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**Occupied Narrative:
On Western Media Collusion with Israel's 'Wars' and Recovering the Palestinian Story**

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to capture the effects of decline in normative narrative structure about the Israel–Palestinian conflict. By engaging in analysis of Western media, the work illuminates the reliance of Western media coverage on Israeli narrative, and the way in which the media has conditioned Western publics to view the conflict. It argues that, historically, privileging a perception in which Palestinians are primarily defined through an Israeli optic has been key to the dissolution of Palestinian narrative internationally and has diminished the weight of contemporary Palestinian claims in diplomatic process. However, it is argued that the first decade of the 21st century saw a growing critique on how Israel–Palestinian relations are defined.

Accordingly, the project takes as its source material the reports and editorials of three different newspapers during two Israeli assaults on the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Operation Defensive Shield (2002) and Operation Cast Lead (2008–9), to document both the way in which certain kinds of narratives are privileged in portraying the Israel–Palestinian conflict, and the decline in narrative dominance which Israeli narrative had previously enjoyed. Both events occurred at the start of a radically different media age for capturing and disseminating information, which created an environment in which depiction of the operations in Western media could not be received as absolute, but circulated alongside other, contestable, narratives. This expanded traffic of information, and Israeli and Western media’s command over and response to this, evince a growing friction between Israeli-driven perspective and emerging alternatives in mainstream discourse. Thus, this thesis seeks to interrogate the inadequacies of received knowledge about the Israel–Palestinian conflict in the West at a moment in which the edifice of dominant narrative has become untenable, and simultaneously a moment in which new narratives might be advanced with hope of a willing reception.

The thesis concludes by evaluating the impact of, and response to, these operations on narrative about the conflict, and considers how this change in narrative direction since Operation Cast Lead could contribute to transforming the dynamic of Israel–Palestinian relations. It argues that shifts in media representation are indicative of the external pressures which have forced Israel to engage in a battle for legitimacy. It considers how certain discourses, such as securitisation and terror, which have privileged Israeli objectives through a matrix of deflection, could be (re)incorporated into an analytical rather than political framework to transform the current discourse on Israel–Palestinian relations, in particular by enabling the international community to scrutinise Israeli action and hold Israel to account. Finally it considers what effect these signs of narrative transformation could have on Israel’s relations with the Palestinians. However, it is concluded that work towards reconciliation will ultimately require radical shifts in the Israeli subjectivity in order to create a willing partner in Israel for meaningful change.

Declaration

This is to certify that:

- the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the Preface,
- due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
- the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed: A. Sahmar.

Date: 8/10/15.

Preface

I acknowledge the editorial assistance of Eris Jane Harrison (as limited to the ‘Guidelines for editing research theses’)

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I should begin by thanking my supervisor and constant friend, Ghassan Hage. He was in the first place a difficult man to find; other potential supervisors with theoretical interests in my original proposal did not feel able to supervise a project on the hotly contested terrain of the Israel–Palestinian conflict. I was fortunate to find in Ghassan a willingness to supervise a somewhat unconventional contribution to the field. Thinking nearby such a surprising and original thinker was invaluable to my project and my development as a scholar. In particular, I am grateful to him for teaching me how to write without bitterness on a topic about which one could easily slip into such a mode. I doubt any other lesson has been so useful as this in learning, as a Palestinian, to write about the Israel–Palestinian conflict.

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Finally, I would like to thank my beautiful Mum, Maxine Sahhar, who has in every way been my most constant support and champion throughout this project. I think it would have been impossible for her to foresee what marrying into a Palestinian family would mean when she married my father in 1978. Not only did I reject the comparatively lucrative and vocational profession of the law, but I insisted on pursuing the subject of Palestine through intellectual means. I truly did believe, as I believe still, that this second choice is the only path to justice. I cannot imagine that this is to many the most obvious path, but I am grateful that Mum has understood the urgency of these questions to me, and in particular that I have experienced my Palestinian inheritance as nothing short of an imperative to act. To her in particular, I am forever indebted.

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*To my brave grandparents, Abdullah and Elain, who lost;
To my aunt, Georgette, who has lived it everyday;
And to my father, whose loss is the greatest for its unknowing –*

I dedicate this labour of hope, with love.

Introduction

‘this way to the bomb shelter’

As is well known, excessive securitization produces the international equivalents of autism and paranoia¹

I went to historic Palestine, which is now described as Israel, for the first time in October 2012. My Palestinian family had lived until January 1948 in Jerusalem, in a large house comprising five apartments in the Greek Colony, which was then known as the New Jerusalem. From at least the time of the Irgun-authored bombing of the King David Hotel in July 1946, it had become clear to my grandparents that the geopolitical maelstrom about the future of Palestine had encroached into their everyday reality. Their precise leaving time was therefore arbitrary in any political sense, although it pertained directly to the imminent birth of my father, who was delivered in the Italian Hospital that same month in Amman, Jordan.

Today, the Greek Colony is located in West Jerusalem. In all contemporary models of partition to create an independent Palestinian state, West Jerusalem would remain, as it is now considered to be, part of the Jewish territory of Jerusalem and as such would form a component of a future Israel. Many Palestinian friends, those that is who have the privilege of foreign passports to freely enter Jerusalem (as those with papers for the Palestinian Territories cannot) have expressed to me great trepidation in venturing beyond the largely invisible division, insofar as it is not formally marked, from East to West Jerusalem. This sense of division for me was overridden by the fact that 8 Asa Street in the Greek Colony is the only place in the whole terrain of Jerusalem, of Palestine, and indeed of my past, about which I am certain. 8 Asa Street is the origin from which the journey of my family’s displacement begins, the origin of all the stories I know about their life in Palestine, and the origin too of my sense of injustice and current endeavour.

On my first night in Jerusalem, I was accompanied by my Israeli guide and friend to visit the premises at 8 Asa Street. In the quiet of after midnight, we sat at the side of the road, breathing in the scent of the brilliant purple bougainvillea that has grown with vigour over the fence well beyond the years of the Israeli State. As we sat, a young man sauntered down the street and into the driveway. With some astonishment, I found myself standing and calling to him, even before I had made the decision, or so it seemed then. Yes, he lived there, he said, in the top apartment. ‘The one with the roof terrace?’ I asked. He must have found the exchange eerie and turned to my male companion for reassurance. ‘How long have you lived here?’ I started again. ‘My whole life’, he said it quickly, ‘twenty-three years’. If the young resident had hoped in my friend that he might find some chord of solidarity, as Israelis, as men, it was shattered when he, unflinching, announced, ‘this is Micaela’s house, her Palestinian family lived here’. The young resident of 8 Asa Street looked truly puzzled, and any remaining doubts he might have had about my sanity were clearly dispelled as he settled the encounter: *but how can that be? This house isn’t that old, maybe eighty or a hundred years*. We left him to go inside, and sat down again, at which time I noticed some Hebrew letters in red paint marked out on the gate pillar. I asked what it meant, and my friend read aloud: *this way to the bomb shelter*. Confirming that it was graffiti, I was assured it was not.

¹ Barry Buzan, “Rethinking Security After the Cold War,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 32, no.1 (1997): 21.

Extraordinarily to me, my father's eldest two siblings, when later told, both nodded sagely and described a well underneath the back lower apartment, agreeing that this would be the most logical place to have built such a thing.

There are two particular parts of that night which I cannot imagine becoming any less powerful than they were when they struck me then, or as they strike me writing now. The first is the young man's complete disbelief that the premises of 8 Asa Street had belonged to a Palestinian family whose original residents were still living; not because he denied either the contemporary fact or historical grounds of the conflict but because he did not appear to be aware of the timeframes involved in the Palestinian exodus or the creation of the Jewish State of Israel. Secondly, that a bomb shelter was considered an essential fortification there, or indeed anywhere, in the heart of Jerusalem. Irrespective of the capacities of Hamas' rockets or anyone else's, it is inconceivable and demonstrably so, that any Palestinian might wish to do serious damage to Jerusalem (leaving aside what can only be described as deplorable, the at times realised desire to hurt Israel in the form of Jewish civilian casualties located in Jerusalem or anywhere else). I have heard the Israeli anthropologist and activist, Jeff Halper, say that what really upsets the Palestinians is that they know that the Israelis know that they are not really terrorists.² It is, I believe, the State he predominately refers to. Since the ordinary Jewish-Israeli citizens in the Greek Colony and elsewhere are caught up in the practices of everyday life which involve signs to bomb shelters, which involved the 'third limb' of the gas mask they were required to carry at all times during the Second Gulf War, along with the double ended syringe with which they were instructed to stab themselves in the event of chemical or biological attack.³ These fearful things are the signs and objects of their commonplace.

These are the effects, writ large, at work in the following thesis. These and one other. Growing up as a Palestinian in 1980s Australia was not without challenge. Half Anglo-Australian though I am, it was the Palestinian surname that I carried. At school, teachers would inquire where my name was from. I remember rehearsing the answer to this with my mother when it became clear that being Palestinian was a confounding thing to be. I was to say 'Middle Eastern' and, if pressed, I would give the honest answer that my father was born in Jordan. It was only in retrospect, and with no small degree of fury that it dawned on me that 'Palestinian', at that time, was an 'anti-Semitic' answer, so closely was the name 'Palestinian' associated with the hateful calls for the demise of the Israeli State or worse. Strange that the answer of a child as small as five should be so visibly appalling to my interlocutors that I came to understand that the reality of my home life could not be the reality of my public one. In my earliest memories, there was no Holocaust without the *Nakba* rounding out the story. Surprisingly, almost no one else had heard about the latter, including a politically astute enough friend studying Arabic in 2006 who went off to consult books at its mention, only to return with the answer that it was defined in her concise Arabic-English dictionary as 'catastrophe'. So from the apparent predicament of Israeli life, internalised as identity, and the smothered valence of Palestinian narrative in Western discourse, I depart.

² Jeff Halper, "Imagining the Future: Towards a Multi-Cultural Middle East Confederation" (lecture, The University of Melbourne, September 19, 2013).

³ Geoffrey Brahm Levy, "Gaza and Catastrophe Theory," in *Gaza: Morality, Law and Politics*, ed. Raimond Gaita (Crawley, WA: UWA Publishing, 2010), 53-54.

This thesis seeks to capture the effects of normative narrative structure, in the Israel–Palestinian conflict. It works to interrogate the perceived naturalness of meaning assigned to event, which it argues is derived through the meaning–event nexus of Israeli national narrative, to assess the consequences when frameworks become invisible. By engaging in analysis of Western media items during two crisis events, the work illuminates the reliance of Western media coverage on Israeli narrative. It argues that this analysis demonstrates how the realm of possible relations in the Israel–Palestinian conflict is foreclosed by the current patterns of representation. However, if as I contend, the current patterns of representation are circumscribed in formal and institutionally determined space, proscription lacks the immunity from critique that it may once have enjoyed. Accordingly, two case studies are selected as the materials through which to analyse these propositions, because of the growing critique during the first decade of the 21st century on how Israel–Palestinian relations are defined. During this period, capabilities of media technology and the capacity of a structural elite to mould public opinion transformed radically, to produce distinctively different identities to those determined by institutional power and interest. Consequently, analysis of Israeli-authored military events at this time displays an unprecedented disjuncture between traditional assumptions about the dynamic of Israel–Palestinian relations and narratives commensurate with statistical evidence of the events. This project therefore seeks to document, first of all, the reliance of Western media coverage on Israeli national narrative. Secondly, it seeks to analyse the fissures between coverage and event, or indeed which subjects are prominent and which avoided. Thirdly, it examines the limits to context which define and produce reasonable expectations, responsibility, and apportion blame to each party. Finally, it aims to accentuate the presence of alternative narrative possibilities which could reformulate prevailing discourse to the extent that they offer more generative modes of thinking to a deadlocked diplomatic process.

This thesis is primarily concerned with Western media depictions of military action that occurred in two enclosed spaces in the Occupied Palestine Territories (OPTs) during operations conducted by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF). The first is Jenin refugee camp, situated in the northern part of the West Bank, to which media, medical and humanitarian access was blocked by the IDF during Operation Defensive Shield (ODS) in 2002. The second is Gaza, the south-western strip bordered by Egypt and south Israel, which was closed in its entirety during Operation Cast Lead (OCL) in the winter of 2008–9, to the media and everyone else. Quite apart from the so-called ‘legitimate targets’ Israel sought to contain and even liquidate in these spaces, substantial numbers of Palestinian civilians were trapped in the battlegrounds of Israel’s wars. At a practical level, this was directly the result of Israel’s strategy of sealing off territory, which for many Palestinians unable to retreat to safer ground, resulted in traumatic and deadly enclosure.⁴ In this sense, the locations share a symmetry for analysis.

The project takes as its source material the reports and editorials of three different newspapers during ODS and OCL. This data set – comprised of *The New York Times*, the *Guardian* and *The Australian* – documents the way

⁴ For ODS, see: Human Rights Watch (HRW), “Israel, the Occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian Authority Territories: Jenin: IDF Military Operations,” May 2, 2002, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/05/02/jenin>; Amnesty International, “Israel and the Occupied Territories: Shielded from Scrutiny: IDF Violations in Jenin and Nablus,” November 4, 2002, MDE 15/143/2002, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3dc672164.html>. For OCL, see Amnesty International, “The Conflict in Gaza: A Briefing on Applicable Law, Investigations and Accountability,” January 19, 2009, MDE 15/007/2009, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4992a1162.html>; League of Arab States, “Report of the Independent Fact Finding Committee on Gaza: No Safe Place,” April 30, 2009.

in which certain kinds of narratives are privileged in portraying the Israel–Palestinian conflict. The effect of what is argued to be a privileging of Israeli perspective is pervasive in Western discourse as measured in its effect on media in the coverage of these two operations, which tend to excuse Israeli action under a variety of guises, notwithstanding the extent of Palestinian fatalities and damage to Palestinian infrastructure on each occasion. Historically, privileging a perception in which Palestinians are primarily defined through an Israeli optic has been key to the dissolution of the Palestinian narrative internationally and has thus diminished the weight of contemporary Palestinian claims in diplomatic process. At crisis moments, however, media captures not only the dominant narrative structures at work in portraying Israel–Palestinian issues, but also a dilemma in the use of that structure. I argue that this dilemma is the inability of the preferred narrative set to develop a coherent account of the operations while simultaneously accounting for the statistically quantifiable impact of events. Rather, sources that continue to adhere to the narrative set are characterised by serial silences; they cannot narrate the story because they refuse to incorporate relevant facts. These elements combine to produce an incomplete explanatory logic of Israel–Palestinian relations, which through omission and incongruities between ‘operational facts’ (for example, low Israeli death tolls) and the narrative set (the presumption of Israeli insecurity), cumulatively describe how Western publics have been conditioned to view Israel.

The rationale for selecting these operations for comparative empirical analysis is twofold. Israel sought to evade scrutiny for both events through the access bans imposed; however, they occurred at the start of a radically different media age for capturing and disseminating information. The proliferation of satellite television by 2002 throughout the Arab world, alongside Arab Diaspora communities in the West, was thus compared to the effect of television on the American public in the Vietnam War, but from the alternate perspective of ‘Vietnamese eyes’.⁵ Obliquely, this created an environment in which depiction of the operations in Western media sources could not be received as absolute, but was circulated alongside other, contestable, narratives. By 2008–9, rapid developments in the realm of independent media meant that Palestinians within Gaza were able to capture what official journalists could not, posting footage and photographs online and supplying eyewitness testimonies to the international press. Consequently, closure could not definitively bury the events. On the contrary, the strategy of closure fuelled speculation, which, particularly in the case of Jenin, was far more damning in its hypotheses than the substantive facts later collected.⁶ One sees the effect of this manifesting both internally and externally to State. Thus, in Israel, what is described in 2002 as a disaster of public relations is comprehensively addressed in State strategy by 2008 with the creation of the Israeli Citizens Information Council, responsible for producing *hasbara*. It is the expanded traffic of information and Israel and Western media’s command over and response to this, which impact on the narratives portrayed in Western media sources in focus in the current thesis.

The second rationale is the circulation in Western media of the idea that Israel’s conduct in these operations amounted to war crimes, and even crimes against humanity. The allegations laid against Israel are of interest not primarily because of the actual weight they might have carried in a court of law. At one level, it is true that the

⁵ James Bennet, “In New Rebuff to U.S., Sharon Pushes Military Sweep,” *New York Times*, April 11, 2002; Max Rodenbeck, “Broadcasting the War,” *New York Times*, April 17, 2002.

⁶ Suzanne Goldenberg, “Toll of the Bloody Battle of Jenin 13 Israelis and 100 Palestinians Dead,” *Guardian*, April 10, 2002; “The Battle for the Truth,” *Guardian*, April 17, 2002; James Bennet, “Israeli Forces Pull Back from Jenin, But Blockade Still Remains,” *New York Times*, April 19, 2002.

significance of criminal accusation did result in effects of real prosecution or its possibility: the decade was in some ways marked for Israel by the anxiety of legal prosecution. For example, in June 2001, a group of Palestinian plaintiffs, survivors of the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres, brought a case against then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon (amongst others) in the Belgian courts for his part in that massacre. This was made possible under 1993 and 1999 laws, which granted Belgian courts ‘universal jurisdiction’ over crimes against humanity or war crimes anywhere. However, the political pressures brought to bear on the case, including the withdrawal of the Israeli ambassador to Belgium, resulted in serious alterations to the ‘universal jurisdiction’ law in 2003, such that the future trajectory of similar cases was effectively contained.⁷ Yet, when the case was dismissed in 2003, it had already impacted on Israeli leaders’ sense of invulnerability. Following this, in February 2004, a case was brought to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legality of Israel’s Separation Wall. Since Israel is not a signatory to the ICJ, the court was confined to an Advisory Opinion in which they determined the wall, then under construction in the West Bank, to be illegal. This determination caused horror amongst the Israeli public, entrenching the conviction of the ‘inherent hostility of the world community towards Israel’.⁸ From this general insensitivity to particular vilification, former Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Minister at the time of OCL, was forced to cancel a trip to Britain in December 2009 amidst claims that ‘pro-Palestinian groups’ had secured a warrant for her arrest over alleged war crime charges.⁹ And finally, at the time when Palestinian statehood was recognised at the United Nations (UN) in November 2012, a recognition Israel opposed, it was suggested that the greatest significance this largely nominal change might have would be to afford the Palestinians recourse for future Israeli crimes in the International Criminal Court (ICC).¹⁰ However none of these real or possible legal events was as significant as the cumulative effect of the weight of the idea of criminality in the court of public opinion.

If international law had briefly appeared a powerful tool for prosecuting Israeli conduct, the failure of such prosecution to materialise after OCL, notwithstanding the findings of the now infamous Goldstone Report (2009), which its titular author later retracted, did not diminish the force of its invocation in common language. The force of legal discourse as a cultural effect has not been extensively documented. However, legal academic and war crimes specialist Gerry Simpson notes that British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s political downfall was largely connected to the sense of criminality attributed to him by the British public after the Iraq invasion of 2003, despite the plethora of legal arguments raised that sought to validate the intervention.¹¹ In this instance, there is a clear division between law as a formal and institutional mechanism for prosecution, and law as a publicly owned terminology for bestowing or divesting legitimacy and accountability. This distinction is critical to the following work. While legal procedure can and does act in some situations as a powerful mechanism to hold state actors to account, in its international framework, it is as dependent on functions of power as it is on legality (to say nothing of what is just, a matter less central to concerns of the law than one might imagine). However, the secondary effects of law in public discourse as a common-language tool for characterising actions and actors as criminal can weigh on perception such that the ‘criminalised’ party feels itself to be called to

⁷ Laurie King, “The Sabra and Shatila Case in Belgium,” *Electronic Intifada*, June 16, 2003, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/sabra-and-shatila-case-belgium-guide-perplexed/4616>.

⁸ Daniel Dor, *The Suppression of Guilt: The Israeli Media and the Reoccupation of the West Bank* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 1-3.

⁹ Ian Black and Ian Cobain, “British Court Issued Gaza Arrest Warrant for Former Israeli Minister Tzipi Livni,” *Guardian*, December 15, 2009.

¹⁰ “Palestinians Win UN Recognition,” *Australian*, November 30, 2012.

¹¹ Gerry Simpson, “The War in Iraq and International Law,” *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 6 (2005).

account. In both 2002, with respect to Jenin and in 2009, post-OCL, international watch bodies such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch (HRW), and the UN raised the possibility of prosecuting Israel for war crimes. I do not believe that the abandonment of these calls impacted on the second, cultural effect, of law as public discourse. Rather, criminal culpability gave rise to a new and unprecedented way of ‘thinking Israel’. While media coverage that had traditionally ignored international law where it did not reinforce a pro-Israel position continued by and large to do so, it was not the only perspective available, nor in the face of significant gaps between that coverage and alternate sources, the most convincing.¹² Thus, in the framing of the operations, Israelis in their iteration of cause and explanation of effect were responding to this shifted weighting in narrative credibility.

These two case studies are thus selected for having occurred concurrently with these two significant shifts in media making and the public discourse on law. It is my argument that changes in ‘thinking Israel’ have created a structural challenge to the present mode of portraying Israel, which has required staunch defence by Israel and its supporters. Israel’s struggle to portray itself as fighting for normality is significant, since, as anthropologist Ghassan Hage argues in the case of OCL, ‘when the normal, that is what should go without saying, does not go without saying, you know that it doesn’t go without saying and that it is therefore far from normal’.¹³ This friction between Israeli-driven perspective and emerging alternatives in a mainstream discourse creates in the present work an opportunity to view the structure of narrative through which Israel–Palestinian relations are determined, which previously, unchallenged, was neither foregrounded. This occurs in two different and distinct forms. The first of these is media reports, which theoretically comprised of material to be taken as fact, evince particular characterisations of the parties involved in the operations. However, more than they reflect information later collated by international watch bodies, media reports printed during ODS and OCL demonstrate particular patterns of narrative which resonate with key tropes that underpin Israeli national narrative. The second is editorials, which by their nature are both analytically reflective and future oriented as well as fulfilling their specific brief to capture individual, and at times a news source’s, perspective. The editorials generated during ODS and OCL are thus indices of how the realm of possibility regarding present and future models of Israel–Palestinian relations is conditioned and circumscribed in contemporary discourse. This division in material is envisaged as a means to capture some of the key transitions in two distinct frameworks in the form of historic and contemporary narratives about relations (reports) and future-oriented discourse about resolution (editorials). In short, the following study seeks to interrogate the inadequacies of received knowledge about the Israel–Palestinian conflict in the West at a moment in which the edifice of dominant narrative has become untenable, at a moment in which new narratives might be advanced with hope of a willing reception.

The first chapter identifies the Israeli narratives of State most closely associated with a national identity predicated on insecurity. It argues that this set of narratives, which determine contemporary interpretation of events within Israel, are structurally integral to Western media interpretation of conflict situations in the OPTs. The key thematic concept at work in the national narratives presented in this chapter is the notion of Jewish

¹² Howard Friel and Richard Falk, *Israel-Palestine on Record: How the New York Times Misreports Conflict in the Middle East* (London: Verso, 2007), chaps 1 & 6.

¹³ Ghassan Hage, “On Narcissistic Victimhood,” in *Gaza: Morality, Law and Politics*, ed. Raimond Gaita (Crawley, WA: UWA Publishing, 2010), 124.

exceptionalism, particularly two symbolic narratives – the Holocaust and Masada – which are constantly employed in the construction of national identity and perception. The chapter tracks the way in which the meaning of these events has been determined, to demonstrate the centrality in contemporary Israeli society of an identity predicated on hostility and isolation. It is argued that the intersection of identity and insecurity in Israel has amounted to a societal discourse in which Palestinians are necessarily and permanently defined in negative terms (principally as terrorist), both materially and ideologically.¹⁴ Having demonstrated the State's investment in constructing and maintaining a sense of siege, this chapter highlights the resonance of this theme in the West to account for the often wholesale adoption of this view in mainstream media. It should be noted that much of the history of the Israel–Palestinian conflict is assumed known, at least in a chronological sense. This was a matter of expediency, although I acknowledge that there is very little in this terrain which has not been disputed. The chapter itself makes the argument that one should consider Zionist narrative as a field of literature distinct from the rigours of evidentially verified history. Indeed, this would go some way to resolving the problem in its entirety although for the present this is perhaps a better reflection of my own wishful thinking.

I should also note that throughout this thesis I refer to the conflict as the Israel–Palestinian conflict, posing noun against adjective, despite more usual descriptions available including the Israel/Palestine conflict or the Arab/Israeli conflict. The logic behind this choice is to highlight in shorthand three things. I have preferred in the first place to refer to the discrete nature of Palestinian identity rather than the adjectival pairing of Arab/Israeli. Secondly, I have wanted to illustrate the disparity in parties; Israel a nation state with all the privileges which accrue to that status; the Palestinians at best a weak political entity, ultimately beholden to their occupying power. Finally, I wish to circumvent the apparently in-built assumption of the descriptor Israel/Palestine, that a two-state solution is the ideal and obvious goal towards which all parties are inevitably endeavouring.

Chapters 2 and 4 engage the interface between the structures of Israel's national narratives and the media coverage of ODS and OCL respectively. These chapters employ five narrative tropes to investigate the redistribution of narrative weight to portray a sympathetic Israel. It is demonstrated that these tropes are directly related to the discourse of security and identity at work in Israeli society, as established in chapter 1. It is argued that the impact of these devices on reporting often distorts the actual circumstances of the operation and thus favourably misrepresents both the rationale and necessity of Israel's strategic goals and IDF practice. Both chapters take a multidisciplinary approach to analysis of the sources. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is employed to analyse the framing devices used in news reporting, linking the recurrent devices through which the themes are circulated to the wider discourse fields to which they relate. It demonstrates that the increasing pressure applied to pro-Israel narrative strategy over the decade results in clear shifts in reporting between ODS and OCL. These shifts are not uniform however. In *The New York Times* and *The Australian* the effect is to adopt a less nuanced approach in OCL, in particular by omitting certain subjects, compared to ODS; whereas in the *Guardian*, reporting engages multiple perspectives in OCL such that there is a wider range of counter-narrative included in comparison with reporting in ODS. Indeed, through the use in particular of eyewitness

¹⁴ Bezen B. Coskun, "Analysing Desecuritisations: Prospects and Problems for Israeli-Palestinian Reconciliation," *Global Change, Peace and Security* 20, no.3 (2008): 394; see generally chap. 2 in Ilan Pappé, *The Idea of Israel: A History of Power and Knowledge* (London: Verso, 2014).

accounts from Palestinians trapped in Gaza, the *Guardian* offers an alternate perspective and framework for OCL. This strategy is directly opposed to that pursued in *The New York Times* which excludes external narrative frameworks unless they reinforce the stance of the paper. While, as documented by Friel and Falk, this has been typical of *The New York Times*' approach, even by the standards of that paper, it appears to have intensified in the event of OCL.¹⁵ Insofar as retaining certain narrative modes at least ignores, and at most wilfully conceals, other quantitative and qualitative data about the events, these chapters seek to evaluate the complicity of Western media reporting with Israeli objectives.

Chapters 3 and 5 assess the editorialising of ODS and OCL respectively, and in particular the use of resolution as an organising principle for evaluating the crises. I argue that the 'imaginative disabling' at work in the report material constrains the range of possible visions of resolution in editorial space, because their explicit language and implicit assumptions are transferred as a limiting definitional set to the editorial field. In this manner, the future-oriented subject matter of editorialising is circumscribed by the present of reporting. Consequently, these chapters capture the parameters of 'reasonableness' as defined in Western media space during ODS and OCL. Reasonableness, measured in terms of the requisite concessions to be prevailed upon each party in preparation for resolution, gives a clear view of that which is and is not visible in the contextual framework of Israel–Palestinian relations. In comparison to ODS, where editorials in both *The New York Times* and the *Guardian* criticise for example the Separation Wall and settlements as distinct obstacles to peace, the language of security, deterrence and existential threat intensified in OCL. Concessions by Israel that were widely endorsed in 2002 editorials therefore entail more caveats in OCL. A key influence I identify for this transition is the change in Palestinian leadership. ODS occurred during the late Yasser Arafat's presidency of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and, whatever its reservations, Israel had already partnered with him in the Oslo Peace Process and subsequent talks. In OCL, Israel refuted the existence of any Palestinian partner with whom they could negotiate, since despite the democratic election of Hamas in 2006, the Hamas-led government has been viewed by Israel and its supporters as a serious diplomatic obstruction;¹⁶ this notwithstanding that fact that at the time OCL commenced, an Egyptian-brokered truce between Israel and Hamas had only recently expired. Thus, in OCL, the idea that Israelis can live without peace, as long as they have quiet, is given prominence.¹⁷ Despite serious inadequacies of representation in ODS, narratives of diplomacy had regressed by the time of OCL. I argue that this represents the expiration of present diplomatic strategy on the Israel–Palestinian issue, and that radical changes in the parameters of discourse are now required to make any material difference to the present situation. It is argued, therefore, that much of what is excluded or explicitly dismissed in editorial discussion according to the alleged imperatives of *realpolitik* is precisely the core content, from a Palestinian perspective, without which resolution cannot be realised.

Chapter 6 concludes by evaluating the impact of, and response to, these operations on narrative about the conflict and considers how this change could contribute to transforming the dynamic of Israel–Palestinian relations. It reviews how Israeli narrative and institutionally led discourse, presented in chapters 2 through 5, have functioned to foreclose Palestinian narrative and political aspirations. It is argued that events of the 21st

¹⁵ Friel and Falk, *Israel-Palestine on Record*, chaps 1 & 6.

¹⁶ Coskun, "Analysing Desecuritisations," 403.

¹⁷ Toni O'Laughlin, "Backing for the Invasion Remains Strong," *Guardian*, January 14, 2009.

century have displaced the fatuous peace process, and that alternative frameworks, in particular the framework of Human Rights, are increasingly becoming politically consequential.¹⁸ The chapter considers how discourses of securitisation and terror have privileged Israeli objectives through a matrix of deflection, and argues that (re)incorporating these concepts into an analytical rather than political framework could radically transform current discourse on Israel–Palestinian relations, in particular by enabling the international community to scrutinise Israeli action and hold it to account. I argue that shifts in media representation, illustrated between ODS and OCL, are indicative of the external pressures which have forced Israel to engage in a battle for legitimacy. Further, it is suggested that this pressure and the current attention directed towards the conflict by the international community could culminate in sufficient political will to alter the stance of institutions that have heretofore supported, protected and enabled Israel to maintain the *status quo*. The chapter considers the narrative direction taken by Israelis and Palestinians since OCL and argues that impacts on Israeli narrative strategy evince the declining influence of Israel’s traditional narrative strategies and, alternately, the increasing success of Palestinian narrative in mitigating the rhetorical violence of the language of power. Finally, the chapter considers what effect these signs of narrative transformation could have on Israel’s relations with the Palestinians. It is argued that the international community is essential in this, and that the narrative transformations documented in this study demonstrate a change in international perception of the conflict, in no small part as a result of Israel’s military practices in the OPTs. However, it is concluded that work towards reconciliation will ultimately require radical shifts in the Israeli subjectivity, in order to create a willing partner in Israelis for meaningful change.

Finally, a note on the scholarship engaged in this current work. Of fundamental significance are the academic endeavours of the late Edward Said and (less directly) the cultural ones of the late Mahmoud Darwish. These two Palestinians, great each in their way, were tireless and eloquent advocates across their lives for the recognition of Palestinian rights and identity. They imparted to the Palestinian question – the future of the land and its people – an integrity of perspective and an outright rejection of colonisations that obfuscate this, most particularly colonisation of the intellectual domain. Said, on the subject of lost causes, cites Theodor Adorno, noting that: ‘in contrast, the uncompromisingly critical thinker, who neither superscribes his conscience nor permits himself to be terrorized into action, is in truth the one who does not give up’.¹⁹ This is a worthy reminder to any thinker: to revise previous propositions, to reject political sloganeering, to refuse co-option and to advance one’s positions. Yet it is a challenge with specific resonance in this fraught context. Discourse fields pertaining to the Israel–Palestinian conflict, intellectual and public, are fields in which exchange is more often replaced by the belligerence of ideology and is thus problematic on both sides.²⁰ It is worse, however, where it is alleged to be absent, when people in the interest of ‘fairness’ and ‘balance’ take these terms to mean the equal apportioning of guilt, blame and responsibility. These assignments neutralise what is one of the most significant factors at work in the Israel–Palestinian question: the gross inequity in power distribution and a dogged refusal by that power to acknowledge its effects.

¹⁸ Richard Falk, “Human Rights in the Occupied Palestine Territories” (lecture, State Library of Victoria, September 16, 2013); Norman G. Finkelstein, “Keynote: How to Solve the Israeli-Palestine Conflict” (paper presented at the Middle Eastern Congress of Politics and Society, Sakarya, October 9, 2012).

¹⁹ Edward W. Said, “On Lost Causes,” in *Reflections On Exile: And Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2001), 553.

²⁰ Hage, “Narcissistic Victimhood,” 101-106.

The work of two contemporary Palestinian scholars, Saree Makdisi and Joseph Massad, is also highly instructive to this research. The critical scholarship of both not only prompted constant interrogation of the structural assumptions at play in dealing with questions on Israel/Palestine, but provided a model of academic interface in which multiple disciplines are required to conduct these thought-experiments. Indeed, the use of a single discipline in attempting to investigate the totalising, permeating, saturating and invasive way in which Israel and its allies have constructed and controlled perception of the conflict would be destined to fall short. Instead, these scholars are representative of an emerging field of ‘Palestine Studies’, in which a great breadth of the humanities and social sciences have a role. Accordingly, the current thesis is conceived in this paradigm, through a Palestinian consciousness but with the hope that it might perform some small service to transforming, rather than reiterating, approaches to the subject of relations, figurative and practical.

In developing a research question that engaged Israeli narrative, I realised I had carved out a space where it was most relevant to rely on Israeli and Jewish thinkers. In a sense this seemed tactically astute insofar as critical work on Israel is best fortified within a framework of critical Jewish scholars in order to disrupt any implication that the present work is ‘anti-Semitic’. This is despite recognising the often spurious pretext on which that allegation is made, something Professor Richard Falk has called ‘the politics of deflection’.²¹ It is part of the effect described above – surely a colonial one in which the uncivilised is deemed unreliable – that Palestinian voices are less credible than Israeli ones. In the context of my research on Israeli national narrative, I am particularly indebted to a relatively new and immensely significant strain of Israeli scholarship. Although its origins are in the principles of revisionist history, and its founders are known as Israel’s New Historians, it is a scholarship that has since expanded across disciplines adopting a variety of different forms. In particular, the work of historian Ilan Pappé, although not alone in those credited as the New Historians, has laid a strong framework for this avenue of thought. Both generally and specifically, this thesis has relied on his research into the discrepancies between State policy in action as compared to State explanation. During the final stages of writing this thesis, Pappé published a new text, *The Idea of Israel*, which became an invaluable checklist for my own research. It seemed testament to the commitment he has had to the field, despite great personal cost, that although written with a reverse inflection, his scholarly and ethical concerns as an Israeli were as my own. I should also note the work of the cultural historian Idith Zertal, who has written extensively about the interface between State policy and some of the primary tropes of narrative on which Israeli identity is constructed, to counteract the presumption that the two are inextricably connected.

In respect of commentary on the two operations under scrutiny, Israeli and Jewish scholars, often in the role of public intellectuals, have done much to call Israel to account for these military interventions. In particular, the analysis of Israeli media outlets during ODS by Daniel Dor has been invaluable, as has the work of Eyal Weizman and Norman Finkelstein, both generally and specifically, in connection to their publications post-OCL that pertain directly to the event.²² I have similarly benefited from the vigorous advocacy work of former UN

²¹ Falk, “Human Rights.”

²² Dor, *Suppression of Guilt*; Norman G. Finkelstein, *This Time We Went Too Far’: Truth and Consequences of the Gaza Invasion* (New York: OR Books, 2010); Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (London: Verso, 2012).

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967, Richard Falk, and anthropologist and activist Jeff Halper, who continue to work tirelessly to support Palestinian claims and hold Israel accountable for myriad violations of its obligations: political, legal and moral. This is not to discount the growing field of scholarly analysis of Israel, and in particular IDF action in the OPTs. In fact, one of the effects on scholarship over the decade of the two operations in focus is that, in contrast to publications post-ODS, after which several works of testimony regarding Jenin were produced, post-OCL, it was not testimony – which had been produced concurrently with the event – but critical scholarship which proliferated.²³ Thus academics from a variety of disciplines have joined in the quest to find a language of currency and traction for talking about the history, ethics and politics of contemporary Israeli relations with Palestinians.

This thesis eagerly anticipates a time when the ‘politics of deflection’ is not dignified with engagement, much less a ready and sloganistic adoption, nor acts as an obstruction to addressing the substantive issues at hand, for example the reinstatement of the value of all people’s lives over the importance of some people’s feelings. Most of all, I look forward to a time when Jewish and non-Jewish thinkers, when any thinkers, but particularly when Palestinian thinkers, are able to say difficult things without the need to address such attack. When evidence alone is sufficient to support the arguments they are making. Because most of all it would be an injustice not to make them.

²³ Muna Hamzeh and Todd May, eds, *Operation Defensive Shield: Witnesses to Israeli War Crimes* (London: Pluto Press, 2003); Ramzy Baroud, ed., *Searching Jenin: Eyewitness Accounts of the Israeli Invasion 2002*, with a preface by Noam Chomsky (Seattle: Cune Press, 2003).

Chapter 1

Israel's identity: national narrative (or how to sustain it)

The main intellectual, cultural and political debate in Israel is not so much about the country's future or present but rather about the interpretation and social construction of what is considered to be its past and the impact of particular constructions on its present and future¹

Contextualising the research

'Certainly Arafat condemned "terrorism" – but only to slip the meaning of the word out from under our feet in the very next sentence,' wrote the current Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, in his 1993 book, *A Place Among the Nations*.² Netanyahu condemns Arafat's duplicitous treatment of a term: 'according to Arafat, [terrorism] is what Israel has done to the Palestinians', whereas Arafat "'salutes" those [in the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO)] who have been "accused of terrorism"', asserting that in contrast to this, it has a certain and obvious meaning.³ To himself, he assigns common sense; to Arafat he attributes disingenuousness. He continues, 'most important, nowhere does he renounce "the armed struggle", the term the PLO have always used universally for what the West refers to as terrorism'.⁴

I want to emphasise not the content of the difference in definition but the structural point implicit in it. Netanyahu, in the omnipotent role of author, designates his own meaning, which he affirms is also that of the West, as the genuine artifact. This act speaks to the right of representation and its relation to power. The Israelis as occupiers have historically been enabled to choose what Israelis (and indeed the world) see, in terms of their own circumstances and those of the Palestinians.⁵ It is this commonplace of authorial supremacy, whose designated meanings construct reality such that subjectivities are asserted as objective, which obfuscates and exhausts discourse on Israel/Palestine. For example, the Israeli Supreme Court has even purported to transform the meaning of *occupation*, though its terms are set out in the *Fourth Geneva Convention* (1949) and protected at international law, stating that the unique length of Israel's occupation 'requires the laws be conformed to meet reality on the ground'.⁶ This is but one example of the institutional devices at work in Israeli discourse that reinforce the Israeli-asserted reality: in this instance, rejecting the international standard for the term 'occupation' and thus the ongoing land contestation through the systemic violence of the law. The consequences of such a project, which transforms the meaning of Israel–Palestinian relations, seriously disrupt the evidentiary basis of history, identity and entitlement in the semantic success of the strong. Analysis of this transformation – or more accurately deformation – of relations by means of representation underpins this thesis.

The present research engages with a notable absence in the field of everyday discourse on the Israel–Palestinian conflict as it is manifested in media coverage of the issue, as previously noted. A range of subjects critical to

¹ Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 7.

² Benjamin Netanyahu, *A Place Among the Nations: Israel and the World* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 213.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Manon Slome, "The Aesthetics of Terror," in *The Aesthetics of Terror*, eds, Manon Slome and Joshua Simon (Milan: Charta, 2009), 17.

⁶ "High Court Sanctions Looting," *B'Tselem*, January 16, 2012, http://www.btselem.org/settlements/20120116_hcj_ruling_on_quarries_in_wb.

improving relations between Israel and the Palestinians and advancing sustainable strategies for a satisfactory resolution are obscured in current conceptualisation of the problem and thus in theoretical proposals for the conflict's improvement or ultimate resolution. This thesis argues that one of the principal causes for these restricted parameters is the way in which Jewish history has been tethered to Zionist ideology since (at least) the inception of the State of Israel. The State has, in particular, deployed the Holocaust as prime evidence for its legitimacy. Attempts to uncouple this nexus of justification have led to serious condemnation by Zionism and its supporters.⁷ A significant consequence of this has been to enable Israel to characterise military action during the State's history as self-defence; these justifications have typically found support with 'a large international chorus'.⁸ A corollary of this success has been that Palestinian accounts of their own history have been delegitimised and, where Palestinian history has 'forced itself on Zionism', it has been coded by the prevailing State ideology, Zionism, as a 'continuation of European anti-Semitism', and even a 'continuation of Hitlerism'.⁹ This has profoundly impacted, by way of distortion, Palestinian narrative, particularly insofar as it has been possible to communicate it more widely. However, the Palestinian political historian, Joseph Massad, argues that: 'the attempt to engage Palestinians with Jewish history, including the history of the holocaust, is an attempt to deflect Palestinian engagement from the Jewish and Israeli present and an attempt to justify this present that is characterized by the oppression of the Palestinian people'.¹⁰ In short, Massad describes Israel's strategy to deflect attention from the manifest inequality, cruelty and illegality of Israel's position with respect to the Palestinians in both the 48 territories and the OPTs. He argues that the real motives for Israel's insistence that Palestinians recognise the Holocaust have little to do with the Holocaust and everything to do with Palestinians 'recognizing and submitting to Israel's "right to exist" as a colonial settler racist state'.¹¹

Primarily, the intention of this study is to interrogate the absences which Zionist logic has encoded as unmentionable. It is premised on re-focusing a gaze that has been too often averted in the last sixty-odd years by Israel's 'politics of deflection'.¹² In the course of the current research, the timeliness of this aim has been often affirmed in the increasing frequency and magnitude of Israeli assaults on the OPTs and the impact of these on political and popular attitudes towards the Israel/Palestinian dynamic. The second case study – Operation Cast Lead – has subsequently been recognised as a turning point in the international propensity to 'suspend disbelief' around Israeli action. This effect became particularly apparent in the compilation and filing of the UN-commissioned Goldstone Report (GR) and its aftermath.¹³ Since then, there has been greater international attention paid to the political claims sought by non-violent Palestinian resistance; this has marked a shift from the earlier Palestinian strategy of armed resistance as illustrated by the PLO's Fedayeen of the 1960s and 1970s and the intifadas of the late 1980s and early 2000s. While the move to non-violent resistance has yet to produce material change for Palestinian people, it has had some effect in influencing the circulation of narrative about

⁷ Joseph A. Massad, "Palestinians and Jewish History: Recognition or Submission?" chap. 8 in *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: Routledge, 2006), 130.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 131 & 133.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 130-131.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Falk, "Human Rights."

¹³ See, for example, Rashid Khalidi, "Palestinian Dispossession and the U.S. Public Sphere," in *The Goldstone Report: The Legacy of the Landmark Investigation of the Gaza Conflict*, eds Adam Horowitz, Lizzy Ratner, and Philip Weiss (New York: Nation Books, 2011) and Ali Abunimah, "Gaza, Goldstone, and the Movement for Israeli Accountability," in *The Goldstone Report: The Legacy of the Landmark Investigation of the Gaza Conflict*, eds Adam Horowitz, Lizzy Ratner, and Philip Weiss (New York: Nation Books, 2011).

the conflict in a Western context. Resistance, argues Massad, in the form of a fundamental ideological rejection of the 'Zionist package deal', is key: 'Resistance is the only remaining obstacle to a complete Zionist victory, one that seeks to be sealed by Zionism's rewriting of both Palestinian and Jewish histories'.¹⁴

Research premises and structure

This chapter will analyse one particular form of representation which it argues is decisive in Israeli and international perception of the Israel–Palestinian conflict: specifically, the way in which Israeli national narrative and, in particular, narratives that have attached to the Holocaust motif, have as their outcome created a collective Israeli identity predicated on a sense of citizens' individuated vulnerability and cumulatively a perpetual belief in an existential threat to State. This existential threat is concretely represented by the Palestinians. The transfiguration of commemorative narratives, decoupled from historical or political contexts, collectively demonstrates that the defining trope of national identity is insecurity. This has created a framework in which the local/Palestinian conflict has become the central means of representing the fragility of Jewish survival, which in turn has endorsed a State culture of militarism and has been used to justify the degree of violence applied, under the auspices of self-defence and the interests of Israeli security.¹⁵ The work of this first chapter on national narratives in Israel provides a key to the central source materials of this thesis – newspaper reports and editorials – structures which are argued to underlie Western media representation of the conflict. Particular national narratives have been shown to be highly influential in political rhetoric within the country.¹⁶ This work seeks to show these narratives to be equally powerful internationally. Thus, it is argued that the national narratives selected in this chapter provide a framework for understanding the narrative devices employed in Western media reporting (presented in chapters 2 and 4); in addition to which their principal 'lessons' offer an explanation for the circumscribed discourse on resolution tackled in editorial space (presented in chapters 3 and 5).

To demonstrate the function of certain narrative devices in later chapters, the current chapter has several aims. Firstly, it demonstrates the relationship between narrative formulations with an historic veneer and the character of Israeli nationalism. It attends to the impact of core national narratives, in particular Holocaust appropriation, which have been highly influential in shaping contemporary State identity. Notably, the effect of re-encoding key narratives over the last 60 years is considered in the context of a political and nationalist project. Secondly, it considers key aspects of the institutional approach taken towards the Palestinian question, specifically Zionism and securitisation, and the impact of these on collective attitudes formed about Palestinians in contemporary Israel. Thirdly, it reflects on the effect of this narrative framework on Israel's national culture, in particular through the edifice of (hyper-) militarism and morality. Finally, it considers why these demonstrably problematic narrative models have so effectively infiltrated Western narrative-making about Israel and the Palestinians.

¹⁴ Massad, "Palestinians and Jewish History," 142.

¹⁵ See generally chap. 5 in Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, new ed., trans. Chaya Galai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁶ See generally Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust*; and Nurith Gertz, *Myths in Israeli Culture: Captives of a Dream* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000).

1. Israel's national narratives

If myths are 'intended to account for rights and privileges as they exist in the present', the repetition of certain lessons in Israel's national narrative has formed an underlying framework for assigning meaning to contemporary Israeli experience.¹⁷ At its heart is a collective identity based on what has been described as 'exceptionalism'.¹⁸ The philosopher Hannah Arendt was deeply critical of this Zionist precept which arose from a formation of Jewish history in which Jews (in contrast to all other nations) 'were not history-makers but history sufferers, preserving a kind of eternal identity of goodness whose monotony was disturbed only by the equally monotonous chronicle of persecutions and pogroms'.¹⁹ Arendt believed that such a view attempted to discharge the victim of responsibility and cast Jews as outside history by essentialising Jewish victimhood.²⁰ This section aims to outline the central tropes and narratives which maintain Israel's identity as unique and uniquely victimised. It will demonstrate how the lessons of the national narrative have been transfigured during the State's history to better reflect State objectives concerning the Palestinians.

As it is employed by the State, the centrality of Jewish victimhood to Israel's identity has wrought more havoc on Israel–Palestinian relations than any other trope. Social scientist Muhammad Shahid Alam deals extensively with the notion of Israeli exceptionalism, documenting both its objective fallacy and its use in State policy and practice. Similarly, political scientist Gil Merom's examination of Israeli exceptionalism finds that neither of its primary tenets has evidentiary grounds.²¹ Their frequent recurrence in Israeli narrative however, highlights two major themes in State representation. The first of these is Israel's sense of a national security crisis (which will be developed in the following section as the product of an imminent but inchoate threat for which Israel's portrayal of the Palestinian is directly responsible) by which the State is regarded as a David against Goliath, or 'the few against the many'.²² The 'few against the many' is a narrative of heroism, exemplified for instance in the Zionist history of 1948 (rigorously disproved though that 'history' has now been).²³ Merom writes that Israel's acute perception of imminent threat means that national security objectives are formulated in 'negative and extreme terms such as those embodied in slogans'.²⁴ Two of these slogans draw on the national narratives of the Holocaust (*Never again*) and the Masada (*Masada shall not fall a second time*). Pappé observes that narratives of total annihilation culminated in the second key theme of State representation: that is, the image of a moral war, one that produced the most famous Israeli oxymoron, 'the purity of arms'.²⁵ Between the 'myth' of annihilation, which has been used to justify, in hindsight, Israel's future extreme use of force, and the David and Goliath imaging of Zionist forces, depicted for the most part cartographically (since materially this metaphor was nonsense), one can perhaps understand how the Zionist victory was sold as nothing short of miraculous.²⁶

¹⁷ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 41.

¹⁸ For Israeli exceptionalism, see M. Shahid Alam, *Israeli Exceptionalism: The Destabilising Logic of Zionism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Gil Merom, "Israel's National Security and the Myth of Exceptionalism," *Political Science Quarterly* 114, no. 3 (1999).

¹⁹ Hannah Arendt, "Jewish History, Revisited," in *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, ed. Ron H. Feldman (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1978), 96.

²⁰ On Arendt, see Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust*, 164. On discharging responsibility, see Dor, *Suppression of Guilt*, chap. 1.

²¹ Merom, "Israel's Security," 425-431.

²² Oren Yiftachel describes this as 'the Tower of Pisa' effect: *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 129.

²³ Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ilan Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951*, new ed. (London: I. B. Taurus, 1994).

²⁴ Merom, "Israel's Security," 415.

²⁵ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 56.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

Literary scholar Nurtih Gertz argues that these themes have an ‘accepted and shared meaning’ in Israel, reiterated and reinforced in State ritual and commemorative practice, including the imagery of religious festivals, the (biblical) allegory of David and Goliath, and commemorative narratives derived from ancient history (Masada) and recent events (Holocaust).²⁷

Published after OCL, Knesset Speaker and chair of the Jewish Agency Avraham Burg singles out the problem: ‘the only hope we have to make peace with the Arabs is if we free ourselves of our Shoah mentality and stop acting like a small Eastern European shtetl’.²⁸ Indeed, one might ask why Jewish victimhood, enshrined in the memory of the Holocaust, has been a topic so prolifically examined in Israeli schools and universities at all. Pappé notes that the attention paid to it ignores Israeli public intellectual Yeshayahu Leibowitz’s ‘famous comment...in the documentary *Yizkor: Slaves of Memory*, about Holocaust memorialisation in Israel’.²⁹ Leibowitz stated: ‘Why should the Holocaust interest us? We are the victims. It is the Germans who should be concerned with what they have done’.³⁰ Pappé writes that, in contrast, ‘the occupation should concern the Israeli Jews, because this is an evil of their own doing’. However, even during the favourable conditions for academic work that challenged the tenets of Zionism in the 1990s, he writes that ‘calling on Israel to focus on its own crimes and less on its victimisation was a demand rarely heard’.³¹ This process by which responsibility has been divested runs to the core of Israel’s approach to the Israel–Palestinian problem.

a) Israel’s national past: a guide to scholarship

Israel’s academics have often displayed ambivalence about interrogating the gap between national narrative and serious scholarship. Pappé accounts for this in two ways. First he argues that Israeli scholars who wished to revise aspects of Israeli academic discourse were not, however, willing to challenge the foundational mythologies of Zionism.³² Secondly, he demonstrates that a wider culture of academic challenge in Israel was confined to a brief period after which many scholars would retract their positions, to greater or lesser degrees.³³ In many respects, this means that what passes for academic controversy in Israel would be a storm in a teacup in other contexts where one might expect methodology, rather than ideology, to dictate the conclusions drawn. This struggle is illustrated, for example, by Israeli sociologist Nachman Ben-Yehuda. His project on the Masada was put in hiatus for several years after an interview with Shmaria Guttman, one of two key figures in the development and transmission of Masada as a rehabilitated national narrative; it seemed to him then that the subject was too sacred, and that contradiction would be to do something ‘bad’.³⁴ When finally he published the book, Ben-Yehuda made an eloquent acquittal of the difficulty Israeli scholars face in applying the rigours of their discipline to their work:

²⁷ Gertz, *Myths in Israeli Culture*, 9, 139. For a discussion of “children’s lore” in early childhood education see Don Handelman and Lea Shamgar-Handelman, “Holiday Celebration in Israeli Kindergartens,” in *Readings in Ritual Studies*, ed. Ronald L. Grimes (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996).

²⁸ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 154.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 169.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 233.

³² *Ibid.*, 50.

³³ *Ibid.*, 154.

³⁴ Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth*, chap. 4.

*Emotionally, this [recognition that an historical account of Masada that contradicted his own beliefs about the event was accurate] was not an easy conclusion to reach. I felt cheated and manipulated. I tried to reconstruct in my own mind how, during my formative years, going through the Israeli socialization process, I acquired 'knowledge' about Masada that was not only wrong but also very biased. And, mind you, Masada is not just a story. Masada provided, certainly for my generation of Jewish Israelis, an important ingredient in the very definition of our Jewish and Israeli identity. Now, what was I supposed to do when it turned out that such a major element of my identity was based on falsehood, on a deviant belief?*³⁵

In short, Ben-Yehuda came to the alarming conclusion that Israel's belief system is 'based on a series of deceptive and very biased (even falsified) claims'.³⁶ He, and some few others, have sought to address the situation, determining that Israel's national narratives are inadequate historical accounts, but vital in their function as commemorative (not historic) narratives.³⁷ Most importantly, the lessons seeded in their fabric have been recognised as integral tools in Zionism's national project, and their meaning explains a great deal about how Israel sees itself and how it wishes to be seen. This project of cultural deconstruction takes two forms. The first is tethered to the idea that a point can be identified in Israel's short history at which it 'lost its way'. This work has sought to demonstrate the transformation of commemorative narratives as they were influenced by external events. The second strand of work has taken an approach more structurally devastating to Zionism's founding mythologies. It demonstrates that, contrary to the thesis of an identity shift, the State has consistently worked to mobilise certain narrative devices to legitimate State policy and practice. In particular, this work has explained the State's culture of military impunity, its aspirations to territorial expansion and its brutalising effect – intentionally and collaterally – on the Palestinians.

b) Narrative transformation: losing the way

Critiques of Israel's national narratives that have left Zionism's foundational mythologies intact have tended to argue that a transformation in Israel's identity is linked to events in the 1960s and 1970s. They claim these events were catalysts for the shift which has since dominated Israel's cultural and social milieu. This scholarship views events coalescing around 1967 to be axiomatic, leaving the sacred narrative of 1948 and a romanticised image of the early decades of the State unexamined. Such readings argue that successive wars in the new State and the intransigence of surrounding 'Arabs' were highly influential in shaping contemporary Israeli identity. In particular, the enduring reality of the Arab (Palestinian) problem is argued to have impacted collective sensibility in a way that displaced the State-groomed cult of the fearless Sabra with a sense of existential crisis.³⁸ Accordingly, imagery of the Sabra and the pioneer are emphasised as characterising the early decades of Israel's national identity. Sociologist Oz Almog, for example, argues that the trope of the Sabra operated as a cultural construct, which served as a behavioural and ideological model for an entire generation.³⁹ These tropes

³⁵ Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth*, 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁷ Yael Zerubavel distinguishes between historic and commemorative narrative: "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death: Masada and the Holocaust as Historical Metaphors," *Representations* 45 (1994), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2928603>.

³⁸ For State construction of the Sabra and embedding heroic identities in the landscape, see Judith Tydor Baumel, "Founding Myths and Heroic Icons: Reflections on the Funerals of Theodor Herzl and Hannah Szenes," *Women's Studies International Forum* 25, no. 6 (2002).

³⁹ Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. Haim Watzman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 3. Sabra was originally a biological term for Jews born in the *Yishuv*: see Andrew L. Mendelson and C. Zoe Smith, "Visions of a New State: Israel as

were designed largely around a premise of dis-identification with the Jewish past, generally the millennia of exile, and specifically the calamity of the Holocaust. Thus, in contrast to depictions of the exilic Jew on whom was heaped ignominy of all forms, aspirational Jewish rebirth as Sabras in Israel invested them with an opposite set of qualities.⁴⁰ Early military success in the region, including the War of Independence and the capturing of the Sinai in 1956, fortified this distinction between the pre-State condition of Jews and the New Jew of Israel.

Work of these scholars therefore maps how and why Israeli identity transformed from an early warrior styling to that of besieged victim. Important events in this analysis are the incorporation of the Holocaust into State narrative, a process which began at the time of the Eichmann trial in 1961, evolving into a primary trope for collective identification as a result of the experiences of 1967 and 1973. The Eichmann trial, facilitated largely through the efforts of the State's inaugural Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion (irrespective of its dubious legal procedure, or Adolf Eichmann's relative insignificance within the mechanism of the Third Reich), created a forum to catalogue Jewish suffering.⁴¹ It distinguished itself from Nuremberg, where charges concerned crimes against members of various nations, and asserted a particularised category of crimes perpetrated against the Jews.⁴² However, it was the consequence of the Six Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973) that led to an identity centred on Jewish victimhood, in particular through conflation of the Holocaust with contemporary State identity. These readings attach great importance to the effect of the Occupation in 1967 on Israeli society. Historian Robert Wistrich identifies 1967 and 1973 as originating the replacement of earlier unifying tropes with the Holocaust in public imaginary.⁴³ Yael Zerubavel, an historian who has written extensively on such transformative moments, in particular in *Recovered Roots*, cites the Yom Kippur War as the watershed event, arguing that it marked Israel's first collective experience of trauma.⁴⁴ She argues that, despite the ultimate failure of a surprise attack by Egyptian and Syrian forces, the War's impact on Israeli society was profound due to the challenge it presented to the sense of invincibility celebrated in the Sabra; Zerubavel argues that this crystallising sense of crisis and the realisation of its intransigence spelt the destruction of the Sabra ideal.⁴⁵ Philosopher Avishai Margalit augments this work with a focus on the country's political climate; he demonstrates that the emergent identity shift was captured politically in the election of Menachem Begin in 1977, which marked an official reinstatement of the value attributed to projections of suffering.⁴⁶ Margalit foregrounds the impact which a re-organised identity had on Israel's moral climate. He argues that the new identity, built on innocence and suffering – a sentimentalised identity – sanctioned crude and brutalising antipathy towards any adversary. In Margalit's estimation, this new identity was an impoverished one, dependent on the culpability of alterity. Not unique to the Israeli case, the culpability of alterity might be

Mythologized by Robert Capa," *Journalism Studies* 7, no. 2 (2006): 198, doi: 10.1080/14616700500533494. For the myth of the pioneer, see Norman Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2003), 89-98.

⁴⁰ Yael Zerubavel, "The "Mythological Sabra" and Jewish Past: Trauma, Memory and Contested Identities," *Israel Studies* 7, no.2 (2002): 116.

⁴¹ For the role of the trial in incorporating the Holocaust into Israeli collective memory, see Zerubavel, "Mythological Sabra," 118; Baruch Kimmerling, "Israel's Culture of Martyrdom," review of *Death and the Nation: History, Memory, Politics* by Idith Zertal and *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The struggle Between Jews and Zionists in the Aftermath of World War II* by Yosef Grodzinsky, *The Nation*, January 10, 2005.

⁴² Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963; London: Penguin Books, 1977; repr. with an introduction by Amos Elon, 2006), 6.

⁴³ Robert S. Wistrich, "Israel and the Holocaust Trauma," *Jewish History* 11, no. 2 (1997): 19, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20101298>.

⁴⁴ Zerubavel, "Mythological Sabra," 119.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Avishai Margalit, "The Kitsch of Israel," *New York Review of Books*, November 24, 1988, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1988/nov/24/the-kitsch-of-israel/>.

described as the phenomenon by which the ordinary (the ordinary Jewish-national subject) is constituted as ‘in crisis’ while the cause of that crisis is attributed to ‘others’ (the Palestinian), who are transformed collectively into ‘the hated’: the group originating a common threat to the ordinary subject.⁴⁷ Ultimately, this has robbed the State of its capacity for self-criticism; it is clear at least that subsequent criticism has been strongly countered and reviled.⁴⁸

Concurrent with this shift, Zerubavel demonstrates that national narratives were assigned new meaning to reflect the changing emphasis in national identity, highlighting also the ‘state’s increasing role as the custodian of national memory’.⁴⁹ Her research on national narrative includes attention to the historical record and the dynamic of narrative meaning in more recent Jewish and Israeli history; this section will engage with the effects of this second focus.⁵⁰ A pertinent example of a broader appropriation of ‘ancient history’, or simply biblical narrative that evinced military heroism and stoic leadership, is in the myth of Masada. Masada is prominent in Israel as a national narrative said to create a particular collective mentality; its narrative meaning has also been closely tied to the dynamic of the Holocaust’s (apparent) rise in prominence. Though Masada and the Holocaust have performed different functions, their messages coalesce around Jewish victimhood, simultaneously affirming its particularity and centralising State security as the strategy for repelling genocidal anti-Semitism. Thus, it both demonstrates the phenomenon of revised narrative meaning and illustrates the centrality of national narrative to contemporary State ideology and practice. Masada was revived for commemoration in the *Yishuv* as a highly symbolic event which captured ‘the essence of an authentic national spirit’, an antithetical ideal to the persecution of Jews in Europe. Zerubavel shows that the use of Masada as a counter-model to the Holocaust victim dates to the early 1940s. Amongst Zionist settlers, and later in the nascent Israeli society, Masada was raised as an historical metaphor for national struggle, emphasising resistance and the integrity of a cause worth dying for. Between the 1940s and the early years of State, Zerubavel argues that the suicide component of the historical event of Masada (silenced in the original revival of the narrative) came to acquire the same message as the death of Yosef Trumpeldor in the Battle of Tel Hai (1920): ‘it is good to die for our country’.⁵¹ Masada also highlighted a sense of continuity in space between the contemporary State and Hebrew antiquity: a major archaeological dig was commenced in the 1960s at Masada under the command of Yigael Yadin, archaeologist and former Hagana commander. Yadin viewed the excavation as a patriotic issue, to affirm the commemorative narrative’s interpretation of the sole extant record.⁵²

Yet the original use of Masada in national narrative is not reflected in its contemporary function. In its current iteration, identification with Masada has fostered a siege mentality in Israeli politics and policy.⁵³ In particular, Zerubavel attributes this transformation to the effect of the Yom Kippur War which, she argues, made Israelis ‘more open to empathizing with Holocaust victims and survivors’. She argues that this identification was

⁴⁷ For discussion on what I describe as the culpability of alterity, see Sara Ahmed, “Affective Economies,” *Social Text* 79, vol. 22, no. 2 (2004): 117-119.

⁴⁸ For discussion on sentimentality, see Mark Jefferson, “What is Wrong with Sentimentality?” *Mind* 92, no. 368 (1983), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2254091>. For Israel’s current hostility to critique, see chap. 11 and chap. 12 in Pappé, *Idea of Israel*.

⁴⁹ Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 129.

⁵⁰ For the historical Masada narrative, see chap. 2 in Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth* and Zerubavel, “Death of Memory,” 73-75.

⁵¹ See chap. 3 and chap. 6 in Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*; see also chap. 1 in Zertal, *Israel’s Holocaust*.

⁵² Zerubavel, “Death of Memory,” 82-86; Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth*, chap. 3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 91.

reinforced by successive wars (Lebanon in 1982, the First Intifada starting in 1987, and the First Gulf War in 1991, to which one might now add events since Zerubavel's major research) and realisation that the Palestine question had endured. Zerubavel documents the consonance between Masada and the Holocaust after 1973, where previously the differences had been foregrounded. She argues that, as the Holocaust emerged as a major theme in Israeli political culture, linking the Jewish past to the Israeli present, the mass suicide aspect of Masada was reincorporated as part of a redefined concept of Jewish heroism. This highlighted death and suffering, and posited survival (against the Nazis or any oppressors) as a form of resistance. Additionally, it emphasised that the recurrence of analogous experiences, often framed as a second Holocaust, was to be avoided at all costs. Masada's dramatic geography, already an integral educational tool and tourist destination, is now a powerful prop for 'vivid testimonies' about 'the fragility of Jewish survival'.⁵⁴ Combined with Israel's Holocaust memorial, Yad Vashem, these are 'intended to legitimize Israel's current concerns about security'. Both national narratives illustrate major national trauma and articulate the terrible oppression and victimisation of Jews; or conversely, affirm the necessity of fear and insecurity.⁵⁵

Zerubavel notes that critical narratives of Masada (or the Holocaust) discredit the validity of the commemorative narratives as selective representations of the past, which in Israel's case, contribute to the State's 'own misuse of power within the context of the conflict with the Palestinians'.⁵⁶ This scholarship gives insight into the contemporary function of national narrative and State ideology, providing a useful account of its role and meaning. However, it confounds alternate readings of both the past and the future. Subscribing to the idea of a halcyon era in Israel between 1948 and 1967, it fails to adequately address the violent foundational premise of the State, and is consequently unable to provide a framework for conceiving of Israel–Palestinian relations outside the present (ineffectual) paradigm.

c) Structural challenges

This section examines the work of scholars who have demonstrated how the Holocaust has been deployed, since the State's inception, to maintain a consensus amongst Jewish-Israeli citizens that justifies Israel's characterisation of the Palestinians and sustains the State's long-term 'state of emergency' approach with respect to them. Unlike the scholarship concerned with a turning point in Israel's national identity, scholars most critical of Zionist narrative have argued this is immaterial to the reality of State policy and practice. Such work has demonstrated that a left (soft) Zionist explanation of seismic shifts in the national psyche is apologist in nature. In contrast to Zerubavel's thesis of recuperating the Holocaust into Israeli national narrative, Zertal argues that the Jewish Holocaust was deployed contemporaneously with the creation of the State, and that it has been 'a central factor in consolidating Israeli identity and fortifying social cohesion and solidarity within Israel'.⁵⁷ Zertal's research shows that State appropriation of the Holocaust has been key to building national values and rationalising militarism. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's comment, that 'it is better for national movements to nationalise the dead than the living', Zertal argues that the State 'made the Holocaust victims into

⁵⁴ Zerubavel, "Death of Memory," 89.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 91.

⁵⁷ Zertal *Israel's Holocaust*, 168.

supreme, lasting, and indisputable moral sanction ... [and] recruited [them] as active players in Israeli politics of that time, of all times'.⁵⁸ Demonstrating that rhetorical use of the Holocaust has been linked with the basis of Israeli power from the State's inception, Zertal argues that it has been consistently used in manipulative and destructive ways: 'there has not been a war in Israel, from 1948 till the present ... that has not been perceived, defined, and conceptualized in terms of the Holocaust'.⁵⁹ Zertal highlights the elevated circulation of the trope in response to the Six Day War (thought not triggered by it) which was framed as an existential threat rather than as a land dispute. In particular, this rhetoric invoked the Holocaust to legitimate Israeli violence, applying the destruction-redemption pattern of Jewish history, which is practically articulated in the IDF.⁶⁰ Its compulsory and (almost) universal conscription ensures that it pervades every level of Jewish-Israeli society, such that Israeli media coverage of ODS, at times critical of policies driving the operation, was unswerving in support of the IDF.⁶¹ The value of the Holocaust to State practice has been continually reaffirmed as 'part of a continual effort invested in the political and educational endeavour of nation-building by the dominant cultural and political elites in Israel'.⁶² Consequently, Zertal argues that 'the Holocaust is inserted directly and metaphorically into everyday life in Israel ... loaded with meaning beyond itself'.⁶³

Despite arguments that the securable nature of a nation state would protect Jews from a new Holocaust, scholars such as Zertal and Pappé note that modern secular Zionism has refrained from defining its territorial borders, pursuing a deliberate policy of territorial vagueness.⁶⁴ Thus, a mythology surrounding the true, promised, sacred 'other border' – an aspirational Greater Israel – has translocated the question of Israeli power from a political context 'to the sacred and absolute' and anthropomorphised the State into a living body such that the renunciation of any part is conceptualised as an amputation tantamount to total destruction.⁶⁵ It is continually reasserted as a present possibility through manipulating Holocaust trauma, as the State so effectively did during the First Gulf War.⁶⁶ In this instance, security measures enacted 'the extermination chambers of the Holocaust' and the source of threat was said to emanate from latter-day Nazism. Avoiding a second Holocaust is thus bound up in the disinclination to declare final borders and in reinforcing the necessity of defending those inside (the Jewish few) against those outside (the anti-Semitic many). Zertal concludes that Israel's excess of violence and inability to develop alternative approaches to territory, security and the Palestinians can be directly attributed to this 'political theology', which is one of the main weapons in the Israeli political arsenal.⁶⁷ Moreover, according to Pappé this aggressive pursuit of policy is the only way in which Zionist tenets can be adhered to and implemented in the present day.⁶⁸

The manner in which the Holocaust has conferred extreme implications on the local conflict has had a direct

⁵⁸ Zertal *Israel's Holocaust*, 182.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4, 176-182. Zertal describes two official addresses to illustrate how the Holocaust was used in earlier years.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁶¹ For analysis of three major Israeli newspapers' editorial line see chap. 3 in Dor, *Suppression of Guilt*.

⁶² Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust*, 167.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 185. For an illustration of this discourse, see chap. 5 in Benjamin Netanyahu, *Fighting Terrorism: How Democracies Can Defeat Domestic and International Terrorists* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 186. Zertal cites future Prime Minister Menachim Begin as invoking both the metaphor of state as body and the Holocaust in an argument rejecting the UN partition plan.

⁶⁶ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 177.

⁶⁷ Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust*, 168, 189 and chap. 5 generally.

⁶⁸ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 251.

impact on how Israelis imagine their present condition.⁶⁹ Zertal demonstrates the use of the Holocaust in Israeli discourse as a strategy to ‘Nazify’ the other as an enemy.⁷⁰ The nexus of Israel’s Holocaust in the present and the ‘Palestinian-Nazi’ has been routinely invoked throughout the history of the State, and its terminology has come to characterise the arguments of Israel’s political elites. It is no coincidence, for example, that al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the Palestinian leader during the Mandate period, is accorded a longer entry in the *Encyclopaedia of the Holocaust* than any other single figure except Adolf Hitler.⁷¹ Zertal argues that not only did the Nazification of the Palestinians evolve out of al-Husayni’s travails with Hitler and Mussolini (albeit in an attempt to halt Britain’s proto-Zionist policies), but that contemporary use of the language of the Holocaust is disingenuous and calculatedly political.⁷² Norman Finkelstein makes this point in the 2009 documentary, *Defamation* (dir. Yoav Shamir), punctuating the hypocrisy of the way in which Naziist language and symbolism has functioned in Israel’s political rhetoric:

*You're funny. I have to tell you, you're funny. You come from a society in which everyone calls everyone a Nazi, right? They called Rabin a Nazi, Ben-Gurion called Jabotinsky a Nazi, Jabotinsky called Ben-Gurion a Nazi, Begin called Ben-Gurion a Nazi, they all said, each of them said one is worse than Hitler. That's the whole language of your society. It's also the language I grew up with, you know, everything in my house – the food: worse than Auschwitz; the clothes: worse than Ausch ...And that's the house you grow up in. And all of a sudden you get so pious when I go like that [holds arm in Nazi salute]. Your whole society is like that!*⁷³

This raises the corollary thesis of a Holocaust Industry (to be considered in the last section of this chapter) of which Finkelstein has been ‘the most vociferous American critic’.⁷⁴ Overall, however, one sees the importance of stripping Palestinians of any context in order that they might best serve Israel’s own definitional needs and the founding mythologies on which legitimacy and identity are staked.

The inescapable effect of Jewish exceptionalism, however (through the particularisation of Israel’s existential threat, literally embodied in the metaphor of survival, reinforced through enactments of Holocaustic crisis and Jewish victimhood), is necessarily a negation of the Palestinians. This is critical to the structuring of Israel’s identity and its strategy for social cohesion: since Jewish resemblance is the indispensable aspect of national identity, other forms of identification are erased;⁷⁵ whereas, in the case of the Palestinian, where absorption is not possible, their ‘indigestible Arabness is emphasized’.⁷⁶ The net effect of a formula for national identification that turns on the value of boundaries (physical and metaphorical ones) which are neither secured nor declared (the prospect of their imminent definition was described emotively by then deputy Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as ‘Auschwitz’ borders in reference to the terms of the nascent Oslo Peace Process), is the intensity with which alterity is reviled by the State.⁷⁷ This outcome reflects Martin Barker’s thesis of the ‘new racism’, in

⁶⁹ Zertal, *Israel’s Holocaust*, 169.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 171-176.

⁷¹ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 175-176.

⁷² Zertal, *Israel’s Holocaust*, 100-103, 175-6.

⁷³ My transcript, *Defamation*, directed by Yoav Shamir (2009; New York: First Run Features. 2010), DVD.

⁷⁴ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 158.

⁷⁵ For example, the Mizrahi community’s cultural affinity with Palestinians: see chap. 9 in Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy*.

⁷⁶ Saree Makdisi, “APARTHEID/ apartheid/ [],” *Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism*, The Salon vol. 2 (2010), http://jwtc.org.za/the_salon/volume_2/saree_makdisi_apartheid_apartheid.htm, 4-5.

⁷⁷ Ali Abunimah, “Israel’s “Auschwitz Borders” Revisited,” *Electronic Intifada*, December 7, 2008, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/israels-auschwitz-borders-revisited/7847>.

which he demonstrates the connection between an apparent common sense instinctivism and vitriolic nationalism.⁷⁸ The State purports to ‘solve’ the issue – when they do – through an extension of that racism, which conceals its violent function through appealing to the ‘natural’ impulse by which one identifies with one’s own tribe and is inclined to suspicion of the ‘stranger’. Philosopher Renata Salecl calls this meta-racism, which in the guise of providing solutions to alterity, ‘is all the more dangerous for posing as its own opposite, advocating racist measures as the very means of fighting racism’; in short, the desire to exorcise a menacing ‘other’ from the body of the self.⁷⁹

2. Framing the Palestinian

It is increasingly common to hear the actuality of Israel being described as an apartheid State. If it lacks the imagery associated with South African Apartheid – signs denoting White-only hospitals, beaches, shops and park benches – this is no substantive barrier to defending the analogy. Evinced by myriad forms of discrimination, it is not difficult to demonstrate, as academic and Middle Eastern commentator Saree Makdisi does, how the term applies to the position of the Palestinian population in either the OPTs or Israel.⁸⁰ Neither is this incidental; as Massad writes, it is an inevitable product of the Zionist-national project.⁸¹ Yet if the situation in Israel can be compared to South African Apartheid, a key difference is in the legibility of the South African situation and ‘the relative illegibility – inscrutability – of Israeli apartheid’.⁸² It is the very illegibility of apartheid in Israel, a product of linguistic evasion in which discrimination occurs before language, that enables Jewish Israelis and Israel’s supporters ‘to indulge in the misrecognition of a reality that is actually staring them in the face’.⁸³ A consequence of this has been that employing apartheid as a term to describe the situation in Israel today does not generate ‘counter-argument backed by counter-evidence, but rather walls of sheer stony denial, if not inarticulate eruptions of blind rage’.⁸⁴ Makdisi concludes his essay on the comparative features of South African Apartheid and Israel by noting that the whole point of a secreted denial – a denial of denial – in Israel about the conditions visited on Palestinians people, or about Palestinian people themselves, is ‘to bypass and render unapproachable the core of the conflict between Zionism and the Palestinians’.⁸⁵ This reframes a sentiment expressed by many Palestinians, reiterated by Massad in the course of a 2002 discussion with Benny Morris about the Middle East: ‘the Palestinians have been telling their story for decades and no one – and by that I mean no one in Western, pro-Israel countries – has ever listened to them’.⁸⁶

These questions – why Palestinian narrative has failed to gain traction in the West; why, as Makdisi asks, the use of the term apartheid should ‘cause such an outcry when it is used’? – are the reverse side of the Zionist

⁷⁸ Martin Barker, *The New Racism: Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe* (London: Junction Books, 1981).

⁷⁹ Renata Salecl, *The Spoils of Freedom: Psychoanalysis and Feminism After the Fall of Socialism* (London: Routledge, 1994), 12.

⁸⁰ For example, road networks for Jews only and the infrastructure of checkpoints that restrict Palestinian mobility: see Saree Makdisi, “Israel, Apartheid and Jimmy Carter,” *Counterpunch*, December 19, 2006, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2006/12/19/israel-apartheid-and-jimmy-carter/>; Makdisi, “APARTHEID/ apartheid,” 3-8.

⁸¹ Joseph A. Massad, “The Persistence of the Palestinian Question,” chap. 11 in *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁸² Makdisi, “APARTHEID/apartheid,” 8.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁶ Joseph A. Massad, “History on the Line: Joseph Massad and Benny Morris Discuss the Middle East,” chap. 10 in *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: Routledge, 2006), 159.

narrative.⁸⁷ The success of Zionist narrative is the success of ‘inscrutability’; Makdisi illustrates the success of Zionism’s linguistic evasion in the case of Western media. He notes that ‘otherwise rational people’, in the form of columnists and editors of major newspapers, ‘use Israel’s own discourse to buy into the state’s erasure of [for example] Palestinian identity in total unawareness that that is exactly what they are doing’.⁸⁸ Its success explains, for example, why it is that Palestinians can (and do) document the injustices of the Zionist project, yet Israel’s discourse is undisturbed by such efforts. It explains, too, why it is that Israel’s discourse is adopted, intentionally or otherwise, in the context of Western commentary. Most of all, Zionist narrative has stripped a political situation of its politics; where they are not erased, the ‘problem’ which Palestinians pose has been redistributed throughout the mundanities of everyday life. I am interested in the way that this State narrative has provided a cohesive account of identity for the Jewish-Israelis of the State, sequestering Palestinians, so that they surface only in questions of Israel’s security, in characterisations of terrorism. Because the Zionist depoliticisation of the Palestinian, by whatever means, is political; because, as Makdisi says, the West has swallowed that narrative whole.

a) Zionism: identity as nationalism/ identity as negation

Reflecting on the project of forging national identity amongst a disparate demographic (in Britain), Patrick Wright notes: ‘there need be little hesitation in granting that the unity of the nation is achieved at the cost of considerable mystification’.⁸⁹ Wright, in reflecting on symbols such as monarchy which touch the ordinary citizen with the symbolism of the idealised nation, elevating them from ‘the rags and tatters of everyday life’, employs the idea of mystification as a relation between state and citizenry in which popular consent is required for the nation’s symbolism to work its spell.⁹⁰ The settler-colonial state has reason to be more profoundly invested in such a relation with its citizens. In the quest for homeliness, Hage writes that nationalists imagine the nation ‘as a space of self-affirmation, a space of existing in the world, a space under their control and domination *where they have the right to remove anything which threatens the possibility of making the nation homely*’.⁹¹ In Israel, this quest turns in particular on the desire to be rid of those things which remind the coloniser of their originary sin. Hage writes these ‘aggressive impulses ... are part and parcel of the nationalist desire for self-affirmation’.⁹² Sustaining and nurturing the desire for self-affirmation requires a network of fictions, what might be called national narratives or myths, to assert authenticities: of state and national character. On the other hand, contradictions to the nationalist ideal are serially suppressed, a task that inheres in the instruments of state, teaching citizens to think through a system of blindness. A coherent national identity was a matter of urgency at the time of Israel’s declaration of independence and, in particular, an identity that was embedded in the State’s new geography. The radical demographic change in the years immediately surrounding 1948, in which incoming citizens consisted primarily of disparate Jewish immigrants, was managed through a project of national myth formation on which a cohesive national identity would rest. The tool of

⁸⁷ Saree Makdisi, “Does the Term ‘Apartheid’ Fit Israel? Of Course it Does,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-makdisi-israel-apartheid-20140518-story.html>.

⁸⁸ Makdisi “APARTHEID/apartheid,” 5.

⁸⁹ Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain*, (Great Britain: Verso, 1985; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24; for discussion on national heritage as manipulation in contrast to Wright’s thesis of consent, see Jim McGuigan, *Culture and the Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 1996), 122-124.

⁹¹ Hage, “Narcissistic Victimhood,” 114 (my emphasis).

⁹² *Ibid.*

national myth making, limited by neither chronological nor spatio-accuracy, was therefore key in formulating what Ilan Pappé describes as ‘the idea of Israel’, and in pursuance of which Israeli scholarship, as per the State, has predominately negated and erased Palestinians from discourse altogether.⁹³

According to Pappé, ‘a neo-Zionist epoch [in Israeli scholarship] commenced in 2000 and still exists today’.⁹⁴ He demonstrates that a revisionist trend in Israeli scholarship originating in the mid-1970s, which had sought to examine some of the conundrums inherent in Zionist history, largely ceased at this time. He suggests that this was a result of the resurgence of political and popular conservatism in Israeli society, attributed broadly to the deterioration of the Oslo Process.⁹⁵ In particular, the Zionist account of 1948 could not withstand the scrutiny: ‘to tackle this as a fable, or worse, as an intentional fabrication, would trigger the most significant challenge to date of the moral basis and validity of the idea of Israel’.⁹⁶ One encounters, in any comparison between Zionist and anti, post or non-Zionist scholarship on Israel’s history, the importance of 1948 to the latter and the primacy of 1967 to the former. Pappé himself has recently argued that 1967 is arbitrary, since Knesset documents from 1963 indicate that Israel had in place at that time juridical and administrative infrastructure capable of implementing the military rule of occupation; rather, it represents the completion of Israel’s territorial aspirations, only partially realised in 1948.⁹⁷ Within Israeli and Jewish scholarship, however, whether the Zionist underpinnings are stringent or ‘soft’, it is not by chance that work on the transition in Israeli identity hinges on events approximately concurrent with the Six Day War. Surveying the subsequent work of Israel’s ‘New Historians’, Pappé notes that, prior to their contribution – one that has never displaced the mainstream view of events in any case – ‘before 1967, Israeli policy had never been depicted as aggressive to say nothing of occasionally brutal and inhuman and quite often morally unjustifiable’.⁹⁸ Yet the centrality of 1967 – an unfortunate error, an aberration – demonstrates an investment in unravelling the Israel–Palestinian conflict with a two-state solution, based on the Palestinian Territories occupied at that time.⁹⁹ From this time (as surveyed in the previous section) a new identity emerges, one that is informed by the transformation of national narratives and which provides a key to understanding Israel’s justification of a culture of militarism with respect to the Palestinians. It explains too, why mystification of the Israeli population through such totalising national narratives has served State objectives. The effect of these ‘founding mythologies’ is reflected in depictions by the State and citizens in Western media sources, as well as the narrative framework of the sources themselves, which are employed in the following chapters of this thesis.

If, as Pappé documents, a critical analysis of the Zionist story of 1948 has rarely been tackled by Israeli scholarship, and the Palestinian in particular has been mostly elided from history, there is however one event from the 1940s that has been essential to creating a place for Palestinians within the construction of Israeli

⁹³ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 50.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁹⁵ Ilan Pappé, “Post-Zionism and its Popular Cultures” in *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture* eds., Rebecca L Stein and Ted Swedenburg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁹⁶ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 47.

⁹⁷ Ilan Pappé, “Revisiting 1967: The False Paradigm of Peace, Partition and Parity,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3-04 (2013), doi: 10.1080/2201473X.2013.810699.

⁹⁸ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 124. See chap. 5 generally for Pappé’s survey of the scholarship.

⁹⁹ Ian S. Lustick, “Two State Illusion,” *New York Times*, September 14, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/15/opinion/sunday/two-state-illusion.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

identity and the national narratives of the State;¹⁰⁰ namely, UN Resolution 181, which proposed allocating 55 per cent of the land of Palestine to the Jewish community in Israel and 45 per cent to the Palestinians.¹⁰¹ The Palestinians rejected the plan because this, in the words of Massad, ‘of course, seemed utterly unjust and unfair’.¹⁰² However, the standard Zionist treatment of this event has been: ‘we are a peace loving movement, we have tried to make peace with these people, and we have accepted what a so-called objective and neutral party, meaning the United Nations, had done in 1947’.¹⁰³ Thus, the Zionist line has been to regard Palestinian rejection of the plan as ‘an act of terrorism’.¹⁰⁴ This is not the first event in the Zionist canon in which Palestinian action is defined as terrorism,¹⁰⁵ but 1947 is, as indicated by Massad, a defining moment in the Zionist narrative about the origins of the current situation, which Pappé summarises: ‘troubles seemingly erupt out of the blue, and Arabs assault Jews, just like that. Thereafter, this is the essence of the ‘troubles’ – attacks driven by incomprehensible and unintelligible hate, against which the Jewish forces defend themselves with valour and determination’.¹⁰⁶ According to Pappé, one of the outcomes of this position is that ‘much of Israeli media and academia have characterised the Palestinian resistance movement as a key factor in the global history of terrorism’.¹⁰⁷ Portraying the Palestinians in this way has also determined how Palestinian relations to the State’s identity have culminated at the present time: namely, in the discourse of security.

b) Terror and securitisation

Since the Second Intifada, the infrastructure of securitisation, primarily expressed through the mechanism of Israeli military action, has manifested, reiterated and enforced the centrality of insecurity to Israeli identity. The condition of in/security and the process of securitisation have been depicted as consequence and response to actions (violence/ resistance) long ascribed by State narrative as terror. The nomenclature of terror in the context of Israel–Palestinian relations both has a particularised quality and shares characteristics of a wider discourse applied often to situations of vast power disparity, sometimes characterised as Colonial/Colonised, North/South or the West and its adversaries.¹⁰⁸ Setting aside the questions of legitimate resistance, Massad argues that it is nationality, in what he calls the ‘Zionist-Palestinian case’, which provides ‘the condition of legitimacy for violence’.¹⁰⁹ Tracing the genealogy and application of the idea in this context, Massad records that the one-time accused terrorist and future Israeli Prime Minister, Menachim Begin, was ‘astute enough to appreciate that “terrorism” is not an objective term that is agreed upon by all parties, but rather a rhetorical strategy used by unequal enemies for political ends’.¹¹⁰ However, since assignment of the term is ‘controlled by an enemy who is in power and who controls the means of representation’, it is impervious to deconstruction in the context of its

¹⁰⁰ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 50-51, 55.

¹⁰¹ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Resolution 181 (II), “Plan of Partition for Palestine,” November 29, 1947, <http://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/2>.

¹⁰² Massad, “History on the Line,” 158.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 37.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* See chap. 2 generally for Zionist rendering of the Palestinian as terrorist.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Ruth Blakeley, “Bringing the State Back into Terrorism Studies,” *European Political Science* 6 (2007): 228-9, doi: 10.1057/palgrave.eps.2210139.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph A. Massad, “The Opposite of Terror,” introduction in *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: Routledge, 2006), 6.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

use.¹¹¹ Terror is, in Massad's reading, a discourse of identity: the 'anti-terrorist' both creates the 'terrorist' and defines themselves in the very act of the naming. He compares it to the function of Nietzsche's 'slave-morality', concluding that the discourse achieves 'a radical relativism and a Nietzschean perspectivalism that forecloses any discussion of the materiality of colonial conquest and anti-colonial resistance, which are reduced by the most "objective" observers to a neutral "cycle of violence"'. In short, it is a discourse 'of identity and equalization between Colonial State violence and those who resist it among the colonized' which has sought 'the erasure of power relations as the central problematic of violence'.¹¹² The net effect of this in Israel today is that the frequency and degree of Israeli military action finds ready explanation and justification and is named within the rubric of State Security.¹¹³

The impetus for securitisation is understood to arise from a subjectively characterised problem rather than a threat with objectively prescribed qualities.¹¹⁴ Notwithstanding the several approaches in the field of security studies, theorist Johan Eriksson has demonstrated that they coalesce around the argument that classifying issues as threats is a political act.¹¹⁵ The professed approach to Palestinians under Israeli dominion (abundantly evidenced in source materials in following chapters) is to regard Palestinians as a security issue to Israel. A security issue is inherently excluded from the political framework as something that 'cannot be dealt with in a normal way'.¹¹⁶ A security issue so characterised, moreover, is only viewed from the perspective of its characterisation as a security risk/threat. If it is the result of political failure to securitise an issue in the first place, the issue is afterwards stripped of its political dimension in the view of the State.¹¹⁷ In Israel, the confluence of terrorist and security studies produces the Palestinian problem as one stripped of politics, requiring nothing more (nor less) than procedural management.

It has been noted by critical scholars of terrorism that 'orthodox terrorism studies tend to focus on the activities' directed 'against the liberal democratic states of the North'.¹¹⁸ Thus, State Terrorism is left off the agenda for reasons which international relations scholar, Ruth Blakeley, itemises as the field's approach to methodology, institutional affiliations and its underlying political assumptions; in short, the operation of a matrix of power differentials in both political and scholarly contexts.¹¹⁹ In the context of Israel–Palestinian violence (ignoring questions of scale or resources), acts are perpetrated by both sides against the other. Yet in Israel (self-evidently) and Western media accounts (more troublingly), only the actions of one side are labelled as 'terrorist', enabling Israeli violence to be read as actions of 'self-defence' within wider policy pursuits of 'security'. Security has taken such a central role in Israel's justification of violence that it is taken for granted not only in Israel but in what has been the dominant Western portrayal of Israel (evinced by sources in chapters 2–5).¹²⁰ Setting aside the effect of this in Israel, in the context of Western media representations of ODS and OCL, these pre-existing

¹¹¹ Massad, "Opposite of Terror," 1.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹³ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 55.

¹¹⁴ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 30.

¹¹⁵ Johan Eriksson, "Observers or Advocates?: On the Political Role of Security Analysis," *Cooperation and Conflict* 34 (1999): 325-327, doi: 10.1177/00108369921961889.

¹¹⁶ Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security*, 26.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹¹⁸ Blakeley, "Bringing State Back," 228. See also Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007).

¹¹⁹ Blakeley, "Bringing State Back," 233.

¹²⁰ Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security*, 28.

characterisations do significant work in establishing the narrative of events. Despite the expansive destruction wrought by the IDF on Palestinian life and property during both operations, the working hypothesis of each side's role meant that the media often continued to portray Israel's military actions sympathetically. In some limited cases when criticism of IDF action was severe, in particular through the censorious language of 'war crimes', the propensity of the State, and the willingness of the sources, to attribute misconduct to 'rotten apples' and not the systemic barrel is readily apparent.¹²¹ This does not, overall, disturb State narrative about these events: an equation of Palestinian (terrorist) action and Israeli (self-defence/security) reaction (the conjunction of which will be dealt with more extensively in following chapters).

The emphasis on Israel's security, combined with the State's characterisation and approach to Palestinians, has produced a situation in which Israel (the *status quo*) depends on a collective belief in imminent threat from 'outside'; thus, citizens are called to invest – both actively and emotionally – in safeguarding the State's survival. In practical terms, this is expressed in the militaristic culture generally, and operations specifically, a milieu that 'Israeli Jews [inhabit] from cradle to grave'.¹²² Thus, Israeli identity is presented with a paradox: by essentialising Palestinians as terrorist, the State perpetuates its experience of (irrational and unknowable) threat; yet in the culture of militarism this fuels and sustains, Israelis are made to feel (albeit vertiginously) secure. C. Heike Schotten demonstrates the application of Nietzsche's 'slavish type' to Israeli identity (a comparison first raised in this section through Massad, who uses it to explain the 'out-of-the-blueness' of Palestinian action in Zionist narrative).¹²³ Psychologically determined, the 'slave' identity has little to do with raw paradigms of relative power. Schotten explains the applicability of this to Israeli reasoning (in the case of OCL) in three steps. Firstly, external phenomena are a (psychological) requirement for the 'slave' to act, thus casting all action, fundamentally, as reaction. Secondly, external phenomena are essential to determining the 'slave' (Israeli) identity. Thirdly, external phenomena need not be hostile in reality for the 'slave' to perceive them as such. These elements of identity, she concludes, enable Israel to portray itself 'wildly inaccurately'. Specifically, she argues that this formulation of Israeli identity is used as evidence for the legitimacy of the State and its absolute mandate to protect the Jews, 'perpetually besieged by an historically variable but ever present genocidal hatred' by any means.¹²⁴ In a discussion on the necessity of an externally defined enemy to Israeli identity, I asked anthropologist and director of the *Israeli Committee Against Housing Demolitions* (ICAHAD), Jeff Halper, what he thought would happen if one could remove the enemy component as a defining aspect of Israeli identity. Without hesitation he responded 'well, then you'd have one state'.¹²⁵ Negative representation of the Palestinian, and focus on Jewish victimhood are crucial, however, to current State identity. In reverse, transforming these perspectives would undermine, irrevocably, that identity's logic.

¹²¹ Slome, "Aesthetics of Terror," 11.

¹²² Specific research on the effect of Israel's education system and militarisation: Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 141.

¹²³ Schotten's work indicates no knowledge of Massad's: C. Heike Schotten, "Reading Nietzsche in the Wake of the 2008-2009 War on Gaza," *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 19, no.1 (2012), http://works.bepress.com/heike_schotten/4.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹²⁵ In discussion at the conference *Human Rights in Palestine*, held at the Australian National University in Canberra, September 11-12, 2013.

3. National culture: militarism and morality

This section focuses on the practices through which Israel has codified hyper-militarism as policy and sought to embed it in a cultural discourse of morality. Zertal's work makes the case that Israeli militarism derives its legitimacy from the instrumentalisation of Holocaust memory in national narrative, which has profoundly impacted 'attitudes towards, and the perceptions of, the Palestinians within Israeli Jewish society'.¹²⁶ She argues that justification for contemporary Israeli power is derived from the existential threat implicit in Israeli identity, reinforced in the educational and ceremonial emphasis on both the Holocaust and the Masada, and secured by the rise of militaristic culture. Summarising the effects of this, Zertal writes: 'they/we all use Holocaust images for their/our own purposes. Some of these images are threatening, others are trivial, all are distorting'.¹²⁷ Following the enormously destructive OCL, anthropologist Lori Allen analysed the scalar relationships constructed by Israel between its citizens and Palestinians in the OPTs. Allen illustrates the way that mechanisms of geography and policy have worked to ultimately obscure these relations, describing an Israeli public quite remote from Palestinian concerns or Occupation. She concludes that, when obscured, they contribute to producing a '*deliberate lack of such basic human concern*' (my emphasis).¹²⁸ As a Palestinian man describes the impasse: 'to my knowledge, no colonizer has ever succeeded in monopolizing even victimhood ... just our luck!'¹²⁹ Systematically, the politics of the oppressed have been stripped of rationality and everywhere suppressed, as concretely expressed, for example, in Israeli authorities routinely whitening-out the walls of Ramallah, covered in the political slogans and images of Palestinian resistance, during the Second Intifada – acts of political annihilation.¹³⁰ These ingredients have combined to create a collective identity in which diplomacy makes little sense or, as Halper has put it: 'Israelis believe they can win, so anyway the issue isn't too important'.¹³¹ In the current paradigm, peace on any terms is anathema to Israel; refiguring Palestinian relations would require total restructuring of the identity currently responsible for binding the nation together.

The frontline of Israel's moral image has been staked on its military image and, more particularly, the symbolic status of the IDF, whose morality has rested on the 'myth of the purity of arms'. Taking the image at face value, Merom concludes that this idea, a vital legitimating component of Israeli national power, is hardly the case in reality.¹³² Merom demonstrates that this vision of morality is refuted by broad evidence of attitudes in Israeli society towards 'the Arabs' and particularly in the chronicle of IDF behaviour towards Palestinians throughout the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.¹³³ Secondly, Pappé's comprehensive survey of Israel's Post-Zionist Academia notes that 'militarism' was one of the fields of inquiry to arise from the movement. One result of this scholarship was the depiction of militarism 'not only as an inevitable product of the state's precarious existence in the midst of a hostile world but also a means of obtaining the wholehearted commitment of every citizen to

¹²⁶ Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust*, 175.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹²⁸ Lori Allen, "The Scales of Occupation: 'Operation Cast Lead' and the Targeting of the Gaza Strip," *Critique of Anthropology* 32, no.3 (2012): 276, doi. 10. 1177/0308275X12449103.

¹²⁹ Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society* (Annandale, NSW: Pluto Press, 2003), 133.

¹³⁰ Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs' Square: A Journey into the World of the Suicide Bomber* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), xviii.

¹³¹ Halper, "Imagining the Future."

¹³² Merom, "Israel's Security," 425.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 427-8.

the state'.¹³⁴ Others examined the relationship between education and militarisation, reaching 'dismal conclusions about the possibility for change from within Israeli society in regard to issues of peace, democracy and equality'.¹³⁵ Yet by and large, the focus on militarism has been with regard to its morally corrupting effect on Israeli society. Tellingly, notwithstanding the resurgence of political conservatism in Israel, anxiety about the effect of violence on the victors has continued to flourish, or as Margalit put it: 'we are beautiful, but we must shoot to kill – but not before we go through an agonizing search of our tormented soul'.¹³⁶ This is widely evinced in recent films, such as *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) and *Lebanon* (2009).¹³⁷ Both are ostensibly concerned with the 1982 Lebanon War, infamous for the brutal Sabra and Shatila massacres; the real focus, however, is on the subsidiary damage done to good Israeli soldiers/citizens caught in an ethical crisis between orders from above and the chaos of warfare in practice. It is similarly demonstrated by the rise of the Israeli organisation *Breaking the Silence*, formed by IDF veterans in 2004, whose work as whistleblowers on abuses of power in the IDF is directed towards the collation of testimonials that call out operational malpractice. They neither aspire to a political stance nor work towards the goal of cohesively improving Palestinian experience. Finkelstein dismisses this existential guilt as lacking practical or moral significance. He argues that the question of morality is a subterfuge: 'the most refined shedders of blood have been almost always the most highly civilised gentlemen'.¹³⁸ Finkelstein finds even the testing of the theory spurious, contending that the notion of a 'purity of arms' is based on racism alone and, in this case, a particularised racism inherent to Zionism.¹³⁹ He suggests instead that IDF expression of State policy exhibits the components of national terrorism in its dispassionate extermination of real or possible opponents.¹⁴⁰

On the one hand, the inherent truths which Zionism has sought to reinforce about the nature of Palestinians, and on the other, the movement's reliance on exceptionalism, are captured together in the military ethics code developed by ethicist Asa Kasher and the IDF general Amos Yadlin.¹⁴¹ This doctrine reconfigures the obligations of an occupying power to an occupied people at international law and purports to abrogate Israeli responsibility as the occupying power.¹⁴² The doctrine's definition of terrorism refers only to non-State acts, and is explicitly written in the context of Palestinian organisations or individuals. This mirrors the development of responses to terror in the West, highlighted for example by Eyal Weizman's comparison between calculations of acceptable collateral civilian mortalities by the US in the Iraq War and OCL.¹⁴³ The Kasher–Yadlin doctrine distinguishes between two battlefronts: physical and psychological. In essence, it sets up a relation between Israel and the Palestinians through a premise of terror which authors Israeli action (of almost any form and proportion) while suppressing the idea of Palestinian political agency. The code reorganises categories of non/combatants as regards the prioritisation of military responsibility towards civilian life: it constructs victims

¹³⁴ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 140.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹³⁶ Margalit, "Kitsch of Israel".

¹³⁷ *Waltz With Bashir*, directed by Ari Folman (2008. New York: Sony Picture Classics, 2009), DVD; *Lebanon*, directed by Samuel Maoz (2009; London: Metrodome Group, 2010), DVD.

¹³⁸ Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, 120, quoting from Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 110-120.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 116. Articulated by historian Joachim Fest in the context of the Third Reich.

¹⁴¹ Asa Kasher and Amos Yadlin, "Military Ethics of Fighting Terror: An Israeli Perspective," *Journal of Military Ethics* 4, no.1 (2005), doi: 10.1080/15027570510014642.

¹⁴² Levy, "Catastrophe Theory," 67-69.

¹⁴³ Weizman, *Possible Evils*, 130-132.

of terror such that combatants and non-combatants of the State are victims alike.¹⁴⁴ The second battlefield, the prevention of the population from being terrorised, is a sphere in which the doctrine purports to ensure not only Israel's security but its sense of security, a subjectivity used to legitimate pre-emptive strike. It includes a right to action in response not only to concerns that the domestic population has succumbed to a sense of diminishing hope for positive change, but when potential changes in international relations might be more hostile to State action in the future (arguably the case in the timing of OCL). By this means, pre-emption is masterfully redefined as response, that is, as self-defence.

Explicit codes of this nature have been a feature of the last decade of Israeli military practice, consistent with developments in the West, and in particular the Bush Doctrine which followed 9/11; in addition, it has been Israel's strategy to extend the boundaries of international law through retrospective recognition of their action.¹⁴⁵ In a practical example, the Kasher–Yadlin doctrine in contravention of Israel's obligations under the *Fourth Geneva Convention*, prioritised IDF soldiers in OCL, characterised in this ethics code as a 'citizen in uniform' over the Palestinian civilians in Gaza, 'persons ... not under the effective control of the state'.¹⁴⁶ The death toll of OCL, estimated by the Israeli information centre for human rights in the Occupied Territories, *B'Tselem*, at 1391 Palestinians in Gaza during the operation, and 13 Israelis in total (of whom only three were civilians, while an additional five IDF personnel were killed by friendly fire), testifies to the outcome of this code, an outcome which co-author Kasher himself defended.¹⁴⁷ Nor is this the only iteration by Israel of such a principle. Developed in an *ad hoc* manner during the 2006 Lebanon War after the indiscriminate bombardment of Beirut's densely populated Dahiya neighbourhood, the Dahiya doctrine illustrates the same code in more blatant form:

*What happened in the Dahiya quarter of Beirut in 2006 will happen in every village from which Israel is fired on ... we will apply disproportionate force on it and cause great damage and destruction there. From our standpoint, these are not civilian villages, they are military bases ... This is not a recommendation. This is a plan. And it has been approved.*¹⁴⁸

This passage outlining the Dahiya doctrine was referenced in the Goldstone Report to describe the effect of OCL in Gaza.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, as was the case in Gaza during OCL and throughout the West Bank in the form of collective punishment measures, the rationale for the Dahiya strategy has been explained as follows:

*in the event of another war with Hezbollah, the aim is not the defeat of Hezbollah but, "the elimination of the Lebanese military, the destruction of the national infrastructure and intense suffering among the populationSerious damage to the Republic of Lebanon, the destruction of homes and infrastructure and the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people are consequences that can influence Hizbollah's behaviour more than anything else".*¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ Kasher and Yadlin, "Military Ethics," 13-21. This section is titled "Principle of Distinction".

¹⁴⁵ Weizman, *Possible Evils*, 129-133.

¹⁴⁶ Kasher and Yadlin, "Military Ethics," 15, 17.

¹⁴⁷ Levy, "Catastrophe Theory," 68-9. Statistics for OCL's death toll (B'Tselem produced another set of statistics to include death from injuries in the months following OCL) can be found on B'Tselem's website: "Fatalities during Operation Cast Lead," <http://www.btselem.org/statistics/fatalities/during-cast-lead/by-date-of-event>.

¹⁴⁸ UNGA, "Human Rights in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories: Report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict," (Goldstone Report) September 25, 2009, paragraph 1191.

¹⁴⁹ Abunimah, "Gaza, Goldstone," 392.

¹⁵⁰ UNGA, Goldstone Report, paragraph 1191.

Part III of the Kasher–Yadlin doctrine highlights the significant role of public relations in legitimising the Israeli stance on military practice. Titled ‘Military Consciousness-Directed Struggle’, it summarises the intended effects of national narrative for both domestic and international publics, as articulated in three domains, and draws together many of the themes of this chapter. The first is the Israeli public, who it is to be ensured, ‘is not only not terrorised but ... support the fight against terror by the military or other defense agencies of state’.¹⁵¹ This reflects State investment in a version of Israeli identity predicated on imminent destruction and thus permanent militarisation. The second is the ‘international community’, whose publics are to be convinced ‘that the fight against terror is being performed effectively and morally’.¹⁵² The effectiveness of Israel’s work in this domain will be raised more explicitly in the final section of this chapter, in addition to which the changing dynamics of this campaign will be considered throughout the analysis of chapters 2–5. The third is ‘the public arena of the home population of the terrorist who must be convinced that terror will not lead to any political or ideological achievements’.¹⁵³ This resonates with the policy of collective punishment, in frequent practical evidence in the OPTs (not only during military operations but in the practices of everyday life) and articulated in the Dahiya doctrine, in addition to which it affirms Israel’s historically consistent stance towards Palestinians.

4. Infiltrating Western structures of representation

Falk argues that Israel is highly aware of discourse registers inside and outside the country, thus noting for example Prime Minister Netanyahu’s international equanimity on a Palestinian state, and the contradiction of that position in domestic rhetoric and action. He concludes that in the international dimensions of the Israel–Palestinian situation, language matters. Falk punctuates this with reference to the terminological shift between domestic references to Judea and Samaria and international references that eschew the messianism of a Greater Israel implied in these biblical terms.¹⁵⁴ In one sense, given the absences of Palestinians from Israeli national narrative, it is at an international level that Palestinians exist most for Israelis. In this international space, the Palestinians cause IDF action and thus are made visible: emerging as one-dimensional antagonists, against whom Israel defines its actions. Yet while Palestinians are visible in international media space, they have been represented in distinctly similar ways to the obliquely malevolent role they inhabit in Israel’s national narrative. Thus, the strength of Israel’s assertion that it is acting in self-defence is rarely, if ever, assessed in mainstream forums at moments of crisis. One has to ask why it is that this underlying assumption has been so commonly accepted; in particular, given the evident (though again often obscured) imbalances of resources and support received by each party to the conflict – imbalances, in short, of power. Alam outlines the crucial conditions of Zionism in the 19th century which allowed the movement ‘to recruit Western allies’.¹⁵⁵ He asserts that the possibility of actualising Israel was enabled by Zionism’s ability to harness ‘all the negative energies of the West – its imperialism, anti-Semitism, Crusading zeal, anti-Islamic bigotry, and racism’ and ‘the peculiar position that Jews held in the imagination, prejudices, history, geography, economy, and politics of Western

¹⁵¹ Kasher and Yadlin, “Military Ethics,” 25.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Falk, “Human Rights.”

¹⁵⁵ Alam, *Israeli Exceptionalism*, 141.

societies'.¹⁵⁶ The appeal of the project to the West, Alam argues, was in the capacity of Israel 'to feed several of the West's egotistical needs', and most importantly that they:

*could take ownership of, and revel in, the triumphs of this colonial state as their own; they could congratulate themselves for helping "save" the Jewish people; they could feel they had made adequate amends for their history of anti-Semitism; they could feel they had finally paid back the Arabs and Turks for their conquests of Christian lands.*¹⁵⁷

Hage notes that the conditions of this alliance have scarcely changed. Rather, more than ever, the West's characterisation as a 'late settler colonial formation' aligns with that of Israel as 'on the defensive despite its expansionary mode of existence', under duress, and overwhelmed by a sea of uncivilised others.¹⁵⁸ Thus, in the case of Israel, there are I believe, three key factors in operation. These are capable of reinforcing Israel's national narrative and appealing to the historical affiliation of the Zionist project with the West, as well as finding significant resonance with Israel's main support base, and in particular with the US.

The first of these is the impact which ideas of the Holocaust have had on attitudes to Israel. In his 2000 book, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, Finkelstein makes the case that representation of the Holocaust has been a fraudulently devised 'falsification and exploitation of the Nazi genocide', marketed to the American public.¹⁵⁹ He argues that this has had a twofold purpose: to revive a faltering sense of Jewish identity and 'to justify criminal policies of the Israeli State and US support for these policies'.¹⁶⁰ Not least because of his family history (his parents Holocaust survivors), Finkelstein argues that 'to truly learn from the Nazi holocaust, its physical dimension must be reduced and its moral dimension expanded' and that to do so one must fight 'for the integrity of the historical record'.¹⁶¹ Instead, he deplores that 'too many public and private resources have been invested in memorializing the Nazi genocide. Most of the output is worthless, a tribute not to Jewish suffering but to Jewish aggrandizement'.¹⁶² In a practical sense, this 'industry' has predominantly affected the American public and political spheres where 'most Americans long knew almost nothing about Palestine except the falsifications that had been foisted on them by decades of propaganda stressing the Biblical roots of the modern Zionist enterprise'.¹⁶³ In addition to Finkelstein's work on the subject, historian Rashid Khalidi identifies several key cultural and pseudo-academic texts that have had significant influence in this regard (to which could be added much of Hollywood's output, which has vilified Arabs throughout its history).¹⁶⁴ In the sources that form the focus of the next chapters, this use of the Holocaust is frequently in evidence, raised to affirm Jewish exceptionalism and distract from criticism of Israeli action. This is highlighted, for example, when Joseph Saramago, a Nobel Laureate for Literature, recounts the outrage of a wide spectrum of Israelis engendered by his comments on visiting the OPTs in March 2002: 'what is happening in Palestine is a crime we can put on the same plane as what happened at Auschwitz ... A sense of impunity

¹⁵⁶ Alam, *Israeli Exceptionalism*, 141, 143.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁵⁸ Ghassan Hage, *Alter-Politics: Critical Anthropology and the Radical Imagination* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015), 16.

¹⁵⁹ Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, 2nd ed. (Verso: London 2003), 7.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Khalidi, "Palestinian Dispossession," 376.

¹⁶⁴ See chap. 2 in Finkelstein, *Holocaust Industry*; Khalidi, "Palestinian Dispossession," 376 – 378; Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, with a foreword by William Greider (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001).

characterises the Israeli people and its army. They have turned into rentiers of the Holocaust'.¹⁶⁵ Saramago reflected on the response to his original comment: 'To have said that Israel's action is to be condemned, that war crimes are being perpetrated – really the Israelis are used to that. It doesn't bother them. But there are certain words they can't stand. And to say 'Auschwitz' there ... It was the fact that I put my finger in the Auschwitz wound that made them jump.'¹⁶⁶ Given the way the Holocaust has been used both inside and outside Israel to serve the State's purposes, these materials demonstrate the product of a narrative underwritten by the Holocaust. In particular, this narrative has stonewalled a range of issues which, though critical to Palestinians, have been rendered taboo.

The second reason that the international public accepts the false Israeli narrative is the binary of civilised/uncivilised, whose effect has been discussed above albeit in different terms. It is the result of essentialising the other into something inexplicable, then insisting that this is not perception after all but inherent to its nature. It pertains to the division which Hage has described as a 'post-extermatory angst': 'we do [massacres] and they do them but the 'crucial difference' between us is that we suffer existential angst afterwards'.¹⁶⁷ The relation between Western support for Israel and Israeli capacity to express its military might unchecked draws on the positioning of Israel as a Western (civilised) frontier and the argument of Israeli ethical superiority which has kept attention (particularly American attention) focused on 'Israeli pros and inversely Arab cons'.¹⁶⁸ In 'Permission to Narrate', Said suggests that the political question of that moment (shortly following the Sabra and Shatila massacre) was:

*why, rather than fundamentally altering the Western view of Israel, the events of the summer of 1982 have been accommodated in all but a few places in the public realm to the view that prevailed before those events: that since Israel is in effect a civilized, democratic country constitutively incapable of barbaric practices against Palestinians and other non-Jews, its invasion of Lebanon was ipso facto justified.*¹⁶⁹

Contrary to the idea that facts speak for themselves, he concludes that 'facts do not at all speak for themselves'. Rather, the conditions of press censorship in America have obtained to the present day 'for reasons to do with a seemingly absolute refusal on the part of policy-makers, the media and the liberal intelligentsia to make connections, draw conclusions, state the simple facts, most of which contradict the premises of declared US policy'.¹⁷⁰

These themes are drawn together in the third reason: terrorism. As earlier sections of this chapter have shown, configuring Palestinian resistance as terrorism did not originate with the plane hijackings of September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington. Prior to this, Netanyahu had, for example, authored books over several decades

¹⁶⁵ Julian Evans, "Reviews: Joseph Saramago," *Guardian*, December 28, 2002.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Hage, "Narcissistic Victimhood," 109 (for the term 'post exterminatory angst') and 108 (quote).

¹⁶⁸ For the European and democratic character of Israel, see "Introduction" in Yitzhak Laor, *The Myths of Liberal Zionism*, with a foreword by Jose Saramago, (London: Verso, 2009); and Anton Shammas, "Kitsch 22: On the Problems of the Relations Between Majority and Minority Cultures in Israel," trans. Yael Lotan, *Tikkun* 2, no.4 (1987). For negative Arab stereotyping in American discourse, see chap. 7 in Alam, *Israeli Exceptionalism*.

¹⁶⁹ Edward W. Said, "Permission to Narrate," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, no. 3 (1984): 28, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2536688>.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

characterising Palestinian nationalism, resistance and aspirations to self-determination as terrorism.¹⁷¹ But the arrival of terrorism in the West, and at the symbolic heart of freedom and liberal democracy on American soil, created the opportunity for Israel to argue the symmetry of American experience.¹⁷² Netanyahu expressed precisely this when asked what he thought 9/11 would do for Israeli-American relations. After stating ‘it’s very good’, he explained: ‘well, not very good, but it will generate immediate sympathy [and] strengthen the bond between our two peoples, because we’ve experienced terror over so many decades, but the United States has now experienced a massive haemorrhaging of terror’.¹⁷³ Journalist Ali Abunimah writes that the event set the tone for what has since been Israel’s basic narrative: ‘we are under attack not because Palestinians are aggrieved at specific material injustices that can be remedied by among other things withdrawal from territory and respect for their human rights. Rather, we are the first victims of, and the vanguard of Western civilisation against a global Islamofascist threat’.¹⁷⁴ Thus, conflating Palestinian resistance with the spectre of terrorism confers a legitimacy on Israeli military operations that short-circuits diplomatic efforts. Said noted this effect decades earlier, when he avowed that terrorism ‘can be used retrospectively ... or prospectively ... to justify everything “we” do and to delegitimize as well as dehumanize everything “they” do’.¹⁷⁵ He continues, ‘the very indiscriminateness of terrorism, actual and described, its tautological and circular character, is *anti-narrative*’.¹⁷⁶ It is on account of this logic that Said quotes an Israeli paratrooper’s statement that ‘every Palestinian is automatically a suspected terrorist and by our definition of the term it is actually true’.¹⁷⁷ In the following chapters, the same rationales are clearly in evidence.

Since the Oslo Accords, the idea of a ‘peace process’ has preoccupied Western discourse on Israel–Palestinian relations, allegedly seeking to transform the adversarial dynamic into one that can sustain a future (for it is always deferred) resolution. The process has substantively deflected attention from alternative roles for the international community. Yet despite the growing trend towards intervention in similar situations, and despite the circulation of such proposals, in particular during ODS, this has never occurred.¹⁷⁸ The effects of the process in stymieing other forms of international involvement must also be seen in the context of the very particular structure of the UN, in which the veto power of the US has ensured and will continue to ensure the abandonment of any proposal Israel considers unfavourable.¹⁷⁹ Drawing on Hayden White’s argument that ‘narrative in general ... has to do with the topics of law, legality, legitimacy, or, more generally, *authority*,’ Said observes that UN resolutions which certify Palestinians as a people, their struggle legitimate, or their ‘inalienable’ right to an independent state, lack the authority which White refers to.¹⁸⁰ Rather, he observes that no UN resolution ‘has drawn any acknowledgement from Israel or the United States, which have restricted

¹⁷¹ Netanyahu, *Among the Nations*; Netanyahu, *Fighting Terrorism*; Benjamin Netanyahu, ed., *International Terrorism, Challenge and Response: Proceedings of the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism* (Jerusalem: Jonathan Institute, 1981); Benjamin Netanyahu, ed., *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1986).

¹⁷² Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism: And Requiem for the Twin Towers* (London: Verso, 2002), 42.

¹⁷³ James Bennet, “Spilled Blood is Seen as Bond that Draws 2 Nations Closer,” *New York Times*, September 12, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/12/us/day-terror-israelis-spilled-blood-seen-bond-that-draws-2-nations-closer.html>.

¹⁷⁴ Abunimah, “Gaza, Goldstone,” 391-392.

¹⁷⁵ Said, “Permission to Narrate,” 36.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, (my emphasis).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁷⁸ This has been the international position since the 1990s: Weizman, *Possible Evils*, 50-53.

¹⁷⁹ Maher Mughrabi, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Israel/Palestine” (panel discussion, The Wheeler Centre, Melbourne, June 10, 2014).

¹⁸⁰ Hayden White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” *Critical Inquiry* 7, no.1 (1980): 17, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343174> (his emphasis).

themselves to such non-narrative and indefinite formulae as – in the language of the lackadaisical US pronouncements – “resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects”¹⁸¹.

The position of the US, in turn, has had much to do with the powerful (and verifiable) influence of the Jewish lobby on American political life.¹⁸² As Falk attests, while the peace process has made few, if any, advances, much has happened ‘on the ground’ since it began.¹⁸³ The building of (illegal) settlements alone in the last two decades has diminished the likelihood of realising the vision at Oslo or subsequent iterations of that plan. Moreover, Israel has inflicted two devastating military operations on the OPTs in 2002 and 2008–9 in addition to countless other incidents and incursions on Palestinian life, autonomy and dignity. Yet these too have been governed by an oblique narrative, centred on Palestinian terror, Israeli security and feeble renewals of the US-brokered peace process. Indeed, Said’s lament that ‘there is every chance that ignorance about Israel’s attitude towards Palestinians will keep pace with sustained encomia on Israel’s pioneering spirit, democracy and humanism’ describes a position scarcely altered in two decades.¹⁸⁴ The institutional approach has in that time, however, become divorced from public sentiment. Finkelstein notes, for example, that OCL marked the dawning of a very clear disjuncture between continued governmental support for Israel and public opinions deploring the action.¹⁸⁵ These fissures are evident in the coverage of operations central to this thesis. Western media, indebted to the established (Israeli derived) pattern, appear often to find, as the following chapters illustrate, the substantive facts of the operations inconvenient, irreconcilable even, to that narrative.

The sum of this leads to the conclusion of this chapter, that Israel is premised on insecurity; and this premise provides the State with its life force. Israeli national identity requires nothing short of the permanent hostility of its other. The frames through which this hostility is construed are the dominant source for justifying a militaristic society that has engaged in destructive operations against a population who, for all practical purposes, are captive to Israeli control. Not least because of the historic relevance of the Zionist project, and consequent reliance by Western media on Israeli national narrative, the West has been primarily sympathetic to Israel’s view of the conflict. This is evinced in both its use of Israeli tropes to narrate crisis and its framing of Palestinians, even as they succumb to the might of IDF operations. Thus, that which Israeli narrative cannot accommodate (Palestinian politics, Palestinian grievance) is in the media, as in Israel, most often absent. In its current formation, Israeli insecurity serves State interest at the expense of any work towards an institutional shift in perspective. As one former Israeli Knesset Member (MK), Yossi Sarid, remarked: ‘Israel has gone to war seven, eight times. It never despaired of going to war. If after seven attempts at war you don’t despair, and after the first attempt at peace you do, that seems strange, no?’¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Said, “Permission to Narrate,” 34.

¹⁸² Alam, *Israeli Exceptionalism*; John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2007).

¹⁸³ Falk, “Human Rights.”

¹⁸⁴ Said, “Permission to Narrate,” 37.

¹⁸⁵ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 13, 103.

¹⁸⁶ Dan Perry and Josef Federman, “Israel Election 2013: Peace with Palestinians Not at Top of the Agenda,” *Huffington Post*, January 21, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/21/israel-election-2013_n_2521752.html.

Inset I
From *Al-Nakba* to the Second Intifada

Mourid Barghouti asserts in his beautiful memoir, *I Saw Ramallah*, a response to the ultimately dashed hopes inspired by the Oslo Process of the 1990s, that the meaning of a story is determined in where one begins a narrative.¹ Where do you start the story; what story is being told? The practice of naming determines narrative too: what is the tragedy of the Palestinian *Nakba* if not the moment at which Jewish independence in statehood is expressed? This section makes a brief survey of the way in which certain key events prior to the first case study of this thesis, ODS in 2002, were portrayed in the West. For practical reasons, I start at 1948, the moment at which an Israeli identity, nominally at least, comes into being. But I start at 1948 also as a matter of insistence on recognition of that date, for reasons I now outline.

The antecedents of Palestinian dispossession are the antecedents by which conditions for the creation of Israel were made possible. Yet the direct correlation of 1948, between Israeli Independence and *Al-Nakba*, is serially denied the Palestinians as the moment at which their contemporary claims originate, such that even amongst sympathetic audiences, 1967 is often cited as the operative date.² As with Israel's own history-making, in which the era between independence and 1967 has been widely enshrined as halcyon, this is not a mis-citation but a mis-recognition, albeit one with malicious consequences, since it is upon this error that the notion of two-states is founded: a nostalgia for something that never was.³ A conversation between Benny Morris and Joseph Massad raises a series of contestable dates, attempting to identify when Zionist expulsion of the Palestinians originated.⁴ However, Jewish-Israeli investment in the question of a Jewish origin in Palestine several millennia ago is, I believe, utterly irrelevant outside of the question of how such spurious scholarship functions in attempting to cure the origins and foundational guilt of Jewish-Israeli settler-colonialism. There is also no doubt that, at a certain period prior to the creation of Israel, arguably (but again somewhat irrelevantly) at the time of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, Western consent to the process was secured. But none of this is particularly salient to the question of Israel–Palestinian relations in the present day, in which, as Massad notes, it is 'readily acceptable' [to everyone, including Palestinians] that 'a large section of the Israeli population, have been born there, they have no other place to go, this is also their country'.⁵ If Massad is correct in describing what is 'readily acceptable', this largely removes the basis for purported concerns of Jewish-Israelis about either conceding the so-called securable borders of 1967 or relinquishing the 'supremacist' rights of Jewish-Israeli citizens in present day Israel. Rather, we are left with the essential question of Israel's legitimacy and the manifest anxiety that question creates for Jewish-Israeli society. However, through the endorsement, active assistance and consent of the West, the State has elided these questions, and this too has been enabled throughout Israel's history in favourable portrayal of its actions during conflict with the Palestinians to a Western audience. It is for no other reason that 1948 is treated as it is, subjected to systemic erasure and an

¹ Mourid Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, trans. Ahdaf Soueif (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 177-179.

² For example, in criticising Operation Protective Edge, Irish senator David Norris accepts that Israel was previously a model society: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7sSQFpyJu8>.

³ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 124.

⁴ Massad, "History on the Line," 162-164.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

institutional conspiracy to silence with regard to the fate of the Palestinians as the shameful collateral of Israeli independence.

In 1948, the birth of the State is portrayed internationally as a moment of Jewish triumph or, as Mendelson and Smith assert, ‘much of the coverage of the birth of Israel, especially in Western media outlets, argued for a particular way of seeing the event, one that echoed and reconfirmed a Zionist way of seeing the new Jewish homeland’.⁶ They investigate the work of Magnum photographer Robert Capa, noting that his published work on Israel is thematically consonant with ways the event was covered more widely. Thus, Capa’s work, representative of ‘a larger phenomenon of media coverage’, is illustrative of the role of media in helping ‘to legitimize the creation of Israel for Western audiences’.⁷ They argue that Capa’s ‘portrayal of the birth of Israel “teaches” Western journalists and the public how to see the ongoing conflict in Israel by creating a visual vocabulary of the conflict’.⁸ Notably absent from that coverage are the Palestinians and, as Mendelson and Smith note, ‘the few Arabs who do appear in Capa’s images are highly marginalized in a visual sense.’⁹ In short, Capa’s work creates ‘visual evidence that supported and reinforced the nation’s founding myths’.¹⁰ In contrast, George Rodger, another founding member of Magnum Photos, recounts the difficulty he had in getting a story on the Palestinians published:

*the whole world knew that the Israelis had annexed Palestine in 1947 and driven out the Arabs. Nevertheless, Capa, Chim and other photographers insisted on photographing the Promised Land and distributing the pictures all round the world ... I was on the other side, insofar as I was an Arabist working with the Palestinian refugees. I knew that their houses had been destroyed. My version of these facts were never published because the editors of American magazines were nearly all Jewish.*¹¹

However, if ‘*the whole world knew* that the Israelis had annexed Palestine in 1947 and driven out the Arabs’ (my emphasis), how is it that the *Nakba* was made to vanish so completely for decades? On this point, an account of the UN’s attempt to restrain the terrorist tactics by which Israel was established, in service of which they dispatched a mediator, Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte, is instructive. Bernadotte, appalled by the response of the Israeli Government to his mission, stated that they had:

*shown nothing but hardness and obduracy towards these refugees. If instead of that it had shown a magnanimous spirit, if it had declared that the Jewish people, which itself had suffered so much, understood the feelings of the refugees and did not wish to treat them in the same way as it itself had been treated, its prestige in the world at large would have been immeasurably increased.*¹²

Consistent with this, the Jewish government responded that it ‘could under present conditions in no circumstances permit the return of the Arabs who had fled or been driven from their homes during the war ...’¹³

As Moshe Menuhin records, Bernadotte’s recommendations to the Security Council and his proposed Peace Plan ‘made him a marked man in Israel’ and, some four months later, he was assassinated by ‘militant,

⁶ Mendelson and Smith, “Visions of a New State,” 187.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 200-201.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹¹ Quoted in Russell Miller, *Magnum: Fifty Years At The Front Line of History* (New York: Grove Press, 1999), 166.

¹² Moshe Menuhin, *The Decadence of Judaism in Our Time*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1969), 510.

¹³ *Ibid.*

inhumane, insane, political nationalists’; while not two years after the assassination, one of the perpetrators was made a member of the Knesset.¹⁴ The trouble highlighted by these cases is not so much the absence of facts but, as described in chapter 1, the capacity of those facts to circulate and compete with a concerted investment in their suppression. Officially, Israel was admitted as a nation amongst nations to the UN and, from those earliest days, the impunity with which it was to treat that body or any other not wholly supportive of Zionist aims was made abundantly clear.¹⁵

It is this complete absence of the Palestinian that characterises depictions of the Six Day War in 1967. A particularly iconic image of what Israel has described as the liberation, recapturing or reunification of Jerusalem, portrays three paratroopers at the Western Wall.¹⁶ The photograph is considered a ‘defining image of the conflict’ and one of the ‘best known photographs in Israel’s history’, while the photographer, David Rubinger, was later anointed by former Israeli President Shimon Peres, ‘the photographer of the nation in the making’.¹⁷ The central figure in the image has removed his helmet, revealing his blond hair (truly a model Sabra!) and looks upwards in a pose reminiscent of religious artworks of the last millennia – a visual embodiment of what Hage describes as Israeli’s moment of omnipotence realised in the Six Day War.¹⁸ As in the photography of Capa, there is no trace of the enemy; rather, they must be inferred in the representation of IDF success. This photographic representation of 1967 is echoed in international headlines of the event. *The New York Times*, for example, ran a story entitled ‘Israel Rules Out Return to Frontiers’, in which Israel’s Minister for Information, Yisrael Gailille [*sic*] states that ‘Israel could not live with arrangements that were supposed to have served as a preliminary to peace, but that have been stretched out for two decades’.¹⁹ In another article from the same edition, a section entitled ‘war’s aftermath’ mentions that the war has made obsolete former armistice pacts and will herald border changes, a somewhat astonishing heading, when aftermath is more often associated with questions of human experience.²⁰ Yet nowhere in evidence are the Palestinians, who, as a direct consequence of the Six Day War, entered a new and dreadful phase of their occupation.

International response to the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the effect of which on Israelis is outlined in chapter 1, was also generally considered to be sympathetic to Israel – as documented, for example, by the *Australia/Israeli Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC)* on the 40th anniversary of the war.²¹ Surveying four major Australian news outlets, it writes that ‘with few exceptions, [Australian] coverage could not be distinguished from *The New York Times* and other leading media outlets of the day’.²² Emphasis was placed on the Israeli experience and

¹⁴ Menuhin, *Decadence of Judaism*, 514-516.

¹⁵ “The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel,” May 14, 1948, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20establishment%20of%20state%20of%20israel.aspx>.

¹⁶ The photograph is available: “Three Faces: The Story of Jerusalem’s Reunification,” *Israel Defense Forces*, May 20, 2012, <https://www.idfblog.com/blog/2012/05/20/three-faces-the-story-of-jerusalem-reunification/>.

¹⁷ For the status of the photograph, see: Conal Urquhart, “Six Days in June,” *Observer*, May 6, 2007, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/may/06/israelandthepalestinians.features1>; for the comments of Shimon Peres, see: Abraham Rabinovich, “David Rubinger’s Third Eye,” *Jerusalem Post*, November 29, 2007, <http://www.jpost.com/Arts-and-Culture/Books/David-Rubingers-third-eye>.

¹⁸ Hage, “Narcissistic Victimhood,” 121.

¹⁹ United Press International, “Israel Rules Out Return to Frontiers,” *New York Times*, June 11, 1967.

²⁰ Sydney Gruson, “Cease-Fire in Syria Accepted,” *New York Times*, June 11, 1967.

²¹ AIJAC, “The Yom Kippur War: Australian Controversies of 1973,” *AIJAC*, October 29, 2013, <http://www.aijac.org.au/news/article/the-yom-kippur-war-australian-controversies-of-1>.

²² *Ibid.*

according to *AIJAC*, coverage ‘included a substantial amount of colour about how Israeli society coped with the war, and interviews with soldiers in the field’.²³ There was also considerable understanding of Israel’s reluctance to withdraw from the Golan Heights and the Sinai without a peace agreement.²⁴ *AIJAC* concludes that the Yom Kippur War ‘was a watershed event for Australian newspaper coverage on Israel’; however, it criticises what it sees as the ‘lack of depth’ in sympathy towards Israel, ‘largely because Israel had become a victim of its own success’.²⁵ It argues that this ‘overconfidence that Israel would easily defeat invading Arabs’ led journalists to question the necessity of the enhanced borders secured in the Six Day War, believing that ‘Israel’s insistence on defensible borders was mostly just an excuse to avoid making peace based on total withdrawal’.²⁶ On the subject of borders, *AIJAC* criticises *The Age* for commenting that ‘Israel could no longer fear an existential threat given their budding alliance with the United States’, editorialising that such an attitude was ‘obviously not comprehending just how narrow Israel was before 1967’.²⁷ It concludes that Israel’s military successes in 1967 and 1973 led to an international misrecognition of Israel’s strength and are in large part responsible for the scurrilous notion that two-states (a paradigm later accepted by most Israelis) would ever be capable of ending the conflict with the Palestinians permanently.²⁸

In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon and was found by the MacBride Commission to be directly responsible for the massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut.²⁹ While Said recounts that ‘no television watcher could have had any doubts that the Israelis were savage and ruthless during the siege of Beirut’, he notes that this event did little to disrupt the international narrative about Israel.³⁰ Said argues that the Palestinian narrative had ‘made a strong impression regionally and internationally during the years 1970 to 1982’ and that there was ‘a genuine international consensus underwriting the Palestinian communal narrative and restoring it as a historical story to its place of origin and future resolution in Palestine’.³¹ However, coverage of the Sabra and Shatila massacre was attacked ‘for a pro-PLO slant’, underlying which was ‘the allegation that the PLO has intimidated or seduced journalists into partisan, anti-Semitic and anti-Western attacks on Israel’.³² Said concludes that ‘when the whole force of the Palestinian national movement proposed a political resolution in Palestine based on the narrative shape of alienation, return and partition, in order to make room for two people ... neither Israel nor the West accepted it’.³³ What this exposed, according to Said, was ‘the degree to which the structure of the evening news depends on ideas of reality determined by the political and social discourse already empowered outside the newsroom’.³⁴ In short, despite the fact that coverage of the Palestinians was unprecedented in response to the massacre, they had not yet ‘managed to find an enabling vocabulary within what is considered ‘reasonable’ political discourse’.³⁵

²³ *AIJAC*, “The Yom Kippur War: Australian Controversies of 1973,” October 29, 2013.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Said, “Permission to Narrate,” 27.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

³² *Ibid.*, 34-35.

³³ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 35; quoting Richard Poirier.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 29-30 and quoting Poirier, 35.

The outbreak of the First Intifada in December 1987 was seemingly a turning point in international recognition of the Palestinian issue. Characterised by the image of young Palestinians confronting Israel's military might with stones, it attracted considerable international attention, generating 'new international sympathy for the Palestinian cause'.³⁶ UN Security Council Resolution 605 condemned Israel for the large number of Palestinian deaths that occurred within the first weeks of the intifada as violations of the *Fourth Geneva Convention* (to the same effect as all its resolutions critical of Israel since 1948) and, while the White House condemned Israel's measures, Congress passed provisions to expand US aid to Israel.³⁷ From an Israeli perspective, one sees the emergence of an attitude that is clearly in evidence in the cases studies of this thesis, in which Israel's concern lay in the negative public image which its response to the First Intifada evoked. This is captured, for example, in the comments of then Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin:

*We will fight with all our power against any element that tries by violence to upset our full control over Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip ... I know the descriptions of what is going on in the territories, the way it is interpreted in the media, is not helping the image of Israel in the world ... But I am convinced that above and beyond the temporary problem of an image, the supreme responsibility of our government is to fight the violence in the territories and to use all the means at our disposal to do that ... We will do that, and we will succeed.*³⁸

It is argued that the First Intifada demonstrated to the world the legitimate national sentiments of the Palestinian people.³⁹ However, the 'peace process' that was to follow, sequestering Palestinian aspirations into the problematic terms which Israel stipulated for two-states, eroded much of this recognition, solidarity, social organisation and momentum over the following twenty years.

A consequence of the First Intifada was the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, followed by the Oslo Process and the 1993 signing of the Oslo I Accords on the lawns of the White House. The move towards Oslo was one through which Israel sought to disrupt the strategies of the First Intifada and find a way out of the 'image destroying predicament'.⁴⁰ Its terms neutralised the formerly radical PLO, transforming it into the PA, with drastically altered ambitions and the responsibility of policing its own people in exchange 'for a place at the negotiating table'.⁴¹ The era of the 'peace process' (fatuous though it was, as will be addressed in chapter 6) was welcomed internationally and rewarded by the Nobel Committee in 1994, when it jointly awarded the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize to Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin 'for their efforts to create peace in the Middle East'.⁴² Yet what is really striking in the international coverage of this process, or of 1948 and other moments, is that it is framed around Jewish-Israeli needs, whether it be those of homeland or for security. Palestinian rights, aspirations and entitlements are, in contrast, consistently made to vanish in plain sight. This is precisely what is at play in the documents of the 1995 interim Oslo agreement, which devote an

³⁶ "The First Intifada," *Ma'an News*, August 16, 2008.

³⁷ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 605, December 22, 1987, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/524/77/IMG/NR052477.pdf?OpenElement>; Donald Neff, "The First Intifada Erupts, Forcing Israel to Recognise Palestinians," *American Muslims for Palestine*, December 1997, <http://www.ampalestine.org/index.php/history/the-intifadas/364-the-first-intifada-erupts-forcing-israel-to-recognize-palestinian>.

³⁸ John Kifner "Israel Bears Down to Stop Protests in Occupied Areas," *New York Times*, December 24, 1987.

³⁹ "The First Intifada," August 16, 2008.

⁴⁰ Neff, "The First Intifada Erupts, Forcing Israel to Recognise Palestinians," December 1997.

⁴¹ Sonja Karkar, "The First Intifada 20 Years Later," *Electronic Intifada*, December 10, 2007, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/first-intifada-20-years-later/7251>.

⁴² "The Nobel Peace Prize 1994," *nobelprize.org*, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1994/.

extravagant amount of space (64 pages) to the question of Israeli security rather than issues (such as Human Rights or the Rule of Law) that must surely pertain to ensuring the success, or ‘viability’ as it is so often termed, of a nascent Palestinian state.⁴³ Similar logic is at play in the idea of Barak’s best offer to the Palestinian people (a falsehood which will be addressed in chapter 3), which as the story goes, Arafat so wantonly rejected in the decay of the US–Clinton brokered Camp David (2000) and Taba (2001) negotiations, preferring instead the violent strategy of the Second Intifada. This remains the logic of mainstream American Zionists such as Peter Beinart, who supports the idea of a Palestinian state precisely because he believes that giving the Palestinians sovereignty in the West Bank is the best guarantee of Israeli security.⁴⁴ Yet notwithstanding the uninterrupted weighting of all this in favour of Jewish interest, Rabin was for his trouble – and as the only Israeli Prime Minister to date who has arguably been willing to negotiate terms meaningful to the Palestinians – assassinated the following year. While the State’s judiciary insisted on the insane-criminality of the assassin, Zertal, for example, argues that there is every reason to believe that the actions of Yigal Amir were strongly resonant with a wider political view in Israel at the time.⁴⁵ Indeed, Amir himself attempted to argue for the political nature of his act at trial.⁴⁶

However, in 2002, during Operation Defensive Shield, which Israel claimed to have mobilised in response to the violence of the Second Intifada and a particularly intolerable month of Israeli fatalities at the hands of Palestinian Suicide Bombing, something really remarkable occurred. In the very early days of the operation, several members of the Nobel Prize committee, noting that it is not possible within the statutes of the Nobel Foundation for the committee to rescind an award, state their regret that Peres could not be stripped of his prize, because ‘as a member of the Israeli cabinet, he had not acted to prevent Israel’s re-occupation of Palestinian territory’.⁴⁷ This shift was undoubtedly felt by Israelis, as captured in the remarks of one official regarding his perception of how ODS was being reported: ‘Arafat is not the story. The story is what is happening to us’.⁴⁸ It was perhaps the first time in the history of the Israel–Palestinian conflict that in 2002, the travails and suffering of the Palestinian people registered in international media coverage. Moreover, this change was a direct effect and consequence of Israeli State practice, political and military, which is addressed in the next two chapters.

⁴³ Allegra Pacheco, “Life Under Siege,” *New York Times*, April 10, 2002.

⁴⁴ Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2012), 63.

⁴⁵ Zertal, *Israel’s Holocaust*, 202-203.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 203-206.

⁴⁷ “Nobel’s Regrets on Peres Award,” *BBC World*, April 5, 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1912953.stm.

⁴⁸ James Bennet, “Arafat Can Leave, But Only to Exile, Sharon Tells Him,” *New York Times*, April 3, 2002.

Chapter 2
Reporting Operation Defensive Shield:
narrative assumptions and narrative power

Operation Defensive Shield was the most notable to have occurred during the Second Intifada, which commenced in September 2000. The direct catalyst for the intifada, amidst the decay of Oslo, Camp David and Taba, is cited as the visit of Ariel Sharon (a ‘right-of-ownership walk about’) at an area described by Muslims (and others) as Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock and which Jews (and others) refer to as the Temple Mount.¹ The Second Intifada is now recalled as the era in which Palestinian resistance strategy took the dread form of suicide bombing. The Palestinian suicide bomber, whose spectre threatened where their presence did not, became the iconographic legacy of Palestinian struggle in poster and video forms and has long since lingered as the defining image of (Palestinian) terror.² In contrast to this perception, Finkelstein notes that ‘it is now largely forgotten that the first Hamas suicide bombing of the second intifada did not occur until five months into Israel’s relentless bloodletting’.³ Nonetheless, it was against this (so-called) threat that the campaign of ODS was waged, an offensive which captured wide-scale support amongst Jewish-Israeli citizens for the stated objective of routing out the Palestinian infrastructure of terror.⁴

The following two chapters are concerned with the portrayal of ODS in international media, specifically news media outlets the *Guardian*, *The New York Times* and *The Australian*. The current chapter details the thematic portrayal of ODS in news reports. In particular, the reports – in explaining what the operation is about – define their grasp of Israel–Palestinian relations and, in doing so, engage in the process of legitimation. Linguist Mosheer Amer explains that ‘discourses of and about war and conflict are profoundly interconnected with *legitimation*’, arguing that news media ‘plays an influential role in the formation of public opinion and the transmission and promotion of particular beliefs and ideologies about particular events and social groups’.⁵ It is a process by which that which is legitimised ‘depends to a large measure on who speaks and in what capacity’.⁶ While chapter 1 outlines the discursive strategies by which Israel has maintained the authoritative voice, as noted in the introduction, ODS marked the start of an era in which criminality has been imputed to Israel in the wider public discourse. The treatment of these accusations in the media illustrates the historic power dynamic which Amer refers to in his discussion on legitimacy. However, it also marks the start of a public struggle of legitimacy over the Israel–Palestinian conflict. By 2009, Abunimah noted that ‘some Israelis perceive[d] this mounting pressure as a crisis of legitimacy so severe it constitute[d] an ‘existential threat’’.⁷ In the instance of ODS, the crisis is yet nascent; however, at work in the following sources is what journalist Gideon Levy has

¹ M. Mosheer Amer, “‘Telling-it-like-it-is’: The Delegitimation of the Second Palestinian Intifada in Thomas Friedman’s Discourse,” *Discourse Society* 20, no. 1 (2009): 6, doi: 10.1177/09757926508097093.

² Joshua Simon, “Thoughts on the Aesthetics of Terror in General and Suicide Bombers’ Videos in Particular,” in *The Aesthetics of Terror*, ed. Manon Slome and Joshua Simon (Milan: Charta, 2009). Recently, a number of films have documented the era of the suicide bomber. With one exception (*Paradise Now*, directed by Hany Abu-Assad (2005; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2006), DVD) these have not been Palestinian productions. For example, the Canadian *Inch’allah*, directed by Annais Barbeau-Lavalette (2012; London: Entertainment One, 2013), DVD; and the Lebanese *The Attack*, directed by Ziad Doueiri (2012; New York: Cohen Media Group, 2013), DVD.

³ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 20.

⁴ This is generally supported by Dor, *Suppression of Guilt*.

⁵ Amer, “‘Telling-it-like-it-is’,” 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-8.

⁷ Abunimah, “Gaza, Goldstone,” 391.

called the ‘devil’s refuge’, that is, the construction of justificatory arguments intended to naturalise ethically unjustifiable situations.⁸

Treatment of sources: ‘mainstream mass media’

The sources used in the following study are categorised as ‘mainstream mass media’. Political scientist Ruud Koopmans, argues that the mass media (as an expression of the public sphere) are central to the analysis of political contention insofar as ‘the media spotlight validates the fact that the movement is an important player’.⁹ These sources operate vertically in their national publics: controlling the flow of information, and subject to the commercial pressure of the industry. In shorter time periods, such as the operations in focus, Koopmans states that politics is temporarily afforded greater space despite the greater financial reward of entertainment or human-interest pieces. He notes that during such peaks of political information, the competition of representation lies between media itself (the gatekeepers of public discourse) and speakers and stakeholders with communicative messages.¹⁰ In this dynamic, speakers are limited according to the dictates of the gatekeepers, who determine the visibility to be allocated to any given message. In addition to the criterion of visibility, Koopmans adds two others for the traction of a topic: resonance (how provocative is the message to actors in the public sphere) and legitimacy (noting that controversy is more powerful than either total legitimacy or illegitimacy).¹¹

Concurrent with the era of ODS, 9/11 and Bush’s ‘war on terror’ was the unprecedented proliferation of alternative media sources and a great expansion in media access. This development offers a context to the mainstream mass media documented insofar as its vertical communications (of power) were disrupted by the emergence of horizontal sources: devoted to particular issues (Israel–Palestinian amongst them) and perspectives anathema to the dominant, institutionally-derived, Western- mainstream. During the era in focus and subsequently, technological capacities to create and alternative media sources themselves, have multiplied exponentially. Although these alternative sources are not documented in the current study, their impact on mass media requires mention, not least because the rise in such material has radically transformed the relationship of one-way mass media communication.¹² By the time of OCL, alternative media had an even greater range of platforms. Since traditional media no longer command a captive audience, they are obliged to recognise (though it may be in the form of an attack or dismissal) counter-narratives through which the operations particularly or the conflict more widely, are explained. In particular, the narrative of Palestinian politics, aspirations and suffering has become prominent in alternative sources, bringing to life the very existence of the Palestinians in international media space. This has necessitated Israel’s acknowledgement of their existence in this international space and, for the first time has demanded of Israel justification of its actions. As indicated by the inset prior to this chapter, this was unprecedented at the time of ODS.

⁸ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 30.

⁹ William A. Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld, “Movements and Media as Interacting Systems,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 528 (1993): 116, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1047795>.

¹⁰ Ruud Koopmans, “Movements and Media: Selection Processes and Evolutionary Dynamics in the Public Sphere,” *Theory and Society* 33 (2004): 372.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 374-375.

¹² Thomas Olesen, “Transnational Publics: New Spaces of Social Movement Activism and the Problem of Global Long-Sightedness,” *Current Sociology* 53 (2005): 430, doi: 10.1177/0011392105051334.

The selection of sources was made according to each paper's national stature, and the relation the nation has had or maintained with Israel. As outlined in chapter 1, the historic and contemporary importance of the American public and political sphere to Israel made a US source indispensable. *The New York Times* was chosen because it is perceived as a preeminent paper in America, indeed the nation's 'newspaper of record'.¹³ A British source was selected in recognition of both the particular role of Britain in the creation of the Israel–Palestinian conflict and the critical shift which Britain (and much of Europe) has displayed with respect to Israel during the decade studied. For example, British series *The Promise* (2011) concerning the British role in Israel's independence, illustrates a level of criticality about Britain's historic involvement in the conflict.¹⁴ Finally, an Australian paper was chosen, due to both Australia's relationship with America during these years and its publicly avowed affinity with Israel. In particular, three factors in Australia's politics suggested the logic of this. Firstly, during the Presidency of George W. Bush, under the Prime Ministership of John Howard, Australia often pursued American policy and at times more zealously than America itself.¹⁵ Secondly, Australian politics started to deviate considerably from the international attitude towards Israel emerging over the same period. Finally, all Australian Governments in the 21st century since John Howard have affirmed an identification with Israel in domestically and internationally contestable circumstances: a fact which highlights the apparent identification Australia finds between the countries' shared settler-colonial premises.¹⁶ With respect to the particular sources – the *Guardian*, *The New York Times* and *The Australian* – these were selected for their position as 'prestige' papers, defined as papers which pay greater attention to national and foreign events and issues. These papers are also categorised according to their prominence in national (and possibly international) publics, the extent of their national distribution and their appeal to a comparatively 'well educated' readership.¹⁷

Reporting: subjectivities of composition

The following work draws on the textual and meta-textual analysis performed by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in considering the strategies at work in media reporting. In mainstream media, the ethic of objectivity has continued to outweigh an alternate ethic of transparency, such that a traditional view of news reporting entails the idea that reporters are primarily conduits rather than opinionated subjects.¹⁸ CDA illustrates the problem in assumptions of objectivity in which perspectivism appears normative. A key strategy is the use of speech (direct or indirect) to confer legitimacy on both the report and the perspective of a speaker whom the report structurally favours. CDA scholars Francis Henry and Carol Tator outline the impacts that 'speech acts' might have on the shape of a report, including that quotes from important news actors may be used as evidence and to lend credibility to a report and, secondly that quotes provide a means of inserting subjective opinions

¹³ Colleen Cotter, "Discourse and Media," in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi E. Hamilton (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 416.

¹⁴ Directed by Peter Kosminsky (2011; Belfast: Channel 4 DVD, 2011), DVD.

¹⁵ For example, the proliferation of terrorism legislation in Australia since 9/11: George Williams, "A Decade of Australian Anti-Terror Laws," *Melbourne University Law Review* 35 (2011): 1137-1138.

¹⁶ For comparative frameworks see chap. 2 in Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy*, 25-28 and 32-47 specifically for Australia; Lorenzo Veracini, "The Evolution of Historical Redescription in Israel and Australia: The Question of the 'Founding Violence'," *Australian Historical Studies* 34, no. 122 (2003).

¹⁷ Peter Suedfeld, "Bilateral Relations Between Countries and the Complexity of Newspaper Editorials," *Political Psychology* 13, no. 4 (1992).

¹⁸ Mendelson and Smith, "Visions of a New State," 187-188.

without breaching the distinction between fact and fiction.¹⁹ Through implicit selection, journalists endorse the reality of certain kinds of speakers over others in their transmission and repetition, allowing those speakers to ‘enact, reproduce and rearticulate their legitimacy in relation to the (shared) assumptions, values or expectations of their audiences and to the discursive event in question’.²⁰ CDA scholar Teun Van Dijk provides a framework for analysing the way in which a source acquires an overall perspective on an event or issue. Paying particular attention to the empowerment of voice and the embedding of quotes, he asks: who is speaking, how often do they speak, how prominently are they featured and what topics are they permitted to voice an opinion about?²¹ The following aims to document how this functions in depictions of the Israel–Palestinian conflict. In particular, how does this correlate with Israel’s national narratives: what weight are they given in the West?

Operation Defensive Shield: context

To situate the media coverage analysed in this chapter, I will briefly describe an overall picture of ODS, launched in the West Bank of the OPTs in April 2002. In Jenin refugee camp, the destruction of infrastructure was so severe that later plans for reconstruction included a streetscape sufficiently wide to accommodate tanks for future incursions.²² I want to pose this image of the decimated camp, the loss of more than 50 Palestinian lives, the massive displacements that numbered in their thousands due to destruction and summary detentions, and the surreal considerations which, pursuant to ODS, were practical ones; against the backdrop of an Israeli April, which in 2002 was framed by a suicide bombing that tore through a Passover Seder in Netanya, killing 30 and injuring more than a hundred, and which is the month of Holocaust commemoration and Independence celebration, these last within a week of each other. In 2002, these national days (which are commemorated according to the Hebrew calendar and fall alternately between April and May) also coincided with the highest single incident causing Israeli fatalities during ODS, in the Jenin camp.

According to Israeli accounts, ODS was launched in response to a rise in Israeli casualties and an increase in Palestinian-authored suicide bombings in the preceding month of March 2002. In particular, it was a direct answer to the Hamas-claimed suicide bombing in Netanya on 27 March.²³ Two days later, ODS was mobilised, and it was not officially concluded until 7 May. During this period, the IDF gained control of most, but not all, major Palestinian cities in the West Bank. The operation had three focal points – the detention of Yasser Arafat in his Ramallah compound, the siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and combat in the refugee camp of Jenin. Residents of the West Bank were subjected to mass detentions and harsh curfews.²⁴ Events in both Ramallah and Bethlehem, notwithstanding the vast disparities in power, had a character of standoff to them. Israel could surely not assassinate Yasser Arafat during the operation in full sight of the watching world. Neither could it extract nor obliterate the alleged gunmen from the Church of the Nativity, due to the inherent significance of the site itself and the presence of clergy and civilians who had become captive in the Church (not

¹⁹ Frances Henry and Carol Tator, *Discourses of Domination: Racial Bias in the Canadian English-Language Press* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 76.

²⁰ Amer, “‘Telling-it-like-it-is’,” 22, 26.

²¹ van Dijk, *Racism in the Press* (London: Routledge, 1991), 151.

²² Gideon Levy, “This Week in Rebuilt Jenin,” *Ha’aretz*, June 10, 2004, <http://www.haaretz.com/this-week-in-rebuilt-jenin-1.124883>.

²³ See “Passover Suicide Bombing at Park Hotel in Netanya, March 27, 2002,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)*, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFA-Archive/2002/Pages/Passover%20suicide%20bombing%20at%20Park%20Hotel%20in%20Netanya.aspx>.

²⁴ HRW, “Jenin: IDF Military Operations,”; and Baroud, *Searching Jenin*.

as hostages, however, and most declined to leave until the conclusion of the siege).²⁵ In Jenin refugee camp, however, a maze of narrow streets and high population density, there was no such scrutiny of IDF conduct.

Israel kept control of the media during the operation by prohibiting media access to combat zones. This fed speculation over events in Jenin refugee camp which formed the central site for allegations of criminality levelled at Israel. The fledgling nature of grassroots media and comparatively limited internet access available in 2002 meant that the days of combat in Jenin camp were blacked out. During this period, information about Jenin was chiefly controlled by IDF spokespersons, augmented by Palestinian accounts from the outside of the camp, mostly by Palestinian residents of Jenin who had been detained and later released elsewhere in the West Bank. Their accounts fuelled the sense that Israeli closure of the camp was truly sinister.²⁶ For example, a number of reports suggested that the figures of the Palestinian dead were much higher than they were ultimately confirmed to be, and that the IDF was covertly burying the Palestinian dead in mass graves – allegations which were not ultimately verifiable.²⁷ Both the closure of the camp and the association between IDF conduct in Jenin and war crimes suggested that, in the present research, narrowing the focus to the Jenin camp specifically would elucidate the main issues in focus. The closure of Jenin exemplifies the high stakes in control of representation. The information available about Jenin – despite the serious inference of criminality imputed to IDF conduct – was thus almost exclusively curated by Israel.²⁸

Themes for analysis

The materials analysed were published between 1 April 2002 when ODS commenced, and 31 May 2002, the month in which it was demobilised and the end of which marked also the end of agitation for any kind of UN inquiry into events at Jenin. An initial search for documents using the term ‘Operation Defensive Shield’ proved inadequate: it yielded fewer hits than expected in all newspapers (the infrequent classification of the event by the Israeli code name itself an index of the significance of terminology and instructive in the attitude towards, and characterisation of, Israeli action). Since my particular focus is on the way in which Jenin became central to international interest, I changed my search term to ‘Jenin’, which located an extensive number of reports during this period in both *The New York Times* and the *Guardian* although quantitatively speaking more than double the number that appeared in the *Guardian* (88) were published in *The New York Times* (177). Comparatively few reports were captured in *The Australian* using this term (21); widening the search term to ‘Israel’ indicated a much larger amount of material was published on ODS generally, however the data set was not expanded. Indeed, it illustrated how coverage in *The Australian* less often differentiated between event-sites and tended to depict the operation as having two clear sides.

²⁵ Peter Beaumont, “15 Days in Bethlehem,” *Guardian*, April 16, 2002.

²⁶ “The Battle for the Truth,” April 17, 2002; see also “International Observer Testimonies,” in Baroud, *Searching Jenin*, 193-239.

²⁷ For reports of the accusation see: Suzanne Goldenberg, “Behind the Wire, Refugees Forced to Give up the Fight,” *Guardian*, April 11, 2002; Suzanne Goldenberg, “Refugees Flee Camp With Reports of Israeli Abuses,” *Guardian*, April 12, 2002. *HRW* found “no evidence to sustain claims of massacres or large-scale extrajudicial executions by the IDF,” nor any evidence “that the IDF had removed bodies from the refugee camp for burial in mass graves”: “Jenin: IDF Military Operations,” 4-5. In contrast, the UNGA report notes that “statements made at some point by the occupying forces” about the number killed and burial arrangements complicate this picture: “Report of the Secretary-General Prepared Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution ES-10/10,” (Illegal Israeli Actions) July 30, 2002, 24, <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/FD7BDE7666E04F5C85256C08004E63ED>.

²⁸ van Dijk describes this tactic in *Racism and the Press*, 153.

Analysis of the way in which Israel tended to be presented in each source, separately and cumulatively, is organised around themes highlighted in chapter 1. As a general observation, despite accusations of criminality and the lack of transparency about what was occurring in Jenin, Western media reports significantly reflected Israeli narrative strategy. In many cases, themes were not discretely addressed but interrelated with others; nonetheless, there were clear thematic points around which evidence accruing to Israeli perspective centred. Terrorism was the most strongly represented theme in these sources, a concept which had only just gripped Western audiences the previous September, but which had been present in Israeli characterisation of Palestinian action for many decades prior.²⁹ A second dominant theme in the sources was the allocation of archetypal narrative roles, that is, Israeli characterisation of the threat faced. A third and related theme was descriptions of the symbolic value and present peril of the Israeli State (as if its very survival was at stake). Comments pertaining to this theme often sought to justify the operation – both the fact of it, and its methods – and more generally to affirm Israel’s legitimacy. A fourth theme was identified in particular with respect to the major themes in Israeli representation in OCL. A problem consistently referred to in OCL is Israel’s feeling of a diminished sense of power within the region. Thus, I was interested in reporting that pertained to an Israeli sense of power as it was experienced in 2002, since this spoke both to Israeli perspective on IDF actions and to their relation to international opinion. Finally, I traced the appearance of Israeli narrative tropes identified in chapter 1, that construct Israeli national identity and are transferred into Western media where they underpin the sources’ assumptions. This takes a number of forms; for example, it manifests as a rejection of international, particularly European, criticism of Israeli actions through invoking the Holocaust. Cumulatively, these themes illustrate the relationship between Israeli and Western media concerns and define the depictions of Israelis, Palestinians and their relations in an international sphere.

1. Terrorism

Ali Abunimah, co-founder of online journal the *Electronic Intifada*, reflects that for Israel, September 11 was ‘very good’: this being the immediate response of Netanyahu when asked what he thought the atrocity would mean for Israeli–US relations. Catching himself, Netanyahu continued, ‘well, not very good, but it will generate immediate sympathy’ and ‘strengthen the bond between our two peoples, because we’ve experienced terror over so many decades, but the United States has now experienced a massive haemorrhaging of terror’.³⁰ Abunimah argues that this narrative, which flourished against the backdrop of 9/11 and the outbreak of the Second Intifada, set the tone for Israel’s basic narrative over the ensuing decade:

*We are under attack not because Palestinians are aggrieved at specific material injustices that can be remedied by among other things withdrawal from territory and respect for their human rights. Rather, we are the first victims of, and the vanguard of Western civilisation against, a global Islamofascist threat.*³¹

²⁹ Note the comment of Australian politician (now Prime Minister) Tony Abbott, who declared after the 2002 Bali Bombing, ‘We are all Israelis now’: Maher Mughrabi, “Perpetuating Conflict,” *Age*, May 16, 2007.

³⁰ Abunimah, “Gaza, Goldstone,” 391.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 391-2.

He argues that this has further relied on Israel and its allies' reframing the conflict into a religious one, in which, through 'demonization, denigration and misinterpretation', Palestinians have been characterised as 'wild-eyed religious fanatics'.³²

Israel's stated objective in ODS as iterated in all sources was to 'rout out the infrastructure of terror'. Throughout ODS, Israel appealed to analogies between the unilateral validation of US interests by the Bush Administration and its own situation to justify ODS. This analogy was inherently endorsed in *The New York Times* and *The Australian*, where terrorism worked metaphorically to enable Israeli speakers to vilify any perceived (Palestinian) adversary within the rubric of terrorism. On the other hand, this position was not uncritically embraced in the *Guardian*; rather, there are examples of how journalists, refusing to ignore the power differentials or adopt a simple binary structure, are left to grapple with representation. A major implication of this is that, where the other two sources resort to characterisation of Palestinians as terrorists, usually via an Israeli speaker, the *Guardian* does not ascribe a protagonist-antagonist relation so unequivocally. This is evidenced, for example, in citing MP Gerald Kaufman's indictment of State action itself as sanctioned terrorism: 'The difference between the Deir Yassin massacre and what happened in Jenin is that Deir Yassin was the work of terrorist groups denounced by mainstream Jewish groups. The horrors in Jenin were carried out by the official Israeli army'.³³ Nevertheless, the inference of terror as attributed to the Palestinian was not definitively disrupted.

One of the key assumptions that underpin all three sources is that Israel's operation is self-defence and thus a legitimate response. Although this assumption is at times displaced, in particular in the *Guardian*, the Israeli position on ODS and its relation to terror is never completely debunked; on the contrary, it is frequently reaffirmed. Notably, Israeli speakers assert that Palestinian political organisations are disqualified for diplomacy because they are complicit with terror. This included the PA, with whom Israel had been negotiating for almost a decade prior, because Israel claimed it supported terror. This notwithstanding that, despite repeated demands made of Arafat to control acts of terror, no evidence could be produced (except some scurrilous evidence published on the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) website) suggesting that Arafat was connected to it; nor was there any evidence that he wielded appropriate influence or resources to meet these demands.³⁴ Yet this argument was used to prolong ODS until a responsible Palestinian leadership, endorsed by Israel, could be produced.³⁵

Anthropologists Joseba Zulaika and William A. Douglass argue that terror has become 'the epistemological gatekeeper that determines which ideas are allowed currency'.³⁶ Terror was presented in ODS as a term that only applied to non-State actors, enabling the assumption of Israeli self-defence. As Blakely argues, while the definition of terror need not exclude State actors, State has been relieved from the charge because the term has

³² Abunimah, "Gaza, Goldstone," 392.

³³ Nicholas Watt, "MP Accuses Sharon of 'Barbarism'," *Guardian*, April 17, 2002.

³⁴ "The involvement of Arafat, PA Senior Officials and Apparatuses in Terrorism against Israel, Corruption and Crime," MFA, May 6, 2002, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFA-Archive/2002/Pages/The%20Involvement%20of%20Arafat-%20PA%20Senior%20Officials%20and.aspx>.

³⁵ Peter Beaumont, "We Fight On Says Defiant Sharon," *Guardian*, April 9, 2002.

³⁶ Joseba Zulaika and William A. Douglass, "The Terrorist Subject: Terrorism Studies and the Absent Subjectivity," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 1, no. 1 (2008): 29, doi: 10.1080/17539150701844794.

been 'appropriated by mainstream discussion to signify atrocities targeting the West'.³⁷ In this manner, it is employed as a political tool to de-legitimize certain groups rather than operating as an analytical category; consequently, denunciations of terrorism are tactical rather than operating as an ideological critique.³⁸ Jackson, surveying the silence in discourse on Western State Terrorism, and Israel's in particular, argues that this emphasis works to obscure the much greater terrorism of State actors, and further that this occlusion contributes to the conditions which make State terror possible, since it is neither expressed nor denounced.³⁹ He argues that categories such as 'war crimes' are used for actions of states that might accurately be framed as terrorism and that the justifications for these actions are highly specious. He concludes that it is only the power of the discourse rather than the merit of arguments that enables certain kinds of state actors to avoid the characterisation.⁴⁰ However, coupled with the 'myth of exceptional grievance', which constructs Americans (and by extension America's friends) as the primary victims of terrorism, and the white-washing of 'terrorists' subjectivities as 'utterly senseless nihilism', terrorism is portrayed by the West as random, provoking uncontrollable fear.⁴¹ Across the reports there is scant reference to State Terrorism perpetrated by Israel. References, when they appear, are voiced by Palestinians accusing Israel of State terror or Washington of double standards. However, categorical endorsement of Israel's position in these articles ultimately dismisses Palestinian accusations, while their framing implicitly ridicules Palestinian speakers.⁴²

The meaning of Jenin formed a point of symbolic contention during ODS (physically speaking, the victors were abundantly clear). While ODS was predominately represented as Israel responding to terror, several factors interfered with the clarity of this portrayal. Despite the relative success in characterising Palestinian actors as terrorist, Israel's media blackout and the sinister stories emerging from Jenin were, as some later lamented, damaging to its image.⁴³ As Peres later stated in regard to the UN inquiry: 'Israel is not in the dock, but in the witness stand and should not give the impression of having anything to hide'.⁴⁴ One strategy that Israelis adopted to address the serious inferences of misconduct was to invoke the terminology of war. Israeli speakers on the practices of the IDF tended to highlight that the sides were equally matched: 'there was a very tough war there',⁴⁵ and that IDF action was carefully deliberated and considered: 'never, never do we shoot for no reason. If we shoot it's because ... it's a danger to us'.⁴⁶ The notion of war, however, replicates the representational violence of portraying the IDF and Palestinians as being in any way equal adversaries. It is argued, for example, by Allen that one objection to describing Israel's operations in the OPTs as wars is that 'war' as a term exceptionalises these episodes of violence as out of the ordinary, and thus tacitly condones conditions faced by

³⁷ Blakeley, "Bringing State Back," 229.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 233.

³⁹ Richard Jackson, "The Ghosts of State Terror: Knowledge, Politics and Terrorism Studies," *Conference Papers -- International Studies Association* (Annual Meeting 2008): 14-16. *Political Science Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 10, 2015).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6-11.

⁴¹ Zulaika and Douglass, "Terrorist Subject," 34.

⁴² "Israelis in the Right, Says Bush," *Australian*, April 20, 2002; Serge Schmemmann, "Arafat Condemns Terror," *New York Times*, April 14, 2002.

⁴³ For example the European Union's then Commissioner for External Relations, Christopher Patten, stated: "if [Israel] resists any attempt by the international media to cover what is going on, then inevitably it is going to provide oxygen for all those who will be making more extreme demands," in Ian Black, Ewan MacAskill and Nicholas Watt, "Israel Faces Rage Over 'Massacre'," *Guardian*, April 17, 2002. See also: Esther Addley, "A Day in the Life of a Conflict," *Guardian*, April 9, 2002; John Kifner, "Israel Says it Will Allow a Fact Finding Mission," *New York Times*, April 20, 2002; Serge Schmemmann, "Israel Eases Opposition to Inquiry into Jenin Attack," *New York Times*, April 25, 2002; "Inching Forward in the Mideast," *New York Times*, April 30, 2002.

⁴⁴ "Sharon Stalls on UN Visit to Jenin," *Australian*, April 29, 2002.

⁴⁵ Goldenberg, "Toll of the Bloody Battle of Jenin 13 Israelis and 100 Palestinians Dead," April 10, 2002.

⁴⁶ Suzanne Goldenberg, "Bodies Search Begins in Rubble," *Guardian*, April 13, 2002.

Palestinians at all (other) times.⁴⁷ More obviously, the disparity in resources between IDF equipment and the improvised and ineffectual weapons of Palestinians hardly bears the comparison. In consenting to represent ODS as a war, the dominance of Israeli narrative is apparent.

Where the language of war did not render Israeli conduct immune from criticism, *Guardian* journalist Suzanne Goldenberg noted Israel's sensitivity to allegations of IDF abuse. Her reports capture an alternate strategy by which Israeli speakers emphasise the *prima facie* incomparability between terrorists and IDF morality.⁴⁸ Firstly, the scruples of the IDF were contrasted with the lawlessness of armed Palestinians in Jenin: 'considering the type of war we are engaged in we have done very, very well to protect civilians. This is a war being conducted in an urban setting ... We are fighting an army of terrorists and terrorists hide in civilian areas'.⁴⁹ Capitalising on the panic engendered by suicide bombers, other Israeli speakers invoked this imagery (despite subsequent investigation finding no evidence that this tactic was used): 'there was a very tough war there and I can tell you there were many people (Palestinians) who wore explosive belts to kill our soldiers'.⁵⁰ A further argument (not pursued in the *Guardian*) is for Israeli speakers to acknowledge Palestinian suffering, but to attribute responsibility for that to the Palestinians: 'Are the Palestinian people under stress? The answer is yes. But does Israel want them to be under stress? The answer is no. The problem here is the terrorists, who had to be stopped from murdering more Israeli civilians'.⁵¹ On the attribution of responsibility for the deaths in Jenin, an IDF spokesman was quoted in *The Australian* in response: 'it was hard, it was tough, but it was not bad. If you kill terrorists, it's not bad'.⁵²

While the *Guardian* represents the Israeli perspective on terror similarly, if less emotively, than *The New York Times* or *The Australian*, in contrast to these sources it often distinguishes between Israeli opinion and the source's narrative line. Although the *Guardian* quotes Israeli and pro-Israeli speakers on various impacts of terror, including on IDF strategy, diplomacy and international perception of the operation, the overall picture constructed in the paper tends to contextualise Palestinian resistance rather than categorically branding it as terror. For example, Goldenberg, who wrote extensively for the *Guardian* on ODS, publishes Ariel Sharon's statement on how Israel will fight terror: 'we must fight this terrorism in an uncompromising war to uproot these savages, to dismantle their infrastructure because there is no compromise with terrorists'.⁵³ Only three days later, however, she reports that the international community is harbouring deepening doubts about Israel's pursuit of a war on suicide bombing, since it is becoming clear that military onslaught against this unconventional target produces few tangible results.⁵⁴ In short, the *Guardian* poses politics, not force, as the way forward.

The implicit disinclination to adopt the Israeli position on ODS leads journalists publishing in the *Guardian* to engage the complexities of the political situation. One journalist names the problem as the 'ritual denunciation

⁴⁷ Allen, "Scales of Occupation," 264.

⁴⁸ Goldenberg, "Bodies Search Begins in Rubble," April 13, 2002.

⁴⁹ Suzanne Goldenberg, "Across West Bank, Daily Tragedies Go Unseen," *Guardian*, April 27, 2002.

⁵⁰ Goldenberg, "Toll of the Bloody Battle of Jenin 13 Israelis and 100 Palestinians Dead," April 10, 2002.

⁵¹ Gideon Mier, quoted in C.J. Chivers, "Violence in Gaza as Israel Reduces West Bank Forces," *New York Times*, April 20, 2002.

⁵² Janine di Giovanni, "Israel Denies Jenin Refugee Horror Tales," *Australian*, April 13, 2002.

⁵³ Graham Usher and Suzanne Goldenberg, "Israel Vows to Avenge Bombings," *Guardian*, April 1, 2002.

⁵⁴ Suzanne Goldenberg, "Israel Tightens its Iron Grip on 1m Palestinians in West Bank," *Guardian*, April 4, 2002.

of terror', which stifles discourse critical of ODS: '[Israel is] rendered untouchable by loose thinking and sloppy phrasing of 'the war against terror'.⁵⁵ This enables the *Guardian* to engage nuances absent in *The New York Times* much less *The Australian*. For example, several articles feature discussions in the British Parliament and in particular the comments of MP Gerald Kaufman, who, though condemning suicide bombing, is critical of the blunt polarisation of a war against terror as good and evil. Kaufman raises the necessity of contextualising 'terror' in politics: 'We need to ask how we would feel if we had been occupied for 35 years by a foreign power which denied us the most elementary human rights and decent living conditions'.⁵⁶ The *Guardian* also publishes opposite claims, for example, comments of Britain's Chief Rabbi, Professor Jonathon Sacks, who argued that Israel had been unfairly treated in the media and insisted ODS should be understood within the war on terror paradigm: 'What is happening now is the direct equivalent of what America is doing in Afghanistan. If we support the latter, I think we also have to understand the former. They're the same policy.'⁵⁷ However, the article concludes with an alternate view, disallowing Sacks' perspective to go unchallenged. A spokesperson for Britain's 'Peace Now' is referenced, highlighting the flaws in Sacks' comparison, specifically that Palestinian behaviour is a direct response to Israel exacerbating circumstances in the West Bank.

In contrast, the objective of ODS is rarely questioned in *The New York Times*. Indeed, Israel's actions against terror were perceived in America as a psychologically significant bulwark to their own fears of a metastasising terror. For example, one participant in a rally denouncing Palestinian terrorism in Manhattan explains: 'I'm here because of my love for Israel, but also because Israel is on the front line in the war against terrorism. They're fighting for the sake of the free world'.⁵⁸ These sentiments indicate not only that Americans were sympathetic to Israel but that support for ODS derived from its conflation with 9/11: 'Israel is the focus of their [terrorist] hate and that's been transferred to the U.S., so we are together in this. Israel's battle is our battle. We are as endangered as they are. We'll soon have suicide bombers here in New York.'⁵⁹

There is less terminological angst in *The New York Times* over categorising ODS or Jenin, rather demonstrating the zero tolerance rhetoric of 'us' and 'them': 'we don't differentiate between different groups and how they think they differentiate their attacks. It does not matter whether a bombing happens inside of Israel or not. Terror is terror is terror'.⁶⁰ This reflects the politics of the time, which strenuously rejected both inferences of State terror and a political objective to 'terrorists'. For example, the American congress, shortly before the conclusion of ODS, took votes in both the Senate and House of Representatives that overwhelmingly confirmed American support for Israel, acknowledged the struggle against terror as common and endorsed the Israeli perspective that ODS was the unwanted result of an impossible situation: 'we are the victims of terror. It was a war Israel didn't want or start. But we got to a situation where we couldn't deal with it anymore'.⁶¹ The connection was also emphasised in reverse, in which Palestinians are portrayed as sympathetic to the 9/11 attacks: 'the women who are crying now in Jenin are the same women who were dancing in the streets after

⁵⁵ Peter Preston, "Tongue-Tied in Arafat's Shattered Bunker," *Guardian*, April 15, 2002.

⁵⁶ Watt, "MP Accuses Sharon of 'Barbarism'," April 17, 2002.

⁵⁷ Brian Whitaker, "UK Chief Rabbi Defends Attacks," *Guardian*, April 18, 2002.

⁵⁸ Robert D. McFadden, "Demonstrators Roar Support for Israel," *New York Times*, April 8, 2002.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ MFA then Deputy Director-General for media and public affairs, Gideon Meir, quoted in C.J. Chivers, "Palestinian Militant Group Says it Will Limit Bombings," *New York Times*, April 23, 2002.

⁶¹ Bennet, "In New Rebuff to U.S., Sharon Pushes Military Sweep," April 11, 2002.

September 11'.⁶² Ultimately, in *The New York Times*, there is no exploration of alternate politics: ODS is portrayed (as Israel claimed) as 'a response to suicide bombings by Palestinian terrorists that have come to haunt Israeli society.'⁶³

Reports in *The Australian* negotiate events quite explicitly through the prism of Israeli perspective. This is structurally established by undermining the claims of Palestinian eyewitnesses and, on occasion, international aid organisations in the area, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNWRA) in particular. This is achieved through an extensive set of statements by IDF spokespeople that give weight to Israel's claim about the objective and success of ODS. One report, for example, commences by reporting what Palestinians in Jenin are saying: that many are bleeding to death in the streets because ambulances have been banned entrance to the camp.⁶⁴ The article acknowledges that the number of dead is unverifiable due to media and medical blackout enforced by Israel (a fact confirmed by subsequent investigation by human rights bodies).⁶⁵ However, the article interposes a dismissal of such claims by IDF spokespersons as 'pure propaganda'. The primary message of the report is conveyed through Israeli speakers. A named IDF regional commander acknowledges civilian casualties, but claims this is a direct result of Palestinian fighters using civilians as human shields (on the contrary, it was established in investigation that this tactic was frequently employed by the IDF but not Palestinian fighters).⁶⁶ Finally, the army affirms that ODS accurately targeted the camp as a factory for terrorism, uncovering 'a large number of bomb factories, home-made rockets and explosive belts used by bombers' (a claim which was not confirmed by later investigation). This has the effect of endorsing both the objective of ODS and IDF methods. Similarly, as the IDF withdrew from Jenin, *The Australian* describes the problem for Israel in the following terms: 'Israel was embroiled in a new battle over its image'; tarnished by a proposal that a UN peace-keeping force be sent to the area.⁶⁷ While the article includes the comments of UN representative and Norwegian diplomat Terje Roed-Larsen, and a brief note on what Palestinians 'say' happened, the article predominately quotes Israeli speakers of some rank, all of whom refute the possibility of a UN presence. Justice Minister Meir Sheeret states a UN force 'will not stop attacks on us and will only interfere if we try to retaliate'. A 'senior army officer' reiterates that civilian casualties were the direct result of unscrupulous Palestinian fighters: 'the terrorists used them as a living wall', while an IDF spokeswoman, whose statement concludes the article, affirms the legitimacy of the operation against terror. Cumulatively in these two reports as elsewhere, the use of Israeli speakers affirms that ODS is unequivocally about terror, that Palestinian speakers are unreliable, and that international parties have failed to understand the problems Israel faces. In this regard, *The Australian* seems less inclined to report than to replicate Israeli narrative.

The only ambiguity raised in *The New York Times* with respect to ODS is on the amount of force used. This is often reported with reference to the IDF's superior morality, and Israelis are quoted appealing to direct comparisons with American conduct in Afghanistan: 'I can tell you, if we were Americans, we would just bomb

⁶² Meir quoted in Chivers, "Palestinian Militant Group Says it Will Limit Bombings," April 23, 2002.

⁶³ Serge Schmemmann, "Attacks Turn Palestinian Plans into Bent Metal and Piles of Dust," *New York Times*, April 11, 2002.

⁶⁴ "Bloody End in the Alleys of Death," *Australian*, April 10, 2002.

⁶⁵ HRW, "Jenin: IDF Military Operations," 5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁶⁷ Abraham Rabinovich, "Israel Denies Mass Killings," *Australian*, April 20, 2002.

the place. But we don't want to do that. We go slow'.⁶⁸ Since the US readership needed less convincing about the validity of fighting terror, emphasising IDF morality has to do with explaining Israeli rejection of the UN-proposed investigation into IDF conduct. They reiterate that diplomacy with the Palestinians is not possible until terrorism is abandoned. This is reflected, for example, in a letter contributed by Abraham Foxman, chairman of the *Anti-Defamation League*, an American body charged with the protection of Jews from anti-Semitism, claiming that 'peace in the region will remain an elusive goal until the Arab leadership stops the incitement, rejects the culture of suicide bombers and leads its people away from terrorism'.⁶⁹ However, one concern not answered by these arguments is the question of what the long-term effect of an operation like ODS on the Palestinian people will be. It is suggested that the psychological impact will fuel future terrorism, for example: 'there's no way to break the system of terror in the West Bank, because the system is now in the minds of the people, in the minds of the teenagers, and what we're doing by this operation is giving them more reason to build that system'.⁷⁰ This sentiment is echoed in *The Australian*, which references the radicalising effect of ODS on the inhabitants of Jenin.⁷¹ Yet, in another article, despite quoting Terje Roed-Larsen, who characterised ODS as 'collective punishment of a whole society', the report ultimately aligns with the sentiments of an IDF spokesperson who reflects that the new generation of terrorists would have emerged regardless of the manner in which the operation was conducted.⁷² Thus, *The New York Times*' note of caution about the effectiveness of ODS is less an indictment of ODS than an acknowledgement of the dilemma facing nations confronting terror.

2. Archetypal characterisation

Characterisation of the parties to ODS had two distinctive features, one of which has not since been replicated. In 2002, the Palestinians were chiefly represented in the figure of Yasser Arafat. Founder of the Palestinian political organisation Fatah, he was from the late 1960s Chairman of the PLO and, following the Oslo Accords, became the first President of the PA. In Arafat's very person inhered the cause of Palestinian Nationalism. Despite criticism of alleged corruption in Fatah and the PA, from which Arafat was not immune, his iconic status as a mascot of Palestinian struggle never lost its potency.⁷³ Thus, Arafat was easily identifiable as a chief actor and symbolic representative of the Palestinians in ODS. The Israeli Prime Minister at this time, Ariel Sharon, matched Arafat for his iconic status. Born in Mandate Palestine, with a military record dating from Israel's 1948 War of Independence, Sharon was truly one of the Sabras of the new State. While the image of the Sabra had fallen into disuse, it endured in representations of the IDF; Sharon's effective command of State and symbolic command of the army made a strong link between notions of the heroic past and ODS.⁷⁴ Secondly, Israel's preference for characterising its military operations as wars was conveniently reflected in the prominence of Arafat and Sharon, who, depicted as nemeses, facilitated that view.

⁶⁸ Major Avi Picard quoted in Joel Brinkley, "U.S. Call for Pullback Roils Eager Reservists," *New York Times*, April 10, 2002.

⁶⁹ Abraham Foxman, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, April 16, 2002.

⁷⁰ IDF Palsar Yaniv Sagee, quoted in Scott Anderson, "An Impossible Occupation," *New York Times*, May 12, 2002.

⁷¹ Catherine Taylor, "Hate Emerges from Under Rubble," *Australian*, April 20, 2002.

⁷² Marie Colvin, "Jenin Mourns its Own Ground Zero," *Australian*, April 23, 2002.

⁷³ Arafat's iconic status is illustrated in a story from the Palestinian premiere of *Divine Intervention: A Chronicle of Love and Pain*, directed by Elia Sulaiman (2002; London: Artificial Eye, 2003), DVD. During the film, a red balloon depicting an image of Arafat crosses a checkpoint and circles the Dome of the Rock, at which point the audience raised an enormous cheer.

⁷⁴ Margalit, "Kitsch of Israel."

A second aspect of characterisation, independent of specific actors, pertains directly to the ideological work of the Israeli State. As raised in chapter 1, Israeli national narrative constructed a binary of Jewish history and identity between 'stateless' Jews and Israeli Jews. However, the linear progression of Jewish history from statelessness (victim) to State (Sabra) is haunted by the Holocaust: heroism is always tempered by fragility and the memory of disaster. This tension is captured directly in the self-characterisation of Israeli speakers and indirectly in the reporting framework, an effect of which is that it forecloses alternative explanations for Palestinian action.⁷⁵ There is a tendency in the sources to recount Israeli celebration of IDF heroism and defence of its moral image (particularly where the event is characterised as a 'war'), although this does not always require that Palestinian fighters are portrayed oppositely. Rather, at times, acknowledgement of Palestinian bravery functions to reinforce Israel's portrayal of ODS as a war. However, excluding the case of Arafat, Palestinians are most often representationally deleted, while Israel's victimisation is emphasised.

Israeli heroism is formulated in two different ways. In the *Guardian*, heroism is sometimes configured as a warrior ideal wherein, as expressed by one IDF Sergeant who commends the Palestinian fighters' display of courage: 'they were no doubt brave. I appreciate any man that is fighting for the things he believes in'.⁷⁶ This framing of the operation enables a defence of the fallibilities of the IDF also. In the words of an Israeli foreign ministry spokesperson, war creates a scenario in which not all actions can be adduced as evidence of heroism: 'The Palestinians are spreading rumours about atrocities, rumours about the behaviour of the army that are completely fake and exaggerated. I am not claiming that there is no suffering to the Palestinian people throughout this period and through Israeli activities. We are speaking about war. We are not speaking about a crime situation in Harlem'.⁷⁷ This raises the Israeli preoccupation with how stories are framed, contrasting (Palestinian) 'rumours' with (Israeli) reality, insinuating (as was the accusation in Sabra and Shatila, for example) that Palestinians manipulated ODS coverage. In *The New York Times* particularly, there are indications that both Israelis and journalists believe that Palestinians have exploited the narrative potential of ODS to make a sympathetic international impression. In an explicit example of this, a representative of the United Nations Reliefs and Works Agency (UNWRA) is reported to suggest that, although the organisation is disinclined to use tents, tents would garner international sympathy: 'we should do it on purpose. We should put up tents all over the place'.⁷⁸

American President George W. Bush praises Sharon as a 'man of peace,' in contrast to Arafat's so-called terrorism, which is noted in all three sources.⁷⁹ Notwithstanding this binary, Israelis quoted in *The New York Times* express concern that Arafat is an internationally sympathetic figure. This is partly attributed to Israel's mismanagement of public relations, such as confining Arafat to his Ramallah compound: 'Sharon has turned him into the man who in his person embodies the suffering of the Palestinian people'.⁸⁰ In a second iteration, an Israeli MK urges Sharon to refrain from exiling Arafat, because 'he would become the martyr and the world

⁷⁵ Jefferson, "What is Wrong?"

⁷⁶ Ewan MacAskill, "'We Fight Like Girls and We are Accused of a Massacre'," *Guardian*, April 20, 2002.

⁷⁷ Ewan MacAskill, "Human Rights Abuses and Horror Stories," *Guardian*, April 20, 2002.

⁷⁸ James Bennet, "Jenin Refugee Camp's Dead Can't Be Counted or Claimed," *New York Times*, April 13, 2002.

⁷⁹ Bennet, "Israeli Forces Pull Back from Jenin, But Blockade Still Remains," April 19, 2002; Ewan MacAskill, "Israel Promises to Quit Towns By Sunday," *Guardian*, April 19, 2002; "Israelis in the Right, Says Bush," April 20, 2002.

⁸⁰ Joel Brinkley, "For Arafat, Phone Calls, Bottle Water and Halvah," *New York Times*, April 8, 2002.

hero he wants to be'.⁸¹ While the *Guardian* reports do not expand on Israeli perception of Arafat beyond the comparison implicit in Bush's compliment to Sharon, many Israeli speakers in *The New York Times* focus on Arafat's portrayal. This focus both includes Arafat's cynicism with respect to international sympathy, and emphasises the idea that Israel has no negotiating partner, dismissing Arafat's competency – notwithstanding that he is charged with responsibility for ODS. In respect of the latter, Israelis are critical of representations of Arafat which assign him significance, which they perceive to be at Israel's expense.

Portrayals of heroism, Israeli or Palestinian, as depicted above, indicate the ambivalence of that representation; in comparison, the characterisation of Israelis as victims in ODS is more straightforward. A concern recurrently expressed by Israelis in all three sources is that IDF action is internationally misunderstood and misrepresented. As one Israeli argues, Israeli victimisation is occurring at the level of international coverage and perception: 'we are the victims. We are the ones who are bleeding. Arafat is not the story. The story is what is happening to us'.⁸² In another example, a soldier deployed to Jenin explains what he understands as the disjuncture between the scruples of IDF practice and international perception:

*this time, the infantry went first [compared to 1982] and put their heads on the block. We went to clear the camp, house by house, with infantry... We paid a high price. I call it stupid. We do all the things we should do (to fight humanely) and we get blamed for it. We fight like girls and we are accused of a massacre.*⁸³

The Australian is particularly supportive of Israeli claims in this respect, at times in direct contradiction of evidence included in its own reports. For example, it reports that increased aggression in Israeli strategy was a result of thirteen IDF deaths in Jenin; yet, despite acknowledging a policy of shooting any unexpected movement on sight, an IDF soldier asserts that Palestinian claims of denied medical care 'are not credible'. *The Australian* presents this assertion about the falsehood of Palestinian narrative notwithstanding the direct contradiction of the Jenin Hospital Director and the international body HRW quoted in the same article, which verify Palestinian claims.⁸⁴

As a point of comparison with OCL, during ODS, arguments deploring criticism of the IDF rarely invoke Israel's 'right to self-defence', an argument which becomes central to refuting criticism in the later operation, reasserting the characterisation of victim–response. In ODS, self-defence is raised directly only in *The New York Times* and it is not expanded upon to justify the operation. When a UN inquiry looks likely, Israelis react to the possibility as further evidence of international vilification. The sources, in particular the *Guardian*, indicate that Israel is well aware that ODS has made it look bad, described in *The New York Times* as a 'pitched public relations battle'; however, it consistently maintains that appearances are at odds with reality.⁸⁵ Thus it is reported that, while Sharon's security cabinet hailed ODS as a success, they 'were shocked by the level of international criticism and diplomatic damage'.⁸⁶ Similar was the attitude of Israel's Defence Minister,

⁸¹ Bennet, "Arafat Can Leave, But Only to Exile, Sharon Tells Him," April 3, 2002.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ IDF Sergeant Kapsi, quoted in MacAskill, "'We Fight Like Girls and We are Accused of a Massacre'," April 20, 2002.

⁸⁴ Catherine Taylor, "Silence Then the Israeli storm," *Australian*, April 27, 2002.

⁸⁵ Chivers, "Violence in Gaza as Israel Reduces West Bank Forces," April 20, 2002.

⁸⁶ MacAskill, "Israel Promises to Quit Towns By Sunday," April 19, 2002.

Binyamin Ben-Elieser, to the proposed UN investigation: ‘we realised that the whole trend, to put it gently, was how to entrap Israel so it could be put on trial’.⁸⁷

Claims that Israel was victimised by the international press were conflated in some cases with charges of anti-Semitism. In the decade since ODS, this tactic has been given increased attention for its incendiary ability to deflect from substantive criticisms of Israel.⁸⁸ For example, an Israeli chef in West Jerusalem, interviewed by the *Guardian* during ODS, reflects: ‘We [friends] said that the whole world is looking at us, especially Europe. But Europe hasn't sorted out its problem with the Jews; not just Israelis, but Jews.’⁸⁹ A direct accusation of anti-Semitism is made by Netanyahu at a public rally in London in which he conflates Palestinians with Nazism, equating Yasser Arafat to Adolf Hitler (a trope often employed in Israeli demonisation of the Palestinian as illustrated in chapter 1). Netanyahu highlights parallels between contemporary Israelis and Londoners in the Second World War, declaring: ‘Israel is determined to fight. The question isn't whether Israel will fight but whether we will fight alone. The path to peace does not go through Arafat, it does not go around Arafat, it must go over Arafat’.⁹⁰ However, in addition to the *Guardian*'s coverage of the protest, the report quotes counter-protesters who assert that Palestinian resistance is just people ‘defending their families and their lives ... it is the Israeli state which is using violence for political ends’. In contrast to the *Guardian*, which depicts the Israeli sense of victimhood as out of joint with international perception, *The New York Times* does not contextualise Israeli perception with the same irony. Rather, the preoccupation of Israeli speakers with international sympathy for Arafat in *the New York Times* is part of a wider sense of Israel's victimisation, in which international opprobrium stems from underlying anti-Semitism in the international (European) community. For example, a young Israeli interviewed on Israeli Independence Day dismisses criticism about ODS: ‘people around the world never liked us, because we are Jews’.⁹¹ *The New York Times* affirms the foundations of the Israeli perspective – that anti-Semitism in Europe is on the rise, confirming that European suspicion of Israel is long standing. For example, an ex-American Ambassador to Germany highlights ‘a general tendency in Europe to take the Arab side’.⁹²

3. Sense of power

In chapter 1, the value of Nietzschean thinking for understanding the role of terror and security in Israel was raised. As will be demonstrated, between ODS and OCL a qualitative shift occurs in how Israel incorporates these themes into explanation of its military operations in the OPTs. Contrasting the degree of destruction and death tolls of each occasion, it is clear that by any measure OCL was more devastating. However, Israel's rhetorical shift between 2002 and 2008 would not evince the conclusion that the IDF had escalated the assault and minimised the cost in Israeli lives in OCL. Hage argues that one might account for such a disjuncture with

⁸⁷ Ewan MacAskill, “Israelis Face Annan with Jenin Inquiry Objections,” *Guardian*, April 25, 2002.

⁸⁸ Larry Stillman, “Why Crying Wolf on Anti-Semitism Harms Us All,” *Crikey*, July 23, 2014, <http://www.crikey.com.au/2014/07/23/why-crying-wolf-on-anti-semitism-harms-us-all/>; Yasmeen Serhan, “Anti-Semitism has No Place in Palestine Advocacy,” +972 (blog), +972 Magazine, 23 July 2014, <http://972mag.com/anti-semitism-has-no-place-in-palestine-advocacy/94201/>.

⁸⁹ Addley, “A Day in the Life of a Conflict,” *Guardian*, April 9, 2002.

⁹⁰ Owen Bowcott, “Britain's Biggest Pro-Israel Rally Divides Loyalties,” *Guardian*, May 7, 2002.

⁹¹ James Bennet, “Israeli Independence Day: Reflection, Not Fireworks,” *New York Times*, April 17, 2002.

⁹² Steven Erlanger, “Europe Knows Who's To Blame in The Middle East,” *New York Times*, April 7, 2002.

reference to Nietzsche's concept of a 'sense of power', which he explains as 'a subjective awareness of the power that I have'.⁹³ He continues:

*It is not an objective evaluation of the amount of power that I have but rather an evaluation of where it is heading and what I can do with it. I can have an x amount of power and feel that my power is diminishing and I will deploy my power by being mean to compensate for my sense that my power is declining. I can have the same x amount of power and feel that my power is rising. Here I might deploy my power magnanimously. It's not the amount of power that I have which makes a difference ... it's my sense of power. Do I feel my power is secure or insecure? Do I feel that it is rising or declining?*⁹⁴

In contrast to the language used by Israelis during the invasion of Gaza in OCL, the language of ODS illustrates the magnanimity that Hage describes. Noting that 'the link between narcissistic fantasies and fantasies of omnipotence is a well-known psychoanalytic fact', Hage (referring to 1967) argues that 'no people have ever come close to caressing their fantasy of omnipotence as much as the Israelis have'.⁹⁵ While ODS occurs at a moment of diplomatic failure, the political and intellectual climate in Israel during the 1990s had accumulated a degree of reflexivity which was not immediately dissipated, despite the resurgence from that time of what Pappé has described as neo-Zionism.

What is expressed by Israelis at this time exhibits a rising sense of power. This is articulated in three distinct ways and almost exclusively in *The New York Times*. Two of these relate to Israel's sense of impunity with respect to the international community. Firstly, Israelis comment on Israel's relationship with the US, noting American warnings and Israel's disinclination to heed that advice. For example, an IDF unit medic acknowledges the importance of the link between the two countries, but asserts the overriding necessity for Israeli action: 'When the U.S. says something to Israel it is more than an opinion. We have to listen. But at this point, I think we have to listen to what is right for us'.⁹⁶ Similarly, an MK comments: 'I would say that this is a time in our history when even the arguments of our best friends are not strong enough in comparison with reality'.⁹⁷ The US requested that Israel scale back ODS in order to assist US Secretary of State Colin Powell's visit to negotiate a truce; withdrawing from two strategically unimportant towns, Israel failed to substantively comply with the request. Concurrently, however, Israel insisted that the US condemn the Palestinians, and was deeply critical of Secretary Powell's meeting with Arafat in Ramallah.⁹⁸ This position is also affirmed in *The Australian*, in which, despite the failure of Israel to comply with US requests, President Bush's praise for Sharon is reiterated: '[he is] meeting a timetable and history will show this'.⁹⁹

Secondly, this rising sense of power is manifested in Israel's ability to reject international scrutiny that does not conform to its terms, and thus to prevent investigation of the operation. Despite discussion of the terms for an inquiry in early May, ultimately Israel blocks access to Jenin altogether, compelling the UN to abandon any independent fact-finding mission. It is stated in *The New York Times* that Israel did not believe that the mission

⁹³ Hage, "Narcissistic Victimhood," 122.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 120-121.

⁹⁶ Brinkley, "U.S. Call for Pullback Roils Eager Reservists," April 10, 2002.

⁹⁷ Serge Schmemmann, "Israel Persisting With Wide Sweep Despite U.S. Calls," *New York Times*, April 8, 2002.

⁹⁸ Todd S. Purdum, "Powell's Meeting With Arafat Portrayed to Critics as a Necessary Evil," *New York Times*, April 14, 2002.

⁹⁹ "Israelis in the Right, Says Bush," April 20, 2002.

would be sensitive to the threat it felt it faced in Jenin.¹⁰⁰ However, when the mission is abandoned, due to Israel's lack of cooperation, the analysis of this outcome is expressed: 'No one believes there was a massacre any more [and the demand for an inquiry] all sort of died a natural death. I don't think anyone's particularly concerned that it did'.¹⁰¹ Rather, an Israeli summarises Israel's display of power (and restraint) in ODS: 'this time the world stopped Israel short of just destroying them but next time they are playing with fire'.¹⁰² This is reflected in an IDF speaker's description of combat in Jenin specifically: 'they have their backs against the walls. We trapped them in there, with the intention they should surrender. Those that don't surrender, we will kill them'.¹⁰³ In short, in ODS, Israeli perspective dictates the terms of how the operation can be understood, while simultaneously asserting the extent of both its diplomatic power and military strength.

4. Characterising State

As raised in chapter 1, Israel's geography and the question of borders have come to exceed the practical questions these matters raise, to inhabit a vast metaphorical terrain tethered to Israeli national narrative and the psychology of the secure-ability of the Jewish people. During ODS, Israeli speakers blur the distinctions between the physical and metaphorical meaning of the State in addition to expressing fantasies of a 'Greater Israel'. In particular, owing to the recent failure of the peace process, Israeli statements are framed in this light; however, their underlying implication belies a drive to territorial expansion and exclusive spatial-affirmation. Hage describes this as narcissistic nationalism, 'where the nationalist always feels that the 'bears' [referring to Indigenous inhabitants] are out of control and becomes totally self-obsessed with self-affirmation', which he argues is not unique to Israel but inherent to the idea of nationalism.¹⁰⁴ However, the thing unique to Zionism, the 'tragedy of the Israeli State', as Hage argues, is that 'its existence as a Jewish state does not and can never go without saying'.¹⁰⁵ This vertiginous relation during ODS for Israelis between a sense of messianism and vulnerability is highlighted in descriptions of the State.

In a concrete sense, Israeli speakers articulate the impossibility of coexistence, asserting the necessity of demographic exclusivity by conflating the survival of Jewish-Israeli citizens to preservation of the State. Several invocations of Israeli nationalism and narrative collect around the language of geography. The geographical exclusivity necessary for peace is articulated by one Israeli: 'The problem is that there is not enough room in this small country for two peoples. It is a trial of strength that we are winning. They would like to throw us into the sea. We may have to do the same to them'.¹⁰⁶ A particularly striking representation of this in the *Guardian* is the description of a line of graffiti written by an IDF soldier on the interior wall of a Palestinian home in Jenin. Written in 'neat blue ink', it read 'I don't have another land'.¹⁰⁷ The reporter makes much of the tidiness of the line (in contrast to the extensively documented vandalism by the IDF of Palestinian homes both in ODS and

¹⁰⁰ James Bennet, "After New Raids, Bush Again Urges Israeli Pullback," *New York Times*, April 27, 2002.

¹⁰¹ Todd S. Purdum, "In Drive for Peace Progress, White House Saw Jenin Inquiry as Expendable," *New York Times*, May 4, 2002.

¹⁰² Senior Israeli official, quoted in Michael R. Gordon, "Limits of Force," *New York Times*, April 14, 2002.

¹⁰³ Brigadier General Eyal Shien, quoted in James Bennet and John Kifner, "Israel Presses on With Attacks, Focusing on Northern West Bank," *New York Times*, April 7, 2002.

¹⁰⁴ Hage, "Narcissistic Victimhood," 116-117.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

¹⁰⁶ Peter Beaumont, "'We're terrified – but what can I do against this?'," *Guardian*, April 8, 2002.

¹⁰⁷ Suzanne Goldenberg, "The Lunar Landscape that Was the Jenin Refugee Camp," *Guardian*, April 16, 2002; Jonathon Freedland, "Parallel Universe," *Guardian*, April 17, 2002.

later in OCL).¹⁰⁸ It echoes the title lyrics of a Hebrew folk song, 'I have no other land', and articulates the contemporary fact of Israeli identity irrespective of questions about its artifice. Another IDF soldier, echoing the ideal of sacrifice which came to be identified with the Sabra/Soldier, comments: 'No one wants to fight. But even though I have lost 13 of my friends – some of whom I have known for 15 years – they died for the survival of Israel, for something bigger than themselves'.¹⁰⁹

As raised previously, pro-Israeli speakers respond to criticism of ODS by describing it as anti-Semitism; in the context of geographies, this invests critique with a genocidal logic. For example, Sacks states: 'when you challenge Israel's very right to exist you are certainly calling into question the Jewish people's right to exist collectively'.¹¹⁰ Legal Professor Peter J. Spiro explains Israeli response to criticism as a response to this perception: 'there is a sort of international shaming dynamic and reputational cost to violators of international law ...[but] when you have got a country that perceives a threat to its survival the reputational interests pale against the supreme interest in survival'.¹¹¹ Similarly, at a pro-Israel rally in London, the former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Mandelson, connects ODS with a fundamental assertion of Israel's legitimacy as derived from, and as a specific consequence of, the Holocaust: 'The Holocaust is not the excuse for defending Israel's right to exist. It's the very reason ... why Jewish people needed a national homeland to go to and live in safety and security'.¹¹² However, these expressions constitute rare perspectives in the case of the *Guardian*. By contrast, *The New York Times* and *The Australian* take a critical view of the European position on ODS (often evident in the editorial material to be addressed in chapter 3) and the idea of Israel's existential peril is frequently iterated. The ideological terrain of survival is imaged through the State as body; for example, an IDF soldier comments he is 'left with no choice ... other than to keep fighting for a Jewish state whose chances for survival after 54 years he sometimes doubts'.¹¹³ This metaphor enables Israeli speakers to read land concessions or final borders as fatal wounds and decapitations, as in this remark: 'at this stage it's a bleeding nation that wants to live'.¹¹⁴ Sharon figures the idea of land concession specifically around 1967, hyperbolising: 'by way of blood and horror, he wants to force Israel into a unilateral withdrawal to its 1967 borders'.¹¹⁵ Israelis have often rejected withdrawal to these borders, claiming they are indefensible, which Sharon reiterates: 'Israel would not be able to survive with these [1967] borders'.¹¹⁶ Precisely the same argument is implicit in Netanyahu's 1995 thesis on terrorism, that one school of Arab thought believed that 'Israel could not be defeated in its present boundaries' and thus 'the proper policy would be to *reduce it to its former indefensible frontiers* and proceed to destroy it from there'.¹¹⁷ However, as Pappé notes, there is an irony in the rhetoric around the 1967 borders: the apparent securability of the post-67 borders is based on a boundary with the Jordan River, yet as Pappé continues, even a frail old man could leap over the Jordan River in places.¹¹⁸ Also ironically, despite repeated emphasis on Israel's physical vulnerability, and notwithstanding the material irrelevance of 1967 borders to

¹⁰⁸ Amnesty International, "Shielded from Scrutiny," 41.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Beaumont, "As a Suicide Bomber Strikes Again, Israeli Soldiers See No Hope of Peace," *Guardian*, April 11, 2002.

¹¹⁰ Whitaker, "UK Chief Rabbi Defends Attacks," April 18, 2002.

¹¹¹ Adam Liptak, "When Letter of the Law Does Not Spell 'Clarity'," *New York Times*, May 1, 2002.

¹¹² Bowcott, "Britain's Biggest Pro-Israel Rally Divides Loyalties," May 7, 2002.

¹¹³ Bennet, "Israeli Independence Day: Reflection, Not Fireworks," April 17, 2002.

¹¹⁴ Dore Gold, quoted in Serge Schmemmann, "Israeli Armor Units Continue Sweeping Through West Bank," *New York Times*, April 4, 2002.

¹¹⁵ Joel Brinkley, "Israel Starts Leaving 2 Areas, But Will Continue Drive," *New York Times*, April 9, 2002.

¹¹⁶ James Bennet, "Sharon Suggests Arafat Could Go To The Gaza Strip," *New York Times*, April 25, 2002.

¹¹⁷ Netanyahu, *Fighting Terrorism*, 100 (his emphasis).

¹¹⁸ Pappé, "Revisiting 1967."

Israel's defensibility, there is no question in ODS that Israel will be forced to make any land-for-peace concessions: 'Everyone knows we're not going to start drawing lines on a border for permanent status and dividing Jerusalem. That's just a nonstarter today'.¹¹⁹ Quite the reverse: Sharon's Prime Ministership saw an escalation in settlement construction and other measures which would further entrench Israeli presence in the West Bank.

5. Myth formation

The clearly articulated goals of ODS were in reality less feasibly achievable. Instead, Israelis expressed concern that ODS would radicalise Palestinians rather than eliminate terror. In evaluating the success of Israel's operations after the Second Lebanon War in 2006, there is an increasing trend towards decoupling material and psychological victory and declaring that, material success notwithstanding, Israel has suffered psychological defeat. However, this notion of psychological warfare is not yet prominent at the time of ODS, in part because the operation itself resembles a more traditional version of combat – for example, the ground forces that enter Jenin and the conventional presentation of the Palestinian fighters – but additionally because of the state of Israeli 'sense of power' in 2002. However, the sources negotiate a related question – not of psychological victory but of how Jenin will be remembered. Several reports (and editorials) in the *Guardian* suggest that Jenin will constitute a critical moment for Palestinian nationalism, that already it is 'becoming a legend' and will 'inform and define Palestinian consciousness'.¹²⁰ For example, a spokesperson for the MFA considers what Jenin might mean to Palestinian nationalism:

*the Palestinians are trying to create a mythology. There are two myths. One is Masada, or the Alamo: a small group of fighters against the odds. The other is Sabra and Shatila. But you cannot have both. If it was a fight, it was not a massacre. If it was not a massacre, it was a fight.*¹²¹

This touches on many aspects of the preceding chapter. By juxtaposing fight with massacre, and posing Sabra and Shatila as the model of massacre, it negates the claim of IDF wrongdoing, since one is to infer that Jenin is simply not comparable with Sabra and Shatila. This is a similar claim to the one raised earlier of defining operations as 'wars'. The comparison between Palestinian resistance in Jenin and Masada is also illustrative of the way in which Israel feels at this time; in OCL, Israelis (re)claim the trope of 'few against the many' or David against Goliath, in a way that is rarely invoked in ODS.

In contrast, neither *The New York Times* nor *The Australian* refers to the impact of Palestinian nationalism on ODS. Both sources instead promote the idea that Israel has succeeded in meeting its objectives. In the case of *The Australian*, reports negate the Palestinian rumours of a massacre with counter-assertions that Israel acknowledges the many dead but denies a massacre (by which one must assume they mean the terminology of massacre): implicitly affirming notions of 'balance' and 'warfare'.¹²² In *The New York Times*, there is an additional drive towards erasing and negating the notion that ODS might have had a positive impact on Palestinian psychology. For example the Defence Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer states: 'it doesn't matter how

¹¹⁹ Todd S. Purdum and Steven Erlanger, "Sharon Proposes Bypassing Arafat in Future Talks," *New York Times*, May 7, 2002.

¹²⁰ Goldenberg, "The Lunar Landscape that Was the Jenin Refugee Camp," April 16, 2002; "The Battle for the Truth" April 17, 2002.

¹²¹ Emmanuel Nashon, quoted in MacAskill, "'We Fight Like Girls and We are Accused of a Massacre'," April 20, 2002.

¹²² "Bomb Kills Six as Powell Arrives," *Australian*, April 13, 2002; "Powell Faces Shuffle Diplomacy," *Australian*, April 13, 2002; Janine di Giovanni, "Israel Denies Jenin Refugee Horror Tales," April 13, 2002.

much time is needed, we have to complete the victory in the camp so as not to allow the Palestinians to turn this place into a myth of bravery'.¹²³ In a pertinent summation of the way in which these two sources support and reflect Israeli perspective, a senior (unnamed) American official is quoted as saying: 'If you're going to die on a particular hill, don't die on Jenin. Die on something that's important to moving forward'.¹²⁴

Despite the position of *The New York Times* as expressed throughout this chapter, the paper did receive serious criticism from the American-Jewish community for its coverage of ODS. In fact, the paper reports on this 'intense public reaction', describing the response as unusually harsh and citing the consequences as including funding withdrawals and boycotts on a number of newspapers and news stations, including *The New York Times*. One of the issues of which Jewish and pro-Israeli critics complained was a moral equivalence drawn between parties to the conflict. For example, a Rabbi involved in organising the media boycott asked: 'Is it O.K. to keep writing things on suffering Palestinians who are suffering because of the terrorism of their colleagues and not to give sufficient attention to the victims of terror?'.¹²⁵ The paper also notes liberal Jewish voices who argued for a robust and independent media: 'We need more constructive criticism, more marshalling of information, more voices speaking out for fair reporting, not a call to shut ourselves off from reporting and opinions we don't want to deal with'.¹²⁶

To conclude this chapter, a brief note on the recurrent absence of Palestinian narrative in the sources which one cannot help but observe. Often, it is simply an absence. At other times, it is expressed outright, such as the idea that 'Palestinian suffering' should not be covered, or the idea that ODS was an Israeli story. However, absence also makes way for the inference of an other, against whom one defines oneself. This speaks to the Israeli conceptualisation of relations with the Palestinian; it highlights the arguments of Pappé outlined in chapter 1, in which he states that, in Israel's configuration of its own history, the Palestinians are mostly absent, their psychology always murderously opaque. In the frame of news coverage of conflict, it is neither possible nor desirable to eradicate the Palestinian; rather, it enables Israeli action, as it is consistently figured in *The New York Times* and *The Australian*, to be framed as reaction rather than initiative. Similarly, there is a trend in Israeli perspective to see Israel as a victim of Palestinian terrorism, narrative manipulation, or international misunderstanding. Although depictions in the *Guardian* are less stark in their support of Israel, none of the sources completely displaces this inference, despite the fact that it is in direct contradiction of the material facts and statistics of ODS. Indeed, Palestinian loss of all forms is often attributed to Palestinians, due either to political failure or the indefensible non-politics of terrorism. One is forced to the realisation that, in mainstream sources during ODS, the logic of Israel's politics prevails.

¹²³ James Bennet and David Rohde, "In Rubble of a Refugee Camp, Bitter Lessons for 2 Enemies," *New York Times*, April 21, 2002.

¹²⁴ Purdum, "In Drive for Peace Progress, White House Saw Jenin Inquiry as Expendable," May 4, 2002.

¹²⁵ Felicity Barringer, "Some U.S. Backers of Israel Boycott Dailies Over Mideast Coverage that They Deplore," *New York Times*, May 23, 2002.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3

Editorialising Operation Defensive Shield: in defence of militarism

Israeli leaders worry about the U.N. inquiry damaging Israel's reputation. Mr. Sharon needs to recognize that far more damage is being done by acting as if Israel has something to hide. ...A credible fact-finding mission is in Israel's interest.¹

Our knowledge will not be increased by this farcical UN inquiry. ... As progressive opinion around the world gets into stride to condemn Israel, we should ask ourselves: Is there a single country in the world that would not make a military response to a sustained campaign of suicide bombing ... that was killing dozens of its civilians every few weeks?²

The destruction of Jenin was extensive, unwitnessed by external mechanisms and seemed to some deeply criminal. To determine the facts, a UN inquiry was proposed. The epigraphs which open this chapter illustrate the effect of assumptions on narrative construction. *The New York Times* piece portrays the inquiry as beneficial to Israel's interest, as a mechanism fostering transparency, and the process as a means of acquittal in international opinion. By contrast, *The Australian*, adopting a particular stance on terrorism, rejects the idea that Israel has a case to answer. In just this example, one sees the role of narrative, terminology and underlying assumptions in naturalising points of view. In the fifth of his 1988 Massey Lectures, devoted to 'the functioning of the most advanced democratic systems of the modern era, and particularly ... the ways in which thought and understanding are shaped in the interests of domestic privilege', Chomsky focuses on the utility of terror to this power-discourse nexus. He argues that, despite assumptions of rationality by which one ought to dismiss the attribution of terror to 'official enemies' and rather accede to an investigation, the former 'wholly irrational position is the standard one in the media and the literature of terrorology,' and 'completely dominates public discussion, the media, and what is regarded as the scholarly literature'.³ Chomsky describes this as 'historical engineering' by which authoritative voices need provide no evidence; rather their claims are (propaganda) necessities and for this reason they are true.⁴ Comparing the language and perspectives of news media to the dystopian institutions depicted by Orwell in *1984*, Chomsky concludes:

With appropriate interpretations, then, we can rest content that the United States and its clients defend democracy, social reform, and self-determination against Communists, terrorists, and violent elements of all kinds. It is the responsibility of the media to laud the "democrats" and demonize the official enemy: the Sandinistas, the PLO, or whoever gets in the way. On occasion this requires some fancy footwork, but the challenge has generally been successfully met.⁵

This chapter focuses on the central themes of editorials published about ODS generally and in particular, Jenin. The two topics selected for their quantitative recurrence and the indispensable issue of framing assumptions which they imply are firstly, strategies to establish (re)solution and secondly, terror, security and Israel's sense of existential threat. The chapter captures the differences in editorial discourse, comparing the way accumulation of perspectives in each news source creates (alternate) realities about the conflict.

¹ "Inching Forward in the Mideast," April 30, 2002.

² Greg Sheridan, "Israelis are Not Guilty of Overkill," *Australian*, April 25, 2002.

³ Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Concord, ON: House of Anansi Press, 1991), 115-116.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

Editorials as source material

Editorials are the ‘voice of the newspaper’; ‘good editorials are considered some of the best examples of persuasive writing in all countries’.⁶ Yet despite the influence of editorials in shaping public opinion, there is a dearth of literature on the subject.⁷ It is perhaps for this reason that media has historically had the ability to manipulate reality; as Zulaika and Douglass describe, the media

*confronts us daily with the ‘realities’ of terrorism, as well as the discursive nature of many of the ‘facts’. Far from being a mirror of events, discourse may create its own reality ... for certain some facts are there but they take shape against a background of threats and fear that then becomes constitutive of the events themselves. Thus the impact can be produced as much by the discourse as by the immediacy of the threat let alone violence.*⁸

Historian Hayden White urges criticality towards the way in which language constructs ‘reality’, which he coins ‘fictions of factual representation’. He counsels against treating ‘language as a transparent vehicle of representation that brings no cognitive baggage of its own into the discourse’.⁹ Rather, addressing the artificial gap created between genres of writing and in particular those of history and literature, White argues for a realisation that ‘the facts do not speak for themselves, but that the historian speaks for them, speaks on their behalf, and fashions the fragments of the past into a whole whose integrity is – in its representation – a purely discursive one’.¹⁰ This argument, which resonates with the work of Chomsky and critical theorists of terrorism engaged in earlier chapters, informs my approach to the present materials.

Although the following chapter is primarily concerned by qualitative assessment of editorials, a brief quantitative review indicates how certain perspectives and assumptions are given primacy in each publication. The initial ambit of inquiry was to analyse editorials that directly referenced Jenin. This focus expanded when search of *The Australian* yielded a negligible sample of editorials that met the criteria. These absences raised the issue of narrative construction: if *The Australian* was disinclined to view Jenin as significant, this spoke to the centrality of framing. The search criterion was extended to include all editorials published about Israel between 1 April and 31 May, 2002. Several features were considered as follows: 1) contributor diversity as compared with the total number of editorials; 2) the percentage of editorials contributed by staff (or affiliated) journalists; 3) the number of contributions by Israeli or Palestinian commentators (and – although this is a qualitative matter – what subjects did they address). It is worth noting, with respect to the third feature, that a significant proportion of Israeli contributors are current or ex-government officials with significant or formerly significant roles in public and political life. In contrast, Palestinian contributors, considerably less represented than Israeli ones, are all writers – whether journalists, academics or commentators. Table 1 below illustrates the contributor diversity as compared to the actual number of editorials published. One of the figures in the staff or affiliated journalist category represents the paper’s unsigned editorials.

⁶ Ulla Connor, *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-Cultural Aspects of Second-Language Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 144.

⁷ Teun van Dijk, “Opinion and Ideologies in Editorials” (paper for the 4th International Symposium of Critical Discourse Analysis: Language, Social Life and Critical Thought, Athens, December 14-16, 1995), <http://www.discurtos.org/unpublished%20articles/Opinions%20and%20ideologies%20in%20editorials.htm>.

⁸ Zulaika and Douglass, “Terrorist Subject,” 29.

⁹ Hayden White, “The Fictions of Factual Representations,” in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 127.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

Table 1: Editorial quantity compared with number and range of contributors

Newspaper	Staff/ affiliated	Israeli	Palestinian	Other	Total # Contributors	Total # Editorials
<i>The Guardian</i>	15 (60.9%)	7 (15.2%)	1 (2.2%)	10 (21.7%)	33	46
<i>The Australian</i>	7 (69%)	0	1 (2.4%)	11 (28.6%)	19	42
<i>The New York Times</i>	8 (70%)	8 (10.5%)	3 (4%)	12 (15.5%)	31	77

As is evident in the table, the *Guardian* has a wider range of contributors relative to the total editorials published, while staff writers account for a lesser proportion of editorials. Additionally, the correlation between the total number of editorials (46) and total number of contributors (33) indicates that there are few contributors published more than once (only five contributors have a second editorial, or in one case a third, all of whom are staff/affiliated journalists). In comparison, in *The New York Times* and *The Australian*, the total number of editorials is more than double the number of contributors. *The Australian* in which a similar number of editorials appear (42) has significantly fewer contributors (19), and a proportionally higher percentage of the editorials are the work of a small set of staff writers (69 per cent). In addition to some five unsigned pieces, five staff writers account for 23 of the editorials published. Two journalists, Roy Eccleston, the paper’s Washington correspondent, and Greg Sheridan, the foreign editor, contribute nine and seven pieces respectively. *The New York Times*, which publishes a considerably greater number of editorials (77) than either of its counterparts has, like *The Australian*, a comparatively low diversity in contributors (31). The number of contributors is slightly lower than the *Guardian*, while *The New York Times* publishes almost double the number of editorials. In this instance, seven named contributors, aside from the 19 unsigned pieces, account for 35 of the editorials published. The most frequently published of these are Thomas L. Friedman, William Safire and Nicholas D. Kristof, who have eleven, nine and seven pieces respectively. This lack of diversity in *The Australian* and *The New York Times* highlights the dominance of certain perspectives within the editorials of these two papers. Van Dijk has noted that editorials are written by journalists (or other writers) who produce them both as professionals and as representative members of groups with whom they share a repository of assumptions.¹¹ The implication of this qualitative survey is that low contribution diversity ensures that certain perspectives are serially reinforced in both *The Australian* and *The New York Times*.

The following chapter develops a picture of how each paper portrays the stakes and positions parties to the Israel–Palestinian conflict. Both *The New York Times* and the *Guardian* have been the subject of well documented criticism of their editorial line, much of which arose from the Second Intifada. Colin Shindler admonishes the *Guardian* for what he describes as its *idée fixe* on Israel during this period.¹² Shindler, notable as the first ever Professor of Israeli Studies appointed at the London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), ‘the college with the reputation of being the most hostile anti-Israeli campus in the UK’, writes that, despite the *Guardian*’s historical association with the Zionist cause, the paper departed from this position on the

¹¹ van Dijk, “Opinions and Ideologies.”

¹² Colin Shindler, “Reading the Guardian: Jews, Israel-Palestine and the Origins of Irritation,” in *Jews, Muslims and Mass Media: Mediating the ‘Other’*, eds Tudor Parfitt and Yulia Egorova (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 172-174.

eve of the Six Day War.¹³ In Shindler's estimation, the *Guardian's* attempt to reconcile Zionist ambition with Arab rights constituted a 'balanced approach'.¹⁴ This balance was disrupted when, at the time of the Six Day War, leader writer Frank Edmead sought to explain the Arab viewpoint: 'Non-Zionists may surely ask why if Jews claim the right to return after 2000 years, the Palestinian refugees have no such right after only twenty years'.¹⁵ Shindler argues that subsequently the *Guardian* adopted a 'new line' which 'was not simply a struggle for justice for the Palestinians but a subtle delegitimisation of the State itself through selectivity of both facts and quotations'.¹⁶ In particular, he criticises the paper's tendency to simplify the 'complexity' of the situation by representing 'Zionist villains against Palestinian heroes'.¹⁷ Chomsky notes US criticism of British media coverage in ODS and particularly with reference to 'the Jenin story'; however, his own criticism is of the 'independent US media'.¹⁸ Indeed, Jenin was an event so horrifying that, according to Chomsky, even in the US media 'careful readers could learn at least a little about the crimes that had taken place'. He argues that, despite the 'most prestigious media "watchdog", the *Columbia Journalism Review*, condemn[ing] the British press for "embracing Israel's guilt as established fact", in fact 'the "independent US media" reached exactly the same conclusions about mass slaughter as the disreputable British media (and others), which, however, failed the test of "independence" by not adopting the framework of US-Israeli propaganda as rigidly as the editors of the *Review* deem appropriate'.¹⁹ Similarly to Chomsky's perspective, Amer, whose research focuses on columnist Thomas Friedman, notes that Friedman has been described as 'an institution at the NYT' and that Robert Fisk has characterised him as 'an increasingly messianic columnist for the New York Times'.²⁰ Amer's analysis of editorials during the Second Intifada leads him to the conclusion that 'more than any other major perspectives and points of view ... Friedman largely anchors his construction of the situation in relation to Israeli explanations and positions on how to deal with the Palestinians'.²¹ There is no such critique of *The Australian*, comparatively a minor player in foreign news coverage. However, the paper, owned by *News Corporation Australia*, is closely associated with media magnate Rupert Murdoch and has trended towards an increasingly conservative position, reflected also in the sourcing of much of its content from papers owned by its parent company, *News Corp*, including the American publication *Wall Street Journal* and *The Times* of London. This integration of material, and the prominence of foreign editor Greg Sheridan, whose pieces closely reflect the criticism levelled against columnists for *The New York Times*, makes this paper comparable to *The New York Times* although, as the following work illustrates, it tends towards stauncher support of the Israeli position.

War crimes, the UN inquiry, and Israel's rejectionism

On 17 April, the date on which IDF troops withdrew from Jenin, an unsigned editorial in the *Guardian* made the following chilling observations:

¹³ Simon Round, "Interview: Colin Shindler," *Jewish Chronicle Online*, October 28, 2009, <http://www.thejc.com/lifestyle/the-simon-round-interview/21373/interview-colin-shindler>.

¹⁴ Shindler, "Reading the Guardian," 158.

¹⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 158.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 157-159.

¹⁸ Baroud, *Searching Jenin*, 17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁰ Amer, "'Telling-it-like-it-is,'" 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

Jenin camp looks like the scene of a crime. Its concrete rubble and tortured metal evokes another horror half a world away in New York, smaller in scale but every bit as repellent in its particulars, no less distressing, and every bit as man-made. Jenin smells like a crime. The stench of decaying flesh, of dead bodies left to rot or buried unabsolved under collapsed buildings greets those aid workers and reporters who manage to gain access. What cruel deficit of pity denies those who died the benefit of departing grace? Jenin feels like a crime. No sentient person can sift this evidence of broken lives and homes; witness the dry-eyed children, their minds shocked and twisted beyond words; look upon the detritus of a frugal, refugee existence - tin plates in a kitchen sink, cheap bathroom tiles, abandoned sleeping mats - turned into ownerless rubbish by bullets, bulldozers and rockets; and not demand an urgent reckoning. Jenin already has that aura of infamy that attaches to a crime of especial notoriety.²²

Two days later, on 19 April 2002, UN Security Council Resolution 1405 was adopted unanimously. The resolution expressed concern about the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people, called for a lifting of restrictions against the operation of humanitarian organisations in the area, and welcomed UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's intention to dispatch a fact-finding mission to Jenin refugee camp. The resolution was already a compromise, reportedly drawn up by the Americans with the cooperation of the Israelis, which was substituted for 'a strongly worded Arab resolution expressing shock at reports of a massacre there and calling for a formal United Nation investigation'.²³ It was stated that Israel was considerably less threatened by 'a personal initiative of the secretary general' in contrast to a formal investigation, and Israel's President Shimon Peres had telephoned Annan to accede to the American-authored resolution.²⁴ However in the ten days following adoption of Resolution 1405, Israel raised serial obstacles to the terms of the investigation, including the composition of the fact-finding team, Annan's refusal to negotiate on the selection (although he did not rule out the inclusion of additional experts), and the sense that the UN team had been designed to entrap Israel by 'moving the goal post from fact-finding to a war crimes investigation', as Sharon opined.²⁵ The latter complaint was raised notwithstanding that Israel had extracted the promise that cooperating IDF personnel would remain anonymous and that information obtained would not be admissible against them.²⁶ As a result of Israel's obduracy, the fact-finding team was disbanded by Annan on 3 May.²⁷

As a substitute for the failure of Resolution 1405, General Assembly Resolution ES-10/10 was adopted on 7 May 2002, which proposed the preparation of a report 'drawing upon the available resources and information,

²² "The Battle for the Truth," April 17, 2002.

²³ Kifner, "Israel Says it Will Allow a Fact Finding Mission," April 20, 2002.

²⁴ Ibid. Also mentioned in *the Guardian*, however only after the inquiry was abandoned: Julian Borger, "Sharon Puts Washington on the Spot," *Guardian*, May 8, 2002.

²⁵ Quoted in Chris McGreal, "Israel Defiant," *Guardian*, May 1, 2002. Several articles document Israel's complaints: John Kifner, "Annan Picks Team to Examine Camp Attacked by Israel," *New York Times*, April 23, 2002; Serge Schmemmann, "Israelis to Delay U.N. Fact-Finders," *New York Times*, April 24, 2002; John Kifner, "Annan Appears to Dismiss Israel's Balking on Inquiry," *New York Times*, April 24, 2002; Suzanne Goldenberg, "Israel Blocks UN Mission to Jenin," *Guardian*, April 24, 2002; MacAskill, "Israelis Face Annan with Jenin Inquiry Objections," April 25, 2002; Chris McGreal, "UN in Crisis Meeting as Israel Snubs Mission," *Guardian*, April 29, 2002; "Annan Rejects Israeli Stall Bid," *Australian*, April 25, 2002; "Sharon Stalls on UN Visit to Jenin," *Australian*, April 29, 2002.

²⁶ McGreal, "UN in Crisis Meeting as Israel Snubs Mission," April 29, 2002.

²⁷ Disbandment of the mission is described in UNGA, "Illegal Israeli Actions", particularly at II (Security Council Resolution 1405 (2002)). See also: James Bennet, "U.N. May Drop Inquiry at Jenin as Israel Resists," *New York Times*, May 1, 2002; John Kifner, "Annan Vows to Disband Fact-Finders for Jenin," *New York Times*, May 2, 2002; McGreal, "Israel Defiant," May 1, 2002; Brian Whitaker, "Last-Ditch UN Talks to Save Jenin Inquiry," *Guardian*, May 3, 2002; "Arafat Waits on Prisoner Transfer," *Australian*, May 2, 2002.

on the recent events that took place in Jenin and other Palestinian cities'.²⁸ The UN report 'was written without a visit to Jenin or the other Palestinian cities in question and it therefore relies completely on available resources and information'.²⁹ During compilation of the report, both the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the UN were requested 'to submit information but only the latter did so'.³⁰ The report, published on 30 July, 2002 and relying on 'public statements of Israeli officials and publicly available documents of the Government of Israel', was largely irrelevant.³¹ In contrast, HRW published a report in early May which, in particular, considered applicable legal frameworks and collated extensive testimony relating to civilian casualties and deaths in Jenin. The release of the HRW report, noted in both the *Guardian* and *The New York Times*, concurrent with the disbandment of the UN fact-finding team, suggested there was strong *prima facie* evidence that the IDF had committed grave breaches of the *Fourth Geneva Convention* (war crimes) in Jenin.³² However, neither this report, nor the later findings of the UN report, nor that produced by Amnesty International, led either to a domestic inquiry in Israel or any international pursuit of the charges laid. In the following year, two volumes of witness testimony were produced about Jenin, which Chomsky, writing the preface to one, welcomed as a tool to overcoming 'barriers to comprehension' that were fostered by the US media's management of 'the Jenin story'.³³

Only days after calls for a fact-finding mission were abandoned, several news pieces illustrated the contempt in which the inquiry was held by both Israel and the US. Moreover, despite extensive evidence of criminal breaches committed by the IDF during ODS and the criticism of Israeli conduct voiced in Europe, which extended to non-binding sanctions in the European Union against Israel, the international sentiment desirous of holding Israel to account quickly evaporated. In contrast to the other sources, no record of the controversy appeared in *The Australian*. Instead, on 25 April, days before the mission was formally buried, foreign editor Greg Sheridan simply states that Israel has no case to answer. The day after the mission was formally disbanded - two pieces appear in *The New York Times* which reinforce Israel's attitude towards the inquiry. The first, an editorial by Yuval Steinitz, Chairman of the Subcommittee for Defence Planning and Policy in the Knesset, explains Israel's reasons for rejecting the mission, concluding: 'Israel has nothing to hide. Israel rejected the United Nations fact-finding committee not because of what the committee sought to explore, but because of what it was determined to ignore.'³⁴ The *Guardian* reports on the American-Israel collusion far more critically, stating that: 'The Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, went out of his way to embarrass the divided US administration ... openly thanking the Americans for scuttling the proposed UN investigation of Palestinian deaths in the West Bank town of Jenin'.³⁵ This indicates the lack of visibility of Palestinian vulnerability in ODS (a situation which Falk notes changed in the coverage of OCL), while in contrast, the terminology of 'war

²⁸ UNGA, "Illegal Israeli Actions," summary.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Whitaker, "Last-Ditch UN Talks to Save Jenin Inquiry," May 3, 2002; David Rohde, "Rights Group Doubts Mass Deaths in Jenin, But Sees Signs of War Crimes," *New York Times*, May 3, 2002.

³³ Noam Chomsky, preface to *Searching Jenin*, 17-18. See also Hamzeh and Mays, *Operation Defensive Shield*.

³⁴ Yuval Steinitz, "Israel Has Nothing to Hide," *New York Times*, May 4, 2002.

³⁵ Borger, "Sharon Puts Washington on the Spot," May 8, 2002.

crimes', a euphemism for state authored terrorism, as Jackson argues, is substantively dismissed in the rejection of the UN inquiry.³⁶

1. (Re)olution and the future of Israel–Palestinian relations

Halper describes possible futures with reference to a triangle; at each vertex he writes a term central to the identity of Israel: 'land', 'democratic', and 'Jewish'. He argues that fulfilling all three desires is impossible while the fulfilment of two is obtainable. However, the attempt to sustain these irreconcilable ideals underpins the uneasy nature of Israel's identity. Political Scientist, Marcelo Svirsky, notes this paradox with respect to endgame negotiations:

It is no secret that the refugee problem is Israel's red rag, but only because the refusal to negotiate the refugee problem is the flip side of the definition of Israel as a Jewish state, which in turn points also to the question of the status of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. This is why Israel insists on being recognised as a Jewish state as a precondition for reaching an agreement with the Palestinians. This demand reveals Israel's deepest collective desires. Being recognised as a Jewish state means closing down the future ... It means legitimising the way of life ... that is incapable of generating anything but segregation, dispossession and social injustice.³⁷

Further, as documented by Pappé (and discussed in earlier chapters), there has been a fundamental inability in Israel (and elsewhere) to interrogate the era between 1948 and 1967, such that the struggle for the future is most often framed through the Six Day War's outcome of occupation and the assumption that the solution would be to end Occupation and establish a Palestinian State.³⁸ This constructs a two-state solution as an Israeli benevolence within the false equation of 'land for peace', which presupposes that a land-for-peace deal (first construed in the UN Security Council resolution 242 following the Six Day War) would entail a *de jure* recognition of Israel's legitimacy by Palestinians and the Arab states in exchange for relinquishing an indeterminate amount of the territories occupied in 1967. The invisibility of contradictions as outlined by Halper and Svirsky and the minutia of land-for-peace discussion broadly characterises the framework of assumptions in which many of the following editorials operate. The options outlined illustrate how current assumptions about resolution typically subscribe to Israeli national narrative and the proposals for solution which flow from that paradigm. Few contributors are able (or enabled) to present ideas which might have a transformative effect on either the conflicts' so-called intransience or Israel–Palestinian relations.³⁹ Questions posed in this section to assess the in/visibility of underlying assumptions about resolution all relate to concession: 1) What concessions are prerequisites to resuming diplomacy? 2) What should Israel concede for short or long-term stability? 3) What does an endgame look like, and how is it to be implemented?

As catalogued in chapter 1, Israeli national narrative eradicates significant historical context and makes Palestinian action difficult to comprehend. Accepting this position gives the impression of Palestinian

³⁶ Richard Falk, "The Goldstone Report Without Goldstone," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41, no.1 (2011): 97, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jps.2011.XLI.1.96>; Jackson, "Ghosts of State Terror," 8.

³⁷ Marcelo Svirsky, *After Israel: Towards Cultural Transformation*, (London: Zed Books, 2014), 208.

³⁸ See chap. 2 generally in Pappé, *Idea of Israel*.

³⁹ Hage, "Narcissistic Victimhood," 101-106; Bashir Bashir, "Reconciling Historical Injustices: Deliberative Democracy and the Politics of Reconciliation," *Res Publica* 18 (2012): 140, doi: 10.1007/s11158-011-9163-1.

intransigence and the conflict's intractability. Several editorials relate to this issue of narrative logic. Unusually for the tenor of *The Australian*, in one editorial, Eccleston focuses on the failure of UN Resolution 242. He argues that its ambiguous wording is a critical example of 'how the often-cited roadmaps to peace can so easily take the different sides to opposite places'.⁴⁰ Contested perception is pursued in the *Guardian* in a piece which eschews reference to peace initiatives or plans, rather focusing on how contemporary psychology circulates amongst Israelis and Palestinians: 'both sides believe they are the victim, both sides are fighting for their very lives. And, like parallel lines, they never touch'.⁴¹ Both engage in the fundamental question of narrative primacy. More commonly, editorials outlining plans for resolution rest on the assumption that this will be realised in two-states. Two additional assumptions often accompany this expectation – first, that the US will be the key peace broker, and second, that Israel is at most only 'half' to blame. For example, shortly before ODS, the Arab League had acquiesced to the Israeli fantasy of recognition as a Jewish state in backing the Saudi Arabian peace plan which signified 'acceptance by the entire Arab world ... of a Jewish state in their midst: the existential security Israelis have yearned for since the birth of their state more than 50 years ago'.⁴² However, this had little practical impact on Israeli action; ODS was initiated shortly thereafter. This highlights what repeatedly confounds the editorials, although is rarely explicit: the issues of settlements. Over and over, discussion about resolution founders at settlements; what the editorials, by and large, are unable to acknowledge is that Israel's ambiguous position on settlements – a corollary of its refusal to unequivocally abandon the fantasy of a 'Greater Israel' – is the primary obstruction to realising two-states.

These logical blocks, perpetuated by arguments founded on misinformation, are addressed by Peter Beinart, who debunks the basis for Israel's claims about settlements and the peace process. Beinart argues that the three routine arguments to justify occupation – that Jews have a right to live in the West Bank, that the occupation is essential to Israel's security, and that the occupation is not Israel's fault – are simply not evidentially supported. With respect to the first, he argues that, until a Palestinian state is created, 'Jewish leaders who encourage Jewish migration to the West Bank are playing with fire'. He argues that the 'rhetoric about freedom of movement sounds liberal, but it's actually profoundly illiberal', since it extends to Jews only; or, if it is genuinely inclusive, then the argument is advocating 'an unrestricted Palestinian right of return and the likely end of Israel as a Jewish state'.⁴³ To the second, he notes that even the Israeli security establishment has argued that maintaining the occupation poses greater security risks than dismantling it.⁴⁴ The third, particularly relevant to this analysis, relates to a false belief of Israelis and Jews about the offers made by Ehud Barak at Camp David and Taba. Beinart writes that one of the most destructive misconceptions of these failed talks is that Israelis continue to believe that Palestinians were offered 'everything they could reasonably want, only to see their effort scorned'.⁴⁵ He raises three essential points with respect to this argument. Firstly, he notes that, because much of these negotiations remain 'shrouded in ambiguity, it is more accurate to say that Barak and Arafat had very different visions of what a Palestinian state would look like than that Barak offered Arafat a fully fledged

⁴⁰ Roy Eccleston, "One Word at Heart of Region's Bloodshed," *Australian*, April 8, 2002.

⁴¹ Freedland, "Parallel Universe," April 17, 2002.

⁴² Jonathan Freedland, "The New Landscape," *Guardian*, April 3, 2002.

⁴³ Beinart, *Crisis of Zionism*, 60.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

state and the Palestinian leader refused to accept it'.⁴⁶ Secondly, he highlights the effect of Israel's position on settlements:

*the historical record clearly shows that, contrary to the American Jewish establishment's twin insistences, that Israel tried to give back virtually the entire West Bank, and that settlements are not a major obstacle to peace, it was precisely because Israel insisted on retaining most of the settlers that it could not offer the Palestinians virtually the entire West Bank.*⁴⁷

A claim emphasised by Israel and America at the time of breakdown, which has been particularly insidious is the myth that Israel had no negotiating partner. This was propagated as an election strategy for Barak, in which America was complicit, to bolster his chances of re-election. However, it has since been repudiated by top aides to Clinton and Barak as 'a flagrant lie'.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, one sees all three arguments circulating in the editorials on resolution.

A second contention in editorials about resolution is the role of US peace brokering. In *The Australian*, the US role is assumed as indispensable and without prejudice. With one exception, *The Australian* fails to consider international perspectives and, on the contrary, is typically scornful of alternative positions, ignoring excesses of State power and reiterating the normalcy of Israel's actions.⁴⁹ In *The New York Times*, the indispensability of the US role is also assumed, though critiqued for its failings, in particular its historical favouritism of Israel.⁵⁰ A key obstacle to resolution and the credibility of US peace brokering raised in several editorials is the special relationship between the US and Israel.⁵¹ In contrast, editorials in the *Guardian* express doubt about the credibility of the US as chief peace broker. Several pieces argue that US perspective attributes failing support in Europe for the 'War on Terror', and ODS specifically, to be the result of European jealousy of American power; a position they consider spurious and consistent with the chilling effect of the 'War on Terror' on dissenting perspectives in the US.⁵² Yet despite the *Guardian's* criticism of US policy, editorials in *The New York Times* acknowledge the significance of that perspective. Reflection on national 'inter-subjectivities' in both papers results in an inter-textual discourse which addresses the relation between European and US perspective. As a strategy of persuasive writing, it strengthens arguments in *The New York Times* by acknowledging awareness of European thought. One editorial even makes explicit the importance of retaining dissenting voices in the atmosphere created by the War on Terror.⁵³ Another by Zbigniew Brzezinski, former US security advisor and key negotiator between Israel and Egypt, urges US sensitivity to world public opinion:

There is a nearly unanimous global consensus that United States policy has become one-sided and morally hypocritical, with clear displays of sympathy for Israeli victims of terrorist violence and

⁴⁶ Beinart, *Crisis of Zionism*, 67.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴⁹ Scott Burchill, "Palestinian Nationalism Won't Die With Arafat," *Australian*, April 2, 2002; Sheridan, "Israelis are Not Guilty of Overkill," April 25, 2002; Janet Albrechtsen, "Global Justice Not Fine by Us," *Australian*, May 15, 2002.

⁵⁰ Tony Judt, "America's Restive Partners," *New York Times*, April 28, 2002; Nicholas D. Kristof, "Behind the Rage," *New York Times*, April 16, 2002; Peter Schneider, "When Europeans and Americans Disagree," *New York Times*, May 5, 2002.

⁵¹ Schneider, "When Europeans and American Disagree," May 5, 2002; Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Moral Duty, National Interest," *New York Times*, April 7, 2002.

⁵² Julian Borger "Muted Criticism in American Newspapers," *Guardian*, April 17, 2002; "Absolutely No Answer," *Guardian*, May 8, 2002; Jonathan Steele, "New York Is Starting to Feel Like Brezhnev's Moscow," *Guardian*, May 16, 2002.

⁵³ "Unleashing the Loyal Opposition," *New York Times*, April 15, 2002.

*relative indifference to the (much more numerous) Palestinian civilian casualties. At risk is America's ability to maintain international support for the war on terrorism ...*⁵⁴

It also encourages a more nuanced forum for opinions, rather than the binary thinking the Bush Doctrine had encouraged. This is illustrated by historian Tony Judt's argument that:

*In the arrogance of power, officials in Washington have taken to describing the Europeans as "our fair-weather friends", whose sensibilities can safely be ignored ... But this is imprudent. Fair-weather or not, the Europeans are our closest friends. But many Europeans see the world very differently, and it is a dangerous illusion to suppose that the logic of globalization must needs bring us together.*⁵⁵

a) The Australian

Twelve editorials in *The Australian* relate to resolution. These pieces typically position Israel–Palestinian relations within a framework of US politics, including the ‘War on Terror’ and regional fragility, specifically the imminence of war on Iraq. This tendency to treat ODS as paradigmatic of political crisis in the Middle East’s interaction with the West is unique amongst the sources. US power is emphasised as the key influence to achieve resolution – which reflects the prolific authorship of Eccleston, the paper’s Washington correspondent, who writes six of these pieces. Almost unexceptionally, the editorials attribute a formal balance to ‘two sides’, ignoring the substantive power imbalance. Consistent with this, Israeli concession is framed in the language of ‘acceding’ to two-states and ‘withdrawal’ from territory as acts of benevolence. This depiction aligns with imaging of Israelis as ‘peace lovers’ and the Palestinians as failed negotiating partners: a representation which reflects the typical Israeli claims about resolution outlined by Beinart. Thus, almost uniformly, *The Australian* replicates the assumptions of Israeli national narrative.

While four editorials stipulate undertakings for Israel to restore stability, only one proposes Israeli concession as a precondition. Yet this is contingent on the need for Palestinian concession, replicating the argument of balance; quoting former US Secretary of Defence William Cohen, the editorial concludes: ‘in the end, Arabs need recognition of their dignity, while Israelis need the dignity of recognition -- and neither is likely to be willing to wait until the end to get it’.⁵⁶ Two additional editorials urge Israel to acquiesce to a two-state solution implemented and administered by the US. Staff writer Paul Kelly presents this as obvious: ‘everybody knows the basis of the settlement. The principles of the two-state solution are well established and are close to the proposals Clinton advanced at Camp David. Both sides know this.’⁵⁷ In the narrower framework of the operation, Eccleston advocates for decisive US intervention. To support this argument, he presents two expert opinions on disengagement, which both agree that failure of Israel and Palestinians necessitates internationalisation of the conflict, with the US as peace brokers. In addition, both experts state that resolution would be conditional on Israel relinquishing (some) territory to either international custody or Palestinian control.⁵⁸ Philip Adams, well-known radio host for the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation* and occasional columnist for *The Australian*, outlines the most onerous Israeli concessions printed in this paper. Adams argues

⁵⁴ Brzezinski, “Moral Duty, National Interest,” April 7, 2002.

⁵⁵ Judt, “America’s Restive Partners,” April 28, 2002.

⁵⁶ “Mission Impossible in the Middle East,” *Australian*, April 8 2002.

⁵⁷ Paul Kelly, “US Needs Guts in Mid-East,” *Australian*, April 20, 2002.

⁵⁸ Roy Eccleston, “The Rock Between Two Hard Cases,” *Australian*, April 13, 2002.

that Israel is primarily responsible for the current impasse. Invoking the failed Taba proposals, he asserts that final settlement would require Israel to dismantle the majority of settlements, make Jerusalem a dual capital and abandon its ‘anachronistic law of return’. In exchange, Palestinians would forgo their right to the same.⁵⁹ In many ways, Adams’ position, somewhat radical as it seems in *The Australian*, reflects that advocated by Beinart. These editorials cumulatively reiterate, in their highly qualified visions for resolution and in particular in the minutiae of detail in negotiating a final two-state status, a tendency to subscribe to Israeli rationalisation of 1967 as the date at which Israel lost its way. Moreover, Israel’s underlying desire for a ‘Greater Israel’ is tacitly legitimated.

Four articles assess limitations to the US role, attributed to the manipulation of Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Three of these are contributed by Eccleston; he argues that, in contrast to the historic capacity of the US to moderate Israeli action, Sharon’s failure to pull out of the West Bank at the ‘US request has jeopardised US standing in the Middle East.’⁶⁰ A later article argues that, while ODS has made ‘Mr Sharon and Mr Arafat look like lions to their own constituents, the US looks naive, weak and indecisive’.⁶¹ Similarly, an editorial by Lawrence Kaplan, a senior editor at *The New Republic* states that the limit to US influence is the result of current Israeli and Palestinian leadership, while additionally Kaplan criticises ‘an incoherent policy towards the conflict in the US’.⁶² Republishing a piece from *The New Republic* further illustrates *The Australian*’s position. *The New Republic*, an American publication, has been noted for its partisanship on the Israel–Palestinian conflict: ‘nothing has been as consistent about the past 34 years of *TNR* as the magazine’s devotion to Peretz’s own understanding of what is good for Israel’.⁶³ Moreover, the aforementioned founder and former owner, Martin Peretz, has been reported as saying that the interests of Israel and the United States are identical and that ‘support for Israel is deep down, an expression of America’s best view of itself’.⁶⁴ In sum, editorials on resolution in *The Australian* closely mirror the argumentation offered from Israeli sources during ODS.⁶⁵

b) The Guardian

The *Guardian* devotes 50 per cent of editorial space to resolution (18 articles). A range of editorials address obstacles to peace, and specifically Israel’s obligations. They reject some of the basic tenets of Israeli national narrative, including the necessity of occupation and expansion. They also advocate for Israeli-led change as a precursor to peace, which requires significant shifts in Israeli perception about Palestinians, land, control of the Palestinian population, and appropriate peace brokers. Two editorials, rejecting the myth of Israel’s indefensibility within pre-1967 borders, state that Israel must abandon aspirations of ‘a greater Israel’.⁶⁶ Several editorials make an even stronger case, that Israeli land concessions are a prerequisite to negotiation. Novelist

⁵⁹ Philip Adams, “Now Peace It Together,” *Australian*, May 25, 2002.

⁶⁰ Roy Eccleston, “Time for Bush to Raise Stakes,” *Australian*, April 11, 2002.

⁶¹ Roy Eccleston, “Sharon Humiliates ‘Naive, Weak Bush’,” *Australian*, April 20, 2002.

⁶² Lawrence Kaplan, “Mid-East Obstacles Stymie US,” *Australian*, April 9, 2002.

⁶³ Eric Alterman, “The New Republic Was in Trouble Long Before Chris Hughes Bought It,” *American Prospect*, June 17, 2007, <http://prospect.org/article/new-republic-was-trouble-long-chris-hughes-bought-it>.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Dor describes commonalities between Israeli media sources: “the foundational basis lies in the portrayal of Israel – its government, its military, its people – as an agent without intentions, an innocent society that has been pushed ... by the sheer force of Palestinian violence, with no agenda of its own except self-defense ... [ODS] is characterized by all news providers as nothing but a desperate attempt to do something – whatever possible – against terror.” See *Suppression of Guilt*, 73 and chap. 5 generally.

⁶⁶ Nicholas Blincoe, “Under Fire in Bethlehem,” *Guardian*, April 3, 2002; Freedland, “The New Landscape,” April 3, 2002.

Ahdaf Soueif argues: ‘the occupation is not negotiable. It is illegal by all accepted international laws. It is immoral, obscene, corrupting. Negotiations about the other issues in question should take place after the occupation is ended’.⁶⁷ Similarly, Khalil Shikaki, academic and Director of the Palestine Centre for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah, writes that negotiation cannot occur without Palestinian independence first, because their current duress renders negotiations invalid.⁶⁸

As noted, the Arab League had, in the month prior to ODS, tacitly acknowledged Israel as a Jewish State; yet, as Freedland points out, US and Israeli diplomacy failed to capitalize on this. On the contrary, Israel initiated ODS.⁶⁹ Why? Chomsky has argued for decades that, while the US was practically ‘deflecting the threat of peace in the Middle East, it never opposed the peace process in acceptable commentary’.⁷⁰ It is, he argues, a phenomenon of discourse in which ‘peace process’ is the language applied ‘to whatever the United States happens to be doing or advocating at some moment’.⁷¹ He reiterates this position during ODS in the *Guardian*, arguing that the broad acceptance of a US and Israeli conspiracy to portray Arabs as insincere peace partners deflects from real obstacles in resolving the conflict. Rather, he argues the US is not a credible peace broker, since it has routinely pandered to Israel:

It is regularly claimed that all peace proposals have been undermined by Arab refusal to accept the existence of Israel (the facts are quite different), and by terrorists like Arafat who have forfeited "our trust". How that trust may be regained is explained by Edward Walker, a Clinton Middle East adviser: Arafat must announce that "we put our future and fate in the hands of the US" - which has led the campaign to undermine Palestinian rights for 30 years... The basic problem then, as now, traces back to Washington, which has persistently backed Israel's rejection of a political settlement.⁷²

Transformation of Israel–Palestinian relations is raised on several occasions. Both Shikaki and the Reverend Desmond Tutu, former archbishop of Cape Town and Chair of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, consider the effect of ODS. They argue that short-term security gains are negated by the impact of the operation’s brutality on generations of Palestinians: ‘Israel will never get true security and safety through oppressing another people ... The military action of recent days, I predict with certainty, will not provide the security and peace Israelis want; it will only intensify the hatred’.⁷³ Even Yossi Beilin, former Israeli Justice Minister in the Government of Ehud Barak, reflects this view: ‘The Israeli war against the terrorist infrastructure will give birth to more terrorists because the terrorist infrastructure lies within people's hearts. It can be uprooted only if there is hope for a different kind of life in the Middle East.’⁷⁴ All three editorials acknowledge the disparity of power and responsibility between the parties. These positions, unquestionably the most critical of Israeli action at the time of ODS amongst the three papers, generally reflect the Zionist position, for example Beinart’s argument that ‘the occupation is not the best way to combat terrorism’.⁷⁵ Notwithstanding criticism of Palestinian tactics, these pieces charge Israel with the primary responsibility. This, again, reflects Beinart’s

⁶⁷ Ahdaf Soueif, “Do Something,” *Guardian*, April 3, 2002.

⁶⁸ Khalil Shikaki, “Why Siege Only Makes Things Worse,” *Guardian*, April 4, 2002.

⁶⁹ Freedland, “The New Landscape,” April 3, 2002.

⁷⁰ Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions*, 120-121.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁷² Noam Chomsky, “The Solution is the Problem,” *Guardian*, May 11, 2002.

⁷³ Desmond Tutu, “Apartheid in the Holy Land,” *Guardian*, April 29, 2002.

⁷⁴ Yossi Beilin, “A Different Life is Still Possible, But It’s Slipping Away,” *Guardian*, April 2, 2002.

⁷⁵ Beinart, *Crisis of Zionism*, 62.

argument of Israel's ethical responsibility: 'Israel has been unlucky in its adversaries. But accepting the ethical responsibilities of power requires accepting the way that the occupation has shaped the behaviour of those adversaries. To ignore those ethical responsibilities constitutes political and moral blindness.'⁷⁶

A less commonly expressed position in the *Guardian* is represented by Jonathan Spyer, academic and advisor to the Israeli Government on international relations, who advocates that Israel retain its current position, both for the sake of clearly illustrating the State's imperviousness to Palestinian violence and also to demonstrate that ODS was essential to State survival: 'irreconcilable differences rule out conflict resolution. Facts must be faced. Returning the conflict to the lowest possible temperature is the only available objective. Conflict management will only emerge from the firm maintenance of Israeli deterrent capacity.'⁷⁷ Spyer's governmental affiliation and long-service in the IDF make his unqualified approval for Israeli action unsurprising. However, of seven Israeli-authored editorials in the *Guardian* this is the only one uncritically supportive of Israeli action. According to Ian Mayes, readers' editor for the *Guardian*, the paper received considerable criticism for its coverage, which was accused of being blatantly anti-Israel and even anti-Semitic. Mayes notes that 'complaints from Jewish, or pro-Israeli readers ... far outweigh complaints from pro-Palestinian or other sources'.⁷⁸ However, it was noted that this was a result of readers who only read articles circulated by lobby groups and also because 'the Israelis' information network and monitoring of the press is much more active and professional than the Palestinians'.⁷⁹ Coverage of Jenin caused particular consternation amongst the complainants. In recognition of this specifically and the proportion of complaints from Jewish and pro-Israel readers, the paper carried a review of press coverage in Jenin by the London correspondent of the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*.⁸⁰ In contrast, however, Mayes notes that a running criticism was that the paper was 'short of articulate Palestinian and Muslim voices'.⁸¹ In a separate article, Mayes quotes a senior correspondent addressing the false parity of balance:

*it does not mean what some insist on, namely that every time Sharon is criticised there must be a sideswipe at Arafat, or that every time Israeli operations are mentioned, the most recent suicide bombings must be recalled in considerable detail. Balance does not mean that blame must be equally apportioned – much of the American coverage that is, up to a point, critical of Israel suffers from this false symmetry ... We do not normally fall into the trap of this deeply unbalanced balance.*⁸²

Defending the paper against the charge of anti-Semitism, Mayes noted that the volume and tenor of criticism indicated something fundamental about Jewish readers: 'that they see Israel as a version of themselves, that an attack on the Jewish state is an attack on Jews, whether we like it or not'.⁸³ This discussion illustrates exactly how intertwined people's perception of anti-Semitism and criticism of Israel was in 2002. Indeed, feeling a need to defend its coverage, the *Guardian* strenuously clarifies the difference between criticism of Israeli action and criticism of Israel:

⁷⁶ Beinart, *Crisis of Zionism*, 77-78.

⁷⁷ Jonathan Spyer, "Waking from the Oslo Dream," *Guardian*, May 1, 2002.

⁷⁸ Ian Mayes, "War and Pieces," *Guardian*, May 18, 2002.

⁷⁹ Ian Mayes, "Balancing Act," *Guardian*, May 25, 2002.

⁸⁰ Sharon Sadeh, "How Jenin Battle Became a 'Massacre'," *Guardian*, May 6, 2002.

⁸¹ Mayes, "Balancing Act," May 25, 2002.

⁸² Mayes, "War and Pieces," May 18, 2002.

⁸³ Mayes, "Balancing Act," May 25, 2002.

*Our leader line has been very critical of the Sharon government which is, in our view, in a cul-de-sac. We think that to identify Israel with Bush's war on terrorism is a grossly simplified reading of the situation ... But, in the end, we think friends of Israel should not shy away from criticising the behaviour of a government which, in our view, is harming the cause of Israel itself.*⁸⁴

c) The New York Times

Of 30 articles on resolution in *The New York Times*, 27 advise that Israel needs to make concessions, although the majority consider two states inevitable. While some echo Israeli obligations set out in the *Guardian*, many propose less onerous concessions. Three recurrent ideas (similarly addressed in *The Australian*) concern settlements, limited withdrawal from the territories, and internationalising the conflict.⁸⁵ Only Brzezinski suggests negotiation ought to be resumed irrespective of Palestinian action, which contrasts with the milieu of the paper, which attributes fault primarily to the Palestinians.⁸⁶ Editorials in *The New York Times* frequently attribute fault to Arafat particularly, and Palestinians and Arabs more generally. In terms even of formal balance, only one editorial argues that new leadership is required by both parties for negotiations to resume, (a recommendation also made in five editorials in the *Guardian*).⁸⁷ Indeed criticism of Sharon would be inconsistent with exhortations that Israel hold its ground, which is done in three editorials, one in the words of Sharon (the transcript of a phone conversation with columnist William Safire) and a second authored by former Prime Minister Ehud Barak. These articles portray ODS as a response to terror, arguing that ODS must not be demobilised nor a peace process resumed until Palestinian terror is ended. In conversation, Sharon expresses reservations about the Saudi Arabian peace proposal, arguing that ODS was the only option: 'all countries seeking peace should pray that the Israeli Defense Forces succeed in their mission, because only by uprooting and eradicating terror will we achieve a durable peace'.⁸⁸ Safire similarly affirms that, 'only when Yasir Arafat agrees to a cease-fire and demonstrates his ability to end his suicide-bomber aggression can Israel begin to withdraw its defense forces from suicide cities'.⁸⁹ Barak too explains why demobilisation is not yet possible: 'the aim of the Palestinian terror is not just to kill Israelis but also to break the will of Israeli society in order to dictate a political solution'.⁹⁰ This uncritical approach to Israeli leadership is contradicted by Friedman, who blames the Palestinians for Sharon's election:

*he did not come from outer space. He was elected only after Mr. Arafat walked away from the best opportunity ever for creating a Palestinian state [and] chose to use military pressure, instead of diplomacy or nonviolence, to extract more out of Israel, and Israelis turned to Mr. Sharon as their revenge.*⁹¹

This criticism clearly subscribes to the Israeli narrative line. Sharon's insistence that negotiations be deferred until the cessation of Palestinian terrorism is consistent with the program that characterised his Prime Ministership. Known to have preferred a solution 'drawn heavily from apartheid South Africa', Sharon

⁸⁴ Mayes, "Balancing Act," May 25, 2002.

⁸⁵ Eccleston, "The Rock Between Two Hard Cases," April 13, 2002, references withdrawal and internationalisation, while Adams, "Now Peace It Together," May 25, 2002, deplors settlements.

⁸⁶ Brzezinski, "Moral Duty, National Interest," April 7, 2002.

⁸⁷ Nicholas D. Kristof, "Fatal Delusions," *New York Times*, April 9, 2002.

⁸⁸ William Safire, "A Talk With Sharon," *New York Times*, April 1, 2002.

⁸⁹ William Safire, "On Being an Ally," *New York Times*, April 11, 2002.

⁹⁰ Ehud Barak, "Israel's Security Requires a Sturdy Fence," *New York Times*, April 14, 2002.

⁹¹ Thomas L. Friedman, "Lifelines to the Future," *New York Times*, April 7, 2002.

proposed, for example, unilateral withdrawal of Israeli settlements in Gaza as a strategy to freeze the peace process.⁹² However, as the same tactic has been employed by successive governments, this says a great deal more about Israel's investment in the *status quo* rather than Sharon's exceptionality.⁹³

In *The New York Times*, settlements are presented as a unilateral issue for Israel. Nine editorials raise the centrality of settlements to progress. Contributors include a Palestinian author, an Israeli academic and two US politicians, and there are five contributions from staff writers. While the reasoning varies, the repetition of similar conclusions emphasises the obstruction settlements pose to two-states. Three are written by staff columnist Thomas L. Friedman, a journalist whose work is closely aligned with Israeli national narrative, as illustrated by Amer's research. According to Friedman, settlements represent failed strategy:

*everyone started blurring the lines. Israel built peace with one hand and continued to build Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza with the other, to a degree that made Palestinians feel their living space was shrinking while Israel's was constantly expanding, all under the umbrella of "peace." Ariel Sharon played a major role in building those settlements and blurring those lines. The Jewish right always justified this with its inane mantra: "Why shouldn't Jews be able to live anywhere?" The point was not whether Jews should have the right to live everywhere. The point was whether it was smart for them to live everywhere in biblical Israel -- when it meant shrinking the Palestinians' opportunity for their own state.*⁹⁴

One notes in this passage that while the Palestinians are not impugned for Oslo's failure, Friedman's linguistic construction implicates both sides, for 'blurring the lines', but reveals empathy with Israeli action.⁹⁵ The latter part of the quote also replicates Beinart's arguments. In a second editorial, Friedman argues that continued strategies of violence have punctured myths held by each side. Friedman attests that ODS has demonstrated terrorism will not drive Jews from the Middle East. However, he also argues that suicide bombing has illustrated to the Israeli right that Palestinians will not 'reconcile themselves to Israeli settlements, or that with enough force Palestinians could be cowed into accepting any Israeli terms.'⁹⁶ Despite the double debunking of myths, the comparison of State military action and suicide bombing, by definition legitimate and illegitimate respectively, reinforces Friedman's and, more broadly, the paper's implicit views on legitimate actors. Both Friedman and an editorial by Joseph R. Biden (then head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee) argue that compromises on settlements are required, yet their visions for this, 'gradual unbuilding' (Friedman) or 'dismantling *most* settlements' (Biden) illustrate the latitude with which Israel is treated in *The New York Times*.⁹⁷

Settlements are also raised as a way of tackling the issue of Israel's ambiguous borders. Staff writer Nicholas Kristof deplores Israel's settlement policy, writing: 'these settlements lead to brutal security procedures – bulldozed olive groves, roadblocks where Palestinians die in ambulances blocked by Israeli troops, humiliating

⁹² Sharon's preference for the South African Apartheid model was documented by *Ha'aretz* journalist Akiva Eldar, quoted in Beinart, *Crisis of Zionism*, 73.

⁹³ See also Jerome Slater, "A Perfect Moral Failure: Just War Philosophy and the Israeli Attack on Gaza," *Tikkun* March/April (2009): 4-5, http://www.tikkun.org/fmd/files/slater_longversion3p.pdf.

⁹⁴ Friedman, "Lifelines to the Future," April 7, 2002.

⁹⁵ Amer, "'Telling-it-like-it-is,'" 11-20.

⁹⁶ Thomas L. Friedman, "George W. Sadat," *New York Times*, April 17, 2002.

⁹⁷ Thomas L. Friedman, "Six Wars and Counting," *New York Times*, May 29, 2002; Joseph R. Biden, "Leading the Mideast," *New York Times*, April 16, 2002 (my emphasis in both quotes).

checkpoints that help create new terrorists – and they prevent Israel from sealing itself off from terrorist incursions.’⁹⁸ However his main argument is for Israel’s security: ‘Israel’s own security interests dictate that it should bring its people home to a defensible perimeter’.⁹⁹ He argues that demography ‘will make the settlements steadily less tenable: Palestinians have twice as many children, on average, as Israelis. Israel can more easily accommodate the differential in Jewish and Arab fertility rates within Israel proper, but not outside.’¹⁰⁰ An unsigned editorial similarly charts the way settlement expansion has obfuscated the issue of Israel’s borders.¹⁰¹ Ultimately, all of these pieces affirm that withdrawal from settlements is in Israel’s best interests.

The most critical perspective on settlements is by Palestinian and Israeli contributors. Palestinian author and lawyer Raja Shehadeh analyses the distorted way in which Israel has framed Arafat and the PA. He writes that Israel’s expectations of Palestinians are unrealistic but inevitably flow from the inadequacy of the Oslo Accords. In particular, the failure to grant Palestinian sovereignty, but with the expectation that the PA would ensure security and public order, meant Palestinian undertakings towards Israel’s security were bound to fail. Moreover, Israel’s settlement building increased significantly, while Israel continued under the auspices of Oslo to hold Palestinians responsible for the security risk it was creating. Shehadeh argues instead that a suitable Palestinian negotiating partner capable of maintaining (Israel’s) security is only possible if Israel dismantles the settlements completely and returns to pre-1967 perimeters. In a reversal of Friedman’s argument, Shehadeh charges Israelis to elect a government willing to accept these borders: ‘peace cannot be achieved with an Israeli government that is committed to pursuing expansionist policies aimed at depriving Palestinians of their legitimate claim under international law to a viable state in all the lands occupied by Israel in the 1967 war’.¹⁰² Israeli geographer, David Newman, attacks settlements as a policy with declining domestic support. He argues most Israelis now see settlements ‘for what they are, namely a security burden’ for which ‘public support is likely to decline further if they are also perceived as the main obstacle on the way to a final peace agreement’. He concludes:

*the settlement problem, created and expanded by successive Israeli governments, will have to be resolved by Israel itself. For Israelis who have lived in the West Bank for more than 25 years, for those who were born there, there will be heartbreak, even if the government can give them housing elsewhere. That is one price they and Israeli society will have to pay for a stable peace.*¹⁰³

Yet, ultimately, the extensive discussion on settlements diverts attention from Palestinian rights in the long term and from the immense suffering and hardship to which Palestinians were subjected during ODS.

2. Existential threat

As noted at the start of this chapter, Zulaika and Douglass attest to the media’s ‘disastrous reality-making power’, derived from ‘fears of taboo and imaginary apocalypse’.¹⁰⁴ They write that after 9/11, counter-terrorism was the only agenda in the Bush Administration’s global policy: ‘terrorism is now the monster transformed into

⁹⁸ Kristof, “Fatal Delusions,” April 9, 2002.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “Israel’s Historic Miscalculation,” *New York Times*, April 26, 2002.

¹⁰² Raja Shehadeh, “The Path from Oslo to War,” *New York Times*, April 2, 2002.

¹⁰³ David Newman, “How the Settler Suburbs Grew,” *New York Times*, May 21, 2002.

¹⁰⁴ Zulaika & Douglass, “Terrorist Subject,” 29.

an omnipresent risk that so dominates American life that nothing else makes sense without reference to it'.¹⁰⁵ A crucial aspect of the discourse, they argue, has been the creation in American society of the 'myth of exceptional grievance' (discussed in the Israeli context in chapter 1). According to Chomsky, this 'power to set the agenda' is the way in which elite interest is served.¹⁰⁶ Within these parameters, 'controversy may rage as long as it adheres to the presuppositions that define the consensus of elites ... thus helping *to establish these doctrines as the very condition of thinkable thought* while reinforcing the belief that freedom reigns'.¹⁰⁷ Thus, as Chomsky argues, 'the game is basically over; excluded from discussion is the unambiguous rejectionism of the United States and Israel, and the terrorism and other crimes of the United States and its clients'.¹⁰⁸ The theme of this section turns on the dominance of terror as a tropic in contemporary political and journalistic discourse and the power of media to create reality effects.

The Israeli Government capitalised on the resonance of terror in the West by framing the operation's goal as an exercise to 'rout out the infrastructure of terrorism'. But whereas terrorism was cited frequently and across all papers in news reports, the editorials were comparatively rarely framed by it. I think this has to do with the nature of editorial writing, but more specifically it relates to reflection on the disjuncture between British/European and American positions on the War on Terror mentioned earlier in this chapter and, secondly, the scepticism in certain quarters about the legitimacy of IDF action. While American foreign policy was all but dominated by the Bush Doctrine, staunchly (if somewhat irrelevantly) supported by the Australian Howard Government, Britain and Europe were less convinced. The *Guardian*, typically critical of American policy and the War on Terror, published editorials that interrogate the taken-for-granted-ness of the tropics of terror. Editorials in *The New York Times* tend not to hyperbolise the concept of terrorism but rather foreground the role of ODS in Israeli security. Even so soon after the military surge following 9/11, described by historian and anthropologist James Clifford as 'a spasmodic reaction to secular, irreversible changes', reflexivity in *The New York Times* illustrated a position which has become increasingly clear in the subsequent decade, that 'American global hegemony is no longer a credible project'.¹⁰⁹ *The Australian* serves as a counterpoint to this, which accepting the conceptual premise of 'terror', unequivocally defends Israel's action and forecloses critique of American policy or the validity of alternative perspectives.

a) The Australian

The Australian has a significantly larger body of articles on terrorism, numerically and statistically, than any other paper. These editorials predominately replicate the media role highlighted by Zulaika and Douglass in constructing terrorism as 'unspeakable evil' demonstrating an 'utterly senseless nihilism on the part of the terrorists'.¹¹⁰ In addition to the contribution of staff writers, four editorials have American origins, and there are contributions by an Australian academic and a British journalist. The American-authored articles portray a strain of thinking which is hardly replicated in *The New York Times*. Moreover, there is frequent demonstration of a

¹⁰⁵ Zulaika & Douglass, "Terrorist Subject," 28.

¹⁰⁶ Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions*, 48.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, (my emphasis).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁰⁹ James Clifford, *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 5.

¹¹⁰ Zulaika and Douglass, "Terrorist Subject," 32.

phenomenon remarked on by *Guardian* journalist Seumas Milne, who argues that, despite the volume of publishing which overstates Israeli fears of anti-Semitism, more problematic in the paradigm of terror generally or ODS specifically is the virulent circulation of anti-Arab racism.¹¹¹ For example staff journalist Tim Blair negates the terrorist's subjectivity and satirises Palestinian political aspiration by conflating support for the Palestinian cause with terrorist armament.¹¹²

One prominent theme is that of 'moral equivalence', an argument which views Israeli action as an indispensable security measure. This thinking defines Israel as a democracy presented with difficult circumstances, while Palestinians are accused of having fostered an illegitimate culture of violence and suicide terrorism. Foreign editor Greg Sheridan evaluates:

*There is nothing more intellectually seductive in any conflict than taking a dividing line between the two contending parties and describing that as the moderate, sensible path. Therefore, it is tempting to say the Palestinian Authority should not be encouraging terrorist attacks and suicide bombings against Israel and Israel should not send tanks into Ramallah, as though those two actions were of equal moral standing. In fact they are not of remotely similar moral standing.*¹¹³

The reality effects created through the cumulative position endorsed in *The Australian*, moreover, does not permit inquiry into the pre-determined character ascribed to the parties. In a reversal of the discussion on 'balance' mentioned earlier in this chapter, American scholar Michael Rubin indicts the kinds of views to be found in the *Guardian*:

*If all sides are equally to blame for the escalation, then the Palestinians might as well radicalise their positions ... moral equivalence dictates that blame must be spread equally. Moral equivalency eliminates responsibility. Arafat freed Passover massacre bomber Abdel al-Baset Odeh from prison, but if Israel responds to the slaughter of its citizens at a religious ceremony, then in European and UN eyes Israel shares equal if not superior blame.*¹¹⁴

This logic of the War on Terror is expressed explicitly in an editorial by Daniel Pipes and Jonathon Schanzer of the *Middle Eastern Forum*, an organisation designed to promote American interest in the Middle East (defined on its website to include Palestinian acceptance of Israel and fighting radical Islam).¹¹⁵ They state:

*Of course, complete victory here means the destruction of Israel, not coexistence with it. How could Arafat aspire for less, when he had turned down so handsome an offer at Camp David? ... So when Israel did the world's bidding and retreated from Lebanon [in 2000], it disastrously reduced its own security. Yes, UN chief Kofi Annan approved, but what good was that in the face of a revitalised Palestinian campaign of violence? In a bad neighbourhood like the Middle East, capitulation brings out the bullies.*¹¹⁶

Similar arguments are made by *Australian* journalists Greg Sheridan and Janet Albrechtsen, who write damningly about the UN inquiry into Jenin. They argue there is a clear inequity between the investigation of

¹¹¹ Seumas Milne, "This Slur of Anti-Semitism is Used to Defend Repression," *Guardian*, May 9, 2002.

¹¹² Tim Blair, "Arafat Crisps," *Australian*, May 30, 2002.

¹¹³ Greg Sheridan, "US Must Cut Lifelines of Hate," *Australian*, April 4, 2002.

¹¹⁴ Michael Rubin, "Shared Blame Dissolves Responsibility, Perpetuates Violence," *Australian*, April 1, 2002.

¹¹⁵ See mission statement on *Middle Eastern Forum* at <http://www.meforum.org/about.php>.

¹¹⁶ Daniel Pipes and Jonathan Schanzer, "Retreat's a Fighting Word in this Neighbourhood," *Australian*, April 22, 2002.

Israeli conduct and the UN's failure to appropriately condemn Palestinian terrorism.¹¹⁷ Both argue that internal review of the IDF should suffice rather than a UN-authored witch-hunt whose competence they discredit because of a UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Resolution which endorsed 'all available means, including armed struggle', to achieve a Palestinian state. This perspective is similarly advocated in two further American editorials that contextualise ODS geopolitically in the War on Terror. They argue that US Secretary of State Colin Powell's mission to the region will jeopardise Israel's gains and they exhort America to recognise Israel's war as an extension of its own: 'right now, Israel's goal should be to destroy the terrorist infrastructure that has been supported and protected by the Palestinian Authority. In the war on terrorism, that must be the US goal, as well'.¹¹⁸ These articles accept in every particular Israeli assumptions which have since been discredited by Israelis and Zionists themselves as insupportable.¹¹⁹

There are two kinds of exception in *The Australian* to wholesale acceptance of Israel's characterisation of ODS and the War on Terror. The first, posed by British journalist Michael Binyon, is that ODS has been a strategic miscalculation which has failed to account for the grievances of the oppressed:

*As occupying armies have found the world over, crushing local resistance only intensifies the hatred and encourages the desperate. Further violence seems almost inevitable -- perpetrated not simply by those under occupation but increasingly by Israeli Arabs, who see the battles of Bethlehem on their screens nightly and identify more and more with Palestinians in the occupied territories.*¹²⁰

Binyon concludes that leverage of US authority must be used to pose real consequences to Israel in order to conclude current violence. The second criticism (addressed more extensively in the previous section) is levelled at the effect of ODS on US authority. For example, staff writer Paul Kelly argues that ODS signals a failure for US authority in the Israel–Palestinian conflict specifically and the War on Terror more widely. He argues that the Bush Administration has failed to mobilise either domestic or global opinion effectively, suggesting that America's uncritical partisanship towards Israel is obstructing recognition that pragmatic solutions to issues in the Middle East, particularly in Palestine and Iraq, are pivotal to US success in the War on Terror.¹²¹

A unique editorial by Scott Burchill, a lecturer in international relations, questions the logic of the War on Terror. Burchill raises the obfuscated issue of power disparity, noting that outside Australia and the US, Israeli actions are not excused as responses to terror, as well as articulating Palestinian aspirations outside the non-narrative of terror. Analysing the history of terrorism and nationalism in the 20th century, he considers the idea of 'moral equivalency' from a Palestinian perspective:

For Palestinians, who regard their cause as an anti-colonial struggle against a brutal and heavily armed adversary who has stolen their land, there is no moral equivalence between those armed with stones under occupation and those with tanks and helicopter gunships who illegally occupy their land. ... Their use of terror is a savagely ironic copy of the tactics employed by Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern group – terrorist outfits headed by future Israeli prime ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak

¹¹⁷ Sheridan, "Israelis are Not Guilty of Overkill," April 25, 2002; Janet Albrechtsen, "Terror, Not Israel, is the Real Enemy," *Australian*, April 24, 2002.

¹¹⁸ William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Talking to Arafat Would Violate the Bush Doctrine," *Australian*, April 12, 2002.

¹¹⁹ See chap. 4 generally in Beinart, *Crisis of Zionism*.

¹²⁰ Michael Binyon, "General Carries a Big Stick and He Must Use It," *Australian*, April 12, 2002.

¹²¹ Paul Kelly, "Next Wave Exposes Bush," *Australian*, May 25, 2002.

*Shamir – against Arabs and the British during the 1940s. However, when the cause is worthy, the killing of innocents is described as self-determination, liberation or freedom fighting. Even after statehood is achieved, the violent acts of occupying state armies are not described correctly as state terrorism but as defensive and only responding to terror. This argument still plays well in Washington, but it is wearing thin in Europe and at the UN.*¹²²

b) The Guardian

Nine articles in the *Guardian* relate to this subject matter; however, many are sceptical of Israeli narrative of State survival. Several editorials question the demonisation of terror without thought to the terrorist's subjectivity, and others challenge the equation that militarism answers security threats. In this last respect, the position in the *Guardian* echoes the arguments of Beinart, which positions the paper within a relatively mainstream rubric – notable, however, for its comparative absence in the other media sources. Three editorials relate to the nexus between terrorism and State security, arguing Israel's militarism is directly responsible for declining security. Canadian intellectual, Michael Ignatieff argues that, by diminishing the effectiveness of the PA and resourcing further settlement building, Israel has undermined its own best hope of security: a viable Palestinian state.¹²³ Similarly, Niall O'Dowd and Tutu argue that Israel's current strategies to obtain security are, to the contrary, highly detrimental.¹²⁴ However despite a level of criticality about Israeli arguments pertaining to existential threat, while three editorials relating to this subject matter are Israeli authored, there are no Palestinian contributions published. In contrast to the position of the paper generally, two editorials by Israeli contributors accept the assumptions that underlie terrorism in order to justify ODS. As noted in the previous section, Spyer argues that unswerving policy will safeguard deterrence capacity.¹²⁵ Secondly, writer David Grossman, who Max Blumenthal observes is 'often portrayed in the West as 'Israel's anguished conscience',' fulfils this characterisation by adopting an approach of 'complexity' and appealing to the 'myth of exceptional grievance' for justification:

*There is not an Israeli who does not feel that his life is in danger, and the despondency and dread that this insecurity causes are again exposing the odd paradox of Israel's position. On the one hand, militarily and economically it is one of the strongest countries in the Middle East ... On the other hand, it is also an amazingly fragile country that is profoundly, almost tragically, unsure of itself, of its own ability to survive, of the possibility of a future for itself in this region.*¹²⁶

The determinative function of tropics in journalism is demonstrated in the editorial by advisor to the Israeli negotiations at Camp David and political scientist, Menachem Klein. This editorial describes the traffic of possible narratives and contested framing. Klein argues that, in ODS, the Israelis succeeded in selling a particular story, one centred on a 'terror plot'. Klein summarises: 'Israeli establishment succeeded in selling the story that the recent military operation was a life-or-death struggle imposed on the Jewish state'.¹²⁷ He contrasts

¹²² Burchill, "Palestinian Nationalism Won't Die With Arafat," April 2, 2002.

¹²³ Michael Ignatieff, "Why Bush Must Send in His Troops," *Guardian*, April 19, 2002.

¹²⁴ Niall O'Dowd, "Irish Lessons in Peace," *Guardian*, April 19, 2002; Tutu, "Apartheid in the Holy Land," April 29, 2002.

¹²⁵ Jonathan Spyer, "Waking from the Oslo Dream," May 1, 2002.

¹²⁶ David Grossman, "Israel is a Clenched Fist, But Also a Hand Whose Fingers Are Spread Wide in Despair," *Guardian*, April 2, 2002.

¹²⁷ Menachem Klein, "Give Us an Alternative," *Guardian*, May 10, 2002.

this successful narrative with another possible focus: the Arab Summit in March 2002. As previously noted, the summit was a watershed for Israel's purported desire for recognition. According to Klein, Israel faced something far short of existential threat, but contrary facts, and alternative narrative, were simply 'swept under the rug' both in Israeli public debate and internationally. In short, Klein's editorial indicates the 'extraordinary protection the media have provided Israel'.¹²⁸

Kamila Shamsie, novelist and occasional contributor, tackles the taboo of subjectivity in reference to the female suicide bomber.¹²⁹ She argues that their presence, as women, disrupts the narrative of terrorism, creating a space in which alternative questions can be engaged. While Shamsie investigates the discourse on suicide terrorism more broadly than the Palestinian context, it stands as a conceptual challenge to Israeli and Western narrative, opening out ways of thinking about terrorism as political and pointing to the inadequacy of military response. This is similarly addressed by Israeli peace activist Uri Avnery, through the prism of Palestinian nationalism. He argues that the brutality of ODS will not only 'isolate Israel and endanger Jews throughout the world', but it will have a foreseeably counter-productive impact on Israeli security:

*When dozens of wounded people lie in the streets and slowly bleed to death because the army shoots at every moving ambulance, it creates terrible hatred ... When tanks destroy houses, topple electricity poles, open water pipes, leave behind thousands of homeless people and cause children to drink from puddles, it causes terrible hatred. A Palestinian child, who sees all this with his eyes, becomes the suicide bomber of tomorrow. Thus Sharon and his chief of staff, Shaul Mofaz, create the terrorist infrastructure.*¹³⁰

Avnery's argument is reinforced by an unsigned editorial:

*The story of Jenin, as yet still half-told, is set to live on in memory and myth, as nightmare and as heroic apocalypse, gaining a separate existence and significance in the history of the Palestinian struggle. As the leading peace campaigner, Uri Avnery, points out, Jenin, like the Jews' Massada, could be the stuff of legend upon which dreams are built, informing, defining (and perhaps warping) the consciousness of the emerging Palestinian nation state.*¹³¹

c) The New York Times

Although *The New York Times* more often attributes blame to Palestinian failures, the paper does not tend to directly equate Palestinian action with terrorism. Of thirteen editorials on terrorism, only five express uncritical support for Israeli action. Five editorials argue that Israeli militarism is doomed to failure, while the remaining three grapple with conceptual frameworks. Despite structural questioning in *The New York Times*, however, it does not dismiss the frameworks of thinking at stake. Thus an editorial which engages questions of how terrorism should be defined, deplores the failure of participants at the Islamic Conference of Malaysia to agree on a definition.¹³² For example, in negotiating the term, participants debated whether the alleged catalyst to ODS, the Passover bombing in Netanya, constituted a legitimate act of resistance to occupation – to which the

¹²⁸ Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions*, 54.

¹²⁹ Kamila Shamsie, "Exploding the Myths," *Guardian*, April 27, 2002.

¹³⁰ Uri Avnery, "Immortal Heroes of Jenin," *Guardian*, April 16, 2002.

¹³¹ "The Battle for the Truth," April 17, 2002.

¹³² "The Cancer of Suicide Bombing," *New York Times*, April 3, 2002.

editorial responds: 'you do not have to agree with Israeli policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to take exception to such equivocation'. However, it also argues that Palestinian political aspirations should be recognised outside of condemnations of Palestinian terror. Similarly questioning the category of terror, Steven Weisman notes that ODS 'turned out to be more brutal than expected, and the horrified reaction by Arab nations, particularly pro-American ones like Egypt and Jordan, was more negative than the administration anticipated'. He concludes that the stark lines of the Bush Doctrine, which 'holds those who harbour terrorists accountable for terrorism' is a failure, given the diplomatic reality of the Middle East: 'however justified a strictly military approach is to terrorism, it has become politically untenable and dangerous for the region'.¹³³

Of five editorials which argue that ODS is a justified action, three are Israeli authored. Nitsan Alon, a senior career officer in the IDF, writes that, while Israel should diversify its response: 'the recent operation has already had a very real effect in disrupting terrorist plans and degrading terrorist capabilities. In human terms, that will translate into many Israeli lives saved'.¹³⁴ He rejects accusations that ODS is 'an emotion-driven reaction to terrorist attacks', claiming it is a proportionate response. Alon argues that operations like ODS should communicate to Palestinians that armed struggle is futile. Further, Yoram Hazony, an Israeli philosopher and political theorist, argues that ODS has united Israeli society:

*The point that seems to escape many observers is that the Sharon government's policies are inseparable from the views of the Israeli public ... it expects Ariel Sharon to do what is necessary to protect our country ... This is an Israeli government that represents not half of Israel, but an overwhelming, united majority of the people. In a democracy, one could not get a stronger mandate.*¹³⁵

In contrast, Safire's staunch support of ODS is less concerned by justification than it is by outright endorsement of Israeli action. His arguments evince what Blakeley has described as the deficit in terrorism studies where 'terrorism' has been utilised as a political tool in the service of elite power, reinforcing 'the false notion that Northern democracies ... simply act to uphold liberal values and protect their populations from threats'.¹³⁶ Safire urges American support for Israeli action: 'if terrorists see this pattern of restraint as a sign of weakness and take it as an invitation to wear down the Israeli will, Israel will be forced to respond mightily'.¹³⁷ He argues that the rise of terrorism calls for a 'new view of sovereignty in the West', specifically the doctrine of 'hot pre-emption': 'within the framework of our right to self-defense' lies 'the right to pre-empt terrorist threats within a state's borders – not just 'hot pursuit,' but hot pre-emption'. Comparable to US strikes in Afghanistan, Safire argues that ODS is an application of this: 'Israel's roundup of terrorists in the West Bank [was] conducted when the governing authority supported, condoned or refused to take action against terrorists targeting Israeli civilians'.¹³⁸

Five editorials question the strategy of ODS, criticising the idea it can either restore or create lasting security. While these articles accept the framework of terror, they are conscious of the power disparity between parties,

¹³³ Steven R. Weisman, "President Bush and the Middle East Axis of Ambiguity," *New York Times*, April 13, 2002.

¹³⁴ Nitsan Alon, "Why Israel's Mission Must Continue," *New York Times*, April 12, 2002.

¹³⁵ Yoram Hazony, "Israel's Right and Left Converge," *New York Times*, April 26, 2002.

¹³⁶ Blakeley, "Bringing State Back," 233.

¹³⁷ William Safire, "Calling Arabs' Bluff," *New York Times*, May 13, 2002.

¹³⁸ William Safire, "Al Qaeda Provoking War," *New York Times*, May 30, 2002.

their conclusion being that violence generally cannot substitute for politics. Three are authored by staff writer Nicholas Kristof, who charges the Sharon Government with primary responsibility for the cyclical violence: ‘each time he bulldozes more Arab homes, each time he kills Palestinians and their hopes, he creates more terrorists’.¹³⁹ He argues that, while terrorism has had a twisted sort of success in the Palestinian psyche, and bolstered Arafat’s popularity, one cannot expect a symmetrical response of violence to quell it: ‘from Israel’s own standpoint, Mr. Sharon’s policy so far has been worse than ineffective; it is aggravating the terrorism’.¹⁴⁰ While Kristof takes a clear stance deploring ‘terrorism’, he attempts to comprehend the terrorist’s subjectivity. Interviewing children in Gaza, he writes:

*After lots of surreal conversations with aspiring shahid, I believe they're living in a delusional universe shaped in part by ... their own rage as Israeli tanks in the West Bank crunch through Palestinian cars, homes and hopes. Unless Mr. Sharon and Mr. Powell can outline steps that will lead the Palestinians to statehood, and thus sprinkle hope in the occupied territories, then I fear that popular support for shahid is so great among Palestinians that the parade of killings will continue.*¹⁴¹

Kristof’s third editorial takes into account the divide between conventional wisdom on the profile of terrorists and the reality. He argues that it is futile to wage a ‘War on Terrorism’ without addressing this disparity, suggesting that failure to address the humiliation suffered by ‘terrorist’ populations prohibits real progress.¹⁴²

Notably, only *The New York Times* has a Palestinian contributor commenting on terror. Shibley Telhami, an ‘Arab Israeli’ and academic in the US, analyses the subjectivity of the terrorist. He explains how the inadequacy of political leaders and the anarchy of ineffective government has led to the perception that suicide bombing can empower where politics has failed. Telhami rejects the simplicity of terrorism when it is theorised to suit the interests of a political elite: ‘there has to be a way of dealing with the realities that have made suicide bombings acceptable to a large number of Palestinians and others. To pretend that this issue is simply one of a choice between good and evil is to know nothing of human psychology.’¹⁴³ Both Telhami and Kristof write to the strategic vacuum of a polarising discourse on terrorism. Israel’s absence of strategy for achieving security is engaged more broadly by Steven R. Weisman, who focuses on the inevitable failure of Israel’s ‘security fence’ (then under construction): ‘Israelis might conclude that walls can slow down a determined enemy, but never work fully ... walls are not a substitute for political accommodations ... Putting up a wall is not so much a strategy as a symbol for the absence of one.’¹⁴⁴

*

The depiction of ODS in editorials counterpoints the circulation of narrative in reports. In *The New York Times* and the *Guardian*, editorials are a space in which Israeli tactic is often critiqued, even if it is cumulatively defended. On balance, however, the vision for Israeli concession is limited, empathy with Israel is frequent, and Palestinian issues are rarely articulated. While the Palestinians are often chiefly to blame, the reflective nature of

¹³⁹ Nicholas D. Kristof, “The Boomerang Syndrome,” *New York Times*, April 2, 2002.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Nicholas D. Kristof, “Kids With Bombs,” *New York Times*, April 5, 2002.

¹⁴² Nicholas D. Kristof, “Behind The Terrorists,” *New York Times*, May 7, 2002.

¹⁴³ Shibley Telhami, “Why Suicide Terrorism Takes Root,” *New York Times*, April 4, 2002.

¹⁴⁴ Steven R. Weisman, “Walls Throughout History,” *New York Times*, May 28, 2002.

editorials adds an additional dimension to analysis. If Israel is at risk and engaged in a global War on Terror, it is also admonished for its brutalities and role in the deterioration of Israel–Palestinian relations.

Inset II

Between ODS and OCL

In the period between 2002 and Operation Cast Lead, a number of local and geopolitical shifts affected both the ideological and physical landscape for Israel with respect to the Palestinians. The US Coalition of the Willing invaded Iraq in 2003 on a pretext, now known to be utterly scurrilous, of ‘Weapons of Mass Destruction’, and despite enormous protest from national publics whose governments had joined the Coalition – including the US, Britain and Australia – which were ignored.¹ As is evident similarly from editorials noted in chapter 3, there is no doubt that the invasion of Iraq had a great deal less to do with any of the rationales proffered than it did with an American armed attempt to balance regional power in its favour.² For the present study, the significance of Iraq lies chiefly in several similarities shared with Israel’s operations since 2008: the declining credibility of the invasion’s rationale, and the rift that emerged between Western governmental action and their national publics, who demonstrated immense hostility towards the invasion, a division that will be considered in the following chapters’ analysis of OCL.³

In August 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew its settlements, and some 8500 Jewish-Israeli settlers, from Gaza. The withdrawal epitomises the direction of Israeli politics in relation to the Israel–Palestinian issue during the decade and serves as concrete illustration of how it has groomed the geography of the Gaza Strip. The British and American governments deemed the move a ‘bold initiative towards peace’, while the UN declared it a ‘positive, precedent setting step that the international community could not but support’.⁴ Media and political researcher Lisa Thomas analyses coverage of the event in the British media, finding that ‘the dominant news theme ... was the trauma of the settlers being evicted by their own troops’;⁵ or as Pappé recounts the scene:

*[the settlers] adopted insignias meant to link the evacuation with the Holocaust: sewing yellow stars of David onto their clothing while tattooing numbers onto their arms. During the actual removal, many of the settlers, crying and shouting on their way to the luxury buses that whisked them off to Israel, re-enacted scenes they had seen in Holocaust films or museums. They cursed soldiers and police as Nazis, and likened senior army officers to Hitler.*⁶

This, Thomas argues, ‘effectively disengage[d] the events from the broader issues relative to the Israel–Palestinian conflict,’ and in so doing ‘the news reports largely reproduced ... the official Israeli perspective’.⁷ She concludes that overall, ‘the sympathetic portrayal of the Israeli soldiers and the preponderance of trauma

¹ Robert D. McFadden, “From New York to Melbourne, Protest on War Against Iraq,” *New York Times*, February 16, 2003; “‘Million’ March Against Iraq War,” *BBC News*, February 16, 2003; “Protests Across Australia Against War,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 14, 2003; on the failure of the protests, see: Ishaan Tharoor, “Why Was The Biggest Protest in World History Ignored?” *Time*, February 14, 2013. Extraordinarily in hindsight, the pretext of the invasion was known to be spurious at the time – on slippages in its justification, see David Coates and Joel Krieger, *Blair’s War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), chaps 3 & 5; and Mark Curtis, *Web of Deceit: Britain’s Real Role in the World* (London: Vintage, 2003), chap. 1.

² See George Packer, *The Assassin’s Gate: America in Iraq*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), chap. 1; and Eric Herring and Glen Rangwala, *Iraq in Fragments: The Occupation and its Legacy* (London: Hurst & Company, 2006), chap. 6.

³ Simpson, “War in Iraq.”

⁴ “Israel’s Gaza Disengagement Plan,” UN Press Release SC/8455, July 21, 2005, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2005/sc8455.doc.htm>.

⁵ Lisa Thomas, “Reconstructions of “Reality”?: The Coverage of the Gaza Withdrawal in the British Media,” *Journalism Studies* 12, no. 4. (2011): 535.

⁶ Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 153.

⁷ Thomas, “Reconstructions,” 524.

and conflict imagery served to reinforce Israel's preferred self-image – of a nation making a bold move towards peace, at great emotional cost to its people'.⁸

This coverage exemplifies the tactic of diplomatic deflection employed by the Israeli government with respect to the conflict. The main international criticism of the withdrawal was that it served as a distraction while Israel increased its control of valuable land and resources in the West Bank, a fear confirmed by Chris McGreal in the *Guardian* and aptly described by Chomsky as 'the US-Israeli expansion plan'.⁹ Contrary to the image portrayed in the media, it is now clear that the decision to withdraw was intended as a unilateral act to stymie other forms of political engagement geared towards the (already seriously compromised) peace process. Gaza, logistically and emotively of far less significance to Israel than the West Bank, had long been considered by Israeli strategists as a burden, and Sharon, concerned by international pressure on Israel towards re-engaging the peace process, argued that this was the only way to prevent Israel being 'dragged into dangerous initiatives'.¹⁰ As Sharon's chief of staff Dov Weissglas states explicitly:

*the significance of the disengagement plan is the freezing of the peace process. And when you freeze that process, you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and you prevent a discussion on the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem. Effectively, this whole package called the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed indefinitely from our agenda.*¹¹

Indeed, the withdrawal should be viewed as part of a wider trend in Israel's creation of a physical and psychological division between the West Bank and the 48 territories on the one hand and Gaza on the other, which contextualises how an operation like OCL (or the two subsequent ones) has been conceptually enabled on both a domestic and international scale. Israel's policy of separation intensified in the 1990s, when, as Allan writes, 'Israel imposed a range of new requirements, crystallizing the separation of the Gaza Strip from the West Bank and the rest of the world'.¹² While the Interim Agreement (Oslo II Accords) included 'the promise of 'safe passage' along a 43km route linking the Gaza Strip and the southern West Bank city of Hebron ... the route ... never accessible for the majority of applicants, was completely closed in October 2000 when the second intifada began'.¹³ Yet, if the residents of the Gaza Strip have been subjected to harsher and more sinister forms of Israel's occupation than those in the West Bank, this should not separate how we think about them, since the management of Gaza is an important and interrelated expression of Israel's control of the OPTs. It is critical to emphasise this, because Israeli policy and action has consistently sought to extract the geographies from one another and characterise them in oppositional ways. This is evident, for example, in the negotiations around the future of the 'Palestinian militants' involved in the siege of the Church of the Nativity during ODS.¹⁴ Israel stipulated that the militants could not remain in the West Bank. Ultimately, it was negotiated that the 13 'most wanted' would be exiled in small numbers to European states willing to accept them, while an additional 26 would be transferred to Gaza. This deal emphasised not only the discontinuity of Palestinian territory and the

⁸ Thomas, "Reconstructions," 537.

⁹ Chris McGreal, "Photos Reveal Israeli West Bank Expansion," *Guardian*, March 21, 2005; Noam Chomsky, "The 'Gaza Disengagement Plan'," *Zcommunications*, July 23, 2005, <https://zcomm.org/zblogs/the-gaza-disengagement-plan-by-noam-chomsky/>.

¹⁰ Beinart, *Crisis of Zionism*, 73.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹² Allen, "Scales of Occupation," 269.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 270.

¹⁴ Nigel Parry, "Israeli Distortions During the Siege on the Church of the Nativity," *Electronic Intifada*, May 20, 2002, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/israeli-distortions-during-siege-church-nativity/3984>.

geographical isolation of Gaza particularly, it also demarked the Gaza Strip as a place appropriate for exile or, in short, as a place of criminality. Cumulatively and over decades, Gaza has thus been formulated as radically different, which has ‘facilitated Israeli and international actions that cement it into a geographically distinct, excluded place of imprisonment’.¹⁵

However, if the trend to demark Gaza in negative ways was already in train at the time of Israel’s withdrawal, the conditions to which Gaza’s residents have been subjected deteriorated sharply with the election of Hamas in January 2006. The free and democratic election process in which Hamas swept to power stunned the international community, and both US and Israeli officials stated that they would not work with a PA that included Hamas, which both countries and the European Union had designated a terrorist organisation.¹⁶ In June 2007, Hamas seized total control of the area after negotiations for a unity government with Fatah in the West Bank collapsed, which according to an Israeli analyst of Palestinian affairs, was due to ‘the fact that Fatah has refused to fully share the Palestinian Authority’s mechanism of power with its rival Hamas, despite Hamas’s decisive victory in the January 2006 general elections’.¹⁷ Israel’s response was twofold. Since Hamas’ election, it had attempted to ‘build up’ Fatah ‘with recognition and weaponry’, while subjecting Gaza to a disruptive and brutalising economic siege. However Weizman documents that, in June 2007, Israel ‘shifted its strategy from trying to hurt Gaza’s economy to destroying it altogether and replacing it with a system of humanitarian government’.¹⁸ The strategy, involving macabre formulae for calculating food provisions and utilities required to sustain life, caused humanitarian organisations and commentators to describe the reality of the Strip as an ‘open-air prison’.¹⁹ Dishearteningly, this descriptor, after three massive assaults on Gaza (in addition to OCL, the November 2012 Operation Pillar of Smoke (OPS) and July–August 2014 Operation Protective Edge (OPE)) and the continuation of supply blockades, is now a commonplace.²⁰

On June 9, 2006, an Israeli artillery strike on a beach north of Gaza City killed seven Palestinian civilians picnicking on the beach, wounding dozens of others.²¹ Israel denied the attribution of the shell, notwithstanding that they could not account for the final landing place of one of six shells fired. To the contrary, a HRW investigation concluded that the injuries inflicted, markings on the shrapnel and the crater site all strongly indicated that the deaths were a result of IDF activity.²² The purpose of the shelling activity, according to an Israeli commander, and in contravention of international law, was explained: ‘the message we are trying to convey, you can call it deterrence, but it’s “Ladies and gentlemen, there is an equivalence: so long as you shoot

¹⁵ Allen, “Scales of Occupation,” 269.

¹⁶ Steven Erlanger, “Victory Ends 40 Years of Political Domination by Arafat’s Party,” *New York Times*, January 26, 2006; Simon Jeffery, “Hamas Celebrates Election Victory,” *Guardian*, January 27, 2006.

¹⁷ Steven Erlanger and Taghreed El-Khodary, “Hamas Seizes Broad Control in Gaza Strip,” *New York Times*, June 14, 2007. See also Ian Black and Mark Tran, “Hamas Takes Control of Gaza,” *Guardian*, June 16, 2007.

¹⁸ Erlanger and El-Khodary, “Hamas Seizes Broad Control in Gaza Strip,” June 14, 2007; Weizman, *Possible Evils*, 81. Weizman notes that the Mubarak regime was a willing partner in maintaining the siege.

¹⁹ Weizman, *Possible Evils*, 80–86.

²⁰ Noam Chomsky, “My Visit to Gaza, the World’s Largest Open Air Prison,” *Truthout*, November 9, 2012, <http://truthout.org/opinion/item/12635-noam-chomsky-my-visit-to-gaza-the-worlds-largest-open-air-prison>; “UN: ‘Not a Single Destroyed Home Has Been Rebuilt’ in Gaza Since Israeli War Last Summer,” *Monoweiss*, April 27, 2015, <http://mondoweiss.net/2015/04/destroyed-rebuilt-israeli>.

²¹ “Beach Strike Shakes Hamas Cease-Fire,” *CNN*, June 9, 2006, http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/06/09/mideast/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD.

²² “Israel: Investigate Gaza Beach Killings,” *HRW*, June 13, 2006, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2006/06/13/israel-investigate-gaza-beach-killings>.

qassams at us, we'll shoot at you”²³. It was reported at this time that in response, Hamas called off a 16-month ceasefire with Israel. Several weeks later, on 25 June in a remarkably singular event, Hamas captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit during a ‘cross border raid’ (Shalit was later released in an exchange deal in October 2011), whose capture Israel cited as the prompt for Operation Summer Rains (OSR).²⁴ The operation, constituting ‘massive violations of international humanitarian law’, was apparently the price for one Israeli soldier; or, as Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert described the collective punishment, ‘he wanted no one in Gaza to sleep’.²⁵ OSR, waged from June until October, was ‘continued’ by Operation Autumn Clouds into November. The death toll of Palestinians from the combined operations stood at over 400.²⁶ However, this assault on Gaza, a premonition of subsequent operations in the Strip, was largely overshadowed by Israel’s concurrent assault on Lebanon, making it ‘the forgotten Middle East war’.²⁷

Instead, the world’s eyes were trained on Operation Change of Direction, better known as the Second Lebanon War, fought in the south of Lebanon between Israel and Hizbollah. Jeffrey Goldberg, journalist for *The New York Times* recounts that ‘the Lebanon campaign was also set off by a cross-border abduction’, noting that Hizbollah had some six years earlier pressured then Israeli Prime Minister Barak to unilaterally withdraw Israeli forces from South Lebanon, which they had ‘occupied as a buffer zone since its invasion in 1982’. Goldberg claims that Hizbollah ‘exploited’ that withdrawal by stationing the border with ‘Hizbollah guerillas’ and thousands of imported rockets.²⁸ This idea of an escalating ‘tit-for-tat’, as it was presented, falls far short of the motivations later identified. As Hage recounts:

*From the information that is now available to us, it is clear that Israel used this incident to launch a strike on its own behalf but also on behalf of other western and conservative Arab nations. This strike was obviously a long time in preparation, and was clearly a response to what was perceived, by Israel, the USA, a number of Arab regimes and some Lebanese factions, as the growing Islamic/radical/Iranian threat in the region.*²⁹

The Australian, British and US governments all declared their support for Israel.³⁰ In Australia, Prime Minister John Howard, while deploring the violence, nevertheless affirmed Israel’s right to defend itself (despite the considerable size of Australia’s own Lebanese population).³¹ However despite the utter devastation to South Lebanon wrought by Israel, the Second Lebanon War is remembered as an Israeli defeat. Hage explains:

Hizbollah made the first ever claim of an active resistance that has produced actual results: the liberation of South Lebanon from Israeli occupation. This psychological gain was real and there is plenty of evidence in official and non-official discourse to prove that this was experienced as a gain both by the Arabs who celebrated it and by the Israelis who deplored it. And there is no doubt that in

²³ “Israel: Investigate Gaza Beach Killings,” *HRW*, June 13, 2006.

²⁴ “Palestinian Militants Say ‘Discussion Closed’ On Fate of Kidnapped Soldier After Ultimatum Expires,” *Haaretz*, July 3, 2006; Rory McCarthy, “Palestinian Children Pay Price of Israel’s Summer Rain Offensive,” *Guardian*, September 7, 2006; Ben Quinn, “Gilad Shalit Freed in Exchange for Palestinian Prisoners,” *Guardian*, October 19, 2011.

²⁵ Laurie King, “A Hard Rain’s Gonna Fall,” *Electronic Intifada*, July 13, 2006, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/hard-rains-gonna-fall/6088>.

²⁶ Liam Bailey, “Gaza: Shock and Awe 2006,” *Palestine Chronicle*, November 28, 2006, <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/gaza-shock-and-awe-2006/>.

²⁷ Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Forgotten War,” *New York Times*, September 11, 2006.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Ghassan Hage, “Hating Israel in the Field: On Ethnography and Political Emotions,” *Anthropological Theory* 9, no. 1 (2009): 60.

³⁰ David Fickling, “Diplomatic Timeline: Lebanon and Israel, July 2006,” *Guardian*, August 3, 2006; Hassan M. Fattah and Steven Erlanger, “Israel Blockades Lebanon; Wide Strikes by Hezbollah,” *New York Times*, July 14, 2006.

³¹ “Israel Acting in Self-Defence, Says Howard,” *ABC Premium News*, July 16, 2006.

*striking Lebanon the way it did Israel aimed at destroying the 'ethos' that gave rise to this sense of power. This is why, despite all the destruction of the 2006 war, Hizbollah and its supporters considered the war as a victory.*³²

As the next chapters address, it is precisely this issue of 'psychological' defeat, triggered by the Lebanon war, which Israel sought to redress in OCL. This is made all the more clear in charts from the MFA website (later removed) which illustrate that, prior to Israel's November contravention of a July 2008 ceasefire with Hamas, under the terms of the ceasefire, Hamas had almost completely curbed the launch of rockets and mortar shells into Israel.³³

I conclude this section with a note, however, not on regional events or assaults local to Palestinians, but on the shift in Palestinian strategy, following the Second Intifada, towards non-violent resistance. Falk notes that, for years, such commentators as Friedland in *The New York Times* had rhetorically urged Palestinians and their supporters to adopt non-violent strategies of resistance, arguing that this approach would find strong resonance in a democratic state such as Israel. One particularly well-publicised case of this has been the weekly protests that occur in the village of *Bil'in*. The protests in *Bil'in*, which began in 2005, have increasingly received the support of international and Israeli solidarity groups and attracted international attention.³⁴ However, Palestinian adoption of this approach has gone largely unacknowledged, and commentators who urged the tactic on Palestinians have been, according to Falk, 'absolutely silent' about the shift.³⁵ One can hardly see how they could do otherwise, given Israel's response to the change.

³² Hage, "Hating Israel", 73.

³³ Jim Holston and Joanna Tinker, "Israel's Fabricated Rocket Crisis," *Electronic Intifada*, January 6, 2009.

³⁴ Haggai Mattar, "New Books Document 10 Years of Protest in Bil'in," *+972 Magazine*, April 3, 2015. See, for example, *Five Broken Cameras*, directed by Emad Bernat and Guy Davidi (2011; London: New Wave Films, 2013), DVD. *Bil'in* was featured by British comedian, Mark Thomas, in *Extreme Rambling – Walking the Wall* (2011), shortlisted for an Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award ("Comedian Mark Thomas Up For Human Rights Award," *BBC News*, August 22, 2011, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-14617376>). See also: Mark Thomas, *Extreme Rambling: Walking Israel's Separation Barrier. For Fun*, (London: Ebury Press, 2011).

³⁵ Falk, "Human Rights."

Chapter 4
Reporting Operation Cast Lead:
fracturing Israel's national narrative

*Their deaths are like rain; our death is the disaster*¹

Operation Cast Lead was the singularly most destructive strike to have occurred for Palestinian civilians anywhere in the geography of historic Palestine since the creation of Israel. Compared to both the founding violence of the *Nakba* and the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre for its fatalities, effects, and the striking vulnerability of the Palestinian people throughout the siege, it led to damning criticism from certain quarters. For instance, Vatican Justice and Peace Minister Cardinal Renato Martino described conditions in Gaza as resembling a 'big concentration camp'.² However, as OCL unfolded, a 22-day strike of unprecedented horrors, one also sees a care in criticism of Israel's military actions. In addition to the aporias in media reporting which form the subject of this chapter, the attempts of academics to analyse OCL reflect this care. It seems that the catastrophe of OCL required reporters and academics alike to believe the Israeli account of Palestinians in order to maintain this approach. Thus, one sees less outright condemnation of Israel than was ethically called for by the devastation of Gaza. This is encapsulated in the comments of moral philosopher Raimond Gaita, who writes: 'I have no doubt that Israel committed war crimes and it is credible that it also committed crimes against humanity, *though I would be astonished if it did so to the degree that could justifiably sustain the outrage* that many people feel when they compare Gazan with Israeli civilian casualties'.³ Earlier in this paper, Gaita argues, as did many others, that OCL must be treated in context: 'Of course, rockets of that kind ... cannot threaten Israel's existence. But fired continuously, as they were before last December, they can provoke Israel into responding *as it did*'.⁴ Gaita's sense of context reflects Israel's own justifications of OCL, in which narrative power disabled Palestinian context and sources of grievance from circulating in a highly selective matrix. As Thomas observes, 'the absence of meaningful historical content means that news can be manipulated by partial selection of facts, which can reconstruct diverse "social realities"'.⁵ In short, OCL exemplifies what it means to *control the means of representation*: who is entitled not only to speak but to be believed, who tells the stories we take for granted, who tells the stories that constitute our reality.

In concert with the context offered to account for OCL by Israel and accepted by much of the media and academic treatment in the West were the questions by which commentators attempted to make sense of the event.⁶ Discourses of law were raised to explain the strike and, in particular, the question of proportionality.⁷ As a legal question, proportionality has a very different definition to that of its common sense meaning, transforming outrage at the practical impacts of the strike into legal abstractions. One instance of this was that

¹ Laor, *Myths of Liberal Zionism*, 40.

² "Vatican Calls Gaza a Concentration Camp," *Australian*, January 9, 2009; Ethan Bronner, "Aid Groups Rebuke Israel Over Conditions in Gaza," *New York Times*, January 9, 2009.

³ Raimond Gaita, "Gaza: Morality, Law and Politics," in *Gaza: Morality, Law and Politics*, ed. Raimond Gaita (Crawley, WA: UWA Publishing, 2010), 201 (my emphasis).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 191 (my emphasis).

⁵ Thomas, "Reconstructions," 531.

⁶ For example, a lecture series, convened by Raimond Gaita at the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, between June 10 and July 22, 2009, entitled *Gaza: Morality, Law and Politics*.

⁷ On proportionality, see Gerry Simpson, "Death in Gaza," in *Gaza: Morality, Law and Politics*, ed. Raimond Gaita (Crawley, WA: UWA Publishing, 2010), and Gaita, "Gaza."

tendering the death toll (conservatively 1:100 in favour of Israeli lives spared) was argued to be an irrelevant comparison. Legal theorist Gerry Simpson, for example, assessing the strategies of each side, argued that the following explanation was more accurate: ‘Israelis kill Palestinian civilians because this is the only way to attack Palestinian fighters, and Palestinians kill Israeli civilians because this is the only way to attack the Israeli state’.⁸ He continues: ‘proportionately, Israeli killings have been more plausibly lawful than their Palestinian equivalents’.⁹ These arguments of Simpson and Gaita illustrate the problems of assessing OCL within a circumscribed discourse which, though it may have sought a ‘balanced’ perspective, demonstrates an incredible detachment from OCL and the scales of context, at once brutalising and brutalised. In contrast, Weizman raises two consequences of treating OCL through a legal lens. The first is that Israel used OCL as a laboratory in which the law’s thresholds ‘are tested and pushed: the limits of the law, and the limits of violence that can be inflicted by a state and be internationally tolerated’. He continues, ‘this limit, newly defined with every attack, will become the new threshold of what can be done to people in the name of “war on terror”’.¹⁰ The second pertains directly to the effect of law on ethics. He recounts the comments of an HRW senior military analyst, who stated that legal evaluation had long since superseded his ability to determine between wrong and right, concluding, ‘it seems as if legal categories have completely taken the place of political and ethical ones’.¹¹

Some of the ethical conundrums of representation are encapsulated in how OCL ought to be characterised, in particular what is unacceptable about characterising it as a war (an issue similarly at stake in ODS, as discussed in chapter 2). Describing OCL as a war reinforces the idea of normalcy outside that time. Allen makes this point when she argues that describing Israel’s military operations as wars not only exceptionalises episodes of violence, but implicitly condones conditions faced by Palestinians at all other times.¹² She argues that war obscures scalar relations and ‘misleadingly suggests a set of practices between two equal sides within a bounded time ...[which] helped render invisible the extent of Israel’s persistent control over the Gaza Strip and the rest of the occupied territory, thereby normalizing the everyday violence of the occupation’.¹³ The systemic and structural violence to which Palestinians in the OPTs and Israel are subjected, meticulously documented by Saree Makdisi in *Palestine Inside Out*, makes it clear that, on the contrary, for these Palestinians, life is very far from normal.¹⁴ However, even if one is to focus on military operations themselves as episodes of violence, there is undoubtedly a significant representational violence in describing OCL as a war, given the vast scalar difference between the resources of the combatants, the fatalities suffered, or the damage to infrastructure and livelihoods, just to name a few points of comparison. It is a travesty of the state of contemporary Western discourse in thinking about the Israel–Palestinian issue that any of these subjects (terminological or legal) became a central focus when it ought to have been clear that the event was quite simply and without qualification a human catastrophe. Hage addresses these points:

to me Gaza is in a permanent state of criminality. It is not what happens in Gaza, it is not the invasion of Gaza, it is not an event in Gaza. Gaza itself is a permanent state of criminality. I cannot be more subtle about it. Indeed, I think it is one of these situations where more subtlety, or more ‘balance’ or

⁸ Simpson, “Death in Gaza,” 48.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁰ Weizman, *Possible Evils*, 96.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹² Allen, “Scales of Occupation,” 276.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 276.

¹⁴ Saree Makdisi, *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation* (W. W. Norton & Company: New York, 2008).

more 'fairness' is simply unethical ... Even if we agree to discuss the ethics of the invasion itself, I also think that discussing whether it is morally justifiable or not, is itself a Western form of self indulgence that has a long colonial history ... I just cannot relate to it as something that is ethical to sit down and discuss whether what happened in Gaza is really ethical or not. To me it is beyond the bloody obvious ... that what happened in Gaza is unacceptable by any standard of our humanity. It is very simple and one sided. Anyone who wants to talk about the need for a more complex view, or about what 'both sides' need to do, is again complicit in trying to make the obvious less obvious if their starting point is anything other than an acknowledgment of the unacceptability of what has happened.¹⁵

Operation Cast Lead: context

Media coverage of OCL is seriously chaotic, and it is difficult to get a sense of events at either a micro-structural level – the logic of certain targets, for example – or a macro-structural level – the logic of the operation itself. This is true, I think, even if you accept everything Israel says about the causes of OCL. The reports are repetitive, there are a lot of eyewitness accounts and facts are reported as piecemeal accumulations rather than narrative. This is notably different to ODS, which had three focal points in Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jenin. Similarly, ODS had clearly defined adversaries: Arafat, Palestinian 'militants' in the Church of the Nativity, and Palestinian fighters in Jenin, whereas these are comparatively ill defined in OCL. As with ODS, there is an underlying presumption that Israeli militarism is legitimate (although aspects of practice may not be), while Palestinian militarism is illegitimate. However, the uncertain characterisation of Hamas as adversary, terrorist organisation, and the elected governing body in Gaza caused ambivalence about both the organisation and ultimately the manner of reporting. Since Israel defines Hamas as a terrorist organisation, it claimed certain targets – Hamas' terrorist infrastructure – as legitimate. These same targets, however, constituted the civic infrastructure of Gaza. Despite Israel's purported concern that Hamas would retaliate massively, used to explain the significant and extensive aerial strikes, Hamas scarcely responded. The scale of destruction and vulnerability of Palestinian civilians led international aid bodies to describe the situation as a humanitarian crisis, a characterisation strongly refuted by the Israeli Government, in particular by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tzipi Livni. Rather, Israel argued that Palestinian residents were notified to evacuate, using strategies such as leaflet drops and 'knocks on the roof' (the practice of dropping small explosives meant to warn residents of a larger strike but documented to have caused significant fatalities), notwithstanding that practically speaking, there was nowhere for Palestinian civilians to evacuate to, since all borders were closed and neutral sites, such as UN institutions, were not exempt from the IDF strike.

While Israel articulates several objectives in OCL, there is little clarity about how these would be measured or achieved. The first, stated by Prime Minister Olmert, is 'to restore normal life and quiet to residents of the south'.¹⁶ Olmert is referring to Hamas rockets fired from Gaza, which Israel argued had made life untenable for Israeli citizens in the south for some eight years. Two *New York Times* reporters describe Israel's aims as being defined relatively narrowly, yet they also write, Israel 'has not made clear if it means to topple the leadership of

¹⁵ Hage, "Narcissistic Victimhood," 106-108.

¹⁶ Taghreed El-Khodary and Isabel Kershner, "Israel Keeps Up Assault on Gaza," *New York Times*, December 29, 2008.

Hamas'.¹⁷ Yet it is hard to see how not toppling Hamas or re-occupying Gaza did not constitute one of Israel's objectives (although they refuted this suggestion), since the logical extension of the operation's aims would be to leave Gaza without a competent governing body, and thus with the likelihood of Israeli re-occupation. A second goal noted by Israeli commentators was to restore Israel's deterrence capacity: a notion which has less to do with Palestinians than it has to do with Israel's sense of psychological defeat in the Second Lebanon War:

*There has been a nagging sense of uncertainty in the last couple years of whether anyone is really afraid of Israel anymore. The concern is that in the past – perhaps a mythical past – people didn't mess with Israel because they were afraid of the consequences. Now the region is filled with provocative rhetoric about Israel the paper tiger. This operation is an attempt to re-establish the perception that if you provoke or attack you are going to pay a disproportionate price.*¹⁸

However, the Palestinian death toll, which leapt initially in daily increments of a hundred, demonstrates a problematic relationship between fatalities and restoring Israel's deterrence capacity, since it seems that the fatalities themselves were evidence of that capacity. Finkelstein argues that targeting Gaza was a very good way for Israel to meet this second objective, because the risks to Israel were negligible: 'Israel targeted Gaza ... because it eschewed any of the risks of conventional war; it targeted Gaza because it was largely defenceless'.¹⁹ He continues: 'the massive death and destruction visited on Gaza were not an accidental byproduct of the invasion, but its barely concealed objective', concluding that, contrary to official assertions and as confirmed by post-invasion reports and the confessions of Israeli soldiers: 'the goal of the Gaza invasion was precisely to demonstrate to Palestinians and neighboring states that Israel was ready, willing, and able to inflict disproportionate violence – what Israeli officials themselves called "mad" and "lunatic" levels of violence – on a civilian population.'²⁰

Not only were OCL's objectives abstractly outlined in Western media space, but Israel's enemy was imprecisely defined. In contrast, the definition of Israel's enemy and operational goals circulating amongst Israelis and the IDF is comparatively clear, as illustrated in part of an Israeli soldier's testimony from OCL, collated by the Israeli group *Breaking the Silence* (BTS).²¹ BTS was established in 2004, and its role in documenting IDF practice and ideology has, in contrast to the IDF and Israel's consistent failure to cooperate with international inquiries, afforded a new dimension of insight into Israel's military practice.²² Along with several other Israeli Non-government Organisations (NGOs), BTS garnered Israel's political wrath after OCL, since its documentation assisted in the Goldstone Inquiry.²³ According to Richard Falk, BTS makes every effort to give Israel the benefit of the doubt, 'assessing only the *conduct* of hostilities without ever questioning the decision to launch the hostilities.'²⁴ Falk describes groups such as BTS as making a 'politically incoherent liberal display of conscience'. However, this lack of political agenda adds, I think, to the significance of the content of testimonies

¹⁷ Ethan Bronner and Taghreed El-Khodary, "No Early End Seen to 'All-Out War' on Hamas in Gaza," *New York Times*, December 30, 2008.

¹⁸ Mark Heller, Senior Researcher for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University, quoted in Ethan Bronner, "With Strikes, Israel Reminds Foes it Has Teeth," *New York Times*, December 29, 2008.

¹⁹ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 39.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 79, 81.

²¹ *Breaking the Silence, Soldiers' Testimonies from Operation Cast Lead, Gaza 2009*, <http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/testimonies/publications>.

²² BTS was established by IDF veterans, specifically in response to service in Hebron, although many served during ODS.

²³ Falk, "Goldstone Without Goldstone," 107.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, (his emphasis).

collected. This excerpt describes how a Rabbi who came to speak to the testifying soldier's unit explained the situation:

*"We have four enemies" ... he started with Iran. Now Iran is a sovereign state elsewhere, it is not our enemy in this war, but usually in Israeli discourse it is perceived as the enemy and regardless of what you do, it's the enemy. So let's assume this enters the discourse – that's pretty much the norm. Then he went on to mention Hamas, which was defined as the enemy anyway, and proceeded to speak of the Palestinian Authority. If I remember correctly, that is a bit more complex. The PA does not reign in Gaza and is a partner to negotiations even if merely virtual, and the fourth enemy is the Arab citizens of Israel. It was said explicitly. I don't recall the exact term, whether he used 'the Arabs of Israel' or 'Israeli Arabs', but said they undermine us. He didn't qualify all or some who ... He explicitly spoke of them as an enemy, while addressing this specific operation ..."*²⁵

This is not a definition that Western publics were exposed to in OCL. In contrast, the idea that Palestinians generally are the enemy is blatantly expressed in the comments of politicians five years later during OPE when, for instance, Knesset members proposed that the 'friendly' population of Gaza should be relocated, the remaining terrorists killed (anyone who didn't want to leave was defined in this way) and the area re-settled with Jews.²⁶

Similarly to ODS, Israel imposed a media blackout during OCL. This was a calculated policy decision after the Second Lebanon War when the fact of the media being everywhere was determined to have 'helped the enemy and confused and destabilized the home front.'²⁷ Recommendations from an Israeli inquiry into that war included establishing the National Information Directorate, designed to attract international support and influence perception. Israel claimed during OCL that it had 'won broad international support in the media for its action in Gaza thanks to its PR strategy which through a new body has for months been concerned with formulating plans and role-playing to ensure that government officials deliver a clear, unified message to the world's press'.²⁸ Thus, in contrast to the sense in ODS that Israel's media ban was a public relations error, it was considered to be of strategic value in OCL.²⁹ The head of Israel's press office, Danny Seaman, argued that the blackout was a narrative victory, since journalists, debarred from entry to Gaza, were compelled 'to give greater focus to Israel's side of the story'.³⁰ In particular, debarring the press from the warzone de-emphasised Palestinian suffering: 'Israel's diplomats know that if journalists are given a choice between covering death and covering context, death wins. So in a war they consider necessary but poorly understood, they have decided to keep the news media far away from death'.³¹ Similarly, an Israeli official tells a *Guardian* journalist of their delight 'at a BBC TV correspondent broadcasting from Ashkelon in a flak jacket, reinforcing the impression that the Israeli city is a war zone'. This notwithstanding, as the reporter observes, that one had in Ashkelon 'more

²⁵ BTS, *Soldiers' Testimonies*, Testimony 16.

²⁶ For example, deputy speaker of the Knesset, Moshe Faglin: Jill Reilly, "Israeli official calls for concentration camps in Gaza and 'the conquest of the entire Gaza Strip, and annihilation of all fighting forces and their supporters'," *Daily Mail*, August 4, 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2715466/Israeli-official-calls-concentration-camps-Gaza-conquest-entire-Gaza-Strip-annihilation-fighting-forces-supporters.html>.

²⁷ Ethan Bronner, "Israel Keeping Reporters from Close Look at War," *New York Times*, January 7, 2009.

²⁸ Rachel Shabi, "Special Spin Body Gets Media on Message, Says Israel," *Guardian*, January 2, 2009.

²⁹ Bronner, "Israel Keeping Reporters from Close Look at War," January 7, 2009.

³⁰ Chris McGreal, "Ban on Foreign Journalists Skews Coverage of Conflict," *Guardian*, January 10, 2009.

³¹ Bronner, "Israel Keeping Reporters from Close Look at War," January 7, 2009.

chance of being hit by a car than a rocket'.³² Additionally, Israel argued the blackout enhanced their strategy of surprise within the combat zone.³³ *The New York Times*, for example, reports that this was intended to keep ' Hamas in the fog of war, which includes disinformation and impediments to real-time press coverage on the ground'.³⁴

According to Finkelstein, the mainstream media was part of 'Israel's carefully orchestrated propaganda blitz' and particularly in the first days of the attack it demonstrated an overwhelmingly 'pro-Israel' bias. He argues that Israel 'strove to manipulate perceptions by controlling press reports and otherwise tilting Western coverage in its favour'.³⁵ However, unlike 2002, the media blackout did not make Israel the primary curator of information emerging from the combat zone. Access to the internet, the infrastructure of social media and the 'blogosphere', combined with the ease of access to recording devices meant alternative ways of generating information were available and alternative sources were abundant.³⁶ In recognition of the altered media environment, Israel continued to argue that its action was being misrepresented, while the mainstream media, such as the newspapers of the present study, most often typified the 'Israeli party line'.³⁷ For example, Bronner reports: 'Israelis say the war is being reduced on television screens around the world to a simplistic story ... [that fails] to explain the vital context of what has been happening ... The issue of proportionality, they add, is a false construct because comparing death tolls offers no help in measuring justice and legitimacy'.³⁸ Yet 'despite official support in the West for the assault – despite all this, large popular protests throughout Western Europe ... dwarfed in size demonstrations supporting Israel'.³⁹ Consistent with this, while the *Guardian* covers the solidarity protests for the Palestinian people, the focus evinces disbelief that the Israeli people could be aware of what their government is doing. For example, one protester quoted in the *Guardian* remarks 'I was brought up in fascist Spain ... I can recognise fascism when I see it and this is really what Israel is doing. The Israeli people are not fascists, I don't think they really see the carnage their government is responsible for' (on the contrary, accounts of southern Israeli residents indicate unequivocal support for OCL and disappointment at what they considered premature demobilisation).⁴⁰ Mainstream media is thus a terrain in OCL where Israel's 'propaganda blitz' is captured.

Yet not only is 'official complicity' of Western institutions illustrated in the portrayal of OCL, but in the timing of the operation with respect to a change in the US Administration. US President-elect Barack Obama was due to assume office on January 20, 2009, and there is a sense in OCL that it was timed to precede the inauguration. For instance, *The New York Times* explains: 'although he has expressed staunch support for Israel ... he has raised expectations of a change in policy in the Middle East'.⁴¹ While the *Guardian* argues 'the three weeks before Barack Obama's inauguration were Israel's last chance to assume automatic diplomatic support from

³² McGreal, "Ban on Foreign Journalists Skews Coverage of Conflict," January 10, 2009.

³³ Bronner, "Israel Keeping Reporters from Close Look at War," January 7, 2009.

³⁴ Steven Erlanger, "For Israel, Lessons from 2006, But Old Pitfalls," *New York Times*, January 7, 2009.

³⁵ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 83.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. 6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

³⁸ Bronner, "Israel Keeping Reporters from Close Look at War," January 7, 2009.

³⁹ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 112.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Audrey Gillan, "Protests Planned for Weekend," *Guardian*, December 31, 2008; for attitudes of southern Israeli residents, see: Isabel Kershner, "Israelis Honor Fallen Soldiers, While Seeing the Gaza Campaign as Justified," *New York Times*, January 8, 2009; Isabel Kershner, "Few Israelis Near Gaza Feel War Achieved Much," *New York Times*, January 21, 2009.

⁴¹ Steven Lee Myers, "The New Meaning of an Old Battle," *New York Times*, January 4, 2009.

Washington, as it got from George Bush over both West Bank settlements and the Lebanon war'.⁴² In fact, Obama declined to comment on OCL until almost two weeks into the three-week siege, stating there is only one Administration at a time; and in lieu of comment, a quote from some six months earlier when Obama had visited the southern town of Sderot in July 2008, was circulated as a proxy endorsement of OCL: 'If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that. And I would expect Israelis to do the same thing'.⁴³ A week later however, *The New York Times* reports that Obama has stated that 'the loss of civilian life in Gaza and Israel is a source of deep concern for me' (a remarks that is positioned between the reporting of 40 Palestinian fatalities in the Israeli shelling of a UN school, and – directly after the statement – several paragraphs devoted to Israeli fatalities).⁴⁴ In contrast, these comments are paraphrased in the *Guardian*, and published after both OCL and the inauguration. He is also reported to offer 'help to Egypt to try to curb smuggling of weapons through underground tunnels to Gaza' and in the 'development of Gaza'. While Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas welcomed these comments, a Hamas spokesman in Beirut, Osama Hamdan, stated that Obama's position did not represent change.⁴⁵ Indeed, Obama's comments neither reference nor implicate Israel, demonstrating that practically and rhetorically (despite the Cairo speech he would deliver only five months later on the importance of a paradigm shift in the Middle East), his presidency has signalled little change in the US Administration's position.⁴⁶

Notwithstanding the relationship between mainstream media sources and Israeli national narrative, there is a notable difference in the portrayal of OCL between the *Guardian* on the one hand, and *The New York Times* and *The Australian* on the other. The cumulative approach in *The New York Times* and *The Australian* was to affirm and endorse Israel's right to act. In the case of *The New York Times*, this is part of a documented strategy by which the readership is shielded from Israel's lawlessness, such that the paper 'currently refuses even to acknowledge the relevance of international law unless it reinforces the paper's pro-Israeli bias'.⁴⁷ Thus, despite the Palestinian death toll (inadequately covered), considerable space is devoted to Israeli deaths and defending Israeli policy against a portrait of the evolving sophistication in Hamas weaponry and tactics. In contrast, Israel's objectives are not reproduced as justifications of the operation in the *Guardian*. The paper instead publishes a high volume of eyewitness accounts, first person narratives and commentaries from numerous perspectives. Colin Shindler, who had previously criticised shifts in the *Guardian's* approach, argued against statements condemning Israel but not Hamas, which gave credence to what he called the Palestinian interpretation of disproportionality, as one sided and biased, a response which the *Guardian* published.⁴⁸ In contrast to the argument made by Falk and Friel specifically about *The New York Times* or Finkelstein generally about the mainstream media's coverage of the Israel–Palestinian conflict, Shindler argues (outlined in chapter 3) that the *Guardian* has typically oversimplified the conflict.⁴⁹ He concludes that the *Guardian's* advocacy of

⁴² Ian Black, "Six Months of Secret Planning – Then Israel Moves Against Hamas," *Guardian*, December 29, 2008.

⁴³ Robert Pear, "White House puts Onus on Hamas to End Escalation of Violence," *New York Times*, December 28, 2008; Scott Shane, "For Israel, a Chance to Strike Before a Stalwart Ally Steps Down," *New York Times*, January 5, 2009; Ewen MacAskill, "Obama Adviser Aligns With White House in Criticism of Rocket Attacks on Israel," *Guardian*, December 29, 2008.

⁴⁴ Taghreed El-Khodary and Isabel Kershner, "Israeli Shells Kill 40 at Gaza U.N. School," *New York Times*, January 7, 2009.

⁴⁵ Ewen MacAskill, "Quest Begins for Peace Between Israel and the Palestinians," *Guardian*, January 23, 2009.

⁴⁶ "Text: Obama's Speech in Cairo," *New York Times*, June 4, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

⁴⁷ Friel and Falk, *Israel-Palestine on Record*, 9.

⁴⁸ Colin Shindler, "Why the silence over attacks on Israeli campuses?" *Guardian*, January 13, 2009.

⁴⁹ Shindler, "Reading the Guardian," 159.

Palestinian nationalism has been the product of ignorance and ideological confusion which has deepened in the 21st century.⁵⁰ Yet in contrast to this view, while the *Guardian* does portray a greater degree of confusion than other sources examined in the current study, in the face of an event such as OCL this does not appear to be a result of ideological confusion but of attempting to reconcile ideas of Israel with the unprecedented horror of what Israel was doing in Gaza.

1. Terrorism

Terrorism is less central to the reporting of OCL than ODS. In part, this can be attributed to its decline in Western discourse by 2008 and, in particular, scepticism for the War on Terror. However, if terror does not perform the ideological work it had at the start of the decade, Israel still cites terror as the chief obstacle to diplomacy. Whereas the diplomatic–terror issue in ODS was Israel’s accusation that the PA was tacitly enabling terror, the issue in OCL was the very credibility of Hamas as a negotiating partner. Israeli politicians reiterate that the government would not negotiate with Hamas, both explicitly and obliquely, invoking the connection between Hamas and terror. Additionally, discourse on ‘terror’ is engaged in the language of the law: a development which has several competing effects. Firstly, as observed above, Weizman argues that OCL was a laboratory in which Israel sought to expand the legality of violence.⁵¹ Thus, Israel justified its actions by creating a polarising account between the illegitimacy of terror and the legitimacy of everything else.⁵² But the language of law also worked against Israeli interest where Israel’s actions were described in the sources at times as ‘war crimes’ (a claim later documented and confirmed by human rights organisations and other investigative bodies). Moreover, by the time of 2008, public opinion was better versed in the language of human rights and international law than it had been at the start of the decade, which is reflected in the higher circulation of these concepts, particularly in respect of criticism of Israel, compared with ODS.

BTS documentation of soldier testimonies from OCL elucidates IDF thinking and practice in a manner previously unavailable. With respect to the role of terrorism in OCL, one testimony illustrates how, within IDF units in Gaza, operational objectives were merged with an attitude of both bravado and panic:

*[the unit commander] defined the operation goals: 2000 dead terrorists, not just stopping the missiles launched at (Israeli) communities around the Gaza Strip. He claimed this would bring the Hamas down to its knees ... [describing orders to shoot the speaker notes the prolific use of euphemistic language] clearly the objective was to get terrorists, but I think that mainly panic was the rule of the game. Everyone was certain we were going to face massive fire as soon as we go into the Strip.*⁵³

This testimony raises several issues. It indicates that Israel’s stated objective in Western media, that it would not re-occupy Gaza (and thus implicitly would leave Hamas intact), was not how the IDF in Gaza understood the operation. Throughout the operation, Israel is consistently criticised for the immense destruction it wrought on life and property, which it counters (as noted in the testimony) with the argument that the IDF had expected to ‘face massive fire’. Consequently, Israel, and pro-Israeli outlets such as *The New York Times* and *The*

⁵⁰ Shindler, “Reading the Guardian,” 174.

⁵¹ Weizman, *Possible Evils*, 96.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 94.

⁵³ BTS, *Soldiers’ Testimonies*, Testimony 26.

Australian, put considerable emphasis on the political division between the (legitimate) West Bank leadership and Hamas, a tactic consistent with Israel's broader policy, depicting Hamas' largely rhetorical role in OCL, in a manner intended to significantly inflate the objective threat posed.⁵⁴

Notwithstanding that Hamas does not answer Israel's assault, both *The New York Times* and *The Australian* focus on verbal threats made by Hamas and on southern Israeli communities that had experienced Hamas-authored rocket attacks. As figurative opponent, Hamas provided a particular repository through which Israel could portray OCL in an essentially decontextualised and dehistoricised way. In contrast to received images of Arafat, which – if at times reductive – afforded him a symbolic significance, the application of labels such as 'terrorists', 'fundamentalists' and 'extremists' to a group like Hamas 'obscures their simultaneous existence as political party, social welfare provider, protection force, local association, relief agency, charity, education provider, bank, guerrilla force and the like'.⁵⁵ Hamas' threats are hyperbolic in nature; for example, in *The New York Times*, one is reported: 'it would be easier to dry the sea of Gaza than to defeat the resistance and uproot Hamas, which is in every house of Gaza ... the children of Gaza will be collecting the body parts of your soldiers and the ruins of tanks'.⁵⁶ Similarly in *The Australian*, it is reported: 'Hamas last night threatened to assassinate Israeli leaders as the bombing of the Gaza Strip entered a third day'.⁵⁷ Retrospectively, the hollowness of such threats is apparent; without depicting Hamas as something fearful, however, it would have been difficult to convince the international community (and arguably it was not) that Israeli action of the scale and nature of OCL was reasonable. Moreover, these threats are used to contrast with Israeli attitude which, according to *The Australian*, less than a week into the operation had 'dispensed with efforts to avoid civilian casualties' in order to 'take out its most senior Hamas scalp'.⁵⁸ Just days before the end of the operation, *The Australian* similarly reports that 'collateral damage' has become more acceptable in Israel.⁵⁹ In counterpoint, reports in both papers describe the destruction caused by rockets in Israeli border towns, detail the damage, portray community reactions – a combination of distress and resignation – and affirm that OCL is cause for optimism.⁶⁰

As noted above, Israel officially cited OCL as a response to 'insufferable rocket attacks' and 'indiscriminate terror'.⁶¹ One of the means by which the IDF intended to practically address terror was through eradicating Hamas' network of tunnels through which they had been smuggling goods, including arms, across the Rafa (Egyptian) border, although it was common knowledge that Hamas' rockets were inaccurate and unlikely to cause significant damage. For example, in *The Australian*, Rabinovich, an historian and journalist responsible for a significant proportion of reporting during OCL, notes: 'the poor accuracy of the rockets would make the

⁵⁴ Falk, "Human Rights." See Ethan Bronner, "Israel Rejects Gaza Cease-Fire, But Offers Aid," *New York Times*, January 1, 2009.

⁵⁵ Jackson, "Constructing Enemies," 401-2.

⁵⁶ Ethan Bronner and Taghreed El-Khodary, "Amid a Build Up of Its Forces, Israel Ponders a Cease-Fire," *New York Times*, December 31, 2008; see also Ethan Bronner and Taghreed El-Khodary, "More Than 225 Die in Gaza as Israel Strikes at Hamas," *New York Times*, December 28, 2008; and Isabel Kershner and Taghreed El-Khodary, "Israeli Tanks and Troops Launch Attack on Gaza," *New York Times*, January 4, 2009.

⁵⁷ Abraham Rabinovich, "Hamas Threatens to Kill Israeli Leaders," *Australian*, December 30, 2008.

⁵⁸ Abraham Rabinovich, "Nuclear Fear Drives Israel's Hard Line," *Australian*, January 3, 2009.

⁵⁹ Abraham Rabinovich, "Israelis Feel Sorry for Victims But ...," *Australian*, January 15, 2009.

⁶⁰ Abraham Rabinovich, "Sounds of Artillery Fire May Herald Peace After Relentless Years of Raining Rockets," *Australian*, January 5, 2009.

⁶¹ Abraham Rabinovich, "Israeli Troops Mass for Assault," *Australian*, December 29, 2008.

odds of hitting a single structure ... unrealistic'.⁶² Yet Hamas is depicted as posing significant risks. In *The New York Times*, Hamas is described as having 'new tactics, quick adaptations and lethal tricks'. These strategic advancements are credited to training with Iran and Hizbollah, which the reporter claimed had enabled the group to 'turn Gaza into a deadly maze of tunnels, booby traps and sophisticated roadside bombs. Weapons are hidden in mosques, schoolyards and civilian houses and the leadership's war room is a bunker beneath Gaza's largest hospital'. The report, quoting an undercover Israeli journalist in Gaza, describes one 'inventive, deadly trap', in which 'the militants placed a mannequin ... rigged to explode and bring down the building'.⁶³ However, the trap does not go off, according to the journalist: 'although they saw a detonator light up, but somehow it did not go off'. This illustrates the way in which these two papers are complicit in amplifying the threat posed by Hamas, to lend credibility to defence of Israeli action. In comparison to their coverage in ODS, both papers are highly defensive of Israel and quick to brand criticism in the chilling language of anti-Israeli-ness and anti-Semitism, mirroring Israel's own strategies of deflection. The construction of this strategy is highlighted by the mockery that journalist Ben Caspit, makes of Hamas for the Hebrew tabloid *Ma'ariv*. Caspit compares Hamas to the Black Knight in Monty Python's *Holy Grail*: 'even after having both arms and one leg severed, (he) continued to hop up and down on the remaining leg, screaming and threatening'.⁶⁴ Given the Hebrew media is documented to be highly regulated and particularly so at the time of military action, it is notable that domestically, Hamas' rhetoric was ridiculed, while internationally it was tendered as evidence of Hamas' threat.

In contrast, the *Guardian* reports do not display the same investment in portraying Hamas as a one-dimensional antagonist; there are plentiful eyewitness reports from people inside Gaza, in addition to which the paper continually highlights the inaccessibility of the area to journalists and the consequent problems in portraying events outside of Israel's dictates. In order to represent the situation in a manner contrary to the Israeli line, the *Guardian* does emphasise a wider spectrum of causation than Israel's claim (as reproduced in *The New York Times* and *The Australian*) that OCL is a response to eight years of rocket attacks. In rejecting Israel's rationale, the *Guardian* also disables the justification for the operation provided through the concepts of terror and counter-terror, raising scepticism about both its risks and necessity as well as Israel's account of its relation with the Palestinians. It reiterates, for example, Jewish pre-State as well as Israeli state action which has contributed to the current state of Israel-Palestinian relations, including the 1948 massacre at Deir Yassin, the 1967 war and the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre. Journalist Ian Black even compares the mounting death toll of Palestinian people in OCL with the 1948 and 1982 massacres.⁶⁵ This approach invokes, albeit implicitly, the work of Massad on terror raised in chapter 1. In particular, the paper's historical accounting for the failings of Israel-Palestinian relations conveys the reprehensible nature of current Israeli action (an implicit recognition of State Terrorism), eschewing the strategy of the other papers that only condemn the so-called terror of non-state Palestinian actors.

This difference in approach in the *Guardian* is similarly apparent in the reporting of criminal allegations against Israel arising from OCL, although in contrast to the rejection of terror in the *Guardian* noted above, the explicit

⁶² Abraham Rabinovich, "Hamas's 'Secret' Threat," *Australian*, January 8, 2009.

⁶³ Steven Erlanger, "A Gaza War Full of Traps and Trickery," *New York Times*, January 11, 2009.

⁶⁴ The original article in *Ma'ariv* was not fully translated, but this quotation circulated widely in Western media. See, for example: Martin Fletcher, "Gaza Ceasefire Imminent as Israel Negotiates Deals With Egypt and US," *The Times* (London), January 16, 2009.

⁶⁵ Black, "Six Months of Secret Planning – Then Israel Moves Against Hamas," December 29, 2008.

accusation of Israeli war crimes was less thoroughly examined. Unlike ODS reporting, where criminality is imputed to IDF action, in particular in Jenin, concurrently with events, the emergence of this discourse in all the sources occurs almost two weeks into OCL. The possibility of prosecuting Israel for violations of international humanitarian law is raised three days prior to explicit allegations of war crimes. War crimes are first raised through the call of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, for investigation of IDF action. In *The New York Times*, Pillay's suggestion is immediately prejudiced by the report's definition of the Human Rights Council, which is said to have 'a reputation for censuring Israel'.⁶⁶ The *Guardian* makes no such qualifications about Pillay or the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHCR). Moreover, the headline reflects the accusation directly (UN Human Rights Chief Accuses Israel of War Crimes). However, the article also encompasses the views of an IDF spokesperson, Israeli public opinion polls and a spokesperson for Prime Minister Olmert, all of which appeal to a concept of reasonableness and refer to the legitimacy of OCL's military goals.⁶⁷ Both the lateness of the allegations generally and the way in which the *Guardian* situates them in this instance, despite its disinclination to accept Israel's own account of the operation, indicates the sensitivity of the situation (this is raised in *Guardian* editorials which will be considered in chapter 5) and what must now be considered an appalling reticence on the part of Western governments to condemn, much less intervene in, Israeli action in OCL.

An additional angle of reporting with respect to Israel's terror alibi in the *Guardian*, absent in Israeli narrative or in *The Australian* and *The New York Times*, is the narrative of conscientious objection. In fact, during OCL, Israel wanted to portray an image of national unity, for which reason it abandoned its former approach to conscientious objectors (imprisonment), telling the press, 'there is so much support for the assault on Gaza that more soldiers have turned up to fight than have been called up', a claim which, according to the objector interviewed, obscures the increasing number of Israeli men of fighting age refusing to serve the occupation.⁶⁸ Israel's narrative is reflected in *The Australian*, where Rabinovich reports that 'thousands of reservists are on the move'.⁶⁹ The objector deplores the conditioning of the Israeli public and media such that they are 'blind to the fact that hundreds of Palestinians have been cut to pieces by Israeli fire power'. While he accepts, as evinced in his language, the problem of Palestinian terror, he does not accept it as an argument that absolves Israel of OCL:

*In the long run, it's not a war of defence. We are creating a thousand suicide bombers for the future from the brothers of the dead, the sons of the dead . . . in the long term, we are creating more terror. You can't separate the war in Gaza from the fact that the Palestinian nation is under occupation for more than 40 years. I'm not justifying Hamas firing rockets but we Israelis should first look at what we are doing.*⁷⁰

This captures the fundamental difference between the *Guardian* and its counterparts in OCL on the subject of terror: that 'terror' is simply not, in the pages of the *Guardian*, treated as a defence of sufficient credibility and weight to justify the horror which OCL unleashed on the Palestinian people.

⁶⁶ Taghreed El-Khodary and Isabel Kershner, "For Arab Clan, Days of Agony in a Cross-Fire," *New York Times*, January 10, 2009.

⁶⁷ Rory McCarthy, "UN Human Rights Chief Accuses Israel of War Crimes," *Guardian*, January 10, 2009.

⁶⁸ Chris McGreal, "Refuseniks," *Guardian*, January 17, 2009.

⁶⁹ Abraham Rabinovich, "Thousands of Reservists on Move as Israel Watches Its Back," *Australian*, January 6, 2009.

⁷⁰ McGreal, "Refuseniks," January 17, 2009.

2. Archetypal characterisation

The political landscape at the time of OCL was no longer populated by politicians who had for decades symbolised the conflict such that it had seemed to inhere in their very persons. Yasser Arafat died in November 2004 and Ariel Sharon fell into a coma in January 2006 (before dying in January 2014). Depiction of Israel's adversary was unclear, although the BTS testimony describing Israel's four enemies illuminates why this might have been the case. Yet even Hamas remained a vaguely depicted group in the reporting of OCL. This differs from ODS in that there were no discrete groups or figures to 'resist'; indeed, Palestinian resistance, outside the rockets (already understood to be inaccurate and ineffective), lacking the potency of suicide bombing in the Western imagination, was almost non-existent – as late as January 13, Rabinovich reported in *The Australian* that 'a more detailed account of their underground tactics has not yet emerged'.⁷¹ Characterisation of the IDF in the operation was also affected by the absence, in comparison to 2002, of reiterations of the argument that the IDF is the most moral army in the world. The narrative of purity of arms, so fundamental to early years of the Jewish State and often invoked during ODS, particularly in Jenin, was incompatible with the stated objective of deterrence and contrary to the image Israel wished to project in OCL. Yet presenting Israel as 'victim' was achieved in two ways, both of which incorporate traditional narratives by reframing the context and scales of threat faced by Israel.

All three papers publish features on Defence Minister and former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, in notable contrast to the absent profiles of other key figures to the operation. While a number of Israelis are frequently quoted (Such as Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni), Barak had a particular narrative appeal, his career intimately connected to State history:

*At 66, Mr. Barak is the country's most decorated soldier, famous for having foiled an airplane hijacking years ago while disguised in a mechanic's uniform and for leading a revenge killing operation against Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon while dressed as a woman. A skilled pianist famed for a steel-trap mind, he has also been the military chief of staff.*⁷²

Bronner's profile in *The New York Times* depicts Barak as a hero: 'Mr. Barak is everywhere, in sunglasses and leather jacket, striding among his military commanders, talking strategy, calculating the next move.' As a Labour party member remarks, 'Israel's MacArthur is back'. According to Bronner, Barak's return to favour (following his role in the peace process and subsequent election loss) stemmed from Israeli yearning for a traditional Zionist warrior to send a harsh message to Hamas. The *Guardian* profile similarly captures Barak's depth of credentials, directly attributing his renaissance to the failures of the Second Lebanon War. The piece concludes: 'He seems to have a feel for what motivates his enemies and was widely quoted as saying: "if I were a Palestinian I would have joined a terrorist organisation."⁷³ This sentiment echoes that of other State-Zionists, including Ben-Gurion, who, according to Massad, 'understood Palestinian nationalism fully and identified with it, even though he was committed to crush it':

⁷¹ Abraham Rabinovich, "In this Incursion, Every Building, Door, Toy or Piano is a Potential Booby Trap," *Australian*, January 13, 2009.

⁷² Ethan Bronner, "Gaza War Role is Political Lift for Ex-Premier," *New York Times*, January 8, 2009.

⁷³ Ian Black, "Soldier Turned Politician Who Spent His Life Fighting Arabs," *Guardian*, December 29, 2008.

*If I was an Arab leader, I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural; we have taken their country. Sure, God promised it to us, but what does that matter to them? ... We come from Israel, it's true, but that was two thousand years ago, and what is that to them? There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was that their fault? They only see one thing: we have come and stolen their country. Why should they accept that?*⁷⁴

In *The Australian* profile, Rabinovich notes Barak's varied popularity with the Israeli public. He cites, for example, Barak's election campaigning for the February 2009 election (after OCL), which included billboards with the slogans: "He's not nice", "He's not your buddy" or "He's not trendy" ... "But he's a leader"⁷⁵. It is emphasised in both this feature and Bronner's that as Defence Minister (Barak stresses that he is not a 'war minister'), Barak, who considered his political colleagues' reaction to Hamas excessive, intended to exhaust all diplomatic avenues before resorting to warfare. In emphasising that Barak is what Israel needs, these two papers seem further to endorse Barak's candidacy for re-election as Prime Minister.

Given the quantitative differences of OCL, compared to any previous operation, Israeli narrative is altered in two main ways. Firstly, the objective of the operation, to restore Israel's deterrence capacity, forecloses the 'purity of arms' narrative. Prime Minister Olmert reflects: 'So now there is talk about Israel's cruelty. When you win, you automatically hurt more than you've been hurt. And we didn't want to lose this campaign'.⁷⁶ This sentiment correlates with Israeli polls in which, as late as 15 January, 80 per cent of respondents thought the operation should continue. Quoting two well-known Israeli writers, Rabinovich writes that collateral damage, once the subject of intense moral debate in Israel, is increasingly acceptable to Israelis: 'it appears as though the consensus has slowly crawled in a direction that enables us to accept, relatively easily, all those things that a few years ago we were not able to digest'.⁷⁷ The concept of calculating the appropriate and proportionate number of civilian deaths in compliance with international law had been theorised extensively in the context of US aerial bombings in the Iraq war.⁷⁸ Israelis describing OCL deterrence are less concerned by this pseudo-ethics than the debacle of Lebanon and damage it caused Israel's 'virtual invincibility' on the one hand, and re-establishing Israel as 'a formidable war machine' on the other.⁷⁹ This marks a radical departure from former Israeli narrative or widespread perception of Israeli policy. It seems that it is only disbelief that Israeli aggression could be about the illustration of a point, that enables Israel to be viewed as holding the moral high ground. For example, UK foreign secretary David Miliband stated:

*Hamas have shown themselves over a number of years ready to be murderous in word and deed. Their motif is 'resistance' and their method includes terrorism. Israel is meanwhile a thriving, democratic state with independent judiciary. But one consequence of the distinction between a democratic government and a terrorist organisation is that democratic governments are held to significantly higher standards, notably by their own people.*⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Massad, "Opposite of Terror," 5.

⁷⁵ Abraham Rabinovich, "He's Not Seeking Love, But Voters are Falling for Him," *Australian*, January 3, 2009.

⁷⁶ Rory McCarthy, "Thousands of Children Face a Long Road to Recovery," *Guardian*, January 30, 2009.

⁷⁷ Rabinovich, "Israelis Feel Sorry for Victims But ...," January 15, 2009.

⁷⁸ Weizman, *Possible Evils*, 129-133.

⁷⁹ Abraham Rabinovich, "Military Puts the Debacle of Lebanon to Rest," *Australian*, January 20, 2009.

⁸⁰ Rory McCarthy, "Israel Sends in Reservists as Diplomacy Falters," *Guardian*, January 13, 2009.

The other argument employed to mitigate the characterisation of Israel as aggressor (despite Israel's own overt celebration of this in OCL) is that OCL signifies Israel's rejection of a victimhood which it simultaneously claims as a means of justifying the operation. Israelis define this victimhood in two distinct ways. The first is with respect to the citizens of the south, and the psychological terror to which they have been subjected since the Second Intifada, as stated in the operation's objectives. For example, a young mechanic in Beersheba states:

*When the rockets come you panic and then you understand what has been going on in Sderot for eight years. How could they live like this, how could the children grow up like this? ... For eight years Israel did nothing and the whole world did nothing, but now that Israel is defending itself the world is saying stop. Israel knows better than anyone else what's going on. We don't want to kill children. We send warnings and tell them that we are going to strike. Without reason, they are sending rockets.*⁸¹

In defending the operation, emphasis is placed on the interminable state of siege by which southern Israeli residents have been victimised over the previous eight-year period. Disallowing media access to the actual war zone of Gaza configures these southern towns not as margins but as war zones themselves, binding the south to the centrality of Israel and the civilised world. This is highlighted by the metaphor employed by Israeli writer A.B. Yehoshua, to explain Israel's actions to an international audience:

*"Imagine", I tell a French reporter, "that every two days a missile falls in the Champs-Elysees and only the glass windows of the shops break and five people suffer from shock ... What would you say? Wouldn't you be angry? Wouldn't you send missiles at Belgium if it were responsible for missiles on your grand boulevard?"*⁸²

This is also rendered visually: one of the effects of the media blackout in mainstream media is the way in which it enables Israeli experience in the south to be equated with the experience of Palestinians in Gaza. Despite an order by the Israeli Supreme Court that foreign journalists be permitted into the area, the IDF continued to debar their access. Bronner writes in *The New York Times* that Israel cultivated 'a public relations push to explain its war to the world by bringing in dozens of officials as spokesmen in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and along the border area (to Gaza)'.⁸³ Jerusalem-based journalist Peter Lagerquist analyses the effects of the ban on the construction of narrative, taking two photo essays published on *The New York Times* website to illustrate the impact. The feature comprised two sets of images, an Israeli collage outside the combat zone rendered in black and white and a Palestinian one, colour images depicting the abject confusion of civilians in a military zone. Lagerquist writes that 'in the Israeli case this has an obvious effect: it dramatizes, and in so doing works to correct this imbalance: fourteen hundred people killed, five thousand wounded, one hundred thousand rendered homeless on one side; thirteen people killed on the other'.⁸⁴

The second strand of victimhood depicted, used to mitigate the scale of the operation in Gaza, repositions Israel as victim of a geopolitical context in which it is surrounded by a coalition of Islamic colonialism which will erase both Palestinian nationalist aspirations and the Israeli State. A feature in *The Australian* argues, for

⁸¹ Yohai Biton quoted in "I want peace – with security", *Guardian*, January 16, 2009.

⁸² Ethan Bronner, "Israelis United on Gaza War Even as Censure Rises Abroad," *New York Times*, January 13, 2009.

⁸³ Ethan Bronner, "Israeli Attack Splits Gaza," *New York Times*, January 5, 2009.

⁸⁴ Peter Lagerquist, "Shooting Gaza: Photographers, Photographs, and the Unbearable Lightness of War," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 38, no. 3 (2009): 91, doi: jps.2009.XXXVIII.3.86. Lagerquist is discussing a photo series: "Photographer's Journal: A War's Many Angles," *New York Times*, January 25, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/packages/flash/international/20090125-PhotoJournal-Gaza-Israel/>.

example, that Hamas is not a movement for Palestinian nationalism but a movement that champions pan-Islamism over secular Palestinian alternatives.⁸⁵ This argument relates to the traditional image of Israel as David defending itself from the Goliath of formerly Arab and now Islamic threat. A philosopher who assisted in producing Israel's code of military ethics, Moshe Halbertal, argues, for example: 'rockets from Hamas could eventually reach all of Israel. This is not a fantasy. It is a real problem. So there is a gap between actual images on the screen and the geopolitical situation.' He goes on to explain the David–Goliath characterisation within this geopolitical context:

*You have Al Jazeera standing at Shifa Hospital and the wounded are coming in. So you have this great Goliath crushing these poor people, and they are perceived as victims. But from the Israeli perspective, Hamas and Hezbollah are really the spearhead of a whole larger threat that is invisible. Israelis feel like the tiny David faced with an immense Muslim Goliath. The question is: who is the David here?*⁸⁶

In contrast, a piece in the *Guardian* by New Historian Avi Shlaim rejects arguments of this kind:

*As always, mighty Israel claims to be the victim of Palestinian aggression but the sheer asymmetry of power between the two sides leaves little room for doubt as to who is the real victim. This is indeed a conflict between David and Goliath but the Biblical image has been inverted - a small and defenceless Palestinian David faces a heavily armed, merciless and overbearing Israeli Goliath. The resort to brute military force is accompanied, as always, by the shrill rhetoric of victimhood and a farrago of self-pity overlaid with self-righteousness. In Hebrew this is known as the syndrome of bokhim ve-yorim, "crying and shooting".*⁸⁷

However, in *The Australian* and *The New York Times*, this characterisation goes largely unchallenged; more often, Israel's position is vehemently endorsed.

3. Sense of power

In OCL, a new expression of Israeli existential anxiety emerges, which relates to Israel's deterrence capacity and the implications of this for Israel's identity, in contrast with characterisation of the State's struggle for survival in ODS. *The Australian* quotes writer Etgar Keret articulating this essence: 'the war we are fighting is not only for our lives and land, it is also a war for our identity'.⁸⁸ The dissonance between Israel's sense of threat versus perception of the operation internationally alienates Israel from world opinion (articulated particularly by Netanyahu in response to the Goldstone Report, discussed in chapter 6). An Israeli news editor explains this relation with the international media: 'it's very frustrating for us not to be understood. Almost 100 per cent of Israelis feel that the world is hypocritical. Where was the world when our cities were rocketed for eight years and our soldier was kidnapped? Why should we care about the world's view now?'⁸⁹ This frustration is punctuated by a report in *The New York Times* which remarks on the headlines of Israel's largest selling daily newspaper, *Yediot Aharonot*, in which an article describing negative coverage of the operation, particularly in the European media, used 'an intentional misspelling of a Hebrew word' which 'turned the headline "World

⁸⁵ Bret Stephens, "Hamas in a State of Denial," *Australian*, January 16, 2009.

⁸⁶ Bronner, "Israelis United on Gaza War Even as Censure Rises Abroad," January 13, 2009.

⁸⁷ Avi Shlaim, "How Israel Bought [sic] Gaza to the Brink of Humanitarian Catastrophe," *Guardian*, January 7, 2009. This editorial, considered in chapter 5, is quoted here for its invocation of the David/Goliath trope.

⁸⁸ Rabinovich, "Israelis Feel Sorry for Victims But ...," January 15, 2009.

⁸⁹ Bronner, "Israelis United on Gaza War Even as Censure Rises Abroad," January 13, 2009.

Media” into “World Liars”⁹⁰. As Hage notes (quoted in chapter two), the real issue at stake is whether Israel perceived its own power to be rising or declining. Numerous statements in the reports indicate that, after Lebanon in 2006, Israel was experiencing a subjective sense of its power’s decline. This is made explicit by an Israeli quoted in *The New York Times* who explains the impact of Qana on the construction of narrative in Lebanon and speculates on interpretations of OCL:

*It was clear from the start in this operation that there could be a Qana, given how Hamas has chosen to fight ... A Qana is not just a function of the numbers of civilians killed but also a function of how the Israeli population reacts, how the Israeli leadership deals with it and how the international community responds and it’s too early to say.*⁹¹

Israel’s objective to re-establish deterrence is sympathetically reported in both *The New York Times* and *The Australian*. For example, in *The Australian*, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy is quoted: ‘Israel believes its deterrence was lost in that war [Lebanon], and Israel’s current campaign against Hamas should be seen as an effort to regain that deterrence.’ He goes on: ‘one lesson Israel learned from Lebanon, was to lower expectations, depriving Hamas of the chance to declare victory simply by surviving the Israeli assault, as Hezbollah did. Israel has done that by remaining vague about its final goals’.⁹² In *The New York Times*, Bronner writes that the operation’s goals are secondary to Israel’s ‘larger concern – it worries that its enemies are less afraid of it than they once were or should be. Israeli leaders are calculating that a display of power in Gaza could fix that.’⁹³ Moreover, repetitions of the false claims that ‘Hamas is committed to Israel’s destruction’ is used to give credence to the argument, whereas in fact, Hamas had abandoned this call from their 1987 charter in 2006.⁹⁴ In contrast, the *Guardian* does not endorse Israel’s claims, but rather contradicts Israel’s narrative as replicated in *The Australian* and *The New York Times*, that OCL was ultimately intended to re-establish Israel’s military reputation. This is demonstrated, for example, in Prime Minister Olmert’s declaration: ‘we have enormous power, we can do things which will be devastating and I keep restraining myself and keep restraining my friends all the time and I tell them: let’s wait ... give them another chance’.⁹⁵

Schotten, reading OCL through Nietzsche’s discourse of mastery and slavishness, concludes that it was motivated not through the indifferent destruction of a self-affirming power (such would be a display of mastery), but was rather an expression of ‘revenge that mistook existence ... of others as the source of its identity and suffering’.⁹⁶ She argues that justification for the war ‘relied on a wildly inaccurate portrayal of Israeli society as a nation precariously under siege that, if not immobilized, would have brought about the destruction of the state itself’. Schotten concludes: ‘the narrative of Israel’s existence is longstanding: it was essential to its historical founding and continues to be used to defend Israel’s otherwise indefensible activities ... The endurance of this

⁹⁰ Bronner, “Israel Keeping Reporters from Close Look at War,” January 7, 2009.

⁹¹ Yossi Alpher quoted in Erlanger, “For Israel, Lessons from 2006, But Old Pitfalls,” January 7, 2009.

⁹² Myers, “The New Meaning of an Old Battle,” January 4, 2009.

⁹³ Bronner, “With Strikes, Israel Reminds Foes it Has Teeth,” December 29, 2008.

⁹⁴ Malcolm Fraser, Mark Leibler, Naomi Klein and Barry Shaw, “Crazy Graziar Blames Israel, Not Bigots, For Anti-Semitism,” *Australian*, January 22, 2009. This misinformation is frequently reiterated, including by Ethan Bronner, “Israelis United on Gaza War Even as Censure Rises Abroad,” *New York Times*, January 13, 2009. For changes to the Hamas charter, see Chris McGreal, “Hamas Drops Call for Destruction of Israel from Manifesto,” *Guardian*, January 12, 2006.

⁹⁵ Toni O’Loughlin, “Israeli Far Right Gains Ground as Gaza Rockets Fuel Tension,” *Guardian*, December 29, 2008.

⁹⁶ Schotten, “Reading Nietzsche,” 79.

narrative, however, does not make it any the more true'.⁹⁷ This argument exemplifies the power of Israeli national narrative in the conceptualisation of relations with the outside world, and Palestinians particularly. Kimmerling writes that, while the timing of the Eichmann trial was directly responsible for Israelis viewing the 1967 war as an existential threat of Holocaust proportions, rather than as a secular war over disputed land, this has permanently defined the Palestinian national movement 'as a mortal threat to Jewish survival' and thus 'unburdened [Israel's leaders] of almost any moral restrictions or even obedience to internal and international laws'.⁹⁸ Indeed, there is much evidence in the reports to demonstrate that OCL is really about the relationship between Israel and its others, and Israel's psychological need to demonstrate power:

*a critical long-term issue is whether the Gaza operation restores Israel's deterrent. Israel wants Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and the Arab world to view it as too strong and powerful to seriously threaten or attack. That motivation is one reason, Israeli officials say, for going into Gaza so hard, using such firepower, and fighting Hamas as an enemy army.*⁹⁹

Although Israel claimed that the aim of deterrence was born of the disaster of Lebanon, as outlined in chapter 1, Israel has worked consistently to convince its public of the permanence of external hostility as a way of ensuring the popular mandate which Israeli governments have had during military operations and for OCL in particular.

4. Characterising State

A significant difference between ODS and OCL is the territory on which the operations unfold. In the earlier operation, two geographical circumstances elicit a particular response in Israeli speakers. The West Bank is both directly proximate to the centres of Israeli society and integral to Israeli land aspirations. In addition to considerable natural resources, significant locations in the OPTs have been considered in some Israeli discourse as the 'heart' of the land, leading to territorial statements regarding the indivisibility of a 'Greater Israel'.¹⁰⁰ Thus, in ODS, the fighting had an imminence and proximity to Israeli citizens. Gaza, by contrast, is far more remote to the Israeli psyche: as demonstrated by Allen (discussed in inset II), removed from the places of real political and ideological significance.¹⁰¹ Secondly, Gaza has been far less coveted for its resources or historical resonance (in contrast, the natural gas resources in the Gaza sea were considered by some commentators in OPE to have formed an implicit rationale for the attack). Netanyahu, for example, describes Gaza as 'a symbol to Israelis as a lair of some of the most rabid Jew-haters in the Middle East. Despite a rich Jewish history, Gaza has become a byword for a hostile and alien place'.¹⁰²

In contrast to ODS, 'survival' is almost entirely absent from descriptions of the operation in international narrative. Despite the position of foreign governments regarding Israel's right to self-defence, this is neither prevalent in Israeli-authored narrative nor enlisted to defend Israel's action in Western media. While *The New York Times* and *The Australian* characterise OCL and Israel sympathetically, it seems the argument of State survival is insupportable. *The Australian*, for example, quotes the British conservative magazine *The Spectator*,

⁹⁷ Schotten, "Reading Nietzsche," 79.

⁹⁸ Kimmerling, "Israel's Culture of Martyrdom," 38-40.

⁹⁹ Steven Erlanger, "Israel Declares Gaza Cease-Fire," *New York Times*, January 18, 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust*, 184-190.

¹⁰¹ Allen, "Scales of Occupation," 265-269.

¹⁰² Netanyahu, *Fighting Terrorism*, 103.

which made the traditional argument of State survival as follows: ‘from its foundation Israel has believed, correctly, that its very survival is at stake. Its leaders have acted accordingly, often in a fashion that baffles those fortunate enough not to live in nations encircled by foes that call for their extinction’. However, *The Australian* journalist suggests, on the contrary, that Israelis have not perceived OCL to be a war of national survival: ‘Israelis themselves appear more cynical than Spectator would have us believe. A December 26 poll in Israel showed that 55 per cent of respondents felt the Government’s actions in Gaza would be motivated by “political considerations”’.¹⁰³

While the Israeli Government had dismantled settlements in Gaza in 2005, the objective to leave Gaza with a political vacuum made re-occupation seem a possible and even likely outcome. Testimonies compiled by BTS indicate that a sub-section of institutional thought in Israel supported reoccupation. One soldier’s testimony refers to the historical and emotive significance attached by the IDF Rabbinate to the geography of Gaza, linking national narratives of Jewish suffering to the objectives of OCL:

*[army-rabbinate-issued booklets with essays were on the subject of] the operation, the importance of serving the People of Israel who have been persecuted all these years and is now back in its own homeland and needs to fight for it. All the well-known clichés ... also because it's Gaza ... the link to the evacuated Katif settlements ... to Netzarim. After I got out I saw a newspaper article about someone who was evacuated from there and had flown the Israeli flag again from a rooftop at Netzarim ... the pamphlets spoke of going back to the source, of historic justice, things like that.*¹⁰⁴

However, if this was an important justification within domestic narratives, it was not propagated in Western media sources. The two settlements referred to, Netzarim and Katif, are collectively mentioned five times in the *Guardian* and once in *The New York Times* and *The Australian*. In *The New York Times*, Netzarim is simply named. In the *Guardian*, it is described as ‘the former Jewish settlement of’ or similarly.¹⁰⁵ There is no work within official Israeli narrative – for English-speaking publics – around either the desire or tactical necessity of reclaiming Gaza. In contrast (a shift considered in the epilogue of this thesis), by the time of OPE, the narrative of reclaiming Gaza moves into mainstream politics as the best territorial and demographic solution to Israel’s problems with Gaza. In 2014, this seems to be about reasserting the Jewish character of Israel, arguably more pressing than in 2008–9, since increasingly the idea of two-states is acknowledged to be unworkable internationally, notwithstanding that no clear institutional support has emerged for a preferred alternative.

According to the evidence of Israeli polls, and in contrast to the proposals for population transfer and Jewish re-occupation of Gaza which emerge in OPE, Gaza was viewed by many Israelis as a neighbouring entity in OCL, albeit a threatening one. According to polls cited in all sources, the government was given a mandate for OCL, and Gaza’s remoteness seemed to be a factor in this: support was as high as 90 per cent, while some 80 per cent of citizens supported its continuation.¹⁰⁶ The *Guardian* cites a regular survey conducted by Tel Aviv University known as the War and Peace index, which illustrates this position: ‘80% would oppose Israel opening its crossings to Gaza even if Hamas stopped firing on southern towns’; a result attributed to the fact that ‘attitudes

¹⁰³ Cameron Stewart, “Siege of Gaza,” *Australian*, January 3, 2009.

¹⁰⁴ BTS, *Soldiers’ Testimonies*, Testimony 36.

¹⁰⁵ McCarthy, “Thousands of Children Face a Long Road to Recovery,” January 30, 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Rabinovich, “Israelis Feel Sorry for Victims But ...,” January 15, 2009; Bronner, “Israelis United on Gaza War Even as Censure Rises Abroad,” January 13, 2009.

among Israelis are so hardened'.¹⁰⁷ This is demonstrated in individuated comments of Israelis, many of whom are said to have been gripped by a 'new euphoria' during the war. One resident of Sderot remarks, for example: 'I do not understand why the army went out now. We should have finished them off'.¹⁰⁸ However, one of the researchers for the War and Peace index argues that Israel is no different from other countries when confronted by war, citing World War II: 'If you take England and the US when they felt there was a need to end the war against Nazi Germany, look at what they did in Dresden. You are talking about tens of thousands of innocent German civilians who were killed'.¹⁰⁹

Although Israeli democracy is emphasised during OCL (for example in the comments of Miliband cited above), this political high ground is ultimately spurious, while Israel and its supporters seek to justify its actions and defame Hamas by any means. These arguments are not always consistent with one another, but they are all employed to champion this common goal. Their inconsistency is particularly problematic in respect of the contradiction at the heart of Israeli policy towards accepting the expression of Palestinian democratic will. As Beinart writes, Israel faced a choice at the election of Hamas: to risk Palestinian democracy or to try and extinguish it. He acknowledges that risking Palestinian democracy would have meant accepting that Hamas had won control of the Palestinian parliament. Israel did not take the risk – a choice that contradicts statements of American-Jewish leaders, who argue that the Gaza withdrawal shows that Israel once again sought peace and the Palestinians once again chose war. Beinart argues that this perspective ignores Israel's own rejection of Palestinian democracy and the resultant continuation of the dynamic of Israel's Occupation in Gaza as elsewhere.¹¹⁰ Moreover, at the time of OCL, neither the operation specifically nor policy generally seemed capable of yielding any political vision for the future of Israel's relations with Palestinians. Rather, the operation's objectives indicate no concern for their effect on present or future Israel–Palestinian relations; on the contrary, they seem to guarantee their deterioration. As a consequence of this, the primary unease for Israelis about OCL, when unease was expressed, stemmed from the fact that residents of Gaza were and would remain Israel's neighbours.¹¹¹

5. Myth formation

If OCL was about re-establishing Israel's deterrence capacity, which it arguably realised in the enormous destruction of the 22-day strike, what Israel could not guard against, short of destroying Hamas and re-occupying Gaza, was the likelihood that Hamas would declare a moral and psychological victory. Yet even from the early days of the strike, military analysts indicated that a clear military victory for Israel would not be possible, and thus neither could OCL improve the security situation for residents of southern Israel.¹¹² In the estimation of a former head of Israel's National Security Council, the operation suffered from poor coordination between military action and diplomatic aims: 'either we want to achieve a sustainable arrangement, with a lasting ceasefire and a stop to arms smuggling from Egypt, or we want to bring about a collapse of the Hamas

¹⁰⁷ Toni O'Loughlin, "Backing For Invasion Remains Strong," *Guardian*, January 14, 2009.

¹⁰⁸ Kershner, "Few Israelis Near Gaza Feel War Achieved Much," January 21, 2009.

¹⁰⁹ O'Loughlin, "Backing For Invasion Remains Strong," January 14, 2009.

¹¹⁰ Beinart, *Crisis of Zionism*, 75.

¹¹¹ Rabinovich, "Israelis Feel Sorry for Victims But ...," January 15, 2009.

¹¹² "Military Victory Impossible," *Australian*, January 7, 2009.

government. These lead to very different actions on all fronts, but ... [there is] a certain confusion about our message to others'.¹¹³ Or, in the words of a senior Israeli military officer, changes at the political level since 2006 were 'not so impressive' and the military remained 'at the center of strategic thinking'.¹¹⁴ Moreover, despite statements that Israel's endgame was clear (according to the Prime Minister's spokesperson Mark Regev, for example), success was impossible to demonstrate.¹¹⁵ Rabinovich states in *The Australian*, for example, that 'even before the war started, Israelis knew it would end with Hamas declaring victory regardless of what happened on the battlefield'. While he argues that this made it tempting for Israel to conquer Gaza City, the total defeat of Hamas 'would leave Israel holding not a victory cup but Gaza itself, a bitter chalice'.¹¹⁶ Similarly, a *Ha'aretz* columnist quoted in the *Guardian* asserts that Israel is in a bind, since it requires decisive defeat of Hamas but cannot shoulder the economic and political costs of re-occupation. He concludes: 'Israel ... is looking to the international community for the diplomatic equivalent of a financial bail-out – without actually saying so'.¹¹⁷ How Israel was to 'complete the job' without re-occupying Gaza was a question that Israeli strategists failed to answer in OCL.

The construction of victory is key to the psychological impact of OCL. Officially, the Israeli Government claimed victory, supported for example by the following description in *The New York Times*:

*In Israel, a sense of justice and triumph prevailed with radio stations playing classic Zionist songs and President Shimon Peres asserting on a visit to wounded soldiers that the army had achieved both a military and a moral victory. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told Israel Radio: "We had achievements that for a long time Israel did not have. And therefore, you also have to know when to make the decision to stop and look. If Hamas got the message that we sent so harshly, then we can stop. If Hamas tries to continue to shoot, then we will continue".*¹¹⁸

However, the comments of Israeli citizens depict a vastly different perception. Yossi Klein Halevi of the Adelson Institute for Strategic Studies in Jerusalem attests that reactions of the Israeli public are key to interpreting victory. He argues that both the Yom Kippur war and the 2006 war in Lebanon exemplify Israel's military success but psychological failures, arguing: 'The Arabs take their cue from Israeli responses. Deterrence is about how Israelis feel, whether they feel they've won or lost'.¹¹⁹ There is significant evidence after OCL that Israelis, and the residents of the south in particular, were disappointed by the outcome of the operation, confirmed in both the *Guardian* and *The New York Times*. Journalist Isabel Kershner writes that, following the ceasefire, 'there was little sense of triumph (in the south) ... more a nagging feeling of something missed or incomplete'. She quotes a potato farmer 'nervous as he drove through the lush fields', stating: 'I do not feel any victory. I still do not feel safe.' Kershner concludes: 'after such a tremendous show of force, many Israeli were hoping to see a more definitive picture of victory'.¹²⁰ Similarly in the *Guardian*, comments of Israeli citizens

¹¹³ Giora Eiland quoted in Erlanger, "For Israel, Lessons from 2006, But Old Pitfalls," January 7, 2009.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ethan Bronner, "Israel Deepens Gaza Incursion As Toll Mounts," *New York Times*, January 6, 2009.

¹¹⁶ Abraham Rabinovich, "Tactical Rethink As Plans Set Back," *Australian*, January 16, 2009.

¹¹⁷ Simon Tisdall, "Time for Another Bail-Out," *Guardian*, January 7, 2009.

¹¹⁸ Ethan Bronner, "Israel Speeds Withdrawal from Gaza," *New York Times*, January 20, 2009.

¹¹⁹ Erlanger, "Israel Declares Gaza Cease-Fire," January 18, 2009.

¹²⁰ Kershner, "Few Israelis Near Gaza Feel War Achieved Much," January 21, 2009.

illustrate disappointment at the ceasefire: ‘the decision was terrible. We should carry on fighting until Hamas is devastated’.¹²¹

Yet Hamas also claims victory in OCL, and at a symbolic level at least, its victory is convincing. Similarly to Jenin, therefore, OCL could be considered an important moment in myth making and the formation of Palestinian nationalism. The primary claim is that Hamas achieved a moral victory, emphasising its rejection of psychological defeat. One Israeli military analyst confirms this when assessing outcomes for OCL: ‘Hamas simply needs not to be broken and to carry on firing rockets until the last day of combat. Israel, by contrast has to achieve a substantial goal’.¹²² Precisely this kind of victory is claimed when the main government spokesperson for Hamas, Taher al-Nunu, states: ‘Israel has succeeded in killing everything except the will of the people. They said they were going to dismantle the resistance and demolish the rockets but after this historic victory, the government is steadfast, we are working and they were not able to stop the rockets’.¹²³ It is on these terms that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declares: ‘people in Gaza have won. They fulfilled their duty in defending their dignity and honor. This is the victory of humanity against barbarism’.¹²⁴ In asserting this victory, Hamas defines its success against Israel’s failure to achieve its goals, emphasising that its resistance is unprecedented, such as when an advisor to Hamas’ foreign ministry compares outcomes: ‘Israel defeated four Arab armies in six days. We lasted 22 days’ or another Hamas associate avows: ‘victory is to the one who survives after 22 days under this hellfire. It is unprecedented, unexpected ... the one who emerged stronger is Hamas’.¹²⁵

A more ambivalent corollary to Hamas’ victory is the idea of a ‘culture of martyrdom’, although in part simply an aspect of Hamas’ rhetorical style, emphasised in the reporting of OCL. The cult of the martyr had been a concern for Israelis and international commentators in ODS, apprehensive that the scale of violence to which Palestinians had been subjected would strengthen the culture of violence in Palestinian society. At the time of OCL, a children’s psychologist states that long-term studies on the traumatising effect of IDF violence since the 90s have confirmed that these children ‘become fighters’. He continues: ‘I warned about this 15 years ago, that in 15 years these traumatised children will be more aggressive, they will want to fight ... So now we will have another generation of more aggressive behaviour ... It’s a cycle of aggression. Children see their parents killed in front of them. What do you expect?’¹²⁶ Undoubtedly, victory is a complex notion in Palestinian society. As one fighter in Gaza states: ‘it’s either victory while alive, or martyrdom. Both ways are victory’, an attitude not so dissimilar to the centrality of militarism in Israeli thinking and a deficiency in political ideas.¹²⁷ However, this idea was not seen by all Palestinians as signalling victory. For example, a political scientist at Gaza’s al-Azhar University, Mkhaimer Abusada, comments: ‘declaring victory while the Palestinians are bleeding and in a catastrophe was not respected by the Palestinians. If Hamas is able to end the siege and reopen the border

¹²¹ Rachel Shabi, “‘We Achieved What We Could, But It Won’t Last,’” *Guardian*, January 19, 2009.

¹²² Ian Black, “Israel’s Military and Political Options,” *Guardian*, January 2, 2009.

¹²³ Bronner, “Israel Speeds Withdrawal from Gaza,” January 20, 2009.

¹²⁴ Isabel Kershner, “Israel Shells U.N. Sites in Gaza, Drawing Fresh Condemnation,” *New York Times*, January 16, 2009.

¹²⁵ John Lyons, “Israel Begins Withdrawal After Truce,” *Australian*, January 19, 2009; Rory McCarthy, “After the Victory Rallies, Leaders Must Decide On Their Next Move,” *Guardian*, January 30, 2009.

¹²⁶ Hazem Balousha and Chris McGreal, “Shell-Shocked Children Who Are Drawn Into the Cult of the Martyr,” *Guardian*, January 7, 2009.

¹²⁷ Taghreed El-Khodary, “Hamas Fighters Display Mix of Swagger and Fear,” *New York Times*, January 14, 2009.

between Gaza and the outside world, then I think they can claim victory without any problem. But I think it's complicated'.¹²⁸

In OCL, as distinct from ODS, in which the failure of Palestinian politics was often indicted as a primary cause for Palestinian predicament, and notwithstanding that *The Australian* and *The New York Times*' reliance on Israeli perspective, it is impossible to avoid the fact that Israel lacks a clear political vision which military substitution cannot cure. Despite the failure of the international community in the entire history of Israel to intervene on the Palestinians' behalf, there is a qualitative shift in the appeals of Israel to the international community. Whereas in ODS there are statements to the effect that Israel is entitled to act with disregard to entreaties of the US, one finds instead Tzipi Livni appealing to the sympathy of the international community: 'we are not asking the world to take part in the battle and send their forces in -- we are only asking them to allow us to carry it out until we reach a point in which we decide our goals have been reached for this point.'¹²⁹ Thus, in a sense, the scale of Israeli destruction in Gaza is also a victory for Hamas in the realm of international visibility of Palestinian suffering and the process of international dis-identification with Israeli narrative. Indeed, OCL heralded a significant shift in the feasibility of utilising traditional Israeli narratives to defend its action, given the crazed onslaught and unobtainable goals. As Palestinian-American historian Rashid Khalidi writes, a 'series of prolonged, vivid and photogenic crises has slowly overwhelmed the deeply held notion that Israel is the eternal victim of aggression, is not responsible for any of its actions, and is thus justified in doing whatever it does under the rubric of self-defense'.¹³⁰ In short, OCL and its aftermath heralded an important shift in Western understanding of Israel–Palestinian relations, compelling departure from the repetition of myths about the conflict that have circulated for more than half a century, since OCL made their falsehoods impossible to ignore.

¹²⁸ McCarthy, "After the Victory Rallies, Leaders Must Decide On Their Next Move," January 30, 2009.

¹²⁹ Steven Erlanger, "In Fatah-Governed West Bank, Solidarity With Hamas," *New York Times*, January 6, 2009.

¹³⁰ Khalidi, "Palestinian Dispossession," 380.

Chapter 5
Editorialising Operation Cast Lead:
proportionality and the manifestation of insecurity

It is always worth asking why, and from whose point of view, one way of using language seems obvious, natural and neutral, while another seems ludicrous, loaded and perverse¹

Unlike the footage of collapsing buildings, terrified crowds, the apocalyptic haze that hung over Gaza and the hundreds of thousands who attended public rallies around the world to protest OCL, the editorial pages were often clinically circumscribed. Few editorials remarked on the disjuncture between public sentiment and governmental support, and at times, the papers seemed to strenuously ignore IDF force, international grassroots reactions to that, or OCL's effects on the population captive in Gaza. The argument of this thesis is vividly demonstrated in the advent of OCL. In addition to thematic developments in reporting, the analysis in editorials captures the derogation between the events and consequences of the operation and the subjects for exposition, illustrating Chomsky's argument that extensively documented facts might be rendered non-facts when those facts are unwelcomed by the institutional power nexus.² As is articulated in the opening epigraph, the editorials exemplify the work of certain influences which determine meaning, circulation and credibility, foregrounding some ideas and making others disappear.

In contrast to the number of editorials produced during ODS, significantly fewer editorials were published during OCL. In *The New York Times* and *The Australian*, 37 and 26 editorials were published, compared with the ODS figures of 77 and 42 respectively. These figures, which support Finkelstein's argument about the role of mainstream media in OCL (presented in chapter 4), speak directly to the stonewalling of critical analysis on an operation elsewhere so virulently condemned. In contrast, editorial content in the *Guardian* was wider in scope and comparable to 46 editorials in ODS, with 45 published in total. In the case of the American and Australian papers, the dearth of discussion seems to have been one of the few strategies available for concealing content, having the dual effect of limiting critique of the operation and enabling those papers to avoid addressing the scale, much less the implications, of a disaster whose authors they were not prepared to condemn.

The role of media and in particular that of *The New York Times*, is widely documented as integral to US support for Israel, and the mechanics of this are in evidence in OCL. In *The New York Times*, contributions of notable Arab, Palestinian and liberal commentators serve to give the impression of diversity, while cumulatively the paper tends to interpret events in the image of Israeli narrative.³ In contrast, *The Australian* publishes very little material from an alternate viewpoint. Thus, similarly to 2002, analysis in *The Australian* is the most unequivocally partisan. However, in OCL this is more marked, since not one of the editorials condemns Israeli action outright, nor do they dwell on the destruction or human devastation suffered in Gaza. The tradition of engaging with reader criticism in *The New York Times* and the *Guardian*, by contrast, creates the appearance of greater transparency in these papers. For example, a piece by Clarke Hoyt defends the paper's line with respect

¹ Deborah Cameron, "Words, Words, Words": The Power of Language," in *The War of the Words: The Political Correctness Debate*, ed. Sarah Dunant (London: Virago Press, 1994), 29.

² Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions*, 7-9.

³ Hamzeh and Mays, *Operation Defensive Shield*, 134-5.

to criticisms received from a wide spectrum of opinion in OCL, while Ethan Bronner describes the parallel narrative of each side before analysing the challenge of reporting ‘the news’.⁴ Thus, where the cumulative messaging is similar, the approach of the sources is vastly different.

War crimes, Goldstone and media effects

The magnitude of destruction visited on Gaza in OCL led the UNHRC to commission an investigation into war crimes allegations. The Goldstone Report (GR), as it came to be known, is considered by prominent commentators on Israel–Palestinian relations to have been a milestone,⁵ notwithstanding that its recommendations, like many reports before it, stood little chance of implementation owing to the function of current UN politics.⁶ What made the GR a milestone was therefore its unmasking of favoured Israeli tactics, both practical and rhetorical, described by Finkelstein as ‘the twin swords of The Holocaust and the “new anti-Semitism”’, employed to stifle Palestinian struggle.⁷ Visibility was produced in the first instance by the content of the report, but ensuing reactions illustrate how Israeli tactic has heretofore succeeded in neutralising seriously damning criticism. Unlike the sources in the present study, the wider traffic of media that reported on OCL was instrumental in raising international opprobrium and placing the UN under significant pressure to be seen to investigate the operation and hold responsible parties accountable, which undoubtedly motivated Israel’s efforts to discredit the GR.

As Falk notes, it was inherently problematic that the report came to be identified primarily with its chair, Richard Goldstone. This was highlighted by Goldstone’s retraction of the findings; his titular connection to the report fuelled the misconception that his retraction discredited the report in its totality, which seriously undermined the force of the findings in the public realm. From the start, the GR was plagued by encumbrances: assembling the team was delayed due to the difficulty of finding a qualified chair with the fortitude ‘to accept an assignment likely to provoke the barrage of denunciations that is Israel’s habitual response to criticism of its conduct’.⁸ In the appointment of Goldstone, who had an established record as a jurist involved in the prosecution of war crimes in addition to ideological and personal attachment to Israel, Falk argues that one can assume Goldstone believed this background ‘would insulate him somewhat from incurring Israel’s wrath’.⁹ Indeed, the media capitalised on Goldstone’s ‘identity as a prominent Jew and an eminent international jurist to draw attention to a high-profile inquiry into controversial Israeli practices’.¹⁰ However, the way in which the report came to be identified with the personage of Goldstone ‘raised Israeli fury to unprecedented heights of denunciation and damage control the minute the report was officially released’.¹¹ This is demonstrated by Israel’s comparatively offhand response to the plethora of reports generated by international and Israeli NGOs that criticised OCL through the lens of International Humanitarian Law on the one hand, and the disinclination

⁴ Clark Hoyt, “Standing Between Enemies,” *New York Times*, January 11, 2009; Ethan Bronner, “The Bullets in My In-Box,” *New York Times*, January 25, 2009.

⁵ A collection dedicated to the GR was published shortly before Goldstone’s retraction: Adam Horowitz, Lizzy Ratner, and Philip Weiss, eds, *The Goldstone Report: The Legacy of the Landmark Investigation of the Gaza Conflict* (New York: Nation Books, 2011).

⁶ Falk, “Goldstone Without Goldstone,” 102.

⁷ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 105.

⁸ Falk, “Goldstone Without Goldstone,” 98.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

of critics to invoke the GR in criticism of Israel's conduct in OCL on the other.¹² The manner in which Israel engaged with the GR is, argues Falk, 'the poster child of a tactical process I have called "the politics of deflection"', which aims to shift attention from substantive criticism 'to the person of the critic or the supposed bias of the auspices'.¹³

Goldstone's partial retraction of the GR demonstrates the success of Israeli *hasbara*, which Falk concludes signalled the partial realisation of the goals of the smear campaign by Israel and its supporters against the GR. Given Goldstone's credentials, 'so that Israel could not play its usual cards – "anti-Semite", "self-hating Jew", "Holocaust denier" against him', it had seemed prior to the retraction, that, in the words of Gideon Levy, Goldstone as messenger was 'propaganda-proof'.¹⁴ Undermining the report on the strength of a personal retraction is an illuminating example of media complicity with Israeli interest: it was hardly noted at the time of retraction that, although chair of the commission, Goldstone was only one of four eminent authors appointed to produce it. Nor was the personal nature of the retraction foregrounded; rather, and in part due to the fact that Goldstone had become synonymous with the report, his retraction undercut the validity of its findings. The personalised phrasing of the retraction, published in *The Washington Post*, implied that it was Goldstone who had determined the final contents of the report, which actively fuelled confusion about the meaning of the retraction.¹⁵ In contrast, a joint statement issued by the other authors of the GR, published in the *Guardian*, received little additional media comment, although it affirmed the findings of the GR and clarified that Goldstone was alone in his retraction.¹⁶ Falk writes that the reception of these two pieces in US mainstream media is indicative of the bias in that media: the 'obviously flawed' retraction was widely and misleadingly interpreted as an authoritative repudiation of the report, while the challenge to Goldstone's retraction vanished almost without trace.¹⁷

'Why Israel fights' [a note on mentality]

In 2003, at the peak of the phenomenon of Palestinian Suicide Bombers (PSB), Hage sought to explain those acts which, in a Western public-political sphere, had been met with utter rejection.¹⁸ He observes that, in the examination of social death as a catalyst to the phenomenon of PSB, undergraduate students at the most prestigious university in the OPTs, Bir Zeit, were generally found to have an inability to dream a meaningful life. He writes: 'nothing symbolises social death as clearly or as forcefully as this inability to dream a meaningful life. But this generalised state of social death does not in itself directly cause suicide bombers. Indeed, such a state can as likely cause the emergence of the classical alcoholic postcolonial culture of despair and resignation'.¹⁹ That the Palestinians who live under occupation have not succumbed to this culture, in the

¹² Jerome Slater, "The Attacks on the Goldstone Report," in *The Goldstone Report: The Legacy of the Landmark Investigation of the Gaza Conflict*, eds Adam Horowitz, Lizzy Ratner, and Philip Weiss (New York: Nation Books, 2011), 360.

¹³ Falk, "Goldstone Without Goldstone," 100.

¹⁴ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 139.

¹⁵ Richard Goldstone, "Reconsidering the Goldstone Report on Israel and War Crimes," *Washington Post*, April 11, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/reconsidering-the-goldstone-report-on-israel-and-war-crimes/2011/04/01/AFg111JC_story.html.

¹⁶ Hina Jilani, Christine Chinkin and Desmond Travers, "Goldstone Report: Statement Issued by Members of UN Mission on Gaza War," *Guardian*, April 14, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/apr/14/goldstone-report-statement-un-gaza>.

¹⁷ Falk, "Goldstone Without Goldstone," 101.

¹⁸ See chap. 8 in Hage, *Paranoid Nationalism*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 134.

face of an unrelenting litany of hardships coupled with the seemingly inexorable deterioration of their situation, is quite remarkable. Hage explains: ‘the difference in this particular bleak social landscape is the development of martyr culture. It seems to me that it is here that the suicide bombing as a meaningful activity – as an illusion – emerges’.²⁰ Some decade on from this piece, the collective strategy (or spectre) of PSB has largely been replaced by other forms of Palestinian action. However, the transformation of Palestinian action into new resistance is critical not only to the Palestinian people but to the Israeli mentality which found such virulent expression in OCL. Fundamentally, what gross physical dispossession has failed to rob Palestinians of is their inalienable identity as Palestinians.

Given the power disparities, it may seem odd that this conceptual capital should prove so unbearable to the Israeli State. During OCL, the eminent historian Rashid Khalidi quoted a 2002 statement by a former IDF chief of staff, Moshe Yaalon, in his editorial published in *The New York Times*: ‘the Palestinians must be made to understand in the deepest recesses of their consciousness that they are a defeated people’.²¹ According to the *Electronic Intifada*, this quotation had previously been widely cited; however, an erratum published by *The New York Times* states that the quote was unverifiable by/at that time.²² Yet the sentiment expressed in the disputed quote goes to the crux of Israeli discomfort. I think it is no coincidence that the original source was ‘unfindable’ at the time of its increased visibility during OCL, or that this editorial was one of the few in *The New York Times* that was seriously critical not only of Israeli action but of the accepted framework of narrative about Israel–Palestinian relations. What this quote betrays is a discomfort about the way in which Palestinians have retained their identity and eked out from the intangibles of their inheritance a cultural cohesion which no OCL-like events, for all their destruction, have been able to demolish. For example, in an essay entitled ‘Israel’s Siege Mentality’, referring to the psychological suffering and sense of victimisation amongst Israelis, journalist Noam Sheizaf describes how the dominant forces in Israel, ‘realising that they are unable to win over international public opinion ... direct their anger and frustration against human rights organizations, peace activists, and members of the Palestinian minority’.²³ I have argued in the current thesis that Israeli mentality has increasingly displayed a sense of siege, which has also dominated Western media, as demonstrated in the editorials relating to existential crisis (considered below). Specifically, this manifests itself as a discomfort with Palestinian identity when Israeli mentality has been increasingly beset by insecurities. It was expressed to me in the following terms during the 2012 OPS. A Palestinian friend who registered with UNWRA as a Palestinian refugee has never been permitted home (in his case, a city inside the 48 territories), called me at the advent of the operation. Enraged, he articulated his view on the motivation of the latest strike: ‘they want to hit us until we will say anything. Until we finally agree we are not who we say we are. But they will never make us say that and they can’t stand it!’

²⁰ Hage, *Paranoid Nationalism*, 134.

²¹ Rashid Khalidi, “What You Don’t Know About Gaza,” *New York Times*, January 8, 2009.

²² Editor’s note to Ali Abunimah, “A Defeated Policy, Not A Defeated People,” *Electronic Intifada*, March 7, 2008, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/defeated-policy-not-defeated-people/7406>. A correction to Khalidi’s alleged misquotation, made January 30, 2009, is available on the electronic version of the article: Khalidi, “What You Don’t Know About Gaza,” January 8, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/08/opinion/08khalidi.html?_r=0.

²³ Noam Sheizaf, “Israel’s Siege Mentality,” in *The Goldstone Report: The Legacy of the Landmark Investigation of the Gaza Conflict*, eds Adam Horowitz, Lizzy Ratner, and Philip Weiss (New York: Nation Books, 2011).

1. (Re)Solution and the future of Israel–Palestinian relations

*When Israel is urged to respect world opinion and put its faith in the international community the point is rather being missed. The very idea of Israel is a rejection of this option.*²⁴

If it was expected that the ‘peace process’ would be re-engaged after OCL, it was not many more years before analysts and politicians alike started declaring the process dead in the water. Given Falk’s argument that, contrary to the sense that ‘nothing has happened’ with regard to the peace process, in fact much had happened to suit Israeli designs and degrade Palestinian hope, this is perhaps unsurprising.²⁵ For example, US Secretary of State, John Kerry warned in the lead up to talks in August 2013 that there is: ‘a year, a year-and-a-half, or two years and it’s over’.²⁶ Yet in contrast to the hope that the death of the peace process would lead the parties back to the drawing board where a framework less odious than that of Oslo might be negotiated, Kerry’s warning pertained to an entrenchment, for the foreseeable future, of the oppressive *status quo* which subjugates Palestinian lives. In contrast to the 2002 materials, the editorials concerning diplomacy and resolution during OCL make little mention of reviving prior proposals or arranging imminent talks. This reflects the impression of many commentators and analysts during OCL, that whomever one apportioned responsibility to, it had narrowed future options and practically made the situation substantively worse. Thus, irrespective of the particular position of a contributor, the editorials capture a sense of rapid disintegration in the feasibility of the ‘peace process’.

a) The Australian

Editorials that discuss diplomatic strategy post-OCL are infrequent in *The Australian*. Statements that most resemble proposals for negotiation identify undefined roles for international actors, often European ones, in contrast to emphasis on the US and resurrections of previous two-state proposals in ODS. The one exception to this is a piece by Richard Beeston, which refers not only to the severity of the crisis and concern over the death toll, but also to the international horror occasioned by IDF action. Additionally, Beeston appraises the operation as an Israeli pre-election strategy, contextualising the current moves within the electoral history of 2006 and Lebanon.²⁷

Two subjects dominate *The Australian* with respect to future diplomatic options. The underlying implication of the first is that Israel has exhausted all reasonable options and is thus at a loss. Martin Peretz argues this decisively, stating that the historical record shows that Palestinians, in contrast to Jews, have always lacked vision. The fact that *The Australian* publishes Peretz, editor for *The New Republic* and characterised by Finkelstein as a ‘die-hard apologist for Israel’, is strongly indicative of the editorial line taken in this paper.²⁸ While a-contextualising Israeli security needs and decontextualising Palestinian action is frequent, Peretz’s

²⁴ *The Times* chief leader writer, quoted in “Israel and the Family of Nations,” *Guardian*, January 14, 2009.

²⁵ Richard Falk, “Human Rights.” The effect of this argument with respect to the international community’s misjudgement of the situation is demonstrated in Yezid Sayigh, “Inducing a Failed State in Palestine,” *Survival* 49, no. 3 (2007), doi: 10.1080/00396330701564786.

²⁶ Jonathan Cook, “Once More into the Dead End of the Palestine-Israel ‘Peace Process’,” *Global Research*, August 2, 2013, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/once-more-into-the-dead-end-of-palestine-israel-peace-process/5344818>.

²⁷ Richard Beeston, “Barak Plotting His Next Move,” *Australian*, January 1, 2009.

²⁸ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 121.

piece presents a particularly distorted history lesson in which the Palestinians are to blame for present day Israeli militarism. Making the somewhat unlikely argument that Israel longs for Palestinian statehood, the article concludes by arguing that Europe must be influential in the wake of OCL, preferably with the PA on board.²⁹ Even the milder perspective of *The Australian's* Middle East correspondent John Lyons deplores the use of the UN in peace brokering and proposes that a resolution might be available in the form of Egypt taking responsibility for Gaza.³⁰ Given the historic involvement of Egyptian rule in Gaza from 1948 to 1967, and the response of the Egyptian authorities to OCL, namely border closures, this suggestion is replete with problems, even disregarding the implications it has for the Palestinian aspiration of self-determination. A second line of speculation concerns Hamas' failure to retaliate, as a possible strategy calculated to ensnare the IDF – an argument advanced by both Lyons and the prolific Rabinovich (whose articles pertain most often to the idea of existential threat). Lyons comments that, regardless of the situation, the long-term best hope for Israel is enabling the Gazan economy and leadership, currently thwarted by prolonged blockade. In the meantime, he argues, 'both sides face an urban nightmare', a sentiment echoed by Rabinovich, who expresses confusion about the nature of fighting, which both he and Lyons attribute to Israel's media blackout for obstructing clarity of information.³¹

b) The Guardian

Twenty-five of some 45 pieces in the *Guardian* relate to possibilities post-OCL, presenting a vastly different account of OCL's legitimacy, advantages and likely impact, compared to *The Australian* or *The New York Times*. Unlike the other two sources, contributors to the *Guardian* include several high profile Palestinian and Israeli commentators as well as senior British politicians and diplomats. The two-state solution is raised, though some query its viability, others urge new approaches, and contributors question the wisdom of isolating Hamas. In addition, several articles raise the concern that OCL marks the end of any perceived value in current Israeli tactics, while two others eschew the role of governments post-OCL, emphasising instead the role of civil society in catalysing change.

Six pieces focus on the potential influences of external actors on the Israel–Palestinian situation: the incumbent Obama Administration, Britain, and the international community. Three unsigned pieces advise that external powers could play a greater role if they had the will. The first argues that, if any of the Quartet members (the EU, the UN, the US and Russia) 'threatened to reconsider their policies, Israel would feel a cost far higher than the loss of its own soldiers'. Given America's continued delay in calling for an unqualified ceasefire, the article's proposal is directed towards EU policy, particularly the suspension of arms sales to Israel.³² This draws on the proposals of Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democrats, who argues that Israel's approach to defence is self-defeating. Rather, contrary to conventional wisdom, he argues that the call for sanctions have Israel's 'long

²⁹ Martin Peretz, "West Must Guarantee Resolution With Gaza," *Australian*, January 7, 2009. This narrative finds considerable support in scholarship, for example, Coskun, who claims that early Jewish organisations were oriented towards 'peace making', while the Palestinians were unwilling to compromise: "Analysing Desecritisations," 398-401.

³⁰ John Lyons, "Close Combat," *Australian*, January 5, 2009.

³¹ John Lyons, "Peace is Fragile and the Omens are Bad," *Australian*, January 19, 2009; John Lyons, "Both Sides Face an Urban Nightmare," *Australian*, January 6, 2009; Abraham Rabinovich, "Hamas Failure to Fight May be a Trap," *Australian*, January 15, 2009.

³² "No Shelter," *Guardian*, January 7, 2009.

term interests at heart'.³³ A second unsigned piece, similarly focused on weapon supply to Israel, suggests that, above all, the Obama Administration should reset the parameters of US–Israeli relations. It argues that, given the situation in Gaza, it is not enough to say that Israel has the right to defend itself, urging the new Administration to tell Israel: 'if you use our weapons, you play by our rules'.³⁴ The third asks what the international community can do 'that will have any resonance in a country which now gives every appearance of having turned its back on global opinion'. It proposes four topics for David Miliband to pursue with the Israeli ambassador to England, though it predicts that 'none of these arguments will, on past form, cut much ice', for which reason it argues for boycotts, arms embargos and the revocation of trade agreements. The concluding observations, that 'a country which truly rejects the collective concerns of the international community leaves its friends, never mind its enemies, running out of road', reflects the tone of all three articles: that sanctions against Israel, historically unpopular, are rapidly becoming the only possible response.³⁵

A second argument takes the position that no change is possible unless power relations between the IDF and Hamas are widely acknowledged. Ali Abunimah notes that diplomatic fronts 'continue to treat occupier and occupied, coloniser and colonised, first-world high-tech army and near-starving refugee populations, as if they are on the same footing'. He writes that this is precisely the problem of the current situation, since all Palestinian resistance, peaceful or otherwise, is 'met by Israel's bullets and bombs'. Moreover, he argues that the PA's accession to all of Israel's demands 'has not spared a single Palestinian in the West Bank from Israel's relentless colonisation'. In short, Abunimah sees no role for the West unless it recognises this function of power, which in contrast, he argues, is recognised by the public as reflected in the popular outrage at Israel caused by OCL.³⁶ Staff writer Seumas Milne similarly condemns the failure of Western countries to acknowledge 'not just the vast disparity in weapons and power, but that one side is the occupier, the other the occupied'. At particular issue according to Milne is the fact that 'Israel and its western sponsors have set their face against an accommodation with the Palestinians' democratic choice and have instead thrown their political weight, cash and arms behind a sustained attempt to overthrow it'. This is how, he argues, it is possible for the US to 'monitor' the situation rather than intervene, how it is possible for the British Prime Minister to call for 'restraint', and why it is that 'Hamas and the Palestinians of Gaza are held responsible for what has been visited upon them'.³⁷ Abunimah appeals to the 'raw emotions' of civil movements, whereas Milne urges systemic changes led by the Obama Administration. However both writers insist on institutional acknowledgement of the disparity of power relations as crucial to constructively transforming the West's role.

Eight pieces relate to the peace process and the two-state solution. Broadly, there are two different approaches. Three pieces, written by Israelis, refer to OCL as strengthening Israel's position while affirming Israel's willingness to negotiate on its own terms (including one by Grossman discussed in *The New York Times* section below). Jonathan Spyer argues that Israel's aerial bombing of the densely populated area has put Hamas under pressure and will improve Israel's capacity to negotiate a new ceasefire.³⁸ The third piece, by Uri Dromni, a

³³ Nick Clegg, "We Must Stop Arming Israel," *Guardian*, January 7, 2009.

³⁴ "Steep Learning Curve," *Guardian*, January 12, 2009.

³⁵ "Israel and the Family of Nations," January 14, 2009.

³⁶ Ali Abunimah, "We Have No Words Left," *Guardian*, December 29, 2008.

³⁷ Seumas Milne, "Israel's Onslaught on Gaza is a Crime That Cannot Succeed," *Guardian*, December 30, 2008.

³⁸ Jonathan Spyer, "A Fatal Miscalculation," *Guardian*, December 29, 2008.

former spokesperson for the Rabin and Peres governments, argues that, despite Hamas' violent designs recently and the Arab world's historically, Israel is a reasonable nation willing to settle: 'If Hamas stops harassing Israel and smuggling arms, and accepts a two-state solution, it will find Israel a solid partner for carving a better future for our children'. This is Dromni's conclusion after describing the lineage of loss-turned-rhetorical-victory against Israel by Arab leaders since the State's inception. The tone of the piece, reflecting on what he describes as the 'Orwellian mindset' of Hamas and other Arab leaders, includes a selective and partial review of historical events, which portrays Arab action as delusional and irrational. Obscuring context, the piece demonstrates the effect Abunimah and Milne seek to debunk and narrates the peace process as something the Palestinians have singlehandedly derailed.³⁹

The second approach to two-states has a very different tenor to the Israeli contributions. This consists of two comparative pieces about the lessons from Northern Ireland, two pieces that urge re-examining the content of the process rather than simply labouring on 'process' for process' sake. One reaffirms the support of the Arab world for the 2002 Saudi plan which, vaunted in discussions of solution after ODS, is scarcely mentioned in OCL. However, arguments in the *Guardian* suggest that the 'peace process', including the 2002 plan, will not adequately meet Palestinian needs.⁴⁰ Both staff writer Jonathan Freedland and Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Féin, reflecting on Ireland, state that each side will be required to take 'real risks for peace'. They affirm that Hamas must not be excluded and attest that any future Palestinian state must be 'sustainable and viable'.⁴¹ The two most critical pieces argue that the current process is lacking in meaningful content. A short piece by a Gazan resident, Sami Abdul-Shafi, argues that, once OCL is over, the US, Britain and other major countries must 'challenge Israel's rogue policies and realign a misguided peace process'. In particular, he questions the supply of aid money without genuine and just peace, arguing it 'will only paper over a failed process and Palestinians' forgotten rights'.⁴² With narrower scope but similar indictment, former Conservative MP Chris Patten criticises the situation by which the EU has bankrolled failed Israeli and US policies through directing aid money into countless rebuilds of Palestinian infrastructure, continually destroyed by Israeli (so-called) self-defence. He argues that Europe should re-examine 'the content of a deal to produce lasting peace and security for Israel and a viable Palestinian state'.⁴³

In contrast to *The New York Times* pieces which promote Fatah as the ideal negotiating partner, some five pieces in the *Guardian* refer to the error of this thinking, and in particular, the futility of excluding Hamas from the process. Both Patten and Adams argue this in highlighting the parallels with Ireland. Similarly, Clegg appeals to world leaders to 'accept that their response to the election of Hamas has been a strategic failure', arguing that ignoring Hamas will not bring Israel 'the security guarantees that it rightly seeks'. An unsigned piece comments that OCL, far from assisting to mould a desirable negotiating partner for Israel, has accelerated the process by which 'Fatah in the West Bank will increasingly be seen by the Palestinian street as a Vichy regime', concluding

³⁹ Uri Dromi, "This Hamas Hallucination," *Guardian*, January 23, 2009. This is an interesting metaphor, given Chomsky's alternate development of it in *Necessary Illusions*, 120: "For the Israeli authorities and the US media, an attempt by villagers to run their own affairs is 'violence' and a brutal attack to teach them who rules is 'preventing violence'. Orwell would have been impressed".

⁴⁰ Ian Black, "Gaza has Exposed the Arab Leaders to Fury and Contempt," *Guardian*, January 20, 2009.

⁴¹ Jonathan Freedland, "Amid the Horror and Doom of Gaza, the IRA Precedent Offers Hope," *Guardian*, January 14, 2009; Gerry Adams, "A Good Man to Talk To," *Guardian*, January 28, 2009.

⁴² Sami Abdul-Shafi, "Here in the Rubble, We Remain As United As Ever," *Guardian*, January 17, 2009.

⁴³ Chris Patten, "Writing Cheques for Gaza is Easy," *Guardian*, January 27, 2009.

that the inevitable effect of OCL is that Hamas' credibility has been enhanced.⁴⁴ Jeremy Greenstock, former British ambassador to the UN, writes that the only way to retrieve the two-state solution is to 'reject the fiction that Hamas is beyond the pale'. Greenstock argues that any solution will require 'the centres of gravity of Israeli and Palestinian public opinion' being capable 'of touching each other' and thus recognition that Hamas is 'closer to the Palestinian centre'. Having explained why Hamas should be considered a serious negotiating partner, Greenstock concludes, similarly to many writers in the *Guardian*, that 'there is no use in seeking a remedy without a fundamental push for justice for all the people involved, equally, on both sides'.⁴⁵ In contrast, a piece by Kadima MK Shai Hermesh argues that 'the Palestinians chose to elect an extremist group that has inflamed hatred and suffering'. His conclusion is an affirmation that Israel is not choosing to punish the Palestinian population of Gaza, nor is OCL punitive.⁴⁶ Yet Hermesh's point is singular amidst pieces deeply critical of the approach taken to Hamas by Western institutions.

Six pieces deplore OCL's inability to achieve goals tangible to peace or strategically advantageous to Israel, and are rather concerned with the practical effects of the operation. This includes two unsigned pieces, two by staff writer Jonathan Freedland, and two additional contributions. Of the two unsigned, the first states that there is no military solution to Hamas rockets and that OCL is paralysing any chance for the peace process.⁴⁷ The second, published at the end of the operation, states that it has had ambivalent and likely disastrous results both in terms of human cost and psychological impact, in particular on Palestinian children (as discussed in chapter 4).⁴⁸ Freedland argues that OCL indicates that Israel has no strategy for peace. He references Israel's rejection of Hamas as a key measure of this, arguing that, if Israel had a strategy, 'it would realise that Israel cannot pick the Palestinians' leaders for them'. Rather, he suggests that resort to military might is what Israelis consider an answer, which he argues avoids 'the toughest questions'.⁴⁹ Freedman's second piece, written some two weeks into the strike, argues that should Israel topple Hamas, the situation will deteriorate further.⁵⁰ These sentiments are echoed by Abdul-Shafi, who argues that OCL's real aim was to crush the resilience of the Palestinian spirit.⁵¹ Alistair Crooke, former security advisor to the EU, draws together several themes at the conclusion of OCL. He examines the nature of the ceasefire (unilateral declarations on both sides), concluding that this has left the core issues unchanged. Worse, he argues that OCL has changed the parameters of the region, all but burying the 2002 offer of Arab states' recognition of Israel in return for a settlement on 1967 principles. Crooke concludes that Israel has learnt nothing, yet notes it has been rewarded domestically in a victory of public relations.⁵² Indeed, while the majority of pieces in the *Guardian* demonstrate little empathy for the Israeli predicament, many continue to grapple with the 'peace process' and are consequently bound to this failed paradigm of thinking.

⁴⁴ "Gaza Ground Assault," *Guardian*, January 5, 2009.

⁴⁵ Jeremy Greenstock, "Out of the Gaza Ashes," *Guardian*, January 16, 2009.

⁴⁶ Shai Hermesh, "Gazans Need to Choose Peace Over Extremism," *Guardian*, January 6, 2009.

⁴⁷ "Killing a Two-State Solution," *Guardian*, December 29, 2008.

⁴⁸ "Brutal Lessons," *Guardian*, January 19, 2009.

⁴⁹ Jonathan Freedland, "Israel Has Plenty of Tactics for War, But None for Peace," *Guardian*, January 3, 2009.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Freedland, "Gaza After a Hamas Rout Will be an Even Greater Threat to Israel," *Guardian*, January 7, 2009.

⁵¹ Sami Abdul-Shafi, "Our Spirit Will Not Die," *Guardian*, January 5, 2009.

⁵² Alistair Crooke, "A Return to Square One," *Guardian*, January 19, 2009.

One theme regarding future directions, which appears in the *Guardian* but not in its counterparts, aligned as they are to systemic support of Israel, is an appeal for civil society action as the ultimate instigator of change. The call to civil action is pursued in three pieces. Abunimah (as mentioned above) appeals to the ‘raw emotions’ of society to ensure that ‘we do not wake up to “another Gaza” ever again’.⁵³ A piece by scholar Tariq Ramadan urges Muslims everywhere to mobilise in non-violent ways to effect change for the Palestinians. Ramadan writes that, despite the neglect of the ‘international community’ and alarming ‘western media coverage’, the majority of which has bought the Israeli story, there is nevertheless a hopeful trend – that is, that more than two-thirds of Europeans now back the Palestinians, compared to a similar statistic of support for Israelis in 1967. Ramadan argues that these three factors combine to encourage a broad grassroots alliance, with clear political objectives, articulated in a ‘global movement of non-violent resistance’ to counter the ‘violent and extremist policy of the state of Israel’.⁵⁴ Similarly, Hamas leader Khalid Mish’al’s contribution notes the public swell of support for the Palestinians: ‘millions of freedom loving men and women stand by [the Palestinians]’ struggle for justice and liberation ... worldwide’.⁵⁵ These articles indicate not only the *Guardian*’s stance but the direction of alternate discourse on changing the *status quo* of Israeli–Palestinian relations, particularly the appeal to civil movements and call to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS).

c) The New York Times

Of *The New York Times*’ 37 editorials, more than half (21) relate to the peace process and future diplomatic options. With the exception of four, these commiserate over the dire state of the peace process or make suggestions to revive it. For ease of discussion, I have identified three categories within this style of editorial. The first draws on the imminent change of Administrations in the US as a herald of better strategy. The second discusses two-states and land-for-peace as a way of contextualising practical steps towards solutions. The third emphasises the role of an appropriate Palestinian negotiator for resumption of the diplomatic process, namely the PA.

Six pieces make the incumbent Obama Administration central to commentary on OCL and future hopes for the region. Three are unsigned; the other three are by staff writers. An unsigned piece published in the first days of OCL affirms Israel’s right to defend itself and blames Hamas for breakdown of the ceasefire. However, ultimately, the piece criticises Israel and the US for the systemic failures of the peace process, concluding that the President-elect must ‘quickly pick up the pieces and fashion a Middle East peace strategy that may actually bring peace’.⁵⁶ Two unsigned pieces published just days after the cessation of OCL focus on whether the new Administration will change anything. Stressing the importance of a ‘more even handed’ team, they argue it can only succeed if the next Israeli Prime Minister is sympathetic to two-states.⁵⁷ This sentiment is echoed by Mark Landler, who speculates on a different attitude in the new US Administration as compared to the Bush Administration’s uncritical embrace of Israel. He marshals expert opinion to the effect that the next

⁵³ Abunimah, “We Have No Words Left,” December 29, 2008.

⁵⁴ Tariq Ramadan, “An Alliance of Values,” *Guardian*, January 2, 2009.

⁵⁵ Khalid Mish’al, “This Brutality Will Never Break Our Will to be Free,” *Guardian*, January 6, 2009.

⁵⁶ “War Over Gaza,” *New York Times*, December 30, 2008.

⁵⁷ “The (Now Silent) Guns of January,” *New York Times*, January 21, 2009; “An Unenviable Job,” *New York Times*, January 23, 2009.

Administration should continue as peace broker while softening the exclusive nature of America's 'special relationship' with Israel.⁵⁸

The remaining two editorials which focus on the new Administration represent the width of the spectrum offered in *The New York Times*. One by Friedman suggests that OCL is a miniature tableau of three great struggles since 1948, including who is to be the regional superpower, the question of recognition for Israel as a legitimate-Jewish State, and whether Islamism (or modernists) will come to dominate Arab society. Friedman discusses the significance of the Obama Administration, noting the 'tremendous appeal' Obama's narrative holds for Arabs, which is a great threat to 'Islamist radicals': '[Obama's] goal – America's goal – has to be a settlement in Gaza that eliminates the threat of Hamas rockets and opens Gaza economically to the world ... That's what will serve U.S. interests, moderate the three great struggles and earn him respect'.⁵⁹ Yet nowhere in this piece, which spends considerable time outlining strategic problems for Israel, are death tolls in Gaza acknowledged. Rather, deflecting from Israeli action, Friedman cites the number of Iraqis dead by 'unprovoked mass murders' of Islamist suicide bombers during the same period. In contrast, a piece by Roger Cohen fantasises about a culturally sensitive and nuanced US 'dream team' in the Middle East. While he acknowledges his fantasy to be far from the reality of US policy, he concludes that failure to offer a fresh approach imperils US interest.⁶⁰ Finkelstein, in surveying media responses to OCL, describes Roger Cohen as habitually 'staid'. Thus, he identifies Cohen's editorials during OCL as one of the notable 'cracks ... in the moderate mainstream'.⁶¹

Eight articles primarily write to the two-state solution and associated concept of land-for-peace. With few exceptions, these articles are concerned by the imminent collapse of the two-state solution, proposing to reinvigorate it. One editorial, reiterating a classic interpretation, sympathises with Israel's goals but insists that Israel must accede to certain compromises for progress since 'Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza need to see that there is another way out of their misery'.⁶² Similarly, Gideon Lichfield, appointed to Jerusalem for *The Economist* between 2005 and 2008, comments that it is important Israel understand that 'deterrence' post-1973 is a defunct concept. Instead, he argues that Israel must give Hamas something worth losing so that it is in Hamas' interests to hold to a ceasefire deal.⁶³ Michael Slackman, staff writer and deputy-foreign editor with an expertise in the region, analyses the cost to former administrating states in the West Bank and Gaza – Jordan and Egypt – if the two-state model collapses, speculating they will be forced to assume *de facto* responsibility for the 'Palestinian problem', since Israel is unlikely to assume or be made to assume responsibility for it.⁶⁴

Friedman contributes three editorials on this subject, all of which engage strategies to delegitimize Palestinian actors and justify Israeli action in OCL, cumulatively demonstrating their investment in Israeli national narrative.⁶⁵ In the first, he argues that, while Israel's message to Hamas has been positive, Israel should create a

⁵⁸ Mark Landler, "From U.S. Experts on Mideast, There's No Shortage of Advice," *New York Times*, January 13, 2009.

⁵⁹ Thomas L. Friedman, "The Mideast's Ground Zero," *New York Times*, January 7, 2009.

⁶⁰ Roger Cohen, "Mideast Dream Team? Not Quite," *New York Times*, January 12, 2009.

⁶¹ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 118-9.

⁶² "Incursion Into Gaza," *New York Times*, January 6, 2009.

⁶³ Gideon Lichfield, "Fighting to Preserve a Myth," *New York Times*, January 8, 2009.

⁶⁴ Michael Slackman, "Crisis Imperils 2-State Plan," *New York Times*, January 12, 2009.

⁶⁵ Amer, "Telling-it-like-it-is," 26.

‘choice for Hamas for the world to see’, namely, ‘are you about destroying Israel or building Gaza?’⁶⁶ The article, set up by the use of highly selective references to historical events, makes the false presupposition that there are two alternatives, as captured by the rhetorical question posed to Hamas. The second piece outlines what ‘those who believe in the necessity of a Palestinian state or lovers of Israel’ need to consider if the two-state solution is to survive. This premise betrays Friedman’s inability to envision emotional investment in the conflict that is not pro-Israel, and evokes alarm in the language of ‘last chances’.⁶⁷ Friedman blames Hamas and fanatical West Bank Jewish settlers for the crisis and proposes that saving the two-state plan requires international support of the PA and the election of an Israeli Government with the power to freeze settlement building.⁶⁸ The selective frame through which failures of the process are ascribed presumes that Israel is invested in a serious offer and that the PA is the only acceptable partner to negotiations. His final piece extrapolates on what he imagines Saudi Arabian King Abdullah might propose (who made no proposals in OCL and declined to speak to Friedman at this time), including Egyptian and Jordanian caretakership of the OPTs to rebuild Israeli trust and reduce their security concerns.⁶⁹ Notwithstanding the insulting premise of inhabiting the persona of King Abdullah, the article evokes an orientalist discourse about who is and is not trustworthy, and who can and cannot bear the responsibilities of autonomy.

By contrast, staff writers Nicholas Kristof and Roger Cohen strive for more nuanced tones on the subject of two-states. Kristof’s premise is that Palestinian–Gazan politics are more ambivalent than Israel or the US credit. Kristof notes, an uncommon sentiment in this paper, that ‘Israel’s right to do something doesn’t mean it has a right to do anything’. In consequence, he writes that IDF action in OCL (regardless of cause) has regrettably given politically ambivalent Palestinians the emotional satisfaction of seeing Hamas fight back. Ultimately however, he urges Obama to be tougher with Israel: ‘we all know that the most plausible solution to the Middle East mess is a two-state solution along the lines that former President Bill Clinton proposed’.⁷⁰ Similarly, Cohen agrees that Israel needs to respond but that current response is absurd. He is critical of the endemic blindness in Israeli society, which has rendered Palestinians a vague abstraction and of ‘the heroic Israel narrative’ which he argues has run its course. In considering the prospect of peaceable coexistence, Cohen is outraged by Israel’s disproportionate strike: ‘Israel has the right to hit back at Hamas when attacked – but not to blow Gaza to pieces’.⁷¹ Yet ultimately, the premise of these editorials does not derogate from the Clinton two-state vision.

Within discussion of two-states, the impact of OCL on Palestinian leadership is raised (similarly to the reporting strategy on this issue discussed in chapter 4). US policy to isolate Hamas and hinder reconciliation with Fatah (outlined in inset II) is reflected in articles which, arguing for the wisdom of a two-state solution, assume President Abbas as Israel’s negotiating partner.⁷² Three editorials take Palestinian leadership as their primary focus. The first, contributed by Jeffrey Goldberg, author and national correspondent for *The Atlantic*, develops a picture of Hamas’ insanity before concluding with an appeal to pragmatism, reason and rationality. Goldberg recounts an interview in 2006 with Nizar Rayyan (killed in OCL), whom he describes as ‘a member of the

⁶⁶ Thomas L. Friedman, “Israel’s Goals in Gaza?” *New York Times*, January 14, 2009.

⁶⁷ Hamzeh and May, *Operation Defensive Shield*, 135.

⁶⁸ Thomas L. Friedman, “This is Not a Test,” *New York Times*, January 25, 2009.

⁶⁹ Thomas L. Friedman, “Abdullah II: The 5-State Solution,” *New York Times*, January 28, 2009.

⁷⁰ Nicholas D. Kristof, “The Gaza Boomerang,” *New York Times*, January 8, 2009.

⁷¹ Roger Cohen, “The Dominion of the Dead,” *New York Times*, January 8, 2009.

⁷² Sayigh, “Inducing a Failed State,” 13-17.

Hamas ruling elite ... scholar of Islam and unblushing executioner'. After describing Hamas' suspicion of Fatah as 'phantasmagorically strange', he portrays Mr Rayyan, and by extension Hamas, as very much worthy of the alarm generated about them. Two such examples include the Holocaust denial of the former Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi, and Mr Rayyan's own relation to Islamic scriptures, which apparently led him to the conclusion that 'it is not literally true that Jews today are descended from pigs and apes, but it is true that some of the ancestors of Jews were transformed into pigs and apes, and it is true that Allah continually makes the Jews pay for their crimes in many different ways'. Goldberg chooses not to interpret this statement in the context of what he describes as their 'rhetorically pitiless' style, rather stating, 'I haven't heard much to suggest that its anti-Semitism is insincere'. Thus, Goldberg concludes by stating that the one option for peace remains unchanged: 'the moderate Arab states, Europe, the United States and, mainly, Israel, must help Hamas's enemy, Fatah, prepare the West Bank for real freedom and then hope that the people of Gaza ... see the West Bank as an alternative to the squalid vision of Hassan Nasrallah and Nizar Rayyan'.⁷³ In contrast, two other editorials refer to the impact of OCL on the credibility of the PA. While both of these make the presupposition that Fatah is to be preferred over Hamas, they are more sensitive to the effect that an Israeli-Fatah coalition in Gaza would have post-OCL.⁷⁴ Kershner writes: 'even if Israel succeeds in toppling Hamas, nobody here seems to believe that the Abbas-led authority would be in any position to fill the vacuum right now, especially because the authority would be perceived in Gaza as having ridden in on a proverbial Israeli tank'.⁷⁵

Four articles stand out from the dominant narrative, three of which propose new approaches for conceptualising solutions. Days after the conclusion of OCL, two academics, Scott Atran, an anthropologist, and Jeremy Ginges, a professor of psychology, comment on their empirical research amongst Palestinians and Israelis from 2004 to 2008. Working from the premise of how to better enable two-states, their research emphasises the importance of certain kinds of negotiation. Falk notes that Palestinians were instructed during Oslo not to raise issues of their moral or political grievance, characterised as disruptive, until the end of negotiations.⁷⁶ The conclusions drawn by Atran and Ginges, however, indicate the value of dealing with such issues sooner rather than later. They argue that diplomats have been misguided in their expectation that 'peace and concrete progress ... will eventually make people forget the more heartfelt issues'. Rather, their survey demonstrates that the land-for-peace premise is not only erroneous but highly distasteful, evoking disgust in respondents from both sides. Atran and Ginges conclude that 'progress on sacred values might open the way for negotiations on material issues, rather than the reverse'.⁷⁷

Not the only Jewish contributor, David Grossman is the only Israeli voice who proposes a way out of OCL. His piece, surprising on first encounter, calls for a (temporary) unilateral and absolute ceasefire.⁷⁸ Max Blumenthal observes that Grossman is 'often portrayed in the West as "Israel's anguished conscience"', and it is the West to whom he appeals, making a display of petitioning Israel's magnanimity and restraint. Grossman's piece makes apparent analytical concessions, acknowledging, as the party with superior power, that 'the inhabitants of Gaza

⁷³ Jeffrey Goldberg, "Why Israel Can't Make Peace With Hamas," *New York Times*, January 14, 2009.

⁷⁴ "A Way Out of Gaza?" *New York Times*, January 16, 2009.

⁷⁵ Isabel Kershner, "War on Hamas Saps Its Palestinian Rival," *New York Times*, January 15, 2009.

⁷⁶ Falk, "Human Rights."

⁷⁷ Scott Atran and Jeremy Ginges, "How Words Could End a War," *New York Times*, January 25, 2009.

⁷⁸ Grossman's article is also published in *the Guardian*: David Grossman, "Let us stop," *Guardian*, December 31, 2008.

will continue to live on our borders and sooner or later we will need to achieve neighborly relations with them'. Grossman is no doubt aware of the public relations disaster caused by OCL in advocating this course of action, a fact captured in his analogy with 2006 where he argues that, if the same approach had been taken, 'we would likely be in a better position today'.⁷⁹ In Blumenthal's summation, this piece is directed to strategic gain: 'he said not a word about civilian casualties'.⁸⁰ Absent of any recognition for the true victims of Gaza, the piece demonstrates the audience that Israeli writers have had in the West, winning the 'hearts and minds' of Western public opinion as documented by Yitzhak Laor.⁸¹ Thus, by appealing to Israel to act without guarantee of return, Grossman reinforces for the West the idea that Israel is alone in its desire to negotiate.

In comparison, *The New York Times* does not publish an editorial on this (or any) subject by a Palestinian located in the OPTs or Israel during this period, in contrast to several contributions in 2002. There are, however, two contributions by writers sensitive to the Palestinian position: Rashid Khalidi and Muammar Qaddafi, described in his contribution as the 'Libyan leader'. Both pieces address the selective presentation of information, and in particular the selective portrayal of historical context. Qaddafi's contribution is a bold exposition of the one-state solution, declaring that history prevents 'the tired rhetoric of partition and two-state solutions' from being viable. After presenting the basis of Israeli and Palestinian relationships to the entirety of historic Palestine, Qaddafi concludes: 'in absolute terms, the two movements must remain in perpetual war or a compromise must be reached. The compromise is one state for all, an 'Isratine' that would allow the people in each party to feel that they live in all of the disputed land and they are not deprived of any one part of it'.⁸² However, Qaddafi's ambivalent international profile, including being labelled by US President Ronald Reagan in 1981 as an 'international pariah' and 'the mad dog of the Middle East', made this radical proposal in the Western context easy to dismiss.⁸³ So packaged, what might have been a remarkable contribution is discredited simultaneously with its publication. For this reason, I think it essential to consider Khalidi's piece alongside Qaddafi's. A highly esteemed academic and commentator, Khalidi opens, 'nearly everything you've been led to believe about Gaza is wrong'. He goes on to explain several 'essential points that seem to be missing from the conversation, much of which has taken place in the press'.⁸⁴ He addresses how this obscurity has best served the Western conversation and parallels Israeli national narrative. Khalidi tackles post-48 Palestinian dispossession and the misnomer that Israel's evacuation from Gaza in 2005 was an end to Occupation, citing Israel's responsibility for the civilian population in Gaza under the *Fourth Geneva Convention*. He raises the political strategy behind the blockade in Gaza and US complicity, as well as reframing the chain of events in the demise of the current ceasefire, which he argues, contrary to the impression created in the media, was caused by Israel. Finally, he describes the possibility that war crimes are occurring in OCL and concludes by considering the real tactical purpose for Israel. Khalidi states that Israel's 'deterrence' is really masking the far more sinister goal of

⁷⁹ David Grossman, "Fight Fire With a Cease-Fire," *New York Times*, December 31, 2008.

⁸⁰ Max Blumenthal, *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel* (Nation Books: New York, 2013), 6.

⁸¹ See chap. 2 in Laor, *Myths of Liberal Zionism*.

⁸² Muammar Qaddafi, "The One-State Solution," *New York Times*, January 22, 2009.

⁸³ Although letters to the editor are not systematically analysed here, the response to Qaddafi is illuminating: in seven letters to the editor, only one congratulates Qaddafi for challenging 'the political orthodoxy': John L. Stainthorpe, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, January 22, 2009. The remaining six articulate disgust both with the concept and its author, succinctly represented: '[i]t is cosmically absurd that Muammar Qaddafi – the brutal dictator responsible for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people, most of them Americans – would give advice on a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict': Matin Shamir, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, January 22, 2009.

⁸⁴ Khalidi, "What You Don't Know About Gaza," January 8, 2009.

demolishing the spirit of the Palestinian people. A remarkable attempt to debunk Western perceptions of the Palestinian position, it is, however, vastly outnumbered.

2. Existential threat

As previously noted, OCL was widely acknowledged to have accelerated Israel's deteriorating public image, yet *The Australian* and *The New York Times* hardly reflect this trend. The spectrum of ideas captured in these two sources replicates the dominant framework of argument circulated by Israelis, particularly that OCL represented Israel's attempt to address an existential threat. The current section documents how the editorials reflect the process of securitising the Palestinian issue, stripping it of political dimension.⁸⁵ Analysing the traction Islamic terrorism has had in Western discourse post-9/11, Jackson argues that in its totality, the Western grasp of the genealogy of Islamic terrorism has located religious extremism at its heart, and by assigning 'non-rational, cosmic aims to violent groups' annuls the validity of these organisations acting on behalf of their wider societies, grievances and political struggle.⁸⁶ Thus, the vocabulary of securitisation was used to depict the threat against which OCL was framed as one that 'cannot be dealt with in the normal way', such that the operation is never about the objective nature of Israel's opponents, but about Israel's existential issues in a format lifted 'above politics'.⁸⁷ Israel's securitisation narrative in OCL had at least three distinct strands: firstly, the security concern for Israeli citizens, particularly those in the south, was invoked as an intolerable assault. Secondly, OCL was figured as critical to ameliorating the psychological defeat suffered in the 2006 Lebanon war. Thirdly, the threat was described, with two alternate emphases, through the broader premise of geopolitical crisis. One characterised Hamas as a tentacle of the regional superpower, Iran – and the affiliated Hizbollah. The other portrayed Hamas as representative of a regional struggle between Arab nationalism and Islamism. In all these arguments, it seemed that Gaza bore only symbolic relevance at best to Israel's operational rationale.

During OCL, many of the central assumptions which obstruct real transformation in Israeli–Palestinian relations were invoked in the editorials of *The Australian* and *The New York Times*. The arguments repeated in these papers are indicative of how perspective has been so colonised that, even in OCL, this view could appear as natural. The Israeli narrative about OCL was clearly a sympathetic one, since these papers had been integral in foregrounding amongst their own national publics the establishment-driven political-cultural narratives surrounding the War on Terrorism, and the charged valence of certain concepts had clear resonances with Israel's construction of its security dilemma, demonstrating 'a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat'.⁸⁸ In contrast to 2002, the idea of 'terrorism' was expressed more diffusely in editorialising OCL, since by 2008, terror, particularly Islamic terror, was so embedded in a discourse of security (frequently referenced and appealed to) that it almost went without saying.⁸⁹ In the framework of the editorials, security de-emphasised the figure of the terrorist, giving primacy to Israelis as narrative protagonists, which also deflected scrutiny from the nature of the (so-called) threat. That the discourse

⁸⁵ Nizar Messari, "The State and Dilemmas of Security: The Middle East and the Balkans," *Security Dialogue* 33 (2002): 418, doi: 10.1177/0967010602033004003.

⁸⁶ Jackson, "Constructing Enemies," 421.

⁸⁷ Buzan, Waever and de Wilde, *Security*, 26.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁹ Jackson, "Constructing Enemies," 420.

of terror in the West had worked to ‘deny and obscure its political origins and the possibility that [terror] is a response to specific Western policies’ explains how these papers could ignore completely the political and diplomatic matrix of Israel–Palestinian relations.⁹⁰ This foregrounded Israel’s claim that OCL was a response to existential threat, marginalised the rhetorical relevance of Palestinians, and tethered Israeli security to State survival by transforming the operation into a regional struggle against Islamic terror. Indeed, this account is indispensable to the capacity of *The New York Times* and *The Australian* to narrate OCL as they do – without it, OCL is seemingly inexplicable and Israel’s defence impossible.

a) The Australian

Some thirteen editorials – half of those published in *The Australian* – pertain to this theme. Five are by Abraham Rabinovich; they cumulatively incorporate all the narratives outlined to illustrate Israel’s existential threat. In the first, he argues that OCL’s limited goals could renew the likelihood of suicide bombing, but overall he endorses the operation, invoking the lessons of 2006.⁹¹ His second piece appeals to the regional power structures in which Hamas is representative of Hizbollah and Iran. Additionally, he raises the rift in Palestinian leadership, attributing the fatalities in Gaza to Hamas.⁹² Acknowledging the opprobrium directed at IDF conduct, Rabinovich’s third piece argues (similarly to Grossman) that a temporary ceasefire would assist Israel to seek international sympathy for escalating military violence in Gaza.⁹³ His fourth directly connects the existential threat faced by Israel to the rise of the regional superpower, Iran, and reiterates that Hamas-controlled Gaza represents a tentacle of that threat. Thus, he explains the onslaught of OCL as Israel’s warning to Iran and its satellites: ‘don’t mess with us’.⁹⁴ This piece also cites the problem created by 2006 as justification for OCL, arguing that it was crucial to the perception of Israel, both in its own eyes and in those of its enemies. His final analysis directly concerns the value of OCL in propagating a message to Hizbollah, giving the impression that Gaza is merely collateral to that aim.⁹⁵

Eight further pieces reflect the range of themes covered by Rabinovich, which privilege Israeli justification for OCL, in particular reiterating the existential threat to Israel posed by the region. Martin Peretz makes a hyperbolic defence of IDF response: ‘how long was Israel to stand aside while its enemies, sworn by fanatic Islam to its destruction, rained death, injury and terror on its population?’ Endorsing the discourse of Islamic terrorism, Peretz compares Israel’s position to that of the US with the Taliban – ‘Engage with whom?’ he asks, dismissing the idea of diplomacy outright.⁹⁶ Greg Sheridan makes a similar argument. Highlighting the psychology of threat, he attaches his analysis of Hamas’ rockets to regional issues, in which the message is addressed to the violent anti-Israeli designs of regional Islamic power.⁹⁷ Pieces by Bret Stephens and Barry Rubin advance similar arguments to Sheridan’s. Stephens states that Hamas is not for the Palestinians but for regional Islamism. While acknowledging they enjoy a certain popularity amongst Palestinians, he argues that

⁹⁰ Jackson, “Constructing Enemies,” 421.

⁹¹ Abraham Rabinovich, “Hamas Shown How the Rules Have Changed,” *Australian*, December 29, 2008.

⁹² Abraham Rabinovich, “Arabs Turn Against ‘Megalomaniac’ Hamas,” *Australian*, January 1, 2009.

⁹³ Abraham Rabinovich, “Trick or Treaty? Barak Keeps Everyone Guessing,” *Australian*, January 2, 2009.

⁹⁴ Abraham Rabinovich, “Israel’s Warning to Militants: Don’t Mess With Us,” *Australian*, January 5, 2009.

⁹⁵ Abraham Rabinovich, “Clear Message to Hezbollah: Provoke Israel at Your Peril,” *Australian*, January 14, 2009.

⁹⁶ Martin Peretz, “Don’t Stop Until Hamas is Destroyed,” *Australian*, January 2, 2009.

⁹⁷ Greg Sheridan, “Stopping the Rockets a Strategic Necessity,” *Australian*, January 6, 2009.

the Palestinians themselves have been duped by Hamas' greater goals of pan-Islamism and anti-nationalism.⁹⁸ Arguing that Israel has clearly indicated its desire for two-states by withdrawing from Gaza, he concludes: 'as for the Palestinians, the people who never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity, have missed one again'. Rubín, writing to the geopolitics of the region, argues that the real conflict lies between Arab nationalism and Islamism, through which discursive strategy he aligns Israel with Arab nationalists, arguing that Hamas is a representative of the so-called 'rogue' States Syria and Iran.⁹⁹ Within Rubín's framework, the Palestinians simply cease to exist altogether.

Three editorials analyse reactions to OCL as expressions of anti-Semitism. Sociologist Frank Furedi contributes an event-specific piece in which he remarks on the anti-Semitic vitriol provoked at a rally condemning OCL in Holland. Furedi expresses scepticism at the official explanation that the fault lies with Israeli aggression, arguing that more was required of politicians leading the demonstration than to acquiesce in the face of virulent hate chants.¹⁰⁰ In this instance, it seems that the anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic slogans circulating at the rally constituted an unacceptable, and unacceptably unchecked, outburst of racist sentiment. However, in light of the suite of articles presented in *The Australian*, this piece contributes to a very skewed sense of the issues at stake, which overall amounts to an elision within *The Australian* of the actual dynamic of (Israeli) power and (Palestinian) entrapment. A second article on this theme, by David Burchell, regular contributor and senior lecturer in humanities at the University of Western Sydney, takes a broader approach to the argument of 'sympathy gone wrong'. He argues that, since Cuba and Vietnam, a troubling trend in global empathy has occurred which has culminated in Hamas winning over Westerners 'who embrace exotic political creeds in the name of compassion'. Burchell contrasts this with sentiment about Israel: 'for the discriminating empathist, Israel presents special problems as an enemy. After all, it's hard for someone who trades in the currency of sympathy to deny any moral capital whatsoever to a state founded as a refuge for one of the most persecuted peoples on the planet'. He is critical of the shift in allegiance from the PA 'towards the superlative foe of Western interest, Hamas'.¹⁰¹ These articles, which reflect the structural characterisation invoked against Israel's critics, ultimately promote the idea of Israeli exceptionalism.

These ideas are reflected throughout the materials published in *The Australian*, which emulate the function of Israel's national narrative of exceptionalism. An anonymous piece summarises these themes in criticising an editorial which appeared in the Melbourne based publication, *The Age*, by journalist Michael Backman. The piece condemns Backman's editorial for making suggestions that are 'outright offensive', including the argument that 'Israel's utter inability to transform the Palestinians from enemies into friends has imposed big costs on us all. We have paid for Israel's failure with bombs on London public transport, bombs in bars in Bali and even the loss of the World Trade Centre in New York'.¹⁰² The author goes on to argue that people who endorse Backman's article 'continue to cloak their anti-Semitism in a faux concern for the Palestinians',

⁹⁸ Bret Stephens, "Hamas in a State of Denial," *Australian*, January 16, 2009.

⁹⁹ Barry Rubin, "The Real Mid-East Conflict is Between Arab Nationalists and Islamists," *Australian*, January 16, 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Frank Furedi, "Critics of Israel Giving Voice to Anti-Semitism," *Australian*, January 15, 2009.

¹⁰¹ David Burchell, "Empathy for Sale," *Australian*, January 12, 2009.

¹⁰² Michael Backman, "Israel Living High on US Expense Account," *Age* (Melbourne), January 17, 2009. It seems the article elicited significant outrage, even in left-wing and alternative media outlets such as *Crikey*: Margaret Simons, "The Michael Backman Column: Weird and Unpleasant Happenings At The Age," *Crikey*, January 21, 2009, http://blogs.crikey.com.au/contentmakers/2009/01/21/the-michael-backman-column-weird-and-unpleasant-happenings-at-the-age/?wmp_switcher=mobile.

concluding: ‘Islamic terrorists want to kill all the Israelis, and then start on everybody else whose opinions annoy them’.¹⁰³ Yet not only are there no Palestinian or Arab contributors in *The Australian*, there is not a single editorial empathetic to, or representative of, the Palestinian position.¹⁰⁴ This is punctuated in an editorial by Yuval Rotem, Israeli Ambassador to Australia during this period, which draws together the arguments made in *The Australian*. After dismissing criticism against Israel as ‘off point’, Rotem argues that Israel has been serially misrepresented during OCL, in particular through de-contextualised quotes. Secondly, he argues that claims Hamas is not a terrorist organisation are spurious, despite a ‘democratic election’, and that present conflict is not a struggle against occupation (citing Israel’s 2005 withdrawal), but about Israel’s existence. He concludes with an argument that echoes A.B. Yehoshua’s analogy to the Champs Elysees: ‘any other Western country would do the same thing, because protection of one’s civilians is the central obligation of any government’.¹⁰⁵

b) The Guardian

Given the approach in the *Guardian*, there are fewer articles directed to Israel’s sense of existential threat. While some eight pieces refer to the predicament, five do so in highly critical ways. This criticality is demonstrated not only by staff writers, but includes the contributions of two of Israel’s New Historians, Avi Shlaim, and Ilan Pappé. The three pieces that articulate the Israeli position are contributed by Israeli psychologist and public intellectual Carlo Strenger, eminent barrister Alan Dershowitz, and Colin Schindler. All three write to defend the alleged disproportionality of Israeli action in OCL. Strenger states that Israeli society was united on the necessity of OCL because ‘Israel must destroy the illusion that it can be wiped off the earth’. However, within Israel he argues that the method of the operation has lost consensus, deploring Israel’s failure to restrict the use of force according to basic humanitarian values. Ultimately, however, he argues that Hamas is to blame for the damage inflicted on the Palestinians because ‘Hamas has changed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from something that can be solved, to a clash defined by the principle that only one side can survive - critics cannot expect Israel to accept this simply because it is the stronger side’.¹⁰⁶ Dershowitz eschews the ethical conundrum which Strenger raises and affirms the legality of Israel’s actions, arguing that Hamas has committed an ‘armed attack’ on the Jewish State under Article 51 of the UN charter. Dershowitz also echoes broadly held positions in *The New York Times* and *The Australian* that the goal of OCL would be at the least to sideline Hamas.¹⁰⁷ Schindler’s piece presents a view of proportionality, which he believes has been neglected due to ‘selective’ outrage about Gaza. Schindler writes that ‘while the Palestinians interpret disproportionality in terms of the powerful Israeli military machine pitted against the highly trained, 15,000-strong Hamas militias, the Israelis understand disproportionality in terms of the potential threat to their unarmed civilians from bigger missiles’. Written to describe the disappointment of Israeli and Jewish studies teachers at SOAS about the *Guardian*’s coverage, this article rather encapsulates a false appeal to balance.¹⁰⁸ However, these are exceptions to the accumulated perspective presented in the *Guardian*.

¹⁰³ “Apologists for Evil,” *Australian*, January 21, 2009.

¹⁰⁴ While Bronwen Maddox questions Israeli justifications for OCL, she does not consider the Palestinian predicament: “Obama’s Campaign Silence May Have Given Israel Licence to Invade,” *Australian*, January 7, 2009; “Egypt Best Placed to Broker End to Crisis,” *Australian*, January 8, 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Yuval Rotem, “It’s About Peace, Not Destruction of Hamas,” *Australian*, January 6, 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Carlo Strenger, “Why Israel is United,” *Guardian*, January 9, 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Alan Dershowitz, “Those Who Blame Israel Misread Morality and Law,” *Guardian*, January 10, 2009.

¹⁰⁸ Schindler, “Why the silence over attacks on Israeli campuses?” January 13, 2009.

By contrast, five editorials touch on the idea of Israel's existential crisis. Considering the narrative opposition between Israel and the Palestinians, ultimately, all five deem the current Israeli perspective to be spurious. Staff writer Garry Younge describes the inculcation of popular fear and prejudice that rose out of 9/11 and the War on Terror. He argues that, for Israel, the current invasion and bombardment of Gaza has been blatantly sold 'as a straightforward extension of the war on terror', despite the fact that the War on Terror is now widely regarded as a 'colossal mistake'. Younge, quoting Livni, notes that, after justifying Israel's action, she has been attempting to convince audiences that 'these are the days when every individual in the region and in the world has to choose a side', to which Younge wryly notes, most people have not chosen Israel's.¹⁰⁹ Another staff writer, Peter Beaumont similarly argues that terrorism has obfuscated the substantive issues in OCL. He explains that Hamas' continued violence must be viewed as a matter of symbolic and not military importance that has everything to do with resistance. He writes that the redefinition of terrorism has obscured this fact, but that there can be no change to current relations while 'many in the international community, and in Israel, remain stuck on the idea that the Jewish state has a monopoly on the deployment of the language of "supreme emergency"'.¹¹⁰

Perhaps the most radical of these pieces is Avi Shlaim's, which draws together many of the arguments in which OCL stood as a 'tipping point' of public sentiment, and which Israel has systematically sought to bury in substantive discussion subsequent to OCL. Shlaim, presenting an historical context, which he argues is the only way to make sense of things, describes a picture in which current attitudes are illogical: 'a surreal situation developed with a significant part of the international community imposing economic sanctions not against the occupier but against the occupied, not against the oppressor, but against the oppressed'. In particular, he notes that Israel's undeclared aim is 'to ensure that the Palestinians in Gaza are seen by the world simply as a humanitarian problem and thus to derail their struggle for independence and statehood'. OCL is an example, he writes, of 'the problem with Israel's concept of security', one that 'denies the most elementary security to the other community'. He concludes that Israel should now be regarded as a 'rogue state', since it 'habitually violates international law, possesses weapons of mass destruction and practises terrorism'.¹¹¹ Simon Jenkins' piece picks up on Shlaim's characterisation of Israel as a rogue state, arguing that Israel's military tactics should be criminalised.¹¹² Finally, in conversation with staff writer Chris Arnot, Pappé comments on Israel's siege mentality. While he acknowledges that he can understand it ('there are genuine collective fears that have to do with past and present dangers'), he argues that 'those fears are manipulated through the education system and the media to seem worse than the reality suggests. And Israelis don't seem to realise that their behaviour is contributing to those dangers'.¹¹³ As will be discussed in chapter 6, these themes evince the shift in key elements of narrative about the Israel–Palestinian conflict catalysed by OCL.

¹⁰⁹ Garry Younge, "Israel Has Yet to Learn the US Lesson, That the War on Terror was a Failure," *Guardian*, January 5, 2009.

¹¹⁰ Peter Beaumont, "Supreme Emergency," *Guardian*, January 12, 2009.

¹¹¹ Shlaim, "How Israel Bought [*sic*] Gaza to the Brink of Humanitarian Catastrophe," January 7, 2009.

¹¹² Simon Jenkins, "Indiscriminate Slaughter From the Air is a Barbarism That Must be Abolished," *Guardian*, January 16, 2009.

¹¹³ Chris Arnot, "'I Felt it as My Duty to Protest'," *Guardian*, January 20, 2009.

c) The New York Times

Six editorials, (slightly more than a sixth of those published), relate to this theme, and many of the contributors are well-known voices in the field. They include Israeli ‘New Historian’, Benny Morris, four Jewish writers with varying profiles, and staff writer, Steven Lee Myers. Myers’ record is cited by media analyst, Edward S. Herman, as an example of the hypocritical double standards by which ‘the New York Times and its colleagues, and ... the intellectuals and pundits with influence’ circulate lies in the service of US and Western interests.¹¹⁴ Two articles canvass regional concerns and the enemy of fundamentalist Islam, two attend to the damage OCL has caused to perceptions of Israel internationally, and two invoke Israel’s total destruction as the stakes of the present violence.

William Kristol and Myers contribute pieces concerned with regional threats to Israel, in particular that posed by Iran. While the threat of Iran does not herald Israel’s imminent destruction (both articles promote Israel’s might), they are concerned by the physical and ideological imperilment of the West. Myers claims that Iran is the key instigator of Islamic militancy ‘to torment Israel’ and aims ‘to spread its influence in the Arab world’, arguing that ‘Iran is the one country – aside from Israel – with the most at stake in the outcome’.¹¹⁵ Additionally, he laments the impact of OCL on relations between moderate Arab governments and their publics ‘over scenes of death and destruction ... that can prevent Arab nations from working with Israel’. Kristol similarly argues that moderate Arab nations benefit from good relations with Israel, stating that OCL is nothing short of a favour ‘to everyone in the Middle East – very much including Muslims – who aren’t interested in living under the sway of extremist regimes. And to any nation, like the United States, that is a target of Islamic terror’.¹¹⁶ Additionally, he characterises Israeli success as ‘a victory in the war on terror’. Both articles, situating OCL in a regional context and the remnants of the War on Terror, dramatise the stakes of OCL for Israel. In contrast, they fail to note the material situation in Gaza or a political situation outside the notion of regional conspiracy, thus emphasising the idea that the ‘war’ in Gaza occurred on remote and intangible fronts.

Staff writers Ethan Bronner and Noam Cohen take different approaches in addressing the impact of OCL on Western sympathy for Israel, although both identify public relations as central. Cohen’s article describes Israel’s use of the social phenomenon, Twitter, to bolster support for Israel in OCL. Cohen states that success for the IDF ‘is as much a public relations challenge as a military one’. In quoting the head of media relations for the Israeli consulate in New York, Cohen’s reasoning of the tactic is outlined: ‘since the definition of war has changed, the definition of public diplomacy has to change as well’.¹¹⁷ Portraying Israel’s enemy abstractly, he makes no mention of the actual carnage in Gaza. By contrast, Bronner analyses the aims for Israel in OCL, arguing that, whatever they achieve, two concerns linger. The first is ‘broad international criticism of this war on Gaza, not only because of the unspeakable suffering seen on television screens but also because of a feeling that Israel has tried such tactics in the past and never succeeded’. Secondly, he contrasts possible outcomes of perception in the Arab world with 2006, which left Hizbollah ‘more popular and perhaps ultimately stronger

¹¹⁴ Edward S. Herman, “Beyond Double Standards and Hypocrisy,” *Dissident Voice*, November 1, 2012, <http://dissidentvoice.org/2012/11/beyond-double-standards-and-hypocrisy/>.

¹¹⁵ Myers, “The New Meaning of an Old Battle,” January 4, 2009.

¹¹⁶ William Kristol, “Why Israel Fights,” *New York Times*, January 5, 2009.

¹¹⁷ Noam Cohen, “The Toughest Q’s Answered in the Briefest Tweets,” *New York Times*, January 4, 2009.

than before the war'.¹¹⁸ The thematic focus of these pieces is key – by engaging perceptions of Israel, they marginalise OCL as an event and return attention to the sensitivities of Israel and its supporters.

Benny Morris and David Brooks write to the widest ambit of Israeli concerns, expressing the stakes of OCL in terms of Israel's fears of annihilation. Morris appeals to an historical analogy, comparing Israeli sensibilities in 1967 with the present: 'many Israelis feel that the walls – and history – are closing in on their 60-year-old state, much as they felt ... when Israel launched the Six-Day War'.¹¹⁹ There is a particular resonance to this choice of event, since 1967 (as illustrated in chapter 1) is a turning point in Israeli nationalism, when existential threat started to dominate national narrative and a narcissistic moral anguish became the mode of reflection. Morris specifies the origins of 'the foreboding', which he states has two general sources and four specific causes. In listing the sources, Morris raises the fundamental and sustained anxieties never far from the logic at work in Israeli collective consciousness or from the explanatory function of national narrative. The first is Arab states' and the Islamic world's refusal to accept the legitimacy of Israel. This is connected to the second: public opinion in the West and diminishing support for Israel. Morris notes that this is a public sentiment rather than an institutional position but reasons that, 'in democracies, governments can't be far behind'. While he acknowledges that Israel's treatment of the Palestinians has produced the shift in opinion, he combines this observation with concern that 'the Holocaust is increasingly becoming a faint and ineffectual memory and the Arab states are increasingly powerful and assertive'. Similarly, Brooks is less troubled by the physical effects of OCL than by the psychological implications:

*it's a struggle for confidence, a series of psychological exchanges designed to shift the balance of morale. The material destroyed in an episode can be replaced, but the psychological effects are more lasting. What is really important is how each episode ends, because the ending defines the meaning – who mastered events and who was mastered by them.*¹²⁰

With these constructions, both Brooks and Morris reinforce the significance of the threats which Israel claimed to face. Echoing the BTS testimony quoted in chapter 4, Morris writes of the threats geographically – to the east (Iran), to the north (Hizbollah), to the south (Hamas), all of which he notes have vowed to destroy Israel, and finally of the threat within, the radicalisation of the 'Arab Israelis', while Brooks argues that this situation has destroyed the idea of land-for-peace or diplomacy, since 'the extremist groups believe in the eventual extermination of Israel'. Morris argues that these threats, despite Israel's capabilities in conventional warfare, have posed a serious challenge to Israel, 'bound by Western democratic and liberal norms of behaviour'. Thus, he concludes: 'Israel's sense of the walls closing in on it has this past week led to one violent reaction. Given the new realities, it would not be surprising if more powerful explosions were to follow'.

Cataloguing 'the break-up of hitherto blanket Jewish support for Israeli wars', and the increasing estrangement of younger Jews in America 'from Israeli bellicosity', Finkelstein underscores the wider sea change in public sentiment compared to that of the establishment as represented in *The New York Times*.¹²¹ He highlights the contrast between the old guard of Israel's defenders, including the likes of Dershowitz and Peretz, and 'the

¹¹⁸ Ethan Bronner, "Is Real Target Hamas Rule?" *New York Times*, January 4, 2009.

¹¹⁹ Benny Morris, "Why Israel Feels Threatened," *New York Times*, December 30, 2008.

¹²⁰ David Brooks, "The Confidence War," *New York Times*, January 6, 2009.

¹²¹ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 104.

generation of youthful Jewish public intellectuals now making their names on the internet'. As an illustration of the clash, he cites a post by Jewish blogger, Adam Horowitz for *Mondoweiss*, in response to the Morris editorial: 'it is clear he can only see the reactions, but not the cause. He lists the responses to Israel and to Israel's ongoing Jewish colonization of historic Palestine, without mentioning the elephant in the room, that the walls closing in on Israel are self-made'.¹²² This criticism, if new in the context of public Jewish criticism of Jews, was not new in itself. For example, the late Edward Said writes of the profound contradiction, 'bordering on schizophrenia', that has informed Israeli scholarship, and Morris' work in particular: 'strangely enough ... Morris seems reluctant to draw the inevitable conclusions from his own evidence ... It is as if he was still enough of a Zionist to believe the ideological version ... rather than completely to accept his own evidence'.¹²³ One similarly sees in Morris' invocation of the parallels with 1967 an inability to read the event outside the meaning ascribed within Israeli society.¹²⁴ This reflects Hage's argument that Israel's success in 1967 tragically heralded the birth of the kind of hyper-militarism on display in OCL, since Israelis started to believe 'that omnipotence was not just a fantasy but an actual possibility'.¹²⁵ He continues that the promise of omnipotence has since become 'the standard that various Israeli governments use to legitimise themselves to their population', which has led many Israelis to believe 'that this is the very function of Israel', and produced 'an inability to live with another that constitutes even a minimum danger to me'.¹²⁶

...[until next time]

*Every time we do something you tell me Americans will do this and will do that. I want to tell you something very clear, don't worry about American pressure on Israel. We, the Jewish people, control America, and the Americans know it.*¹²⁷

At the peak of his political influence, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is said to have admonished then President Shimon Peres for urging him to respect America's calls for a ceasefire, with the above epigraph. The idea that Israel has been impervious to American, let alone international, influence, is often in evidence in the sources at hand. Yet this quote was quickly buried at the time, exemplifying the creation of a Chomskian 'non-fact', when facts fail to accord with the perceived interests of the institutional power nexus. On Sharon's death in January 2014, Raja Shehadeh wrote: '[he] was always a pioneer. He went further than most in his crimes against Palestinian civilians, and further than others in his deception; he showed Israeli leaders that they could retain the tactics of war while calling them efforts for peace, and this is his most corrosive legacy.'¹²⁸ It is this sort of diplomacy that has frustrated and devastated the Palestinian people for as long as the conflict is old.

Chapters 4 and 5 have evoked the emerging disjuncture between an historic support for Israel in mainstream media narrative and the crisis of Israel's typical narrative explanations produced by OCL. The era of the War on Terror was widely considered at an end with the inauguration of President Barack Obama, yet his presidency,

¹²² Finkelstein, *This Time*, 121-122.

¹²³ Said, "New Histories, Old Ideas," quoted in Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 132.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹²⁵ Hage, "Narcissistic Victimhood," 121.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 121-122.

¹²⁷ Kevin Barrett, "Burying Sharon – And 'We Jews Control America'," *Veterans Today*, January 11, 2014, <http://www.veteranstoday.com/2014/01/11/burying-sharon/>.

¹²⁸ Raja Shehadeh, "Ariel Sharon's Corrosive Legacy," *New Yorker*, January 11, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/ariel-sharons-corrosive-legacy>.

despite the limited ground for hopefulness generated by the Cairo speech of June 2009, has not heralded a change in US approach in any substantive sense. Indicatively, Obama, like so many before him, has rather attributed Palestinian violence as a surrender of moral authority in the conflict.¹²⁹ Yet even so, the power of Israel's national narratives to convince Western publics of the legitimacy of OCL was clearly a diminished force which, despite continued support from traditional defenders, no longer provided a definitive rejoinder to criticism. In short, OCL was a tipping point for representations of the conflict. As Khalidi argues, the consequence of OCL and the GR was 'a landmark in the history of how the Israeli-Arab conflict has been perceived in the American public sphere'.¹³⁰ Indeed, since OCL, the Israeli Government, 'realising that they are unable to win over international public opinion', has instead focused on making international views of Israel unintelligible to Israeli citizens.¹³¹ Thus, for example, the Israeli response to BDS has become more charged as the campaign itself has started to have real effect.¹³² According to Khalidi, OCL has facilitated an increasing 'pushback' against 'vilification campaigns [which] continue against those who speak up about the oppression of the Palestinian people or challenge the reigning orthodoxy on the unlimited virtue of Israel'.¹³³ It is perhaps the most quantifiable effect of the narrative transformation catalysed by OCL, yet, as Khalidi concludes, 'it took generations to establish the myths Israel was built on, and it will take years to deconstruct them, as well as for the generations who believe in them to lose their influence'.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ "Text: Obama's Speech in Cairo," June 4, 2009.

¹³⁰ Khalidi, "Palestinian Dispossession," 375.

¹³¹ Sheizaf, "Israel's Siege Mentality," 407.

¹³² Abunimah, "Gaza, Goldstone," 396-398.

¹³³ Khalidi, "Palestinian Dispossession," 382.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 383.

Chapter 6

'they wait, and waiting is steadfastness and a stand'¹

It is easy to blur the truth with a simple linguistic trick: start your story from "Secondly" ... Start your story with "Secondly" and the world will be turned upside-down²

Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti observes that, at the signing of the Oslo Accords on the lawns of the White House, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's remarks took 'everything, even the story of our death'.³ According to Barghouti, this has everything to do with the fundamental questions of narrative. Trapped in a reductive binary, Palestinian narrative has been mostly obscured, the people mostly vilified, the portrayal of their history wildly misrepresented, so that it might align with Israel's story. Palestinian narrative has been the elephant in the room, an ancillary to what repeatedly presents itself as the core taboo in talking Israel: the question of its legitimacy. This has prevented Israel from recognising what effect they have wrought on the Palestinian population who have been exiled, legally and rhetorically, from the nation's history.⁴ Throughout the 1990s as Pappé documents, debates emerged about redressing the injustices visited on Palestinian people by the Israeli past.⁵ Whatever its inadequacies, Oslo was an acknowledgement that there was something to redress; yet some twenty years later, it is clear that the ideological transformations it heralded have failed. Comparative historian Lorenzo Veracini argues that this failure centred on the question of 'returning land', not only because it would 'constitute an intolerable reallocation of resources' but because 'it would bring to a crisis the founding myths of a society based, essentially, on the invariable denial of Indigenous legitimacy to land'.⁶ In short, Israel has yet to address the consequences of its founding violence and is thus plagued by an indissoluble anxiety about legitimacy. Nor has it been capable of making a postcolonial passage, because those 'unresolved issues are still active and ... a conspiracy of silence on the "founding violence" remains hegemonic in significant sectors of the public opinion'.⁷ It is the State's national narratives which fill that silence and which enable Israelis to embed their national claims and aspiration to homeliness, at once concretely and metaphorically, in the land.⁸

In November 2012, when Palestine was granted observer state recognition by a resounding majority of the UN General Assembly, fears of Israel and its friends were piqued. A particular anxiety around Palestine's admission to the UN was that it would afford Palestinians recourse to the ICC. Subsequently, repeated attempts have been made to extract a promise from the President of the PA, Mahmoud Abbas, that Palestinians will not pursue this avenue. It is ironic that the very countries that voted against recognition of Palestinian statehood have sought that promise. Current US ambassador to the UN Samantha Power stated in April 2014 that the US would be

¹ Mahmoud Darwish, *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*, trans. Ibrahim Muhawi (Brooklyn, NY: Archipelago Books, 2010), 172.

² Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, 178.

³ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁴ For example, legal fictions such as the 'Present Absentee', contrived to negate Palestinian claim in order to facilitate Jewish colonisation: chap. 5 on 'Present Absentees' in Nur Masalha, *The Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).

⁵ See chap. 6 in Pappé, *Idea of Israel*.

⁶ Veracini, "Historical Redescription," 340-341.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 344.

⁸ Hage, "Narcissistic Victimhood," 114-116.

opposing ‘attempts at upgrade in status anywhere’.⁹ She reiterates that the Obama Administration is adamant that Palestine should be formally disqualified from approaching the ICC, stating that both Secretary Kerry and the President have ‘made it very, very clear to the Palestinians’, because ‘this is something that really poses a profound threat to Israel’.¹⁰ Power also states, however, that withdrawing funding from UN agencies that award Palestinians membership (a move repeatedly threatened in proposed legislation) would be against US interests:

*we’re not punishing the Palestinians if we cut off funding to these agencies, we’re punishing US interest. And that is why [a legislation that waives Palestinian rights to access the ICC] is to deter Palestinian action, that is what we do all the time and that is what we will continue to do, but we cannot surrender the vast range of US interests in the process.*¹¹

One might reasonably ask why it is that the historic broker of the peace process seeks to ‘punish’ the Palestinians at all. One might ask why, if acting against the Palestinians is not in US interest, US policy has defended Israel *against its own interests* for so long. As Mearsheimer and Walt observe, US generosity to Israel ‘would be understandable if Israel were a vital strategic asset for the United States ... It would also be easy to explain if there were a compelling moral rationale for maintaining such high levels of material aid and diplomatic backing. But this is not the case’.¹² This being so, it has been said that ‘the United States and Israel may well have the most extraordinary tie in international politics’.¹³ The influence and infiltration of Israeli narrative in the West, as documented in this study, has had a significant role in persuading the international community of Israel’s case. However neither can the US sustain such policies with respect to Israel, nor the consequences of those policies be ignored indefinitely.¹⁴

There may be legal grounds not only to prosecute Israel in case specific instances such as those relating to military operations, but to challenge the State’s current structure. For example, Avi Shlaim argues that Israel meets the criteria used to define a ‘rogue state’; were this to be treated with the weight that the accusation has carried for other ‘rogue states’ – not coincidentally also characterised as against Western interest – the implications could be monumental. However, given the US stance, it is clear that Israel will not, in any immediate sense, be treated as such.¹⁵ One might conclude that rogue status or international criminality is hardly about meeting a legal definition, but whether the Western hegemony has a will to enforce the consequences. As Friel and Falk have meticulously documented in the case of *The New York Times*, one has every reason to believe that a conspiracy to silence is employed to undermine the power of law (not least because international law strongly supports the central Palestinian claims in the conflict) to best safeguard Israeli interest.¹⁶ Yet regardless of whether there are legal avenues available – and the Palestinians have attempted to utilise these in both international and (with no small amount of futility) domestic contexts – they are not now, nor are they likely to be, the way forward.¹⁷

⁹ Samantha Power, quoted in Philip Weiss, “US is ‘Absolutely Adamant’ That Palestine Not Go to the ICC and Wreck the Peace Process,” *Mondoweiss*, April 6, 2014: <http://mondoweiss.net/2014/04/absolutely-palestine-process.html>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Mearsheimer and Walt, *Israel Lobby*, 48.

¹³ Mitchell Bard and Daniel Pipes quoted in *ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 355.

¹⁵ See generally Sayigh, “Inducing a Failed State,” for an outline of how the international community, in particular the US, has supported Israeli actions while failing to defend their investments in the OPTs.

¹⁶ Friel and Falk, *Israel-Palestine on Record*, 9.

¹⁷ For Palestinian attempts to utilise Israeli law, see chap. 3 Weizman, *Possible Evils*.

This chapter will critique the developments in discourse on the Israel–Palestinian conflict since OCL, drawing on trends accounted for in the primary research of this thesis, and outline what is considered to be a more valuable direction for transformations of thinking about the conflict. First, it will consider the emergence of two approaches in international discourse during this period – the BDS and the language of international laws. It argues that, while these developments have positively influenced conceptualisation of the conflict, they engage in kinds of thinking that have an intermediate value only. This is in part due to their function as strategies, rather than ends in themselves, but additionally because, if viewed as ends, they will circumscribe kinds of change which are both necessary and possible, for example, by de-politicising Palestinian claims in the case of legal approaches, thus reducing the Palestinian issue to a humanitarian problem. Without insistence on progress beyond these strategies, they will become complicit in perpetuating a technique of conservative governance by which the ongoing dynamic of the conflict is treated as ‘a state of permanent crisis’ and utilised to ensure that the stasis of the situation is perpetually reproduced.¹⁸ Indeed, this new terrain of discourse has presented a new space of rivalry, in which ‘different forces with different interests and investments in the crisis’ have struggled ‘among each other to enforce particular ways of living the crisis rather than others’.¹⁹ In this chapter, I want to think through this terrain in the language of complexity, as a way of thinking outside what Hage calls ‘mono-realism’, that is ‘the idea that there is one, and only one, reality that our thought is, or can be, connected to’.²⁰ As will be detailed, the language of ‘complexity’ has been deployed in particular ways by Israel in its defence since OCL. However, other trends in narrative illustrate how complexity could be enabled as a generative space for the rivalry Hage outlines. This draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s theorisation of ‘minor literature’, in which they argue that a dominant language (in this case, the dominant discourse of the conflict) might be used not to join or overcome the language of institutions with a new institutional language, but rather to ‘create the opposite dream’, that is: ‘how to create a becoming minor’.²¹

The declining credibility of Israeli-led narrative

Until recently, the Israel–Palestinian conflict has been defined in the Western eye through Israeli narrative.²² The 21st century heralded a new opportunity for narrative resonance, since Israeli characterisation of Palestinians – as terrorists – mapped onto the wider discourses with which the West had become directly concerned. That Israeli narrative has instead lost some of its potency is an index of changes that are neither institutionally led nor driven, and this has been a development coterminous with the operations central to this research. The advent of social media and capacities for personal recording have played a large part in this development, and OCL was a watershed in the use of these mediums for disseminating information that Israeli authorities had sought to censor and contain. If, in the past, publics were beholden to mainstream media as the primary source for news, the first decade of the 21st century completely revolutionised that equation. With the advent of a blogging culture and myriad online publications that focus on the Middle East and Palestine, there is

¹⁸ Hage, *Alter-Politics*, 34, 36.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 200.

²¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature*, translated by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 27.

²² Mendelson and Smith, “Visions of a New State,” 187.

no shortage of ‘alternative’ information available.²³ In line with an apparent shift in public sentiment illustrated by the culture of Palestinian-solidarity demonstrations, it is possible to see in a paper like the *Guardian*, both for reasons of its historic political preferences but, I think also in response to these changes, that coverage of OCL was significantly more critical of Israel than it had been in ODS. According to Finkelstein, these were the influences at play in the personal revision of such columnists as Roger Cohen in *The New York Times* during OCL for example, and reflect the claims of Khalidi and Abunimah that the American public, contrary to mainstream media coverage of OCL, is increasingly critical of US policy regarding Israel, and of Israel more generally.²⁴ Judging by the numbers in Australia protesting OCL, as compared with coverage in *The Australian* or the Rudd government line, Australia would seem to reflect the trend in America. Though these gains are incremental, it must only be a matter of time before the effect of changing opinion in national publics starts to weigh on political institutions that have sanctioned Israel’s *status quo*.²⁵

A practical outgrowth of this has been BDS. The movement’s aims are threefold. The first and best-understood tenet is that BDS is a strategy to effect an end to Occupation and the colonisation of all Arab lands and to dismantle the Wall. Secondly, it demands recognition of the ‘fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality’; a claim increasingly captured in descriptions of Israel as an Apartheid State, a view formalised in an international Israeli Apartheid Week which has been marked annually since 2005.²⁶ Thirdly, it calls for ‘respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194’ (adopted 11 December, 1948).²⁷ Overall, BDS is sometimes framed as a strategy to compel Israel to comply with its obligations under international law. The movement, founded by a group of Palestinian NGOs in July 2005 had, in its early years, limited effect; increasingly, the international community’s involvement has lent it greater power. Following OCL – spurred on by Israel’s attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in which nine activists aboard the MV *Marvi Marmara* were killed – the principles of BDS have found greater resonance, and its early solidarity-base of student and activist groups has expanded to include support by weightier organisations.²⁸ For example, in December 2013, the *American Studies Association* voted to boycott Israeli universities and academic institutions. Moreover, an increasing number of international artists have declined to tour or have their work shown in Israel, while several European countries, including Denmark and the Netherlands, have rescinded on contracts with Israel, citing aspects of BDS as the cause.

Abunimah writes that Israel’s response to BDS has been to ‘burnish “Brand Israel”’ as part of a strategy which reflects ‘a realisation that the battle for legitimacy in the countries on which Israel has always relied for military, economic and political support ... has to be fought on the territory of universal principles, human rights, and

²³ For the importance of social media, see Manuel Castells, “The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks and Global Governance,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 86, doi: 10.1177/0002716207311877. For the role of media in social movements, see Olesen, “Transnational Publics,” 424-431. In the Israel-Palestinian conflict, examples include: *Electronic Intifada*, +972 Magazine, *Mondoweiss*, *Ma’an News Agency* – although the list is extensive.

²⁴ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 118; Khalidi, “Palestinian Dispossession,” 382-383; Abunimah, “Gaza, Goldstone,” 394.

²⁵ Haidar Eid compares OCL to the 1960 Sharpeville shooting of Black anti-Apartheid protesters, which he argues was the turning point in international recognition of South African civil society’s appeal for boycott, divestment and sanctions: “Sharpeville 1960, Gaza 2009,” *Electronic Intifada*, January 22, 2009, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/sharpeville-1960-gaza-2009/8013>.

²⁶ See the website *Israeli Apartheid Week*: <http://apartheidweek.org/>.

²⁷ “Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS,” *BDS Movement: Freedom, Justice, Equality*, July 9, 2005: <http://www.bdsmovement.net/call>.

²⁸ Abunimah, “Gaza, Goldstone,” 397.

equality'.²⁹ However, the success of this has been modest. Yet, in contrast to the international momentum that BDS has gathered, Australian federal politics has adopted a bipartisan stance that is resolutely against the movement. For instance, the current Australian Government, while in opposition, made an election promise that it would block all federal funds to individuals and institutions that support BDS.³⁰ Perhaps heartened by this stance, an Israeli NGO, which defines itself as a 'civil rights movement', *Shurat HaDin*, launched a class action in the New South Wales branch of the Federal Court against Associate Professor Jake Lynch at the University of Sydney. *Shurat HaDin*, a group that has traditionally litigated against those they claim support terrorism, in this case targeted BDS. The action was based on Lynch's refusal in 2012 to assist an application, made by Professor Dan Avnon of the Hebrew University, to secure a Zelman Cowen Scholarship to conduct research in Australia. *Shurat HaDin* claimed that assistance was denied on the basis of Avner's Jewish-Israeli ethnicity.³¹ But initial indications from the court suggested the action was spurious.³² However, the legal position is only a portion of *Shurat HaDin*'s aim. The case against Lynch is an example of what has been called 'lawfare', which quite separately from legal merit, aims to deter others from similar action lest they be pursued in time-consuming and costly legal proceedings. It has been suggested that *Shurat HaDin*, connected to *Shin Bet*, is a 'proxy for Israeli government agencies'.³³ Despite the Australian Government position, however, national and international funding to assist Lynch with the pecuniary burden received strong response, while the court was unsympathetic to *Shurat HaDin*'s claim. The Lynch case demonstrates Abunimah's claim that this is a time of changing narrative, one in which 'the territory of universal principles, human rights, and equality ... is ground held increasingly firmly by the Palestine solidarity movement'.³⁴

Lexicons of consequence

Finkelstein writes that a significant outcome of the GR was that it 'catapulted Israel's human rights record into the court of public opinion, and concomitantly the damning findings of human rights organisations have become *politically consequential*'.³⁵ This notion of consequence is crucial in talking about a change in attitudes to Israel's military operations. One of the earliest premises for this research was that mainstream media-visibility of assertions that Israel was responsible for war crimes was a development that signalled change in Israel–Palestinian relations. Taken in isolation, however, the circulation of these terms in the sources during both operations was seemingly insufficient to argue that legally founded accusation or the threat of legal retribution had a major role in catalysing change to Israel's narrative strategy or Western portrayals of that. Having since documented narrative tropes used in reporting and the direction of editorial commentary over two operations separated by some six and a half years, I believe that the nascent media discourse on Israeli war crimes has added a significant if subtle dimension to the changes that have occurred.

²⁹ Abunimah, "Gaza, Goldstone," 398.

³⁰ Ean Higgins, "Libs to Cut Funding for Anti-Israel Activists," *Australian*, May 25, 2013, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/lib-to-cut-funding-for-anti-israel-activists/story-fn59niix-1226650231080>.

³¹ Evan Zlatkis and Gareth Narunsky, "Shurat Case 'Pumped Up'," *Australian Jewish News*, April 1, 2014, <http://www.jewishnews.net.au/shurat-case-pumped-up/34536>.

³² Ultimately *Shurat HaDin* withdrew the case, claiming it had been defeated on a technicality: Gareth Narunsky, "Shurat HaDin Drops Case Against Lynch," *Australian Jewish News*, July 21, 2014, <http://www.jewishnews.net.au/shurat-hadin-drops-case-against-lynch/36352>.

³³ Asa Winstanley, "Israeli Lawyers Group Shurat HaDin Unmasked as Mossad Proxy," *Electronic Intifada*, October 24, 2013, <http://electronicintifada.net/blogs/asa-winstanley/israeli-lawyers-group-shurat-hadin-unmasked-mossad-proxy>.

³⁴ Abunimah, "Gaza, Goldstone," 398.

³⁵ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 143.

Prior to the Second Intifada, Israel had rarely been indicted for perpetrating war crimes. There are obvious historic reasons for this reticence, including the fact that capturing ‘war criminals’ through international tribunals or universal jurisdictions were mechanisms set up primarily to address Nazi atrocities, largely perpetrated against Jews. Indeed, it is this legacy that has shaped the contemporary international legal framework. A keyword database search for ‘Israel’s war crimes’ indicated that, between independence and the end of the 20th century, the majority of connections between Israel and ‘war crimes’ related to the aftermath of the Holocaust, Nazi war crimes, and a campaign spearheaded by Israel to open UN archival materials relating to Nazi war criminals.³⁶ In contrast, events which have subsequently been enlisted as illustrations of Israel’s criminality, including for example the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres, were not described in this way at the time. Indeed, while the hits were in excess of 2,200, the first 50-year period is covered in little more than 100 entries. This changes with the Second Intifada. From late 2000, Israel’s bloody response to the uprising received considerable criticism. Within the first five weeks, Amnesty International suggested that Israel’s violent methods could amount to war crimes.³⁷

Notwithstanding the accelerated use of terms arraiging IDF action during the Second Intifada, labels of criminality were attached to Israel and its political and military agents with significant qualifications. Discounting two smaller maritime incidents, ODS marked the first major operation launched by the IDF during the Second Intifada and thus the first to have been charged in a mainstream media context as serious criminal conduct. Two phrases are raised recurrently with regard to IDF conduct in Jenin during ODS: ‘massacre’ and ‘war crime’. In accord with the empirical evidence documented, only the *Guardian* raises these terms as accusations although with the qualification of inverted commas.³⁸ However, the *Guardian* also publishes criticism of its coverage, for example, *Ha’aretz* reporter Sharon Sadeh rails that British papers:

almost unanimously, presented [the battle of Jenin] from the outset as a ‘massacre’ or at least as an international ‘war crime’ of the worst kind ... [and] were quick to denounce Israel and made sensational accusations based on thin evidence, fitting a widely held stereotype of a defiant, brutal and don’t-give-a-damn Israel.

Despite acknowledging that negative press was in part the result of Israel’s own ‘blunders’, he concludes by disqualifying the competence of the British press to appropriately capture Israeli predicament, having had no first-hand experience of ‘terrorism’, which he compares to the state of the US media prior to 9/11.

Tackling the *Guardian* and wider British press presumption of Israeli criminality, Sadeh’s article employs the key narrative strategies used by Israel and its supporters in ODS: that the issue is how to frame the story and that the problem is Israel’s public relations. *The New York Times*, which mentions the circulation of these allegations in as many articles as the *Guardian*, does so quite differently. Three pieces mention war crimes through citing

³⁶ See for example: “Israelis Expect UN War Crimes Files to Be Open to the Public Soon,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, July 14, 1987, <http://www.jta.org/1987/07/14/archive/israelis-expect-un-war-crimes-files-to-be-open-to-public-soon>.

³⁷ “Israel’s Response to Rioting has been too Harsh, Right Group Says,” *St. Louis Post – Dispatch* (St. Louis, MO), November 2, 2001.

³⁸ For example, the *Guardian* publishes a report, using “massacre” in the title, documenting Labour MP Gerald Kaufman’s denouncement of Sharon, in the British House of Commons, as a “war criminal”: Black, MacAskill and Watt, “Israel Faces Rage Over ‘Massacre’,” April 17, 2002. See also: Chris McGreal and Brian Whitaker, “Israel Accused Over Jenin Assault,” *Guardian*, April 23, 2002; McGreal, “UN Calls Off ‘Massacre’ Inquiry After Sharon Sets Impossible Conditions,” May 1, 2002; Brian Whitaker, “UN to Press On With Jenin ‘War Crimes’ Report,” *Guardian*, May 10, 2002.

people and organisations ‘prejudiced’ against Israel, including comments of the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister, Prince Saud Al-Faisal (despite his highly qualified language), Amnesty International and HRW.³⁹ Two other references relate to the UN inquiry into Jenin, including that the inquiry appears to have been ‘set up to accuse Israel of war crimes’, and that Israel would prefer to take its chances with negative international opinion over chancing the ‘long term risk of possibly exposing the IDF to war crimes trials’.⁴⁰ *The Australian* mirrors *The New York Times* treatment of these terms.⁴¹ In the event, the reports of the UN commission and international human rights organisations vanished, mired by Israeli and pro-Israeli strategies of narrative defence, in particular that of public relations.

However, if the importance of these terms is measured not in legal pursuit, but in the fact that this was their debut appearance in mainstream media, then their use might be considered ‘consequential’. Although little scholarship has thus far investigated the effect of legal indictments in media space on political outcome, there is some evidence to suggest that their connection has a practical value. Legal academic and war crime specialist Gerry Simpson, writing after the initial Iraq invasion in 2003, asserted that international law mattered in this instance because ‘people care about the legality of war’.⁴² In particular, he argues that UK Prime Minister Tony Blair’s resignation was a consequence of the voting public’s concerns, fuelled by the media, about the institutional legitimacy of its own government, given emerging evidence about the illegality of the war.⁴³ Simpson urges that, as distinct from domestic law, a more nuanced picture of the operation of global law is required; that we ought not declare it a failure if it does not adhere to traditional notions of law in which ‘punishment and enforcement are either present or absent here and now, or not at all’.⁴⁴

The connection between legal allegations, media and public attitudes towards Israel in foreign states will not have the same impact as Simpson argues it had in the UK. Only such a shift in the Israeli public itself could directly effect that change, and the Israeli Government continues to enjoy a popular mandate to employ tactics of high militarism and questionable legality.⁴⁵ However, there are two reasons why this precedent matters for Israel. The first is that the symbolic value of the accusations to foreign national publics such as those in the US, the UK and Australia could ultimately lead to those publics rejecting governments whose foreign policy position staunchly endorses Israel. The second is that, should change occur in those publics, and in particular in the US, this would make Israel’s violence against the Palestinian people, in addition to its tactical avoidance of endgame negotiations, untenable.⁴⁶ Thus, according to Simpson’s view, one might argue that, in the case of ODS, law had a palpable effect: ‘international law, in the end, is enforced in all sorts of ways ... Wars are the outcomes of

³⁹ David E. Sanger, “President Praises Effort By Powell in Middle East,” *New York Times*, April 19, 2002; James Bennet, “Two Sieges Fuel Tension as Arafat Meets U.S. Envoy,” *New York Times*, April 23, 2002; Rohde, “Rights Group Doubts Mass Deaths in Jenin, But Sees Signs of War Crimes,” May 3, 2002.

⁴⁰ Schmemmann, “Israelis to Delay U.N. Fact-Finders,” April 24, 2002; Bennet, “U.N. May Drop Inquiry at Jenin as Israel Resists,” May 1, 2002.

⁴¹ See “Troops Out But Arafat Siege Stands,” *Australian*, April 19, 2002, quoting *Human Rights Watch*; see also “‘Israelis in the Right,’ Says Bush,” April 20, 2002, quoting Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat. For Israeli comments discrediting the UN inquiry, see “Sharon Stalls on UN Visit to Jenin,” April 29, 2002.

⁴² Simpson, “War in Iraq,” 186.

⁴³ Gerry Simpson, “Duelling Agendas: International Relations and International Law (Again),” *Journal of International Law and International Relations* 61, no.1, (2004-2005): 72-3

⁴⁴ Simpson, “Duelling Agendas,” 73.

⁴⁵ Sheizaf, “Israel’s Siege Mentality,” 401.

⁴⁶ Khalidi, “Palestinian Dispossession,” 383.

arguments, armies move by the force of ideas. And law is a powerful idea'.⁴⁷ Israel's outrage about the UN inquiry specifically picked up on accusations that Israel had committed war crimes in Jenin. The outrage was, I think, evidence of Israel's discomfort at international pursuit, if only rhetorically, of ODS in these terms.

Consistent with my argument in chapter 4 regarding the absences in coverage of OCL, references to 'war crimes' were in marginally less evident than in ODS. In the case of both *The Australian* and *The New York Times* this has much to do with these sources' support for Israel as expressed in their accumulated narrative position. In two of three instances in *The New York Times*, they are minimised or refuted.⁴⁸ For example, an Israeli major is reported to ask, in connection with the accusations: 'how does an army fight a terrorist group? If we [the world] just see the pictures and don't use our heads then the terrorists will always win these public opinion battles'.⁴⁹ Silence around legal accusation seems reflective of two things. The first is, that the West had spent a decade engaged in developing a 'code of practice' around the War on Terror, which mirrored many of the premises of the Kasher–Yadlin code of military ethics.⁵⁰ Thus, consistent with the position of their national governments, OCL was defended in terms of security. Secondly, as argued in chapter 4, these papers' position necessitated ignoring certain currents of discourse.

The sense internationally that OCL was pursued by Israel in flagrant disregard for Law – even those of war, let alone International Humanitarian Law (IHL) or Human Rights Law (IHRL) – created sufficient political will to execute what became the Goldstone Report.⁵¹ If mainstream print media remained supportive of Israel, this was less in the form of vociferous defence but rather in 'sitting it out'.⁵² For example, while Israel refused to cooperate with either the inquiry into Jenin or the Goldstone Commission, the sources treat an identical response differently in each event. After ODS, Israel strenuously refuted the validity of the inquiry by arguing that it was being scapegoated for war crimes; this argument was conveyed repeatedly in the news media. After OCL, Israel's concerns about the prejudice of a commission received far less attention. Moreover, several eminent commentators on the Israel–Palestinian conflict from legal backgrounds, including Richard Falk and George Bisharat, proposed the legal basis for prosecuting Israel, provided there was the political will.⁵³

Although no official action resulted from the GR, it was nevertheless a remarkable document. As Rashid Khalidi puts it: 'the Goldstone Report could not have been written, and would have had little effect, as recently as a decade ago. That fact that it has had such an impact reflects how the report is both a product of an evolving consciousness and a vital contributor to it.'⁵⁴ As Simpson argues, international law matters. Yet its meaning is not to be found in its ability to penalise or enforce, but rather in the gravity of its concept, the weight of its lexicon and the stigma of contravention. For this reason, the GR was styled in Israel as the 'Goldstone threat';

⁴⁷ Simpson, "Duelling Agendas," 73.

⁴⁸ Bronner, "Israelis United on Gaza War Even as Censure Rises Abroad," January 13, 2009; Steven Erlanger, "Weighing Crimes and Ethics in the Fog of Urban Warfare," *New York Times*, January 17, 2009. In the third instance, while the comments are not called into question, the Human Rights Council, to whom they were addressed, is described as having 'a reputation for censuring Israel': El-Khodary and Kershner, "For Arab Clan, Days of Agony in a Cross-Fire," January 10, 2009.

⁴⁹ Erlanger, "Weighing Crimes and Ethics in the Fog of Urban Warfare," January 17, 2009.

⁵⁰ Kasher and Yadlin, "Military Ethics."

⁵¹ Falk, "Goldstone Without Goldstone," 102; Finkelstein, *This Time*, 112.

⁵² Finkelstein, *This Time* 120.

⁵³ Richard Falk quoted in Afua Hirsch, "Israel May Face UN Court Ruling on Legality of Gaza Conflict," *Guardian*, January 14, 2009; George Bisharat, excerpted in Paul Krugman, "Promised Rescue Package Not Enough to Save the Day," *Australian*, January 12, 2009.

⁵⁴ Khalidi, "Palestinian Dispossession," 376.

the nature of the threat is that it has ‘furthered a growing understanding of the complex interaction between Israel and Palestine’ to an international audience, including the American public.⁵⁵ Additionally, increasing recognition in international publics that Palestinians have at last pursued a diplomatic front instead of armed struggle, unavoidably paints Israeli State policy and IDF conduct in the OPTs in stark (often appalling) ways.⁵⁶ The human rights dimension to documenting Israeli behaviour has been a major factor in this change. When the Jenin inquiries were thwarted by Israel, a senior US official in *The New York Times* commented ‘if you’re going to die on a particular hill, don’t die on Jenin. Die on something that’s important to moving forward’.⁵⁷ The outrage at the number of deaths, the level of destruction and the criminal conduct in pursuit of criminal policies in OCL meant, six and a half years later, such a statement would be a bigoted anachronism. Within the legal lexicon, the rise of IHL and IHRL, and the flagrant breaches in OCL of numerous principles they uphold, have brought Israel’s violations to sustained attention. This was stated unequivocally in the GR, whatever its limitations, and increasingly, the international community is listening. Cumulatively, this is how law as a conceptual threat has come to have *political consequence*.

If not security then what?

Political economist Sara Roy recounts that, on the occasion of *Eid al Fitr* in August 2012, the Israeli Government granted in excess of 100,000 visas to Palestinians in the West Bank, enabling them to visit the beaches of Tel Aviv. Whatever reasons it may have had for this, the Palestinians who entered the 48 territories were seemingly too numerous to be surveilled.⁵⁸ This makes a strong empirical case against the idea that the Palestinians, in a concrete sense, are regarded by the authorities dispensing visas (and one might assume therefore the instruments of state) to constitute any real security threat. Demonstrably, this has not prevented those instruments from fabricating for Israeli citizens the Palestinian as a symbolic threat. Yet, if OCL was not about this so-called terror, what then? Halper argues that ‘if you can’t explain [OCL] by security then obviously there is something the state is not saying’, to which it should be held accountable.

The findings of the GR drew the same conclusions. It determined that the primary purpose of the economic blockade in Gaza, in place two years prior to the invasion, was intended ‘to bring about a situation in which the civilian population would find life so intolerable that they would leave (if that were possible) or turn Hamas out of office, as well as to collectively punish the civilian population’. Concomitantly, the invasion itself was ‘aimed at punishing the Gaza population for its resilience and for its apparent support for Hamas, and possibly with the intent of forcing a change in such support’.⁵⁹ This was in spite of Israel’s justification of the attack on the grounds of self-defence, and in contradiction of the fact that the GR itself accepted the framework of self-defence in its investigation, despite evidence that strongly refuted the credibility of that premise. Scholar, Henry

⁵⁵ Sheizaf, “Israel’s Siege Mentality,” 401; Khalidi, “Palestinian Dispossession,” 376.

⁵⁶ Falk, “Human Rights.”

⁵⁷ Purdum, “In Drive for Peace Progress, White House Saw Jenin Inquiry as Expendable,” May 4, 2002.

⁵⁸ Sara Roy, “Rights to Freedom of Movement and Economic Development,” (paper presented at *Human Rights in Palestine*, Australian National University, Canberra, September 11-12, 2013); Abraham Rabinovich, “A Day at the Beach Breaks Down Barriers,” *Australian*, August 27, 2012, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/a-day-at-the-beach-breaks-down-barriers/story-e6frg6so-1226458416226>.

⁵⁹ UNGA, Goldstone Report, paragraphs 1208 and 1884; Finkelstein, *This Time*, 128.

Siegman, summarises the effect: ‘It cannot be said, therefore, that Israel launched its assault to protect its citizens from rockets. It did so to protect the continuation of its strangulation of Gaza’s population’.⁶⁰

Despite such findings, there was a tendency in public discourse to treat OCL as if it were a war, giving a farcical (if macabre) air to the proliferation of ‘fair-minded’ commentary which, suffering from the institutional blindness of historic and systematic obfuscation of scalar relations, extolled the importance of holding each side ‘equally’ to account. A satire of this recurrent institutional violence was articulated by Hage, some three years later, in response to OPS:

The good unbiased westerner just told me: “Forget that there are colonisers and colonised, what there really is are two sides”.

Forget that there are people losing their land and people stealing it. What we have are two people with different histories.

Forget that the Israelis have killed tens of thousands of Palestinians, while the Israelis killed by the Palestinians can be counted in the hundreds.

For what there really is are two people prone to violence.

Forget that in terms of actual capacity to cause violent destruction the Palestinians are to the Israelis what a single ant is to an Elephant.

For what is important is that both sides ought to show restraint.

The good unbiased westerner is adamant:

“We don’t want to talk about the fact that one side is filthy rich and technologically over-equipped while the other is getting poorer and poorer; Nor do we want to talk about injustice, dispossession, racism and apartheid, for this doesn’t allow us to see what is wrong with both sides...”

For the most important thing that one should always remember is that both sides are sides.

And if both sides did not side, there would be no side.”⁶¹

Yet if this idea of ‘balance’ was considered appropriate, there is much to suggest that it is one of the more stubborn vestiges of apologetic nicety employed to justify Israeli action. In the view of commentators such as Finkelstein, Khalidi and Abunimah, OCL was precipitous of a trend already on its way, and insistence on balance has been increasingly addressed as a substantive nonsense. For example, the GR rejected ‘equating the position of Israel as the Occupying Power with that of the occupied Palestinian population or entities representing it’, because ‘the difference with regard to the power and capacity to inflict harm or to protect ... are obvious and a comparison is neither possible nor necessary’.⁶² Furthermore, in answer to criticisms that the GR disproportionately focused on Israel, Finkelstein argues that, proportionate to the number of deaths, to the contrary, the report had a disproportionate focus on Hamas.⁶³

In a transitional sense, these indicate positive development in attitudes to Israel–Palestinian relations, in particular as responses to the inexcusable and unjustifiably brutal military onslaughts which Palestinians have

⁶⁰ Henry Siegman, “Discrediting Goldstone, Delegitimizing Israel,” in *The Goldstone Report: The Legacy of the Landmark Investigation of the Gaza Conflict*, eds Adam Horowitz, Lizzy Ratner, and Philip Weiss (New York: Nation Books, 2011), 390.

⁶¹ Ghassan Hage, “An ‘Unbiased Westerner’: Forget It, Just Two Sides At War in Gaza Tragedy?” *Adonis Diaries*, November 21, 2012, <https://adonis49.wordpress.com/tag/ghassan-hage/>.

⁶² UNGA, Goldstone Report, paragraph 1876.

⁶³ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 129.

suffered at the hands of Israeli policy in increasingly visible ways since OCL. Yet Hage invites us to direct our gaze ‘towards *other* realities, which might contain the possibility of forms of sociality between Palestinians and Israelis that are not encompassed by and contained in the state form and its reality, and that the proponents of the ‘Jewish State’ and the ‘Palestinian State’ continuously reinforce as the only ‘realist’ solution to the conflict’.⁶⁴ This is what I referred to earlier, when I suggested that BDS and international legal frameworks should be treated as strategies of intermediate value to transforming discourse on the Israel–Palestinian issue. While they have initiated the hard work of calling Israel to account, they also operate within the assumption of a mono-reality, and share in the vision of a ‘realist’ outcome such that it appears an inevitability, rather than an option amongst options. Conceived of as end-points, they become complicit in, and also the mechanisms by which, a particular reality ‘becomes hegemonic over other realities’.⁶⁵ In contrast, Hage’s theorisation of an *alter*-politics as something not just counter, but polyphonic, is an invitation to think not only beyond a mono-reality, but outside of binaries or alternative linearity. This charge undoubtedly presents a significant challenge to prevailing currents of thought. However, as the next section details, it is a challenge which has been engaged in contemporary Palestinian creative practice, and in particular cinema, which at its best is creating narratives that disrupt the logic of 20th century politicking on Israel–Palestine, and re-engage questions that have fallen from view in diplomatic, legal and even resistance discourses. This practice, in developing an alter-politics, rehabilitates core issues of the conflict, working against an ‘established cultural repertoire’ to provide alternative ways of thinking about the future.⁶⁶ The remainder of this chapter engages with how this ‘minor’ production has succeeded so far in tearing ‘away from its own language, allowing it to challenge the language’ so that it may follow a ‘revolutionary path’ and the implications of this for traditional discourse tools such as media and for incorporating these transformative modes into mainstream discourse, wherever that is to occur.⁶⁷

Toward a minor complexity

OCL marks the abandonment in Western media discourse of certain narrative strategies long used to justify Israeli policy and IDF practice, specifically, the end of the ‘myth of purity of arms’: that the IDF is the most moral army in the world. Previously, this had been a staple defence of Israeli action. Finkelstein suggests that in OCL, ‘Israelis could apparently no longer even conceive of a feeling of remorse’ and ‘dispensed with the theatrical outpourings of angst – ‘shooting and crying’ – that Jewish cheerleaders abroad regularly used to tout as proof of the uniquely sensitive Israeli soul’. In contrast, the myth of purity of arms was integral to justifying ODS, as outlined in chapter 2.⁶⁸ OCL and the GR marked a significant shift: even in media sources which defended Israel’s actions, the narrative of morality in either comparative or absolute terms was hardly in evidence. Finkelstein argues that the GR concluded an era of ‘apologetic Jewish liberalism that denies or extenuates Israel’s crimes’, evidenced in the fact that ‘if newspaper editorials and liberal commentary did not come out in Goldstone’s defence, they also did not defend Israel against him’.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Hage, *Alter-Politics*, 76-77.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁶⁶ John D. Cash, “Negotiating Insecurity: Law, Psychoanalytic Social Theory and the Dilemmas of the World Risk Society,” *The Australian Feminist Law Journal* 30 (2009): 96.

⁶⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 19.

⁶⁸ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 135.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.

In the wake of ‘purity of arms’ – an idea that no longer aptly describes Israel’s own desire, and desire to be seen, to ‘go crazy’ – Israelis have replaced a narrative of anguished innocence with one of ‘complexity’. Lacking the virtues of ‘purity of arms’, it has nevertheless been similarly employed to curtail discourse. It challenges the interlocutor to tender a particular kind of empirical knowledge of the situation, ‘you can’t understand unless you’ve lived there’, or risk disqualification (in contrast, I have never heard a Palestinian insist that you must have lived ‘there’ to comprehend the substantive issues to the conflict). It acknowledges the horrible ‘mess’ while absolving Israel of responsibility (the recurrent appeal that any state would do the same). There is much evidence of the way in which this narrative of complexity is increasingly favoured in a broadly pro-Israel camp to frame the current situation as an impenetrable ethical conundrum. This is often the case in media coverage during OCL, and in particular in the staunchly supportive pages of *The Australian*. One example is in the emerging visibility of the Palestinian collaborator or ‘co-operator’ as they are termed in the ‘Hebrew jargon’, which Rabinovich asserts are one of Israel’s most important intelligence sources, and were of particular value in preparing and implementing OCL.⁷⁰ Consistent with the approach of that paper, their mention is intended, I believe, to ‘complexify’ the relations between Israel and Palestinians, as if these were the Palestinians on Israel’s side.

For all the paucity of scholarship on collaborators – in English, Hebrew or Arabic – they have been a consistent fact of the Israeli State, systematically recruited since 1948 with the intent to ‘entrench the occupation and destroy Palestinian resistance’.⁷¹ Investigative journalist, Jonathan Cook argues that collaborators have been the ‘great unmentionable’: ‘when the subject was dealt with by the international and local media, it was solely in the context of the failings of the Palestinian legal system, which allowed the summary execution of collaborators by lynch mobs and kangaroo courts’.⁷² To date, there is only one sustained, scholarly text on collaborators, authored by an Israeli academic, Hillel Cohen. Pappé criticises the work on these grounds that, written from the point of view of the operator, it often describes the operator-collaborator relationship as ‘intimate and complex’, and entirely fails to engage in a ‘wider ethical analysis of this criminal policy’.⁷³ One serious gap in this focus is failure to document how methods of recruitment replicate the institutional violence visited upon Palestinians by the Israeli State. Thus, while collaboration is often ‘incentivised’, Palestinians who shun compliance face the impost of harsh penalties, most often in the form of prison or exile.⁷⁴ Recently, the subject has received attention in two feature films released in 2013 which centre on the collaborator relationship to foreground Israel–Palestinian relations. Instructively for the purpose of comparison, one of these, *Omar*, was directed by seasoned Palestinian director Hany Abu-Asad; the other, *Bethlehem*, by first time Israeli director, Yuval Adler.⁷⁵ Both films mark the first serious works of cultural documentation devoted to the subject, and that they should be produced concurrently is an index of recent narrative directions. In comparison, they elicit the tension between

⁷⁰ Rabinovich, “Trick or Treaty? Barak Keeps Everyone Guessing,” January 2, 2009.

⁷¹ Jonathan Cook, “Palestinians Compelled to ‘Favour’ Israel,” *National* (Abu Dhabi), September 11, 2008, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/palestinians-compelled-to-favour-israel>; Ilan Pappé confirms this dearth of scholarship in his review of: *Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and the Israeli Arabs 1948-1967*, by Hillel Cohen, trans. Haim Watzman; reviewed in *Review of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 2 (2010), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23057163>.

⁷² Jonathan Cook, “Israel’s Dark Arts of Ensnaring Collaborators,” *Electronic Intifada*, September 12, 2008, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/israels-dark-arts-ensnaring-collaborators/7712>.

⁷³ Pappé, “Review of *Good Arabs*,” 232.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Omar*, directed by Hany Abu-Assad (2013; New York: Adopt Films, 2014), DVD; *Bethlehem*, directed by Yuval Adler (2013. New York: Adopt Films, 2014), DVD.

complexity as defence and complexity as radical potential. But in the case of the Palestinian film, what is also evoked is the capacity for Palestinian cultural production to utilise the alterity of a ‘minor’ discourse to create the individual concern as political and thus ‘all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it’.⁷⁶ This enables the particular concerns of the protagonists to intersect with the institutional spheres that determine their narrative arc, making it possible to represent frameworks themselves, that is, to generate discussion of the conflict not just in oppositional ways but in its entirety.⁷⁷

In *Bethlehem*, the relationship between collaborator and agent is symbolic of a metaphor of ‘complexity’ – ‘the misery of the collaborator the humanity of the agent’ and it situates this relationship in a political vacuum.⁷⁸ In other words, according to Gideon Levy, it is a film lacking in context. Levy summarises the plot: ‘the agent always takes care of his pet informant, lying to save his life, until the latter rises up to kill him by shooting him and bashing his skull in, ungrateful wretch that he is’.⁷⁹ Indeed, it is very difficult to identify with the Palestinians portrayed in *Bethlehem*. The film is set in the action-genre realm of good and evil, and there is hardly a redeeming feature amongst the Arab ‘bad guys’ who populate the scene. In contrast, the handsome Israeli agent, Ravi, toes an ambivalent line: he repeatedly puts himself between his confused teen collaborator, Sanfur, and *Shin Bet*, and in the end this does him no favours. The director, Adler, stated that he wanted to make a film ‘that won’t deal with political conflict’; it is, however, an affectation to suggest that excluding the conflict makes for a film that has avoided the political.⁸⁰ Rather, as Levy insists, ignoring the context, which blurs the power dynamics, is precisely the film’s ‘powerful, outrageous statement’.⁸¹ Levy declares the avoidance ‘abominable’, since it produces a covert propaganda, ‘which is worse than the overt kind’.⁸² Historically, this is what has been known as ‘balanced’ and is the criticism which *Omar*’s director makes of the film, albeit less scathingly.⁸³ Levy, however, firmly rejects the idea that *Bethlehem* represents neutrality and balance, arguing that the one-dimensional nature of the film is yet another example of Israeli anguish, which affirms: ‘hey, look how right you are. Hey, look how they victimise you. Hey, look how hopeless the situation is’.⁸⁴ Thus, to the contrary, Adler’s assertion that he sought to circumvent politics, and the expectation that this claim should be accepted at face value, is rather an illustration of what Hage describes as ‘Western modernity’s greatest ‘achievement’’: it has made us ‘mono-realists, minimising our awareness of the multiplicity of realities in which we exist’.⁸⁵

Further to these criticisms, however, I think *Bethlehem* is attempting – an Israeli production, for an Israeli and Jewish audience as well as an international one – to depict the ‘complexity’ of what, from that perspective seems an ethical no-man’s-land in the agent-collaborator relationship. I was struck by the reactions of the (predominantly Jewish) audience at a screening of *Bethlehem* in Melbourne’s 2013 Jewish International Film

⁷⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 17.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Gideon Levy, “‘Bethlehem’ is Yet Another Israeli Propaganda Film,” *Ha’aretz*, October 6, 2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.550699>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Amir Bogen, “Hany Abu-Assad: Shabak Agents are Decent People Carrying Out an Indecent Task,” *Ynet*, January 7, 2014, trans. Sol Salbe, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/10151978694596662/>.

⁸⁴ Levy, “‘Bethlehem’ is Yet Another Israeli Propaganda Film,” October 6, 2013.

⁸⁵ Hage, *Alter-Politics*, 210.

Festival (JIFF). At the conclusion to the film, as the inevitable no-way-out-ness of things unfolded and despite the obvious direction of the plot, I noted around me a sharp and collective intake of breath as Sanfur's shot is fired into Ravi. The protracted scene – the barbaric skull bashing – was accompanied in the audience by several hysterical shrieks, mercifully interrupted by the credits. As I exited the theatrette, I overheard a bewildered couple wondering if this film had been pro-Palestinian or not, a subject which other patrons around me weighed into earnestly. The mere fact that the central Palestinian character had been problematised as an antagonist (though antagonist he remained) was seemingly enough to confuse an audience used to black-and-white characterisation. I might add that the problematisation of the Palestinian collaborator was less in his actions than in the mere fact that this character's wretched travails dominated the screen time and plot developments. Nevertheless, it is insightful to realise that the narrative of complexity as defence is enough to shake the certainty of a Jewish audience's bearings in the ideological current.

In contrast, *Omar* tackles the systematised and institutional brutality inflicted by agents of power. The film eschews the simple black-and-white dehumanisation of the agent, which Abu-Assad describes as his reticence 'to place the blame for the crimes of the Occupation on an ordinary person'. In this description, it is clear that Abu-Assad is inviting the viewer, as formulated by Hage, to entertain the possibility that what we call reality, even the reality of a 'relation of power' or a 'relation of domination', is merely a dominant reality.⁸⁶ *Omar*, replete with nuanced figures from both 'sides', is wracked by suspicion of one's presumed friends and allies, which Abu-Assad describes as a phenomenon that runs deep in Palestinian society, such that one is raised 'to be careful; anyone might work with a secret agent'.⁸⁷ Reviewing Hilel Cohen's book, Pappé concludes by suggesting that, until a Palestinian book is written on the phenomenon, there will be no 'restitutive or conciliatory moment'.⁸⁸ Yet although a film is not a scholarly work, one could hardly describe the conclusion to *Omar* as a conciliatory moment for Israel–Palestinian relations. Not dissimilar to the ending of *Bethlehem*, it tracks a widely different route to arrive there; the hapless Omar resolves to shoot his jailor – for the unpardonable mess he has wrought on his life and those around him – before shooting himself. In this conclusion, and in the film generally, Abu-Assad is, I think, interested in the complexity of the practical application of an ethics of resistance, and linkages between the personal and the wider political context are integral to the structure of the film's narrative, and any conceivable statement that the film as a whole is intended to make. *Omar* illustrates the idea I have been developing here around complexity, that the possibilities that complexity-as-alter generate ultimately refuse to operate through counter-moments of restitution. Indeed the comparison is not about how the work of *Omar* corrects *Bethlehem* in depicting an exclusively Palestinian commentary on the collaborator, but rather that *Omar* presents an alter-vision, producing a discourse in which the ethics of politics and resistance cannot be reduced to alternatives.

Omar highlights a different approach that Palestinian thinking has drawn, presented with the same circumstances, in comparison to complexity as defence in *Bethlehem*. The integrity of the central character in addition to the plot resolution both illustrate the failure of an Israeli scheme to undermine, at an ideological

⁸⁶ Hage, *Alter-Politics*, 77, 201.

⁸⁷ "Omar: the Palestinian Oscar nominee made amid panic and paranoia," *Guardian*, February 23, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/feb/22/omar-film-palestine-oscar-hany-abu-assad>.

⁸⁸ Pappé, "Review of *Good Arabs*," 233.

level, Palestinian solidarity through collaboration, and demonstrate the mistaken calculations that have been made about Palestinian mentality more widely. Thus, collaboration in *Omar*, unlike *Bethlehem*, does not occur amidst a context of social division and mistrust; rather, it tackles the long-term institutional violence – manifested, at one level, in the cruel recruitment of collaborators. Indeed, *Omar* reflects the wider exclusion from ‘reality’ of Palestinian thinking, which has for nearly seven decades been positioned outside the mono-reality of Israel, both conceptually in international discourse and in the eminently tangible ways in which the Israeli State has constructed the Palestinian. In not presenting its analysis of the collaborator as a series of collisions, it proposes a way of thinking with complexity that simultaneously engages a multiplicity of strands. Watching *Omar* at the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF), the audience lacked the homogeneity of JIFF. As the credits rolled, in contrast to the histrionics on display at JIFF, a stunned silence gave way to gales of applause. An interesting sign of the times, *Omar* was voted tenth in the audience choice awards at MIFF and was subsequently nominated for Best Foreign Film in the 2014 Academy Awards. It seems that Abu-Assad’s invitation to audiences to live in *Omar*’s ambiguities, at least for its duration, was accepted.

Narrating Gaza after OCL

I recall a conversation in 2008 with an Israeli theatre-maker and friend about how the militarised landscape of the OPTs has seriously impacted both Palestinian and Israeli societies. I was particularly struck by her – as it transpired – rhetorical conclusion, in which she asked whether ultimately it was Palestinian people or the young IDF soldiers who were most brutalised by the experience. My Palestinian companion and I hardly thought this question bore the asking. That is does, by a certain left-wing but assuredly Zionist section of Israeli society, exemplifies their lack of recognition of the serial inconveniences and tragedies which form the practical fabric of everyday Palestinian life. In the years since OCL a number of cultural productions have reflected on the operation. A ten-minute play for voices, *Seven Jewish Children*, by English playwright Caryl Churchill, which charts the transformation from Jewish Holocaust trauma to violent Israeli oppressor through the State’s history, received considerable attention.⁸⁹ In addition to international work, OCL received attention from both Israeli and Palestinian artists. This section compares two pieces made in response to OCL: an Israeli performance and a Palestinian short film. Their respective contributions index the direction of narrative transformations and illustrate broader strategies employed by certain kinds of stakeholders since OCL.

An Israeli theatre piece, *The Gaza Strip Show*, performed in October 2013 in Tel Aviv, is set in the ‘dark heart of the controversy’: a figurative ‘Gaza’ which stands as synecdochical representation for the conflict. Gaza, it is stated, is evocative – as a word, place and situation – of the commodification by a wide variety of stakeholders, ‘looking to gain something from its use’.⁹⁰ It takes place in the tunnels below Gaza, where one is transported via the young Lily, an *Alice in Wonderland* figure, into a ‘political cabaret’ (referencing Christopher Isherwood’s depiction of 1930s Berlin later immortalised in the 1972 film *Cabaret*) presided over by Madame Gaza, a

⁸⁹ See, for example: Karl Quinn, “‘Bollocks’: Jewish Actor Defends Contentious Play,” *Age* (Melbourne), May 8, 2009, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/entertainment/arts/bollocks-jewish-actor-defends-contentious-play/2009/05/07/1241289313892.html>; Charlotte Higgins, “Is Caryl Churchill’s Play *Seven Jewish Children* Anti-Semitic?” *Guardian*, February 18, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/charlottehigginsblog/2009/feb/18/israelandthepalestinians-religion>; Patrick Healy, “Readings and Talks for Pro-Gaza Playlet,” *New York Times*, March 15, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/16/theater/16chur.html?_r=0.

⁹⁰ Ayelet Dekel, “The Gaza Strip Show,” *Midnight East*, October 13, 2013, <http://www.midnighteast.com/mag/?p=27785>.

weapons dealer and war profiteer. When the latter-day Alice arrives in the cabaret, announcing that ‘war has ended’, the tunnel dwellers are seriously perturbed. A reviewer who describes her online blog as ‘an insider’s perspective on Israeli culture’ interprets the show as ‘a vision of the hell that is everyday life accustomed to conflict’. The Israeli writer/director, Sivan Gabrielovich, is at pains to reinforce that *The Gaza Strip Show* is designed to emphasise consumerism of the conflict on the one hand, and the variety of partisanship on the other, such that ‘each person sees what they choose to see’.⁹¹ She states that her intention was to create an entry point into the politics of the Israel–Palestinian conflict through humour. As an exercise in meeting an Israeli audience (a theatre-going Israeli audience, willing to attend a piece eponymously named for its troubling subject matter) halfway, it may have been successful.⁹² However, the fundamental concept of the show epitomises the myopias of an Israeli left. It assumes of itself, as does the reviewer, that it is without agenda, rather acting as ‘a complicated and sometimes confusing portrait of people who cannot envision an existence without war’.⁹³

The Gaza Strip Show exemplifies the direction of Israeli narrative after OCL, that is, complexity-as-defence. The Gaza cabaret embodies how Gaza as a tangible geography has been conceptually bracketed and externalised from Israeli society, replicating what Allen describes as the practices of controlling scale, such that its lived reality for the Gazan inhabitants is represented in ways that sanction and enable the continuing violence, not limited to military forms, to which it has been subjected.⁹⁴ These components of remoteness, danger and disengagements mean that there is little conceptual difficulty in transforming the actual Gaza – as it exists for Israelis – into the liminal setting of *The Gaza Strip Show*, which in the lexicon of the play is ‘flamboyant, surreal, erotic, chaotic’. That the show’s set is located in the tunnels – one of the primary IDF targets during OCL – entrenches the ‘over there’ nature of Gaza. Seeking to undermine what an audience thinks they know about Gaza, the stage is adorned with international flags which indict the interest of an international community and stacked with boxes of supplies that reference the incompetence of humanitarian aid as much as the blockade. Yet ultimately these problematisations must be attributed to the agenda of its Israeli makers, who reinforce the idea that Gaza is *complex*. What is marketed as a show replete with an array of perspectives, depicted by a cast of comedic villains, ultimately seems to have only one point to make. What happens in the surreal cabaret bears no relationship to the reality of audience members; no one from the safety of the audience can really understand this place of exclusion. Amidst the traffic of contradictory perspectives, it ultimately asks that we do not judge the ordinary ‘us’ of Israeli society too harshly.

The Palestinian short film, *Operation Condom Lead* (2013), directly references OCL in its satirical title.⁹⁵ The film details the intimate world of a couple and child held captive in their apartment by OCL, depicted against the constant background noise of aeroplanes, tanks, sirens, missiles and explosions varying only in their proximity to the protagonists. The plot tracks the attempts of the couple to make love during the 22-day siege. The apartment setting is stylish and minimal, with little décor to mark it out as a particularly Arab household;

⁹¹ “The Gaza Strip Show – Promo,” October 4, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFfj_EHpr18.

⁹² The paucity of reviews perhaps indicates that it did not attract a wide audience. A Hebrew-speaking friend identified one additional review, which she described as ‘froth’. Gabrielovich previously resided in Melbourne for a decade, where she produced political (and often bilingual) works of theatre and film to generally full houses and community interest. My translator friend suggested, scathingly perhaps, that the dearth of reviews seemed to suggest that, in Israel at least, the concept hadn’t caught on.

⁹³ Dekel, “The Gaza Strip Show,” October 13, 2013.

⁹⁴ Allen, “Scales of Occupation,” 265–269.

⁹⁵ *Operation Condom Lead*, directed by Tarzan and Arab Nasser (2013; Gaza: Made in Palestine Project), Film.

nor is there any dialogue to estrange an international audience from the tongue of its protagonists. Each attempt made by the couple throughout the film to have sex is frustrated by increased urgency in the external noise, and for each thwarted encounter, the Man inflates an unused condom. The final scene, ‘22 days later’, shows the apartment floor littered with condom balloons idling in the draft. The Man makes his way onto a balcony for a cigarette where he surveys a skyline filled with condom balloons that have emanated from all over the city.

The directors of *Condom Lead*, twin brothers from Gaza known as Tarzan and Arab, have an artistic background in engaging the titles of IDF operations.⁹⁶ *Condom Lead*, in comparison to their earlier visual art, is a subtle contribution to Palestinian cultural commentary post-OCL which has received recognition on the international festival circuit, including as the first Palestinian short selected in competition at Cannes. In fact, the title and the time period over which the drama unfolds are the only overt connections that the film bears to the military event. This is precisely the intention of the piece: the producer (and lead actor), Rashid Abdelhamid, at the time of the Cannes announcement stated that they intended to ‘show a different side to Palestine’.⁹⁷ This echoes the Directors’ Statement, which makes three points regarding the purpose of the film. Firstly, their intention was to make a ‘universal vignette of war at the human scale’ – rather than treating conflict ‘through the spectacle of death, we take a subtler, more human approach: imagining war through the lens of lovemaking’.⁹⁸ Thus, the Palestinian narrative is de-located rather than particularised to experiences in Gaza. Secondly, the directors intended that this film might speak to the ‘raw deal being dealt to Palestine on a daily basis’ for the benefit of the international community by, thirdly, presenting a scenario which affirms the cultural diversity of Palestinian people.

Condom Lead seems to have done a remarkably successful job of achieving these aims. The serious comment of the film is mediated by its novel premise, which eschews the trauma of the ‘spectacle of death’ captured in other documentations which followed OCL.⁹⁹ Each failed sexual attempt, marked by an inflated condom, is comically relatable for a Western audience, while the device of the condom universalises the context of ‘life under siege’. Further, it shatters the common portrayal of religious fanaticism in Gaza from which concerns of sexual intimacy seem remote. Combined with the unobtrusive set of the apartment, Gaza is rehabilitated, not as a location geographically connected to the West Bank or Israel, but as a location that might be anywhere at all. Finally, billing as a Palestinian film (produced under the *Made in Palestine* label, co-founded by the directors and producer of *Condom Lead*) particularises the message such that the international attention it has received was precisely an opportunity to portray the hardship of conflict, not as an exceptional hardship for the Palestinian people, but as something current to the Palestinian context. For all these reasons, *Condom Lead* demonstrates the strategy of ‘deterritorialisation’ which Deleuze and Guattari outline as a key component to developing the ‘minor’, and in its stereotype-defying narrative hinged around sex, it draws out the political from

⁹⁶ The brothers previously designed a series of mock-Hollywood posters, *Gazawood*, for films whose imaginary titles derived from Israeli military operations, which won the A. M. Qattan Foundation’s Young Artist of the Year Award in 2010: “Condom Lead: Short Film Package 2013” (media package supplied by Producer, Rashid Abdelhamid, on application).

⁹⁷ Debra Kamin, “‘Omar’ and ‘Condom Lead’ Will Fly Palestine Flag at Cannes,” *Variety*, May 15, 2013, <http://variety.com/2013/film/news/omar-and-lead-will-fly-palestine-flag-at-cannes-2-1200481143/>.

⁹⁸ “Condom Lead: Short Film Package 2013.”

⁹⁹ For example, *Tears of Gaza*, directed by Vibeke Lokkeberg (2010; Beverly Hills, CA: Choices, 2010), DVD, includes deeply disturbing footage at *Al-Shifa* hospital.

the origin of the personal.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, this creates the possibility for the filmmakers to express ‘another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility’.¹⁰¹ In contrast to the exclusivity of suffering in Israeli national narrative, the film appeals to universal values and international identification, inviting recognition that siege is untenable for anyone, including (but not limited to) the Palestinian people.

What future possible: new narratives, transformed relations

*We possess the moral imagination to know what a just solution would be*¹⁰²

Jeff Halper, addressing an audience at the University of Melbourne in September 2013, articulated his vision for the future of Israel–Palestinian relations. It was a vision bearing more similarities with Qaddafi’s ‘Isratine’ than anything that international managers of the conflict have yet proposed. His inspiration, drawn from what he referred to as the ‘Middle Eastern System’, invokes the autonomous provinces and weak centralised structures of the Ottoman Empire. Two points seemed particularly pertinent to considering questions of the future. In noting Kerry’s prediction that the two-state solution would soon be over, Halper suggested that ‘collapse’ could come at any time. And yet, for all the decades of intellectual and activist energy expended on this issue, he opined that no concerted attempts have been made to outline the particulars of an alternative strategy. In short, the collapse of the two-state model is meaningless unless there are serious and practical proposals to replace it with. Secondly, that whatever one thinks of the construct of a Jewish ‘ethnicity’, and however wrongly imposed the birth of Israel on the lands of the Palestinian people, there now exists an identity which is ‘Israeli’. This now concerns specifically some two or three generations of ‘native born’ Israelis whose relation to place is not emotively but literally described in the line ‘I have no other land’.

The realities of present power mean that an Israeli identity is not now, nor is it likely to be, practically threatened, regardless of any ‘just solution’ which could be conceived of for the Palestinian people. More pressing, however, are issues essential to Palestinians, which require attention by Israel if a genuinely new direction is to be taken in Israel–Palestinian relations. In this regard, I believe that the end of the ‘peace process’ is useful if it enables a new approach to accommodate, where its predecessors have not, the fundamental issues of Palestinian claim. Indications that Palestinians have started to generate narratives that appeal to international audiences is a positive step in dismantling the disinformation which Israel, in the service of its own narrative constructs, has circulated about its Palestinian adversary. That this has been a trend catalysed in part by reactions to OCL might also be considered a silver lining to the horrifying trauma of that event.¹⁰³

Finkelstein argues that the rise of IHRL and IHL as frameworks to which international publics pay attention has been a main contributing factor to displacing the peace process.¹⁰⁴ In some quarters, it has become a mode for portraying the situation of Palestinians in a new light and, to that extent, it serves a purpose. But the standards of

¹⁰⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 16-17.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰² Falk, “Human Rights.”

¹⁰³ Khalidi, “Palestinian Dispossession,” 384; Finkelstein, *This Time*, 141-145.

¹⁰⁴ Finkelstein, *This Time*, 142-3.

human rights should not be confused with the parameters of Palestinian struggle. A number of Palestinian participants at the ANU conference *Human Rights in Palestine* in September 2013 made this argument repeatedly to the convener, in protesting the premise for dialogue implied by these international frameworks. Many of the guest speakers, while acknowledging the role of the discourse, tended to agree. Jeff Halper, for example, noted that while it was positive that human rights had become a stronger component of public discourse about Israel–Palestinian relations, it would not be enough to end Occupation. Moreover, legal mechanisms, both international and domestic, have repeatedly proven inaccessible for reasons of cost, the institutional partisanship in Israel’s domestic courts, and the flagrant disregard of international legal precedent exhibited by Israel in the past.¹⁰⁵ Thus, whatever temporary improvements legal victories might afford, fundamentally the question of transforming Israel–Palestinian relations lies elsewhere – namely in narrative and the capacity of narrative to transform the political.

One question, in the context of the present research, is whether traditional media sources will be able to reflect and accommodate this change. Will the newspapers be capable of incorporating the complexity of discourse-shifting potential, currently being forged in the medium of cultural production, into their strategies of reporting and editorialising the Israel–Palestinian conflict? Certainly, the practice of journalism would require significant revision, particularly when it has been standard amongst journalists of the conflict ‘to accept the routine supply of information’ rather ‘than to undertake the difficult, expensive and sometimes dangerous path of generating independent material’.¹⁰⁶ In the case of the *Guardian* during OCL, there is a sense that the practices of that paper were in transition, insofar as they attempted to deviate from the typical Israeli-led narrative, notwithstanding the narrative aporias which this strategy sometimes produced. This is evident too where the *Guardian*, and also *The New York Times*, deployed Palestinian journalists or commentators from the immediate area to contribute to coverage of OCL. However, several factors make it unlikely that these traditional sources, themselves in crisis as a result of the rise of online media, will make easy transitions towards capturing the radical narrative potentials being forged in other mediums and forms of production. As has been documented in this thesis, the landscape of journalism has been irrevocably changed in the 21st century, and we are perhaps witnessing the collapse of serious mainstream print media in favour of online platforms which, having the capacity to model themselves in issue-specific ways, are better able to take up the challenge of the ‘minor’. An indication of the approach which mainstream media has taken, in contrast, is demonstrated some six years later in the *Guardian*’s termination of a journalist’s contract (discussed in the epilogue), apparently because of his suggestion that Israel’s objectives in OPE were not those stated. At the very least, these sources will be required to resolve their historical relationship with institutionally driven agenda if they are to be capable of making that change. One might anticipate that in this, the papers could be led by the newly demonstrated capacity of their national publics to grapple with the complexities made increasingly visible in the Israel–Palestinian conflict. Were such a shift to be enacted, it would symbolise what must be the essential recognition by the West, that received wisdom about the conflict requires nothing short of a systemic and total restructuring.

¹⁰⁵ For Israeli reactions to the ICJ Advisory Opinion on Israel’s Separation Wall, see chap. 1 in Dor, *Suppression of Guilt*; for the function of Israel’s domestic law, see chap. 3 in Weizman, *Possible Evils*.

¹⁰⁶ Greg Philo and Mike Berry, *Bad News from Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 247.

In chapter 5, I quoted Khalidi's circumspect conclusion to the meaning of transforming international discourse and dismantling Israeli myths which have maintained the structure of Israel–Palestinian relations: that it will take time. It will also take a change in the conditioning of Israeli psychology, as Svirsky asserts:

the production of subjectivity is more important than the production of tanks and fighter planes that sow fear and terror; more important than the production of microchips and gadgets that help the Israeli army control the lives of Palestinians; more important than the production of the components and elements that together create separation barriers and checkpoints; more important than the production of separate roads for Jews and Palestinians. This is because, as Felix Guattari so lucidly explained, 'the production of subjectivity is the raw material for any and all production'.¹⁰⁷

This feat of transformation would require, but not be limited to, reformulating the State's education system. The education system alone has played an instrumental role – grooming students for IDF service, observing a system of fabricated commemorative practice, and employing a curriculum that fortifies the prejudice of State narrative – in instilling a particular understanding of Israel–Palestinian relations into the consciousness of all Israelis.¹⁰⁸ Dismantling myth, in large part a process that would require the backing of Israel's education system, and thus the State, is the only way in which fundamental issues to transforming relations can be addressed.

Political theorist Bashir Bashir argues that the only way to incorporate historically excluded groups in contemporary politics is via a discourse of reconciliation. Using Habermas' model of deliberative democracy, he makes the case that, while an historical dimension may not be at the forefront of all political struggles, certain forms of oppression and domination cannot be adequately addressed without taking seriously their historical dimension.¹⁰⁹ He applies this to Israel–Palestinian relations, in which the Palestinian people continue to suffer from the legacy of historical injustice.¹¹⁰ Given Palestinian history, democratic inclusion into the political process of Israel's consolidated democracy as 'undifferentiated citizens subject to generic and universal concepts of deliberation and justice' would not suffice, since Palestinian experience exceeds the frame of deliberative politics.¹¹¹ Thus, Bashir critiques Habermas' belief in the self-correcting potential of deliberative democracy in the case of historically excluded social groups, arguing that there is little chance those who have been systemically privileged will be able to transform their perception to include alternate possibilities.¹¹² An example of Jewish-Israeli society's incapacity to think outside the present reality of its structure is recounted by Palestinian author Susan Abulhawa, describing a screening of an Israeli-made documentary, *The Great Book Robbery*.¹¹³ The film, which Abulhawa praises, concerns the theft of over 70,000 Palestinian books, which constitutes one part of the massive expropriation of Palestinian property following Israeli independence. In contrast, she found the Q and A session to be fraught, redolent of many of the issues which Israelis – even the left – seem incapable of understanding. The director, Benny Brunner chastised Palestinians for their failure to

¹⁰⁷ Svirsky, *After Israel*, 202.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, Tamar Katriel, "Sites of Memory: Discourses of the Past in Israeli Pioneering Settlement Museums," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80, no.1 (1994); Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman, "Celebrations in Israeli Kindergartens"; Pappé, *Idea of Israel*, 269.

¹⁰⁹ Bashir, "Reconciling Historical Injustices," 129.

¹¹⁰ Bashir distinguishes Israel, a consolidated democracy, from transitional democracies, such as Apartheid South Africa, in which reconciliation was viewed as an essential component of the democratising process: *ibid.*, 130.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 131-132.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 135-136.

¹¹³ Susan Abulhawa, "Robbery of Books and Ownership of Narrative," *Palestine Chronicle*, February 16, 2013, <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/robbery-of-books-and-ownership-of-narrative/>.

coalesce around a demand for the books, ‘whose ownership is easily proven’. Abdulhawa responded: ‘Palestinians can prove ownership of nearly all of Israel, what makes you think that demanding our books back would get a result different than demanding our homes back?’ She recounts that his answer was delivered in the form of a lecture – the leftist Israeli criticising the failings of the Palestinians: ‘he said it didn’t matter whether we got them back or not, what mattered was the demand’. Brunner went on to state that the ideal solution would be for the books to go to the ‘Birzeit library’. Another Palestinian in the audience asked, why Birzeit? – ‘these books came from Jerusalem, Haifa, Yaffa, Lod and other Palestinian towns quite a distance from Birzeit’. He responded, ‘it doesn’t have to be only Birzeit. The books can be split between there and Nablus for example’. Abulhawa concludes: ‘he clearly didn’t understand what the woman was asking or the deeply Zionist underpinnings of his response’. In distinct contrast to Habermas’ belief that the use of reasonable arguments might enable other citizens to transform their views, this has not occurred – even, as Abulhawa documents, amongst ‘good Israelis’ – and cannot, according to the critique of Bashir. What is missing is recognition of the reality of power relations.

In transforming Israel–Palestinian relations, recognition of power dynamics is, most assuredly, key. Bashir argues that asymmetries of power are precisely what a process of reconciliation aspires to realise, going ‘beyond the standard of equality and reciprocity’ to explicitly recognise power imbalances as fundamental issues to existing political and social arrangements in which reasonableness is determined by the values and norms of the hegemon.¹¹⁴ On this point, Bashir concludes: ‘according room for the voices of the oppressed unconstrained by the boundaries of the hegemonic interpretations of reasonableness is necessary if the politics of reconciliation is to avoid prejudging the very issues in dispute’. Bashir argues that, further, this would raise awareness of the link between the history of the State and structural violence of ‘current distorted political, social and economic inequalities’.¹¹⁵ Ultimately, Bashir argues, deliberative democracy in a society riven with historical injustices cannot function effectively without accommodating the retrospective components of reconciliation: ‘remembering, acknowledging and restoring historical injustices’.¹¹⁶ However, Bashir addresses himself primarily to the existing ‘consolidated democracy’ of Israel with respect to its marginalised citizens: a model which includes the so-called Arab-Israelis and may or may not include those Palestinians in the OPTs. Those whom it does not include are the Palestinian refugees and their descendants, some fifteen million strong, the largest refugee diaspora population of the 20th century.

The role of the Palestinian Diaspora has had no small part, through its eminent academics and commentators – too many to name, and many of whom have provided invaluable references to this study – in keeping the question of Palestinian justice alive. In fact, it has been precisely the quality of diaspora thinking, excluded as it is from the mono-reality of things, that has been integral to this. As such, many Palestinian scholars have accepted Said’s call to remember ‘that nothing – and certainly not a colonial ‘fact’ – is irreversible’.¹¹⁷ If we are to accept the present reality of an Israeli identity, so too must the transformation of Israel–Palestinian relations recognise the rights of that vast number of Palestinians who constitute their diaspora. In an abstract way, this

¹¹⁴ Bashir, “Historical Injustices,” 138.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 133, 139–140.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 140–141.

¹¹⁷ Edward W. Said, “Introduction,” in *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, eds Edward W. Said and Christopher Hitchens (London: Verso, 1988), 19.

touches on perhaps the most profound difficulty for Israeli society, since in the combination of us all – here and there, the 1948 Palestinians and their descendants – Palestinians can, in the words of Abulhawa, ‘prove ownership of nearly all of Israel’.

There is evidence not only internationally but within Israel that certain groups of Jewish-Israeli citizens are willing to engage in the work needed to effect the necessary recognitions from which a meaningful transformation in Israel–Palestinian relations must derive. As this thesis has demonstrated, Israel has well understood the power of narrative and commemoration, and this is true not only of the entrenchment of national narrative as the underpinnings of Israeli consciousness but in its response to attempts within the State to produce counter-narratives that affect the truth of Israeli reality. For example, in recent years, Israel has gone to considerable lengths to outlaw commemoration of *Al-Nakba*. Far from being a coincidence, this is a response to the increased circulation of the term and commemoration of the event which activists within and outside Israel have worked to revive as a means of re-engaging a serious understanding of the Palestinian question.¹¹⁸ In 2002, an Israeli non-governmental organisation, *Zochrot* (remembering) was established, whose mission has been to ‘promote acknowledgement and accountability for the ongoing injustices of the Nakba,’ and reconceptualise ‘the Return as the imperative redress of the Nakba and a chance for a better life for all the country's inhabitants, so that it renounces the colonial conception of its existence in the region and the colonial practices it entails’.¹¹⁹ It is precisely this acknowledgement that Israel has actively sought to repress. In 2011 a bill was introduced to the Knesset, *Budget Principles Law (Amendment 39) – Reducing Budgetary Support for Activities Contrary to the Principles of the State*, purporting to outlaw acts deemed to reject ‘the existence of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state’.¹²⁰ While the original version of the bill, which included three years’ incarceration for offenders, was rejected, it was ultimately passed in the Knesset, 37 to 25, outlawing, amongst other things, the commemoration of ‘Independence day or the day of the establishment of the state as a day of mourning’.¹²¹ A joint petition to find the law unconstitutional was rejected by Israel’s Supreme Court in January 2012.¹²² Echoing the mission of *Zochrot*, one of the Jewish petitioners argued that opposition to the law was ‘about education without censorship. There were people who suffered when the state was founded, why should we hide it? Why not choose to acknowledge the pain and heal it?’.¹²³ But such an acknowledgement remains unthinkable to Israel in its current configuration. Rather behind this ‘Nakba law’, as Palestinian MK Haneen Zoabi remarked, ‘is a fear, the fear of the victim. Behind this law is the ability of the memory of the victim to threaten the legitimacy of Zionism’.¹²⁴ A video made for the 67th *Nakba*, in 2015, documenting Israeli response to the question ‘what is Nakba?’, demonstrates a general vagueness amongst Israelis about the meaning of the term,

¹¹⁸ For example, the 55th *Nakba* was commemorated in London in 2003 (“Pro-Palestine Rally in London,” *BBC News*, May 17, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3037117.stm). In Australia, there have been annual commemorative events since the 60th *Nakba* in 2008, when *Australians For Palestine* held a weekend event in Melbourne: “Al-Nakba,” <http://www.1948.com.au/2008events/melbourne-events.html>. At times, these have received considerable attention, for example when British-Jewish Actress Miriam Margolyes performed in Carol Churchill’s play ‘Seven Jewish Children,’ for the 61st *Nakba* in 2009, shortly after OCL: Miriam Margolyes, “Critique of Israel Not Anti-Semitism: Margolyes,” *Age*, May 13, 2009, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/entertainment/arts/hope-play-stimulates-dialogue-on-antisemitism-margolyes/2009/05/13/1241894015914.html>.

¹¹⁹ From the *Zochrot* website, <http://zochrot.org/en/content/17>.

¹²⁰ Jillian Kestler-D’Amours, “Israel Criminalizes Commemoration of the Nakba,” *Electronic Intifada*, March 29, 2011, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/israel-criminalizes-commemoration-nakba/9289>.

¹²¹ Kestler-D’Amours, “Israel Criminalizes Commemoration of the Nakba,” March 29, 2011. For a translation of the amendment, see *Adalah*: http://www.adalah.org/uploads/oldfiles/upfiles/2011/discriminatory_laws_2011/Nakba_Law_2011_English.pdf.

¹²² Randa Abdel-Fattah, “Illegal Mourning: The Nakba Law and the Erasure of Palestine,” *ABC Religion and Ethics*, May 17, 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/05/17/3761661.htm>.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Kestler-D’Amours, “Israel Criminalizes Commemoration of the Nakba,” March 29, 2011.

which attests to the level of ignorance in Israeli society over this history.¹²⁵ Notwithstanding the influence of State, such an ignorance should be considered remarkable when, as Zoabi explains, ‘the Nakba is not just part of Palestinian history. It’s also part of the Jewish history of this land. Because you need two in order to make Nakba. You need the victim and you need the oppressor ... It’s not a narrative. It is not a political attitude. It’s a historical fact’.¹²⁶ That this ignorance is not remarkable is indicative of the wholesale erasure of *Nakba* which Israel has engineered, with some success, for 67 years.

Rather, in its entirety, Israeli society remains some way from being able to bear the responsibility of their contemporary actions, much less the burden of guilt for their State’s history.¹²⁷ On this point, an Israeli interlocutor said to me after OCL ‘we all know what we do, and we are not proud of it. But how can we acknowledge what we do when we continue to do it?’ Recognising what Israel has meant for the Palestinian people would amount to recognition of no lesser moment than of the illegitimate and stolen foundations on which the State came into being and on which it still stands. I was struck by the response of Hage in question time after a panel discussion on OCL that ‘the Palestinians could live with a land grab’. Perhaps he is right, although I am radically hopeful that they will not always have to. He continued, ‘but what they cannot live without is acknowledgement of that land grab’; on this point I would willingly concur. Whether this is possible in any imminent sense is another question, since there is little to indicate that Israeli society has either the will or the ability to effect such change on its own. To the contrary, Makdisi attests to the ‘manifest futility of the attempts to end this conflict by raising consciousness among Israelis or supporters of Israel around the world or appealing to their better instincts’. Rather, he argues:

*A just peace will not come about by merely pleading with, or trying to persuade, Israeli Jews to do the right thing and abandon and dismantle the racist system that endows them with privileges while denying Palestinians fundamental rights. All the closest historical precedents to this conflict ... remind us that privileged groups don't abandon their privileges just because that's the right thing to do or because they are made to feel bad about enjoying those privileges; they abandon them only when they have no other choice. This case is no different: a just peace fundamentally requires nonviolent outside pressure to be brought to bear on Israel...*¹²⁸

This thesis has documented the shifts in Israeli national narrative that have enjoyed a Western resonance, particularly in media discourse. It has demonstrated that, even in the institutionally dominated space of mainstream media, traditional modes for representing Israel have been disrupted by Israel’s own methods in military operations of the 21st century. The decline in Israeli narrative dominance in media and public discourse is a positive change insofar as it can enable other ways of viewing Palestinians and the conflict in an international context. There is no doubt that some form of international assistance will be required for real and significant change to occur in Israel–Palestinian relations, and the turning tide of public sentiment in countries that have been historically influential is a necessary forerunner to this.¹²⁹ However, this external component for

¹²⁵ Yara Dowani, “So Wait, the Nakba is ...?: Listening to Israelis Discuss the Nakba,” *Mondoweiss*, May 15, 2015, <http://mondoweiss.net/2015/05/listening-israelis-discuss>.

¹²⁶ Kestler-D’Amours, “Israel Criminalizes Commemoration of the Nakba,” March 29, 2011.

¹²⁷ Dor, *Suppression of Guilt*, chap. 1.

¹²⁸ Makdisi, “APARTHEID/apartheid,” 11.

¹²⁹ Khalidi, “Palestinian Dispossession,” 383; Abunimah, “Gaza, Goldstone,” 397-398.

change will not be sufficient alone. It is the Israelis and the Palestinians who must live together, and the transformation of relations must stem from those holding the reins of power. I think Makdisi is correct when he argues that, practically speaking, Israeli society will not reform without real pressure from outside; and hearteningly, evidence of this pressure has been documented through the current research. But I also believe that a necessity for the future of Israel–Palestinian relations is that Israel must acknowledge what it has done to the Palestinians: it must accept responsibility for this injustice, and society must accept a collective shame for their continued part in that injustice if meaningful transformation is to occur. Comparison between the brutal colonial histories of Israel and Australia, and the violent practices of erasure and oppression to which it has treated its Indigenous populations, has been made by many including Oren Yiftachel and anthropologist Patrick Wolfe.¹³⁰ White Australia’s relations with its Indigenous people have little to recommend them. But there is one point on which White Australia’s recognition of the colonial past (and present) is quite remarkable: it has become widespread practice to observe Indigenous protocols (Welcome to Country) in the form of an Acknowledgement of Country at the start of official gatherings. The acknowledgement is a symbolic one, and it has often been derided as token. But I have often thought that such an acknowledgement, in an Israeli context, would be a sign that we might all, Palestinians and Israelis, aspire to some genuinely new horizon.

¹³⁰ Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy*, 25-28 and 32-47; Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 388-389, doi: 10.1080=14623520601056240.

Epilogue
On transforming Palestine in the international agenda
and transforming the international agenda to realise a just end

Since this research commenced, developments in the immediate context of Israel–Palestinian relations have shifted the terrain of the conflict both physically and ideologically, contributing to changing the nature of relations between Israel and the international community and between Palestinians and the international community. Materially, none of this has yet rendered any assistance to ways Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, in the 48 territories, or in myriad refugee camps and quarters surrounding historic Palestine, continue to live. Indeed, Falk has argued that, on the contrary, since the beginning of the specious Oslo Peace Process, Palestinian rights have deteriorated as Israeli rule has become more cruel and improbable, such that it can hardly escape analogy to Kafka’s dystopian parables of bureaucracy blended with omnipotence. As historian Adel Manna commented after OPE, ‘Israel’s policy of sustaining the political status quo, or managing the conflict rather than solving it intensifies the apartheid system of the settler-colonizer’.¹ However, Palestinian resistance is now combined with an increasingly sympathetic international community with which the current trend to conservatism in Israeli society is incompatible.² Thus, despite incremental erosion of the Palestinians’ circumstances – practical and political – which Israeli State action has uniformly heralded, that Palestinian resistance endures makes the contemporary flux a matter, I think, for hope and not despair.

In the thirteen years since ODS, ‘Israeli public discourse has been overwhelmed by the procession of simulacra’.³ As documented by Pappé in *The Idea of Israel* and throughout this research, one sees that Israeli society has in the 21st century embraced a neo-Zionist mentality and become increasingly desensitised to their own treatment of the Palestinians. By the time of the latest assault on Gaza, OPE, one could see these effects in the media discourse present in Israeli society. As political scientist Ofer Cassif notes, there was an ‘absence of any debate in the mass media’, instead:

*IDF generals and other recruited “specialists” dominated talk shows and interviews with their “expert” analyses and comments which followed the PR line of Netanyahu’s administration. Their verbal mantras - about the “accuracy of Israeli missiles”, “rocket attacks on Israel”, “war between Hamas and IDF”, “Israel warning Palestinian civilians before strikes”, and so on – were supplemented by “supporting pictures” of distant smoke and the sound of bombing in which no people (let alone victims) in Palestinian areas were seen or heard.*⁴

While ‘deadly criminal atrocities were being carried out in Gaza’, on Israeli screens ‘there was a war – almost one between equals’. Cassif writes that: ‘in the simulated war, the victimised who suffered an unprecedented death toll and degree of destruction were presented as the victimizers and aggressors, while the victimizers became the victimized who were merely defending themselves’. He writes that the most surreal aspect of this was the ad hoc theatres in the southern town of Sderot (and nearby locations) where, as the *Guardian* reported:

¹ Adel Manna, “Deconstructing the Israeli Socio-Political Apartheid System,” *Theory & Event* 18, no. 1 Supplement (2015): *Project MUSE, EBSCOhost* (accessed January 28, 2015).

² *Ibid.*

³ Ofer Cassif, “The War With Gaza Did Not Take Place,” *Theory & Event* 18, no. 1 Supplement (2015): *Project MUSE, EBSCOhost* (accessed January 28, 2015).

⁴ *Ibid.*

*groups of Israelis gather each evening on hilltops close to the Gaza border to cheer, whoop and whistle as bombs rain down on people in a hellish warzone a few miles away ... On one hilltop, a swing has been attached to the branches of a pine tree, allowing its occupant to sway gently in the breeze. Some bring bottles of beer or soft drinks and snacks ... The thud of shellfire, flash of an explosion and pall of smoke are greeted with exclamations of approval. "What a beauty," says one appreciative spectator.*⁵

Although this phenomenon received wider publicity in 2014, it was already a function of Israeli response some six years earlier during OCL.⁶ It was no doubt this mentality that produced the rash of game-apps released during OPE: *Bomb Gaza*, *Whack the Hamas* and *Gaza Assault: Code Red*, the last of which was marketed with the tag-line, 'terrorist cells are launching rockets into your country, do you have what it takes to protect your citizens?'⁷ The game-apps provided a literal illustration of Cassif's argument that most Israeli combatants and civilians 'perceive the bombing and targeting of Palestinian civilians as no more than another simulation' in which 'computer monitors and gaming joy sticks become the weapons of this war'. It highlights a sentiment which, if previously present in the Israeli fringe, was becoming mainstream in OPE, creating a significantly different picture to attitudes in Israeli society collated in my research, even as recently as OCL. The reaction of Israeli society to OPE evinced a profoundly racist and murderous attitude towards Palestinians generally: for example, images of a Palestinian boy who was brutally beaten in the lead up to OPE were circulated on social media comparing his profile to that of a pig.⁸ This reflected verbal explanations of Israelis, widely documented on social media at the time, that not only are Palestinians 'not like us', but that they really are animals. It is this racism, as Cassif argues, that has sustained the litany of war crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinians since its inception, and which 'feeds into justification of the occupation by representing the colonized/occupied as "inferior", "barbarian" or "primitive"'.⁹ There is good reason to argue as Cassif does, for seeing OPE within a continuity of Israeli atrocity; but recognising the amplification of this in OPE, the disinclination to conceal brutality (which as recently as ODS was quite the reverse), is surely a sign of the pressures at work on Israeli society.

As was demonstrated in chapter 1, the consensus of the Israeli public has for its history been strongly intertwined with the propagation of national narrative through State institutions. Responses to OPE continue to reflect this strategy and indicate also the direction that Israeli policy and public sentiment has taken since OCL. The fact of international criticism is nothing new; however, the Netanyahu Government has exploited this isolation, consolidating domestic consensus on Israel's policies towards the Palestinians by highlighting the hostility of the international community. The mentality that this has fostered was clearly on display in OPE, as illustrated in the spectators of Sderot or the macabre game-apps, conceived of, according to the developer of *Whack the Hamas*, as 'a way of helping supporters of Israel build solidarity with Israel's fight against Gaza

⁵ Harriet Sherwood, "Israelis Gather on Hillsides to Watch and Cheer as Military Drops Bombs on Gaza," *Guardian*, July 20, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/20/israelis-cheer-gaza-bombing>.

⁶ Lagerquist, "Shooting Gaza."

⁷ Wikipedia, "2014 Israel-Gaza Conflict in Video Games,"

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Israel%E2%80%93Gaza_conflict_in_video_games (accessed January 30, 2015).

⁸ Ali Abunimah, "Israeli Law Maker Calls for Genocide of Palestinians Gets Thousands of Facebook Likes," *Sleuthjournal*, July 14, 2014, <http://www.thesleuthjournal.com/israeli-lawmaker-calls-genocide-palestinians-gets-thousands-facebook-likes/>.

⁹ Cassif, "War With Gaza."

terrorists'.¹⁰ During this time, in which Israel has launched three brutally destructive assaults on Gaza, domestic polls have illustrated that an overwhelming majority of Israelis have supported them. For example the War and Peace index, compiled by the *Israel Democracy Institute*, found at the time of OCL that 'the government's "reading of the public desire was one of the major inputs into the decision to launch this operation"'.¹¹ With respect to resolving the conflict, the index suggested that 'Israelis could live without peace as long as they had quiet'.¹² Indeed it had shown in April 2008 that few Jewish-Israelis 'were willing to "pay" for peace by ceding land' and that 'the conflict with the Palestinians was the least of their worries'.¹³ Similarly, a poll conducted shortly after OPE by the *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* indicated that the two-state model which has been posed as the inevitable solution for decades, has minimal support in Israel. The study found that 'a large majority of Jewish Israeli citizens (74 percent) oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state along the pre-1967 borders', while '76 percent oppose a Palestinian state if it means dividing Jerusalem'.¹⁴ These recent results reflect the prevalent political sentiment after OPE. For example, Defence Minister Moshe Ya'alon, describing the conflict in October 2014, stated '[I am] not looking for a solution, I am looking for a way to manage the conflict and maintain relations in a way that works for our interests. We need to free ourselves of the notion that everything boils down to only one option called a [Palestinian] state'.¹⁵ This lack of urgency which resolution holds for Israelis is a function of several contributing factors. Until now, Israel has been able to sustain its rule over the Palestinians 'quietly'.¹⁶ Secondly, the issue of Palestinians, in the everyday lives of Israelis, is mostly absent or, at times of military assault, grossly distorted. Finally, as Finkelstein has noted, international aid funding has continued to ensure that Israel's occupation costs it nothing, but on the contrary, affords it numerous advantages.¹⁷

In this same period in which Israel has pursued its demonic course of militarism in Gaza, and in large part as a result of these policies, the international discourse – as the Netanyahu Government recognises – has changed. Chapter 6 documented shifts in discourse about the Israel–Palestinian conflict after OCL, and particularly with respect to the international community, the momentum that has accrued to the BDS movement. OPE has catalysed new discussions, conducted in national parliaments, regarding the unilateral recognition of Palestinian statehood. While international support for statehood had already been tested at the UN, the further push towards recognising Palestinian statehood seems to have made Israel very uncomfortable, notwithstanding that the practical benefits recognition affords the Palestinians are scant, and the discourse has the potential to erode the core issues of Palestinian struggle if embraced uncritically.¹⁸

¹⁰ David Shamah, "'Whack Hamas' App Developer: Google Gave Me a Raw Deal," *Times of Israel*, August 7, 2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/whack-hamas-app-developer-google-gave-me-a-raw-deal/>.

¹¹ O'Loughlin, "Backing For Invasion Remains Strong," January 14, 2009.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Mairav Zonszein, "Most Jewish Israelis Oppose Palestinian State, New Poll Shows," *+972 Magazine*, October 19, 2014, <http://972mag.com/most-israelis-oppose-palestinian-state-new-poll-shows/97833/>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Jon Simons, "Introduction: The Israeli War on Gaza 2014," *Theory & Event* 18, no. 1 Supplement (2015): *Project MUSE, EBSCOhost* (accessed January 28, 2015).

¹⁷ Finkelstein, "Keynote: How to Solve the Israeli-Palestine Conflict."

¹⁸ "General Assembly Votes Overwhelmingly to Accord Palestine 'Non-Member Observer State' Status in United Nations," *United Nations (Meetings Coverage and Press Releases)*, November 29, 2012, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2012/ga11317.doc.htm>.

In what way, then, might recognition of statehood assist the Palestinian cause, and why should it be of any concern to Israel? This thesis has investigated the systemic mechanisms of representational violence committed against Palestinian narrative. So much of the time, it is invisible and taken for granted. But as the present research demonstrates, this has not remained static, either in the decade of ODS and OCL or in the more recent barbarities of OPS or OPE. In many ways I think the parliamentary discussions about statehood, and motions for recognition passed in Sweden and the British parliament, are positive recognition of Palestinian struggle. As demonstrated in the UN vote, it needs to be acknowledged that this is not a direct or conclusive route to resolution. In the instance of UN recognition, the only material right attached to recognition was to entitle Palestinians to membership of the ICC, which both the US and Israel, in a demonstration of the power which they exert on Palestinian leadership, tried to insist that Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, agree to waive. On the one hand, this demonstrated how current Palestinian leadership is an entity easily intimidated and reiterated the great disparity in negotiating parties which, even if it is acknowledged, is a fact difficult to adequately redress. However symbolically, giving Palestinians the standing to seek legal recourse against Israel in future military operations was significant, not because it would avail Palestinians of the demonstratively weak mechanisms of international law, but because it made a statement to Israel that the international community *en masse* would support the Palestinians' right to do so. There is similarly a potential value in the statement which parliamentary recognition of Palestinian statehood sends to Israel, insofar as it may indicate that these states will be less likely to sanction Israel's illegal policies and practices in the OPTs in future. In the case of Britain's non-binding motion, which was followed by the Spanish, French, Portuguese and Irish Parliaments, recognition could draw attention to Israel's practices of racism in the OPTs and could act as an important conceptual signal in isolating that. In Sweden, where recognition is binding, it could in time serve to demonstrate how a state is empowered to relate to Israel's clear breaches of international law in the OPTs when it is also contrary to a state's legislated policy.

Aside from the symbolic merits of this shift, however, which index the increasing attention of the international community towards the conflict, the actual substance of these motions is something about which Palestinians and their supporters should be wary, or, as Massad cautions, 'with the achievement of mainstreaming also come serious risks'.¹⁹ Whether we can count the symbolic value of these moves as a victory or not, practically speaking, recognition of statehood could have a more sinister dimension than the apparent benevolence of its rhetoric. Despite declarations that a two-state solution is dead, recognition of Palestinian statehood seems to be a move to revive that model. Massad certainly considers the situation as such when he writes: 'parliamentary resolutions in fact aim to impose a *de facto* arrangement that prevents Israel's collapse and replacement with a state that grants equal rights to all its citizens and is not based on colonial and racial privileges'.²⁰ Indeed, a move to recognition is not capable of repairing many issues core to the conflict. For example, one immediate problem with such a state is its incoherent geography, including, but not limited to, the effect of Israel's Separation Wall on the West Bank and the discontinuity between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; at least in the latter case, such a state would require that Palestinians remain permanently beholden to Israel for passage between these areas. In addition to this, recognition of a Palestinian state runs the very real risk of absolving

¹⁹ Joseph Massad, "Recognizing Palestine, BDS and the Survival of Israel," *Electronic Intifada*, December 16, 2014, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/recognizing-palestine-bds-and-survival-israel/14123>.

²⁰ Ibid.

Israel of its responsibility to the non-Jewish citizens of Israel (predominately Palestinians) whose citizenship is widely documented to be of a second-class kind. This is perhaps the most recent example of an international push in the politics of deflection, one that replaces substantive issues with trivialities, and to the contrary of its rhetoric, is recognition, according to Massad, of ‘Israel’s eternal “right” to be a racist state’:

*The international consensus that Israeli liberals have built over the decades to shield Israel’s ugly reality from the world has been weakened, if not threatened with collapse altogether ... It is in this context that European parliaments are rushing to rescue Israel’s liberals by guaranteeing for them Israel’s survival in its racist form through recognizing a nonexistent Palestinian state “within the 1967 borders”.*²¹

Given these objections, if statehood was meant as a rhetorical reward to Palestinians, still reeling in the aftermath of the horrors visited upon them in OPE, it is a truly inadequate response.

Alarming, the focus on statehood also impacts on the value of BDS. Since OCL, as canvassed in chapter 6, the movement has been increasingly supported and practically, has applied real pressure on Israel in a way that State recognition cannot. However, BDS, which was conceived as a strategy by its originators, is increasingly being ‘transformed from a means to an end unto itself’.²² If one notes, as Massad has, the actual content of motions supporting BDS, the majority fail to articulate a position supportive of the explicit goals of BDS; rather, it is being used as a ‘means to achieve ends that those who adopt it can decide on’. It is for this reason that Massad argues there has been:

*a sudden downgrading of the threat of BDS from something that is untouchable by European and American officials and liberal academics and activists — who understood its ultimate goal as one that not only refuses to guarantee the survival of Israel as a racist state, but also aims specifically to dismantle all its racist structures — to something increasingly safe to adopt by most of them, as it now can be used to secure Israel’s survival.*²³

He argues that, unless Palestinians and their supporters reaffirm that support for BDS is support for its explicit goals, ‘then this recent and apparent “transformation” in attitudes, which in fact is no transformation at all, will usher in a slippery slope’.²⁴ If they allow BDS to be co-opted in this way, as a ‘threat’ to Israel to end its 1967 occupation, the effect will in reality be ‘to perpetuate Israel’s other forms of colonial control over historic Palestine and the Palestinians and to preserve its institutionalized and legal racism’ which occurs inside and outside the 1948 boundaries.²⁵ As with the growing trend to support Palestinian claims through legal frameworks, which tend to de-contextualise the substance of Palestinian claim and objectify the Palestinians themselves, this trend must be rigorously resisted.

Yet to return again to the idea that Israel is becoming uneasy, whatever the perils of current ‘transformations’ in attitudes, that Israel is feeling this way is a matter of significance. It has been increasingly clear under the Netanyahu Government that Israel has little interest in any kind of negotiation that might be called a ‘solution’. Rather, Israel’s repeated failure as a negotiating partner to the Palestinians is now a reality in plain sight. So too

²¹ Massad, “Recognizing Palestine.”

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

is Israel's desire to continue controlling the Palestinians 'quietly', through the continued expropriation of the 1967 territories and resources, all of which amount to a *de jure* assertion of a 'Greater Israel'. But the significance of Israel's uneasiness lies in the capacity of civil society to continue to place pressure on their parliaments to improve their policy stance and to hold them to the vision of BDS in its complete form. I think this is all the more important when, in the time since the case studies of this research, the mainstream media, which has reflected European parliamentary support for the expression of Palestinian nationalism, is still unable to acknowledge the racist and expansionist dreams which Israel continues to harbour. This was highlighted, for example, in the employment termination of a blogger for the *Guardian*, Nafeez Ahmed, as a result of a piece he wrote during OPE. Commissioned to cover 'the geopolitics of environmental, energy and economic crisis', Ahmed published a story on Gaza's natural gas resources. While the *Guardian* claimed the piece was in violation of his brief, Ahmed claims that his termination was due to the fact that his piece had 'undermined Israel's publicised rationale for going to war'.²⁶ Since the gas resources have been known of for over a decade, it would therefore appear that the idea that Israel attacks Gaza for reasons other than preventative terrorism, security or self-defence, remains difficult for those bred on Israeli narratives to comprehend, much less accept. By contrast, the gas story received far greater attention from alternative news sources, indicating that OPE had a great deal more to do with Israel's economic and resource concerns than the Palestinians.²⁷ All of this can and must be utilised in the continuing struggle towards a just solution to the Palestinian question if we are to finally see meaningful and material change in the travails of the Palestinian people.

²⁶ Nafeez Ahmed, "IDF's Gaza Assault is to Control Palestinian Gas, Avert Israeli Energy Crisis," *Guardian*, July 10, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/earth-insight/2014/jul/09/israel-war-gaza-palestine-natural-gas-energy-crisis>; on Ahmed's termination see Nafeez Ahmed, "Palestine is Not an Environment Story," December 3, 2014, <https://medium.com/@NafeezAhmed/palestine-is-not-an-environment-story-921d9167ddef>.

²⁷ For example: Tascha Shahriari-Parsa, "It's Money, Not Blood: Is Israel's Operation Protective Edge Really About Natural Gas?" *Counterpunch*, July 18-20, 2014, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/07/18/is-israels-operation-protective-edge-really-about-natural-gas/>; Catherine Shakkam, "The Truth About Israel's New War on Gaza – The Energy Rush," *Middle East Monitor*, July 22, 2014, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/12971-the-truth-about-israels-new-war-on-gaza--the-energy-rush>.

Postscript

I end as I began, since the labour of this work, as patient as it is oblique, is a letter to the Palestinian people, our resilience, our resistance, and above all our dignity. That one can see any point in continuing to expend time on a question so often pronounced over the decades as intractable, hopeless, a lost cause, is a testament above all to these qualities. My beautiful, fiercely intelligent and enduringly optimistic grandmother died just two days before the death of Yasser Arafat was reported on 11 November, 2004. Theirs both, one the most iconic leader yet of the Palestinian people, the other a woman whose riches radiated only as far as to those who peopled her life, were to me deaths of great moment, each more significant for their concurrency one with the other. It marked to me the end of the old guard; everyone who came after, particularly those such as I in the diaspora, would be compelled to fight tooth and nail for the right just to claim our history, our culture and our origins: in short, our identity. In a section from *Some things I probably should not say and some things I should have said (fragments of a diary)*, Palestinian artist Emily Jacir captures this experience in a way so deeply (so painfully) familiar to any Palestinian I have met:

Where are you from?

This is the hardest question to answer because our answers never satisfy you, or are unacceptable in your eyes.

In fact, we know exactly where we come from and exactly where we belong but for some reason this seems incomprehensible to anyone else but ourselves. We are constantly questioned and doubted. In extreme cases we are simply told that that in fact is not where we are from.¹

I am cautiously hopeful for the future of Israel–Palestinian relations precisely because the Palestinian cause is gaining global recognition as the symbolic centre of so many other worthy causes in addition to its inherent and particularised merits. It is my great hope that the international community will continue to channel their growing support for the Palestinian cause in ways that are of genuine use to our claims. It is my hope too that, before the struggle is out, it will be the mainstream in Israeli civil society and not just its fringe who are ready to make the acknowledgements, reparations and radical transformations that a just solution requires. But I cannot abide the proliferation coterminous with this trend of sentimental identification with the Palestinian people expressed by well-wishing demonstrators or audience members who, at seemingly appropriate moments, are moved to cry: ‘*we are all Palestinian*’. For above all, we are forged through the experience of what it has felt like to live as, to be, Palestinian in these times; we should brook no fair-weather co-option of identity or cause. Of lost causes, Said writes that they are:

the individual intellectual vocation, which is neither disabled by a paralyzed sense of political defeat nor impelled by groundless optimism and illusory hope. Consciousness of the possibility of resistance

¹ Emily Jacir, *Some things I probably should not say and some things I should have said (fragments of a diary)*, 2008, in *Palestine – Rien Ne Nous Manque Ici*, ed. A. Laidi-Hanieh (Paris: Cercle d’Art, 2008). Reproduced in Guy Mannes-Abbot, *In Ramallah, Running* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2012), 144-151.

*can reside only in the individual will that is fortified by intellectual rigor and an unabated conviction in the need to begin again, with no guarantees.*²

He concludes, ‘in this way thinking might perhaps acquire and express the momentum of the general, thereby blunting the anguish and despondency of the lost cause which its enemies have tried to induce. We might well ask from this perspective if *any* lost cause can ever really be lost’.³ In the absence of our lands, in the ongoing struggle to have our historic, political, material and ideological claims recognised, above all, ours is an inheritance of aspiration. It is we, who in our steadfastness have tended it tirelessly, who continue to imagine futures in which we can take heart: we, the champions of our most unlikely cause.

² Said, “On Lost Causes,” 553.

³ *Ibid.*, (his emphasis).

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