

THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF AN ALJAZEERA SPECIAL REPORT

Anita L. Wenden

Abstract

This paper focuses on the role of language in social life, specifically on discourse as the focus of political struggle, i.e. the struggle for the power of representation. It reports on the results of a discourse analysis of twelve articles posted on Aljazeera's English website to mark the third anniversary of the al-Aqsa Intifada. The study provides a profile of Aljazeera's perspective on this second Intifada, outlining the themes used to represent the Intifada, the ideologies revealed by these themes, the characterization of the actors, their actions and the events that make up this conflict, and the attribution of agency. The conclusion points to the utility of including a linguistic perspective in planning interventions for achieving a culture of social and ecological peace.

Introduction

Referring to two basic themes found in the traditional study of politics and in discourse studies, Chilton and Schaffner (2002, p.5) define politics "as a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it" on the one hand, and on the other "as cooperation, as the practices and institutions a society has for resolving clashes of interest over money, power, liberty and the like". The first theme points to power struggle as the essence of politics while the second views politics as the management of conflicting interests in a nonviolent manner, further listing examples of what may be the focus of such conflict. While the role of discourse as the instrument of politics has been recognized by the theoretical writings of philosophers, e.g. Plato and Aristotle (cf. Chilton and Schaeffner, 2002), communication scholars (e.g. Shapiro, 1988; Gorsevski, 2004), cognitive linguists (e.g. Chilton and Lakoff, 1999; Lakoff, 2004) and discourse analysts (e.g. Fairclough, 1989; Haidar and Rodriguez, 1999; Musolff, 1999; Muntigl, 2002; Wodak, 2001; 2002) and while the power of language in the realm of politics is intuitively recognized by the lay person, less appreciated is the fact that, like liberty, power and money, discourse can also be the focus of struggle, i.e. a struggle for the power of representation.

Politics of Representation

As used in discourse analysis, representation refers to the language used in a text or talk to assign meaning to groups and their social practices, to events, and to social and ecological conditions and objects (e.g. Fairclough, 1989; 1995; van Dijk, 2002).¹ Implicit in this view of the role of language in social life is that meaning is not embedded in the reality that is perceived but rather that it is construed by linguistic representation (Fairclough, 1992; Goatly, 2000; Halliday, 1990; Hodge and Kress, 1993; Mehan and Wills, 1988; Muntigl, 2002; Shapiro, 1988; van Dijk, 2002; Wenden and Schaffner, 1999; Wodak, 2002). Of course, modes of representation will vary depending on the perspective from which they are constructed, whether biographical, historical, socio-cultural (Voloshinov, 1986 cited in Mehan and Wills, 1988). Ideology will also influence the manner in which groups represent matters of import and relevance to the body politic (e.g. Fairclough, 1989, 1992; 1995; Hodge and Kress, 1993; Bloomaert and Verschueren, 1998; van Dijk, 1999; Goatly, 2000), including the achievement of a culture of peace. Moreover, inasmuch as linguistic representations determine the way in which we think about particular objects, events, situations and, as such, function as a principle of action influencing actual social practice (Shapiro, 1988; Fairclough, 1989; Hodge and Kress, 1993; Wodak, 2002; Karlsberg, 2005), there will be competition among groups over what is to be taken as the correct, appropriate, or preferred representation (Holquist, 1983; Fairclough, 1992; Wodak, 2001).

The competition over meaning among groups is referred to as the “politics of representation” (Holquist, 1983; Shapiro, 1988). During the period of the Cold War, for example, views varied on how to define the role of nuclear weapons in international politics. Immediately after World War II, voices for international control proposed a *nuclear partnership* with the Soviet Union. However, voices for national interest dominated and, from the 1950’s to the 1990’s, *deterrence* was the accepted representation, justifying the need to develop and if necessary use nuclear weapons. Nonetheless, alternative views were proposed by groups from civil society such as MEND (Mothers Embracing Nuclear Disarmament), which challenged the dominant discourse with their doctrine of *nurturance* – emphasizing the role of mothers in creating a secure world for their children and in helping children cope with the threat of nuclear war (Mehan and Wills, 1988). Discourse can also be the focus of struggle in the representation of issues related to the achievement of a culture of peace other than nuclear war on a global scale, i.e. organized physical violence on a regional level within nation states (e.g. Firer and Adwan, 2004); domestic violence – unorganized physical violence within the home² (e.g. Rapping 2000); and structural violence, e.g. the representation of the grievances of poor rural villagers in Thailand, social diversity in Europe, and North-South relations (for examples see respectively, Chalermvipinyorat, 2004; Bloomaert and Verschueren, 1998; and Doty, 1996.)

If the use of nuclear weapons was the major source of concern during the Cold War, in the post Cold War period and especially since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio, June 1992), environmental degradation, i.e. ecological violence, and its implications for the survival of the whole Earth Community has become a priority,³ and groups with differing views on its seriousness and the manner of dealing with it contend for prominence in the representation of the various threats to ecological integrity and planetary well being. Global warming is one example, with the U.S. government proposing 'climate variability' as a challenge to 'climate change', the predominant view of (most) world governments and civic groups (Rohter, 2004). Among those who agree with the latter representation, emerging voices of poor countries and communities in the Arctic, atolls of the tropics, and the flanks of the Himalayas propose that global warming be viewed as a threat to human rights, challenging the prevailing voices of those who would represent it as an environmental issue (Revkin, 2004).⁴

Thus, discourse can also be the focus of politics, that is, the struggle for the power of representation and proponents of various views use a variety of strategies to ensure that their framing of the nature of a particular issue predominates. Approaching the matter with the conviction that reason will prevail, attempts can be made to persuade others of the logic of one's arguments (e.g. the 'development debate', the 'abortion debate', the 'AIDS debate'). Alternately or additionally, the language of opposing views can be incorporated into one's discourse (e.g. Bill Clinton's 'welfare reform', G.W. Bush's 'compassionate conservatism') or as is evidenced in political campaigns, one can attempt to silence one's opponents by attacking their positions. If physical coercion is the chosen strategy, those with opposing representations may suffer imprisonment or loss of life (e.g. poisoning, car accidents....).⁵ When one mode of representation prevails, a hierarchy is formed among the competing representations with the winner's being given primacy as a way of framing a particular issue (Mehan and Wills, 1988), and taking into account the acknowledged power of discourse as a principle of social action, in the selection of social actions taken to deal with it.

Aljazeera and the Politics of Representation

Launched in January 2001 as the first mainstream Arabic news site free from government censorship and control, Aljazeera.net (Arabic) promises a different and new perspective on global events (see <<http://arabic.aljazeera.net>>). With the development of Aljazeera.net (English), the network further aims to open "a new window of opportunity" through which to see the world (see <<http://english.aljazeera.net>>). Its home page lists articles on the Arab World, the economy, culture, science and technology, global affairs as well as opinion pieces and special reports. The focus of this paper is a special report entitled "Intifada: 3 Years On", consisting of 13 articles posted on Aljazeera's English website between 28 September 2003 and 3 October 2003 to mark the third anniversary of the al-Aqsa Intifada. It was also intended as a retrospective on the three years that had

passed since the inception of the conflict, and, as acknowledged in one of the articles, “Bad News from Israel...Media Coverage” (Philo, 2003), there was a need for an alternative representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Referring to findings of an interview survey administered to a total of 385 people by the Glasgow University Media Group, Philo (2003) concludes that “the lack of explanation in the news about the origins of the Intifada plus the differences in the manner in which both ‘sides’ were presented had measurable effects on some public understanding”; this view is supported by Karmi (2003) who writes, “The real problem here is the way in which this conflict is viewed,” and, by implication, represented.

Purpose of the Paper

This paper reports on a discourse analysis of twelve of the articles that make up the special report (Appendix 1). It aimed to determine what they would reveal about Aljazeera’s perspective on the second Intifada. What representation was proposed as an alternative to that of the Western press? Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

- (1) What key themes recur throughout the reports to represent the Intifada?
- (2) What ideologies underly these themes and how are they legitimized?
- (3) How do the reports characterize the actors, their actions and the events that make up this conflict?
- (4) To whom is agency for these actions and events attributed? How?

Thematic Representation of the Intifada

Themes communicate a writer’s representations of the conditions, events, practices, individuals, and groups that are the focus of a text or talk. They are based on information *selected* from a wide range of rhetorical options, e.g. causes/consequences, problem/solutions, compare/contrast, argumentation or description or a combination of several (Wenden, 2003). Ultimately, authors’ choices reveal what they consider relevant to an understanding of the topic. As such, they are a key to their ideological biases. In the case of the special report, each of the following themes (Figure 1) appeared as the main focus of an article and then recurred in several others. The themes represent the second Intifada in terms of its causes – provocative (theme 1) and foundational (theme 2), consequences (themes 3 and 4), the solution to the problem (theme 4) and final outcome (theme 5). They set up an antagonistic relationship between the Palestinians and Israel and explicitly assert a preference for armed resistance as an approach to dealing with the conflict – thus revealing a militarist ideology.

1. The provocative cause of the second Intifada was Ariel Sharon's visit to al Haram al Sharif in Jerusalem.
2. The foundational causes are the ongoing violation of Palestinian rights not addressed since the first Intifada and the failure of the peace process.
3. The power balance between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Islamists is swinging in favor of the latter.
4. The disproportionate, violent, discriminatory Israeli response to the Intifada has led to the adoption of armed resistance as a more effective strategy.
5. In the long term, the mistrust and animosity between Israelis and Palestinians will not be easily undone.

Figure 1: Thematic Representation of the Intifada

Ideologies

Ideologies are organized sets of fundamental and often normative ideas and attitudes about some aspect of social reality shared by members of a group, society or culture. They are used to frame, legitimate, or validate opinions and actions in the domain to which they are applicable. Thus, indirectly, they control how people plan and understand their social practices, including their use of language. Ideologies persist over time. They are unconscious and rarely questioned, and when they are, their common sense nature is offered as adequate explanation of their existence (Bloomaert and Verschueren, 1998; Fairclough, 1989; Hodge and Kress, 1993; Van Dijk, 1999).

Militarism

The militarist ideology that underlies the themes is one which advocates violent resistance while explicitly rejecting nonviolence as an effective approach to dealing with the conflict as noted in the following elaborations on themes 2, 3, and 4 listed in Figure 2. The first excerpt is a defense of martyrdom attacks (referred to as suicide bombing in the Western press). The next makes explicit the link between the 'failure' of the peace talks and the support for violence, manifested in the popular support for Hamas (excerpt 3), the involvement of the Palestinian Authority in the Intifada (excerpt 4) and the decrease in public protests (excerpt 5). This preference for force traced out by the news writers finds support in the opinions of Palestinians they interview, e.g., "Resistance is the key...."; "The solution to Palestinian strife is armed struggle"; "What was taken by force will be only returned by force" (Nahas and Twal, 2003).

Excerpt 1

Friends of the Palestinians have rushed to warn them against any more of these operations, pointing out that all support for their cause has been dissipated and advising a return to peaceful means of protest. The first Intifada is held up as a model, where civil disobedience was the norm and none of these attacks took place. What no one points out is that the first Intifada, for all its nonviolence, achieved no end of Israeli occupation and no cessation in the Israeli theft of Palestinian land.

Excerpt 2

Loss of confidence in the peace process to deliver a permanent agreement on acceptable terms has had a dramatic impact on the level of Palestinian support for violence against Israel....

Excerpt 3

Any movement that resists the Israeli occupiers has popular support. They symbolize Palestinian strength in the face of Israeli attacks.

Excerpt 4

Also when the PA and its factions, security services, and individuals became involved in the Intifada – this meant they drifted towards the viewpoint of Hamas and not the peacemaking views of the PA.

Excerpt 5

This is no longer an Intifada. The majority support the armed resistance, but there are fewer people protesting in the streets.

Figure 2: Evolving Militarist Ideology

Islamic Ideology

One of the consequences of the Intifada was the swinging of power towards the Islamists (theme 3), and so militarism is wedded with components of an Islamic ideology. That is, “Palestinians learned from the first Intifada that military might alone is incapable of determining the overall balance of power” (Tamimi, 2003). They needed more. Islam provided this. The “Islamic trend” is represented as a “credible alternative to the failing nationalist trend”, an “ideology and spirituality” which promised deliverance, and provided motivation and hope (Tamimi, 2003).

Characterization

Words or expressions whereby a text or talk characterizes persons, groups, social relations, events or conditions that shape a conflict are chosen from among a wide range of options to reinforce and legitimate the ideology communicated through the discourse themes (Bloomaert and Verschueren, 1998; van Dijk, 1999; Goatly, 2000). In the case of

the special report, the characterizations of the Intifada, the peace process, Israel and the Palestinians serve to justify the militarist ideology and related values underlying the themes.

The Intifada

War and terms referring to war, e.g. “human bombings”, are selected to represent the Intifada and its tactics (Nabarro, 2003). At the same time, this military metaphor is linked to and reconstrued in terms of two other metaphors drawn from Islam. Human bombings are “martyrdom attacks” (Ghazali, 2003). Human bombers “sacrifice their lives” (Salih, 2003); they are martyrs. However strong Israel may be militarily, they can’t match the willingness of Palestinian people to sacrifice their lives. Thus, the action of the bomber is given religious significance – justified as a response to a fatwa, a clerical pronouncement that approves of martyrdom attacks, while its destructive consequences on other humans are not mentioned. Additionally, the logic of war is used to evaluate the outcomes of the Intifada (Figure 3). Typically, as the Figure 3 excerpts illustrate, war discourse is decontextualized, preferring numbers and statistics to concrete details about human suffering. It is the calculation of the numbers killed that determines whether the outcome is successful or not. Concrete details depicting the outcome of war are disallowed as this might lead to opposition to a militaristic ideology and its related strategies (Cohn, 1988; Wertsch, 1987).

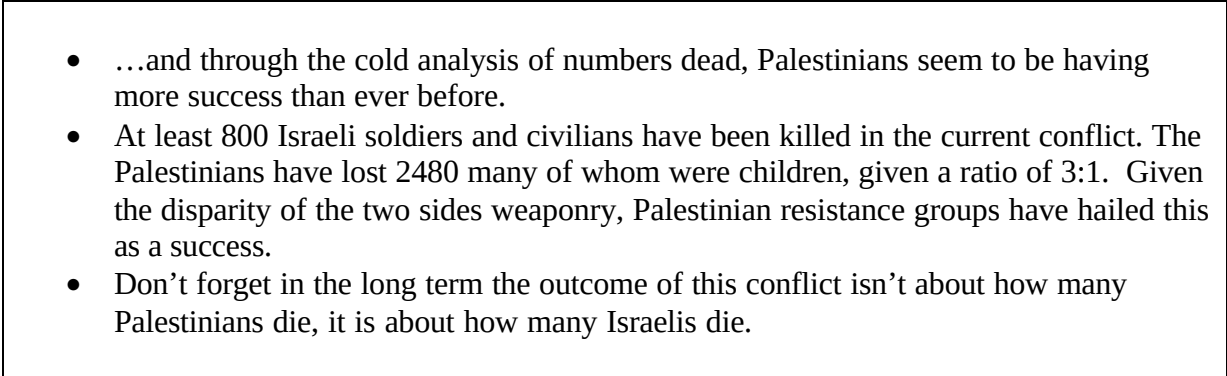
- 
- ...and through the cold analysis of numbers dead, Palestinians seem to be having more success than ever before.
 - At least 800 Israeli soldiers and civilians have been killed in the current conflict. The Palestinians have lost 2480 many of whom were children, given a ratio of 3:1. Given the disparity of the two sides weaponry, Palestinian resistance groups have hailed this as a success.
 - Don't forget in the long term the outcome of this conflict isn't about how many Palestinians die, it is about how many Israelis die.

Figure 3: The Logic of War

Peace Process

The peace process or peace talks refer to the various negotiations that took place to resolve the conflict (e.g. the Oslo accord, the Madrid talks, Camp David II, and the Taba talks in Egypt). Implicit in the characterizations of the peace talks are a rejection of nonviolence and by implication a legitimization of the belief that violence is the means

for the Palestinians to achieve their cause. They are viewed cynically, as not inspiring confidence, and ineffective, with the outcome of successful negotiations considered a setback.

A cynical view. Generally, the texts communicate a cynical view of the negotiations. The offer made at Camp David is an “alleged offer” put on the table by Barak and Clinton; it “*reportedly* (my italics) offered a Palestinian state” (Aljazeera Staff, 2003a). The notion that an offer was made is the “biggest distortion” (Aljazeera Staff, 2003a). Self-serving motivations are attributed to the participants in the peace process. For example, as regards the Oslo and Madrid meetings, “the PLO leadership outside Palestine took part to translate the uprising into political dividends” (Tamimi, 2003). They were “nothing but a conspiracy aimed at rescuing Israel from the serious predicament created by the first Intifada” (Tamimi, 2003), “a veneer” which legitimized Israel’s hold and “stealing” of Palestinian land and resources (Kharmi, 2003). As for the Israelis and their US partners, they took part because they sought a partner for a peaceful settlement from among the Palestinian secular elite because they were “anxious about the Islamicisation of the conflict in the Middle East” (Tamimi, 2003), while Clinton undertook Camp David II because he was struggling to secure himself a place in history. As for the road map, it was “based on America’s long delayed realization that the Palestinian question was a major root cause of global ‘terrorism’” (Nabarro, 2003). In other words, now it is seen by the US as serving their national security needs, i.e. fighting global terrorism.

Not inspiring confidence. Further, the peace talks do not inspire confidence. There is “no confidence in” the peace talks (Khodr, 2003). The birth of Fatah’s military wing is seen as “clear proof of the loss of faithin making peace with the Israelis” (Tamimi, 2003). The road map is “viewed pessimistically”(Nahhas and Twal, 2003). Their failure (of the peace talks) “dashes the hopes of ordinary Palestinians” (Chugtai, 2003).

Ineffective. The talks are ineffective. They are characterized as “failed” (Chugtai, 2003), “at a low point”(Aljazeera Staff, 2003b); “their promise failed to materialize”(Khodr, 2003). Peace proposals are described as “nonsense” (the road map) (Nahhas and Twal, 2003), “strange”, “weird” (Barak’s proposal at Camp David) (Aljazeera Staff, 2003a). At Camp David “intractable issues” were discussed “in vain” (Tamimi, 2003). These characterizations are reinforced by metaphors that refer to the peace process as being “in shreds”, “collapsed” (Gooder, 2003), and to the “breakdown of the negotiations” (Chugtai, 2003) – all connoting total destruction and, therefore, “lifeless” (Aljazeera Staff, 2003b), “a stillborn initiative” (Tamimi, 2003).

Successful peace negotiations-a setback. Camp David I, a peace negotiation that did yield an accord between Israel and Egypt, is viewed as a “loss” of Egypt (Tamimi, 2003), one of the Arab brothers they hoped would come to their rescue. Thus, rather than a move forward, the peace negotiation is interpreted as a setback for the Palestinian cause.

Representation of nonviolence. The representation of nonviolence as a hopeful and preferred alternative appears only in one of the reports, which features the views of the negotiators. Entitled “Where is the Peace”, it provides a chronology of the peace process and its outcomes sandwiched between an outline of the attitudinal components of a pro-violence perspective.

Israel and the Palestinians

The characterizations of the main participants in the conflict, i.e. Israel and the Palestinians, and of their relationship to one another set up an antagonistic relationship between the two parties – the ‘us-them’ relationship that is a component of militarism.

The relationship. The reports characterize the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza as that of occupier and occupied respectively (Figure 4). Shaping the dynamics of this relationship are the characterizations of each of the parties in the conflict, i.e. Israel *and* the Palestinians.

- The intifada is described as an ‘uprising against the Israeli occupation’; a ‘struggle against occupiers’; ‘seeking to free Palestine’; ‘legitimate under international conventions which allow occupied people to use all means of struggle against occupiers.’
- Palestinians are ‘citizens of occupied Palestine’ and the Israeli military, occupiers. However the Palestinians will not ‘accept subjugation/occupation’ forever.
- The chief Palestinian negotiator at Taba is optimistic that there will be peace despite Israel’s ‘continuing occupation’.
- Referring to the social and economic impact of the Intifada, “.... the occupation is first and foremost to blame for this catastrophic situation.”

Figure 4: Relationship as Occupier and Occupied

Israel. The terms used to characterize Sharon’s visit to the al Aqsa mosque reinforce the thematic notion that this was the provocative cause of the Intifada. The visit is labeled as “calculated” (Tamimi, 2003) – it was intended. Metaphorically it was “an act of political karate....highly inflammatory....the spark that ignited the uprising” (Chugtai, 2003), and “incendiary” (Aljazeera Staff, 2003a). The first metaphor categorizes the visit as a physical attack, while the last three view the Intifada as a fire, the visit having ignited it. Verbs and metaphors selected to describe the actions of Israeli soldiers and government policies represent them as brutal and destructive (Figure 5).

<u>Verbs</u> • <i>break</i> the will of the other side... • <i>kill</i> people, <i>destroy</i> houses • <i>kill</i> our kids <i>without mercy</i>, <i>attack</i> them with machine guns . <u>Metaphors</u> •the successive <i>blows</i> dealt the PLO • the West bank and the Gaza strip being <i>brutally carved</i> up • the Israeli army <i>hunting for the heads</i> of the Palestinian armed sections • an airforce officer stating that, “We will continue to <i>hunt</i> terrorists .”

Figure 5: Characterization of Israeli Soldiers, Policies and Actions

Both the verbs and metaphors evoke images of concrete actions, the clear purpose of which is physical harm. In the case of the metaphors, physical *blows* are intended to knock down and so to subdue one's opponent. The cooked meat of animals is *carved up* with a knife so that each one may have a piece. The notion of *hunting* calls to mind the hunted animal who is the prey and who must be found and caught and, depending on the context, slaughtered.

Additionally, the Israeli government's policies are portrayed as repressive and unjust – characteristics of structural violence. Israeli policies directed at Arab Israelis and which intend to curb Palestinian activism are “repressive” (Ghazali, 2003). The colonization of the Palestinian homeland is “unjust” (Nabarro, 2003). Referring to the “targeted killings,” the Aljazeera staff describes Israel as having a “hit list” with statistics varying on how many have been ‘struck off the list’, thus evoking the world of crime. The targeted killings are further characterized as “extra judicial executions” and “contrary to the rule of law”(Aljazeera Staff, 2003c). As for the construction of Jewish settlements, they are “stealing” Palestinian land and resources; the settlements are “illegal” (Kharmi, 2003).

Palestinians. The Palestinians are depicted as powerless. They “watched helplessly” as their “land slipped out of their hand” (Tamimi, 2003), a metaphor which transfers to the Palestinian situation the sense of losing control that comes when one slips. Powerlessness is also communicated through the use of factual accounts that further emphasize the innocence of Palestinians (Figure 6). Though powerless, Palestinians are also characterized as resistant. The notion of passivity often associated with powerlessness is absent from the texts. As the reports state, they will not “accept subjugation/occupation forever” and “vow the Intifada will not end on Sharon's terms” (Aljazeera Staff, 2003b). Involvement in the Intifada is referred to as “Palestinian activism”(Tamimi, 2003), Palestinian “resistance” (Ghazali, 2003). Participants in the Intifada are called: “Palestinian resistance groups, armed resistance, resistance fighters,

resistance leaders (Gooder, 2003), Palestinian resistance bombers” (Ghazali, 2003), and the new generation as “more potent resistance fighters” (Aljazeera Staff, 2003a).

The ‘David and Goliath’ metaphor used to characterize the disparity in power between Israel and the Palestinians also entails the notion of resistance. Religious in origin, this metaphor represents Israel as Goliath. He had been a warrior all his life and was in possession of the best military technology of his day. Similarly, Israel is depicted as a “powerful regional actor” that has “all the power” (Kharmi, 2003), the “Israeli giant” with a “high-tech multi-billion dollar” army (Salih, 2003). In contrast, David, the Palestinian figure, is a young boy, small in stature and powerless but unafraid. As noted in the biblical account, he had rescued his sheep from the mouths of lions and bears. His only weapon was a sling shot and five smooth stones picked from the river bed. However, despite the disparity in size, military technology, and military experience, David was willing to confront the giant and he slew Goliath, bringing victory to the Israelites (Jones, 1966). Thus, the metaphor reinforces the Palestinian notion that resistance despite the odds is an effective strategy.

- Two Palestinian bystanders were also killed when an Israeli helicopter gunship fired missiles at Abayat’s car’
-a Hebron resident....has seen his sister shot and critically wounded by Israeli soldiers as she had her morning coffee with neighbors during an invasion.
- He (the resident) was also shot in the arm leading to temporary paralysis and was only able to fully regain use of it after a costly operation in neighboring Amman.
- Houses were bulldozed and dozens of Palestinian non-combatants killed in incursions that were roundly condemned by the international community.

Figure 6: Palestinians as Powerless

Drawing upon the David and Goliath metaphor are statements that contrast Israeli action aimed at weakening the resistance and/or quelling the uprising with an increase in strength or an effective show of resistance on the part of the Palestinians (Figure 7). The first statement of the contrast reports on some form of violence the Palestinians have suffered at the hands of the Israelis while the second, the ‘but’ statement, highlights the successful outcome of resistance – the opposite of what was anticipated.

Palestinians are further represented as law abiding and adhering to democratic processes. Referring to the competition between the Hamas and Fatah, Khodr (2003) writes, “The jury is out as to whether support for the Islamist movements will overtake Fatah.” This metaphor, which draws upon the reader’s knowledge of the judicial system, carries the notion of careful deliberation and evaluation of evidence. Applied to the struggle for power between the two Palestinian groups, it suggests that the outcome will

represent careful deliberation and evaluation of evidence and, therefore, that the winner will be chosen in a participatory and democratic manner, reflecting the popular will. Thus Palestinians are represented as working within the rule of law – in contrast to Israel.

- Israelis say they're assassinating leadersto weaken the organizations. But... Hamas is getting stronger.
- They may have assassinated our leaders.... But we have also succeeded in penetrating their security apparatus to explode their buses.
- It has been the policy of Zionists since they occupied our land,' said Rantisi. They did it in Lebanon and other countries as well. But after everyone of their crimes....you witness more support in the Palestinian street for Hamas.

Figure 7: Palestinians as Resistant

Attributing Agency

Participants in a conflict and their relationship to one another can be viewed from yet another perspective by asking how responsibility is attributed (e.g. Fairclough, 1989; Goatly, 2000; van Dijk, 1999). Is the agent of violent actions made explicit? Or not? Is agency shared by both participants in the conflict? Or not? Attribution of agency in a text or talk can also create antagonism between conflicting parties and thus serve to legitimate a militarist ideology, as is the case with the Aljazeera reports on the second Intifada.

Israel as Causal Agent

The reports use two strategies to represent Israel as exclusively responsible for initiating the al Aqsa Intifada, the ongoing violence, and for the failed peace talks (Figures 8 and 9).

Foregrounding actors and actions. Israeli actors (government, military, Sharon....) are foregrounded in the texts – placed in prominent positions in a main clause, usually at the beginning, as the agent of a very concrete action aimed at the Palestinians (Figure 8).

Foregrounding consequences. The consequences of Israeli actions is foregrounded – presented in the main clause at the beginning of the sentence – while Israeli agency is made explicit through a 'by' phrase (Figure 9).

- In response, *Israeli security forces* shot dead several Palestinians and wounded hundreds more.
- The failure (to make peace) has not been due to lack of opportunity.... *The Israelis* rejected the truce insisting that Palestinian Prime Minister Abbas do what was expected of him by the road map....
- *The Israelis* scuppered Abbas's cabinet, brought his political life to an end and gave more oxygen to the Intifada.
- *The Israeli army* stepped up its own campaign to wipe out the resistance groups and their sponsors...
- Since that fateful day (the start of the Intifada) *Israel* has virtually re-occupied the entire West bank, used F-16 fighter jets and helicopter gun ships to kill members of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad

Figure 8: Attributing Agency: Foregrounding Actor and Actions

- *Thirteen (Arab-Israelis) were gunned down* (effect) *by Israeli policy* (agency) and troops in a state response the Orr Commissions official inquiry this year described as characterized by "prejudice and neglect"
-prevent them from building new houses for homeless families *whose houses were crushed* (effect) *by the Israeli army* (agency) in the West Bank and Gaza.
- *As human rights abuses perpetrated against the Palestinians* (effect) *by Israel's army* (agency) have been exposed, so a growing wave of sympathy for the victims has been in evidence.
- Food and clothes supplies have been collected by the Islamic movement since May. But *the delivery of these quantities has been delayed* (effect) *by the military checkpoints* (agency)

Figure 9: Attributing Agency: Foregrounding Consequences

Palestinians as Responsive and Resistant Actors

On the other hand, Palestinians are not held responsible for *initiating* violent action but rather are represented as responding to or resisting it.

Pattern of Israeli provocation and Palestinian reprisal. While it is acknowledged that the violence is played out in a cyclical manner, following a pattern of action and reaction on the part of both, this notion rarely appears in the reports. Rather the texts describe a pattern of Israeli provocation and Palestinian reprisal: "It was the start of the Intifada in which more than 800 Israelis have been killed in an accelerating cycle of Israel raids and Palestinian reprisals" (Aljazeera Special Reports, 2003). This pattern

places the burden of responsibility for the violence and its consequences on the Israelis. Responsibility for initiating the violence is not attributed to the Palestinians who, rather, are represented as responding to Israeli provocation, i.e. as resistant.

In the reports, the provocation and reprisal are collocated, i.e. presented together in a sentence or in sentences that follow one another, prompting the reader to see the relationship and draw the conclusions it implies (Figure 10).

- Following Sharon's visit clashes between angry Palestinian youths and Israeli police broke out near al Aqsa almost immediately. Several Palestinians were injured.
- In response, Israeli security forces shot dead several Palestinians and wounded hundreds more. This prompted further clashes.
- Assassinations, detentions, reprisals, incursions, closures and other collective punishment measures became commonplace. Israel turned the entire Palestinian population into a barrel of dynamite that only needed a spark to set it off.
- Each day eight Palestinians were being killed at checkpoint protests, once 12 in a single day. So the Palestinians retaliated.
- They (Israel) continue to assassinate Palestinian activists, kill and wound bystanders, and destroy homes in Palestinian towns.... Hamas patience ran out on 19 August with a huge bus bombing in Jerusalem that killed 22 people.

Figure 10: Israeli Provocation and Palestinian Reprisal

Palestinian action is represented as the result of a force beyond their control. The following metaphors of Nature-based processes selected by the writers represent and communicate the notion that Palestinian action is due to a force beyond human control (Figure 11). *Boiling water* and *erupting volcanoes* (italics are mine) represent the working of natural processes, which at a certain point can no longer be contained. Water must boil once it achieves a certain temperature. Similarly volcanoes must erupt when the pressure and heat reach a certain intensity and, at the same time, come into contact with a weak spot in the Earth's crust. Each metaphor describes the initiation of violence on the part of Palestinians. Represented in this way, responsibility for the violence is construed as something over which they (the Palestinians) had no control. They are not the causal agents, but, as the metaphor would have us believe, it is the natural power of the resentments and tensions resulting from the ongoing violation of Palestinian rights that could no longer be contained.

Boiling water

- *Simmering* resentments
- These frustrations (Arab Israeli's) *boiled over* two months later....
-it remains to be seen whether it is desperate enough to cause the *pressure cooker* to *explode* in sympathy for the Palestinian resistance

Erupting volcanoes

- In 12/87 after enduring occupation for more than 20 years, Palestinians of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank *erupted* in the face of their occupiers.
- Riots *erupted* around the Arab populated old City.
- For many months after its *eruption*, the Palestinian Intifada...
- The first Intifada *erupted* in 1987.

Figure 11: Nature Based Metaphors

Palestinian agency is not made explicit. Three separate strategies are used to deal with Palestinian agency in the conflict: ambiguity (Figure 12), nominalizing the action (Figure 13) and downplaying the effects of Palestinian violence (Figure 14).

In the first two examples (Figure 12), where Palestinians are responsible for the violence, the writers choose to focus on the event or outcome of the action. There is no explicit reference to agency in these examples and so the agent of the action remains ambiguous. Readers are left to wonder whether the deaths were caused by the violence initiated by the Israelis, by the Palestinians, or by both. In the third example (Figure 12), the beginning clause, "As a result of the second Intifada", points to the Intifada itself – the uprising – as the cause. However, the phrase is general and, therefore, ambiguous. Is the economic damage caused by the Israelis? Or is it because of the Palestinian 'reprisals'? Or both? Because agency is ambiguous, the notion that the Palestinians may have also been responsible for the 'huge economic damage' remains unacknowledged.

- The Israeli army stepped up its own campaign to wipe out the resistance groups and their sponsors, but throughout 2002 coordinated attacks continued to claim hundreds of lives. At least 800 Israeli soldiers and civilians have been killed in the current conflict.
- It was the start of the Intifada in which more than 800 Israelis have been killed in an accelerating cycle of Israel raids and Palestinian reprisals.
- As a result of the second Intifada' Huge economic damage has been wrought on the Palestinian areas, a state of near starvation prevails along with a high level of child malnutrition and a long list of other depredations.

Figure 12: Ambiguity as a Rhetorical Strategy

Making Palestinian agency explicit is also avoided by representing their actions in nominal form. Another way of writing the first example (Figure 13) would have foregrounded Palestinian responsibility, i.e. Palestinians demonstrated against Sharon's show of force, throwing stones at the Israeli policemen. However, by nominalizing the demonstrating, i.e. demonstrations in protest, the need to acknowledge Palestinian agency is avoided; instead the main clause highlights the agency of the policemen who were, in fact, responding to the stone throwers. The same applies to 'bloody clashes' in the second example.

- "The following day, during *demonstrations in protest* against Sharon's show of force, Israeli policemen opened live gun fire on stone-throwing protesters, killing six Palestinians and injuring more than 200 civilians."
- Serious violence erupted on 9/29 of that year (2000) with *bloody clashes* at al-Aqsa Mosque compound after Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon had paid a provocative visit there the previous day.

Figure 13: Nominalizing the Action

When Palestinian agency is explicit, it is either downplayed or justified as shown in the examples below (Figure 14). It's true that rockets were fired (first example), but

- Hamas has fired rockets and mortars from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. They may have generated more noise and fear than actual damage – one person was killed out of the tens of mortars and rockets that have been aimed at Israeli held areas.
- As had been predicted angry Palestinian youth stoned Israeli security personnel and Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall.
- Many Israelis claim Palestinian president Arafat planned the uprising...The Israeli agency Palestinian Media Watch says official Palestinian TV broadcasts became increasingly militant during the summer of 2000. And Arafat was accused of not doing enough to condemn Palestinian rioting and attacks. However, the Mitchell report said there was no evidence to indicate the Intifada had been planned though Palestinian officials were quoted as saying an uprising was likely if peace talks failed.....
- Arafat had been zealous in detaining Palestinian radicals opposed to peace. But his ability to act was increasingly undermined by popular Palestinian anger at rapidly increasing illegal Jewish settlements and land seizures by the Israelis.

Figure 14: Downplaying Effects of Palestinian Violence

the major effect was noise and fear; only one person was killed. As for the stoning of Israeli security personnel and Jewish worshippers (second example), the youth were angry; they had a reason for doing it. Moreover, this type of violence had been predicted but the warning was ignored. The third example is a contrast, which begins with a statement attributing the violence to the Palestinians followed by the 'however' statement which provides information that directly discounts Palestinian agency or, as in the case of the fourth example, excuses it.

In sum, focusing exclusively on Israeli responsibility, the reports do not recognize the role of the Palestinian resistance in initiating and maintaining the violence. That is not part of the discourse of the oppressed and oppressor as acknowledged by a Palestinian who articulates the logic of the oppressed, "The Intifada has achieved nothing, it took us many years backward. But the occupation is first and foremost to blame for this catastrophic situation. We are the victims and blaming the victims is wrong," said a 35 year old taxi driver on the West Bank in an interview (Nabarro, 2003). The views of B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights group, regarding the socio-economic impact of the Intifada is drawn upon to add credibility to the taxi driver's views. That is, "The sweeping restrictions on freedom of movement that Israel has imposed since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada are the principle cause of deterioration of the Palestinian economy and the unprecedented increase in unemployment and poverty in the occupied territories" (Salih, 2003). In other words, though it is acknowledged that the Intifada has worsened their socio-economic situation, Palestinians are not to be blamed for the result of their actions. They are cast in the role of the oppressed – victims, though also resisters, and causality is placed exclusively on the shoulders of Israel; Israel is portrayed as responsible for the economic and social consequences of the Intifada on the Palestinian people – no other factors are referred to. The reports do not consider internal problems and actions initiated by the Palestinians as causative. Of course this is also evidence of the war mentality. One unites against the external aggressor and ignores internal causes and situations that may also need to be addressed.

Aljazeera's Representation of the Second Intifada

To summarize, Aljazeera's special report represents the al Aqsa Intifada as caused by the ongoing oppression of Palestinians by Israelis and the failure of the peace talks. The immediate or provocative cause is Sharon's visit to the al Haram al Sharif in Jerusalem. The conflict has shifted power from the Palestinian Authority to the Islamists and is likely to continue for some time. It depicts the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians as that of oppressed and oppressor – the former brutal, belligerent, and repressive, to be totally blamed for the state of affairs, while the latter are resistant but blameless. By so characterizing the actors in the conflict and by so attributing agency for it, the ongoing antagonism between Israel and the Palestinians, predicted by one of the

themes, is ensured, and militarism, the ideology that underlies the main themes and which shapes both their responses, is justified.

Conclusion

Unlike other forms of linguistic study, including discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis is explicitly socio-political in purpose. It aims to better understand the role of discourse in the reproduction of social inequality (e.g. van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2001) and “ultimately, its success is measured by its effectiveness and relevance, that is, by its contribution to change”, i.e. social change (van Dijk, 1993, p. 253). The need for discourse intervention to contribute to the creation and production of nonadversarial models of social organization, a notion introduced in an earlier issue of this journal (Karlsberg, 2005), also recognizes the contribution that discourse can make to social transformation. These concluding remarks build upon this view on the role of discourse in social life, referring to benefits that may be derived by including the linguistic perspective in the development of interventions aimed at achieving a culture of social and ecological peace.

First let us consider what can be learned for future social practice from the Aljazeera special report. As a retrospective, its main purpose was to review and evaluate the strategies used by the Palestinians to resist oppression and to make a prognosis about the future of the relationship. At the same time, and as noted earlier, understanding that the fundamental problem is the manner in which the conflict is perceived (Karmi, 2003) and further acknowledging that, “Unless the essential fact is grasped that one side has all the power and the other none, Israel will maintain its occupation and Palestinian resistance will be called ‘terrorism’” (Karmi, 2003); the special report is an attempt to provide the basis for changing power relations through discourse. It provides an alternative representation on the conflict, which is essential if the Palestinians are to follow the advice of the late Edward Said: to “gain legitimacy in Europe and especially in the US, and consequently de-legitimize the apartheid regime” (Nabarro, 2003). In other words, the politics of representation becomes a strategy in the broader struggle for the recognition of one’s cause and ultimately, its achievement. That is one clear example of how language can be used by the oppressed – as a means of empowerment, of rebalancing a relationship. It is an example of how discourse intervention can contribute to social transformation through the politics of representation.

However, a prerequisite to discourse intervention and any other social intervention aimed at social transformation, i.e. the achievement of a culture of social and ecological peace, is an assessment of the situation(s) of peacelessness that inhibits it. Such an assessment should also take the role of discourse into account. How does it contribute to the conflict? An analysis of the discourses of the various actors in the conflict, such as this study of the Aljazeera special report, can provide insights into how language use

provokes and exacerbates the conflict. This analysis focused on the discourse's themes, its characterization of events and actors and its attribution of agency. Other features of discourse can also prove insightful. For example, with whom does the author seek to have the readers identify? How broadly is the problem defined? Is the perspective extended to include global concerns or does it remain focused on local concerns? What is the author's mode of reasoning? Is it contextualized or de-contextualized? What topics are discussed in detail? given prominence? not included? (See Wenden 2003 for an analysis of both a militarist and an environmentalist text based on these questions and Appendix 2 for a copy of the framework for guiding such an analysis).

Empathy, a notion that appears in the discourse on the management and resolution of interpersonal conflict, requires peace workers to take on the perspective of the other in order to understand what s/he is saying and how s/he feels, accepting and understanding without necessarily approving or agreeing. It is both a skill, i.e. active or creative listening, and an attitude, open and receptive to the possibility of finding new truth in what another is saying no matter how different this seems to be from one's point of view (See Lantieri and Patti, 1996; Rosenberg, 2003). Empathetic listening or perspective taking could also be usefully applied to peacemaking and peacebuilding in inter group conflicts – within and between countries. This is yet another use for the alternate, different, and potentially conflict provoking representations of views on social and ecological issues profiled by an assessment that takes the linguistic perspective into account. That is, they (i.e. the representations) should enable informed empathy.

Finally, referring to the role popular ideologies can play in the interethnic and international management of diversity, Verschueren (1994, p.2) observes that knowledge of these “implicit models of interpretation....is an absolute prerequisite for successful preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping.” This suggests another contribution critical discourse analysis can make to peacemaking. As the analysis of the Aljazeera special report illustrated, including an analysis of discourse in one's assessment of a situation of peacelessness can uncover these ideological beliefs – which are communicated and reinforced through the discourse thus justifying and maintaining situations of conflict. It is only when they are made explicit that they can be challenged and changed.

Notes

1. See van Dijk (2002) for a discussion of the relationships between linguistic representations and a person's mental representations, i.e. political and/or personal beliefs.
2. The notions of organized and unorganized physical violence are based on Brock-Utne's (1989, p. 47) framework for defining negative and positive peace.
3. Of course, it must be recognized that the consequences of environmental degradation, while remaining a source of concern, now take second place to the ongoing 'war' on terror and the many ethnic conflicts in various world regions.

4. Also related to the achievement of a culture of peace is Karlberg's (2005) review of the literature from the discourses of feminism and systems theory, which challenges the representation of *power as dominion* (i.e. power over), a core notion in Western social and political theory and an organizing principle of political structures in liberal Western democracies with *power as capacity* (i.e. power to).
5. For an extended description of one strategy for predominating in the power struggle over representation, see Lakoff (2004) for an outline of the manner in which conservative representations of issues, such as 'tax relief', 'healthy forests', and 'clear skies initiative', have come to frame the debate on public policy and a strategy for liberal groups who wish to effectively challenge these views.

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Appendix 1

Special Report

Introduction: Intifada Three Years On – Aljazeera.Net

1. Origins of the Intifada – Shaheen Chughtai
2. Deconstructing Camp David – Aljazeera staff
3. Intifada Swings Power Towards Islamists – Zeina Khodr
4. From Intifada to Intifada – Dr. Azzam Tamimi (Director Institute of Islamic Political Thought in London)
5. New Intifada, New Tactics – James Gooder
6. Targeted Killings Terrorize Palestinians – Aljazeera staff
7. Where is the Peace? – Aljazeera staff
8. Israel's Arabs Feel Backlash – Sa'id Ghazali in Jerusalem
9. Intifada Needs International Support – Ghada Karmi
10. Second Intifada: Success or Failure – Nick Nabarro
11. Displaced but not Downbeat – Roufan Nahhas and Natasha Twal in Jordan
12. David versus Goliath – Roshan Muhammed Salih

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Appendix 2

A Framework for Critical Language Study

Framing the Ideology

Propositions

- What is the topic of the discourse? What key themes are communicated about it? What general statements about the topic of the discourse can be derived from the themes?

Discourse structure

- How is information about the themes in the discourse organized or structured?

Rhetorical plans

- What *kind* of information is used to shape the writer's key themes?

Scope of identification

- With whom does the author identify? expect the reader/listener to identify?

Justifying/Legitimizing the Ideology

Mode of reasoning

- Is the representation of the actions, events, conditions in the discourse contextualized? or decontextualized ?

Attribution of agency

- Are the persons or groups responsible for actions, events, conditions represented in the discourse made explicit? If so, who are they? If not, whose participation/responsible action is being hidden?

Characterization

- What words or expressions does the author use to *characterize* the event, persons, and situation under discussion? (attributions, x is; terms used to describe/identify)
- Which metaphors are used to explain and enhance the author's representation of the event, persons, and/or situation under discussion?

Exclusion

- What kind of information has not been included or only implied in the discourse?

Specificity

- What information is presented in detail? in more general terms?