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**CRITICAL MEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE 2023
CONFLICT IN GAZA (A COMPARATIVE STUDY)**

SUMMARY

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The doctoral candidate is a full-time PhD student in Germanic Languages (Modern English) at the Department of English Studies.

The thesis consists of 277 pages including 15 pages of references and a 21-page appendix part. The references include 226 sources: 210 in English, 10 in German, 4 in Turkish and 2 in Bulgarian. 56 of the references have been published between 2023 and 2026.

The public defense of the doctoral thesis will be held on 16 October, 2026 at 11 o'clock in room 208 at Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, Building 2.

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I. General characteristics of the dissertation

The thesis investigates the news coverage of the 2023 conflict in Gaza in four selected news outlets on four days within the first six months of the war. The news outlets whose coverage of the war has been analyzed are: *The Guardian* from the United Kingdom, *Der Spiegel* from Germany, *Dnevnik* from Bulgaria and *Cumhuriyet* from Türkiye. These have been selected on the grounds of their similarities: they are representatives of the serious press in their respective countries, and in terms of their orientation are all considered to be left-liberal. The selected days for analysis mark the end of four time periods: the day after Hamas' attack, the end of the first, third and sixth month of the war. Thus, four separate corpora have been collected, each one consisting of all the headlines published online by the four media outlets on these specific days:

	Oct. 8, 2023	Nov. 7, 2023	Jan. 7, 2024	April 7, 2024	Articles in total per news outlet
<i>The Guardian</i>	22	28	11	16	77
<i>Der Spiegel</i>	20	7	9	3	39
<i>Dnevnik</i>	7	5	1	4	14
<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	31	13	3	4	51
Articles in total per day	80	53	24	24	

Table 1: Articles published online per news outlet and per day

The qualitative study is placed within the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis mostly profiting from Fairclough's three-dimensional model showing the relationship among text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice; and from van Dijk's work on ideology and the identification of ideological discourse structures. The study is particularly interested in the headlines because of their central role in news production and reception in terms of their textual and cognitive functions (van Dijk, 1991, pp. 50). For the purpose of the investigation, the study adopts a contrastive approach looking at and comparing text material in English, German, Bulgarian and Turkish. Such an approach proves useful in determining common patterns and individual particularities.

The decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the arena of clashing narratives, political interests and ideologies concerning not only the Israeli and the Palestinian people who are directly affected by it but also governments and peoples internationally. This makes the matter a highly topical one and leads to its being covered by media all over the world. By choosing four news outlets with similar characteristics, the thesis aims to answer the following question: Is the media coverage of the latest war in Gaza similar in *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet* because of their presumed ideological closeness or does the coverage display differences which are based on local historical, political and/or cultural realities? In order to answer this question, the study

- describes the news coverage of the military conflict in Israel and Gaza on each of the selected days as found in each news outlet;
- compares and contrasts the headlines of the four news outlets grouping them around common themes;
- shows similarities and differences found among the four news outlets;
- provides contextual information and possible explanations where differences are found;
- outlines tendencies which are spotted within individual news outlets.

The main part of the thesis consists of an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. Due to the contentious nature of the topic, a preface and an afterword have been included, in which the moral ambiguities surrounding the conflict as well as the psychological burden on media consumers in general and on the author of the thesis in particular have been touched upon. The thesis profits from 56 sources published between 2023 and 2026 which present the newest research related to the events in the Middle East.

II. A brief outline of the main parts of the dissertation

The **INTRODUCTION** begins with a brief overview of the events of October 7, 2023, the day on which Hamas attacked Israel and Israel

responded with a military operation, the different interpretations of these events and the question of their proper contextualization. Fassin (2024, p. 12) explains that for those considered pro-Israeli “it was a pogrom, the victims having been brutalized and executed because they were Jews” whereas for those seen as pro-Palestinian “it was an act of resistance in response to oppression at the hands of an enemy army”. According to different historians and other academics, choosing to see the October 7 attack as the starting point of a sequence of events depriving it of any historical context serves political purposes and is a part of the war of narratives. Shlaim (2024, p. xi) points out that “[t]he murderous Hamas attack did not come out of the blue as many believed. It was a response to Israel’s illegal and exceptionally brutal military occupation of the Palestinian territories since June 1967, as well as the suffocating economic blockade that Israel had imposed on Gaza since 2006” and Pappe (2024, p. 2) states that “to provide context is not the same as making excuses”.

The INTRODUCTION proceeds with an overview of the place of the United Kingdom, Germany, Bulgaria and Türkiye in the history of Israel and Palestine, their current political relations as well as societal sentiments. From a historical point of view, the Ottoman rule over Palestine, the Balfour Declaration, the British Mandate for Palestine, the Holocaust and Bulgaria’s saving its Jewish population from deportation to the concentration camps have relevance for the state of the current relations. The societal sentiments in the home countries of *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet* are partially also determined by the effects of these historical developments and the resulting governmental policies. Other factors are the dynamics between majorities and minorities as well as left and right-wing domestic political currents. This overview is followed by brief portraits of the four news outlets whose coverage of the Gaza war is the object of this study. Finally, the INTRODUCTION outlines the corpus, methods and aims of research, as well as the structure of the study.

CHAPTER I presents a historical overview of the Israel-Palestine conflict looking at its roots, the creation of the State of Israel and the Nakba, the subsequent major events in the region, the main Palestinian organizations, the peculiarities of the Gaza Strip, and finally the

ideologies of Zionism, Post-Zionism and Neo-Zionism, and their relevance for Israeli historiography.

There is no single answer to the question how old the Israel-Palestine conflict is. Often, its beginning is placed in 1948 when the state of Israel was created. There are also those who prefer to go several thousand years back in time to find its roots in the ancient history of the region. Pappe (2024, pp. 3-4) and Shlaim (1995, pp. 5-6) recommend to start in the late nineteenth century towards the end of the Ottoman rule. In those days, Palestine was divided into three Ottoman districts: Nablus, Acre and Jerusalem and there lived about half a million people, 70% of whom were Muslims and the rest consisted of Christian and Jewish minorities (Pappe, 2024, p. 3).

Antisemitism in Europe and the rise of nationalism as a political ideology are shown as the main factors for the of the Zionist idea and the consequent movement (Shlaim, 2014; Pappe, 2024; Said, 1992). Shlaim (2014, pp.1-2) explains that 1) “[t]he Zionist movement, which emerged in Europe in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, aimed at the national revival of the Jewish people in its ancestral home after two thousand years of exile” and that 2) modern Zionism was a secular movement which “had its roots in the failure of the Jewish efforts to become assimilated in Western society, in the intensification of antisemitism in Europe, and in the parallel and not unrelated upsurge of nationalism”. Pappe (2024, pp. 5-6) shares this opinion and adds that for European and American Christians, supporting the Zionist idea was seen not only as a way to get rid of their own Jewish population but also as a way to “take the ‘Holy Land’, as they described Palestine, from the hands of the ‘Muslims’, i.e. the Ottoman Empire, which had been frustrating European imperialist designs in that region”.

The ideological and political foundations of the future State of Israel were laid in the first decades of the Zionist movement by Theodor Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, Ze’ev Jabotinsky and Ben Gurion (Shlaim, 2014, pp. 2-18), and its official history begins with its proclamation on 14 May 1948. Even though the popular belief is that the war of 1948 started with the proclamation of the State of Israel when it was attacked by the joined armies of several Arab countries, the war actually

continued from 1947 until 1949. The first phase, ‘the unofficial war’, lasted from 29 November 1947 until 14 May 1948 and the second phase was from 15 May 1948 until 7 January 1949 (Shlaim, 2014, p. 29). As Shlaim (*ibid.*) explains, the first and unofficial phase of the war started right after the UN had voted for the partition (Resolution 181 of the General Assembly of the UN) between the Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine and “ended in triumph for the Jews and tragedy for the Palestinians”. The second phase, the official war “involving the regular armies of the neighboring Arab states, also ended in a Jewish victory and a comprehensive Arab defeat (*ibid.*)”.

At the end of the Israeli War of Independence, estimated 700,000 to 750,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled (Black, 2018, p.129), thousands died in massacres (Pappe, 2022, p. 128), “[o]ut of about 850,000 Palestinians living in the territories designated by the UN as a Jewish state, only 160,000 remained on or nearby their land and homes” and became “the Palestinian minority in Israel” (*ibid.*). In terms of territory, after all the armistice agreements with the Arab states had been signed, Israel controlled 78 per cent of Palestine, much more than the 55 per cent it was planned to get according to UN Resolution 181.

The following almost eight decades have witnessed a number of wars, military operations, UN resolutions and rounds of peace negotiations. However, for the careful eye, discourses, narratives, political and military strategies of the early years up to 1948 will come familiar as these can be traced all the way to the present. Most of what happened after 1948 is a result of the implementation and continuation of the ideological principles laid in the first half of the 20th century.

Three main movements have dominated the Palestinian struggle for nationhood since the establishment of the State of Israel. According to Baumgarten (2005, p. 25-27), these are the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN), mostly influential from the 1950s to the mid-1960s, Fatah, enjoying its best days from 1967 until the late 1980s and Hamas as a main actor from the 1990s up to present day. Discussing Hamas, Baumgarten (*ibid.*, p. 41) points out that in its early years, the movement advocated peaceful means of resisting the occupation like demonstrations and strikes; and even after its military wing, the

Izzeddin al-Qassam Brigades, was formed in 1992, “ Hamas’s use of violence was extremely limited and until 1994 almost exclusively targeted the Israeli army”. Throughout the 1990s and in the beginning of the 2000s, Hamas had also signaled its “willingness to work within a 1967 framework”, for the establishment of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders and a long-term truce with Israel (ibid.). Dunning (2019, p. 178) places the demonization of Hamas within the Orientalist frame and states that the movement “has often been portrayed in an essentialist, one-dimensional manner asserting that its primary goal is to destroy the State of Israel”. Even though “Hamas has been responsible for many morally and legally dubious violent attacks against Israeli targets, including those deliberately targeting civilians”, according to Dunning (ibid.) Hamas is nevertheless more than that, it is “a mass socio-political movement”.

Turning our attention to the Gaza Strip, we first need to point out that comprising about 2 percent of what once was Palestine, it was created in the last days of the 1948 war and was “a zone into which the Israeli forces pushed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians” (Pappe, 2017, p. 118). In the years up to the Gaza war of 2023, the Strip was one of the most densely populated areas in the world with about two million people living prior to the latest war on 365 km². The developments in the Gaza Strip in the last two decades have been mainly determined by two major events: the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and the electoral victory of Hamas in 2006 followed by a full Israeli blockade of the Strip.

As Pappe (2017, p. 124) explains, in 2005, it was becoming increasingly difficult to protect the Jewish settlers and at the same time apply military plans involving massive bombardments of the Strip and Prime Minister Sharon needed “the removal of the Gaza settlers so as to facilitate a retaliation policy”. The second historical event – the electoral victory of the Hamas movement, was the result of fair elections (Chomsky and Pappe, 2015, pp. 159-160; Shlaim, 2014, p. 797). However, this result was not what Israel, the USA and the EU had hoped for and they refused to recognize the new government. Hamas’ election results also fueled the conflict with Fatah and in the end, the government of Palestine was split into two with Fatah ruling over the

West Bank and Hamas establishing its own authority in the Gaza Strip. This in turn resulted in Israel imposing a full-blown siege on Gaza which was “turned into an open-air prison, where by 2018 at least 53 percent of some two million Palestinians lived in a state of poverty” (Khalidi, 2020, p. 221). As early as 2015, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD] published a report titled *Gaza could become uninhabitable in less than five years in wake of 2014 conflict and ongoing de-development*, and two years before Hamas’ attack Roy (2021, p. xv) pointed out that „the only laws that truly apply in Gaza are those of war where the sovereign power, Israel, can inflict violence without accountability or any reference to law“. It was in this historical context that Hamas’ attack took place.

Yet, as is often pointed out in the literature, the history of the conflict is a continuous clash of narratives. As Pappe (2015, pp. 17-18) explains, “establishing its history academically and publicly has always been essential” to the survival of any national movement and Zionism “was driven by a wish to rewrite the history of Palestine, and that of the Jewish people, in a way that proved scientifically the Jewish claim to ‘the Land of Israel’”. Similarly, Shlaim (2014, p. xv) explains that

Zionist and pro-Zionist historians have tended to portray Israel as a peace-loving nation that goes to war only when there is no other choice. According to this school of thought, the fundamental cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948 has been Arab rejection of Israel’s legitimacy and Arab diplomatic intransigence.

However, as Pappe (2018, p. 3) points out, starting at the end of the 1970s sociologists and historians “began casting doubts about the validity of the Zionist narrative, or version, of events”. The movement of the so-called ‘new historians’ appeared and according to Pappe (2015, p. xvi), an important factor which led to its emergence was “the change in the climate of opinion in Israel in the aftermath of the Lebanon War in 1982”. Its most important achievement in relation to the 1948 war was that “it legitimized the historical narrative of the Palestinians, and it offered a potential for normalizing the national collective memory”.

With time the work of the new historians began to be defined as ‘post-Zionism’ and had its heyday in the 1990s. The new millennium witnessed a change of mood in Israeli society and an “overall shift of the Israeli political system to the right” (Pappe, 2018, p. 6). The conservative political spectrum believed that “the new historians were undermining patriotic values and young people’s confidence in the justice of their cause” (Shlaim, 2014, p. xviii). Thus, post-Zionism was replaced by neo-Zionism according to which “only a Jewish religious and nationalist cement would secure Israeli society from further fragmentation and disintegration” and the history of Israel was to be “interpreted as an existential struggle against the Palestinians, particularly those who were Israeli citizens, as well as against the enemies from within, which is to say, whoever would be deemed a post-Zionist” (Pappe, 2015, p. 265).

All these are factors which play a role in any attempt to understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

CHAPTER 2 focuses on the importance of journalism and media which Richardson (2007, p. 181) explains as follows: “through employing argumentation – predominantly rhetorical moves placed in the normative framework of objective reporting – [journalism] can help organize people’s understandings of the world”. Peterson (2019, p. 38) talks about “the existence of nationally specific media forms which are able to effectively structure contemporary cultural, political, and ideological realities for a broad and disparate audience”. For Korn (2004, p. 211), reproducing the dominant ideology and constructing the consensus for the social order are actually the main functions of journalism.

The media are our main source of information, however it cannot be ignored that the information we receive has been carefully selected, filtered, shortened, modified, interpreted, retold and the form it is presented to us reflects not only certain journalistic rules related to news selection, structure and production but also the viewpoints and the values of the journalists themselves as well as of the society they belong to (Bell, 1998, p. 64). The selection of news is a complex process influenced by various factors, among which the need to make profit, the

relations of the press with other industries, the tight production schedules and the access to sources (Fowler, 1991, p. 20). These often lead to the discourses of powerful institutions and/or persons being adopted by the news outlets themselves, which makes the voice of the powerful the dominant voice.

Another aspect of the process of selection is related to the so-called 'newsworthiness' of news: "news is not simply that which happens, but that which can be regarded and presented as newsworthy" (Fowler, 1991, p.13). This is based on certain news values, first defined by Galtung and Ruge (1965). Yet, even though news values give journalists a good starting point in their work, it must not be forgotten that news values are not something fixed but rather "the (imagined) preferences of the expected audience, (...) in a sense 'guesswork'" (Richardson, 2007, p. 94). This, according to Richardson, can lead to either newspapers missing to report on a story or to reporting which backfires "when the values of the audience are misjudged" (ibid.).

The production of news is another area which deserves a closer examination. In the normal case, before being published, the news text has gone through the hands of multiple people like reporters, chief reporters, editors, senior editors, etc., and at any of these stages the language of the article can undergo changes (Bell, 1991, pp. 33-36). However, no matter which role journalists adopt in the process of news production, there are certain professional values and practices which should be taken into consideration. Journalistic ethics exists around the following four principles: 1) seeking and reporting truth; 2) acting independently, of sources and other journalists; 3) minimizing harm; and 4) being accountable for their work (Richardson, 2007, p. 83, based on Iggers, 1999). However, as Richardson (ibid., pp. 84-85) points out, there can be situations in which the four ethical principles can lead to ambiguities and contradictions. For example, it can be the case that reporting the truth will inevitably do harm to someone. Or, an accurate quotation may be accurate only in terms of accurately presenting someone's statement, which can still represent what actually happened in an inaccurate way. It can also be the case that journalists are torn between their ethical principles and the need to produce stories demanded by their employers. All these considerations turn the practice

of journalism and news production into a complex balancing act always prone to various kinds of criticism based on all sorts of considerations and interests.

A key concept related to news production is the concept of objectivity. Richardson (2007, p. 87) warns against confusing journalistic objectivity with neutrality and explains that a journalistically objective report is “inevitably value-laden” and can at times even be “fundamentally biased”. Both Richardson (2007) and Tumber (2004) point out that the operational view of objectivity serves to defend the profession, to fend off criticism. Tumber (ibid., p. 201) states that “the verification of facts, the separating of ‘facts’ from ‘analysis’, the presenting of conflicting possibilities and supporting evidence, the judicious use of quotation marks, the structuring of information in an appropriate sequence” are all factors which are considered among the elements of the operational view of objectivity. However, the consideration of these factors inevitably leads to the question ‘Who gets to speak in the news?’ as access to the news is directly related to power, and there is a serious bias towards the coverage of public bodies (Richardson, 2007, p. 88).

Since this research project deals with 1) a war in which a Muslim population is involved and 2) the coverage of this war also by Western media, we find it necessary to briefly discuss the concept of Orientalism, which can help to explain certain phenomena in news language found in European and US-American publications.

The term ‘Orientalism’ is associated with the work of Edward Said and can be briefly described as “the historical construction of Eastern cultures as alien, the Other, by the West” (Poole, 2002, p. 18). According to Poole (ibid.), discourse stemming from an Orientalist worldview tends to present “‘them’ and ‘us’ constructed as naturalized, binary oppositions [which] has allowed ‘the West’ to dominate Oriental cultures”. Muslims are often conceptualized and “homogenized as backward, irrational, unchanging, fundamentalist, misogynist, threatening, manipulative in the use of their faith for political and personal gain, and yet with politically unstable governments and movements” (ibid.).

The decades following the publication of Said's *Orientalism* witnessed radical political changes in the world, among which the falling apart of the Eastern Bloc, the Gulf War, the era of globalization, the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent 'War on Terror'. In this context, Poole (ibid.) warns against seeing 'the West' as a homogenous entity and its media as 'monolithic Western media'. According to her, it is necessary to "study journalistic discourse in its social, cultural and national contexts of production" because "[n]ews about Muslims is partly the result of international 'flashbulb' events (...) but it is also affected by local histories, local concerns and local agendas" (ibid., pp. 1-2). In other words, "Foreign news (about Islam) is interpreted through national frameworks" (ibid., p. 18).

The concept of Orientalism can be employed to account for certain characteristics and developments of the Israel-Palestine relations. Matar (2011, p. xi) states that "Palestinian history tends to be viewed solely in relation to Israeli history or narrative; and (...) the story of the Palestinians, as ordinary human beings subjected to violent forms of power, remains a largely hidden one", which for Sabido (2015, p. 205) is itself an orientalist approach to Palestine and its history as "Palestine does not exist, in any way, as an entity in its own right". In addition, according to Traverso (2024, pp. 19-20), having been 'whitewashed' and identified as representatives of a so-called Judeo-Christian civilization, Jews are now not only "an integral part of the West, they have become its symbol" as "[i]n Western Europe, the fight against anti-Semitism has become the flag behind which all post fascist and far-right movements rally, ready to fight 'Islamic barbarism'". All this shows that the discursive representation of the Middle East cannot be fully understood unless also seen through the lens of Orientalism.

Due to its relevance to the current study, war reporting as a branch of news reporting needs to be considered too. Allan and Zelizer (2004, p. 13) identify some of the pressing issues related to (the covering of) conflicts, critically dealing with which could contribute to modern journalism: the influence of censorship and propaganda; 'us' and 'them' narratives; access to sources; '24/7 rolling news' and the so-called 'CNN effect'; military jargon (such as 'friendly fire' and 'collateral damage'); 'embedded' and 'unilateral' reporters; visual images of war;

tensions between objectivity, patriotism and humanitarianism; online reporting.

Boyd-Barrett (2004, p. 25) is critical of war reporting as a genre and states that “[t]he genre plays into the hands of power” and in effect “serves a propaganda purpose”. According to him (*ibid.*, p. 29-30), war reporting is “generally one sided” and “[t]he media typically cover war from the point of view of the country in which they and their major owners and readers are based, reflecting the point of view of that country’s government and its foreign policy elites” (*ibid.*). Boyd-Barrett’s criticism is closely related to the problem of propaganda which, according to Richardson (2007, p. 180), is omnipresent. Richardson (*ibid.*, pp. 182-186) explains that some of the reasons which make journalism so susceptible to propaganda are found in journalism’s own key professional and occupational practices.

CHAPTER 3 looks into the academic field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the current study is theoretically based within its framework. First, the term ‘discourse’ is discussed because it often causes confusion due to its polysemous character including everyday and linguistic meanings. Second, an attempt is made to answer the question ‘What is discourse analysis (DA)?’. This is not an easy task as “our understanding of discourse is based on scholarship from a number of academic disciplines that are actually very different from one another” (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 5). According to Schiffrin (*ibid.*, p. 42), one of the main reasons for the “tremendous scope” of DA stems from the existence of the structuralist and the functionalist paradigms in linguistics with their different definitions of discourse.

CDA, on the other hand, is an explicitly political enquiry into social, economic and cultural power (Luke, 2002, p. 97). CDA sees discourse “as a form of social practice” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258) and is defined by van Dijk (2001, p. 352) as “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context”.

CDA is critical in two senses. First, the term ‘critical’ is related to the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and especially to the ideas of

Jürgen Habermas. Second, ‘critical’ relates to Critical Linguistics, a movement which originated at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s and was “concerned to develop a social approach to linguistics which recognized power relationships as a central theoretical issue and text as its main unit of analysis” (Flowerdew, 2013, p. 178). This was made possible with Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) where language is not seen as a formal system but as a “resource for communication and making meaning” where, depending on context, different but interrelated linguistic choices (systems) “are available for the expression of meanings in situational contexts” (ibid., p. 18).

CDA is particularly interested in the media because of the media’s “manifestly pivotal role as discourse-bearing institutions” (Garrett and Bell, 1998, p. 6). Especially the names of the CDA scholars Teun van Dijk and Norman Fairclough are closely associated with critical media research. Fairclough’s three-layered model of CDA shows the different types of analysis involved:

- 1) text or discourse analysis which includes micro levels (e.g. vocabulary, syntax) and macro levels of text structure, as well as interpersonal elements in a text;
- 2) analysis of discourse practices [which] looks at how a text is constructed and interpreted, and also how it is distributed. Analysis of discourse also considers the discourse practices of different social domains (...) [or] orders of discourse;
- 3) Analysis of social practices, focusing in particular on the relation of discourse to power and ideology (ibid., pp. 11-12).

Phelan (2018, p. 289) points out that “CDA researchers continually emphasize the dialectical relationship between text and social context (...). Yet, media sociologists have criticized CDA for its narrow textual focus”. A prominent critic of CDA in media research is Philo (2007), according to whom Fairclough and van Dijk’s “text-based studies are limited in the conclusions which can be drawn, since their approach does not include the study of key production factors in journalism or the analysis of audience understanding” (p. 175).

For the purposes of the investigation, this thesis adopts a contrastive approach. According to Gomez-Gonzalez and Doval-Suarez (2005, p.

24), both Contrastive Discourse Analysis and Contrastive Pragmatics deal with language beyond the clause level with the aim to “explore the (textual features of) language in use under the assumption that the relations between texts and contexts are mutually reflexive – texts not only reflect but also shape their contexts”.

CHAPTER FOUR provides an overview of previous research on the media coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict, which has been of interest for different scholars from various fields of study – from law and international relations to communication studies and linguistics. There is a lot of research of news reporting of the Israel-Palestine conflict since the turn of the millennium. Sometimes different media in the same country are compared, sometimes media from different countries are analyzed, and in this case, it is often a comparison between European and American media, or Western media and Arab media. The most common research method is content analysis, which is often supported by CDA analysis and/or audience surveys. The most frequently analyzed periods of violence are the Second Intifada at the beginning of the new millennium and the war of 2008-2009. Research of media coverage of the latest war in Gaza which started in October 2023 is still very limited with the author’s publications among the few on the topic.

In this chapter, twenty studies in total have been presented. In all of them, considerable differences between the media outlets under investigation have been found. On occasion, these have been described in detail in order to give the readers the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the prevailing discourses in the coverage of earlier wars and military operations within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Thus, the results of the current study can be used to determine whether the coverage of the conflict has changed through the years or whether in spite of all the critique certain patterns remain unchanged.

Without a question, one of the most thorough and widely cited studies in the field is that of Greg Philo, Mike Berry and the Glasgow University Media Group (2004/2011). The aim of the study is to reveal how TV news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on BBC and ITV in the UK “relates to the understanding, beliefs and attitudes of the

television audience” (2004, p. viii). What makes this study one of a kind is the combination of analysis of processes of production, news content and audience reception. Philo and Berry (2004, p. 244) discover that “there is in general a dearth of in-depth, analytic and explanatory material included in news reports” and that apart from factors like time pressure, logistics and convenience, “[t]he pressures of organised public relations, lobbying and systematic criticism together with the privileging of Israeli perspectives by political and public figures, can affect the climate within which journalists operate”, which in turn can explain “why journalists sometimes have difficulty in giving a clear account of the Palestinian perspective, while they can apparently more easily facilitate that of the Israelis” (ibid., pp. 255-256). Philo and Berry’s message to both journalists and audiences alike is that “[t]he effect of presenting propaganda is in the end to prolong the violence, but a proper understanding of its causes, is a major step in the move towards peace” (2011, p. 398).

Peterson (2019) takes a different approach to researching news reporting of the conflict. He chooses to focus on print news language and to compare the coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict in the UK and in the USA. The concept of ‘national news media community’ is of central importance in Peterson’s analysis. According to him (ibid., p. 37), “the mass media and the news media in particular contribute to the establishment of conceptual parameters of the nation through the development and distribution of text, sound, and images from home and abroad”. The representations of ‘self’ and ‘other’ “shape domestic and international events for the media consumer and are ideologically particular within each national community” (ibid., p. 39). Peterson (ibid., pp. 182-183) finds out that different discourses dominate the print news media in the United States and in the UK and that as a result each national community has “come to know and view the Palestinian-Israel conflict in qualitatively disparate terms”.

Sabido (2015) offers yet another perspective and studies the media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the framework of Postcolonial CDA. According to her, there are clear indications that “the concept of ‘orientalism’ applies to the media representations of

Palestinians, including both negative representations as well as their exclusion from the discourse” (ibid., p. 213).

When it comes to the latest war in the Gaza Strip which started with Hamas’ attack on October 7, 2023, it can be said that even though its media coverage all over the world has been unprecedented, the number of scholarly publications analyzing this coverage is still relatively small (El Damanhoury et al., 2025, p. 2). As El Damanhoury et al. (ibid.) point out, there are several articles on the coverage of the latest conflict in Western, Vietnamese, Malaysian, Pakistani and Indonesian news outlets, as well as a couple of publications comparing Arab and Western media coverage. In two separate articles, Dimitrova (2024, 2025) analyses different aspects of the media coverage of Hamas’ attack on October 7, 2023 in *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet*.

CHAPTER 5 focuses on the media coverage of the war in Gaza starting with the news reports on October 8, 2023 and then discussing three more particular days, namely November 7, 2023, January 7, 2024 and April 7, 2024. In each case, the day to be analyzed is chosen to mark a certain point of time after Hamas’ attack on October 7, 2023, namely the first day, the first month, the third month and the sixth month. Thus, apart from October 8, 2023, each day under investigation marks the end of a temporal period, a kind of a small ‘anniversary’, which is often used in media coverage as a stimulus to refer back to events, make recapitulations and/or discuss prospects for the future. The four days in question are analyzed in a similar way and following a similar structure. First, a general overview of the articles in the corpus is presented. Then the analysis of each day starts with a look at the coverage of casualties and human suffering, which is followed by a look at the parties at war with their military actions, then the national and international politics of the conflict are analyzed and finally any other topics related to the war that are present in the headlines are discussed. It is only natural that differences in the content of the news coverage determined by the concrete events of the day in question inevitably lead to certain structural and qualitative differences in the presentation of the individual days under investigation. In any case, all the headlines of the day related to the war in Gaza appearing in the online editions of

the British *The Guardian* with its Sunday edition *The Observer*, the German *Der Spiegel*, the Bulgarian *Dnevnik* and the Turkish *Cumhuriyet* have been subjected to critical analysis. In occasional cases where certain points could not be fully illustrated and/or explained, parts of the bodies of the articles have also been included. This has sometimes also been the case when a certain piece of news figures in the headline of one news outlet but has not been covered by the other media outlets.

The first corpus in this thesis consists of all the articles published online on October 8, 2023 in *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet* related directly or indirectly to the war in Gaza:

	Total number of articles published	Photos only	Video only	News update
<i>The Guardian</i>	22	1	1	2
<i>Der Spiegel</i>	20	0	3	1
<i>Dnevnik</i>	7	0	2	1
<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	23 + 8	0	0	0

Table 2: Articles published online on October 8, 2023

In terms of quantity the following differences have been observed: on October 8, 2023, *Cumhuriyet* offered the highest number of articles although this is due to its publishing pieces in both Turkish and English. When we consider only the articles in Turkish which *Cumhuriyet*'s service normally consists of, we notice that *Cumhuriyet*, *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel* published almost the same number of articles while the number in *Dnevnik* was on a much lower level. Yet, these numbers do not represent the whole truth as apart from *Cumhuriyet*, the other three news outlets also published very detailed news updates throughout the day covering the new information as it flowed in.

As the shock and the horror of the events of October 7, 2023 was still the dominating emotion around the world, we first wanted to find out how visible death, destruction and human suffering were in the headlines of the four news outlets. The first difference is found in the headlines of the news updates where only *Dnevnik* refers to victims on both sides of the conflict, *The Guardian* only focuses on the Israeli side remaining factual whereas *Der Spiegel* chooses very expressive

wording borrowed directly from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and reviving Orientalist stereotypes.

There are also differences among the news outlets under investigation related to the total number of victims published in the headlines. The headline in *The Guardian* is misleading as it reports a number comprising victims on both sides which is interpreted as referring only to Israeli victims. Only in *Cumhuriyet* we find two such headlines focusing separately on each side of the conflict. Apart from total numbers, there are also more concrete examples of civilian suffering in the headlines of *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet*. Here, too, the four news outlets differ from one another in terms of the chosen information and the visibility of Israeli and Palestinian civilians. On the day after Hamas' attack, it is understandable that the main focus on the media outlets is on the people of Israel. Yet, *The Guardian* makes a particular effort to present both sides in a balanced manner using parallel structures in its headlines and quoting civilians. On the other hand, the suffering of the civilian population is hardly present among the headlines in *Cumhuriyet*. The headlines in *Der Spiegel* are different because they all lead to either video materials or feature articles and include quotes which are not contextualized. One headline in particular, namely "Youmna, bitte geh in Deckung" (Youmna, please take cover), sticks out as it belongs to a piece of news published a day earlier in all the other news outlets and with a different focus. This leads to the inevitable question 'why?', a possible answer to which could be the unwillingness of *Der Spiegel* on the day of the attack to show destruction caused by the Israeli side preferring only to focus on the consequences of Hamas' attack in Israel.

When it comes to covering military action *Cumhuriyet* is the leader and the only news outlet which refers to concrete strikes in its headlines. It looks both at what Hamas and Hesbollah, and Israel are undertaking, however not in the detail witnessed on the day of the attack. *Dnevnik* only posts a video from the previous day, and *The Guardian* just announces that the conflict has entered its second day. *Der Spiegel*, on the other hand, adopts the language of its source, the Israeli government, about what is to come and thus spreads further its threatening message.

After on October 7, 2023 the headlines of all media outlets were full of statements by political leaders from different countries and by international organizations, on October 8, 2023 we witness a sharp decrease in these. Such statements can be found only in *Der Spiegel* which mentions the EU and the USA, and in *Cumhuriyet* which reports on diplomatic contacts between the USA and Türkiye, and refers to a statement by the UN. However, in both of *Cumhuriyet*'s headlines imprecise language leads to misunderstandings and to the question whether this was intentional with the aim to raise the headlines' news value.

On the day in question *Cumhuriyet* is the only news outlet which in its headlines pays broad attention to the politics surrounding the conflict focusing on both the conflicting parties and on Turkish political reactions. When compared to the headlines in the other three news outlets, this difference can only to a certain extent be explained with the fact that *Cumhuriyet* simply published many more articles than the others. Apparently, it was also a matter *Cumhuriyet* showed real interest in. Unfortunately, here too, we find a headline whose wording is misleading.

Another topic found in the headlines of October 8, 2023 is related to worries of the German, Turkish and Israeli governments about the safety of their citizens. In the case of Israel, this is also related to an incident in Egypt where a local police officer shot two Israeli tourists. All four news outlets under investigation cover this story, however *Dnevnik* and *Der Spiegel* only in the form of subheadings within their news updates. The headlines and subheadlines about the shooting in Egypt display a variety of linguistic choices varying from a full identification of the agent to its complete absence.

The analyzed headlines in *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel* also cover worries of the British and the German authorities about rising antisemitism in the respective countries. Incidents with a limited number of participants in both countries led to very harsh reactions by the authorities, which reveals how sensitive the matter is in these two countries with large Muslim minorities where the roots of such clashes of opinion about the Middle East are multifarious.

One final group of headlines shows that on October 8, 2023 the four news outlets under investigation publish not only reports of the latest developments in the conflict but also press reviews, explainers, analyses and op-eds. The magnitude of the Hamas attack and Israel’s immediate military response are the reason why *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet* all try to offer their readers the opportunity to understand the course of events and their possible consequences better. The language is mostly matter-of-fact and *Cumhuriyet* is the only news outlet which calls Hamas’ attack by the name given to it by Hamas themselves. Here too, it is *Der Spiegel*’s headlines that stick out as different from the other three news outlets as they contain emotionally loaded language.

The second corpus consists of all the articles published online on November 7, 2023 in *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet* related directly or indirectly to the war in Gaza:

	Total number of articles published	Photos only	Video only	News update
<i>The Guardian</i>	28	0	4	2
<i>Der Spiegel</i>	7	0	1	1
<i>Dnevnik</i>	5	0	1	0
<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	13	0	0	0

Table 3: Articles published online on November 7, 2023

In terms of quantity, *Der Spiegel* has considerably reduced the number of published articles focusing in separate pieces only on few of the topics of the day. A serious drop is also observed in the number of materials published by *Cumhuriyet*. *The Guardian*, on the other hand, has increased the amount of published material broadening its scope with materials from numerous affiliated journalists touching even on developments in Australia. *Dnevnik* continues to report on the war with just a few pieces most of which borrowed from different news agencies, which can be explained with its lack of resources and journalistic network.

Similarly to our approach when analyzing the headlines of October 8, 2023, we first checked the visibility of those killed in the war. This time none of the four media outlets under investigation mentions victims in

their headlines and information about these can be found only in the bodies of the articles. Compared to the other three news outlets, *The Guardian* mentions these relatively often – in approximately one third of its news reports. Considerable differences in reporting casualty figures reveal that the different media have different stances towards the war and its main actors. While *Dnevnik* clearly names Israel as responsible for the death of ten thousand people and *Cumhuriyet* breaks down these figures to show how dramatic the situation is, *Der Spiegel* is mostly focused on relativizing those by implying that the source of information cannot be trusted. Even though *The Guardian* quotes the same source, it refers to it in a neutral way.

When it comes to the suffering of the civilian population in the headlines, it is again *The Guardian* which displays the highest number of mentions referring equally to Palestinians and to Israelis. *Der Spiegel* and *Cumhuriyet* only mention Palestinian suffering and *Dnevnik* does not put such information in its headlines. Here both *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel* use direct quotations and thus give the civilians a voice.

All four media outlets cover the fighting in Gaza and there is a dominance of official Israeli sources. Statements by both the Israeli PM Netanyahu and the minister of defense Gallant are reported in the four media, however with some differences in their presentation, which could be interpreted with the influence of propaganda having entered the news rooms internationally and with the individual media's ideological positioning. When describing the Israeli army's activity in Gaza *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel* use verbs with a more general meaning and more technical terms (e.g., 'to storm', to 'move', 'to advance', 'to operate') while *Cumhuriyet* prefers to describe concrete actions by the Israeli army with verbs like 'to target', 'to kill', 'to strike'. *Cumhuriyet* is the only newspaper which often places Israel in subject position foregrounding its active role in the war and again the only one citing not only Israeli sources but also Hamas representatives legitimizing Hamas as a valid counterpart in the military conflict.

The absence of Hamas in the headlines of *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* as a source of information has prompted us to look for sentences in the bodies of the articles where Hamas is found. *The Guardian*, citing

other sources, uses 'scare quotes' and the verb 'to claim' in the reporting clause to distance itself from the validity of Hamas' statement it reports, and *Dnevnik* reports indirectly using the verb 'to declare', which gives Hamas a more official status. *Der Spiegel* differs a lot as it completely avoids citing Hamas sources and instead prefers to talk about Hamas, what it is and what it does, overlexicalizing it and supporting this information with statements by a high rank US official who expresses his certainty that Hamas has genocidal intentions. Such way of writing reveals that *Der Spiegel* has a clear stance in relation to reporting about Israel and its enemies which involves adopting and propagating official Israeli, American and German positions.

Another topic found in the headlines of the four news outlets only indirectly touches upon the war in Gaza but has political relevance in the countries in question. The headlines reveal political and ideological struggles in Australia, the USA, Bulgaria, Türkiye and Germany. In Australia and Türkiye the struggle is between the ruling party/parties and the opposition, in the USA between high ranking conservative and other governmental circles, and left-liberal pro-Palestinian opposition in the face of intellectuals, in Bulgaria in relation to how the war in Ukraine should be seen, and in Germany there is the state with its 'reason of state' and its focus on fighting antisemitism which the government often finds in pro-Palestinian protests. Indeed, more than half of the headlines found in *Der Spiegel* have something to do with fighting antisemitism or reporting cases of it while the Palestinian side in the conflict is barely present.

One last topic found in the news outlets under investigation (with the exception of *Cumhuriyet*) is related to pro-Palestinian, pro-Israeli and anti-war demonstrations in different cities and countries. The death of a Jewish man during a protest in LA is reported very differently in *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel*, demonstrating again their ideological positioning in the context of the war in Gaza. While *The Guardian* describes the tragic event as a result of two sides having a heated dispute, *Der Spiegel* presents the person who lost his life only as a victim. However, even within *The Guardian* there are sometimes differences in reporting when correspondents from different locations report.

The third corpus consists of all the articles published online on January 7, 2024 in *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet* related directly or indirectly to the war in Gaza:

	Total number of articles published	Photos only	Video only	News update
<i>The Guardian</i>	11	0	1	1
<i>Der Spiegel</i>	9	0	0	0
<i>Dnevnik</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	3	0	0	0

Table 4: Articles published online on January 7, 2024

In terms of quantity, there is a drop in the number of articles published by *The Guardian* while the number of articles published by *Der Spiegel* is relatively stable when compared to November 7, 2023. The two smaller newspapers, the Bulgarian *Dnevnik* and the Turkish *Cumhuriyet* hardly cover the war on the day in question which could at least to a certain extent be explained with the fact that January 7, 2024 fell on a Sunday. In the case of stand-alone photo and video materials, there is a general drop.

That the day in question marks the end of the third month of fighting is explicitly stated only by *Der Spiegel* and even though this time there are victims mentioned in the headlines of three of the four newspapers (no such information in *Cumhuriyet*), figures related to the whole period of three months can only be found in the bodies of the articles. The numbers in different publications vary, which can be explained with the nature of the military action and the speed with which new victims were added to the statistics. Even though the total number of articles in *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel* is almost the same, there are many more mentions of these figures in the British outlet. Throughout the examples the victims are reported with the help of the verb ‘to kill’, which is used only in the passive in *Dnevnik* and *Der Spiegel*, and both in its active and passive form in *The Guardian*. Information as to who is responsible for the killing of these people is not given by the Bulgarian and the German news outlet. This information is always found in *The Guardian* but its presentation differs from article to article. Thus, sometimes the agency is backgrounded by being placed in a prepositional phrase or represented by an inanimate agent, and in other cases the Israeli forces

are given as the entity directly involved in the killing. When reporting IDF's statement about the number of killed Hamas members, *The Guardian* uses scare quotes around the word 'terrorists' to distance itself from the standpoint of the official Israeli source and *Der Spiegel* does not, expressing its support for the used terminology.

Looking at the coverage of human suffering on both sides of the conflict, we have found out that both *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel* report about both Palestinian and Israeli suffering and the percentage of such news in relation to the whole number of published articles for the day is on a similar level. Here, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet* have percentages of one hundred and zero respectively, as *Dnevnik*'s only headline focuses on victims and *Cumhuriyet* does not report these at all. One of the memorable events of the day was the killing of two journalists, one of whom the son of Al Jazeera's chief representative in Gaza, yet this information is only found in the headlines of *Dnevnik* and *The Guardian*.

When it comes to the coverage of military action, differently from the headlines of November 7, 2023 no specific fighting is referred to. The headlines on January 7, 2024 focus rather on general military and political strategy. One of the events of the day was the visit of relatives of some hostages to Qatar which was covered by *Der Spiegel* and *Cumhuriyet* though with a different focus. The headline in the German news outlet foregrounded the death of a Hamas commander making a direct connection to the low expectations on progress in the hostage matter. *Der Spiegel*'s headline can be easily misinterpreted as it omits essential information as to the cause of his death.

On January 7, 2024, Hamas is not present in headlines the way it was at the beginning of the conflict, but this time other armed groups are mentioned within the context of worries that the war might spread outside Gaza. The Houthis in Yemen are present in one headline in *The Guardian* and not mentioned by name but indirectly related to a headline in *Der Spiegel* which discusses arms exports to Saudi Arabia, previously considered inappropriate in German politics.

With the USA being a major actor in the Middle East and the expectations related to their possible influence of the developments in

the war, it is understandable why Secretary of State Blinken is present twice both in *The Guardian* and in *Cumhuriyet*. The two media outlets, however, foreground different aspects of Blinken’s statements with *The Guardian* referring to Blinken’s expectations from the Arab countries and *Cumhuriyet* foregrounding his indirect message towards Israel. *Der Spiegel* also touches on international politics but limits itself to reporting the Middle East visit of the German foreign minister. Baerbock’s statements and their coverage in *Der Spiegel* have been analyzed in more detail as they are a good example of a news outlet positioning itself behind the government and supporting its politics through its texts.

With January 7, 2024 being a Sunday, the first Sunday of the new year, the news outlets which had the necessary manpower could afford to allocate more space to analytical pieces which did not necessarily need to be published on the day in question. Two longer analytical pieces in *The Guardian* deal with questions of morality regarding claims and interpretations of the term ‘genocide’ as applied both against Israel and Hamas revealing political realities in the UK and the USA but also how the newspaper positions itself within their context. *Der Spiegel* opts for a humorous and very positive text describing the life of two friends in Berlin who come from “Israel-Palestine”, thus managing to add a sense of hope in the hard news landscape where news is, in most cases, bad news.

The fourth corpus consists of all the articles published online on April 7, 2024 in *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet* related directly or indirectly to the war in Gaza:

	Total number of articles published	Photos only	Video only	News update
<i>The Guardian</i>	16	0	0	1
<i>Der Spiegel</i>	3	0	0	0
<i>Dnevnik</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	4	0	0	0

Table 5: Articles published online on April 7, 2024

In terms of quantity, the number of articles published in *The Guardian* has increased compared to January 7, 2024 but has not gone back to the

levels of the first weeks of the war. In contrast, the number of articles published by *Der Spiegel* marks a serious drop from nine articles in January 2024 to only three on April 7, 2024 in spite of the fact that the date marks the end of a six-month period, an opportunity to look back and analyze the events of the time period in question. There is no change in the Bulgarian *Dnevnik* which marks both the end of the three-month and the six-month period with one single article without any reference in the headline to these small anniversaries. *Cumhuriyet*, too, stays on the level of January 7, 2024 with only few articles about the war in Gaza.

Following the same structure for each of the days in question, we first looked at how visible death is in the headlines and whether the total number of victims could be found there. Similarly to November 7, 2023 and January 7, 2024, such numbers do not take place in the headlines and can only be found in the bodies of the articles in the corpus. However, for the first time, these numbers are present not only in news reports but increasingly also in politicians' statements and opinion pieces, which shows that six months into the war the topic is gaining relevance for the media outlets. When reporting the number of victims, there are significant differences among the four news outlets under investigation related to their presentation and especially of those responsible for them. In *Der Spiegel* people die as a result of the war but their numbers are presented in such a way as to lose credibility. Similarly, in *Dnevnik*, it is the war that leaves the dead behind. The same information is given much differently in *Cumhuriyet* where Israel or the Israeli army are present in every sentence thus placing a strong emphasis on those responsible for the killing. In addition, the source of information is not presented as untrustworthy. However, compared to earlier reports, the verb used to introduce the victims is more often 'to lose one's life' rather than 'to be killed' or 'to be murdered'. The way *The Guardian* presents the casualty figures for the first six months of the war is relatively similar to that of *Cumhuriyet* although every now and then *The Guardian* casts some doubts as to the truthfulness of some pieces of information by using words like 'likely to' or 'in the Hamas-run territory'. However, it does not attempt to discredit the Palestinian health authorities by emphasizing their being under Hamas' control the way *Der Spiegel* does. *The Guardian* prefers passive structures and

when the agent is visible, it is usually placed in a prepositional phrase which diminishes its responsibility. In case of an active clause, it is the Israeli offensive, an inanimate agent, that is responsible for the killing.

With April 7, 2024 being a milestone in the war for most of the media outlets, a question arose as to how visible the hostages still are in the coverage of the war which started with their kidnapping. The hostages held in Gaza are not mentioned in *Cumhuriyet* and appear once in *Dnevnik*. *Der Spiegel* and *The Guardian* publish almost the same number of articles referring to them, however in relation to the total number of articles published on April 7, 2024, the visibility of the hostages in *Der Spiegel* is much higher than in the other media outlets, which in an indicator of editorial policy. When we consider the headlines dealing with human suffering more generally, in *Cumhuriyet* we find one mention of people still under the rubble in Gaza, no mentions in *Dnevnik*, a headline about the hostages in *Der Spiegel* and four mentions in *The Guardian*, three of which about death and suffering in Gaza. In its headlines, *The Guardian* chooses to include direct quotations, which foregrounds the real people affected directly or indirectly by the events they talk about.

Differently from the other days analyzed in this thesis, on April 7, 2024, there are hardly any mentions of concrete military actions. Probably related to the fact that this day marks the end of the first six months of the war, more emphasis is laid on analytical pieces and on comments by different politicians with their main focus being Israel's PM Netanyahu and his leadership in the war in Gaza. He is criticized for his management of the conflict and is presented as someone who does what he wants irrespectively of disagreement or resistance home or abroad. An interesting detail spotted here was the reference to a demonstration with 'tens of thousands' of people mentioned in *Der Spiegel* and in *The Guardian* where it turned out that the almost identical wording at the beginning of the headlines actually refers to two different demonstrations – one in Tel Aviv against Benjamin Netanyahu and another one in Jerusalem for the release of the hostages, with *Der Spiegel* not mentioning the protest against at all.

Civil society initiatives and protests also take place among the articles published on that day with reports about reactions to the upcoming Eurovision song contest in Sweden, pro-Palestinian campus protests in the USA and an appeal by Australian humanitarian groups towards their government to impose sanctions on Israeli officials.

Afterwards, CHAPTER 5 looks separately at each of the media outlets under investigation with the aim to find out whether and what changes can be observed within the given period of six months and what specificities of each outlet can be outlined. Our analysis shows that

- *The Guardian* clearly positioned itself against the way the war had been conducted and the way it was developing;
- *Der Spiegel* sees its role more as a communicator and multiplier of the official governmental stance rather than a provider of a meeting platform for contradictory views and positions;
- *Dnevnik* never includes individual voices of civilians in its headlines which can be interpreted as a conscious attempt on the part of the news outlet to stay objective and unbiased, but it can also be claimed that this matter-of-fact way of reporting has led to lower interest and involvement on the part of the Bulgarian audience;
- *Cumhuriyet* offers its readers almost no analytical or opinion pieces even though its webpage shows a long list of columnists. Thus, the news outlet limits itself to the flow of news of the day and inevitably to the available official sources.

Finally, CHAPTER 5 presents an overview of the linguistic devices used by journalists for expressing the desired meaning. These are found on both the lexical and the syntactic level and in most cases appear in combination.

The **CONCLUSION** offers a concise summary of the similarities found among the four media outlets under investigation. As has been shown, similarities are mostly found in terms of what has been covered and differences in terms of how it has been covered. Afterwards, the **CONCLUSION** presents an overview of the major points of difference displayed by each of the four news outlets. All in all, it can be said that

even though *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet* are all considered to be left-liberal media outlets, they are quite dissimilar and the influence of local political and societal specificities can be traced in the coverage of the Gaza war in all of them.

III. Limitations of research and suggestions for further studies

It is only natural that such an analysis has its limitations. To begin with, the study was limited to the headlines on four selected days. Analyzing all the headlines for the whole period of six months and/or the bodies of the articles and/or the visuals in them would inevitably give a better idea of what tendencies exist in the coverage of the four media outlets in question. However, such a task is much more time consuming, more voluminous and ideally requires the work of a team of researchers. What could also make such a study better is what Philo and Berry (2004, 2011) recommend, namely to combine textual research with an analysis of the processes of production and reception. Unfortunately, here too, one needs more resources, time and manpower.

Even though limited in scope, the current study can serve as a starting point for further research which can focus, for example, separately on the media coverage of the war in each country comparing the findings here with future findings based on the analysis of other media outlets located elsewhere on the media landscape in each respective country. Ideally, these could be combined with interviews with journalists and media consumers. The results here can also be considered in a future study extending the period of time to include other time periods like the end of the first and the second year too as this can potentially lead to more variability in the news coverage and can better reflect the eventual changes in the political and social attitudes in the countries in question towards the war in Gaza.

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V. The study's contribution to linguistic research

- The study is one of the first thorough investigations of the latest war in Gaza and adds to the bulk of research on previous wars in the region;
- It provides a basis for comparison and diachronic analysis as well as an opportunity for extending the research further;
- It provides a comprehensive review of the literature on the topic published by representatives of both parties up to this point;
- 56 of the resources used in the study have been published between 2023 and 2026, which makes the study an important source for future investigations on the topic;
- The study adopts a multilingual approach with the language combination English-German-Bulgarian-Turkish not found in the work of any other researcher;
- The study proves that national realities, political, historical and social specificities influence the language of news media and lead to differences in the coverage of otherwise ideologically similar news outlets;
- It provides a frame which can be applied to the investigation of media discourse on other armed conflicts;
- Its multidisciplinary character makes the study relevant for researchers of different academic fields like critical discourse studies, journalism and media studies, conflict and peace studies, to name a few.

VI. List of publications on the topic of the research

- Dimitrova, S. (2024). A Saturday like no other. The beginning of the latest military conflict in the Middle East – a cross-linguistic analysis of news headlines from British, German, Bulgarian and Turkish media. *Cultural Perspectives. Journal for Literary and British Cultural Studies in Romania*, 29, 69-92.
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