From 'Operation Cast lead" to "Operation Swords of Iron": A case study of naming and framing in "The Question of Palestine."

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Abstract:
This study explores the ideological embedding of the UN position on the enduring Palestinian-Israeli conflict, referred to on the UN website as "*The Question of Palestine*". It specifically examines press releases issued by two consecutive Secretary Generals in response to four major Israeli attacks on Gaza strip; namely: *Operation Cast Lead* (2008), *Operation Pillar of Defense* (2012), *Operation Protective Edge* (2014), and Operation *Swords of Iron* (2023). Those press releases are sampled because they are carefully phrased to frame perspective and stance. Employing a qualitative, descriptive approach, the study scrutinizes how those press releases articulate the UN value systems, via lexical, syntactic, and discourse choices. The analysis is anchored in Wodak's (2015) Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), specifically how naming, predication and framing unveil the ideological assumptions of the international organization. The findings highlight the frequent use of generic nouns, and nominalization to obscure agency as prevalent nomination strategies. Predication strategies indicate an asymmetrical stance towards the conflicting parties, with more emotionally charged modifiers applied to one side over the other. Additionally, the texts of the press releases frame the international organization as one that prioritizes upholding order and international laws over efforts to stop violence, restrain the aggressor, or denounce the attacker. This study sheds light on the underlying ideologies within the international organization, offering insights into subsequent UN resolutions and actions. Furthermore, it contributes to the literature on this highly polarized issue, providing a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play in the international discourse surrounding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.
keywords: Question of Palestine, UN ideologies, press releases, discourse historical approach

دراسة حالة عن التسمية والتأطير في "مسألة فلسطين" من "عملية الرصاص المصبوب" إلى "عملية السيوف الحديدية"

الملخص:

تهدف الدراسة إلى الكشف عن التوجهات الأيديولوجية في موقف الأمم المتحدة تجاه الصراع الفلسطيني-الإسرائيلي المستمر، والذي يُشار إليه على موقع الأمم المتحدة بـ "مسألة فلسطين". وتتناول الدراسة بشكل خاص البيانات الصحفية الصادرة عن أمينين عامين للمنظمة الدولية وذلك رداً على أربع هجمات إسرائيلية رئيسية على قطاع غزة وهي: عملية الرصاص المصبوب (2008)، عملية عمود السحاب (2012)، عملية الجرف الصامد (2014)، وأحدثها عملية السيوف الحديدية (2023). تم اختيار هذه البيانات الصحفية لأنها مُصاغة بعناية لتعكس المنظور والموقف وذلك باستخدام منهجية نوعية وصفية حيث تفحص الدراسة كيف تُعبر هذه البيانات الصحفية عن النظام القيمي للأمم المتحدة من خلال الاختيارات اللفظية، والنحوية، والخطابية. يرتكز التحليل على منهجية تحليل الخطاب التاريخي لووداك (2015)، وتحديداً كيف تكشف استراتيجيات التسمية، والتوصيف، والتأطير عن الافتراضات الأيديولوجية للمنظمة الدولية. تبرز النتائج الاستخدام المتكرر للأسماء العامة، واستخدام المصدر لإخفاء المسؤولية كاستراتيجيات تسمية سائدة كما يشير استخدام استراتيجيات التوصيف إلى موقف غير متماثل تجاه الأطراف المتنازعة، مع استخدام أوصاف عاطفية أكثر قوة لطرف على حساب الآخر. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تؤطر نصوص البيانات الصحفية المنظمة الدولية كمنظمة تركز على الحفاظ على النظام والقوانين الدولية على حساب جهود وقف العنف، وتقييد المعتدي، واستنكار المهاجم. تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على الأيديولوجيات الكامنة داخل المنظمة الدولية، مقدمةً رؤى حول قرارات وإجراءات الأمم المتحدة اللاحقة. وعلاوة على ذلك، تساهم في الأدبيات المتعلقة بهذا الموضوع شديد الاستقطاب، مما يُسهم في الوصول لفهم أعمق للديناميكيات التي تلعب دوراً في الخطاب الدولي حول الصراع الفلسطيني-الإسرائيلي.

From 'Operation Cast lead" to "Operation Swords of Iron": A case study of naming and framing in "The Question of Palestine."

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1. Introduction:

This paper investigates the ideological dynamics embedded within the United Nations (UN) discourse on the Palestinian- Israeli conflict, officially termed by the UN as "*The Question of Palestine*". Specifically, it examines how the dimensions of the conflict are named, described, and framed in the press releases of two consecutive UN Secretary-Generals- Ban Ki-moon and António Guterres respectively- during four major Israeli military operations in Gaza: *Operation Cast Lead* (2008), *Operation Pillar of Defense* (2012), *Operation Protective Edge* (2014), and *Operation Swords of Iron* (2023). These press releases are selected for analysis because they are meticulously crafted to reflect the UN's stance and perspective on the conflict.

The study employs a qualitative, descriptive methodology to scrutinize these press releases, focusing on the lexical, syntactic, and discursive choices made in this genre of discourse. The analysis is anchored in Wodak's (2015) Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), which provides a robust framework for understanding how discursive strategies reveal underlying ideological assumptions. This study focuses on the strategies of naming, predication, and framing to uncover how the UN's language reflects and constructs its ideological stance on the conflict.

The researcher postulates that press releases employ specific naming strategies that frame the conflict in particular ways, reflecting the organization's ideological positions. By examining those specific linguistic choices, the study reveals the nuanced ways in which the UN articulates its position on the Palestinian- Israeli conflict. For instance, the choice of terms like "operation" versus "attack," or "militant" versus "terrorist," can significantly influence the framing of events and the perceived legitimacy of actions taken by the involved parties. Predication strategies further attribute certain qualities and actions to these actors, which encode ideological underpinnings. Furthermore, the study explores how syntactic structures, such as passive constructions, can obscure

agency and responsibility, thereby subtly shaping the narrative. Framing strategies are crucial in shaping the overall narrative presented in the press releases. By emphasizing certain events, downplaying others, or contextualizing actions within broader historical or moral frameworks, the UN constructs a narrative that aligns with its ideological commitments.

By applying DHA discursive strategies to the data set, this study not only examines the immediate linguistic resources of the press releases but also situates them within a broader socio-political context. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how the UN's discourse reflects and perpetuates certain ideological stances. The findings of this study contribute to the broader field of critical discourse analysis by providing insights into the complex relationship between language, ideology, and international diplomacy. They underscore the role of language in shaping perceptions and influencing the global discourse on contentious issues such as the Palestinian- Israeli conflict.

2. Background:
2.1.   "The Question of Palestine"

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is considered one of the longest, if not the longest, disputes in modern history. Starting back in 1917 with Balfour Declaration, promising "a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine", then under the British mandate, this unlawful occupation has been the focus of national and international interest for over a century, with extreme positions and ideologies adopted by different concerned (and unconcerned) parties. This century-long dispute has attracted the attention of scholars from as diverse disciplines as political science, military studies, psychology, linguistics, to name just a few. With every wave of resistance by the Palestinian people, and a counter wave of armed oppression by Israel, a plethora of studies are produced, attempting to analyze, investigate and draw conclusions.

Since Israel's 2005 unilateral disengagement from Gaza, the densely populated Palestinian strip, tensions have escalated. In 2006, Hamas's electoral victory in Gaza led to a series of military confrontations. Major operations include *Operation Cast Lead* in 2008, which resulted in substantial casualties and infrastructure damage, followed by *Operation Pillar of Defense* in 2012, aimed at halting rocket fire from Gaza. The 2014 *Operation Protective Edge* marked one of the deadliest conflicts, with significant loss of lives and extensive destruction in Gaza. Subsequent operations, such as the most recent *Swords of Iron*

2023 continued, exacerbating humanitarian crises. Israeli military assaults have been criticized for their disproportionate impact on Gaza's civilian population, highlighting the persistent and tragic nature of this enduring conflict.

The present study is instigated by the recent escalation in events in Gaza strip, following the October 7th attack of Hamas on the South of Israel, in response to the continuing provocations of the Israeli government and the ongoing suppression of the Gaza people. Following this sudden attack, the international community showed a new wave of concern about the situation in Gaza, especially with the rising inhumane attacks of the Israeli army on almost all vital infrastructures there. Calls for exercising military restraint, practicing self-control, and putting humanity over interests were heard from different corners of the world. What was particularly astonishing is that the majority of calls were directed at both the Israeli and the Palestinian parties alike, not considering the military power imbalance and the inequality in claims of rights. The calls and comments on the current situation could not be seen as mere grandiloquence, but rather direct instantiation of deeply rooted ideologies adopted by their producers.

2.2.   Ideology and language

Ideology encompasses a network of interconnected beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions that shape how groups visualize the world. Ideologies are hardly individual constructs but rather "mental representations shared by, and distributed over, the members of social collectivities (Augoustinos 2017; Fraser and Gaskell 1990; Hamilton 2005; Jones and Collins, 2006, Simpson, 1993). van Dijk reiterates this saying that "[i]n the same way as there are no private or personal languages, there are no personal ideologies" (2013, p.177). van Dijk contends that "[I]deologies … are belief systems that are only *shared by specific (ideological) groups of people*… hence are typically persuasively attacked and defended among members of different ideological groups" (p.177). As put by Wodak (2015)

> From the point of view of the DHA, ideology is defined as an (often) one-sided perspective or worldview composed of related mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes, and evaluations. Ideologies are shared by members of specific social groups. Ideologies serve as an important means of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations through discourse (p. 7).

Language and ideology are profoundly interconnected, with language serving as a vehicle for ideological expression and

reinforcement (Fairclough, 2013). Similarly, van Dijk (2013) postulates that "Ideologies are largely acquired, spread, and reproduced by text and talk" (p. 175), where "ideological discourse usually exhibits the polarized structures of underlying attitudes and ideologies", featuring in "all levels of discourse, from the surface levels of sounds and visual structures, syntax, and the lexicon, on the one hand, to the underlying semantic and pragmatic levels of meaning and action" (p. 180). Ideologies shape discourse, influencing societal norms and perceptions, while discourse, in turn, can perpetuate or challenge these ideologies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). For instance, media language often embeds ideological assumptions, subtly shaping public opinion and reinforcing existing power structures (Richardson & Burridge; 2014). Thus, understanding the relationship between language and ideology is crucial for uncovering the underlying power dynamics in communication.

Drawing on the prominent role of discourse in ideological representation, the present study investigates the discourse practices of two consecutive UN Secretary Generals on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with special focus on the conflict in Gaza over the past two decades, adopting Wodak (2015) Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), which is briefly elaborated in the following section.

2.3. Theoretical Framework: Discourse Historical Approach:

DHA is a field of study that falls under the umbrella of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Working along the same lines of thought pioneered by Fairclough (1995, 2002), van Dijk (2006), van Eemeren (2010), Ruth Wodak (2001, 2006, 2009, 2015) developed her model of analysing discourse using a triangulated approach, lending due importance to both the macro sociopolitical context as much as the micro discourse context. The Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) has been integrated with ethnographic methods to explore identity politics and decision-making patterns within EU organizations. This combination provides valuable insights into the "backstage" of politics (Wodak, 2011).

In her model, Wodak identifies five strategies that are employed in the discursive construction of discourse. Datondji and Amousou (2019) define strategy as "systematic ways of using language" (p.78), adopted in order to achieve a particular social, political, psychological, or linguistic goal (Wodak, 2001). According to Wodak, these discursive strategies are: i) referential/ nomination; ii) predication; iii) argumentation; iv) perspectivation, framing, or discourse representation; and v) intensification and metigation (2006, p.73).

Referential and nomination strategies are concerned with how the major social actors and events are named or categorized. Linguistically, this nomination is encoded in deictics, anthroponyms, metaphors, use of verbs and processes. Predication, as the name implies, denotes how the actors or events are positively or negatively labelled, which is linguistically achieved through the use of explicit predicates or predicative adjectives, implicatures and rhetorical figures. Framing is concerned with the positioning of the speaker's point of view, which reflects the degree of engagement. This is particularly encoded in the use of either direct, indirect, or free indirect speech. Intensification and metigation relate to the force of the utterances given by the speaker. The use of diminutives, tag questions, vague expressions, hyperboles, indirect speech acts are all linguistic devices that are employed to that effect. The final discursive strategy is argumentation. This strategy is based on the use of the concept of a "topos" (pl. topoi). Kienpointner (2001) defines "topoi" as "parts of argumentation which belong to the obligatory, either explicit or inferable premises and used extensively in all forms of persuasive speeches. This study primarily focuses on the use of the nomination, predication and framing discursive strategies.

2.4. Press Releases:

Press releases are official statements issued to the media to provide information, make announcements, or offer an official position on specific issues. Hamelink (1990) defines press releases as a sub-genre of international communication to the mass audience. (p. 144). According to Jacobs (1999), a press release is "a written communication directed at members of the news media for the purpose of announcing something ostensibly newsworthy." Functionally, press releases aim to shape public perception, manage reputation, and influence media coverage (Lassen, 2006).

Thematically, press releases often cover a range of topics including corporate announcements, public relations campaigns, and responses to crises. Structurally, they typically adhere to a standardized format consisting of a headline, a lead paragraph summarizing the key message, and subsequent paragraphs providing detailed information, quotes, and a boilerplate about the issuing organization (Suda & Miyabe, 2013). This structure ensures clarity and facilitates the quick dissemination of information by journalists.

Stylistically, press releases employ formal and concise language, with an emphasis on factual reporting and an authoritative tone. According to Choi (2012), the choice of language in press releases is strategic, designed to convey credibility and reliability. In media studies, press

releases are analyzed for their role in framing news stories and shaping media agendas (Barnett, 2005). Overall, press releases are a critical tool in media relations, balancing informative content with strategic communication goals. These stylistic features that make UN press releases a convenient sample of the international discourse on the Palestinian-Israeli.

3. Review of Literature:

This section reviews the literature along two main strands. On the one hand, it elucidates linguistically oriented studies that have been conducted on press releases as a discourse genre, with special reference to CDA-based studies. On the other hand, the researcher elaborates on the use of DHA as a framework for analyzing UN or other international organizations discourse samples.

Analyzing press releases and international organizations discourse as two genres anchored in political discourse has garnered considerable attention from researchers across various disciplines, each approaching the analysis from distinct perspectives. These studies range from thematic analyses to explorations of linguistic structures. Notable works such as those by Antico et al. (2023), Azhar et al. (2020), Barnett (2005), Choi (2012), Davis et al. (2006), Ferrigno et al. (2023), Horsley et al. (2020), Jacobs (1999), Lassen (2006), Sleurs et al. (2003), and Suda & Miyabe (2013) thoroughly examine the content, functionality, and linguistic strategies employed in press releases. These researchers investigate how press releases, different samples of UN discourse, or the discourse of other international organizations are used to frame particular positions or stances, reflecting the strategic communication objectives of their producers.

While many of these studies fall under the domains of public relations, communication, or political science (hence fall beyond the scope of the present study), there is a significant body of research that adopt a more linguistic and critical discourse analytic orientation. These studies delve deeper into the nuanced ways language is used to construct and convey ideological stances.

Adopting a mixed-method approach, Domingo (2022) examines 60 online press release headlines to highlight the tone of the UNICEF press releases in the Philippines, Thailand, and United States. Results show that headlines from the Philippines had a committed tone, where "authors from this country present their headlines to their readers with a reasonable and analytical attitude…. Like the headlines from the Philippines, Thailand press release headlines have *committed* as the majority tone.On

the other hand, USA press releases have a *neutral tone* as the majority tone. The authors of the headlines from this country aim to present their headlines in a neutral tone, that is, to use a voice or voices and present these in unbiased ways and write without a particular point of view" (p.50)

Employing transitivity as a tool of analysis, Eladly (2022) analyzes the 2020-2021 news press releases of the refugees' agencies: UNCHR, USCRI, and the UK refugee council. The data set consists of 206 press releases and is investigated adopting a mixed-method approach. Findings show that meaning making is instantiated through material processes. The study also concludes that "the raised meaning potentialities are mostly identified through 'tenor' where the interpersonal relations are determined though the registered variations" (p.55).

Azhar et al. (2020) have conducted a Systemic Functional Grammar-based analysis of Pakistani Elite Forces' press release (and press conference) following the Special Court decision indicting the former Pakistani President Pervez. The study primarily focuses on how transitivity, nominalization and passivization affected listeners' ideology, with special focus on "the various discursive practices employed by the writer of the press release and speaker of press conference in response to special court judgment" (p. 12). Results demonstrate that nominalization and passivization in the press release are strategically utilized to maintain objectivity and impersonalize criticism. Additionally, the analysis of transitivity in material processes indicates that elite forces are depicted as actors in positive activities, whereas the court is described as the actor in negative actions.

Yang (2018) adopts van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach of CDA to analyze the Taiwan president's press releases (2014) against the students-led Sunflower movement. The author concludes that "[T]hree themes were revealed from the presidential press releases: discourse representing US versus THEM (Taiwan versus other Asian countries), persuasive strategies (direct quotes from elites and experts and the rule of three), and from the rational to the emotional…. The sources of power and dominance are unfolded from the discourse of the press releases, particularly the utilization of positive evaluation of US and negative terms describing THEM" (p. 141).

Bhatia (2006) employs critical discourse analysis to examine a data set of 20 political press conferences between different political leaders dating from 2001 to 2003. The study aims "to undertake a detailed investigation of the way political speakers negotiate and maintain face

work when interacting with each other in such contexts, while highlighting the nature and function of political press conferences" (p.178). In this study, Bhatia examines the generic structure and thematic content of press conferences. Findings show that there are four major sequences: "the opening sequence, the individual voices, the interactional sequence, and the closing sequence" (p. 179). On the other hand, thematic analysis yields three broad themes, which Bhatia identify as 'positivity', 'influence and power' and 'evasion'.

D'Acquisto's (2017) work on the linguistic analysis of UN resolutions on the "Question of Palestine" directly relates to the present study. In her book, the author examines a corpus of 66 Security Council resolutions and 40 General Assembly resolutions from 1948 to 2006, with special focus on the role of modal verbs and modality. Informed by Halliday and Matthiessen's (2013) Systemic Functional Grammar and Fairclough's (1995, 2001, 2013) Critical Discourse Analysis, the author contends that "the linguistic investigation refers to the use of prescriptive and performative verbs to express different degrees of obligation in the documents of the United Nations" (p.2). Findings of the study identify characteristic syntactic and stylistic features of the resolutions: "[t]he structure of Resolutions consists of the name of the authorizing body followed by subordinate sentences beginning with *-ing* form, *-ed* participles and a series of finite performative verbal constructions in the present simple tense" (p.19).

Intrigued by the 'vagueness' of UN resolutions and using the same analytical framework of the present study, Scotto di Carlo (2013) examines the 'intentional vagueness" of the UN Security Council resolutions regarding the Second Gulf War, in the light of Wodak (2001, 2009) DHA and the use of AntConc and Sketch Engine for the quantitative analysis. The study demonstrates how strategically employed vagueness significantly contributes to the outbreak of the war and influences the legislative measures enacted by the U.S. Congress to authorize the conflict, and that "the UN preferred to use phrases that could be collocated at a low level of a scale of gravity and vague expressions" (p. 706).

Equally interested in UN resolutions, and the interplay between power and hegemony in legal-diplomatic discourse, Hassaballah (2022) employs Bhatia's Move Analysis model and Fowler's checklist (lexical processes, transitivity, syntax, modality, and speech acts) to reveal how power and hegemony are reflected in the use of certain linguistic patterns and the

specific organisation of the legal-diplomatic discourse, in particular the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) resolutions and the (International Court of Justice) ICJ on the armed conflict and the proliferation of weapons. Findings of the study highlight three main moves of resolutions, namely: "arguing the case, deriving ratio decidendi [i.e the rule of law], and pronouncing judgement/ declaring the resolution". On the other hand, from a transitivity perspective, the choice of certain verbs in UNSC resolutions and ICJ decisions reveals that these entities engage in Material, Mental, and Verbal Processes, positioning themselves as Actor, Senser, and Sayer. Secondary participants are framed as Goal, Phenomenon, and Receiver, illustrating a powerful-powerless dynamic. Nominalization and passivization obscure the roles of participants. Additionally, functionalization reflects power and hegemony in the lexicon, as UN texts avoid personal pronouns like "I," "we," and "you," instead representing individuals by their social roles rather than personal names (pp. 23-26).

The application of the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) as a framework for analyzing various political discourse genres is well attested in the literature. Weisi and Dastyar (2024) examine, via a qualitative content analysis, how members of the UN Human Rights Council frame discussions about political figures in Iran following the death of Jina Amini's in 2022. Specifically, they analyze the speeches delivered by council members advocating for the establishment of a fact-finding mission to impartially investigate the events in Iran. Drawing on DHA, the study scrutinizes the discursive tactics employed by different representative states to portray Iranian political figures. Analysis of the data reveals a prevalence of predication and argumentation strategies among speakers, with varying approaches depending on their stance towards Iranian political actors. Furthermore, the study shows that "the most common topoi employed by the three groups included the topoi of humanitarianism and justice; however, each group applied these topoi for different aims and purposes" (p.18)

In his study using DHA as an 'analytical apparatus', Assaiqeli (2020) examines the UN resolutions 242 and 338 to highlight the discursive strategies, and lexicogrammatical selections deployed in these texts, with the ultimate goal of underscoring "the role of UN discourse on the Palestine Question in the realities of the conflict, the status of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and Right of Return to their homeland" (p.6). Results suggest that passivization, the use of modality, and the use of empty signifiers are the most frequent linguistic

realizations of the discourse strategies of empowering Israel, obscuring causal agency, and creating false impressions (pp. 16-17).

Alemi & Rajabi (2018) have conducted a DHA-based analysis of the UN General Assembly addresses given by two Iranian presidents (Rouhani and Ahmadinejad) in 2012 and 2013 respectively. They aim to unveil the presidential identity projected at the UN international meeting and their stances towards global issues. The researchers use the discursive strategy of *topoi* to illicit the study's objectives. Results demonstrate a balanced use of intrinsic and extrinsic topoi. Moreover, they conclude that "the use of pronoun 'I' can be a way to project a personal identity by political activists" (p. 14) and emphasized "the role of topoi in uncovering the ideologies of politicians in their public speeches" (p.2).

Boukala (2016) examines Greek media coverage of the Madrid 2004 and London 2005 terrorist attacks, in the construct of DHA, and with special reference to the role of topoi in framing public opinion. The Greek media portrayal of 'Islamist terrorism' contribute to the delineation of an in-group ('us', comprising Europeans and Greeks depicted as superior, innocent, and potential victims) and an out-group ('them', characterized as terrorists, fanatics, inferiors, and enemies). This discursive dichotomy is facilitated by the application of the topos of threat (Reisigl and Wodak, 2005: 77), exerting significant influence over the discourse in all data set.

In a study conducted by Wodak herself in (2006), she investigates the FPO petition "Austria first," employing her developed discursive strategies to identify elements of 'discriminatory discourse. Through her examination, she illustrates the prevalence of the burden topos, wherein the FPO suggests that non-native German speakers in Austrian schools pose a significant hindrance to the education of Austrian children, often combined with themes of threat and cultural preservation.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the present study is one of the first linguistic studies to be conducted on press releases, in relation to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It addresses the gap in examining this genre within the context of the United Nation discourse on Palestine.
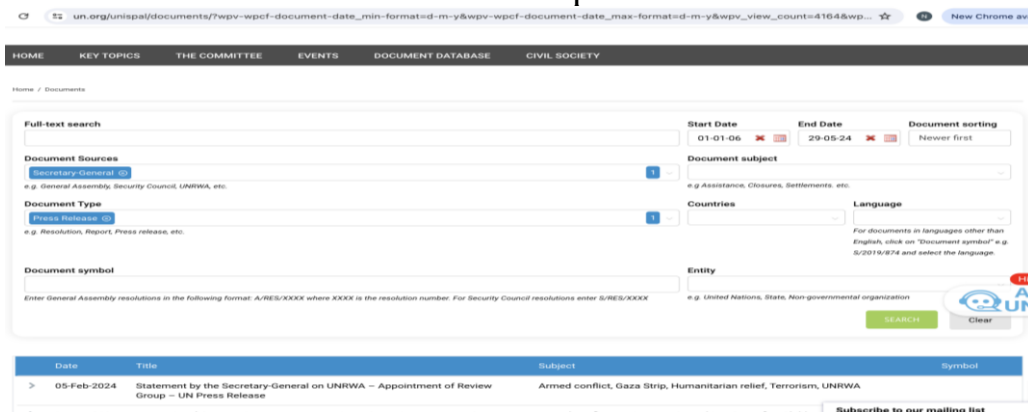
4. Methodology

4.1. Data collection procedure

The data for this study is set of the press releases issued by two consecutive UN Secretary Generals over the period from 2008 until the present moment, more specifically the press releases that were issued in the aftermath of four major Israeli attacks on Gaza strip. These are *Operation Cast Lead* (December 27, 2008- January, 18, 2009), *Operation Pillar of Defense* (November, 14, 2012-Novemeber, 21, 2012), *Operation*

Protective Edge (July, 8, 2014- August, 26, 2014), and the most recent one *Operation Swords of Iron* (October, 7, 2023-present). Names of the operations, their dates, and the subsequent press releases were all retrieved from the United Nations website sub-section https://www.un.org/unispal/ entitled "The Question of Palestine". Press releases are particularly chosen since they represent a convenient sample (in terms of length, compared to addresses, speeches, and resolutions) of the ideologies, values, and stance dynamics of the organization, issued by the spokesperson of the highest-ranking official (the Secretary General).

To filter the data, the researcher used the 'document database' section of "The Question of Palestine", selecting the *press release* as 'document type', secretary *general* as 'document source', and choosing the time range from 1st of January 2006 to present time as shown in figure 1 below. It is worth noting the 2006 was chosen as this is the year when Hamas won the elections to run Gaza strip.
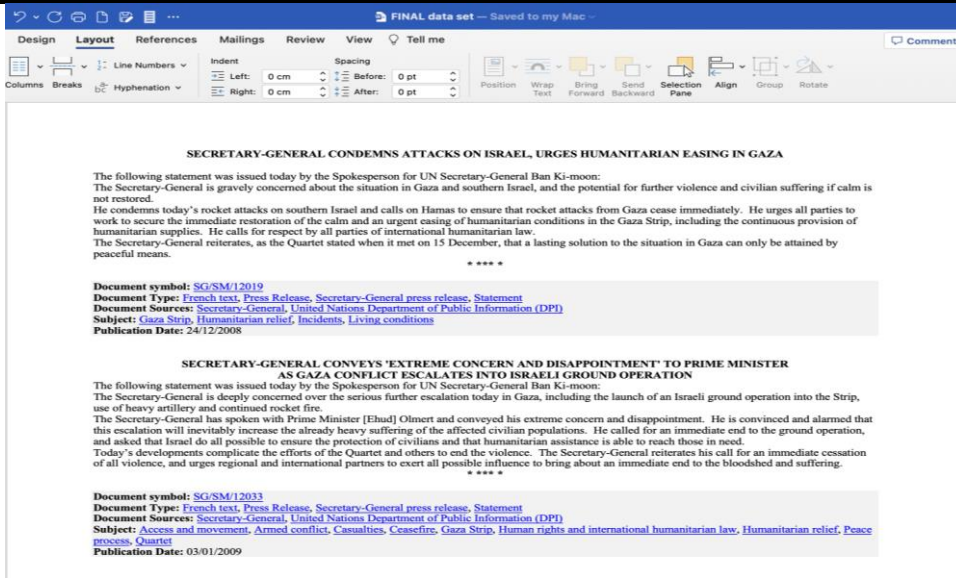

Fig. 1 Screenshot of the search and filtration procedure on the UN website

As shown in Figure 1, the search results appear in the form of a table with a column citing the date of the press release, another giving the link to its transcript, and a third coding the subjects of the release.

Following the search and filtration process, all press releases that were issued during the attack and in its aftermath are copied in a word document as shown in Figure 2. Needless to highlight that press releases usually begin at the start of the assault/ operation and does not stop until a cease fire is attained.

Fig. 2 Screenshot of two sample press releases copied from the UN website.

The total number of press releases is 25, with the following distribution (Table 1) for each military operation. It is worth noting here that three out of the four data sets show similar numbers of press releases, whereas the press releases pertaining to *Operation Protective Edge* outnumbered all the others. This, however, would not tamper with the results, where both the holistic analysis and the discursive strategies analysis would not be affected by this inconsistency. Equally important to note that other UN documents, issued concerning these operations (e.g., resolutions, addresses to the UN General Assembly or Security Council, press conferences, reports, briefing) fall beyond the scope of the present study's data set.

Table 1 *Number of press releases following each military assault.*

Military assault	# of press related releases
Operation Cast Lead	3
Operation Pillars of Defense	3
Operation Protective Edge	13
Operation Swords of Iron	6

The researcher would like to highlight a notational convention for reference to the press releases. As clear from the screenshot on figure 2, each press release is followed by a number of identifying information details. For ease of access, the researcher refers to the press release under analysis using the *publication date*. This is particularly helpful since it

links each press release to the one military assault after which it is issued. Normally, there would be more than one press release following the assault, but they would still be discernable considering the year gaps between each one and the following one. So, for example, the first set of press releases would be issued over December 2008, and January 2009. The second set would be issued over November 2012, the third over July and August 2014, and the fourth starting October 2023 until the present time.

Two points are worth highlighting. First, although the press releases are verbally produced, tone of voice, intonation, body language, and other paralinguistic features fall beyond the scope of the study. In fact, this could be a seed for future research. Second, as well documented, there were multiple unjustified Israeli attacks on Gaza strip during that period of time (2006-2024), but the ones under study are the ones that were described by the UN official website as "massive military assault/operation".

4.2. Theoretical framework

4.2.1. DHA

As highlighted in Section 2.3., Wodak's (2015) Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) informs the procedures of analysis of the data. DHA is chosen as a theoretical model of analysis since it is one of those CDA-anchored models that pay due attention to the historical context of producing texts (press releases in our case). In her model, Wodak makes a clear distinction between discourse and text, with discourse being more comprehensive and encompassing, while texts are considered components of discourses. She contended that discourse is "a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices… it is topic related, that is discourse on x" (pp.89-90), where X here would be 'The Question of Palestine'. Additionally, the 'triangulated approach' employed would allow researcher to examine the data from multiple perspectives, leading to findings that would be both reliable and feasible.

In DHA, three dimensions are central: the content of the data, the discursive strategies employed (see Section 2.3), and the linguistic realization of these contents and strategies. The analysis covers all three dimensions, with special reference to the discursive strategies of naming, predication, and framing. These are particularly selected due to the length of the press releases (mean average length 150 words), where the lexical choices are more significantly represented. Examining the use of topoi would have necessitated much longer texts to trace the use of argumentation.

4.3. Procedures of analysis

The study adopts a DHA-based analysis of the data under investigation. As contended by van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999), "[T]hree dimensions are central to the discourse-historical method: the content of the data, the discursive strategies employed, and the linguistic realization of these contents and strategies" (p.89). In the present study, the researcher is particularly informed by Wodak's (2018) analysis of the Bloomberg Speech on Brexit by former prime minister Tony Blair. In the light of the three-dimensional approach of DHA, Wodak sets off by first detecting the "macro-topics and related subtopics", then, second, understanding the "aim of the text producer", and finally identifying "the different strategies and linguistic devices used to realize the intended meaning" (p.4). Along the same lines, the present study sets off with identifying the macro-topics and subtopics of the press releases. The second section of the Results would focus on eliciting the discursive and linguistic strategies employed.

5. Results

5.1. Macro-topics:

A holistic content analysis of all press releases has yielded a number of topics, and subtopics that prevail across almost all of them. Before reviewing these topics, the researcher would like to note that the *absence* of certain topics is as indexical of ideologies and stances as the *presence* of others. To elaborate, whereas appealing to Israeli government to alleviate the damages incurred by assaults is present in those press releases, appealing for stopping the assault (rather an appeal for ceasefire) is not equally present. This clearly reflects the UN position towards both the Government of Israel and the whole Palestinian (Gazan) predicament. The most frequently recurring topics of those releases could be summarized as follows:

5.1.1. Concern about aggravating situation:

As commonly known (and even joked about), the most prevalent topic in all press releases is the expression of 'concern' by the UN highest-ranked official, Secretary General. This concern is usually about the rising toll of injuries and deaths. More often than not, the concern is equally distributed about the situation in both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides (notwithstanding the attacker and the victim respective responsibility). Examples 1 to 4 are sample expressions of concern found in all the data set.

1. "The Secretary-General is gravely concerned about the situation in Gaza and southern Israel, and the potential for further violence and civilian suffering if calm is not restored" (24/12/2008)"
2. The Secretary-General is greatly concerned by the new wave of violence in Gaza and southern Israel, which has resulted in several Palestinian deaths, including civilians, and wounded people on both sides. He deplores the loss of life and calls for an immediate de-escalation of tensions" (12/11/2012).
3. The Secretary-General is alarmed that, despite the Security Council's clear demand for a ceasefire, the situation in and around the Gaza Strip appears to be worsening, with grave implications for the safety of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians (13/07/2014)
4. "The Secretary-General is deeply concerned for the civilian population and urges maximum restraint. Civilians must be respected and protected in accordance with international humanitarian law at all times" (7/10/2023).

5.1.2. Condemning attacks:

This topic is as prevalent among the four data sets as the previous one. A key characteristic of this condemnation is that it is addressed to the Israeli and the Palestinian Hamas almost equally (examples 5-8). This feature of equating between Israel (the principal aggressor) and Hamas or Palestinian people is similarly instantiated in the sub-topic of showing concern about both parties equally (examples 9 and 10).

5. "The Secretary-General condemns the Israel Defense Forces firing on a United Nations aid convoy in Gaza" (8/1/2009).
    The situation in and around the Gaza Strip appears to be worsening, with grave implications for the safety of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians (13/7/2014)
7. "The Secretary-General condemns in the strongest terms the reported violation by Hamas of the mutually agreed humanitarian ceasefire" (1/8/2014)
8. "The Secretary-General condemns in the strongest terms this morning's attack by Hamas against Israeli towns near the Gaza Strip and central Israel, including the firing of thousands of rockets towards Israeli population centres (7/10/2023)
9. ""The Secretary-General has condemned in the strongest terms the 26 May air strikes on Rafah hitting tents sheltering displaced people" (28/5/2024)

6.1.1. Appeal for securing humanitarian supplies:

Regardless of the brevity of the release, this topic prevails across almost all press releases where much emphasis is put on the importance and the source of these supplies (neighboring countries, UN-led agencies, Red Cross, etc.). Examples 10-12 instantiates this topic.

10. "He urges all parties to work to secure the immediate restoration of the calm and an urgent easing of humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip, including the continuous provision of humanitarian supplies" (24/12/2008).
11. "He asks the parties to do their utmost to ensure the protection of civilians and United Nations premises and staff, and that humanitarian assistance continues to reach all those in need" (17/7/2014)
12. "He asks the parties to do their utmost to ensure the protection of civilians and United Nations premises and staff, and that humanitarian assistance continues to reach all those in need" (4/12/2023).

6.1.2. Call for ceasefire and respect for international humanitarian laws:

This topic features in the majority of press releases, where the spokesman of the Secretary General calls upon concerned parties (Palestinians and Israelis) to abide by their obligation to such overarching laws, as shown in examples below:

13. "All sides must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law in this regard" (16/11/2012)
14. "I once again stress to all sides that they must abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law to respect the sanctity of civilian life, the inviolability of UN premises and to honour their obligations to humanitarian workers" (24/7/2014).
15. The Secretary-General calls once again for an immediate ceasefire in order to facilitate full and unhindered humanitarian access (8/1/2009)
16. The Secretary-General reiterates his demand for an immediate ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages (28/5/2024)

As shown, the identified topics recur consistently among the four data sets. Although those press releases are issued on quite different dates

along 16 years, the content and the major points are quite unchanged over this long period of time.

5.2.   Micro-analysis:

According to Wodak, the aim of the producer of the text constitutes a principal pillar of the discourse historical analytic approach, where aims range from persuading the audience, to telling a story, or reporting facts. The main objective of all those press releases is mainly to report on the stance of the international organization towards the century-long conflict. The researcher contends that this reflects how press releases, as a sub-genre of political media communication, instantiates the ideologies and value systems of the organization which issues them. Needless to mention that few of the releases, as shown in the examples above, intends to have a persuasive function, when it comes to appealing for a ceasefire, to no avail.

5.2.1 Discursive strategies:

As defined earlier in the study, discursive strategies within DHA refer to the linguistic practices employed in the discourse; these practices are informed by underlying ideologies, are systematic, and are discursively placed within the broader sociocultural and political context. Within the framework of DHA, specific lexico-grammatical resources function as the realization of these strategies, each carrying a particular function. Wodak (2015) identifies five main discursive strategies, cited above in section 2.3. As highlighted in section 4.2.1., three out of the five would inform the analysis: nomination/ referential strategy, predication, and framing/ perspectivization.

5.2.1.1.   Nomination/ Referential strategy:

As with all critical discourse models and approaches, naming (nomination/ referential strategy in Wodak's (2009) terms) plays a crucial role in identifying the ideological stance of the text producer. Referential and nomination strategies focus on the naming and categorization of key social actors and events. Linguistically, this nomination is expressed through noun phrases, deictics, metaphors, the use of verbs, and various processes.

The first ideological-laden referential strategy is the recurrent use of generic nouns to refer to aspects of the conflict, so as to downplay their gravity. Although not an intrinsic part of the data sets, the name used on the UN website to refer to this longstanding conflict would be a clear example. Using the typically generic phrase "The Question of Palestine" elucidates how the international organization opts to project this century-long conflict, with all the recurrent attacks and assaults, as a "question",

which stands as a typically neutral term, in comparison to the "crisis of Palestine", for example. This ideology of using generic nouns similarly features in a myriad of examples, including, but not limited to: the use of 'the situation' to refer to a catastrophe; 'conflict' instead of assault, 'incidents' instead of killing; 'further action' instead of further military operations; 'military action' instead of military assaults; 'ongoing violence' to refer to the Israeli attacks; 'political dispute between Israelis and Palestinians' to refer to the occupation of the Palestinian lands, and 'persons in need' to refer to Palestinian casualties. It is worth noting, however, that the current UN Secretary General press releases are moderately more direct in using noun phrases, referring to the situation in Gaza. Instances of this directness include the use of "humanitarian catastrophe" and "catastrophic humanitarian situation". This directness is also shown in referring to the Israeli Defense forces attack in example (43) below. Although these are still scarce instances, they might indicate a less-biased ideology.

Nominalization is another recurrent linguistic discursive strategy. Nominalization involves converting a process into a noun, making it definite, non-negotiable, and presupposed. Fairclough (2013) defines nominalization as "a process ... expressed as a noun, as if it were an entity. One effect of this grammatical form is that crucial aspects of the process are left unspecified" (51). Nominalization is commonly considered a potential site for ideology construction in texts, as it allows "habits of concealment" (Fowler 2013), and can also presuppose the existence of events or states. As contested in CDS, nominalization has one of two major functions: either it presupposes the existence of events and presents them as non-negotiable, or it diminishes the agency of the actor. The latter function features more prominently in the data set as with the following examples, nominalization is typed in bold.

17. "He is convinced and alarmed that this **escalation** will inevitably increase the already heavy **suffering** of the affected civilian populations. (3/1/2009).
18. "there had been a regrettable number of incidents involving the deaths of civilians, including the terrible **killing** of four Palestinian boys on a beach in Gaza City" (17/7/2014)
19. "The **blockade of and the closure** on Gaza must end" (26/7/2014)
    "I am deeply saddened by the reported **deaths** of more than ten members of the Dalu family, including women and children, and additional Palestinian civilians killed as a result of the ongoing

violence in the Gaza strip" (18/11/2012)

Indeed, this nullification of agency features prominently in the recurrent use of the passive structure in the texts. The passive structure is sometimes accompanied by the agent and the prepositional phrase headed with '*by*'. Contrastively, an outspoken reference to Hamas's responsibility is used as shown in the below examples. In terms of thematic structure, Hamas is fronted to lay emphasis on agency.

20. "Hamas' indiscriminate firing of rockets against Israeli civilian targets is a violation of international law" (13/7/2014)
21. "The Secretary-General has learned with concern that leaflets are reportedly being dropped by the Israeli Defense Forces in the northern Gaza Strip this evening" (28/7/2014)
22. "The Secretary-General condemns in the strongest terms this morning's attack by Hamas against Israeli towns near the Gaza Strip and central Israel" (7/10/2023)
23. "The Secretary-General condemns the strike this evening on Al Ahli Anglican Episcopal Hospital in Gaza, with preliminary reports of hundreds killed and many others wounded, including women and children" (17/10/2023)
24. "The Secretary-General has condemned in the strongest terms the 26 May air strikes on Rafah hitting tents sheltering displaced people. He is heartbroken by the images of the killed and injured, including many small children" (28/5/2024).
25. "With more than 800,000 people displaced from Rafah due to hostilities and evacuation orders since 6 May, the Secretary-General stresses that civilians must be protected" (26/5/2024)

It is worth noting that the few syntactic structures where the press release specifically attributes agency of the conflict to the Israelis is the one where the attack was on the UNRWA convoy, or when appealing for allowing the passage of humanitarian aids, or calling for investigation:

26. "The Secretary-General condemns the Israel Defense Forces firing on a United Nations aid convoy in Gaza" (8/1/2009)
27. "The United Nations is in close touch with the Israeli authorities about full investigation of this and other incidents" (8/1/2009)
28. "The Israeli authorities must allow, facilitate, and enable the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian supplies assistance to those in need and all crossing points must be open in

line with Security Council resolution 2720 (2023) (28/5/2024)

Other linguistic devices that fall under the referential/ nomination strategy such as deictics, metaphors, membership categorization hardly feature as significant ideologically laden linguistic resource. With the exception of using nationality categorization (Palestinians, Israelis), no other instances are found. As for metaphors, there are only two instances of metaphor. This could be explained in the light of the fact that these are press releases, which are mostly factual. Examples (29-30) illustrate the only instances of using metaphor across the whole data set.

29. "The Secretary-General is greatly concerned by the **new wave of violence** in Gaza and southern Israel" (12/11/2012)
30. "With the humanitarian operation near **collapse**, the Secretary-General emphasizes that the Israeli authorities must facilitate the safe pickup and delivery of humanitarian supplies from Egypt entering Kerem Shalom to those in need. (26/5/2024)

The following section examines how the second discursive strategy-predication- featured across the data.

5.2.1.2. Predication:

As identified by Wodak (2015), predication pertains to the question of "[w]hat characteristics, qualities, and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events, and processes?" (p. 12). The employed lexico-grammatical resources range from the use of "evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits (e.g., in the form of adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, etc.), to explicit predicates or predicative nouns/adjectives/ pronouns, or allusions, evocations, and presuppositions/ implicatures, as well as 'others' not specified by Wodak.

This discursive strategy is quite functional in the analysis since it clearly reflects the underlying ideologies within the press releases. It is significantly instrumental in unveiling the stance of the UN Secretary Generals towards the different aspects of the assaults, the responsibility of Israel towards the ongoing conflict, and the gravity of the Palestinian crisis. In this regard, the predication discursive strategy features in different lexico-grammatical patterns: participle phrases, apposition, relative clauses, as exemplified in the following extracts:

31. I am deeply **saddened** by the reported deaths of more than ten members of the Dalu family, including women and children (18/11/2012)
32. "**The Secretary-General, abhorring** the images of Israeli families hovering in shelters in fear for their children's safety, repeats his condemnation of Palestinian rockets fired from Gaza (13/7/2014).
    "The Secretary-General condemns in the strongest terms the reported violation by Hamas of the mutually agreed humanitarian ceasefire which commenced this morning. He is **shocked** and profoundly **disappointed** by these developments"
33. "The Secretary-General **is appalled** by reports that civilians have been attacked and abducted from their own homes (7/10/2023).

As clear from the above examples, the position of the two quoted Secretary Generals seems more outspoken when it comes to the Israeli civilians, where the evaluative attributes 'appalled' and abhorring' are used only in these two cases, whereas the rest of the data sets feature less strong expression of attitude as in 'concerned', 'alarmed' or 'disappointed'. Particularly significant is the comparison of the stance of UN Secretary General in example (31) versus example (32), where the death of women and children resulted in a 'sad' situation, whereas the images of families in shelters are 'abhorring'. This is further emphasized in the press release issued on the first day of the *Swords of Iron* operation, where the Secretary General was "appalled" by the report of attacks on Israelis.

Other predication devices pertain to the description of the status quo, following the attacks.

34. "With hundreds of Palestinians already killed in Gaza and **horrifying levels of physical destruction**, he urges those responsible to step back from provoking or inflicting yet more **tragic violence** on civilians there (28/7/2014).
35. "The inability of the United Nations to provide assistance in this **worsening humanitarian crisis** is unacceptable (8/1/2009)
36. "Seven weeks of hostilities in Gaza and Israel have taken an **appalling** toll that has shocked the world" (27/11/2023)
37.

With the exception of the last example above, all descriptions give equal importance to the situation on both sides, or to the situation in general, rather than specifying the more affected party.

5.2.1.3.   Framing/ Perspectivization:

The analysis of framing/ perspectivization strategies examines how speakers convey their involvement, position, or stance within a discourse. Through this discursive strategy, the speaker positions his/her points of view, expresses idea, frames, and represents discourse. Wodak contends that this strategy helps answer the question: "From what perspective are […] nominations, attributions, and arguments expressed?" (p.12). The analysis in Section 5.2.1.2 has already tapped on how predication helps frame the UN Secretary General's stance towards different aspects of the conflict.

Framing typically manifests in the use of deictics, discourse markers, modality, direct and indirect speech, and metaphors. Although personal deictics are used across the data, they hardly signify the classic 'US' versus 'THEM' dichotomy, regularly featuring in ideologically laden discourse. This can be explained in the light of the fact that the UN is supposed to be an un-biased international organization that stands on equal distance from all parties. As for the use of direct and indirect speech, the default syntactic pattern of press releases consistently features as instance of indirect speech, where the spokesperson of the UN Secretary General is the one who recites the release, with the following introductory sentence:

38. The following statement was issued today by the Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General (Name)

Looking at the data under investigation, the first linguistic device used for framing is the use of discourse markers as lexical resources for *equating* the Israelis and Palestinians with regards to the responsibility towards the conflict, the consequences, and the impact. Equating serves as an effective textual tool that enables a text producer to construct diverse perspectives, conveying the his/her ideologies. Equating can be realized either lexically via discourse markers or syntactically via parallelism.

39. "A new cycle of bloodshed will make **neither Israelis nor Palestinians** more secure" (16/11/2012)
40. It is time for **Israeli and Palestinian families alike** to feel a sense of peace and security, with trust in the other side, rather than fear, despair and hatred that characterize too much of the relationship in the current environment (13/7/2014)

41. **The hopes of the people in Gaza for a better future** and **the hopes of the people in Israel for sustainable security** rest on the talks in Cairo.(19/8/2014)

42. "These images make it clear that we owe to the people of **both Israel and Gaza** our renewed effort to consolidate this pause in fighting into a more sustainable ceasefire (26/7/2014).

43. The Secretary-General is extremely alarmed by the resumption of hostilities between Israel and Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups in Gaza, on 1 December, including **rocket fire towards Israel from Gaza** and **the renewal of ground operations** and **intensified airstrikes** by the Israel Defence Forces, increasingly in southern Gaza (4/12/2023)

As shown in the examples above, using 'and' as a discourse marker clearly equates between the victimization of Palestinians and Israelis, as if both are held equally responsible for the humanitarian catastrophe, disregarding the incomparable military capacity, let alone the power imbalance, and rights claim. Similarly, the use of parallel structures in example (43) creates equivalence between the destruction caused by rocket fire and that of "massive ground operations" and "intensified airstrikes" of one of the most powerful, fully military supported armies.

Modality is another linguistic resource used in framing. The present study primarily focuses on deontic modality which is "degree of obligation attaching to the performance of certain actions" (Simpson 1993: 47), with focus on the use of modal auxiliaries, which elucidate the speaker's view of the world and stance towards the ongoings. Examining the whole data set shows the use of 'must' 32 times, with 25 times mainly pertaining to obligations to international laws, passage of aids, respecting civilians, or political solutions, whereas the obligation to stop the killing, and the destruction featured 4 times directed at Hamas and Palestinians and 3 times at Israeli forces, whereas 'should' is used only once to calling on "all parties" to "avoid further escalation".

44. "[Hamas] Rocket attacks are unacceptable and **must** stop at once. Israel **must** exercise maximum restraint " (16/11/2012)

45. I am also alarmed by the continuing firing of rockets against Israeli towns, which has killed several Israeli civilians. This **must** stop (18/11/2012)

46. The dialogue that led to the agreement **must** continue (27/11/2023)

47. "We **must** also move forward with tangible and irreversible steps to create a political horizon (28/5/2024).

This use of deontic modality clearly frames the international organization as fundamentally committed to upholding order and adhering to international laws. While this focus could potentially contribute to maintaining peace, the pressing need to address the aggressive assaults, devastating consequences, and catastrophic loss of life suggests that prioritizing efforts to stop the bloodshed, restrain the aggressor, and condemn the attacker is of greater immediate importance.

One final point is worth noting: there is no instance of other lexical or syntactic realizations of deontic modality across the data, whether in the form of imperatives sentences, modal adjectives (such as necessary, obligatory, mandatory, etc.), or speech acts denoting obligation.

6. Discussion

The findings in Section 5 support the researcher's argument about the role of linguistic resources in unveiling the ideologies, value systems, and stance of the UN regarding "The *Question of Palestine"*. Employing the DHA as a model of analysis, the present study has explored the use of the three aforementioned discursive strategies of nomination, predication and framing in the construction and reflection of the underlying ideologies of the UN, as evidenced in the examined press releases. Results of the analysis reveal a number of discourse patterns that prevail across the data. This section reviews these patterns and also compares the findings to the existing literature.

The most significant discourse strategy is the de-agentalization of Israeli actions to obscure agency, thereby creating a more neutral tone that mitigates direct attribution of responsibility or blame. By transforming actions into abstract entities and using passive constructions, the press releases effectively distanced the UN from explicitly critiquing specific actors (except for Hamas). This approach not only unveiled the ideological underpinnings but also subtly influenced the audience's interpretation of events. This strategy is not only prevalent in terms of frequency of occurrence, but also in terms of employing the three discursive strategies of nominalization, predication and framing to achieve it. This has been linguistically realized via the use of de-verbal nouns, passivization, or agent deletion. These findings align with those of Azhar et al. (2020), and Hassaballah (2022) who both contend that the strategic utilization of nominalization and passivization is instrumental in preserving objectivity and depersonalizing criticism. These linguistic mechanisms are employed to obscure agency, and the role of participants.

Similarly intersecting with the present study is Assaiqeli's (2020) work, which employs the same analytical framework and addresses the Palestinian case. While this paper analyzes press releases, Assaiqeli's study focuses on UN Resolutions 242 and 338. Both studies agree that passivization and the use of modality are the predominant linguistic strategies employed to empower Israel and obscure causal agency.

In this context, the use of generic nouns in the examined press releases has been identified as a strategic tool, echoing Scotto di Carlo's (2013) findings. Scotto di Carlo emphasizes the role of "intentional vagueness" in UN Security Council resolutions, noting that "the UN preferred to use phrases that could be situated at a low level of a scale of gravity." This intentional vagueness serves to moderate the perceived severity of attacks or humanitarian situation.

Both the present study and D'Acquisto's (2017) recognize the functional use of modal verbs and modality. While the present study argues that the employment of modal auxiliaries primarily frames the UN as committed to its obligation towards international law and order rather than prioritizing the preservation of lives, D'Acquisto similarly identifies the use of various prescriptive and performative verbs in UN resolutions to express varying degrees of obligation related to "The Question of Palestine." These findings collectively underscore the significant role of modality in conveying institutional priorities and commitments within UN discourse.

This analysis contributes to the broader understanding of how international organizations like the UN use language to navigate complex political conflicts and project their ideological stances. It demonstrates that the language of diplomacy is not neutral but is imbued with ideological significance that can shape international perceptions and policy responses. By applying the Discourse Historical Approach, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the interplay between language, ideology, and power in the context of the conflict.

7. Conclusion

This study has investigated the ideological dynamics embedded within the United Nations (UN) discourse on the Palestinian- Israeli conflict, formally known by the UN as "the Question of Palestine." By analyzing the press releases of two successive UN Secretary-Generals during four major Israeli military operations in Gaza—*Operation Cast Lead* (2008), *Operation Pillar of Defense* (2012), *Operation Protective Edge* (2014), and *Operation Swords of Iron* (2023)—the study has illuminated how the

UN's language reflects and constructs its ideological stance on the conflict. The paper has scrutinized lexical, syntactic, and discursive choices in these press releases. Anchored in Wodak's (2015) Discourse Historical Approach, the analysis focuses on the strategies of naming, predication, and framing to uncover the underlying ideological assumptions of the UN. The findings reveal that specific naming strategies frame the conflict in particular ways, influencing perceptions of legitimacy and responsibility. Predication strategies further attribute specific qualities and actions to these actors or phenomena. Additionally, syntactic structures, such as passive constructions, were found to obscure agency and responsibility, subtly shaping the narrative. By applying DHA discursive strategies, this study not only examines the immediate linguistic features of the press releases but also situates them within a broader socio-political context. This macro-analysis has provided a deeper understanding of how the UN's discourse perpetuates certain ideological stances. The findings contribute to the broader field of critical discourse analysis, highlighting the complex relationship between language, ideology, and international diplomacy, and underscore the role of language in shaping perceptions and influencing global discourse on contentious issues such as the Palestinian- Israeli conflict.

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