NARRATIVES, THE MEDIA AND OPERATION CAST LEAD

by

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Narratives, the Media and Operation Cast Lead

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at George Mason University, and the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Malta

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all the crazy folks I met and to all the cigarillos and bottles of wine which made this thesis possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

NARRATIVES, THE MEDIA AND OPERATION CAST LEAD

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The objective of this Master thesis was to conduct a narrative analysis of the news coverage of the Gaza War in 2008/9 between Israel and Hamas. More specifically, this work discusses the application of Israeli and Palestinian historical-national narratives in English language online (version) newspapers from the U.S., Israel as well as the Palestinians and the Arab world. The purpose is to improve the reader's understanding of narratives and their media applicability in a conflict context and especially in light of Israeli-Palestinian issues. For this qualitative research, numerous articles published in different newspapers on several days during the start, middle and end phase of the war were analyzed. Results show amongst others that in terms of Israeli narratives there are certain recurrent themes and historical references (e.g. the Six Day War) frequently applied in the media. With respect to Palestinian narratives, the picture is less clear and one comes rather across what you may call a counter-Israel narrative than a clear Palestinian one.

EPILOGUE

The anchorwoman in the Israeli news studio attempts to continue with the next headline on today's news agenda when she is abruptly interrupted by another newscaster. The man who is sitting close to the anchorwoman holds a mobile phone in his hand and explains that Dr. Ezzeldeen Abu Al-Aish is on the line. Dressed in suit and tie he calmly explains that Dr. Al-Aish, who regularly comments on occurrences in the Gaza Strip (where he lives), is being shelled by Israeli forces in the very moment. Before switching on the speaker, so that the TV audience can hear Al-Aish, the newscaster mentions that the family of the Palestinian physician was injured.

The speaker of the mobile phone is switched on and while Ezzeldeen Abu Al-Aish repeatedly and despairingly shouts *"ya'Allah"* – oh God – the man in the news studio says that his family was killed and briefly mentions that Al-Aish works in Israeli hospitals. One can hardly miss the growing distress on the newscaster's face while he tries to retain his composure. Apparently the man is trying to counteract the first signs of stuttering by quickly explaining some side issues. He is finally interrupted by Al-Aish who desperately shouts *"ya'Allah ya'Allah"*. After it became clear that the Palestinian's daughters were injured, the newscaster explains that Al-Aish tried to keep his family safe in Beit Lahiya. Like his female colleague, who complained that they were supposed to talk to Al-Aish later, the newscaster tries to live up to his role: explaining the case,

clarifying the picture – but through his mobile phone the war, the real war on the ground, has found its way into a modern TV studio with smartly dressed and professional newscasters.

While the man in the shelled house in Gaza continues screaming, the man in the news studio tries to take action. He asks for Al-Aish's whereabouts reasoning that perhaps someone could send ambulances. But the doctor goes on screaming – that his daughters were hit in the head, that he wanted to save them, but that they died on the spot. He shouts: "What have we done to them?" Then the newscaster says that he will not hang up, being already visibly less in control than some minutes earlier. This statement is followed by a silence during which none of the newscasters knows how to react and only Al-Aish is screaming in the background. After a couple of seconds, Al-Aish tells him the name of a junction close to his home and the newscaster addresses the IDF and any other organization to send help.

The man in the studio repeats that he does not want to hang up. While he prepares to leave the news studio, the camera angle changes. Now the audience can see the overwhelming normalcy of the clean news studio with the anchorwoman and two guests who, so far, had been invisible for the viewer. Between anchorwoman and guests there is a screen with the Hebrew lettering *milkhamah b'azah*[1] with the smiling face of an Israeli soldier in the background.

The reader might wonder why I start off with this little anecdote. Obviously it is a very catchy story and, yes, I put it at the beginning of this dissertation in order to grab

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[1] *milkhamah b'azah* (מלחמה בעזה) is Hebrew for war in Gaza

your attention. However, there are other, more academic reasons. To begin, I wanted to illustrate the significance of my topic – media framing during conflict, but we will get to this later – and why it is interesting. At this point it is probably clear how conflict and media are related in the anecdote I chose to illustrate this connection.

Furthermore, there is a certain discrepancy between reality and the representation of reality in the media. I suppose that this is not big news. Yet, in most cases it is less obvious than in the one that I chose here. The representation of events like Operation Cast Lead does always take place in a certain context which is part of the general framing process. The story of Dr. Al-Aish, who is being shelled in the Gaza Strip while he talks to newscasters of the very country that attacks his home, is especially illustrative since the media (or the representing part) and the represented reality clash in the oddest way. They are seemingly incompatible with each other in that the news studio, in which the representation takes place, does not seem to be the appropriate context to deal with the realities of the war in Gaza. How can you fit hundreds of dead people or just a single family tragedy, which takes place right now, between two news jingles and some headlines?

There is a last reason why I made this story a part of my dissertation. Even though I could argue that I simply described a scene which I watched on YouTube, chances are that you and many other readers, who have a look at this clip, (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLUJ4fF2HN4[2]) will come to the conclusion that I did not describe it in a fair, unbiased or objective way. It is possible and even very likely

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[2] Another link to this video is: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUh6xVlndhM

that I framed the story in a certain way. I leave it to the reader's judgment whether I applied a pro-Israel or pro-Palestine, a Jabotinskian[3] Revisionist, a neoconservative or maybe a rather leftist frame, a state-centric Realist or a Marxist grassroots frame or simply none of them. If the reader cannot or does not want to make a decision at this point, he or she may be more willing or able to do so after I described the course of the Gaza War, what narratives and media framing actually are and of course which (Israeli and Palestinian) narratives are applicable in this context.

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[3] Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky (1880 born in Odessa) was a Zionist leader and founder of the Revisionist branch who actively championed the virtue of self-defense, self-determination and Jewish statehood. He opposed the partition plan for Palestine and later became a leader in the paramilitary Etzel group (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION
Concepts, literature and research question

"There is no more Palestine. Finished" (Moshe Dayan, 1973)

General introduction to terminology

In this article I will concern myself with media framing in terms of Israeli and Palestinian historic-political narratives in the context of the 2008/9 Gaza War. To begin, I will elaborate on the chosen research terms and give explanation why this topic is interesting and important for the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution. First, narratives are – and at this point I want to keep with Rowland & Frank's (2011) well-worded explanation – "sacred and transcendent stories that inform speech and induce action" (p. 42). This short phrase gives you an idea of the power of narratives. They are not simply something that people repeatedly narrate or some kind of bonfire folklore, but instead they can be powerful political and societal instruments and drivers. Narratives can motivate action and can become guidelines to interpret the latter, for instance by attributing meaning to them. Furthermore, they can develop a sacred character which can equip them with inviolability (Rowland & Frank, 2011; Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006).

Still, why do narratives arise? What is their function and how do they become powerful in society in terms of action and interpretation? Without a doubt much ink has been spilled over these questions and related ones. In my introduction I will try to answer some of them. However, it is of utmost importance to understand that there is no clear-cut

framework for the application and investigation of narratives. There is no manual and I will not deliver one. The fuzziness of this topic will strike you the first time when you begin to concern yourself with important literature about the field and come across terms like narrative, myth, ethos and script to name just a few. Which term is used and to what extent they are used interchangeably depends on the author. However, I will try to be clear-cut and begin with some important questions and answers.

First of all, what is the gist of narrative? "A *narrative* is a story about events that took place in history or are taking place in the present" (Auerbach, n.d., p. 101). These stories have definite points where they start and end; they are self-contained and catchy. A very important characteristic of narratives is the fact that they answer certain questions: "Who, What, When, Where, and Why"? A very helpful distinction is the one between national narratives and meta-narratives (Auerbach, n.d., p. 101).

National narratives are stories about certain spectacular occurrences in a nation's more or less recent history. In the context of group and identity conflicts, national narratives can fulfill the function of excluding the other group, for instance by delegitimizing their national narrative. Intractable conflict can actually result in the construction of a specific conflict narrative in such a way that narrative and conflict reinforce each other. Further, often enough national heroes, whose mythic lives shape group identities, as well as Chosen Traumas and Chosen Glories make part of these nation-specific narratives (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; Volkan, 1998).

Meta-narratives on the other hand are more "holistic, hierarchical framework[s] that embrace[] the national narratives" (Auerbach, n.d., p. 102). Meta-narratives form the

ideological basis of nations, offering answers to questions about the legitimacy of a people and its claims (e.g. for territory). The notion of the ideological dimension of meta-narratives becomes understandable when, for example, Enlightenment and Marxism are understood as meta-narratives. Meta-narratives are almost all-encompassing explanation and justification frameworks in which smaller narratives can be included and which can become part of the foundation of a nation (Auerbach, n.d.). In brief, narratives give individuals (and groups) the experience of understanding, the idea that life is organized and that it has a meaning. That is how narratives satisfy very basic psychological needs.

Terror Management Theory (TMT)[4] holds that people are consciously aware of their own demise. This terrorizing awareness motivates them to find something permanent, a particular *Weltanschauung* or belief system which they can become part of so that a part of them will survive within the greater idea. Most certainly, narratives can be considered to be a way to manage inner terror, to create something that is bigger than the individual, but at the same moment enables the individual to be included and integrated in it – to create a "*symbolically constructed shared identity*" (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006, p. 3). Especially in the context of prolonged conflict group members experience the need to cope with a challenging situation which jeopardizes their positive self-concept and perhaps even their life. Here narratives can provide stability and safety inside the group (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; "Fear, Death and Politics", 2008).

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[4] TMT is considered to explain why religions are universally successful (more than 80% of all humans follow some kind of religion). They facilitate denial of death through highlighting life after death (Strenger, 2011).

However, it is important to highlight how enormous the psychological and group-dynamical forces behind narratives are. Narratives are a strategy to cope with violent conflict, group competition and inevitable demise. Obviously the challenges are huge and so are the forces unleashed to counter them. History has proven time and again that humans are willing to go great lengths to protect their belief systems, part of which may be a set of narratives. In the context of a threat to the group (not necessary physically but to its identity) narrative or myth (as it is called by other authors) can turn into an entelechy, "a symbolic force that causes humans to extend an idea to the 'end of the line' in search of perfection, which often produces terrible results" (Rowland & Frank, 2011, p. 43). Myths (social transfer of values), ethos (explanation of society's direction and aspirations) or narratives in general can shape (political) reality and are being shaped by it; they answer the most fundamental questions and are temptingly straightforward; they shape identity and keep it positive and stable; they deliver perceived safety and meaning; they reduce angst. However, if groups are threatened their ideas and understanding of present and past, their shared believes, their mythic systems can be "extend[ed] [...] to the 'end of the line'". People will undertake great efforts and make incredible sacrifices to avoid recognizing that the person in the mirror is only a "breathing piece[] of defecating meat no more significant or enduring than porcupines or peaches" (Rowland & Frank, 2001; "Fear, Death and Politics", 2008).

The seemingly intractable conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is only one conflict case in which narratives play an important role. If you concern yourself with the Cyprus issue then you will come across divergent attempts of explaining and justifying

past as well as present events, too. Probably the same is true for Northern Ireland, Basque country and so forth. However, since the case study on the basis of which I will investigate the intersection of narratives and media is located in the context of the Mideast conflict, I will delve into the mythical systems and sacred stories of Israelis and Palestinians only. A closer look at this more concrete example will make it easier to understand some of the very abstract concepts and ideas which were outlined earlier.

The Israelis

It is almost impossible to reduce the mythical system of the Israeli people to a framework which is not beyond the scope of this work. The Israelis comprise of the early secular left-leaning Ashkenazi[5] establishment and their descendents as well as of oriental Jews who immigrated to the young State of Israel during the 1950s and 1960s and make up approximately half of the Israeli population. Nevertheless, the dominant narrative was hardly shaped by them. The term Israelis includes Palestinian Arabs who constitute roughly 20% of the population, but Israeli narratives were made by and for the Jewish majority. There are many former Soviet citizens with Jewish roots who settled in the country after the Soviet Union collapsed and who are comparably unreligious and nationalist-Zionist (as their strong voting support for *Yisrael Beiteinu*[6] shows), much in contrast to the ultra-orthodox Jews, or *Haredim*, whose population grows at a breathtaking pace and who are largely anti-Zionist (Strenger, 2011).

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[5] Ashkenazim is the Hebrew term for Jews with European origin as opposed to Sephardim, the oriental Jews who were driven out of Spain in the 15th century, and Mizrahim, Jews from the Arab world (Kamrava, 2005).

[6] *Yisrael Beiteinu* (ישראל ביתנו) is Hebrew for Our Home Israel. It is a "right-wing nationalist party established in 1999" which considers itself to follow the political path of Jabotinsky's Revisionism ("Israeli Political Parties", n.d.).

This is an attempt to roughly subdivide the citizenry of the Jewish state. The religious spectrum ranges from Muslim and Christian to Jewish, from secular, traditional, traditionalist and orthodox to ultra-orthodox and so forth. The political spectrum ranges from hardcore right-wing nationalist (*Yisrael Beiteinu*), the oriental-orthodox Shas party, the centrist Kadima, the right Likud and the left Avoda[7] to some socialist parties to name just a few (Strenger, 2011).

Dependent on who you ask you will probably hear very different versions of Israeli narratives. Some might differ slightly whereas others vary on core dimensions like victimhood and perpetrator role, the right to exist (or not) and much more. The different groups in Israel will give you accounts concerning the history and aspiration of the people of Israel from a wide range of diverging religious and political angles. However, there is something that – being bold enough – one could call an average or mainstream narrative. Here I will delve into this Zionist mainstream story of who, what, why and so on (Strenger, 2011).

It might be a good idea to start off with what I will call the Israeli meta-narrative. It is the kind of narrative that has the capability to include many of the smaller mythic and sacred stories that the reader will come across in this section. Due to the limited scope of this work, I will simplify a little and focus on core aspects. Well, what is the fundamental ideological super-story of the Israeli nation? Even though Marxism (the Kibbutz movement) and Judaism (the state's national symbols: the Star of David and the menorah) most certainly form an important part of this story, the term which is even more

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[7] Avoda (העבודה) is Israel's version of the Labor Party. It holds Zionist social-democratic (formerly socialist) views and is headed by Shelly Yachimovich (Strenger, 2011; "Labor Party", n.d.)

significant in this context is, of course, Zionism. Zionism is the ideology whose proponents aspire to the return of the Jewish people to the Biblical Land of Israel – back to *Eretz Yisrael*[8] and Zion. The idea of political Zionism as conceived of by the Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl and implemented by David Ben-Gurion is well-expressed in Israel's 1948 Declaration of Independence, setting the stage for many national narratives to come: from the War of Independence, in which Israel successfully defended itself against the Arab states surrounding it, to the Six Day War, during which Israel destroyed the entire Egyptian air force, defeated the armies of Syria and Jordan and seized Jerusalem. The super-story that Ben-Gurion read out loud on Mai 14th 1948 goes as follows:

> ERETZ-ISRAEL (the Land of Israel) was the birthplace of the Jewish people.
> Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first
> attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance
> and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.
> After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it
> throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it
> and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.
> Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every
> successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In
> recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, ma'pilim (immigrants
> coming to Eretz-Israel in defiance of restrictive legislation) and defenders, they

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[8] *Eretz Yisrael* (ארץ ישראל) is Hebrew for Land of Israel.

made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and

created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving

peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all

the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood. (Israel

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.)

This is only an excerpt from the declaration. Yet it includes the most important features

of the Zionist mainstream meta-narrative. It answers certain important questions about

the group's standing in the world. What does the Declaration of Independence tell us? To

begin, it highlights that the territory of modern Israel/Palestine is the place of Jewish

roots. It is where the Jewish people come from, where they formed a nation and where

their culture was shaped. "Eretz-Israel" is described as a birthplace, a homeland and as a

place of "political freedom" where "independent nationhood" is aspired, a formulation in

which the European idea of nation state resonates. It offers an explanation why the Jews

should be in Israel. What follows is a legitimization of this claim based on the notion that

the Jewish pioneers "made deserts bloom [and] revived the Hebrew language". In order

to legitimize their claims, Israelis also frequently point to the 1917 Balfour Declaration in

which Britain emphasized their support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine

(Auerbach, n.d.; Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; Adwan & Bar-On, 2003).

You can also find the concepts of independence and West-orientation in Ben-

Gurion's statements about economic and cultural control as well as progress ("to all [...]

inhabitants" conveys the idea of Western tolerance and democracy) respectively. Another

very important legitimization attempt in this excerpt is the idea that the Jews "kept faith

with" their Biblical homeland and cultural birthplace. In conclusion, it can be stated that the Israeli meta-narrative (at least in the form of the Declaration of Independence) combines religious, national, cultural, territorial and historical approaches to the positioning of the Jewish people in time and space as well as to explaining and justifying their aspirations (Auerbach, n.d.).

Within this broader super-story, we can dig deeper and delve into the nuances of the Israeli system of myths and stories. One can find a multitude of national narratives in Jewish and Israeli culture. For one, there are the ancient Hebrew heroes like Bar-Kochva who fought against the Romans with his men, David who fought stronger Goliath, the Maccabees who fought the Hellenes, Moses who faced the Pharaoh (to go far back in time) and Joseph Trumpeldor who died defending the settlement of Tel Hai in Galilee in rather recent history. These heroic figures are celebrated as representatives of the entire nation. Be it David's superior technique through which he compensated for physical inferiority or Bar Kochva's and Trumpeldor's will to resist and the latter's iron nationalism (as expressed in Trumpeldor's allegedly last words: "It is good to die for your country"), they are supposed to form the fundament for the character and nature of today's Israelis (Auerbach, n.d.).

Characters like Trumpeldor and Bar-Kochva as well as sacred sites like Masada[9] are all part of national narratives from which Israel's mythical system is made. Until today some units of Israel's army take their oath at Masada: "Masada shall not fall again". Mythic figures and places are essential components of the ethos which explains

[9] Masada was the last stronghold of a rebellion against the Romans that was held by the Jewish rebels for a long time before the Romans finally seized the fort and the remaining rebels committed suicide.

"goals, means and experiences" (Bar-Tal & Salomon 2006, p. 6) of contemporary Israeli society. Societies take certain directions, make certain decisions and hold on to certain shared values; and narratives help ensuring "society members that their behavior is not just random" (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006, p. 9), but does actually have understandable historic roots and makes sense: There is meaning! Supported and proven by mythic Hebrew heroes (ancient or recent) and sacred places (like Tel Hai and Masada which are connected to heroes) within a set of narratives which is embraced by political Zionism, Israel's ethos goes roughly as follows:

The Diaspora Jew is weak and always a victim, a fact of which the Holocaust gave the final and clearest evidence. The Jews have longed for the return to the Land of Israel ever since they were exiled from it and the horrifying events during their exile show how daringly they must return to their Hebrew warrior roots and reestablish national sovereignty and freedom. Only in their own homeland, which will be on eye-level with the other (Western) nations, and with the deepest connection to the soil, they can find security. To achieve this aim (and keep the gains) the new Jews, the *sabras*[10], who are strong, bold and proud, shall stand united against all their enemies who are the successors of Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans and the Nazis. Further, the post-Diaspora Jews have to be independent of other powers, they must deter their enemies and always demonstrate that they can and will defend themselves. History has proven that when it comes down to it no one will come to help them. The allied forces did not bomb

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[10] *sabra* (צבר) is Hebrew for the desert plant prickly pear. The term is used in Israel to describe persons who are born in Israel after 1948. It is used metaphorically to characterize these people as being prickly on the surface, but soft from the inside. The *sabra* is thought to be "free of the neuroses of Diaspora Jews" and a "stoic defender of his new home [...] with a gentle core ("Glossary: S", n.d.; Mann, 2004, p. 233).

Auschwitz, UN forces were withdrawn from Sinai when Nasser mobilized troops in 1967 and Europe was too intimidated by the OPEC's oil weapon to help in 1973. The new Hebrew warrior must not be hesitant and he must be willing to resist like the zealots in Masada and he must be willing to die for the greater good like Trumpeldor at Tel Hai (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; Rowland & Frank, 2011; Porat, 2006; Strenger, 2011).

In the following section I will sometimes come back to certain components of the Israeli narrative which are better described in the context of the Palestinian perspective. That is why the next section, which focuses on the Palestinian narrative, will prove quite comparative.

The Palestinians

When you concern yourself with the Israeli narrative structure you can hardly escape the "Other". Besides the weak and victimized Diaspora Jew who backs down to the *goyim*[11], there is obviously the Arab (later especially Palestinian) "Other" whose claim to the Land of Palestine is perceived as a clear threat to the Israeli claim to the same territory.[12] That is to say that in this case narratives are perceived as a zero-sum game, which is not too surprising since the conflict itself is a zero-sum game: If I am right then you cannot be right as well (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; Rotberg, 2006). To express it in the words of Bar-On & Adwan (2006, p. 206): "These narratives morally exclude each other and devalue and dehumanize their enemy's narrative". It is interesting

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[11] *goyim* (גוים) is Hebrew for non-Jews, sometimes used in a derogatory way.

[12] Before the creation of Israel, Arabs were not considered the "Other". They were rather ignored or their culture was even admired, for instance, by HaShomer, a Hebrew self-defense group in the 1920s, which adopted certain habits of the Arabs since "they were considered fighters" (Porat, 2006, p. 53). Some go as far as to say that the first Israelis paradoxically felt "fascination with, and repulsion by, Arab culture" (Mann, 2004, p. 236).

to see that the Israeli as well as the Palestinian narrative fundament can be expressed in the following way which excludes the respective "Other":

> [W]e are an ancient nation with proven historical ties to the territory of which you – a religious (or cultural, social – anything but national) group – claim ownership. That is, the primordial theory is embodied and proven within us, while you artificially invented yourselves as a people (or nation or nationality – the distinctions are unclear both within the academic discourse and outside of it) with a groundless claim to our territory. (Auerbach, n.d., p. 103)

In contrast to the Israelis who already achieved statehood, the Palestinians are in an earlier phase of constructing their own group identity which is why their narrative is less clear-cut and consistent than the Israeli mainstream story (Auerbach, n.d.). That is due to "the fragmentation of the Arab narrative" along many lines, Arab historians' use of Israeli formulations and limited access to important archives in Israel (Jawad, 2006, p. 76). Being the party that is weaker and in an earlier phase also results in the fact that while "the Israeli narrative is more reflective and self-critical, the Palestinian narrative is less so" (Bar-On & Adwan, 2006, p. 216).

However, the Palestinian and Israeli narratives are fairly similar at the structural level, which is at least partly due to the fact that both narrative structures are also conflict narratives related to the same conflict (Auerbach, n.d.; Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). For that reason Rotberg (2006) describes the conflict and "[the groups'] intertwined reckonings of the past" as "History's Double Helix" (p. 2).

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To begin, in the Palestinians' mythical box there is Salah ad-Din who defeated the crusaders (whose position is filled by contemporary "imperialist" Israelis). Salah ad-Din can be viewed as the equivalent to, for instance, David on the Jewish Israeli side (Auerbach, n.d.). More similarities become apparent when one focuses on the myth entrepreneurs at the more extreme part of the continuum. On the Israeli side there is the Revisionist interpretation, famously represented by Vladimir Jabotinsky ("'liquidate the diaspora or the diaspora will liquidate you'") and Menachem Begin ("'like sheep led to the slaughter'") (Rowland & Frank, 2011, pp. 44-45), in which the fighters of the pre-state underground organization Irgun – Begin was one of them – are understood to be the reborn ancient Hebrew warriors.[13] On the Palestinian side you can find the Jihadist resistant fighters and – perhaps in their most extreme form – suicide terrorists who represent the heroes of the "golden age of Islam" (Rowland & Frank, 2011, p. 50).

Further, you have the Israeli and Palestinian claims to the land and the often reiterated deep connection to the soil which is, according to the Israeli interpretation, rooted in the Jews' 2000 years long yearning to return to the Biblical Land of Israel. Palestinians claim that the Jews were absent for two millennia and that for most of that time the Land of Palestine was Islamic *waqf*, which means that "Palestine [is] a sacred place" (Rowland & Frank, 2011, p. 50). The Hamas organization has stated in its Charter that this *waqf* must not be given up and that "the movement 'strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine'" (Rowland & Frank, 2011, p. 50). On both sides there

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[13] The Revisionist framework plays an important role in this paper, first, since militarist defensiveness and power are concepts that play a significant role in the context of military escalation and, second, for the political reason that since 1977 Revisionist Zionism is fairly dominant in Israeli politics. Revisionism was formerly represented by the Herut party and nowadays by Netanyahu's Likud. It is a nationalist movement which aspires to an Arab-free Greater Israel (Strenger, 2011).

have been maximalist aspirations in regards to the territory that the community claims. It is also noteworthy that in the mythical frameworks of Palestinians as well as Israelis, Jerusalem plays a vital role and that in both cases return – the refugees' right to return and the return to the Biblical homeland respectively – is a very important aspect. That is to say that there are sacred places, mythic heroes and many claims on both sides which are essential for the groups' identities (Rowland & Frank, 2011).

When you concern yourself with Palestinian narratives it is key to take into account that the Palestinians are the (at least militarily and economically) weaker party to the Mideast conflict. They were driven from their homes and did not establish their own sovereignty as a nation yet. In contrast to that, the Jews who were driven from Europe already created a sovereign state. In the Palestinian narrative the notion is prevalent that the Palestinians were deceived by Western powers, for instance through the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement between Britain and France as well as through the abovementioned 1917 Balfour Declaration which effectively invalidated the earlier 1915 deal between Sharif Hussein and Sir McMahon. This Hussein-McMahon Agreement was supposed to set the stage for an independent Arab state. Yet another common claim is that "Britain granted a land she did not possess (Palestine) to a group who did not own it (the Zionists) at the expense of those who possess and deserve it (the Palestinian-Arab people [...])" (Adwan & Bar-On, 2003, p. 8). Generally speaking, in the Palestinian narrative the pre-state history of Palestine is one of deception by "the Zionist-British team" (p. 8) under which the Palestinian people, who opposed Zionist settlement, had to suffer (Adwan & Bar-On, 2003).

A peak moment of this suffering would later be known as the War of

Independence on the Israeli side and *al-Nakba* on the Palestinian side. It is one of the

historic events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where narratives clash massively. A

foundation event which is clearly understood by the Israelis as a war that they had to fight

"since Arabs wished to push them into the sea" (Jawad, 2006, p. 73) is at the same time

an event which the Palestinians see as a clear case of ethnic cleansing. Even though the

Palestinian narrative lacks clarity when it comes to the role of several Arab leaders and

the Arab armies, the narrative asserts the responsibility of Western powers, especially

Great Britain, concerning the creation of the conflict in the Mideast. To the Palestinians it

is also clear that Israel cleansed Palestine systematically as a part of its strategy and is

responsible for the refugee problems. Palestinians hold that counter to the Israeli

narrative, which underlines that the Israeli army acted very ethically, the Palestinians did

not leave their homes voluntarily but were expelled instead. Another important claim is

that besides Great Britain also the Arab leaders are responsible for the defeat in 1948.

This disappointment with their own leaders is also reflected in the accusation that there

was a lack of organization after the *Nakba* (Jawad, 2006; Adwan & Bar-On, 2003).

As for the decades following the mandate period and the 1948 war, the Six Day

War in 1967 was a major event for Israel in terms of policies as well as the creation of

new legends and heroes for the Israeli narrative. Despite the significance of this event for

the Palestinians (after 1967 they lived under Israeli occupation) it appears to be the First

Intifada[14] starting in the 1980s which influenced the Palestinian narrative after 1948. In the Palestinian narrative the Intifada was the "appropriate response to twenty years of occupation" (Adwan & Bar-On, 2003, p. 40) which meant to the Palestinian people a repression ignored by Arab and international actors, rising unemployment, degradation of infrastructure, increasing settlement construction and, perhaps one of the most important points, "policies whose aim was to erase the reality, national identity and the very existence of the Palestinian people on its land" (Adwan & Bar-On, 2003, p. 38). The Israelis tried to tackle the Intifada through coercive and violent means but recognized, according to the Palestinian interpretation of events, that they would not be successful that way. It is also assumed that the Intifada eventually set the stage for the Oslo talks and the Palestinian Authority which brought the Palestinians closer to statehood (Adwan & Bar-On, 2003).

Just like in the section about the Israeli narrative I want to give a limited version of the ethos of the Palestinians, as well. However, as implied earlier in this writing, the Palestinian narrative appears to be as fragmented as the Palestinian society itself. That is why it seems comparably challenging to find a mainstream narrative. To use a concrete example, the Palestinian education system (through which narratives and ethos are communicated) is less centralized than the Israeli one. Still, it is worth to dare an attempt here (Brown, 2006):

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[14] Intifada (انتفاضــــة) is an Arabic term which can be translated as "uprising". The First Intifada started in 1987 and was followed by the Oslo peace process in the 1990s. After the failure of the peace process (last negotiations between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat in 2000) the Second (or Al-Aqsa) Intifada broke out and lost momentum in 2004/5 (Kamrava, 2005).

The Palestinian Arabs have the right to establish a state somewhere between Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea and those Palestinians who became refugees due to Israeli aggression have the natural right to return to their homeland, the land of which they are the "true native inhabitants" (Oren, Bar-Tal & David, n.d., p. 139). The Palestinians have been living in the Land of Palestine for a very long time and they weathered many occupations of which the Israeli occupation is only one. They are very conscious of their nationhood of which their specific Arabic dialect is only one expression. Because of this and other points, justice is on their side, for instance in the form of international law which underlines their right to a state through covenants and resolutions. Even though the Palestinians are clearly a part of the greater Arab family they are also absolutely unique in that they had to fight constantly to keep their specific culture and heritage alive. That is why their history is full of heroism and martyrdom. However, the Palestinians are also a very educated people full of brotherliness and a sense of community, family and patriotism. This loving people faced massive violence through the aggression of Israeli invasion. They will defend themselves, though, because rebellion and the willingness to sacrifice for greater goods is part of their character. They have all the right to defend themselves because their territory was stolen from them by foreign colonial aggression. In spite of everything, their land and Jerusalem, which ever since was an Islamic city, remains in their heart (Oren et al., n.d.; Brown, 2006).

Before I turn to the next section I want to highlight some striking similarities between the Palestinian and the Israeli way of shaping their self-images and group identities. First, in Palestinian textbooks you will come across notions of heroism,

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martyrdom and rebellion which may remind the attentive reader of the Israeli myths about Bar-Kochva, the Maccabees and the new Hebrew warriors. Further, in the Palestinian self-description there is a certain emphasis on education and "knowledge as a weapon" (Oren et al., n.d., p. 141). I leave it to the reader to decide whether it is too far-fetched to point to King David on the Jewish side who – though not directly through education – defeated Goliath through superior intelligence and technique. Furthermore, it is interesting to see that the Palestinians wish to stand united with the Arab peoples while perceiving themselves as unique, not unlike the (religious) Israeli self-image of being the chosen people on the one hand but being part of the family of (Western) nations on the other. Last but not least, the Palestinians frame their history amongst others in terms of expulsion and massacre which reminds you of the Diaspora experience and the pogroms in Europe that play an important role in the Israeli narrative (Oren et al, n.d.).

After this introduction in the concept of narrative and the particular Israeli and Palestinian narratives, I want to delve into the idea of media framing which is important since in this work I will investigate how media outlets framed the Gaza War in terms of narrative structures.

Media Framing

To begin, what are frames and what is framing and how do I know it is in front of my face? Well, let us turn to Tversky & Kahneman (1981) and their little game:

Imagine that the U.S. is preparing for the outbreak of a rare disease, which is expected to kill 600 people. Two alternative programs to combat the disease have been proposed. Assume that the exact scientific estimates of the consequences of

the programs are as follows: If Program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved. If Program B is adopted, there is a 1/3 probability that 600 will be saved and a 2/3 probability that no people will be saved. (Gilovich, Keltner & Nisbett, 2006, p. 399)

If you are like most people then you would prefer the adoption of program A. However, what happens if the programs look like that?:

If Program C is adopted, 400 people will die. If Program D is adopted, there is a 1/3 probability that nobody will die, and a 2/3 probability that 600 people will die. (Gilovich et al., 2006, p. 399)

Again, if you are like most people you would have chosen to adopt program D. However, it is important to understand that option C is the same as option A and that option D is the same as option B. That is to say that how people make decisions depends heavily on "how the options were *framed*" (Gilovich et al., 2006, p. 399, my emphasis). This is an example from the field of Psychology and, more accurately, from research on human decision making and evaluation in terms of losses and gains. In Psychology a framing effect is defined as "[t]he influence on judgment resulting from the way information is presented, including the order of presentation" (Gilovich et al., 2006, p. 397). This definition is quite straightforward, easy to understand since it is rather parsimonious and it is certainly applicable to our case. Still, this is not the only definition and scholars in the field of framing research applied themselves to propose further definitions.

In D'Angelo & Kuypers (2010) frames are described by Reese (2010) as "'organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work

symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world'" (p. 17) and, quoting Entman (1993), as something through which particular facets of reality can be depicted "'*in such a way* as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation'" (p. 17). The fact that the terms "organizing", "socially shared" and "meaningfully" were used in these definitions may already give the reader an idea how narratives can be understood as frames.

Another point which illustrates that narratives (especially the concept of meta-narrative) suit the concept of frame very well is the fact that "[f]rames organize and structure" which is why, in the context of media, they are much broader, almost all-encompassing, in comparison to news themes or issues (Reese, 2010, p. 17). That is also the idea behind narratives; they structure and organize. An even more important point, though, is that frames "don't just arise as free-standing entities" (Reese, 2010, p. 18), but are instead clearly related to certain contexts like the culture of a people. About narratives one could go as far as to say that they are one of the clearest expressions of culture. Frames can also be described as "structures of meaning made up of [...] concepts" and "'interpretive packages'" (Reese, 2010, pp. 23, 18).

Yet, how are people guided to interpret aspects in a very particular way and not another? To achieve this aim you need so-called framing devices. A fairly clear and obvious example of framing devices are metaphors, buzzwords and other "specific linguistic structures" (Reese, 2010, p. 19). These structures can be culture-related. Take for instance "Nazi", "Hitler" and "Auschwitz" in regards to a hypothetical Israeli danger/annihilation frame. Many Israeli or Jewish readers may automatically associate

these terms with the idea of existential threats. Benjamin Netanyahu's comparison of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad with Adolf Hitler can be considered a real world example of such a framing attempt (Lappin, 2006). Another example from the real world is the way in which a war frame was utilized in the media during former U.S. president George W. Bush's War on Terror campaign with the declaration of "America's new war" and Iraq as "the 'front line'" (Reese, 2010, p. 25). This linguistic structure encourages people to ask "whether we will win, not whether we are in the right fight with the right strategy" (Reese, 2010, p. 22).

However, these cases exemplify rather superficial parts of meaning structures. Pointing to certain metaphors and linguistic devices is certainly a good way to start, but some, like Hackett (1984 in Reese, 2010) who understand frames as "'deep structure[s]'" (Reese, 2010, p. 24), highlight the need to research "the myths, metaphors, and narratives [which] calls for a more qualitative, interpretative approach" (Reese, 2010, p. 24). It would be too trivial to focus simply on the manifest part of a text while ignoring the more hidden and covert messages behind it. By now the reader might have noticed that this is where the narratives described in earlier sections and a real understanding of these deep cultural structures become essential (Reese, 2010).

Even though it should have become obvious that investigating narratives and frames is not exactly what you call a hard science – amongst others due to "the lack of a commonly shared theoretical model underlying framing research" (Scheufele, 1999, p. 103) – I still want to shed a little more light on media framing by applying Scheufele's (1999) attempt to organize frame theory into a model in order to describe this concept in

a way that is less vague and fuzzy. To begin, framing in the media is considered especially relevant due to media's strong influence on people's perception of reality. Media outlets lend themselves to become instruments of agenda setting and reality construction. Frame entrepreneurs in the media can filter and package information to make it more understandable and reduce complexity. Certain pieces of information can be made more salient to serve a certain agenda, for example. That is how a media frame works or rather how it can be used. Individual frames on the other hand are mental webs of interrelated ideas through which incoming information can be dealt with cognitively. You can also call it mental schemata or mind sets. Inside individual frames a line can be drawn between rather global frames and frames which are issue-related. Based on individual frames, people can make sense of the information they receive, for example through the media. What we know about both, media and individual frames, implies that the way media filters and packages information to shape certain reality perceptions should ideally (from a practical perspective) be suitable for the schemata which already exist in people's minds. Trying to reduce complex information to easily understandable patterns makes sense only if the patterns are actually recognized by the media consumer (Scheufele, 1999).

Long and complicated story short and simple: We like to pigeonhole things, we peg and label to make it all clear and tidy. We like to do that in regards to (political) events, as well; that is, a good frame entrepreneur in the media knows which individual frames, which pigeonholes, are actually available and utilizes them – with help of

buzzwords, metaphors, pictures or, on a more latent level, with help of an ethos and myths which people understand (Scheufele, 1999; Gilovich et al., 2006).

In brief, I want to touch upon three further attempts to structure the concept of framing, one by Entman (1993 in Scheufele, 1999), one by Gerhards & Rucht (1992 in Scheufele, 1999) and, third, a framework proposed by Blondheim & Shifman (2009). The first mentioned writer believes that there are five important characteristics found in written media content, namely importance judgment, agency, "identification with [...] victims", chosen label and "generalization to a broader national context" (Scheufele, 1999, p. 114). In addition to that, Gerhards & Rucht (1992 in Scheufele, 1999) differentiate between diagnostic framing, prognostic framing and motivational framing. The first one focuses on who is responsible; the second one communicates what action should be taken; and the last kind of framing is meant to set the masses in motion. Blondheim & Shifman (2009) apply the concept of power, vulnerability and disaster scripts. When power scripts are employed in the media, then aspects of events are framed in terms of strength and assertiveness. In the case that a vulnerability script is applied to the media representation of an event, then the frame agents probably try to evoke the impression that the group is weak and unprotected. A disaster script is highly applicable when power meets vulnerability. These proposed conceptualizations of framing are mentioned here because they might become important later during my analysis of media coverage and since it enables the reader to structure his or her own critical thoughts along established frameworks.

After exploring the concepts of narratives (especially in the context of Israel/Palestine) and media framing, in the next section I want to give an overview of the case study which I chose for this dissertation. However, it should be noted that there are several sources describing the Gaza War in different ways. Although we are dealing with an actual event, it is not easy to find something like an objective report of Operation Cast Lead. For the following section I fall back on information from the Center for Strategic & International Studies located in Washington D.C.. The author of the report, Anthony H. Cordesman, is a strategic analyst who frequently wrote on Middle East issues.

Gaza and the dogs of war – What happened in the Gaza Strip between December 27, 2008 and January 17, 2009 and what is the background?

The fog of war came in on a Saturday noon. Israel's war machinery appeared at the horizon like commercial aircraft approaching from the Mediterranean. The massive military power they came to unleash was based on careful years-long reconnaissance, the result of which was a detailed targeting plan. The well-equipped Israeli Air Force (IAF) attacked the Gaza Strip (or rather the Hamas organization) with the support of GPS as well as precision guided and light weapons in order to minimize civilian deaths. Supposedly to attain this goal the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) also threw leaflets on Gaza and made use of text messaging and phone calls to warn civilians in target areas. Mid-January 2009, when Operation Cast Lead or the "Gaza Massacre" ended, the Palestinian death toll stood at approximately one-and-a-half-thousand and many thousands were injured (Cordesman, 2009).

The Gaza Strip, which Israel's army attacked on December 27th, is a territory of 360 square kilometers inhabited by 1.5 million people at the time of the event. Gaza's

population is extremely young with 45% of Palestinians in this territory being not older than 14 years. The unemployment rate stood at an average of 40% since 2006. Education and economy have been in constant deterioration before the war in 2008/9. Unemployment and poverty rates were high while the private sector contracted due to Israeli security measures and the blockade amongst others (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013; Cordesman, 2009).

Before turning to a more detailed description of the actual occurrences during Israel's military operation in Gaza, some light should be shed on context and causes of the war. To begin, the direct historical background of Operation Cast Lead is the Second Intifada (also Al-Aqsa Intifada) and more recently the 2006 Lebanon War. The Second Intifada wreaked havoc from roughly 2000 to 2005 and marked the end and failure of the Oslo peace process. The Intifada was characterized by terrorist attacks like suicide bombings (often though not exclusively by Hamas) and shootings. The Palestinian uprising beginning in 2000 was one of the bloodiest chapters in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which took the lives of more than 1.000 Israelis and 3.000 Palestinians. After that the Al-Aqsa Intifada had lost momentum due to Israeli counter-insurgency, the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004 and the construction of the barrier between core-Israel and the West Bank, Israel and Lebanon went to war in 2006. To be more accurate, it was a war between the Hezbollah organization in southern Lebanon and Israel. Although the historic event which destroyed the myth of the undefeatable Israeli army can be found earlier in history, in the year 1973 when Egyptian and Syrian armies invaded Israel in a surprise attack during the Yom Kippur holiday, the 2006 Lebanon

War was nevertheless an alarming event for the State of Israel. The army of the Jewish state appeared unprepared and could not achieve its objectives (Cordesman, 2009; Siboni, 2009; "Terrorism", n.d.; "Fatalities", n.d.; Schachter, 2010).

Before analyzing the Gaza War it is essential to understand the impact of the aforementioned events, especially the 2006 war. "Moshe Arens said, 'In the history of the State of Israel there has never yet been such a war…There has never yet been such a defeat, a defeat in a war against a few thousand Hizbollah fighters.'". The Winograd Commission investigating the war against Hezbollah pointed out that after 34 days of war the rocket attacks against Israel came to an end because of the ceasefire and not due to victory (Siboni, 2009, p. 28). The perceived defeat of the Israeli army which did not achieve its objective in the eyes of many observers constitutes a central part of the direct context of Operation Cast Lead. Siboni (2009) goes as far as to argue that "[t]he Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead must be viewed as a continuum in Israel's campaign against the resistance movement" (p. 30).

The war in Gaza must be seen in light of these events. When the Second Intifada destroyed the conviction that peace can be achieved, then the 2006 Lebanon War shattered (at least in the eyes of many Israelis) the state's deterrent potential vis-à-vis regional opponents like Iran and Syria (Cordesman, 2009).

The Second Intifada brought the peace process to a violent end and initiated a general shift towards the political right. It is probably no exaggeration to say that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict entered a new phase after the millennium. Until then the conflict had been limited to short inter-state wars, tactical hit-and-run actions as well as

terrorist acts. The latter acts however cannot be compared to the violence of the Al-Aqsa

Intifada which "was astounding even by the standard of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict"

(Kamrava, 2005, p. 251) in terms of the massive violence which both parties unleashed.

The Second Intifada was a shock for both sides – an increasingly vicious cycle of attack

and retaliation in a fight between suicide bombings and tanks in which women and

children became warriors willing to "extend an idea [of resistance and *jihad*] to the 'end

of the line'" (Rowland & Frank, 2011, p. 43) as well as victims of this crisis. It is not far-

fetched to assume that teenagers as suicide bombers, targeted killings of Palestinian

leaders and a few months old babies that became victims on both sides destroyed most of

the optimism and trust which had been created during the Oslo years. It is improbable

that the Palestinians forgot events like Israel's targeted killing of Hamas member Salah

Shehadeh with a 1000-kilo bomb that killed Shehadeh as well as 15 civilians. It is as

unlikely that the Israelis forgot similar incidents like the terrorist attack which left more

than two dozen Israelis dead during a Pesach celebration in Netanya. Even though most

Intifada-related effects on public perceptions are temporary, the general feeling of

security and individual mood did not totally recover as compared to the pre-Intifada level

and Arab aspirations were evaluated as more negative and threatening. Further, the

population became more pessimistic and perceived Palestinians as less interested in

peace. In sum, it can be assumed then that the events of the Al-Aqsa Intifada may have

caused Israelis to become more sensitive to security threats (at least regarding the

Palestinians) and consequently willing to act very decisively in countering them.

However, also the Lebanon War may have added to these effects as the reader will see in

the next paragraph. I moreover hypothesize that the security barrier, which Israel erected in the course of the uprising, could have made it psychologically more convenient for Israel to act violently against a population they do not see and from which they are physically separated[15] (Kamrava, 2005; Hefez & Blum, 2006; Ben Meir & Bagno-Moldavsky, 2010; Gilovich et al., 2006).

The war with Hezbollah instigated fear in many Israelis that their state could lose its deterrent potential. Certainly it was especially shocking that the best-equipped army in the Mideast did not succeed in achieving its objectives while facing a guerilla army which was not aided by tanks, jetfighters and a navy. The Israeli public witnessed how in the context of asymmetric warfare the IDF with 176.500 active personnel could not stop the rockets launched by 15.000 guerillas. According to the National Security and Public Opinion Project in 2007, after the war the threat perception in Israeli public increased. Furthermore, half of all Israelis had less confidence in their army and the country's deterrent potential. When we add up the aforementioned factors, then a clear picture is emerging. It appears that due to the Second Intifada and the Lebanon War, which directly followed, Israelis became more pessimistic, trust Arabs and Palestinians less; they feel more insecure and less well protected by the combined force of IDF and deterrent potential. The assumption that Israeli leaders had an interest in reestablishing confidence and deterrence (vis-à-vis militant groups at their borders as well as the regional powers supporting them) as a consequence of the Lebanon War suggests itself (Second Lebanon War, n.d.; Ben Meir & Shaked, 2007).

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[15] See Milgram Experiment, e.g. in Gilovich et al. (2006).

Finally, the rocket fire, which Israelis knew from the times of the Second Intifada as well as the Lebanon War, threatened the life of civilians in southern Israel. After years of increasing rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, the IDF went to war in a coordinated air and ground offensive. In 2001 Israel was hit by 4 missiles and in 2002 by 35. 155, 281 and 179 rocket attacks were recorded in the following three years respectively. After Israel's disengagement from Gaza in 2005 under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, rocket hits skyrocketed (946 in 2006 and 783 in 2007). Other sources indicate higher numbers. In 2008 a total of 1.500 Qassam rockets[16] were launched against Israel. It was against this backdrop that Israel started its air campaign in December 2008 (Cordesman, 2009; "Rocket threat", 2007).

The first strikes conducted by the Israeli Air Force were so massive that one officer commented the war started at 11.30 "and could have ended [...] at 11.40" (Cordesman, 2009, p. 19). Another officer compared the initial phase of the air operation to the Six Day War in that it was equally decisive. All key targets (between 450 and 603, dependent on the source) were destroyed in the first three to four days. On the first day alone, the IAF hit 150 targets. One of the main target groups were the tunnel systems at the Gaza-Egypt border, the Philadelphi Route, through which weapons and other goods were smuggled. When the air campaign ended on January 3rd, Gaza's economy as well as power and water services had collapsed, 430 Palestinians had died according to Gaza officials and many civilian facilities were destroyed or damaged. However, "Israeli

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[16] Such as the fighting wing of Hamas, also the Qassam rocket is named after Ezzedeen Al-Qassam who died fighting the British in Palestine in the 1930s. The Qassam rocket was continuously further developed, starting in 2001. This simple rocket is easily manufactured and can be launched in a few seconds ("HAMAS Rockets", n.d.).

experts felt that the damage done to Hamas had not yet reached the point where it could deter Hamas in the future, or restore Israel's military credibility" (Cordesman, 2009, p. 31). By the end of the air campaign, Hamas had shot 500 rockets into Israel and the Arab street was enraged (Cordesman, 2009).

After January 3rd the air force was supported by Israeli ground forces marching into Gaza to achieve some key objectives like stopping rocket fire and destroying the infrastructure of terrorist groups. While trying to avoid heavy casualties on their own side and the reoccupation of the Gaza Strip (to prevent a scenario similar to the one the IDF faced after 1982 in Lebanon), the Israelis sought to reduce Hamas' strength, its weapon smuggling capabilities and also tried to reestablish Israel's deterrent potential. The negative assessment of the equally asymmetric war in 2006 had made clear that a well-defined set of objectives was essential before going to war. The army tried not to repeat the grave mistakes it made during its fight against the Hezbollah organization at Israel's northern border. After the Lebanon War the Jewish state had put effort into training its forces (also reservist forces mobilized during the land campaign in Gaza) so that they were sufficiently prepared for the asymmetric kind of warfare they would be engaged in when fighting Hamas, Hezbollah and similar militant non-state actors (Cordesman, 2009).

The IDF entered the battle field in Gaza with 10.000 combat troops to face the estimated 6.000 to 10.000 Hamas fighters and cut off many of them by an effective encirclement of Gaza City. Long running ground fights were kept at a minimum. The Israeli army units in Gaza tried to operate in an unpredictable way, relying on night battle

and infantry to penetrate target areas. Another asset was the well-organized cooperation of air force and ground forces ("jointness") as well as the hi-tech equipment Israel used for battle. That is to say that air power remained a key factor during the advancing offensive against Hamas in Gaza, amongst others to keep Hamas under constant pressure. The offensive was continuously supported by the Israeli navy, as well (Cordesman, 2009).

When an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire was accepted by the Israeli cabinet on January 18th, the Gaza War had taken between 1.166 and 1.417 Palestinian and 13 Israeli lives. On the Israeli side 10 soldiers were killed (four by friendly fire) and more than 500 soldiers and civilians were injured. On the Palestinian side approximately 5.300 individuals were wounded. In regards to the civilian death toll which resulted from the military operation in the Gaza Strip figures differ widely. According to Israeli sources 295 Palestinian civilians died whereas Palestinian sources estimate that 926 civilians lost their life through Operation Cast Lead (Cordesman, 2009; "Confirmed figures", 2009; Lappin, 2009; United Nations, 2009).

Furthermore, the Hamas organization had lost around 50 of their weapon specialist and several leaders. When the ceasefire brought Operation Cast Lead to an end, Hamas had approximately 1.200 of its originally 3.000 rockets left. The other rockets had been used against Israel or had been destroyed by the latter party. Among specialists it is debated whether Israel achieved the main objectives for which it started Operation Cast Lead. This uncertainty is amongst others due to the fact that hundreds of Hamas weapons were not destroyed and out of 6.000 to 10.000 Hamas combatants only a small minority

was killed. However, in the Gaza Strip public support for Hamas dropped according to a public poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion whereas support for Fatah increased (Cordesman, 2009; Gazzar, 2009).

At this point, I want to conclude by drawing the reader's attention to a quote by Paul Valéry which, in my opinion, may reflect how many in Israel perceive the Gaza War and especially its backdrop, the Intifada and the Second Lebanon War: "In the abyss of history there is enough space for everyone"[17]. In one way or another, Israelis may have contemplated Valéry's idea. While the U.S. army, the military forces of the last superpower, proved unable to decisively fight guerilla forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, Israel's own unsettling performance in its asymmetric warfare against groups like Hezbollah might propel the sediments of historic anxieties to the surface of political awareness – and decision-making (Strenger, 2011; vonGreifenfels, 2012).

Research Question
I think that by now it should be clear why and in which way the factors (especially in combination) which I research in this dissertation are important and interesting for the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution. The problems between Israelis and Palestinians do certainly constitute a serious conflict that frequently grabs the world's attention, which becomes especially manifest in the context of the highly covered Gaza War. If one wants to analyze this conflict as a whole, it would be negligent to ignore some very important aspects of group conflict – political as well as psychological – and these aspects are related to peoples' commonly shared narrative – their attempt to structure the world, find

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[17] Original quote: Et nous voyons maintenant que l'abîme de l'histoire est assez grand pour tout le monde (Paul Valéry).

explanations as well as justifications for experiences and actions as well as their effort to enhance their lives with meaning.

Mythical systems are of paramount importance for individuals as well as for groups. They satisfy psychological needs and enable opinion formers as well as state leaders to convey messages and set agendas – on which you may find the next war. In the media these narratives may take the form of media frames. Media representatives (journalists etc.) may simply reflect the narrative they grew up with without being all too aware of it. However, the creation of media frames, for instance in order to shape a certain social perception of reality among the media consumers, can be manufactured deliberately, as well (Scheufele, 1999).

Further, assuming that an all-encompassing analysis of complex conflicts is essential to find viable solutions, I would argue that also from the perspective of conflict *resolution* this work could add something to what is already known widely about the Mideast conflict. In addition to that, having a look at the particular event of the Gaza War could be interesting since it was an event which was highly present in the media and received a lot of attention among Arabs, Israelis and a significant part of the global public. That is why I hope that this case study will prove to be fertile soil for my academic research.

However, since I want to explore this topic with appropriate deliberation, the research field must be limited. That is to say that, first, I have to restrict myself to English language media outlets since only in my native tongue and in English I am able to research the minor details and latent parts of media communication. Second, due to the

limited scope of this dissertation, my research will be restricted to particular media outlets. I will fall back on media coverage by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* for the U.S., *Haaretz* and *JPost* for Israel and *Al-Jazeera* as well as *Al-Qassam* and *The Electronic Intifada* (*EI*) for the Palestinians in terms of media application of narratives in the reportage on the Gaza War. It should be noted, though, that at times I might make use of further sources (e.g. *The Palestine Chronicle*, *Ynetnews* etc.). Besides that, for practical reasons I can only use online sources. While doing so, my focus will rest on print media since different methods of news analysis would have to be applied if I concerned myself with media footage in this work.

The exact choice of media outlets depends on several factors. For one, the media outlet I analyze should be an influential one in terms of circulation and effect on decision makers. *The New York Times* as well as *The Washington Post* are known to have high circulations and both newspapers are prestigious, also among state elites. However, another important criterion is the very practical question whether or to what extent online archives are accessible for me. Concerning U.S. newspapers, the language issue does not play into the decision process for obvious reasons. That is very different, however, when choosing Israeli and Arab or particularly Palestinian sources. In regards to Israel, not all of the important newspapers have English online versions with readily accessible archives. Finally, I chose the English online version of *Haaretz* since it is considered a prestigious and influential newspaper in Israel (also among political leaders) although the circulation is comparably low. *Haaretz* is politically more left than other important newspapers. Another Israeli newspaper that I chose is *JPost* which is the online version

of the English language *The Jerusalem Post,* an important Israeli newspaper which is considered to be more centrist-right on the political spectrum than *Haaretz*. Finding appropriate media sources on the Palestinian side was the toughest task of this part of the work. One interesting option is *Al-Qassam*, the online news organ of the fighting wing of the Hamas organization, which is like the Palestinian Authority a decision making institution. Additionally, Hamas is a party to the analyzed conflict. Since English language newspapers on the Palestinian side are scarce articles, I will also access content published in *EI. EI* is described by the *Jerusalem Post* and the *NRC Handelsblad* as a very elaborate and professional website that gives a Palestinian perspective (Brown, 2002; Roelants, 2001). Another interesting news source is English *Al-Jazeera*. Even though not a Palestinian newspaper, it is an influential media outlet, increasingly in the international media arena, but of course mainly in the Arab world and among Palestinians (Chomsky, 1997; Edmonds, 2011; "Israel", n.d.; "The press in Israel", 2006; "Israeli Newspapers", n.d.).

The reader can already tell that I will obviously not only fall back on sources located in the P.A.-Hamas governed territories for my research; instead I will also make use of outlets based at other places and those that reflect generally Arab rather than specifically Palestinian media. The number of online English language sources with accessible archives located in the Palestinian territories is extremely limited. More importantly, I suppose that national media means something different in the case of the Palestinians since a big part of the population is spread all over the globe and because their territory is not defined like those of Israel and the U.S.. Last but not least, the

Palestinians are perceived as a part of the greater Arab family and, besides that, Arab media tends to be very focused on the unifying Palestinian issue in any case and shed light on the Palestinian non-Western perspective (Oren et al., n.d.; Lewis, 2004; Alterman, 2005).

Even though I will try to stick to the outlined structure – that is, making use of the same media outlets on particular pre-chosen days during the Gaza War – I will sometimes analyze other media outlets for certain reasons. I will do that primarily in order to enhance the reader's understanding of narratives applied in the media as much as possible.

By now it should be obvious that I will analyze the media coverage of the Gaza War by Israeli, Arab/Palestinian and U.S. English language online newspapers. Clearly, I focus on Israeli and Palestinian media (or media focused on the Palestinian perspective) for the reason that this dissertation is primarily about the narratives of these two peoples. The choice of U.S. media is yet not that self-explanatory. There are several reasons for this decision. For one, as the last superpower the U.S. is not only the most important global player, but also influential and very involved in the Mideast conflict. It is striking that important developments between Palestinians and Israelis, like the Oslo peace process and the Camp David accords, were to a significant extent U.S.-supported and – mediated. Additionally, the U.S. is Israel's major supporter in regards to military as well as economic matters. In brief, the U.S. can be considered to be one of the most important actors in the Mideast conflict besides Israel and the Palestinians. In the Western world, it could be seen as the most important one. That brings us to the second argument. The U.S.

is the leading Western power and I regard it to be important to have a look at the media coverage of the Gaza War outside the Middle East, as well, in order to draw a more complete picture. The United States, or rather the parts of their media landscape which shape leaders' opinions and form their interpretation of political events, are therefore too important and influential to be left out in this research project. To come to a conclusion, my research question for this dissertation is: In which fashion was Operation Cast Lead framed by Israeli, Arab-Palestinian and U.S. media in terms of Israeli as well as Palestinian narratives (Kamrava, 2005; Lewis, 2004)?

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

By now, we already touched upon an impressive amount of research-related concepts and ideas. However, the question that remains is: How to put it all together, how to go over the analysis of narratives in terms of news articles? Well, to a certain extent these questions have been answered in the previous chapters. For example, I made clear that a rather "qualitative, interpretative approach" (Reese, 2010, p. 24) is needed for this research in order to be able to analyze in depth. Due to the limited scope of this work – it is not supposed to become the Mideast narratives researcher's Bible –, due to the vast amount of news pieces available and because of the fact that I cannot access the exact same kind of news sources and the same amount of interesting text material (per day) in all three national media landscapes, there are further aspects of my approach which should be outlined here.

First, it should be noted that the qualitative-interpretative character of my research is not limited to the analysis of content, but extends to the choice of articles that are analyzed. When I have ten *Haaretz* articles in front of me and a single article by *The Washington Post* for any one of the days within the relevant time period, then it is obvious how my analysis cannot be balanced. What I mean by this is that I cannot, for example, compare the frequency of the word "war" in ten articles by one newspaper with the frequency of the same word in a single article by another newspaper to draw some

valid conclusions. To some extent, then, the mere accessibility and the number of articles on a given day make certain choices for me and limit the comparative character of this work. On other occasions, however, – let us assume I have ten articles by each of the pre-chosen news sources in front of me – I will have to decide which articles (out of too many) I will analyze, or rather which articles I will analyze in depth and which will be touched upon just briefly.

However, what is the criterion on which I base these decisions? Basically, there is only one major criterion which happens to be the underlying objective of this academic work. The basic idea which got this project started is to give the reader an improved understanding of (historical and national) narratives. Since narratives are an overly abstract and very broad subject, the researcher has to zoom in on a certain sub-field: in this case, the Mideast conflict. At least in the case that the researcher wants to enable the reader to get an idea of the practical and applicable facets of narratives, such limiting measures are inevitable.

What does it mean in the context of this work and for the way I choose the material? Well, first of all, it means that I will try to shed light on the diverse aspects of how Israelis and Palestinians explain, justify and tell their story. Even though it is fair to assume that the relevant themes can be found in very different contexts, I am sure that the set of themes as such is relatively narrow since we are looking into one particular kind of media (online version print media in English) and because this work is narrowed down to the specific case study of the Gaza War in 2008/9.

It is, for instance, an interesting hypothesis that one will come across numerous examples of Revisionist ethics on the Israeli side as well as Hamas (or rather jihadist) lines of reasoning on the Palestinian side – both are quite militarist and maximalist – since we delve into the application of narratives in terms of a violently escalating conflict.

That means that in many cases it seems wise to spare the reader continuously repeating approaches to interpreting recurring themes and instead to focus on covering as large a range of themes as possible (despite the probably limited set). Of course, it can also be insightful to show how similar themes can be applied in varying contexts. In any case, it is my goal to improve the reader's understanding of Israeli and Palestinian narratives and the reader's ability to detect them in a real world situation, for example while watching the news on TV (in which *vulnerable* Israeli civilians are fleeing to shelters before the backdrop of the *tzeva adom*[18] rocket alert while Palestinian fighters behind ski masks launching missiles appear to have the *power* to call forth this behavior), listening to a lecturer on the subject (who calls the West Bank *Yehuda ve Shomron*[19] or disputed territories while avoiding the term "occupied territories") or simply reading news articles about the issue.

Let me go into greater detail. Since the Gaza War lasted three weeks I cannot pick articles published by several newspapers in three different countries (or territories) on every single day during this escalation. Due to the scope of this work and for reasons

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[18] *tzeva adom* (צבע אדום) is Hebrew for color red.

[19] *Yehuda ve Shomron* (יהודה ושומרון) is Hebrew for Judea and Samaria. It is a term widely used in Israel that describes the West Bank territory. It has a right-wing, religious Zionist flavor (Ronen, 2011).

regarding recurrent themes mentioned above, it would hardly make sense to go about the research with such a broad focus. Instead, I chose to pick a roughly equal amount of days in the beginning, middle and end phase for deep analysis. Of course, journalists write about events of the day the article is published, but they also touch upon significant occurrences of the previous days. The choice of days depends primarily on the utility (in terms of applied narrative structures) of the articles. Again, my decisions will be guided by the objective outlined above.

Still, what precisely am I analyzing in this dissertation? Because of the fact that videos and pictures will not be analyzed, I believe that the range of devices for information transmission is already quite limited. That is why I do not want to add further restrictions, for instance limiting myself to single words only, sentences only, pre-chosen mythic terms, metaphors, text structures or word count to name just a few options. Basically, I will take all of these possibilities into account. However, first of all, the analysis will be organized around wording and terminology used by authors. Since I cannot look into the writers' heads, this project rests on deductions, for which there is no evidence in the scientific sense of the word, but only indications. Even though I can fall back on a considerable quantity of literature on the topic as well as knowledge garnered in (hard) social science, for this research I will stick primarily to words and sentences, following the slogan: simplex sigillum veri.

CHAPTER 3: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF GAZA WAR COVERAGE

"Palestine – from the [Jordan] River to the [Mediterranean] Sea, from its north to its south – is our land, our right, and our homeland. There will be no relinquishing or forsaking even an inch or small part of it" (Khaled Meshaal, 2012)

Before the war

In the few days prior to the start of Operation Cast Lead, *Haaretz* writers appear to apply notions of a vulnerability script while framing the tense situation. Besides underlining the helplessness of Israeli citizens, they stress that neither government nor army take the responsibility to protect Israelis. One commentator, Issacharoff (2008), assumes that Hamas' seemingly contradictory behavior (launching a large quantity of missiles against Israel while at the same time confirming that they are willing to extend the truce) is due to the fact that they want to negotiate from a position of strength and do not want to appear weak. His argument goes that Hamas assumes the Israelis understood only violence, which is, as he adds, an assumption that is often applied by the Israeli side, as well, when dealing with the Palestinians. What resonates in these assumptions is the nature of conflict narratives. The aforementioned assumption about the "Other", who only understands violence, is the expression of a typical function of conflict narratives. Violent acts by your group can thus be justified and, furthermore, the threatening conflict situation (including the opponent side as such) can be understood and predicted more fully through reducing complexity (in this case: we use violence equals they get the message, and there is no way around it) (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; Blondheim &

Shifman, 2009; Issacharoff, 2008; Ettinger, 2008; Ravid & Issacharoff, 2008; Harel, 2008; Editorial, 2008).

Haaretz's Ettinger (2008) writes two days before the start of the air raids on Gaza about the vulnerability of the people in southern Israel who are threatened by the massive number of rocket hits in these days. Again a vulnerability script comes to the fore. In this article, it is, first of all, the Israel-is-democratic-and-Western and the security-for-the-Jews aspects of the country's narrative which are quite prevalent. The author underlines that the State of Israel, which is supposed to guarantee security for the Jewish people, neglects its responsibility to protect Israeli citizens. In this case we are talking about a democratically elected government and it appears that a violent state response is the will of the people (at least in this article in which several Israeli individuals are cited): "'I don't understand why we don't use our military might,'" (Ettinger, 2008). Another Israeli cited in the article describes the situation of citizens in the South as being "'cannon fodder'" (Ettinger, 2008), which has a Revisionist flavor – because of the security aspect as well as due to Begin's never again "'like sheep to the slaughter'" credo (Rowland & Frank, 2011, p. 45). Haaretz's editorial did convey the security-first message, as well (Blondheim & Shifman, 2009; Ettinger, 2008; Rowland & Frank, 2011; Editorial, 2008).

The Haaretz article about the pre-war Gaza crisis which is most significant in terms of Israel's mythical system is probably the one by Harel (2008) who, in my interpretation, pushes forward the opinion that Israelis, or rather the IDF, lost the Trumpeldorian value of sacrificing for the national good as well as the boldness and decisiveness which is a key aspect of Israel's societal ethos. He asserts that the army is

protecting itself and not the citizens and that Ehud Barak, the defense minister in these

days, does not act in accordance with the principle "'those who dare, win'" (Harel, 2008)

any more. The author appears to wish for an at least partial societal turn toward the

stubborn fearlessness of *sabra* legends like Ariel Sharon. In this vein, the author suggests

massive retaliation as an answer to any breaches of the truce by Palestinian militants,

which, of course, may deter the enemy and prove the willingness to defend the nation, all

of which are important parts of the Israeli value system (Auerbach, n.d.; Strenger, 2011;

Hefez & Blum, 2006; Harel, 2008; Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006).

Further, regarding the short period before outbreak of war, also *JPost* published

an insightful article. Although *Haaretz* is perceived to be the liberal Israeli newspaper, in

the allegedly more centrist-right *JPost*, Derfner (2008) advocates a more compromising

stance concerning the Gaza blockade in order to prevent war. He attacks the Revisionist

militant narrative by reducing it to the formula "We won't go like lambs to the slaughter.

If they want war, they'll get it" (Derfner, 2008) and by describing how this notion could

result in war. At the end of the article, Derfner (2008) tackles the notion of victimhood

("we still think we're the Jews of Europe in the 1930s, or the Israelites under Pharoah

[sic]" (Derfner, 2008)) which is a strong aspect in the Israeli narrative, a narrative that is

heavily influenced by a history of victimization during the European exile and especially

the Holocaust. By mentioning the Pharaoh, Derfner (2008) goes far back to the roots of

Judaism and the days of the perhaps earliest Hebrew hero, Moses.

As for the Arab-Palestinian side, I could not find a lot of telling articles in terms

of applied narrative structures. However, the information office of the Ezzedeen Al-

Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, applied a fairly obvious vulnerability script paired with the notion of enduring and steadfast resistance by them and the Palestinian people. The article also underlines the supposedly large number of Hamas supporters and the organization moreover asserts unity as well as the legitimacy of its rule. Further, the article emphasizes that Hamas is willing to extend the truce and that all their military action is only a response to Israeli aggression. In other words, Hamas frames itself as the victim; however, not as a helpless victim, but instead as one that knows to defend itself. It is the notion of the Palestinians as a good-hearted people (only reacting to aggression) with a rebellious character (being unified and steadfast), willing to sacrifice for the greater good. At a more latent level the article conveys that Hamas commits violent acts for the greater good (the nation), which could hardly be debated since the mass rally the article talks about is supposed to imply the large support among the public in Gaza ("Palestinian people are stead", 2008; Oren et al., n.d.).

In other media outlets, like *EI*, the vulnerability script is employed, as well, based on the underlying narrative of the Palestinians who were victimized by the Israeli-Western team of superpowers. There is a lot of finger pointing at Israel as the aggressor that bears responsibility for hunger and general under-supply in the Gaza Strip. Israel is framed as the powerful one whose politicians intend to hurt the Palestinian population (Habeeb, 2008; Almeghari, 2008).

In this section, it was my intention to briefly illustrate how I will go about this exercise and how some Israeli and Palestinian sources commented on the tensions between Gaza and Israel in order to catch the general mood in light of media framing

through narratives. However, in the next section I will start to concern myself with the actual topic of this work: the coverage of the Gaza War itself. In doing so, I will access information from a wider range of sources, including American ones. Yet, before getting involved with the actual frame analysis, the reader will have the chance to learn more about the particular media outlets whose contributions I will analyze. Some of them were already mentioned in the section above. Whenever new outlets appear on the scene, I will clarify some basic facts about them before the analysis.

Outbreak of war

In this section, I will concern myself with media framing in the first days of Israel's 2008/9 military campaign in the Gaza Strip. As mentioned above, the first handful of days was a surprising as well as surprisingly violent time for those involved. It is described as a very decisive air strike in which all key targets could be destroyed. It is moreover reported that on the first day alone 150 targets were hit. In my analysis, I will start off with the U.S. perspective on events and ask how *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* online outlets, two important and opinion-forming newspapers, framed the beginning of the war. Do journalists exhibit a certain bias in terms of narrative structures? Are such structures applied in one way or another in the news coverage on these bloody last days of December 2008 at all? Here I will try to answer these questions, but, first, let's have a look at the political persuasion of these U.S. media outlets. Later, we will also turn to a description of the Israeli and Arab outlets that will play a role in this section about the first days of the war.

According to a survey by Rasmussen Reports, 40% of Americans hold that the *Times* has a political left bias as compared to only 11% who think that this newspaper has a conservative bias. Among liberals, 25% believe in a liberal bias whereas 17% think that the *Times* exhibits a conservative bias. Almost 60% of conservatives would agree that the *Times* is biased in favor of the political left. With respect to *The Washington Post*, a similar yet less clear-cut picture emerges with 30% holding that the *Post* is biased in favor of the left while 16% hold the newspaper is biased in favor of the right. Again, conservatives believe that the *Post* exhibits a liberal bias. In other words, most U.S. citizens perceive both, the *Times* as well as the *Post*, as rather liberal papers, which is most visible in regards to the *Times* ("New York Times", 2007).

Anyway, what does it mean if newspapers appear to have a rather liberal outlook in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and particularly with regard to narrative and mythical value systems? Well, it is important to note that the attitudes of liberals and conservatives in the U.S. are not diametrically opposed concerning the Mideast conflict since within the groups of liberals as well as conservatives the biggest sub-groups in terms of attitude are more sympathetic to Israel than to the Palestinians. Yet, only a minority (37%) of liberals states that their "sympathies [are] more with the Israelis" whereas a clear majority (77%) of conservatives says that about themselves (CNN, 2012). Furthermore, some argue that Israel loses support among American liberals and especially young liberal Jews in the U.S. (Weisberg, 2010; Horing, 2012; "Are young American", 2010). Overall then, support for Israel among Americans seems to be strong even though it can be stated that liberals appear to be less polarized. One could therefore

hypothesize that liberal newspapers like the *Times* and the *Post* may not be anti-Israeli but to a certain extent critical and flexible as for their opinion vis-à-vis the Jewish state and the Palestinians. However, some are convinced that the *Times* and the *Post* are clearly biased in favor of the Palestinians; and still others, like the authors of the 2007 book "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy", Mearsheimer & Walt, come to the conclusion that mainstream media in general adopt pro-Israeli perspectives (Simmons, n.d.; Rennert, 2010; "The Israel Lobby", 2006).

At this point, I also want to provide a brief overview of the character of *Al-Qassam* and *Al-Jazeera*. To begin, *Al-Qassam*, or more precisely the Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades – Information Center, is the official website of the fighting branch of the Hamas organization. In the site's "About Us" (n.d.) section, the organization describes itself as a resistance movement against the "Zionist occupation" and the occupation's "state-sponsored terrorism against the Palestinian people" with the following proclaimed aims:

> 'To contribute in the effort of liberating Palestine and restoring the rights of the Palestinian people under the sacred Islamic teachings of the Holy Quran, the Sunna (traditions) of Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the traditions of Muslims rulers and scholars noted for their piety and dedication'. ("About Us", n.d.)

The organization, which was established in the context of the First Intifada, lists "piety, integrity and steadfastness" as the values of its members and claims that it relies on God and the justice of its struggle ("About Us", n.d.). On the Australian Government's

website on national security and the listing of terrorist organizations, the brigades are depicted as being "specialized in terrorist attacks, assassinations and kidnappings inside Israel" and as aiming at "the unification of Israel and the Palestinian Territories under Islamic rule", which resembles the objectives of Hamas in general (Australian Government, 2012). When getting involved with *Al-Qassam*'s representation of events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one should conduct the analysis in light of the objectives and the ideological character of the Hamas organization and especially its military wing.

The other media outlet which deserves some elaboration at this point is the *Al-Jazeera* website. *Al-Jazeera* is "a Qatar-based independent Arabic satellite channel" (Nisbet, Nisbet, Scheufele & Shanahan, 2004, p. 12) that was founded in 1996 with – as of 2004 – an audience of up to 45 million viewers in the Islamic world and several million in the West. More than any other Arabic media outlet, *Al-Jazeera* represents the new kind of "'liberal commercial television'" (Ayish, 2002 in Nisbet et al., 2004, p. 18) with Western-style journalism in this part of the world. However, scholars point to several significant differences between the work philosophy of *Al-Jazeera* and Western outlets, differences which let this Arabic outlet appear especially interesting in the context of my research. For one, *Al-Jazeera* coverage is considered to be more sensationalist and, concerning matters "'enjoying pan-Arab consensus'" (Ayish, 2002 in Nisbet et al., 2004, pp. 19-20), rather unbalanced and not objective. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is mentioned in this context. In the West and especially in the U.S., the leadership is aware of *Al-Jazeera*'s potential and influence, which is expressed, for instance, with the term "'Al Jazeera Effect'" (Nisbet et al., 2004, p. 16) in the style of the

"CNN effect". That is to say that Al-Jazeera is believed to be able of influencing public opinion and even foreign policies to a certain extent. That is why the U.S. was concerned about of the Qatar-based channel's criticism of the Afghanistan campaign, which was accompanied by hosting Taliban representatives and supporters. *Al-Jazeera* clearly reflects the Arab trend towards more liberal and independent news outlets. However, the channel is a highly controversial phenomenon with regard to alleged anti-Americanism and also concerning its view on the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians (Nisbet et al., 2004). A last point worth mentioning here is that I will concern myself with information published on the English-language *Al-Jazeera* website and not the original Arabic-language one. *Al-Jazeera* English's mission comprises amongst others a "'global south orientation'" whereas the "'Arab perspective'" is more important for *Al-Jazeera* Arabic (Kraidy, 2008, p. 25). Intuitively it makes sense that the English outlet has an internationalist focus since it makes use of the global lingua franca, English. Yet, one professional drop-out from Al-Jazeera English explains that the media outlet began to shift from its cosmopolitan towards a rather Arab standpoint. Further, it appears to be possible that the Arabic outlet exerts a certain pressure on its English counterpart to report in a more Islamic-Middle Eastern way (Nisbet, et al., 2004; Kraidy, 2008).

Before the actual analysis, I want to put *Haaretz, JPost* and *Ynetnews* – the Israeli outlets which the reader will come across in this section – into perspective. According to Dor (2003), *Haaretz* is "the most liberal and critical newspaper in Israel". It is argued that the paper's criticism of Israel during the Second Intifada (or at least the critical coverage by certain reporters) caused them to lose subscribers. It is also argued, though, that the

newspaper moved more to the center ("The Media and the Second Intifada", 2003).

Another noteworthy and related point is one made by other commentators who claim that *Haaretz* is kept alive by a rather narrow segment of Israeli society – liberal secular Jews in the Tel Aviv area – who have a birth rate which is at best moderate. That means that *Haaretz* does not perfectly represent the Israeli mainstream, but most probably a group which will become relatively smaller in the near future. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that the "center-left outlook" of the newspaper, which was en vogue during the peace process in the 1990s, has lost support due to the Al-Aqsa Intifada (Chandler, 2013).

Characterizing *JPost* in terms of political persuasion is fairly challenging. After starting as a left-wing paper in the 1930s, it shifted political preferences several times and can today carefully be characterized as a center- or liberal-right print media outlet ("The Jerusalem Post", n.d.). *Ynetnews* is the online version of *Yedioth Ahronoth* which has one of the highest circulations in Israel and a very successful internet site; it is described as "the country's number-one paper" that gives a voice to left- as well as right-wing commentators. Part of the explanation for this success story could be the fact that *Yedeioth Ahronoth* is said to "emphasize drama and human interest over sophisticated analysis" (Tal, n.d.; "The press in Israel", 2006; Wolfsfeld, 1997, p. 96).

After this attempt to characterize the newspapers whose contributions on the outbreak of war I will investigate, I want to start off by having a closer look at the reporting of U.S. media on the first days of Operation Cast Lead. A day before Israel launched its massive military offensive against Hamas, an article in *The Washington Post* cited then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and former Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni,

both of whom highlight certain parts of the Israeli self-concept. Olmert underlines Israel's strength in his TV speech to the people of Gaza, which reminds you of Israel's aversion against the Diaspora "Other", the weak Jew who could not defend himself as opposed to the strong Rabin-Sharon kind of *sabra* warrior: "'I am telling them now, it may be the last minute, I'm telling them stop it. We are stronger'". Livni's quote "When there's shooting, there's a response. Any state would react that way" can also be interpreted with reference to the Israeli narrative and value system since from the very beginning, the Zionists longed "to be perceived [...] as 'any other nation'" (Porat, 2006, p. 65) and Livni is arguing in this vein (Lavie, 2008).

December 27th: massive air raids on Gaza, hundreds die
    On December 27th 2008, the first day of the Israeli air campaign, El-Khodary & Kershner (2008) as well as El-Khodary & Bronner (2008) write for *The New York Times* about the new Mideast crisis. In both articles Palestinian shock and suffering is framed by a clear disaster script, a concept which is described as "emphasiz[ing] massive destruction and the distant suffering of helpless victims" by Blondheim & Shifman (2009, p. 207). A telling example of the application of this script is a paragraph in El-Khodary & Bronner (2008): "The center of Gaza City was a scene of chaotic horror, with rubble everywhere, sirens wailing, and women shrieking as dozens of mutilated bodies were laid out on the pavement and in the lobby of Shifa Hospital". However, it must be added that in the same article suffering on the Israeli side is mentioned, as well. In El-Khodary & Kreshner (2008), though, you cannot talk of a more or less balanced

representation of events any more, amongst others since individual accounts by Gaza inhabitants (but not Israelis) are included.

In El-Khodary & Bronner (2008) the reader can identify several (radical) aspects of the Palestinian set of narratives. Ismail Haniyeh is cited as saying that Palestine will not be abandoned and that they "will bow only before God". Taken together, these statements imply that Hamas alleges that the Israelis have territorial maximalist intentions, that it is about entire Palestine for them and that it will not be given up. After all, Haniyeh does not assert that Gaza or the West Bank will not be abandoned. Instead, he talks about Palestine as though the Israeli assault were only one expression of the Israelis' enduring attempt to achieve their territorial maximalist objectives; that is, he is "anticipat[ing] the worst from [the] adversary" (Rotberg, 2006, p. 5). It is an example for the collapse of time (one expression of an enduring attempt) and in this case especially space (territorial maximalism) due to the mental consequences of narratives (Strenger, 2011; Rotberg, 2006; Auerbach, n.d.).

Haniyeh's reference to God can be interpreted as an attempt to unite the Palestinian people behind a shared belief, but also as an effort to emphasize that Palestine cannot be given up since it is an Islamic *waqf*, a divine endowment which must be kept. Further, it is reasonable to assume that Haniyeh tried to take their struggle to a higher and more sacred level – the level of heroes, be they "from the Islamic past" or be they contemporary Hamas fighters struggling in the name of God and "under the sacred Islamic teaching of the Holy Quran" (Rowland & Frank, 2011, p. 50; "About Us", n.d.).

Besides that, it could be assumed that the authors of the article framed their content on the basis of Palestinian victimization. They describe how young unemployed men are involuntarily driven into the arms of Hamas police forces and that on the first day of Operation Cast Lead the heaviest casualties were reported at a police ceremony. This conveys the rather latent message that Palestinian violence is merely a justified reaction to the periodic killing of innocents, which in turn creates further Hamas resistance fighters:

> But with work here increasingly scarce because of an international embargo on Hamas, young men are tempted by the steady work of the police force without necessarily fully accepting the Hamas ideology. One of the biggest tolls on Saturday was at a police cadet graduation ceremony in which 15 people were killed. (El-Khodary & Bronner, 2008)

In contrast to that, the Pear (2008) article in *The New York Times* of the same day about the U.S. administration's position approaches the issue at the other end of the continuum and describes Hamas as responsible for the violence and, most importantly, calls them "thugs" and "terrorists". Describing Palestinian militants as terrorists and criminals as opposed to freedom fighters does not only delegitimize them, but dehumanizes them, as well. That again is best understood in light of Bar-On & Adwan's statement that "[the Israeli and Palestinian] narratives morally exclude each other and devalue and dehumanize their enemy's narrative" (2006, p. 206); and indeed a terrorist or thug is certainly more readily perceived as inhuman and immoral than the heroic Islamic warrior who fights the crusader-like imperialists like Salah ad-Din once did.

The information office of the Qassam Brigades published a rather plain time line of events in which only some parts of the terminology are worth noting. For one, not surprisingly, Hamas talks of the "Zionist entity" instead of Israel and describes its targets as Zionist, which allows avoiding specifications regarding the military or rather civilian nature of its rocket targets. In this formulation, one may sense an attempt to dehumanize the enemy, which is not unusual in the context of conflict and related conflict narratives. Calling the "Other" Zionists reduces them to an ideology or a political agenda as much as calling the "Other" terrorists reduces them to an allegedly evil aspect of their behavior ("Under bad humanitarian", 2008; Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006).

The *Al-Jazeera* report on that day refrains from the ideologically charged Hamas language which implies dismissal of Israel's right to exist. However, one can tell that the report describing how the IAF wreaks havoc employs a vulnerability script ("Israel launched air attacks across the *besieged* Gaza Strip", my emphasis) whereas Hamas people who are cited in the article tend to employ a power script ("our resolve cannot be dented and cannot be shaken. We will continue our struggle with absolute strength and steadfastness"). This statement is similar to the one published on the *Al-Qassam* website two days before, in which steadfastness was underlined as well ("Hundreds die", 2008; Blondheim & Shifman, 2009).

After that we had a look at the interpretation and framing efforts in the American and Arab/Palestinian media landscape, let us turn to Israeli media. In *Haaretz*, Stern (2008) describes international reactions to the first wave of attacks on December 27th. In light of my research topic, some particular Arab reactions are especially insightful. In this

article, Hamas seems to massively apply a power script by constantly underlining that they are well-prepared and fearless. The wording of the cited Hamas members has a clearly ideological-fundamentalist character which adds to the power script: "'Hamas will continue the resistance until the last drop of blood'". It is an interesting statement in that the Hamas representative decides to use the word "blood". Blood is a mighty symbol of demonic power and aggression; mighty enough to cause Jews and Christians to create a blood taboo. Blood is moreover connoted with the loss of inhibitions, violence and cruelty (a term which stems from the Latin word *cruor* which means blood separated from body, in contrast to *sanguis*) (Verplaetse, 2009). Probably, the roots of blood symbolism are very old, reaching back to the days in which humans (through technology) were finally becoming predators after a long time of being predated by animals themselves. One author puts it this way and relates blood rites to the act of war:

> Rituals of blood sacrifice both celebrate and terrifyingly reenact the human transition from prey to predator, and so, I will argue, does war. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the case of wars undertaken for the stated purpose of initiating young men into the *male warrior-predator role*" (Ehrenreich, 1997 in MacNair, 2003, p. 24, my emphasis).

In this description, the link between blood and manhood (or rather the fighter facet of manhood) is obviously most interesting. The Hamas fighter is initiated into battle as the only way for Palestinians to "protect themselves [against 'evil-doers'] and regain their identity" (Rowland & Frank, 2011, p. 50). Of course, blood is also a symbol of life,

implying that the one who fights "to the last drop of blood" gives his life and becomes a martyr or *shahid*[20] (Verplaetse, 2009; Lewis, 2004).

Further, there is an entelechial dimension since the chosen wording reflects a dogmatic believe system which encourages to go all the way, even to "'the last drop of blood'". Obviously, Hamas underlines its worrier ethos by calling its struggle "resistance" (as opposed to the illegitimate "terrorism" which is frequently used by American and Israeli sources) and by showing that it is a sacred, a holy fight, even a *jihad*, for which the warrior shall go to the violent extremes in the name of the common cause (Rowland & Frank, 2011).

A resistance can be violent and accompanied by much bloodshed without automatically losing the calming appearance of legitimacy. That is different, however, in the case of terrorism, which is why "terror" is a term applied to discredit the opponent, also in the case of Hamas: "[T]he day these followers [of other religions, e.g. the Jews] should take over there will be nothing but carnage, displacement and terror". Of course, it is hard to frame terrorism as a holy war whereas Hamas does not see a challenge in combining resistance and *jihad* as expressed in its charter's 33rd article ("Hamas Covenant, 1988", 2008).

In the same newspaper article, the statement of an Islamic Jihad representative is quoted, in which at least a flavor of the jihadist ethos is reflected: "'All fighters are ordered to respond to the Israeli slaughter'". First of all, the Israeli self-defense narrative

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[20] *shahid* (شـــهيد) is an Arabic term which describes a person that endured *shahada*, that is martyrdom, and "met death while struggling in any licit and noble pursuit during one's mundane existence on earth". The term is frequently translated as "martyr" and/or "witness". One meaning of *shahid* is the description of someone who becomes a martyr in military *jihad* (Afsaruddin, 2010, p. 40; Lewis, 2004).

with the notion of the Israeli army as an especially moral one is dismissed from the outset by using the term "slaughter". Related examples in this article are the comments of the Lebanese Prime Minister and the head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, both of whom call Israel's military actions "massacres" and "criminal". Further, the general call to arms for all "fighters" by the Islamic Jihad organization reminds of the defensive *jihad*, in which all Muslims fit for action have to participate. In classical Islamic legal doctrine, a distinction is made between defensive *jihad* and offensive *jihad*, the latter being a duty for the entire *ummah* whereas the former is the responsibility of "[a]ll fighters" (Auerbach, n.d.; Lewis, 2004).

I did not find an insightful *JPost* article in this context. However, there is a 27th December *Yetnetnews* article which is worth an analysis due to the speech act of Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak (Somfalvi, 2008): "'I don't want to mislead anyone. This won't be easy and it won't be short, but we must be determined,' [Barak] added. 'The time has come to act. We do not go to this clash gladly, but neither are we afraid of it. We will not let terrorists hurt our citizens or soldiers'". The Israeli minister uses the term "terrorist" readily as opposed to resistance or freedom fighter. Further, he highlights the need to "be determined", which is a reference to the "societal beliefs [which] motivated the members of Israeli Jewish society to fight for their goals and to *endure the stresses, sacrifices, and costs of intractable conflict*" (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006, p. 10, my emphasis). The part of the quote which stresses that Israelis "'do not go to this clash gladly, but neither are [they] afraid of it'" emphasizes the belief and value that the Israeli army is "'the most ethical in the world'" (Jawad, 2006, p. 73) and that Israelis are "moral

and humane" (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006, p. 12). In light of this, it is worth having

another look at Israel's Declaration of Independence where it is pushed forward that the

Jewish people are "loving peace". However, it is also underlined that they are not fearful,

which is in line with the idea of the strong and brave Israeli fighter who is willing to

defend and deter. The 1948 declaration states that the Jewish pioneers in Palestine love

peace "but know[] how to defend [themselves]" (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

Also Barak's comment that Israel will not accept that its citizens are attacked must be

seen in light of this ideal (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; Strenger, 2011).

December 30th: civilian casualties on both sides, massive Israeli hits against Gaza ministry buildings

According to BBC's timeline of the Gaza War, on December 30th several civilians

were killed in Gaza as well as in Israel; and Hamas shot deeper into Israeli territory than

ever before while the IAF hit a number of target buildings in the Gaza Strip ("Gaza

crisis", 2009). On the same day, a commentator in *The New York Times* suggests that

Israel does not break the resistance ethos through its military campaign but actually

strengthens it in that people turn their back to agreement solutions and support Hamas,

"the Palestinians' principal resistance" (Farrell, 2008). It is even depicted how

Palestinians express admiration for Hamas since it challenges the superpower Israel. It is

clear that the author seems to believe that Hamas' ethos of continued resistance against

the "Zionist entity" is being highlighted and supported not despite but rather because of

Operation Cast Lead. In order to convey the message, the writer makes use of statements

by Palestinians on the street like "'I am originally Fatah and my voice will always be

Fatah. But Hamas is resisting and we are a nation under occupation'" (Farrell, 2008).

In another article, which was published by the *Times* on that same day, the authors employ a vulnerability script; however, they portray the vulnerability on both sides in a fairly balanced fashion. Bronner & El-Khodary (2008) continue Farrell's point regarding Hamas to a certain extent in that they assume the organization tries to portray "its fighters as martyrs in a continuing battle". This could reflect their understanding that in the value system of Hamas, the struggle against Israel is a divine duty and a part of a holy war that must be fought continuously until the goal is achieved. In the Hamas Charter, the organization expresses this aim as follows: "the Islamic Resistance Movement aspires to the realisation of Allah's promise, no matter how long that should take" ("Hamas Covenant, 1988", 2008). As mentioned earlier in this text, the notion of the continuity of the struggle must be put in the correct historical perspective – which is an enormously broad one. The *jihad* in which Hamas finds itself is not exactly a battle which began when the State of Israel was created, but much rather when the religion of Islam was founded. That in mind, it makes more sense to read the reference to Salah ad-Din in the organization's 1988 Charter about Muslims "fighting under the leadership of Salah ed-Din al-Ayyubi. They fought for almost twenty years and at the end the Crusaders were defeated and Palestine was liberated". In the eyes of Hamas, Israel is the modern imperialist equivalent of the crusaders; and so Hamas believes that the way Salah ad-Din fought against the crusaders "is the only way to liberate Palestine. There is no doubt about the testimony of history" ("Hamas Covenant, 1988", 2008; Lewis, 2004).

In contrast to the two previous articles, which were comparably balanced and in which the writers' attitudes are not always clearly detectable, the December 30th *Times*

article by Morris (2008) is virtually a piece of jewelry when it comes to narratives. In this writing, Morris represents the *Weltanschauung* of hawkish, right-wing, security-focused Revisionists. At least in his article, Morris interprets the world as a hostile place in which security for the Jews can only be achieved through an uncompromising independence-focused stance. He frames the current military escalation by putting it in the broader context of existential threat. Everyone familiar with Israeli history knows that the writer makes a (rhetorically) smart step when he introduces the article by drawing a parallel between the brief time period before the Six Day War, when Israelis feared for their mere existence, and the contemporary threat backdrop of the Jewish state, of which Gaza is only one expression, as the author seems to see it: "Israelis feel that the walls -- and history -- are closing in on their 60-year-old state, much as they felt in early June 1967".

In Volkan's (1998) terminology, these six days in June 1967, in which Israel conquered the Golan Heights, entire Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula, are a Chosen Glory for Israelis. They defeated the Arab armies which seemed to threaten and encircle them. However, the more important point here is that the Six Day War took place against the background of an economic crisis, pessimism and an emigration movement (the so-called *yordim*[21] who left the country). That is why this war is more than "only" a huge military success. After tough years of *fedayeen*[22] infiltrations, constant border clashes with Syria, the creation of a defense pact between Jordan, Egypt

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[21] *yordim* (יורדים) is a Hebrew term used for those emigrating from Israel.

[22] *fedayeen* (الفــــدائيين) is an Arabic term which goes back to the medieval Mideastern Assassins and means "[those] who [are] prepared to sacrifice for the cause" (einer, der bereit ist, sein Leben für die Sache zu opfern) (Lewis, 2004, p. 157, my translation). The term was later used to describe terrorist assaults on Israel (Lewis, 2004).

and Syria, President Gamal Abd El-Nasser's aggressive rhetoric, the closure of the Strait of Tiran by the latter and finally the mobilization of Egyptian troops – after all these challenging events, the Six Day War "brought about a wave of euphoria and messianic exhilaration" (Kamrava, 2005; Bar-On, 2006, p. 161). These incredibly shaping six days had the potential to make Israelis feel that they tore down "the walls [that were] closing in on their [...] state" (Morris, 2008).

The excitement caused by the Six Day War and allegedly by the other Israeli-Arab wars as well, can be approached in psychological terms. Pioneer psychologist William James identified certain "needs [which] make war attractive" (MacNair, 2003, p. 19). Pride and satisfaction, which derive from helping to achieve the objectives of one's group, as well as war's ability to give meaning to your life, are the first two needs. They might remind the reader of Terror Management Theory outlined earlier in this work. That is how war can be a way to defend one's ego against the terrorizing certainty of demise (MacNair, 2003; Gilovich et al., 2006). Additionally, war satisfies the need to "redirect[] anxieties toward a more comfortable target"; it furthers group cohesion due to a common threat; it enables you to demonstrate the possession of values like self-sacrifice for the greater good and discipline; and, last but not least, it heralds the end of uncertainty "when war hysteria arrives" (MacNair, 2003, p. 20). It is evident how these needs play an important role universally, but especially in the case of the Israeli nation. The history of the Jewish state is full of anxiety, uncertainty and unsettled group dynamics: the fear of annihilation (accelerated through the Holocaust), the grave uncertainty before the Six Day War and, of course, the enormous challenge to form a community, a real society and

national group, out of immigrants from literally all over the world whose only common ground was the Jewish religion. With that in mind, back to Morris:

Morris (2008) puts Operation Cast Lead in the same light spot as the decisive war and the "euphoria and messianic exhilaration" brought about by the "'messianic soldier'" of 1967 (Bar-On, 2006, p. 161). Still, the threat scenery is not confined to the Six Day War. The author also remarks that the Arabs "have never truly accepted the legitimacy of Israel's creation and continue to oppose its existence", which is a very significant matter in the context of Israeli narratives. Tessler (2006) describes it this way: "The story many Israelis tell [, their national narrative,] [...] is that Zionist leaders have consistently pursued peace, whereas Arabs have always been determined to destroy to the Jewish state [sic]" (p. 177). The three No's of Khartoum by Arab leaders after the Six Day War – "no to peace, no to recognition, no to negotiation" (p. 177) – are a famous example that is applied to highlight this alleged intransigence. It is this belief, which is an important part of Israel's narrative framework, in which the old fear of annihilation and the dehumanization or rather demonization of the "Other" come together: There is not only the possibility that we will be annihilated, no, the "Other" does pursue our annihilation in the same way that the Nazis, the Greeks, the Romans and all the other villains wanted to destroy us.

As for this kind of phenomena, MacNair (2003) explains on the basis of Lawrence LeShan's (1992) work that there is a qualitative difference between the "realistic understanding of how the world operates" (p. 20) during peacetime and the mythic mode of wartime. One of the mythic wartime perceptions, which enable us to understand

Israel's belief in Arab intransigence better, is the perception that "*Good* and *Evil* are reduced to *Us* and *Them*, with no bystanders. Opinions on crucial issues are wholly right or wrong". In this vein, there must be either no intransigence or total intransigence (MacNair, 2003, p. 21; Tessler, 2006).

Morris' (2008) comment reads like a narrative list. The next point he makes is that Western support for Israel decreases while the power of its Arab enemies is increasing. Here, two important facets of the Israeli narrative are combined. For one, there is the widely held idea that when it comes down to it, Israel will stand alone. Expressed in figures, "56 percent of Jewish Israelis subscribed to the view that the 'whole world is against us'" (Inbar, 2013). Besides the "extensive media coverage of the April 2002 'Jenin massacre' fabrications, the infamous Goldstone report of September 2009, and the Gaza 'Freedom Flotilla' of May 2010", (Inbar, 2013) this conviction may derive from the fact that the allies refrained from bombing the death camp in Auschwitz; that in 1967 U.N. General-Secretary U Thant backed down and withdrew the blue helmets from Sinai when Nasser demanded it; and that Europe did not support Israel when Egypt and Syria invaded in 1973 because of the OPEC's oil weapon. The notion that Israel cannot and therefore must not rely on anyone is reflected in the societal conviction that "Israel should not rely on help from foreign military forces or be dependant on international public opinion or the views of foreign leaders and international organizations (e.g., the UN)" (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006, p. 11; Kamrava, 2005; Bushinsky, 2012). Second, there is the abovementioned David versus Goliath notion in that Israel may become weaker (without support) while the enemies encircling it grow in strength (Jawad, 2006). That is

to say, Morris (2008) frames Israel's situation as being a vulnerable state surrounded by rising aggressors which has to defend itself alone. Even though it is a risky undertaking to analyze what remains unmentioned in a text, it should be noted that, first, Morris (2008) does point to "Iran [which] is frantically advancing its nuclear project" while he does not directly address the (widely assumed) advanced stadium of Israel's military nuclear project. As a matter of fact, the author does highlight that, in his eyes, "the Arab states are increasingly powerful and assertive" whereas he does not make any mention of, to give just one example, the by far superior equipment of Israel's air force. It is therefore not far-fetched to assume that Morris (2008) left certain basic military facts unsaid, probably in order to make the David and Goliath frame look more authentic.

Later in the *Times* article, Morris (2008) narrows in on the current Gaza crisis. He describes Hamas as the party which frequently violated and later unilaterally ended the ceasefire whereas Israel is presented as the party to the conflict which only reacted to the villain's actions. Even though the author's allegations are not incorrect, they cast light only on a small part of the entire context. For instance, the killing of six gunmen of Hamas by Israel as well as Hamas' accusation that Israel did not deliver humanitarian aid, as agreed, are not mentioned in the article (Cordesman, 2009).

The writer makes a very telling point at the end of the article when he comments on the risks posed by the high birth rate of the Arab population within the Jewish state. Remaining loyal to his approach, he frames this issue in terms of warfare and annihilation: "Demography, if not Arab victory in battle, offers the recipe for such a dissolution [of Israel]" (Morris, 2008). Besides that, such as in the previous paragraph, it

is more noteworthy what Morris (2008) does not say than what he actually says. In this case, for instance, he refers to the Arab population as a demographic threat while leaving out Israel's ultra-orthodox community, which, first, experiences a strong population growth since the average ultra-orthodox woman gets 6.5 children and, second, whose unwillingness to participate in Israel's economic and military life is considered a problem by many mainstream Israelis, as illustrated by the following Israeli joke: "[I]n Israel there is a division of labor: one third of the populace pays the taxes, one third serves in the military, and one third upholds the law; the trouble is that it is always the same third" (Baratz, 2011; Jeffay, 2011).

Concerning U.S. media, *The Washington Post* did also publish some interesting articles on that day. In light of Morris' (2008) thoughts, it is most interesting to continue with an article by Witte & Raghavan (2008), in which a say is given to Israeli citizens and officials, one of which is the IDF spokesperson, Avital Leibovich. The Israeli spokeswoman says that "Hamas has used ostensibly civilian operations as a cover for military activities" and that "[a]nything affiliated with Hamas is a legitimate target". What comes to the fore in this statement? First of all, it must be noted that this is an official statement by the State of Israel, which is why it is fair to assume that it expresses the actual viewpoint of the Israeli government (or at least the viewpoint it wishes to communicate to outsiders). Further, it is eye-catching how Hamas is portrayed in line with the idea that "the enemy is evil. It lies. Interaction is not possible. Only force can settle the matter". This notion is described in LeShan's (1992 in MacNair, 2003, p. 21) framework on the mythic wartime mode of societies. In Leibovich's statement, it

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becomes evident that Hamas as a whole *must* be evil. In the heat of battle it is a monolithic unit with no subdivisions. The spokeswoman expresses that the entire organization (and even everything somehow related to it) is a legitimate target and that every activity which is not obviously military is automatically assumed to be not more than camouflage in the name of violence. This view is not too surprising since, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, "*Good* and *Evil* are reduced to *Us* and *Them*" and "*We* and *They* are qualitatively different" are basic suppositions (MacNair, 2003, p. 21). It is obvious that Israel (or rather its representatives) considers itself as the hero-part in the hero-villain duet since in line with its defense-of-a-victimized-people narrative it is acting in a moral way face-to-face with an immoral counterpart that seeks the destruction of the Jewish state.

However, these assumptions and stances are reflected in some Palestinian statements, too. Sha'ath, a representative of the university which was targeted by Israel, highlights that the Jewish state tries "to ruin Palestinian culture, not just Hamas infrastructure" and asserts that "'[t]his attack shows *the real face* of Israel'" (Witte & Raghavan, 2008, my emphasis). Sha'ath seems convinced that Israel is not primarily defending itself, but has vicious motives instead. It is a logic very similar to the one prevalent in the Israeli spokeswoman's statements before. Furthermore, the idea of annihilation resonates in Sha'ath's wording since he assumes the Israelis intended to destroy the Palestinian culture, which is a common allegation in this conflict. Sha'ath's speech act about "the real face of Israel" is very telling, as well. In his wording, the notion that "[t]he enemy is evil [and] *lies*" is reflected (MacNair, 2003, p. 21, my

emphasis). That again is in line with the Palestinian narrative which, in essence, assumes that the Israelis are liars, that they deceived and betrayed them from the very beginning together with Western colonial powers[23]. The real face is therefore the face of the liar (Adwan & Bar-On, 2003).

Another article published in the *Post* on that day, is a very good example for the application of a vulnerability script supported by many personal account elements (Blondheim & Shifman, 2009). Raghavan & Kareem (2008) provide the reader with the story of a Gazan family that lost 5 daughters in an Israeli airstrike during the military operation. The text is based on very dramatic and moving quotes by family members as well as visual descriptions. A case in point is the line "'I've lost five sisters,' Iman, 16, said at a relative's house Monday evening, her soft voice fading. Tears slid down her face". Another example is the description of the family father: "Bruises covered his face. His head was wrapped in a bandage. He could barely walk". However, in terms of application of narratives, this article becomes attention-grabbing for some additional reasons: the focus on religion and family, two core values of the Palestinian value system. For instance, the textbooks produced for Palestinian school children emphasize "religion, family, and national identity" (Brown, 2006, p. 233). At one point in Raghavan & Kareem's (2008) article, it is depicted in detail how the parents bring their children to bed:

> At 10 p.m. Sunday, Samira said goodnight to her seven daughters. They all slept
>
> in the same bedroom in the tiny house without electricity in this sprawling refugee

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[23] See Balfour Declaration, Sykes-Picot Agreement and Weizmann's assurance to the Arabs that forcing them out was not the plan (Adwan & Bar-On, 2003).

camp. Before she left the room, she doused the kerosene lamp. "I was worried that

an airstrike would rattle the house and the lamp would fall and burn down the

room," Samira said. Then she and her husband, Anwar, took their son,

Muhammed, and baby daughter, Bara, to their room.

This paragraph highlights that the people in the article are a real family with a real family

life and it conveys the idea of normalcy, a normalcy which is suddenly interrupted by

"the deadliest wave of attacks in Gaza since [the occupation began]". The religion

element comes in at several points during the text. For one, it is mentioned how the

family father asks his wife to pray the prayer Muslims say before they die, the *shehada*. It

is moreover noted that the Israelis targeted the mosque besides the family's house and

that they had a false sense of security, assuming the Israelis would refrain from bombing

the mosque. Last but not least, one of the concluding sentences in the *Post* article goes

"In his daughters' room, he found a framed verse from the Koran. It read: 'Nothing will

happen to us but the things that God wrought for us'". Be it deliberate or not, the authors

give an account of unprecedented Israeli force targeting Palestinian core values in the

context of a vulnerable and finally severely harmed family.

As for the coverage of the Gaza War on December 30th, I could retrieve only a

single *Al-Jazeera* article. This contribution does not offer a lot of new insights concerning

Palestinian or Israeli narratives. First of all, it repeats much of the basic information you

find in many articles about this or the previous day: that Ehud Barak declared "'all-out

war'" on Hamas which might be expanded and deepened if necessary, that there have

been 345 Palestinian fatalities and that Israel is creating a "'closed military zone'"

("Israel in all-out war", 2008). *Al-Qassam* appears to be quite silent on that day, as well. In *EI*, which I mentioned above, there is an article about the connection between domestic Israeli politics, first of all the coming elections, and the outbreak of war in Gaza (Cook, 2008). Without digressing too much, I want to give some information about *EI* as a news source in addition to what was mentioned earlier. In what the outlet says about itself, a strong notion of independence, recognition and engagement for the Palestinian course is prevalent:

> The Electronic Intifada is an independent online news publication and educational resource focusing on Palestine, its people, politics, culture and place in the world. Founded in 2001, The Electronic Intifada has won awards and earned widespread recognition for publishing original, high-quality news and analysis, and first-person accounts and reviews. The Electronic Intifada's writers and reporters include Palestinians and others living inside Palestine and everywhere else that news about Palestine and Palestinians is made. ("About The Electronic Intifada", n.d.)

Even though the sources referred to earlier portray *EI* as reliable and underline its quality, there are also voices claiming *EI*'s strong bias: "True, Web sites like Electronic Intifada do not constitute cyberterrorism; instead, cyberpropaganda is a more appropriate term" (Sedan, 2001). The December 30th article in *EI*, however, simply analyses Operation Cast Lead in terms of the calculus of politicians in Israel's domestic arena. It is not exactly a journalistic contribution that overflows from myths and worldviews. Still, at one point Cook (2008) does not miss to cite a representative of a Jerusalem-based institution who

claims that "'all Israeli leaders are competing over who is the toughest and who is ready to kill more'". In this statement, the demonizing aspect of group conflict and accompanying group perceptions, which was illustrated in the previous paragraphs, resonates quite evidently.

As regards the Palestinian and Arab side of media coverage, the most important contribution to my narrative analysis appeared in *The Palestine Chronicle* on that day. *The Palestine Chronicle* is a U.S.-based online newspaper that describes itself as an independent news outlet "focused on Palestine, Israel and the Middle East region" that draws attention to topics related to "human rights, national struggles, freedom and democracy". It further claims not to advocate particular political agendas. According to the online newspaper's website, MIT's Noam Chomsky depicts it as "trustworthy and reliable" ("About The Palestine Chronicle", n.d.; "Palestinian News Sites", n.d.). Obviously, the line between U.S. and Palestinian media is blurred in the case of the *Chronicle*. Even though it is not strictly in compliance with the mode of analysis I chose, I decided to incorporate the *Chronicle* since its articles contribute clearly to the better understanding of narratives. I do not want to deny the reader these insights which are the major focus of this academic work.

In a *Chronicle* article by Miles (2008), first, the writer underlines the complicity of Western powers and Israel as well as Israel's evil character, which is later highlighted by an attempt to compare Israel and especially its handling of the Gaza issue with certain aspects of Nazi Germany's atrocities. Some of these and other arguments applied by Miles (2008) are recurrent in other articles published in the same newspaper. Miles

(2008) appears to be keen on emphasizing how Israel and the Western powers are similar and even in cahoots with each other: "Those alarmed governments from the west try to salve their complicity in the Israeli atrocities". At another point, the writer expresses his disbelief of the sorrow "'Israeli politicians expressed'" about the civilian death toll and compares it to the alleged indifference of the U.S. about its operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. It almost looks like an attempt to frame the U.S. as the Great Satan (a concept based on Ayatollah Khomeini) and Israel as the Little Satan. Even though the author does not deliver evidence for his accusation of indifference, he seems to automatically presume this evil trait as though it was a fact which is out of the question. In line with LeShan's (1992 in MacNair, 2003) framework of "Mythic Perception of Reality" during wartimes, the U.S. and Israel are assumed to be evil since "*They* act from a wish for power" and things are "evil when *They* do them", which is why "*They* are the villains" (p. 21). It comes across as an effort of Satanization because of the believed inherence of this evil. The writer "envision[s] [the] opponent as a superhuman foe, a cosmic enemy" (Juergensmeyer, 2003, p. 186; Lewis, 2004). I understand that for most people my proposed interpretation may seem fairly far-fetched. However, I do not hold the aforementioned opinions only because of the author's disbelief of Israel's expressed sorrow and the comparison with the U.S., but also due to additional statements in the same article. It is very telling, for instance, that Miles (2008) suggests that Israel might, "if need be", make use of nuclear weapons "reserved for neighbouring Arab states". The word choice "reserved for" could imply rather aggressive intentions, perhaps even a mass murder to come, on which the Israelis already decided. The writer also compares the

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situation of the Gaza Strip with the Warsaw Ghetto, justifying this claim by arguing that in both cases a particular ethnic group is "surrounded by a superior and hostile military" which, also in both cases, is up for ethnic cleansing. Even though I see that an objective analysis of these statements is almost impossible, I want to add to the reader's own thoughts that it is highly debatable whether one should equate an occupying force with a genocidal one (that is, Nazi Germany's army) and if it is convincing to call Hitler Germany's actions vis-à-vis the Jews and other minority groups ethnic cleansing rather than a full-blown and large-scale genocide in which millions were systematically killed and not, for example, expelled. Before this backdrop, applying Juergensmeyer's (2003) concept of Satanization does not appear to be that implausible.

Furthermore, Miles (2008) launches an attack on certain aspects of the Israeli narrative in an unconcealed fashion. For one, the author questions the Jews' victimhood, not so much in regards to events like the Warsaw Ghetto, but much rather concerning the Israelis vis-à-vis the Palestinians. In the article it is claimed that the Jews were victims turned perpetrators even though their narrative still does not embrace this evident change. The writer also mentions a "desire of the Jewish people to claim all of the land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River as Eretz Israel" whereby "Eretz Israel" adds a religious connotation to a statement that, as a whole, might remind the reader of the territorial maximalist Revisionist ideology proposed by Begin and others in the Israeli political right (Rowland & Frank, 2011). Miles (2008) concludes with the pessimistic evaluation that after the operation in Gaza has lost its newsworthiness, it will be forgotten and neglected. That, to come to an own conclusion with this interpretation-worthy article,

reflects the notion that the international community ignores Palestinian issues, which is a strong allegation in the Palestinian narrative. For example, one proposed reason for the outbreak of the First Intifada is the indifference of Arabic and international actors toward the Palestinian issue. Interestingly enough, a very similar notion can be found on the Israeli side, as was mentioned earlier. Israelis as well as Palestinian seem to share the belief that, at the end of the day, they stand alone. (Adwan & Bar-On, 2003; Inbar, 2013).

Even though other articles in the *Chronicle* facilitate interesting ways of narrative interpretation, as well, I will restrict my analysis to the most significant aspects and recurrent themes. An article by Khodr (2008) opens with the words "Day Four of the Gaza Genocide", which can be interpreted better in light of Miles' (2008) very similar attempt to delegitimize Israel's self-defense and victimhood narrative by turning Jewish history against the Jews, for instance by framing Israel as the genocidal perpetrator (Rowland & Frank, 2011). In the following, Khodr (2008) claims that the Israel lobby in the U.S. provides Western opinion and agenda formers with justifications and related speech acts like "1.To teach them a lesson to be quiet and not resist Israel's militarism. 2. Remove terrorist regimes and establish pro democracy, i.e. Pro Israel, regimes. 3. Kill enough civilians to cause them to overthrow existing regimes. 4. And lastly, Israel has the right to defend itself". By providing this list, Khodr (2008) refers to the work of Mearsheimer & Walt about AIPAC and tackles the security part of Israel's narrative ("right to self-defense" and "teach them a lesson"); the war on terror frame which arose after September 11 ("Remove terrorist regimes"); and Israel's self-image of a good and peace-loving people ("Kill enough civilians") as expressed in Bar-Tal & Salomon's

(2006) elaboration: "The immigrants bought land from Arab landowners to build Jewish settlements with the will to live peacefully beside Arabs" (p. 8).

Israel's right to self-defense is a highly recurrent theme in the national narrative's set of justifications. Comparably significant is the idea of deterrence through retaliation, which was most famously pushed and implemented by Ariel Sharon and his Unit 101 in the 1950s (Hefez & Blum, 2006). As a matter of fact, Israel was also not spared by the war on terror frame mentioned above, as expressed by former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's words "'Everyone has his own Bin Laden. Arafat is our Bin Laden'" (Whitaker, 2001). What comes to the fore in the phrase "Kill enough civilians" is the alleged ruthlessness of Israel – or Israel's "real face" (Witte & Raghavan, 2008) – which is also expressed in Miles's (2008) earlier comments about Israeli indifference towards civilian casualties.

Such as in Miles (2008), also in Khodr (2008) one finds the alleged U.S.-Israel link which has a clear negative connotation. Israel's narrative of self-defense for security is again attacked when Khodr (2008) equates the speech act of "self-defense" with "massacre Gazans until Hamas is eliminated". A last point I want to highlight is Khodr's (2008) opinion that the "media adopts Israel's narrative" which, in his eyes, "den[ies] the humanity and worth of Palestinians". In this statement, the idea of conflict narratives as a zero-sum game comes to the fore, in which the identity and narrative of one group "delegitimizes the opponent" and that "acceptance of the other identity would negate [the own group's] case and identity" (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006, pp. 3-4, 8).

In a third article published in *The Palestine Chronicle*, Cruz (2008) opens with a reference to the three No's of Khartoum by writing about the Jewish state's "no to the right of return, no to recognition of the historic and political rights of the Palestinians in Jerusalem, no to the dismantling of settlements, no to a sovereign Palestinian State". Precisely as parts of the Israeli narrative, i.e. the Holocaust, were turned against Israel in the two previous articles, Cruz (2008) uses another aspect of the narrative – the belief in Arab intransigence – against Israel. It is a recurrent strategic-rhetoric device (Tessler, 2006). While some might argue that Miles' (2008) comparisons of Nazis and Israelis went pretty far already, Cruz (2008) applies the terms "21st century nazis: the Zionists", "[t]he massacre of Gaza is self-evident proof of the new SS: Zionist soldiers" and "[w]e are faced with a Vichy-style West Bank regime, with Abbas as its Pétain". The author does not only satanize Israel, i.e. its actions in Gaza, by placing it on the same footing with Nazi Germany, which often symbolizes total and pure evil, but he also launches a verbal strike against the Arab leadership. Arab leaders are often portrayed as Western marionettes and are presented as being responsible (besides the British) for the Arab defeat within the Palestinian narrative (Lewis, 2004; Adwan & Bar-On, 2003).

Before concerning myself with Israeli news on that day, I want to draw attention to the fact that the three previous articles were not published in media outlets comparable to the *Times*, the *Post* or the Israeli sources I use. The *Chronicle* is U.S- and not Palestine-based. Further, it is an online newspaper and not the online version of a traditional elite print version newspaper. The *Chronicle* is not as prestigious and influential as other outlets which I use for my analysis. That is to say that the presented

articles from the *Chronicle* as well as my interpretation of the latter should be seen in this light. Now, let us address the Israeli perspective.

In *Haaretz* archives you find a large amount of news articles published on December 30th. Of course, I will not be able to analyze all of them or at least to pick articles which appear to be representative of the found sample. However, I chose to have a closer look at those articles which add something to the work already done in this dissertation. Yet, it must be acknowledged that the choice I make is subjective and does not reflect the general persuasion of the newspaper.

First, it should be noted that the general impression which the articles of that day convey is that a certain war phase comes to an end, which is why the coverage of the following days will be analyzed under a new heading. The best example is a *Haaretz* article by Benn (2008) who points to the fact that the air operation's potential is exhausted and leaders have to make decisions about how to go on and especially for how long. Besides these analytical and supposedly objective contributions, there are several articles in which opinions are expressed and narrative structures resonate.

To begin, *Haaretz* published an article by the famous Israeli writer David Grossman, who lost his son in the 2006 Lebanon War. Grossman (2008) asks whether Israelis became "too imprisoned in the familiar ceremony of war". By using the term "imprisoned", the writer does not imply guilt. It is a relatively passive word. However, "imprisoned" has a high efficacy since it highlights how dramatically opportunities and flexibility are limited and implies that an escape might be necessary. More importantly, Grossman underlines that going to war became a ceremonial element of Israel's

normalcy. Even though Grossman does not frame his argument as drastically, it is not very far from Rouhana's (2006) idea that "Zionism's encounter with Palestinians has created the basis of an Israeli *culture of force* against Arabs that, together with continued Palestinian resistance, is capable of bringing Zionism to its utmost extreme – committing crimes against humanity" (p. 132, my emphasis). Rouhana's (2006) "culture of force" is a concept not too distant from Grossman's (2008) "familiar ceremony of war". Both imply (in a more or less radical way) that violence became part of Israel's mode of life – and probably its narrative since a mode of life must be built on explanation and justification. Rouhana (2006) proposes the notion of "'Arabs understand only the language of force'" (p. 123) as the part of Israel's discourse congenial to this mode. Grossman (2008) further suggests that his country should try to break out of the "maelstrom of violence and destruction" in which "Israel will strike Hamas, it will strike and be struck, strike and be struck". What sounds like a simple and not very far-fetched suggestion is actually an approach which is clearly in contradiction to the conflict-related parts of the Israeli set of explanations and justifications. These parts do certainly not include "turn the other cheek", but much rather "eye for an eye" notions related to the concept of deterrence and a self-image of strength and determination. It is also noteworthy how Grossman underlines Israel's power by stating that "Israel's strength is almost limitless", which is why the country should be aware of its actions and always question their proportionality. The author applies the idea of responsibility that arises from great strength. The Israeli narrative on the other hand, or rather the ethos of the defending, strong and sacrificing *sabra* warrior, was basically the result of events that took place decades or even centuries

ago. Not that the very clear and strong lessons of the Holocaust, Tel Hai, the War of Independence and so forth became necessarily obsolete; but Grossman proposes the modification of a value system which was formed under extreme and, for the most part, very different circumstances (of weakness). Trying to understand the writer's suggestions from this perspective makes the article appear very significant in terms of Israeli narratives.

On the same day, several articles by Amira Hass appeared in *Haaretz*, which are very critical of the entire operation in Gaza. Such as in the previous article, also in this one you find attacks on Israeli narratives. For one, Hass (2008) tackles the notion that the IDF is an especially moral army by underlining, for example, that those giving the instructions to launch the air strike on Gaza "knew that at exactly 11:30 A.M. on Saturday, during the surprise assault on the enemy, all the children of the Strip would be in the streets". Besides the in her eyes unethical conduct of the operation, whose civilian victims she points out in the text, Hass (2008) also strikes the unity and military dimension of Israel's ethos: "That's how we like our leaders - calling up reservists, sending pilots to bomb our enemies and manifesting national unity". After falling back on the concept earlier, it is probably obvious what the author tackles: Begin's "'*We fight, therefore we are!*'" (Rowland & Frank, 2011, p. 46); that is, the Zionist right-wing worldview in general, which is based on the "idealization of militarist masculinity" (Idealisierung militaristischer Männlichkeit) (Strenger, 2011, p. 59, my translation), and holds that "Israel is surrounded by enemies und survives day by day only due to its overwhelming military power" (Israel sei von Feinden umgeben und überlebe Tag um

Tag nur dank seiner überwältigenden militärischen Macht) (p. 59, my translation). Bar-On (2006) would call Hass' (2008) focus of critique the "'eroticization of war'" or rather "'fighting masculine romanticism'". As a side note, in this context I want to refer to the "smiling face of an Israeli soldier" mentioned in the epilogue (Bar-On, 2006, p. 161).

Hass (2008) does not stop there and addresses national unity which is mentioned in the same context as taking up arms. It makes sense to relate these concepts since intergroup conflict has the potential to create group cohesion, for example in the form of national unity. In Tajfel (1982), Sumner (1906) puts it this way: "The exigencies of war with outsiders are what makes peace inside". Bar-Tal & Salomon (2006, p. 6) hit the nail on the head when they elaborate that groups, which find themselves in a conflict with each other, depend on certain "psychological conditions that ensure successful coping such as loyalty to a society and country". Of course, the Israelis are such a group and unity is an essential aspect of Israel's self-image. Patriotic believes encouraging Trumeldorian sacrifice and the willingness to die are glorified and those who do not play in accordance with these rules of nationhood and bold loyalty, those who "did not fulfill their duties to the state [...] were stigmatized" (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006, p. 14). Besides the Revisionist notion of militarism, this sense of national unity, which passed down generations, is critically highlighted by Hass (2008) in her *Haaretz* contribution.

While Hass (2008) denounces the Israelis' "[s]atisfaction from tanks once again raising and lowering their barrels [...], satisfaction from our leaders' threatening finger-waving at the enemy", Marcus (2008), another commentator for *Haaretz*, does not try to "conceal [his] enjoyment of the flames and smoke rising from Gaza that have poured

from our television screens". This comment has a slight flavor of Bar-On's (2006) euphoria and exhilaration. The writer introduces his article with a reference to one of Israel's Chosen Glories (Volkan, 1998), the Six Day War, by pointing to Bar-Lev's words "'We'll hit them hard, fast and elegantly'". This phrase is contrasted with Ehud Olmert's "the patience, determination and endurance of people on the home front will determine our ability to complete the job", which (at least in this context) seems to contradict Bar-Lev's (and Ben-Gurion's) credo of quick decisive strikes against enemies. By pointing to the 1967 Chosen Glory, Marcus finds an effective way to cast a bad light on Olmert, an effect which is accelerated by mentioning the negatively evaluated Lebanon War of 2006 (under Olmert): "What achievement did the Second Lebanon War bring us, other than exposing Israel's soft underbelly [...]?".

As regards December 30th and the outbreak of war phase in general, the last media outlet I want to have a look at is *JPost*. An article by Glick (2008) is especially eye-catching for several reasons. For one, the Revisionist fighter ethos is reflected in a very illustrative way in this writing and, second, the discrepancies between the political left and right inside the mainstream ethos are highlighted. Glick's (2008) writing is constructed along the individual account of deceased Tzafrir Ronen who had "dedicated his life to defending the country". Ronen's strong will to defend and resist, his loyalty to Israel and Zionism as well as his "organic connection to the land", to use Porat's (2006, p. 60) terms, are contrasted with the "Left's defeatist and post-Zionist narrative". The political left is portrayed as keeping alive those elements the Zionist pioneer movement (especially the Revisionists) wanted to root out in Jewish society. The word "defeatist"

refers to the Jabotinskian Revisionist contempt of the "bootlicking Jew, who courts the *goyim* like a servant" (kriecherischen Juden, der den Gojim dienerhaft den Hof macht) (Strenger, 2011, p. 60, my translation) and is in clear contradiction to Begin's ethos of the fighting Jew.

Glick (2008) speaks out against the "post-Zionist narrative", a concept which "remains nebulous and conceals a great variety of ideological conceptions" (Bar-On, 2006, p. 163). Basically, post-Zionism means that there is a "declining need of Zionist ideology" (Bar-On, 2006, p. 163). However, Glick (2008) does not only call the political left weak and un-ideological, but moreover accuses them of being excluding and even traitors – which is certainly a harsh criticism since both allegations are related to the strong value of unity. She pushes forward the opinion that they "demoniz[e] voices like Tzafrir's" and have "taken leading roles in our enemies' propaganda campaigns" (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006).

The author goes even further and makes the statement: "[People] are still [...] drawn to voices in the wilderness, like Tzafrir's, which say that we must fight, and win, and that we deserve to win and should feel privileged to fight for what is right", which is obviously a playground for those analyzing narrative application. Even though this is a personal impression and the reader does not have to agree with it, the fact that Glick (2008) employs the term "wilderness" while talking about Tzafrir Ronen as a representative of the Moshe Dayan-Ariel Sharon kind of *sabra* warrior (or even of the Maccabees and Bar-Kochva) as well as the detail that Tzafrir's funeral takes place in the north of Israel conveys the impression that she intends to latently enrich her writing with

a Trumpeldor of Tel Hai flavor (Tel Hai is in the north) (Auerbach, n.d.; Strenger, 2011).

Of course, also the terms "fight", "win" and "right" refer to Begin's notion of "*We fight,*

therefore we are!" (Rowland & Frank, 2011, p. 46) and oppose cultural (or rather

ideological) relativism since they are "right" (and the "Other" is wrong in line with zero-

sum perceptions). Further significant points that come to the fore in this article are the

perception of the withdrawals from Gaza (2005) and Lebanon (2000) as mistakes in

terms of security and as mere surrender; that Hamas will never live in peace with the

Jewish state – here a reference to Tessler's (2006) thoughts on the Israelis' belief in Arab

intransigence seems appropriate –; and that even Fatah is nothing more than a hostile

force, an enemy of Israel. The last point is another support for LeShan's (1992 in

MacNair, 2003) idea of "Mythic Perception of Reality" (p. 21) in which it is suggested

that in times of violent conflict, the enemy is understood as a monolithic entity; that is, if

Hamas is an enemy, then why should Fatah (also Palestinians) be different?

     Taken together, Glick (2008) assumes that Israel's left-wing is simply wrong

concerning all "major issue[s]". To me it seems that the writer pushes forward the view

that the left in Israel makes the same mistake that many in the West, especially in Europe,

tend to make: They think like "Nietzsche's 'last men' who [have] overcome history"

(Nietzsches "letzte Menschen", die Geschichte überwunden) (Posener, 2013, my

translation) and cannot imagine that certain peoples are willing to sacrifice for greater

goods (like for the whole of Palestine between Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea);

who cannot understand that Palestinians may have an own agenda charged by mythical,

spiritual ideas and feelings which will not be given up for some European-style conflict

resolution and every-day life comfort. In Glick's (2008) eyes, the Israeli left-wing looks like post-heroic and post-ideological Europeans living on a continent which "is fed up with murmuring interpretations of history, and it therefore expects the Jews, as well, to come over the mythical interpretation of old traumata and to turn towards the future" (hat [...] von den raunenden Geschichtsdeutungen genug, und auch von den Juden erwartet es daher, über die mythische Deutung alter Traumata hinwegzukommen und sich der Zukunft zuzuwenden) (Strenger, 2011, p. 96, my translation). However, Glick (2008) describes also the Palestinians as though they were a group which was not willing to overcome all of these mythic dimensions and which did not want to be "last men". Instead they transformed Gaza into a "jihadist hub" – here ideology and religion enter the equation – ruled by Hamas which is in the article compared to al-Qaida as an organization that will not give up its objectives (of destruction): "Just as al-Qaida will never live at peace with America, so Hamas will never accept peaceful coexistence with Israel". Seemingly, the author assumes that adhering to the left's "defeatist political philosophy" is senseless appeasement whereas, in this logic, one might find it more useful to keep with Ariel Sharon's laconic family wisdom: "You do not cede land" (Hefez & Blum, 2006). Against this backdrop, Glick (2008) states that Hamas must be defeated and that Operation Cast Lead, which does not pursue this goal (in totality), cannot live up to the serious uncompromising realities on the ideology-struck ground, in which a soft Europeanized left-wing approach, that failed until now, will fail again when facing determined terrorist groups – groups that must be tackled by a steadfast approach

which is as resolute as theirs, like the one of Tzafrir Ronen[24][25] (Strenger, 2011; Posener, 2013; Gilovich et al., 2006; Münkler, 2006).

In the other *JPos*t articles published on that day, the reader is informed primarily about Israel's dilemmas and options concerning its operation in Gaza as well as the blows which the conflict parties dealt to each other so far (Baskin, 2008; Katz, 2008). In another article, power script alternates with vulnerability script in that, on the one hand, you can read that Hamas intends to throw more troops into battle, that the "armed wing had hardly been affected by the IDF operation" and that they "'have many surprises for Israel'", which seems to be an attempt to communicate the group's confidence. On the other hand, the article goes on to say that the police men who were killed through an air strike on their graduation ceremony were not Hamas fighters. They are portrayed as civilian forces not preparing for battle and being very vulnerable during the assault (Toameh, 2008).

Amidst the Gaza War – the ground operation starts

The analysis of the articles published in January during Operation Cast Lead may be conducted on a smaller scale than analyses in the previous section. This is due to the fact that even though Palestinian and Israeli narratives are very broad frameworks, they consist of recurrent themes. Especially in times of war, it is a rather limited set of themes, terminologies and mythical references which is employed. In order to avoid unnecessary

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[24] See TMT as a framework for ideological and religious heroism from the psychological perspective.

[25] See also Bell's (1962) "The End of Ideology" about the young in a post-ideological world who are "unhappy because the 'middle way' is for the middle-aged, not for [them]; it is without passion and is deadening". For them "the question of how one mobilizes [their emotional] energies is a difficult one" (Bell, 2007) while Posener (2013) and Glick (2008) may add that in some parts of the world (like Palestine) the young still find a way to channel these energies for political purposes.

reiterations of interpretations that were already made, I will focus on text structures through which new insights can be added to this dissertation.

Before turning to the analysis of January 5th, I want to point out that many themes I found in the articles were (unavoidably) already mentioned and interpreted above. However, some of them will be incorporated while others are dismissed because I regarded them as irrelevant for my objective of drawing a complete and broad picture of narratives in application. Further, I want to underline that I used rather prestigious, supposedly opinion forming newspapers on the American as well as the Israeli side whereas this is not the case on the Palestinian side. Even though I could find insightful *Al-Jazeera* sources, it must be noted that this outlet can be described as Arabic in origin, but not as Palestinian. Since *Al-Qassam* did apparently not publish articles on this day, another source I made use of is *EI*. As regards the application of narratives, the outlets chosen for the Arab/Palestinian perspective are highly informative. However, as alluded to earlier, the reader should keep in mind that they do neither represent the national media of the Palestinians nor can both of them be described as prestigious or elite newspapers.

With that in mind, let us get down to work. First, I want to draw the reader's attention to something that the Israelis call *hasbara*[26]. Dependent on whom you ask, *hasbara* is described as Israel's propaganda or as its public diplomacy. In any case, it is some kind of public relations campaigning (Said, 2001; Meir, 2005). Said (2001), who critically compares *hasbara* to Orwell's "newspeak or doublethink", describes it amongst others as

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[26] *hasbara* (הסברה) is a Hebrew word. Since it is related to the verb *l'hasbir* (להסביר), which means "to explain", it is often translated as "explanation".

an entire range of efforts: lunches and free trips for influential journalists;

seminars for Jewish university students who over a week in a secluded country

estate can be primed to "defend" Israel on the campus; bombarding congressmen

and -women with invitations and visits; pamphlets and, most important, money

for election campaigns [...].

Israel's *hasbara* efforts include, according to Meir (2005), media materials of high

quality which are distributed in great number through many different channels to a wide

public abroad. Of course it should not come as a surprise that national narratives casting a

positive light on Israel are part of such campaigns[27].

January 5th: Israel targets tunnels and Hamas leaders, Gaza hospitals are unable to cope with quantity of casualties, hundreds of Gazans flee homes

As for the media coverage of January 5th, I came across the concept of *hasbara* a

couple of times. For one, in *The New York Times* Bronner (2009) refers to Israel's public

relations campaign which accompanies the military operation in Gaza as a "public

relations blitz[28]". From a historical perspective, the writer's wording smacks of war

(especially in this context). Further, Bronner (2009) employs this term after that he has

explained how Israel denies foreign journalists entry to the battlefield, which adds the

notion of bias and therefore propaganda to the military dimension. In *Al-Jazeera*

Margolis (2009) characterizes *hasbara* as a "mighty information machine" which makes

it possible for the State of Israel "to weather the storm of worldwide outrage". In both

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[27] The alleged unveiling of Yasser Arafat as supporting terrorism is deemed a great success for *hasbara*.

[28] Blitz is the short form of blitzkrieg, an anglicized term that goes back to Nazi Germany's campaign in Poland.

examples, the reader gets the idea that Israel's public relation efforts are part of the war

as such, in the form of propaganda and as a weapon against criticism and public outrage.

A *Haaretz* contribution, which is best understood before the backdrop of *hasbara*,

is Burston's (2009) article which presents some analogies. In the first analogy, he

describes an imaginary situation in which a fundamentalist government takes over a part

of Mexico and shells U.S. towns while claiming American territories which were

formerly part of Mexico. It is an obvious attempt to translate the situation of southern

Israelis into an imaginary situation which is understood by people in the West, especially

U.S. citizens. In the second analogy, Burston (2009) tells the story of a family which is

attacked by a man who fails to injure anyone because he uses a low quality gun. The

family father tries to defend himself and his family by using his own gun (of much higher

quality) with which he accidentally kills the child of the attacker since the latter was

hiding behind the child. As a reaction to that, it is described how around the world people

protest against the defending father because his reaction is perceived as unproportional.

Of course, the low quality weapon represents Qassam rockets and the high quality

weapon represents the strong Israeli army. Further, the writer tries to illustrate how

Hamas (the attacker) hides behind Gaza's civilian population (the killed child). This form

of storytelling can be understood as a very basic kind of narrative. The term narrative

itself means, first of all, nothing other than story or tale. Burston (2009) tries to reach the

international public by establishing rapport through identification with Israel – first, on

the state-level (the Mexico case) and, second, on a personal-individual level (the

defending father). It is obvious, then, how Burston's (2009) contribution reflects the

notion of *hasbara* as public relations campaigning or, indeed, simply as an attempt to explain.

Besides that, Burston (2009) also points angrily to the comparison of Gaza with the Warsaw Ghetto which, in his eyes, "Jew-haters the world over adore". He argues that "[i]t denies and diminishes and exploits the Holocaust" as well as that it "dismisses the humanity and the vulnerability of the million Israeli Jews and Arabs within rocket range, and ignores completely the role of Hamas, the Islamic Jihad [and the like]".

Quite in contrast to this opinion, in *Al-Jazeera* Margolis (2009) seems to regard this analogy as legitimate and writes that many in the Muslim world see Gaza "as a modern version of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising by Jews against the Nazis". Such as in earlier examples, the Jewish history is turned against the State of Israel. The uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto is important for Israel's ethos of the fighting and defending new Hebrew, the *sabra*. The gravity of the Warsaw Ghetto theme comes to the fore in West's (2003) argument that during the 1948 war, Masada and the Warsaw Ghetto were forbidden images since they evoked the idea of "'dying to the last man' [and] it was feared that it could happen in Israel". Still, the Warsaw uprising became one of the "meaningful and inspirational [struggles] within the historical meta-narrative" (Naveh, 2006, p. 250). It is a symbol of Jewish resistance in a line with the fights of Bar-Kochva and the Maccabees, which attenuates the weakness of the Diaspora Jew or rather delivers a Diaspora example of the bold fighting Jew applicable in the Zionist Israeli context.

In a way, Margolis (2009) makes use of a narrative theme to blur the lines between in- and out-group, between *us*, the good and righteous, and *them*, the evil

"Other", by locating the seed of evil, which *they* (the Jews) used to fight, within *them*. In addition to that, a number of familiar aspects of the Palestinian narrative vis-à-vis Israel come to the fore. For example, Margolis (2009) opens the article by assuming that there are "two completely different versions of what is currently happening in Gaza", by which she undoubtedly means the narratives of both people as reflected in the Gaza War. To her mind, the Israeli framework is the one employed by Western media through notions like the country's right to self-defense and the idea that Hamas is a terrorist organization. The writer, on the other hand, targets Israel's actions in Gaza by employing perceptions prevalent in the Palestinian story. To the reader, allegations of Israel as (legally) unrighteous (Israel's "blockade of Gaza [...] is an egregious violation of international law and the Geneva Conventions"), Israel as a clandestine deceiving force that sometimes shows its real face (America's carte blanche for such operations through pressure by the mighty AIPAC; Israel coldly plotted the operation with domestic politics and the American interregnum period in mind) are not new anymore. The idea that Israel is only interested in power, not in peace, and that it is indifferent and coolly calculating vis-à-vis its friends as well as its enemies is reflected in Margolis (2009) as well.

Allegations of power interests and evil characteristics are well-known aspects not only within the Palestinian narrative, but also in the Israeli one. Besides, these are facets of humans' conflict mode of thinking and perceptions of other groups in general (MacNair, 2003; Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). However, Margolis (2009) presents these aspects in an interesting light by calling Israel's Operation Cast Lead a "Biblical punishment of Gaza". One does not need to be a theologian to know that a considerable

amount of punishments in the Bible turn out rather harsh. Lot's wife who "became a pillar of salt" as well as Egypt's ten plagues are telling examples ("Genesis 19:26", n.d.; "Exodus 12:12", n.d.). Yet, one can go further and suggest that Margolis (2009) did not only want to point out that Israel's military operation is very cruel, but, moreover, that Cast Lead is actually not an act of self-defense. She seems to perceive it much rather as a punishment by the Jewish state playing God. At this point, a reference to Juergensmeyer's (2003 p. 186) concept of "a superhuman foe, a cosmic enemy" in the framework of Satanization appears to be adequate once more.

Whereas Israel has the dubious pleasure to be uplifted to a Biblical and extraordinary foe, Hamas is de-demonized in that the author describes the organization as simply reacting to Israel's indifference towards Palestinian refugees while being interested in compromise and "a non-religious state" in Palestine much rather than in annihilation and absolute, territorial maximalist outcomes.

At this point, I can continue seamlessly with Loshitzky's (2009) contribution in *EI* since in this article the writer plays with notions of demonic evil, as well. Loshitzky (2009) explains that the name Operation Cast Lead is derived from a Hebrew song in which "a father promises to his child" a "cast lead *sevivon*[29]" and that, apparently, the army member that chose the operation name believed that "if Israeli kids would enjoy a *sevivon* cast from lead there is no reason why Palestinian children would not appreciate it too". Both, Margolis (2009) and Loshitzky (2009), provide good examples of the idea of "Mythic Perception of Reality" during war as outlined in MacNair (2003, p. 21), in which

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[29] *sevivon* (סביבון) is the Hebrew word for dreidel.

it is held that "[t]he enemy is evil" to the extent that talking would not make sense any more, as well as of Korostelina's (2009) 4-C model. This model is interesting – not only in light of the works of these two authors, but in general for the topic of this work – since it adds a stage model for "[t]he dynamics of identity conflicts" to Tajfel & Turner's (1979 in Gilovich et al., 2006) "social identity theory"[30] (Korostelina, 2009, p. 100). According to the 4-C model, group conflict begins at the comparison stage and develops through the stages of competition and confrontation to the counteraction stage. The process in the confrontation stage is described as the "ideologization of social identities" (Korostelina, 2009, p. 102), which should be a familiar idea. After all, narratives share with ideologies at least a dogmatic and identity conveying dimension. One could even go as far as to equate ideologies with narratives, for instance in the case of Zionism; an ideology that includes sacred parts of Israel's meta-narrative, such as the return to the ancient Biblical homeland (Auerbach, n.d.; Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006).

In the last and most extreme stage of identity conflict, counteraction, however, we find Margolis' (2009) and Loshitzky's (2009) attempt of "moral duality, dehumanization, and devaluation of Other" (Korostelina, 2009, p. 102). Before this backdrop, I want to turn to another part of Loshitzky's (2009) contribution, which brings us back to the aforementioned concept of *hasbara* which is described by the writer as "meaning in Hebrew, explanation, but practically referring to misinformation, spin and lies". Even though we already came across the notion of Israel being a deceiver and liar (which goes back, amongst others, to the period before 1948 when Palestinians felt deceived by

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[30] On the most basic level, social identity theory states that a person's self-esteem derives from the status of its group, amongst other factors like personal accomplishment (Gilovich et al., 2006).

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Zionists and Western powers), Loshitzky (2009) now articulates it in a contemptuously eroticized way, which is new in this context:

> The blonde offensive, led by [Tzipi Livni], was fortified by a team of peroxide blonde Israeli women, whose sex, lies and video games decorated TV screens worldwide. They explained to the sympathetic world the hardships endured by the nuclear-armed Israelis threatened by the crude rockets.

The author takes a fairly radical measure of illustrating Israel's alleged tendency towards deception, first, by verbally militarizing it with the words "offensive" and "fortif[y]" and, second, by framing it in terms of female seduction, a concept reaching back to the Biblical narrative of sin:

> And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband [...]. ("Genesis 3", n.d.)

Both conceptions appear several times in the text, for example when Lashkovitz (2009) uses the terms "icy blonde offenders" and "'secret weapons' of mass deception" (referring to weapons of mass destruction). Even though the reader may not agree with me in all points, it seems that a certain level of contempt gleams through in the writer's descriptions. A last point I want to mention in this reference is Loshitzky's (2009) metaphor of *hasbara* representatives who attempt to "whitewash Israel's dirty laundry in the global launderette". In Verplaetse's (2009) framework, there are several kinds of morality; one of them is called the "morality of cleaning" (reinigingsmoraal) (p. 132, my

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translation)[31]. It is an umbrella term for the part of our morality where hygiene and moral feelings meet. Good examples are ethnic cleansings – the term itself makes any explanation superfluous – and, more concrete, Nicolas Sarkozy's suggestion to clean the "banlieues with a pressure washer" during the riots (banlieues met een hogedrukreiniger schoonspuiten) (Verplaetse, 2009, p. 133, my translation). Based on a system of disciplining which is basically supposed to protect us from "direct contact with harmful substances" (direct contact met schadelijke stoffen) (Verplaetse, 2009, p. 134, my translation), the human brain extends this system (from the age of ten) to the moral dimension, which is called "sociomoral disgust" (p. 144). That means that people execrate behavior they regard as immoral. In order to shed light on the consequences of this system and its moral extensions, imagine the disgust that people may experience simply by touching a murderer's hand. It shows how physical realities and moral realities can intermingle in an apparently irrational way. An idea which seems abstract at first glance can become manifest in the form of extreme behavior like, for instance, genocides, a "ritual violent act [in which] the 'pathogenic' person or group vanishes" (rituele gewelddaad verdwijnt de 'ziekteverwekkende' persoon of groep) (Verplaetse, 2009, p. 167, my translation).

I hope that through this brief excursion to the field of morality, it became clear why the metaphor of Israel's "dirty laundry" is noteworthy. In light of the morality of cleaning, it may not appear too far-fetched to understand this metaphor before the same

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[31] Verplaetse is not the only one offering a morality framework with subdivisions. His notion of morality is supported by Shweder (in Gilovich et al., 2006) who distinguishes between ethics of autonomy, community and divinity. Ethic of divinity is characterized by "a concern for purity, sanctity, pollution, and sin" (Gilovich et al., 2006, p. 560)

psychological and rhetorical background as other metaphors like, for example, equating Israel with cancer by Hamas and Iranian leaders (Toameh, 2012; "Iranian Leaders", 2010).

Furthermore, Loshitzky (2009) expresses his opinion that it is particular "juridicial procedures" and "deployments of power" which enable certain entities to commit crimes without others identifying them as such. In doing so, he refers directly to "Nazi death camps" while the structure of the paragraph (it opens with an indication of Israel's cruelties) makes evident that he indirectly refers to the Jewish state: "murderous and criminal attack on Gaza". It seems that Israel's "deployments of power" to cover its crime is by Loshitzky (2009) identified as Israel's alleged success to present itself through its *hasbara* spokespersons as a Western nation which defends itself: "They [spokespersons] are interviewed in their comfortable (probably leather-clad) offices. They look and sound like respectable westerners, just like 'us,' and their foreign minister is very calm and cool as her blonde hair obliges". By doing so, the writer hints at Israel's self-perception as a Western, democratic and modern state and counters it by arguing that this is only a *hasbara* camouflage hiding a "more 'primitive,' 'organic,' and tribal cruelty" (Porat, 2006).

This being said, let us turn to the Israeli media side because it allows us to smoothly continue with Israel's aforementioned self-perception (or rather its representation) as well as another potent metaphor. *Haaretz* Service (2009) published an article on this day, which does not come close to the strong frame and narrative application in the *EI* contribution analyzed above. However, some quoted statements

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shed further light on what Loshitzky's (2009) criticism of Israel's way to present itself (e.g. through *hasbara*) is related to.

For one, Livni is quoted as saying that the operation in Gaza is a "'legitimate self-defense'" and "that Israel has no choice but to retaliate when attacked". Ehud Barak is mentioned "saying any nation seeking to survive would have taken the same form of action". Even though it might not be totally clear at first glance, the politicians' statements do indeed reflect very Western notions as regards the nation state, its rights and responsibilities. They emphasize that Israel fights for survival and must defend itself, ideas in which the Westphalian concept of the sovereign nation state ("any nation")[32], Kenneth Waltz's political Realist notion of survival as the state's most basic goal ("seeking to survive")[33], the state's (and its army's) responsibility to protect ("no choice but to retaliate when attacked")[34] and the idea of just cause within the framework of *jus ad bellum* ("legitimate self-defense")[35] resonate (Lake, n.d.; International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty [ICISS], 2001; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2011).

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[32] Barak's argument that any nation would act that way should not only be seen in light of the Peace of Westphalia (1648) framework of sovereign states, but even more before the backdrop of Zionism as a movement that "has always seen its place in the broader democratic mainstream" and longs for a state "accepted as an equal by other nations" (Porat, 2006, p. 67).

[33] Whereas state power is understood to be the primacy of Realist theory interests, Waltz holds that state power is a maximalist national interest while survival is the minimal precondition (Lake, n.d.).

[34] Israel can argue that it is obliged to protect its citizens from harm on the basis of the same international consensus which brought the R2P doctrine into existence: "sovereignty implies a dual responsibility: externally – to respect the sovereignty of other states, and internally, to respect the dignity and basic rights of all the people within the state" (ICISS, 2001, p. 8).

[35] Just war criteria have a long history in Western civilization. Back in the 14th century, Thomas Aquinas listed such criteria, one of which is just cause (Ramsbotham et al., 2011).

Another criterion within the *jus ad bellum* framework is war as last resort, a principle which Ehud Olmert philosophically bases his argument on when he, according to Eldar (2009) in *Haaretz*, "pledged that he had sent their [parents] children to the battlefield only after the government had tried everything else to achieve quiet for the children of Sderot". Yet, Eldar (2009) clearly dismisses Olmert's last resort argumentation and thereby attacks the myth of the peace loving Israeli people with their highly moral army (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.; Jawad, 2006). In the same article, Eldar (2009) applies the metaphor of the white and the black flag: "As long as Israelis expect Palestinians to raise white flags, a black flag will fly over their own head". Well, the meaning of a white flag is common knowledge. In the law of war (Hague Conventions), the white flag symbolizes ceasefire, surrender and perhaps even the willingness to talk. On the most basic level, a white flag is supposed to tell you: Don't attack! However, the black flag has several meanings, most of which are quite interesting in this context. For example, the Prophet Muhammad used a black banner. Also the flags used by anarchists and by rebellious farmers during the *Bauernkriege* in the 16th century were black. At the end of the 19th century, the flag of Afghanistan was black and so is the flag of al-Qaida today (Patel, 2009; Nicolle, 1993). Taken all of these applications of black flags together, it emerges the picture of the black flag as a rebellious and Islamic (or even Islamist) symbol. Apparently, Eldar (2009) tries to convey the message that Israel's attempt to violently force Palestinians into surrender will only strengthen the nowadays religiously charged resistance facet of the Palestinian narrative, which Hamas

applies in its jihadist fighter ethos[36]. He correspondingly expresses doubts about the deterrence philosophy popular among Israelis and takes it ad absurdum: "Israelis, who are so fond of 'deterrence,' would understand that in wars like this, a guerrilla force considers a 1-to-10 kill ratio in favor of the enemy a glorious victory".

Also in *Haaretz*, Burg (2009) argues in the same vein when he launches a rather broad assault on the Israeli warrior ethos which appears obsolete and useless to him in a world in which "it's no longer possible to win wars. We're [that is, Israel] not the only ones who can't; the West as a whole is incapable of doing so". He highlights that Israel did not win a war since its Chosen Glory in 1967 and for America the same is true since World War Two. Burg's (2009) article can certainly be interpreted in several different ways. Still, it seems that Burg (2009) stands up for the "abolition of the doctrine of war" by Israel. He explains that parts of the West in general chose to abolish this doctrine after they had drawn their lessons from the Holocaust. What the writer implies here is a very strong message, at least in light of Israel's historical narrative, since he assumes that the Jewish state did not learn the right lessons from its most devastating Chosen Trauma. That again is a bold statement in the context of a society which believes that its mere existence (as an Israeli and Jewish society in *Eretz Yisrael*) is the best evidence that lessons have been learned. One of Burg's (2009) most insightful statements in this article is:

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[36] My remarks about the black flag are rooted in a fairly deep and historical interpretation. Of course, the writer could have made use of this symbol merely in order to convey the message that Israelis bring war upon themselves instead of peace (the white flag symbol).

It seems to me that if the goal of a war is the *destruction* of the enemy, it is a war that is doomed to fail. For reasons that are well-known to us, it is no longer possible to annihilate nations or at least suppress their *aspirations of independence*. (my emphasis)

First, the wording of the paragraph indicates that Burg (2009) understands the zero-sum, all-or-nothing, black-and-white character of intractable identity conflicts, of which the fight between Israelis and Palestinians is an example (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; Ramsbotham et al., 2011). This understanding is reflected in expressions such as "destruction of the enemy" and "annihilate nations". For us, this paragraph becomes especially interesting when the writer suggests that it is not possible to "suppress their aspirations of independence". At this point, the notion of zero-sum, black-and-white conflicts merges with the idea of national narratives since "[t]he Palestinians and the Jews believed that acceptance of the other identity would negate their own case and identity" (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006, pp. 3-4). In his writing, Burg (2009) counters the mechanisms of exclusivity which accompany intractable conflicts and especially the narratives of Palestinians and Israelis, who view their own nationhood as being put at risk by the sheer (alleged) nationhood of the other group. He does this by pushing forward the opinion that Israelis must learn to accept the nationhood of the "Other" because war does not work anymore.

In another Israeli media outlet, *JPost*, Kramer (2009) basically outlines the Israeli grand strategy vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip. The interesting aspect of this description is the way in which Palestinian (or rather Hamas) narratives come into play here. It is assumed

that part of the Israeli strategy is to communicate to Gazans that Islamic resistance does

not make sense by creating a clear difference between the improving West Bank

economy (caused by the removal of certain obstacles to economic growth, such as

checkpoints) and the deteriorating Gaza economy (through economic sanctions). It is

hardly necessary to look for latent messages in Kramer's (2009) analysis in order to find

the narrative link. The writer is quite open about it: "Hamas was fully aware that

sanctions were slowly eroding its base and contradicting its *narrative that 'resistance'*

pays. This is why it refused to renew the 'calm' agreement after its six-month expiration,

and renewed rocket fire" (my emphasis). This means that Israel launched an attack on

Hamas' jihadist fight against the imperialist crusaders version of a warrior ethos by

economic means plus contrast effects. It is therefore interesting to see comments made by

Hamas representatives as quoted in another *JPost* article by Katz (2009) in light of the

apparent threat to Hamas' resistance ethos: "'You entered like rats,'" as well as

"'Gaza will be a graveyard for you, God willing,'". In these statements, first, the

dehumanization aspect of group conflict is highlighted through the use of the word "rat"

to describe Israelis[37]. Stripping the Israeli soldiers of their humanity legitimizes and

enables the use of violence without empathic inhibitions (Gilovich et al., 2006). Hamas

also tries to create the impression of power by calling Gaza a graveyard for the Israelis.

Taken together, the Hamas organization creates a façade of consistent Islamic resistance

(despite Israeli military and economic obstacles).

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[37] During the genocide in Rwanda, Tutsis were called cockroaches, snakes, malaria mosquitoes amongst others (Verplaetse, 2009, p. 172).

Turning back to U.S. media, in two *The New York Times* articles, one by El-Khodary (2009) and one by Bronner (2009), the reader comes across vulnerability scripting of the kind we know from earlier examples. For instance, El-Khodary (2009) begins and concludes her contribution with anecdotes and quotes in direct speech underlining the vulnerability of people in Gaza ("'God has no mercy! You get me her leg now!'"). In Bronner (2009), Israel's military strength is highlighted on the one hand and the rising Palestinian death toll as well as the shortages which Gazans face on the other hand. By applying not solely a vulnerability script, but combining it with a power script, the result turns out to be what Blondheim & Shifman (2009) call a disaster script. Also Whitlock & Abdel Kareem (2009), who wrote for *The Washington Post* on January 5th, employ a vulnerability script with visual descriptions of the suffering in Gaza such as "Beneath one sheet in the morgue was the body of a 17-year-old girl still dressed in a black head scarf" and the use of expressions like "widespread panic as people scrambled for refuge".

In addition to the descriptions of the Palestinian situation in Gaza during the military operation, the *Post* also published an account focused on the Israeli (civilian) side by Witte (2009), in which an Israeli who lives in the south of the country is quoted as saying "'If they stop, then Hamas won't exist,' [...] 'They claim that this is their land, and they want it back'". What is noticeable in this fairly laconic statement is the ease with which the quoted Israeli sums up some of the core facts I frequently come back to in

this work. First, he indicates that without resistance, Hamas[38] might cease to exist which is, basically, what Kramer (2009) points out in his *JPost* article earlier in this chapter. Whether the Hamas organization would indeed cease to exist if it stopped firing rockets, is another question. However, in the Israeli's eyes, the link between resistance activity and the existence of Hamas appears to be clear, strong and direct. "'They claim that this is their land, and they want it back'" is equally straightforward. What is striking is the fact that the quoted individual does neither question the maximalist aspirations of the movement (since he chooses the word "land" and not, for instance, Gaza, the West Bank or the south) nor does he seem to assume that Hamas' actions could be based on some complex and flexible strategic reasoning, but instead supposes that they simply "want it back". It comes across as though he recognizes the pre-eminence of the organization's basic narrative in determining its behavior.

Even though – contrary to the Palestinian case – the often accompanying disaster dimension is missing, in Witte (2009), a vulnerability script is applied to the Israeli side. The article implies that people in Israel do not believe that they (or rather Operation Cast Lead) have the power to actually stop the rocket fire. It is also pointed out that the rockets launched by militant groups in Gaza hit Israeli targets at a much greater distance than earlier in the conflict. A point where visual descriptions briefly come in is an illustration of the effects of Qassam missile hits: "an advanced Qassam tore through the modest, white-washed Sderot home of a woman in her 70s. The woman was in her bedroom. The rocket devastated her living room". At the end of the article, one is possibly reminded of

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[38] Hamas (حماس) is Arabic and means literally "zeal" although it is also an acronym for "Islamic Resistance Movement" (Kamrava, 2005).

the Israeli Declaration of Independence and more specifically of this particular part of it: "loving peace but knowing how to defend itself" (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). An Israeli civilian, who is called Ohana in the article, is indirectly cited as saying that "she hopes that Israel and the Palestinians can learn to live together without fighting each other. But until then, she said, an Israeli military operation is the only solution". Obviously, in the first part of her statement, the Israeli underlines her wish for peace while she also expresses willingness to use military force in the second part. Ohana's contribution brings the strong belief to the fore that Israel is a peace loving and pursuing nation as expressed in its foundational myth stressing that Israelis "sought peace but no Arab leader responded" (Jawad, 2006, p. 73) as well as in the Declaration of Independence mentioned above.

A final *Post* article I want to touch upon is a contribution by Bolton (2009). In this piece of writing, it is assumed that the two-state-solution is not the only option on the table. Instead, Bolton (2009) proposes a three state solution since "Hamas has killed the idea [two state solution under P.A.], and even the Holy Land is good for only one resurrection". The writer holds that putting Gaza under Egyptian and the West Bank under Jordanian control would theoretically be the more feasible solution. Bolton (2009) clearly negates the Palestinian nationhood aspirations by proposing that Palestinians should come under the rule of other states. His rationale is quite telling in that it is based on the assumption that no two nations fit into the Land of Palestine. He talks about "resurrection" in this context. What is especially remarkable about Bolton's (2009) proposal is that he does acknowledge the very probable Jordanian and Egyptian

reluctance towards such a three state solution and even outlines their reasons for being reluctant. However, he does not at all touch upon the fact that in such a settlement, the Palestinians would give up their struggle for an own nation state in Palestine. In Brown (2006), Khalid (1997) is cited as stating that national identity is perhaps the only asset Palestinians have, taking into account that they are politically and economically weak and lack real resource control. Because of that and since Palestinian schoolbooks, which present Palestine as a timeless political entity, emphasize "religion, family and *national identity*" (Brown, 2006, p. 233, my emphasis), it seems very unlikely that most Palestinians would agree to this proposal which does not take their national aspirations, an essential part of their narrative[39], into account.

January 9th: Palestinians say their death toll stands at 800, UNRWA seeks Israeli safety assurances before restarting aid delivery after death of driver

If someone is looking for a list of many of the most significant themes within the discussed narrative structures, then he/she will find the media landscape of January 9th interesting. It becomes evident how the conflicting parties (or rather their supporters) try to delegitimize each other by different means, for example, in the case of *The New York Times* where the reader learns about an Egyptian preacher who delivers a perfect example of dehumanization by referring to the Jews as animals; here: pigs and apes (Slackman, 2009). In addition to this example in the *Times*, Krauthammer (2009) in *The Washington Post* calls the Hamas organization a "one-step-from-madness gangster theocracy". By

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[39] Brown (2006) writes about Palestinian schoolbooks: "The students read nationalist writings when studying Arabic and count Palestinian flags while learning arithmetic. Students do not merely study English; they learn it from books entitled *English for Palestine*" (p. 234).

doing that, the writer portrays Hamas as irrational, criminal and religious fundamentalist in this sequence.

In addition to that, references to the Holocaust and the Nazis are not applied sparingly, as well. For one, in the *Times* Bronner (2009) quotes a Vatican representative who compares the Gaza Strip with a concentration camp and in *The Palestine Chronicle* Pilger (2009) goes as far as to describe it as a "death camp by the sea". In the same article, the reader will also come across the Warsaw Ghetto ("Jewish ghettos in Poland") comparison once more and will have another encounter with the conspiring U.S.-Israel team[40] which replaced the "Zionist-British team" in the Palestinian historical narrative (Adwan & Bar-On, 2003, p. 8). The conspiring-U.S.-Israel-team theme is the topic of an article published by *Al-Qassam* on the same day. In this piece, it is argued that Israel is testing U.S. weapons in Gaza and that "the nature of the strong Zionist-American military relations and Zionist entity's persistence in making wars mean that its military establishment tests new weapons in real wars in the interest of the US" (2009). In contrast to the aforementioned Egyptian preacher, the writer of this article does not create psychological distance to the "Other" by calling them pigs and apes, but instead by framing the other party in ideological terms. "Zionist occupation forces" is a wording which replaces Israeli Defense Forces; and when it is mentioned that fighters in Gaza lobbed missiles at Ashqelon, the Israelis wounded in the strike are simply called "Zionists", thereby evading a clear differentiation between civilians and soldiers. In

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[40] In the internet you often come across the term "USrael" as a play on words implying the actual or alleged cooperation of America and Israel: http://www.prisonplanet.com/usrael-plans-genocide-in-syria-palestine-and-the-middle-east.html, http://www.hanzelhoff.com/blog/?page_id=4655, http://middleeastrealitycheck.blogspot.com/2013/02/usrael-pulls-bulgarias-strings.html

employing a similar approach, in *EI* the Al Mezan Center For Human Rights (2009) calls the Israeli army "IOF" (short for Israeli Occupation Forces) and presumes that Israel is "deliberately targeting civilians". Demonization through assuming criminal or simply evil motives turns out to be a popular and recurring strategy in this case of conflict coverage.

In the Israeli media, you can hit upon explanatory frameworks that are by now familiar. For instance, in *Haaretz* Pfeffer (2009) quotes the mother of a killed Israeli soldier addressing Diaspora Jews through media representatives as follows:

> 'You think it is dangerous here, [...] but we have here soldiers like Sagi [her killed son] who defend us, and in the end they will try and kill you too so you should come here and live here as soon as possible'.

Pfeffer (2009) makes clear that the media asked suggestive questions, that the woman was excited while answering and that her English was rather basic. However, in an apparently challenging situation she expresses some core credos of Revisionist Zionism in not more than one sentence: The way she describes her son as a defender and her appeal that all Jews should come to Israel reminds you of the strong Revisionist aversion to the Jewish Diaspora: "[T]he Zionist right [...] is so ashamed of the history of the Jewish Diaspora that it convulsively pays homage to the manliest and most bellicose figures of Jewish history" ([D]ie Zionistische Rechte [...] schämt sich der Geschichte der jüdischen Diaspora so sehr, daß sie krampfhaft den männlichsten und kriegerischsten Gestalten der jüdischen Geschichte huldigt) (Strenger, 2011, p. 60, my translation). The reasoning behind the Revisionists' disregard of the Diaspora is very briefly summarized in the Israeli woman's words: "and in the end they will try and kill you too". In the

Revisionist *Weltanschauung*, the Diaspora – or rather the Jews' assimilation within the Diaspora societies – was the primeval sin which finally resulted in the almost annihilation of European Jewry. It is interpreted as a weakness which only the creation of the muscle Jew[41] in *Eretz Yisrael* can overcome. Revisionism focuses on survival and security through defense and military power in political Realist terms, notions which can partly be recognized in the words of the bereaved Israeli mother (Strenger, 2011).

In an article that appeared in *Haaretz*, as well, Harel & Issacharoff (2009) allude to a phenomenon that was introduced earlier in this paper. They write that "Israeli society has in recent years developed a serious allergy to the death of soldiers in combat", which could be interpreted as a further indication of post-heroism which, according to Münkler, is a characterization of societies that "'are based on work and exchange, not on sacrifice and honor'" (Detsch, 2010). What is novel about the application of this phenomenon here, though, is the writers' distinction between a rather post-heroic segment in Israeli society and a rather heroic one. The writers point out that the interviewed mothers of several IDF soldiers killed in Gaza all support the military operation. Related to that, Harel & Issacharoff (2009) highlight that the majority of soldiers killed to that day came from national-religious and Druze communities. The Druze in Israel are known to be traditionally dedicated to the State of Israel and especially to their military duty (Ben Solomon, 2013). More importantly, the fact that they underline the national-religious character of many fallen soldiers could be attributed to the fact that this segment of society (with a clear exception of its religious convictions) is politically close to the

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[41] The muscle Jew or *Muskeljude* in German is an expression coined by Zionist leader Max Nordau who applies it as an antithesis to the "weak" Jews in the Diaspora (Strenger, 2011).

Revisionist ideals of solid nationalism. That means that they are understood to represent

the rather Trumpeldorian and heroic segment of society, which is less associated with Tel

Aviv's hedonism and whose representatives are still willing to continue military action

even after serious losses (Strenger, 2011). However, it should be noted that Harel &

Issacharoff (2009) also point to other factors which may cause Israeli society to tolerate a

number of victims despite their alleged "allergy".

Even though it is not very balanced, the last three pieces of writing which will be

introduced to the reader are taken from the Israeli media landscape, as well. They seem to

add some relevant information to the themes discussed earlier and introduce new

concepts which are significant in terms of understanding narrative. First, in *JPost* Sam

Ser (2009) takes a glance at the community of former Jewish Gaza settlers who witness

Operation Cast Lead and some of whom participate in it. The prevalent idea (although

not mentioned explicitly) is the totality of the conflict, in which there can only be total

victory or total defeat and every gain by the "Other" is automatically a loss for your side

(zero-sum game). Territorial maximalism on both sides is an example for this

uncompromising stance. Some comments by former settlers, as quoted in the article, are

quite illustrative in this context: "'If we don't destroy Hamas, we will have accomplished

nothing'" is telling in that the choice is between all or nothing, between total victory or

just "nothing". Another quote implies the absence of power vacuums and that one step

back by Israel (withdrawal from Gaza) will be met by Hamas making a step forward; that

is, one man's gain is another man's loss: "'When we said there would be rockets in

Ashkelon, everyone laughed at us. They said there wouldn't even be one single rocket. Now, there are rockets in Beersheba, and everyone can see that we were right'".

Since we already touched upon Hamas ideology and Revisionist stances and because it is evident that this case study constitutes a part of an identity conflict augmented with (extremist) religion, it should not be too surprising that notions of totality and zero-sum logic are prevalent. In addition to that, however, it is interesting to see how it is justified by characterizing the opponent (Hamas) as a "'Nazi-like and Taliban-like regime'" that should be "'uproot[ed]'". This description of the "Other" could be taken as an indication that the opponent is assumed to perceive the conflict in total win-lose terms, as well. Last but not least, when reading Sam Ser (2009) it is hard to avoid the impression that the Zionist meta-narrative of the Jewish peoples' return to their Biblical homeland is reflected in quoted statements by former settlers, for example: Returning to the settlement "'to start fighting again? Personally, I couldn't see myself doing it,' Yael says [...]. 'But if my kids were to be able to go back some time [...] I'd be happy'". The settlers are presented as clearly doubting the wisdom of the disengagement decision and in light of the described rocket attacks and their vulnerability, comments like this one read like an appeal for Begin's "Redemption through Return" (Rowland & Frank, 2011, p. 45) – in this case to Gaza and not *Eretz Yisrael*. This interpretation may not appear to be the most down-to-earth one. However, statements like those mentioned above and others which stress advance instead of retreat, for instance by pushing forward that "'the answer to the rockets lies in offense rather than defense'" as well as readiness for combat ("'Itai is so

eager to go into Gaza and fight. It's how he was raised and what he's been trained for'")

reflect a rather militarist Revisionist mindset (Rowland & Frank, 2011).

It is exactly this mindset which Levy (2009) in *Haaretz* critically refers to as "the

only legitimate bon ton in town". He goes as far as to call Israeli society racist and

bloodthirsty in stark contrast to their self-image of a peace loving and good people. It is

especially noteworthy, though, how the writer underlines the brutality and self-

righteousness he discovers in his people (he is Israeli) by turning the *sabra* ethos against

them: "[H]is attitude is a faithful representation of the basic, twofold Israeli sentiment

that has been with us forever: To commit any wrong, but to feel pure in our own eyes".

According to the *sabra* ethos, Israelis are "stoic defenders [...] with a gentle core". This

concept may have been helpful in providing guidelines for numerous war-torn years after

that David Ben-Gurion had declared a state for a people "loving peace but knowing how

to defend itself" (Mann, 2004, p. 233; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). Levy

(2009), however, turns the "stoic defender" into a pseudo-moral warrior ("We'll shoot

and then we'll cry") and, further, even into a ruthless killer and annihilator: "The

'inclination of the commander' in the Israel Defense Forces is now 'to kill as many as

possible'", supposedly for the "'purification from terrorists'". These and other allegations

in Levy's (2009) piece draw the picture of a people in which conflict-driven entelechial

totality as regards perception of and violence towards the "Other" are very strong.

It seems almost as if Segev (2009), one of Israel's new historians[42], wanted to outline the ideological or rather psychological mechanisms behind this supposed totality in his *Haaretz* article. Based on the words of Tolstoy, he launches a rather indirect assault on the triggers of mental mechanisms which enable conflict violence, perhaps even in the drastic form described by Levy (2009):

> The government assures the people that they are in danger from the invasion of
>
> another nation, or from foes in their midst, and that the only way to escape this
>
> danger is by the slavish obedience of the people to their government. In this
>
> condition [the government] compels [the people] to attack some other nation.
>
> (Tolstoy as cited in Segev, 2009)

This anxiety, this heightened risk perception (e.g. through news coverage) is thought to induce "hatred and murder lust among the masses, all in the name of *patriotism*. Against people whom they have never seen" (Segev, 2009, my emphasis). In his piece of writing, Segev (2009) warns of this angst-based hatred that turns violent in the name of nation and patriotism. At the end of the article, the writer points to the "cloud of secrecy" under which the war seems to take place and to several human rights groups which could complete the picture. However, it is debatable whether highlighting sources of information can have an effect on the mental processes of group coherence and ethnocentrism, of which patriotism is one expression. The comfort and self-esteem provided by elevating the status of the own group and drawing clear group boundaries can hardly be overestimated. Especially in the case of the Israeli people, a continuously

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[42] The new historians are a group of Israeli historians who cast doubt on the established Israeli narrative. Benny Morris, Tom Segev and Ilan Pappe are some of them.

challenged group, mechanisms like patriotism to defend social identity are of paramount importance (Gilovich et al., 2006; Korostelina, 2009).

The lead is cast
January 18th: after ceasefire hostilities continue for some time
        On January 18th the Gaza War can finally declared ended through the implementation of a ceasefire after approximately three weeks of shooting and shelling. The writers whose articles I will analyze in the following have used the direct aftermath of Operation Cast Lead to employ several ideas, some of which are rather unexplored in the context of this dissertation. Even though Lavie (2009) in *EI* applies the rather familiar scheme of Israel being the evil villain committing genocide – in this case even as a part of politicians' domestic election campaigns – and the country's elites being ready to nuke Iran if Tel Aviv is hit by Hamas' missiles, a new notion of demonization in this writing refers to Israel's own social fabric. Lavie (2009) argues that the Jewish state is supposedly committing some form of cultural genocide against a segment of its own population, the Mizrahim, since they were too Arabic in the eyes of the Ashkenazi state elites with their European heritage: "This revival followed several decades during which the left-wing eradicated Mizrahi culture because they conceived of anything Arab as primitive". This approach is worth noting because it transfers the idea of Zionism and the Arab "Other" to Israeli or rather Jewish society itself. By doing that, the transfer strikes out against the aspect of unity of the Jews in the Land of Israel, as expressed by Ben-Gurion's and Labor's vision of Israel as a melting pot which was to result in the creation of a new Israeli identity – the *sabra* identity. The *sabra* identity, however, is a masculine, military and work focused ethos of European descent that did not necessarily fit the

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predominantly religious oriental Jews. Even more important, the early "romanticized images [of Arabs], such as the 'noble savage'" (Porat, 2006, p. 56) held by *sabras* were later replaced by ideas of Arabs being backward and primitive (Strenger, 2011; Mann, 2004). The writer argues further that Mizrahim were "settled [...] as cannon fodder in the border zones" and that the government did not react very decisively to Hamas rocket fire since it hits predominantly Mizrahim. That is to say, Lavie (2009) transfers the Zionist-Arab narrative structure to Israel's Jewish society.

A second contribution in *EI* is even more noteworthy since Abarbanel (2009) does, in a way, psychoanalyze Israeli society before the backdrop of the Gaza operation. However, the writer's analysis is broad and tries to encompass the Israeli narrative and related attitudes and behavior in general. Abarbanel (2009) portrays "trauma-induced Jewish paranoia" which, in her eyes, is something Israeli society by and large suffers from, versus the successful coping with the Jewish and Israeli cultural-historical background. Abarbanel (2009) constructs her argument with the help of statements by IAF pilot Yonatan Shapira and those of Lt. Colonel Ye'ohar Gal. The writer describes herself and Shapira, who harshly criticizes the army's conduct of Operation Cast Lead as "'illegal and immoral orders of attacks'", as individuals who have overcome the paranoia of their people. Ye'ohar Gal on the other hand is integrated into the article to represent the big group of people who "have [not] healed from Jewish trauma". Gal is quoted as stating that today the Mideast conflict is a fight between civilians on both sides and that "as sons of Holocaust survivors [...] [n]o one will throw a stone at us for being Jewish". Gal also argues that people like Shapira have lost their "survival instinct" which, as

Abarbanel (2009) argues, is what she understands as Jewish trauma. In her eyes, crimes like the Gaza War are committed because of this Jewish trauma. She also theorizes that for the traumatized victims, survival becomes "the highest value" and that Jewish identity "is based entirely on survival". To drive her point home, she mentions the Jewish holidays of Hanukah, Purim as well as Pesach, all of which have to do with stories of Jewish survival. By doing that, she brings some key aspects of narrative structures into play; that is, values and sacred elements as well as their interrelatedness with society's current behavior and how it is explained by and to people. Abarbanel (2009) also takes a look at one of the core dimensions of narrative, which is selectivity, for instance in terms of "[k]*nowledge structures* [and] *schemes* [which] influence our interpretation of information" (Gilovich et al., 2006, p. 426). In this case, she refers to Israelis' general tendency to downplay the negative consequences of the occupation and neglect of the ethnic cleansing in 1948.

Abarbanel (2009) theoretically embeds Israel's self-concept of Israelis being the moral and victimized group and their commission of violent operations, like the one in Gaza, into their meta-narrative which includes events and characters deeply interwoven with Jewish history and religion, for instance the aforementioned holidays. The most straightforward example of Abarbanel's (2009) approach is the writer's comment on Israel's relation with the Palestinians:

> To many Israelis the Palestinians are not the same as the Nazis but are the Nazis, the powerful, non-human, faceless, single-minded psychopathic murderers who were determined to exterminate the Jews for being Jews. When Israelis kill

Palestinians they are killing Pharaoh and his army (Passover), Hamman and his 10

sons (Purim) and the Greek occupying army (Hanukah) over and over again.

It illustrates how the writer perceives that past and present can hardly be kept apart when

mythic historic narratives enter the stage and pave the way for tunnel vision as well as

black-and-white thinking[43]. Due to the scope of this work, I will turn to some other pieces

of literature now, but Abarbanel's (2009) contribution, whether you agree to her approach

or not, highlights some of the core elements which are outlined in the introduction section

and frequently come back in this work. Further, the writer dares to describe narratives in

terms of the mental set of an entire nation, which makes this article insightful.

In Israeli media, two *Haaretz* articles are worth our attention since they tackle the

issue of victory. In several online newspapers, one can read excerpts from Ehud Olmert's

speech at the end of the war: "'The operation proved again the power of Israel and

improved its deterrence against those who threaten it [...] Hamas was hit hard, in its

military arms and in its government institutions'". It is evident that Israel's former Prime

Minister tries to sell the campaign as a victory, underlining the achieved objectives

(Whitlock & Finer, 2009). However, some question the entire concept of Israeli victory.

For one, Sarid (2009) underlines the highly immoral dimension of Operation Cast Lead

by writing that "the winning image [...] will brand itself on our consciousness and souls,

as though done with phosphorous". The wording he chooses is a reference to allegations

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[43] Everyday life in Israel often reveals how, under the meta-narrative veil of Zionism, distant past, recent past, present, nationalism and religion collapse into a single unit. Religious holidays (e.g. Hanukah and Pesach) as well as Yom HaShoah (Holocaust remembrance), Yom HaAtzmaut (indepdendence day) and Yom HaZikaron (remembrance of fallen soldiers) are all celebrated as national holidays. Boundaries of nation and religion become blurred under Zionism (Shafir & Peled, 2002).

that Israel used white phosphorous[44] during Operation Cast Lead. Sarid (2009) takes the

notion of victory ad absurdum by depicting it as being based on immorality so grave that

it comes across as a defeat. At the end of the article, he writes "The same shell has

produced both our image of victory and of our defeat" and thus resolves the

contradiction, the convenient black and white, of victory and defeat. Related to that, he

also mentions the visit of his granddaughters and a friend who were "the three happiest

girls in the world". He further describes them as Israelis' "human shield against the

atrocities", a notion which reflects, at least partially, Abarbanel's (2009) idea about

Israel's traumatic experience inducing selective perception in terms of "tunnel vision"

(on "the three happiest girls") and "constant stress" (which can be compensated through a

façade of happiness or hedonism[45]). Probably, both writers talk about a shield which

protects people from coming to deeper insights – true or not – that could jeopardize the

positive stereotyping ("moral and humane") of one's own group; insights like the one of

former Shin Bet chief[46] Avraham Shalom: "We have become cruel" (Bar-Tal & Salomon,

2006, p. 12; Sherwood, 2013).

Sternhell (2009) is another *Haaretz* writer tackling the idea of Israeli victory. He

brings Israel's Six Day War victory into play, an important and glorified event for

Israelis, in order to highlight how an apparent victory can turn into a disaster (probably

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[44] Some consider the use of white phosphorous for military purposes as illegal, for example, due to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (Reynolds, 2005).

[45] Tel Aviv is sometimes called the bubble because in all its relaxed hedonism it seems removed from the harsh and violent reality of the Mideast conflict; almost like an attempt of overcompensation, of exaggerating the opposite of a threatening reality (Mitnick, 2009; David & Heller, 2012).

[46] Shin Bet (or Shabak) is Israel's internal security agency.

referring to the occupation). Sternhell (2009) also stresses that Hamas managed to convey the message that it is the victim while images of killed children made Israel the villain in public opinion. Being the good guy and having a highly moral army only for defense purposes is a strong belief in Israeli society and by challenging it, Sternhell (2009) challenges victory itself (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). Interesting, though, is Gazzar's (2009) description in *JPost* of Hamas' struggle to keep the resistance ethos alive in order to not look like the loser even though Sternhell (2009) argues that the organization has achieved to be perceived as the victim. This ostensibly paradox victor-victim representation seems to be in accordance with Blondheim & Shifman's (2009) assumption that Hamas conveyed the message of power and strength on the one hand while being perceived in terms of Israeli-induced disaster on the other hand. A last article I want to direct the reader's attention to is written by Whitlock & Finer (2009) and published in *The Washington Post*. It addresses an important part of Israel's value system which did not appear in this writing until now.

When Ariel Sharon was in his twenties and commander of special force Unit 101, one of his subordinates was wounded during a commando raid in Jordan and left behind by his comrades. In the aftermath of this event, Sharon drummed into his soldiers that "We're not leaving any wounded behind in the field" (Wir lassen keine Verwundeten im Feld zurück) (Hefez & Blum, 2006, p. 90, my translation). This brief anecdote about one of the most influential characters in Israeli military and politics illustrates the great importance Israelis attach to the value of comradeship: "A soldier must always come to the aid of his fellow soldiers despite all danger and hardship, even at the risk of his life"

(Israel Defense Forces, 2011). The fact that the army enjoys high standing in Israeli society in combination with the fact that most Jewish Israelis serve in the IDF – they or their children could thus find themselves in the same position as the wounded soldier in the anecdote – is certainly part of the explanation for the importance of this value. In this context, Bar-On (2006) talks about the "'messianic soldier'" who became the character setting the societal norm within "a militaristic value system" (p. 161). With that in mind, back to the article:

Whitlock & Finer (2009) address the issue of Gilad Shalit, an IDF solider who had been kidnapped by Hamas in a 2006 raid and was still in captivity during Operation Cast Lead. The writers mention that "Israeli society places the highest premium on the welfare of its soldiers, and there is widespread public pressure on the government to secure Shalit's freedom". To give evidence of this, they refer to "hundreds of demonstrators [who] gathered outside the Defense Ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv, chanting, 'No deal without Gilad'". Years later, Gilad Shalit would indeed be released in a prisoner exchange; Shalit for 1027 prisoners, Palestinians and other nationalities. The deal was widely supported by the Israeli public (Knell, 2012).

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

"Some people think that the truth can be hidden with a little cover-up and decoration. But as time goes by, what is true is revealed, and what is fake fades away" (Ismail Haniyeh, 2012)

"We win every battle, but we lose the war" (Ami Ayalon, 2013)

Well, in order to complete this work and draw a conclusion, I want to pose the question: What did we learn from this media content and narrative analysis? To what extent did I manage to achieve the outlined objective and shed light on narratives in general, the way narratives can be applied in a media and conflict context and, most importantly, how the particular narratives of Palestinians and Israelis can be made use of? First, I want to direct attention to the most prevalent aspects of the stories Israelis and Palestinians tell themselves and others in order to explain and justify their behaviors and aims and to position their group in time and space. I consider this step important due to my decision not to use ready-made narrative packages.

It should be obvious to the reader that the Trumpeldor of Tel Hai theme within the Israeli narrative system is one of the more important ones. As expressed in his supposedly last words "It is good to die for your country", Trumpeldor represents the spirit of the activist new Hebrew warrior who is willing to sacrifice for nation and country. It is evident why this kind of myth would be important in the context of violent conflict. The bereaved mother praising the determination of her son, Sagi, is one example

and Tzafrir Ronen, who is described as one of those voices "say[ing] that we must fight, and win, and that we deserve to win and should feel privileged to fight for what is right" is probably the most obvious example of this spirit. Trumpeldor also represents patriotism which is a concept so important in Israeli society that writers like Gideon Levy and Tom Segev launch written attacks on exactly this sentiment as one of the core problems.

Another important aspect of the application of Israeli narratives is certainly the Six Day War as a Chosen Glory. Again, this should not come as a surprise since the case study used in this research is a war, as well. Further, the 1967 Six Day War is celebrated as the quintessential victory. Besides that, however, the 1967 war is also directly related to another important theme, Arab intransigence, and the occupation which followed the victory. In one article, Avraham Burg argues that since this war, Israel did not achieve any military victory anymore and another writer understands the Six Day War as a defeat (due to its consequences) rather than a victory. As expressed in some of the newspaper articles at the end of the Gaza War, Ehud Olmert, however, tried to sell Operation Cast Lead as another victory of the Jewish State.

Additionally, in terms of Israeli narratives one cannot evade one of the cultural achievements of the Zionist meta-narrative: the *sabra*. The *sabra* is more than a sociological classification in that the term does not merely describe a Jew who was born in the State of Israel, but also an idea of the new Jew per se. The concept "*sabra*" is "society's attempt to socialize its young" (Mann, 2004, p. 233). Long story short, the *sabra* is the Zionist ideal of someone who is a Jew, but not a Diaspora Jew, and someone

who lives surrounded by Arabs in the Middle East without being an Arab; the *sabra* is how the Israeli was imagined (or wished) to be, as a farmer, a poet – and also as a soldier in the Gaza Strip.

In light of the *sabra* concept, Trumpeldor and the Six Day War, it makes sense that Zionist Revisionism is another prevalent framework in this dissertation. Quite a lot has been said about this political idea. However, it should be noted that Begin and Jabotinsky were not the only political figures with a rather bellicose outlook on the conflict with the Arabs. Ben-Gurion and the Labor Party, undoubtedly dominant well into the 1970s, were at least from a contemporary European perspective ideologically not always too distant from their Revisionist counterparts. Even though Ben-Gurion did not like to see Israel's isolation in the Middle East, he did not regard integration as a realistic option and, moreover, "[a]ll his life Ben-Gurion worried about Israel's security and its prospects of survival against a vast and hostile Arab world" (Shlaim, 2004). In the 1950s, there was the political "school of retaliation" (against *fedayeen* cross-border raids) and the "school of negotiation". The reader would be wrong to think that Ben-Gurion and the political left were necessarily proponents of the latter school. Actually, Ben-Gurion lent his support to the "school of retaliation" (Shlaim, 2004). I chose to point that out in order to avoid the wrong impression that there exists something like a clear Ben-Gurion-Begin or political left-right dichotomy along the lines of, let us say, militarism and pacifism.

Another noteworthy aspect of this work is that the Israeli narrative is much more prevalent in the newspaper articles which I analyzed than the Palestinian one. Before going into more detail about this conclusion, it should be pointed out that this could, at

least partly, be a subjective impression since I am admittedly more familiar with the Israeli than with the Palestinian narrative. That again could have resulted in me finding more concepts related to Israel and Zionism whereas I may have missed the finest nuances of the Palestinian narrative. This being said, it seems that, in the context of Operation Cast Lead, Arabic, Palestinian and Palestine-focused sources were concerned rather with attacking features of the Israeli narrative than with highlighting and supporting the Palestinian narrative. One striking example is the frequent application of the Warsaw Ghetto and Nazi theme (not only by Arabic outlets, though). Instead of countering one narrative with another narrative, certain writers preferred turning parts of the Jewish history – on which facets of the Israeli narrative are based (e.g. the Holocaust) – against Israel; that is, turning the victims of the ghettos and the Nazis into the Nazis themselves. In applying some of the theoretical background used for this work, it can be argued that turning Jewish history against Israel by denying the Jews victimhood and granting it the Palestinians is in line with Auerbach's (n.d.) notion that both conflict parties attempt to monopolize victimhood as a key part of their meta-narrative. This can turn out to be problematic, first, due to the zero-sum nature typical of intractable conflicts since such a mindset dictates that you "own" all the victimhood or none of it (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). Second, this problem is accelerated by mental mechanisms of group dynamics; that is, the "Other" which constitutes the background before which the members of a group define themselves must of course be different from your group to the extent that clear-cut boundaries can be drawn around your group (the in-group). Especially in the case of conflict, people wish for such clear boundaries that reduce

complexity and structure the world in terms of in-group and out-group, us and them, friend and enemy, good and evil, – victim and perpetrator (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; Gilovich, et al., 2006).

In addition to that, it is important to note that Nazi-comparisons are not only employed by certain newspaper writers, but are a significant part of Hamas' theoretical framework, more precisely, its charter. It seems that in a number of cases it is not exactly Palestinian values and traditional myths which are applied in framing the Gaza conflict, but predominantly devices of Hamas rhetoric. Still, this is mainly due to the fact that Hamas representatives were frequently quoted and that one of the news sources which were used is the information office of Hamas' fighting wing.

As a last attempt to explain the relatively weak representation of a popular Palestinian narrative (as compared to Israeli and Hamas narratives), it should be pointed out that Palestinian identity, at least regarding the group's history since the first Zionists arrived, is to a considerable extent shaped along the Israeli narrative or rather as a counter-identity or counter-movement to Zionism. It should therefore be taken into account that this "counter"-facet of Palestinian identity might be accelerated by episodes of violent conflict with Israel (Kamrava, 2005).

At this point, certain theoretical frameworks which were not exactly part of the groups' narratives, but nevertheless turned out to be very helpful to make sense of these narratives, should be emphasized. First, Tajfel & Turner's (1979 in Gilovich et al., 2006) social identity theory is very enlightening in this context. As outlined earlier, it says something about the relation between the individual – or rather its self-concept and self-

esteem – and the individual's group or rather its standing. In light of the fact that your self-esteem is related to the (perceived) status of the group you identify with, patriotism, boosting the in-group (e.g. by lowering another group) and group conflict as well as related narratives, become better understandable from a psychological angle. Besides that, also Terror Management Theory is a very helpful concept that sheds light on people's basic need to become part of a superordinate system of meaning in order to cope with their inevitable demise. At the beginning we talked about people being motivated to go great lengths in order to become, in one way or another, "immortal". Even though I cannot give evidence of any direct link here, it is significant that a conflict about a sacred piece of land, not bigger than New Jersey, which started many decades (perhaps a century) ago, has barely lost its intensity (see Gaza War) and does still motivate young men and women to walk to death under the banner of nation and religion (Gilovich et al., 2006). This brings us to the next concept, Münkler's (2006) notion of post-heroism. Münkler's framework does not offer the same explanatory value as the former concepts. However, it is most certainly an interesting thought in that it acts as a counterbalance to Terror Management Theory and because it is noteworthy in the context of post-Zionism; that is, the weakening of the traditional meta-narrative. Further, LeShan's (1992 in MacNair, 2003) framework of peacetime and wartime modes of perception (the latter being based predominantly on good versus evil and black-and-white thinking) gave valuable insights. Last but not least, morality plays an important role; and although most readers might be familiar with the set of rules which guides us through everyday peace times, rules and moral functioning in times of war and protracted conflict are different. In

the context of this research, especially the notions of morality of cleaning (Verplaetse, 2009) and ethic of divinity (Shweder in Gilovich et al., 2006) are interesting frameworks. The application of these concepts makes sense in light of identity and inter-group conflict since the "Other" must be evil and characterized by immorality so that one's own group can be set apart in a positive and moral manner. That again implies that perceiving and labeling the "Other" as morally impure suggests itself, which is where the aforementioned frameworks enter the equation (MacNair, 2003).

The reader is certainly aware that the analyzed news outlets exhibit preferences in terms of narrative application. This is less obvious in the case of the U.S. outlets but more so regarding outlets like *The Chronicle*, *EI* and of course Hamas' website. In the case of the Israeli newspapers it is again different and especially concerning *Haaretz* the importance of the individual writers must be emphasized. The *New York Times* articles used in this work give rise to a fairly unclear image as regards narrative preferences. The reader comes across writers applying vulnerability and disaster scripts in an unbalanced way as well as articles in which Israel is accused of propaganda and of strengthening Hamas and its ethos through its actions. In other contributions, however, scripting efforts are more balanced; Hamas is depicted as criminal and the reader even hits upon the Revisionist ethos applied in defense of Israel's actions. In the case of *The Washington Post* it is equally hard to find a clear preference. Even though there are heartrending visual descriptions of individual Palestinian fates, the reader does come across the negation of Palestinian statehood aspirations and descriptions of Hamas as a gangster theocracy, as well.

In contrast to that, it is much easier to find this kind of preferences in newspapers like *The Palestine Chronicle*. When delving into *Chronicle* articles, it is first and foremost the idea of turning Jewish history against the Jews which comes to the fore. This is especially true in terms of Nazi, Holocaust and ghetto comparisons which are frequently applied by writers. Further, one does sometimes hit upon notions of a strong complicity between Israel and the West. It is therefore fair to assume that the *Chronicle* exhibits a clear anti-Israel bias in that the newspaper delegitimizes the state's actions and attacks its narrative by means of extreme historic comparisons. A look at the *EI* articles I analyzed gives you a very similar impression in that demonization of Israel, the allegation of deception and evil motives as well as notions of genocide play a crucial role. The general consensus in this outlet seems to be that for its paranoia Israel does not have any respect for human life and does not know moral restraint. *Al-Qassam* goes further in the sense that the outlet does not merely deny Israel's humanity but goes as far as to deny the state's right to exist. The enemy is described in ideological terms and differentiations are neglected (e.g. between civilians and soldiers), which conveys the impression of totality in terms of fighting and dehumanizing. As a concluding remark it can be argued that these outlets do not apply a particular historic national narrative, but much rather focus on countering the Israeli one through demonization. Interestingly enough, this "countering" appears to give rise to yet another narrative which is not exactly national and is predominantly based on notions of the Jews turning into their former enemies by disregarding human life, deliberately engaging in deception, propaganda and worse.

Of course, my argument includes a certain degree of generalization. Abarbanel (2009) who wrote for *EI* about Jewish trauma, for example, might rightfully protest against my statements since it seems to place her writings in the same category as those by *Al-Qassam*. This is due to the imperfect character of generalizations. However, I find it important to point to the common denominator or common ground which takes shape before the reader's eyes when studying the contributions of these outlets. Still, obviously not every single contribution fits my description of the demonization narrative used to counter Israel. Further, it should be stressed that *Al-Jazeera* (at least the text material of the English version) cannot be put in this category since its articles are much less charged in terms of ideology and narrative structures. During analysis, *Al-Jazeera* appeared to be rather informative than fomenting.

On the Israeli side, *Haaretz* can barely be forced into a particular narrative category, as well. During analysis one comes across a multitude of diverging opinions related to different narrative sets. However, it is my impression that with respect to the articles incorporated in this work, the post-Zionist stance (or at least one critical of the ideological mainstream) is prevalent. Whereas in the earliest phase of escalation writers expressed criticism of the IDF for not meeting their responsibilities and voiced the opinion that security comes first and bold decisions should be made, later writers appear to become increasingly critical of the operation. Views which are very critical of the Zionist narrative find their way into war coverage, as expressed by writers questioning Israel's victory, their broad attack on the nation's warrior ethos as well as on Israelis' self-perception as peace loving and moral people. Earlier I mentioned that in the case of

Haaretz the individual writers are significant. For one, there is Gideon Levy who is famous for his continuous coverage of the occupation and has a reputation for being extremely critical of Israeli society which he perceives to be morally numb and apathetic ("'Gesellschaft im Koma'", 2007; "Gideon Levy", n.d.). In the context of the Gaza War coverage, Levy describes Israelis as bloodthirsty and racist. Amira Hass is another noteworthy journalist for *Haaretz*. Like Levy she writes extensively about the conditions of people under Israeli occupation and actually lived in the occupied territories for years ("Amira Hass", n.d.a; "Amira Hass", n.d.b). In her writings, Hass voices her opposition to militarism and the conduct of the military operation which she perceives as unethical. Levy and Hass stand out as Israeli journalists due to their extensive reportage and criticism on issues related to Palestinian everyday life and the occupation. That makes them famous writers and also recipients of much hostility (Doering, 2002). Besides these two authors, Tom Segev, who is one of the new Israeli historians, and David Grossman, a famous Israeli author, are writers that should be mentioned in this context, as well. They express their criticism by uncovering the underlying mechanisms of force and how violence finds its way into society (and stays there) through neglect, secrecy in times of war and sheer anxiety. In conclusion, it can be argued that a diverse set of writers, including journalists, historians, literary figures and politicians, express their diverse opinions in *Haaretz*. However, as compared to the coverage of the early phase of escalation, later in the conflict the writings become increasingly critical of the IDF's operational conduct, Israeli society and its mainstream narrative.

As for the *JPost* articles in this thesis, the picture is less clear-cut. However, quite similar to *Haaretz*, also in *JPost* you find very divergent views. For instance, on the one hand the reader is confronted with attacks against the Revisionist narrative and denial of the Jews' victimhood. Yet, on the other hand *JPost* published a very anti-left article skeptical of post-Zionism in general (see Tzafrir Ronen) and another one in which the Zionist meta-narrative is in a quite militaristic fashion reflected in the personal stories of former Gaza settlers. A clear narrative preference is therefore hard to detect in this case and the characterization of *JPost* as a fairly centrist paper seems correct.

After this excursion into important concepts and newspaper persuasions, let us have a look at lessons learned, the flaws of this work and what should be done in future research. Well, although it intuitively makes sense to draw upon a large number of newspaper articles from different outlets and different countries in order to analytically cover a broad range of perspectives, persuasions and, of course, themes, it is nevertheless a fairly quantitative approach. This research, however, has a clearly qualitative and interpretative character. For the conduct of a proper quantitative research, one would need an even bigger sample as well as quantifiable data (e.g. through word count). Under such circumstances, it might be possible to make comparisons on the dimensions of newspaper outlet and nation/country. Of course, making use of a multitude of articles (even in a qualitative study) was nevertheless helpful in avoiding trivial generalizations and categorizations.

In my approach, the comparisons you can make and the related conclusions are automatically very subjective. That means, it is a good idea to make use of many articles

for the aforementioned reasons, but future research – at least in the qualitative realm – should, in addition, focus more on the character and quality of the text material. By doing that, one could do justice to the subjective and qualitative character of the research as well as to the finest nuances and details which can be found in the text material and which are so important for a sophisticated narrative analysis. Even though I conducted my analysis on a fairly deep level, the kind of analysis which could be conducted in future research could include features like pictures used in articles and the background of the writers. For example, a deeper analysis of articles in outlets like *EI* and the *Chronicle* could be insightful since they contain a great number of themes.

In this research, only on the Arab-Palestinian side, it was drawn upon that sort of text material. Outlets of this kind may be more prone to rather radical views and theme expressions; that is, they express narrative aspects in a very clear-cut way. In such a context, it might be sufficient to focus on a small though very meaningful and indicative sample while analyzing it in more depth. Long story short, future research could repeat this research in a quantitative fashion, for instance by applying a word count approach. In terms of qualitative research, it might be a good idea to focus on small (though diverse) samples which provide the researcher with well-interpretable themes and wording. As a side note, I want to conclude that it is my impression that the biggest (or most significant) differences are often found at the writer level rather than at the nation or outlet level.

Furthermore, I hope it became clear that some parts of this dissertation are more interpretative than others. Two examples are my interpretation of the black flag symbol (Eldar, 2009) and the Bible comparison (Loshitzky, 2009) I made. The reader should

understand these (and similar) cases as attempts to shed light on the interpretation opportunities and an assumed deeper meaning. However, it is simply not possible to read the essayists' minds.

To come to a conclusion, let us return to the epilogue section about the scene in which the harsh reality of the Gaza War enters the Israeli TV news studio in the form of Dr. Al-Aish. I posed the question in which way this first section of my work was framed? Which narrative system was employed? By now the reader has perhaps formed an own opinion about this question. However, while writing the epilogue I did not have a certain narrative in mind. Yet, the circumstances under which Al-Aish's tragic story took place almost invite a vulnerability script. The way in which the physician's despair is described in the epilogue is a good example of this script which can, for instance, be used to communicate victimhood: "He is finally interrupted by Al-Aish who desperately shouts *'ya'Allah ya'Allah'*" and "He shouts: 'What have we done to them?'". The Israeli side comes across as fairly Western, calm and professional ("Dressed in suit and tie he [the newscaster] calmly explains that Dr. Al-Aish, who regularly comments on occurrences in the Gaza Strip [...]") in stark contrast to the chaos and violence going on in Gaza. After reading the thesis, this description might remind you of Loshitzky's (2009) contribution about the blonde offensive in which it is argued that Israel makes use of blond, calm and generally Western-style people for propaganda purposes. Furthermore, as already touched upon in this writing, at one point I directed attention at the smiling Israeli soldier on the studio screen, which is a rather clear reference to "a militaristic value system" that shapes good-hearted but stoic defenders of their Hebrew nation (Bar-On, 2006, p. 161).

Probably the reader can interpret the epilogue in more depth as an objective outsider than

I can. I hope that this thesis contributes something to the reader's understanding of

Mideast conflict narratives and related concepts as well as their media applicability.

APPENDIX
Analyzed newspaper articles in the same order as they appear in text

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