

**A Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis of Fox News**

**Representation of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict**

تحليل خطاب نقدي معتمد على المتون لتصوير قناة فوكس نيوز للصراع الإسرائيلي  
اللسطيني

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## Abstract

Drawing on van Leeuwen's (2008) model of social actor analysis and (de)legitimization strategies, the present study analyzes a corpus of online news reports selected from Fox News online website to find out how the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is represented by the Fox News media outlet. The Antconc software version (4.2.4) is used to analyze the corpus and generate the most common keywords, their collocates, and their concordances. Afterwards, van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor analysis and (de)legitimization strategies in addition to Halliday's' transitivity processes are used to analyze the most frequent theme in the corpus i.e. the theme of terror. Data analysis reveals that Israeli and international politicians are the most dominantly included and quoted actors in the corpus. The analysis further demonstrates that Israeli actors are represented as doers in material processes in terms of defending their country against terrorism whereas Hamas fighters are allocated the role of doers in material processes as far as issuing attacks against Israel is concerned. Palestinian civilians and authority members are seldom activated which indicates the absence of the role of Palestinian authority. The analysis also show that authorization, moral evaluation, and rationalization strategies are the most prominent ones and they are used to assign legitimacy to Israeli actions and deny legitimacy to Hamas' actions.

## المخلص

بالاستناد إلى نموذج فان ليوين (2008) لتحليل الفاعلين الاجتماعيين واستراتيجيات اضعاء الشرعية و نزع الشرعية، تحلل هذه الدراسة مجموعة من التقارير الإخبارية الإلكترونية المختارة من موقع فوكس نيوز الإلكتروني، لمعرفة كيفية تصوير فوكس نيوز للصراع الإسرائيلي الفلسطيني. استُخدم برنامج Antconc (الإصدار 4.2.4) لتحليل المتن واستخراج الكلمات المفتاحية الأكثر شيوعاً ومرادفاتهما و التوافقات المتكررة. بعد ذلك، استُخدم نموذج فان ليوين (2008) لتحليل الفاعلين الاجتماعيين واستراتيجيات اضعاء الشرعية و نزع الشرعية ، بالإضافة إلى اعمال التعدية لهاليداي، لتحليل الموضوع الأكثر تكراراً في المتن، ألا وهو موضوع الإرهاب. يكشف تحليل البيانات أن السياسيين الإسرائيليين والدوليين هم الفاعلون الأكثر هيمنةً في المتن ، سواءً من حيث تضمين تصريحاتهم أو الاستشهاد بها. كما يُظهر التحليل أن الفاعلين الإسرائيليين يُصوّرون كفاعلين في الاعمال المادية المتعلقة بالدفاع عن بلادهم ضد الإرهاب، بينما يُنسب لمقاتلي حماس دور الفاعلين في الاعمال المادية المتعلقة بشن الهجمات ضد إسرائيل. نادراً ما يتم تفعيل دور المدنيين الفلسطينيين وأعضاء السلطة ، مما يدل على غياب دور السلطة الفلسطينية. كما يوضح التحليل أن استراتيجيات التفويض والتقييم الأخلاقي والتبرير هي الأبرز، ويتم استخدامها لإضعاء الشرعية على الأعمال الإسرائيلية و نزع الشرعية عن أعمال حماس.

## 1. Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the longest and most intricate conflicts whose roots go back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries and has gone through periods of wars, uprisings, and peace negotiations. One of the recent events took place in the morning of October 7<sup>th</sup>, when the military wing of Hamas, Al-Qassam Brigades, started al-Aqsa Flood Operation and launched 5000 missiles into Israel. This surprise attack resulted in killing about 1200 Israeli people and taking 200 captives including high-ranking military officials. Within hours, the Israeli government declared that Israel was in a ‘state of war’ and would respond with an intensive military campaign in Gaza to eradicate Hamas. Israel responded by launching counteroffensives against different areas of Gaza, which resulted in mass displacement and a large number of civilian deaths, including children. Additionally, Gaza Strip was under a near-complete blockade due to water, internet, and power disruptions (Elmali, n.d, p. 6). Media outlets across the world started to cover the conflict and interview different politicians to talk about the conflict. One of those outlets is Fox News that started to publish news articles and breaking news on its website on daily basis. In this regard, the present paper aims to find out how Fox News represents the Israeli and Palestinian actors, the actions assigned to them and whether these actions are legitimized or delegitimized. To carry out these aims, van Leeuwen’s (2008) model of social actor analysis and legitimization strategies are employed. Hence, the current paper is designed to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1) How are Palestinian and Israeli social actors represented in the Fox News coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict?

RQ 2) How are Palestinian and Israeli actors activated and what roles are assigned to them?

RQ 3) How are (de)legitimization strategies used by Fox News to grant or deny legitimacy to certain actions in the conflict?

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is an approach to language study that has been mainly concerned with “the discursive reproduction of social power, the critical study of political discourse, ideology and the study of fundamental social problems” (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 8). However, some scholars such as Henry Widdowson and Michael Stubbs have criticized the methodology followed by CDA analysts. Widdowson (1995) argues that many CDA analysts focus on certain lexical items or a particular range of linguistic features such as passive voice, nominalization, etc. and ignore the rest of the text. In this case it is possible to reach conclusions about ideology but CDA is likely to be accused of randomness, impartiality and openness to bias. Thus, he suggests that corpus

methodology might be a helpful tool to resolve the problem of bias since it makes use of large samples of texts and systematic methods. Hence, corpus methodology can “reduce the researcher’s bias in deciding what to focus on and thereby reduce the subjectivity that most studies of (CDA) are often accused of” (p.162). The problem of possible analytical bias is tackled by other scholars such as Stubbs (1997, p.7) whose criticism of CDA revolves around the issue of representativeness. Stubbs notices that some CDA scholars do not offer any quantitative evidence to strengthen their analysis and focus on the analysis of small samples of data and in this case, generalizations cannot be made. Thus, he believes that CDA should not be restricted to the analysis of short fragments of data or a small range of linguistic features. Hence, he emphasizes the need of a comparative approach that is based on large and representative samples of data so that linguistic analysis can be strengthened. Accordingly, one of his proposals is to use large corpora of representative data, study a wide range of linguistic features and compare findings across corpora in order to make generalizations and avoid the possible analytical bias (p.10).

Corpus linguistics which is thought of as a possible solution to the problem of possible analytical bias and representativeness of data is defined by Biber et al. (2007, p. 9) as “an approach or a methodology for studying language use. It is an empirical approach that involves studying examples of what people have actually said, rather than hypothesizing about what they might or should say”. Since Corpus linguistics (henceforth CL) relies heavily on computer technology, it is possible to manipulate data in a way that is not possible when dealing with printed material. Baker and McEnery (2015, pp.1-2) point out that (CL) makes extensive use of computer programs and enables researchers to study hundreds or thousands of texts and facilitate the analysis of language by identifying the regularities among millions of words accurately and quickly. Since the word "corpus" comes from Latin, meaning "body," it can be argued that corpus linguistics is “the study of a body of language – in many cases a very large body indeed” (p.2). Hundreds or thousands of texts that have been carefully selected and balanced to be representative of a particular linguistic variety may make up such a body (such as teenager’s text messages, political speeches, nineteenth-century women’s fiction, etc.). The first step of a CL study is quantitative as analysis relies on tools like keyword lists and collocates in order to give the research a focus. However, as the project develops, the analysis starts to rely less on computer software and becomes more qualitative and context-led. The second step of analysis involves the interpretation of quantitative patterns. In this stage the software aids the researcher by allowing the linguistic data to be quickly surveyed.

Bowker and Pearson (2002: 2) assert that (CL) and discourse analysis are closely related to each other as they study language use i.e. how linguistic forms are used in context and what certain words tend to collocate with. McCarthy and O’keeffe (2010, p. 9) add that discourse analysis makes extensive use of (CL) techniques to investigate language patterns in large datasets. Since CDA studies

language above the sentence level i.e. texts, it is likely to benefit from the tools of corpus linguistics. (CL) can mechanize many of the processes of (CDA) through the use of frequency lists, keyword lists, collocates and concordances. However, the process is not unidirectional. (CL) techniques provide the means for analysis but they are not used alone to carry it out as researchers usually utilize theories of (CDA).

## 2.2 Criteria for Selecting the Media Outlet

The target corpus to be analyzed in this paper is composed of news articles taken from the Fox News media outlet website. The choice of Fox News rather than CNN or other news media outlet is based on surveys and statistics of media credibility and amount of viewership in October (2023) which is the first month of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The first survey is conducted by Statista (2023) which is an online platform that conducts statistics and surveys from over 80,000 topics across 170 industries. According to a Statista report authored by Amy Watson (2023), Fox News was the most watched cable news network in the United States in (2023) during both prime time and day time. The average number of primetime viewers for Fox News was significantly higher than that of CNN. CNN has been losing viewers in recent years, although it did manage to attract a larger audience than usual during the coronavirus outbreak.

According to a Pew Research Center survey (2023), CNN, MSNBC and Newsmax have seen a decline in prime and daytime viewership Since 2022. Viewership for Fox News increased in both prime-time and daytime in 2022, while viewership for CNN, MSNBC and Newsmax saw declines. In 2022, CNN's prime news time slot (8 to 11 p.m.) saw a 25% drop in average viewership. During this time, MSNBC saw a 6% drop in viewers. However, Fox News' viewership increased by 10%. In 2022, Newsmax's average audience decreased by 18% compared to 2021. While Fox News had a 12% rise in 2022, CNN, MSNBC, and Newsmax saw declines in their average audiences during the daytime news time slot (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.).

Korach (2023) wrote an article that was published in The Wrap website about the number of viewers during the first month of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Numbers and statistics demonstrate that Fox News, CNN and MSNBC have been competing to win the rating battle of viewership but Fox News seems to be the winner of the rating battle since it was the most viewed media outlet in the United States. From Oct. 9 to Oct. 15, Fox News had a 22% increase in the number of viewers from the week of Oct.7. MSNBC held the second place with a 20% increase for the network from the previous week. CNN held the third place with a 13% increase from the prior week.

### 2.3 Van Leeuwen (2008) The Representation of Social Actors

Through his framework of social actor analysis, Van Leeuwen (2008, pp.23-24) attempts to answer an important question “what are the ways in which social actors can be represented in English discourse?”. Van Leeuwen (2008) uses the term social actor instead of participant. He focuses on the representation of social actors in racist discourse where immigrants are treated as ‘other’, ‘different’ and source of threat. However, van Leeuwen does not focus on linguistic categories such as “nominalization”, “passive agent deletion”, instead he attempts to develop a “sociosemantic inventory” of the ways in which social actors can be represented for two reasons. The first is “the lack of bi-uniqueness of language”. Agency, for example, as a sociological concept, cannot be always realized linguistically by the grammatical role “agent”; it can be realized in other ways, such as “possessive pronouns” or “prepositional phrases” with “from” in which case the grammatical agent is sociologically “patient”. The second reason is based on the assumption that “meanings belong to culture rather than to language” and cannot be only tied to language. Accordingly, van Leeuwen (2008, p. 34) emphasizes the importance of sociological categories such as “nomination” and “agency,” rather than linguistic categories such as “nominalization” and “passive agent deletion”. Thus, he presents a system network that tackles the representation of “social actor” by focusing on a variety of linguistic and rhetorical phenomena rather than only focusing on linguistic concepts such as the “nominal group”. The sociosemantic categories of van Leeuwen’s (2008) social actor analysis that will be adopted in the current study, their types and linguistic realizations are presented in table (1) below.

*Table (1) Van Leeuwen’s (2008, Pp.28-45) Sociosemantic Inventory of Social Actor Analysis*

Sociosemantic Category	Type	Linguistic Realization
Inclusion Vs Exclusion	Suppression or Backgrounding	Passive agent deletion, nonfinite clauses standing as a grammatical participant, deletion of social actors who benefit from action, nominalizations and process nouns.
Role Allocation	Activation Passivation	Transitivity processes (material, mental, behavioural, relational), subjection, benefication
Genericization	Genericization	Plurals without articles, definite article and singular, indefinite article, mass nouns without articles
Specification	Individualization Assimilation	(individuals) Collectivization (groups),

		aggregation (Definite & indefinite quantifiers)
Nomination	Formalization Semi-Formalization Honorification	surnames with or without honorifics surnames and names standard titles and ranks
	Functionalization: social actors are depicted with regard to the activity they perform, their profession or role.	nouns derived from verbs by adding suffixes such as -er, -ant, -ent, -ian, and -ee (e.g., interviewer, correspondent, etc.), nouns ending with suffixes such as -ist and -eer which signify something related to an activity, or nouns ending with the words <i>man, woman, person</i>
Categorization	Classification: social actors are classified in terms of age, gender, provenance, class, etc.	Relational identification: representing social actors as belonging together Physical Identification: identifying social actors in terms of physical characteristics
Appraisalment	Positive or Negative	Adjectives and nouns that evaluate social actors positively or negatively

## 2.4 Van Leeuwen's (2008) Legitimization and Delegitimization Strategies

Hart (2014, p. 7) defines legitimation as “a macro-function through which speakers seek social approval of the Self, where the Self is either the individual speaker or an institution or social group the speaker identifies with, or accreditation for social actions and relations”. Suchman (1995, p.574) views legitimation as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions”. Van Dijk (1998, p. 256) adds that “legitimizing the self often involves the delegitimation of others”. Van Leeuwen (2008, p.105) points out that legitimization strategies are used to answer the questions: “why should we do this?” and “why should we do this in this way?”. He identifies the following four strategies of legitimization: authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization and mythopoesis.

Through authorizations, actions are justified and legitimized by making reference to authority and it is further subdivided into personal authority, impersonal authority, expert authority, role model authority, the authority of tradition, and the authority of conformity. With personal authority legitimacy is achieved by means of what individuals of high status or position say. Because of

the high status that they have, prime ministers and presidents for example do not have to justify their actions or what they ask others to do. Impersonal authority legitimization is enacted by referring to what the international laws, rules and regulations stipulate. Actions that comply with international law are legitimized while those that violate international conventions are delegitimized. With expert authority, legitimization is carried out by refereeing to what experts in many domains say. Role model authority legitimizes actions by referring to what role model or opinion leaders say and do. The authority of tradition gives legitimacy to actions that comply with what the norms, traditions, customs and habits prescribe. The last subtype is the authority of conformity according to which actions that align with public opinions and the opinion of the majority are justified (Van Leeuwen, 2008. Pp. 106-109).

The second strategy is moral evaluation that legitimizes actions based on moral values. Three sub strategies of moral evaluation are recognized namely, evaluation, abstraction, and analogy. With evaluation, certain actions are legitimized or delegitimized by using some approval adjectives such as *good*, *bad*, *evil*, etc. Abstraction revolves around (de)legitimizing actions or social actors by focusing on general abstract moral values rather than concrete specific actions such as *freedom*, *security*, *stability*, etc. Lastly, analogy is used to legitimize or delegitimize actions by comparing them to other actions that have positive or negative values. Actions with positive values are legitimized whereas actions with negative values are delegitimized (Van Leeuwen, 2008. Pp. 109-112).

The third (de)legitimization strategy that van Leeuwen (2008, pp.113-116) lists is rationalization. In rationalization actions are legitimized or delegitimized “by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalized social action, and to the knowledge society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity” (p.113). Rationalization is divided into instrumental rationality and theoretical rationality. The former justifies actions by referring to their goals (goal-oriented instrumentality), the methods used to carry out actions (means- oriented instrumentality), and the outcome of certain actions (effect-oriented instrumentality). In terms of theoretical rationalization, legitimization is based on some kind of truth or logical explanation. It is subdivided into definition, explanation, and predication. With definition, actions are defined whereas with explanation actors involved in actions are defined. The last subtype of theoretical rationalization is predication that presents a certain action as an avoidable response based on experts’ opinions.

The last strategy that van Leeuwen (2008, pp.117-119) lists is mythopoesis that employs storytelling to legitimize or delegitimize certain actions. Mythopoesis is further subdivided into moral tales, cautionary tales, single determination and overdetermination. In moral tales, “protagonists are rewarded for engaging in legitimate social practices or restoring the legitimate order” (p. 118). With cautionary tales, social actors and their actions are delegitimized as they are presented as engaged in immoral actions that have undesirable outcomes.

In single determination, social actors are presented as involved in one moral action so as to be legitimized or delegitimized whereas, with overdetermination, social actors are presented as involved in more than one social practice so as to be legitimized or delegitimized.

### 3. Methodology

The corpus selected for analysis in this study is composed of online news articles taken from the Fox News online website. The articles are published during the first month of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict namely from October 7<sup>th</sup> 2023 to November 6<sup>th</sup> 2023. The reason behind the selection of this period is that the first thirty days represent the climax of the conflict since an abundance of news articles and reports were dedicated to cover this period. The criteria of selecting Fox News media outlet are surveys and statistics of media credibility and amount of viewership as shown in section (2.2). The data selection is limited to the news articles that deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and they are retrieved from <https://www.foxnews.com/>. These articles are collected by using the query terms *Palestine, Palestinian, Israel, Israeli* in the searching process. After collecting the data, the news articles are reviewed manually to eliminate any irrelevant article that is not directly related to the conflict. Thus, the target corpus i.e. the Fox News corpus comprises (258667) words collected from (1146) articles published during the first month of the conflict. The *Brown Corpus* (1964) of general English that comprises one million words of different genres is used as a reference corpus along with the target corpus. In this respect, Baker (2006, p. 139) confirms the importance of using a reference corpus as he states that “comparing a smaller corpus or a set of texts to a larger reference corpus is a useful way of determining key concepts across the smaller corpus as a whole”.

Next, a keyword list of the most frequent and significant keywords is generated by using the Antconc software version (4.2.4). Keywords generated by using the wordlist function in Antconc are arranged by frequency and keyness likelihood from the highest to the lowest. Keyness is defined by Baker et al. (2008, p. 278) as “the statistically significantly higher frequency of particular words or clusters in the corpus under analysis in comparison with another corpus, either a general reference corpus, or a comparable specialized corpus”. Keywords are utilized to indicate what a corpus is about (i.e., its aboutness), in other words, its topic and content. Thus, the top 100 keywords are generated by comparing the Fox News corpus, as a target corpus, to the *Brown Corpus*, as the reference corpus. Nevertheless, some keywords have limited semantic meaning such as function words for example (*the, has, been, etc.*), and words about news and publication information such as (*Fox News, Reuters, etc.*), and other words not related to the conflict such as (*said, say, told. etc.*). These words are deleted leaving only (73) keywords to be further analyzed in terms of collocates and



focuses on Hamas as a terrorist organization that has to be eliminated because it posits a danger not only to Israel but also to the whole world. Most of the examples on terror revolve around two points namely Hamas as a terror group that targets Israel and Israel responding back to Hamas attacks. The percentages of van Leeuwen's (2008) sociosemantic categories of social actor analysis are illustrated in table (2) below along with some examples and discussion in the coming section.

Table (2) Sociosemantic Categories of Social Actor Analysis in the Target Corpus

	Sociosemantic Category	Palestinian Actors	Israeli Actors	Other Actors	Total
1	Inclusion	(32.13%)	(46.53%)	(15.40%)	(100%)
	Exclusion	(3.86%)	(1.19%)	(0.89%)	
2	Activation	(26.51%)	(15.23%)	(13.14%)	(100%)
	Subjection	(15.48%)	(23.88%)	(2.62%)	
	Beneficiation	(1.83%)	(1.31%)	-----	
3	Genericization	(36.99%)	(30.93%)	(6.94%)	(100%)
	Specification	(2.31%)	(13.30%)	(9.53)	
4	Nomination	(8.16%)	(18.4%)	(73.44%)	(100%)
5	Functionalization	(68.21%)	(9.09%)	(3.03%)	(100%)
	Identification	(1.50%)	(18.17%)	-----	
6	Appraisalment	(88.23%)	(11.77%)	-----	(100%)

Regarding social actor analysis, Palestinian actors are included in a percentage of (32.13%) and they are mostly represented as Hamas fighters such as *Hamas, the terror group, terrorists, etc.*, whereas Israeli actors are included in a percentage of (46.53%) and they are represented as politicians such as *Israel, the Jewish nation, etc.*, military fighters such as *Israeli Defence Forces* and Israeli civilians such as *hostages, victims, etc.* The examples of inclusion show that Palestinian actors are mainly represented by reference to Hamas as a terror group that launched deadly attacks on Israeli civilians on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October as in example (1) below. Hence, the main focus of Fox News is Hamas as a terror group and Israeli civilians that have been killed and injured in these attacks. Palestinian politicians are included in a few instances only in which their role is limited to reporting the number of

Palestinian victims. These few instances indicate the absence of the role of Palestinian authority and that the war is between two equal powers i.e. Hamas and Israel. By contrast, lots of instances in the target corpus refer to the members of the Israeli government (example 2). Thus, Fox News demonstrates the dominant role of Israeli government in defending the country and the disability of the Palestinian authority. Other actors such as the *United Nations*, *U.S.A*, *Biden*, etc. are included in percentage of (15.40%). Through these inclusions, reference is made to the attitudes of other countries and political figures towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some international actors such as *the Former Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich*, the American senator Blackburn and president Biden support Israel and believe that Israel must respond to the terrorist group Hamas as in example (3-5). Other countries such as Turkey, on the other hand, supports Hamas and sympathizes with Palestinian people as in example (6) below.

1. "At least 2,800 people have died since **Hamas** launched thousands of rockets on Israel over the weekend, pushing Israel to declare it was at war with the terrorist group and issue warnings to residents in Gaza ahead of operations in the territory to root out the group". (Fox News, Oct. 13<sup>th</sup>)
2. "Israel and the IDF are operating in accordance with the highest standards of international law to avoid harming innocents. We will continue to do so until our victory," Netanyahu said in a statement." (Fox News, Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>)
3. "**Former Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich** in an op-ed wrote that Israel must respond to the terrorist group Hamas by destroying them utterly". (Fox News, Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>)
4. "**The majority** of the American people support Israel, and they want to make certain that aid is going to make it to people who need that aid," Blackburn said". (Fox News, Oct. 21<sup>st</sup>)
5. "President Biden highlighted the distinction between Palestinian citizens and their Hamas leaders on Sunday, saying most Palestinians had "nothing to do" with the October 7 attack on Israel. "We must not lose sight of the fact that the **overwhelming majority of Palestinians** had nothing to do with Hamas's appalling attacks, and are suffering as a result of them," he wrote". (Fox News, Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>)
6. "**Turkey** also has ties to Hamas, hosting some of its members and facilitating investment for to the group". (Fox News, Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>)

With respect to (de)legitimization strategies, two subtypes of authorization appear in the above examples. First, Impersonal authority that is represented by making reference to *international law*, *humanitarian law*, *institutions*, etc. is used in example (2) above. Referring to international law or established systems is used to grant legitimacy to certain actions as complying with international norms and denying legitimacy to other actions as they are considered a violation of international law. In example (2) the Israeli prime minister gives legitimacy to Israeli military actions since Israel acts in accordance with the international law. Second, the authority of conformity is also used in examples (5) and (6) to

legitimize certain actions based on implicit messages and implicit comparisons. In example (5), an American senator legitimizes support to Israel by stating that the majority of Americans do so. Hence, through his statement, he infers that supporting Israel is the normative, patriotic stance, while opposing views of supporting Hamas are not acceptable. In example (6), the phrase *the overwhelming majority of Palestinians*, is used to describe Hamas' actions as illegitimate since they are harmful to Palestinian people. Through the authority of conformity, Fox News draws on consensus as a source of legitimacy since actions or beliefs are legitimized by what most people do or believe. One of the subtypes of theoretical rationalization i.e. explanation is employed in example (3) above in which a Former Republican House Speaker states that Israel must do its best to eradicate Hamas because it is a terrorist organization and this is the way to deal with terrorists.

As regards exclusion, Hamas fighters are excluded and suppressed i.e. not mentioned in the representation in a few instances. In example (7) below for instance, the social actor responsible for killing (250) Israeli civilians i.e. *Hamas* is not mentioned even though it could have been included, through postmodifying phrases with *by, of, from*, etc. Israeli and Palestinian social actors are also backgrounded in examples (8 and 9). Backgrounding takes place when social actors are deleted by leaving a trace somewhere in the representation. In example (8) for instance, the social actors responsible for the murder of Hamas members are not included but it could be concluded by reading the previous text that the backgrounded social actors is *IDF ground troops*. Similarly, in example (9), it could be concluded that the social actors responsible for the death of (1300) Israelis is *Hamas*. Excluding Israeli and Palestinian actors from the representation whether by suppression or backgrounding is used to avoid redundancy and to turn the readers' attention to the action itself rather than the doer of the action. As far as (de)legitimization strategies are concerned, impersonal authority that is enacted through referring to institutions such as the IDF or the Israeli military, the Israeli troops, etc. rather than referring to individuals is used in examples (8 and 9) below. In these examples, the Israeli ground invasion of Gaza is justified based on institutional or official authority. By citing military and governmental sources, the Israeli military operations in Gaza are authorized as legitimate actions and violence is viewed as a logical and necessary reaction to possible threats.

7. "More than 250 civilians were killed at the Tribe of Nova music festival on Saturday". (Fox News, Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>)

8. "Ground troops took control of a Hamas military compound in the Gaza Strip overnight, the IDF said. Several Hamas terrorists were killed during the operation, according to the IDF". (Fox News, Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>)

9. "The Israeli military reported additional casualties inside the Gaza Strip , the day after it said its first two soldiers were killed during its ground invasion against Hamas Tuesday morning, the first such casualties in Gaza since Israel began its ground operations there". (Fox News, Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>)

As for the genericization, Van Leeuwen (2008, p. 35) states that it takes place when social actors are referred to as “classes of people rather than as specific, identifiable individuals”. Accordingly, genericization may contribute to establishing a distinction between “us” groups and “them” groups. In the target corpus, Israeli actors are genericized in a percentage of (30.93%) as table (2) shows whereas Palestinian actors are genericized in a percentage of (36.99%). Genericization of Israeli actors is achieved through plural nouns without articles as in *Israel Defense Forces* (example 10); the definite article and singular nouns *the group* (examples 1 and 6 above); and mass nouns without articles for example *Israel* (example 25 below). Israeli actors are mostly genericized by using the nouns *Israel* and *the Israeli government* to stress the powerful role of the Israeli government in defending the country. Palestinian actors, on the other hand, are genericized by using plural nouns without articles such as *terrorists* (example 10), *Palestinian authorities* (example 11), etc., the definite article and singular nouns such as *the terrorist group Hamas* (example 15), etc., the indefinite article and noun such as *a terrorist group* (example 34), and mass nouns without articles such as *Hamas* (example 12). Referring to Palestinian actors as *Hamas* and *terrorists* indicates that Fox News avoids identifying Hamas in terms of work, age, gender, etc. Instead, Hamas is portrayed as a group or an organization rather than as specific identifiable individuals.

10. “Israel Defense Forces conducted raids in northern Gaza on Friday in an effort to eliminate the **threat** of terrorists and weapons in the area and locate hostages, IDF said”. (Fox News, Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>)

In terms of (de)legitimization strategies, the second subtype of moral evaluation i.e. abstraction is used in examples (10) above and (13) below. Abstraction revolves around (de)legitimizing actions or social actors by focusing on general abstract moral values rather than concrete specific actions. In examples (10) and (13), the IDF and Biden invoke certain moral categories such as threat, freedom, justice to demonstrate that Israel’s ultimate aim is pursuing justice, restoring security, and supporting peace in the area. By invoking such moral-laden values, the news reader may interpret events in terms of familiar moral binaries of good versus evil, order versus chaos. Thus, such moral values are employed to legitimize Israeli military operations in Gaza without the need for a detailed justification and to delegitimize Hamas’ actions as a threat to peace and stability.

As for the specification of social actors, Israelis are specified in a percentage of (13.3%) in the (500) random examples selected by Antconc as table (2) shows whereas Palestinians are specified in a percentage of (2.31%). The low percentage of specifying Palestinian actors indicates that Fox News does not focus on Palestinian civilians as much as it stresses the consequences of terrorism on Israeli civilians that have been tackled heavily in its coverage of the conflict. Israeli civilians are specified and aggregated by statistics and numbers in a lot of instances to draw the world’s attention to the big number of Israeli victims and

hostages and to demonstrate that lots of civilians have been killed and hurt due to Hamas terroristic actions as in example (11) below. Specification of Israeli actors is also carried out by collectivization i.e. the use of collective nouns through referring to Israelis as *the Jewish nation* as in (example 12) and *the Jewish state* (example 13) below and by using the pronoun *we* in example (14) below.

11. “On Friday, Israeli officials said over **1,300 Israeli civilians** were killed by Hamas, while Palestinian authorities said over **1,500 Palestinians** died from Israel's retaliatory strikes” (Fox News, Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>)

12. “Hamas official Ghazi Hamad said in an interview that Hamas will repeat terrorist attacks against Israel "again and again" until **the Jewish nation** is destroyed”. (Fox News, Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>)

13. “Quoting Israel's founders, Biden said **the Jewish state** was based on freedom, justice and peace. The United States stands with you in defense of that **freedom**, in pursuit of that **justice** and in support of that **peace** today, tomorrow and always, we promise you.” (Fox News, Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>)

14. “Israel Defense Forces said. **We** just eliminated him. All Hamas terrorists will meet the same fate”. Fox News, Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>)

In terms of nomination, Van Leeuwen (2008, p. 40) explains that social actors are nominated when they are “represented in terms of their unique identity”. Nomination can be realized by formal, semi-formal or informal proper nouns in addition to standard titles and ranks such as Dr. As far as nomination of Palestinian and Israeli social actors in the target corpus is concerned, Palestinian actors are nominated in a percentage of (8.16%), Israeli actors are nominated in a percentage of (18.4%) and international actors are nominated in a percentage of (73.44%) as table (2) shows. In examples (16) for instance, the international social actors *Biden* and other European leaders are nominated and formalized since they are represented by their surnames. Mentioning a lot of international politicians stresses their opinions and political stances as supporters of Israel in its war against terrorism. In other instances, different Palestinian and Israeli social actors are nominated and semi-formalized since they are represented by their surnames and names such as *Hamas official Ghazi Hamad* (example 12 above), *Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu* (example 15 below), and *Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant* (example 17 below). It is worth pointing out that Israeli politicians are nominated more than Palestinian ones since they are represented as responsible decision makers who have political legitimacy. Hamas members, on the other hand, are less

nominated to indicate that it is a terrorist organization that does not have a legitimate political status.

15. “Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday announced that his forces have entered the "second stage" of its war with the terrorist group Hamas, calling the fight a "second War of Independence.” (Fox News, Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>)

16. “Biden, along with European leaders like Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and French President Emmanuel Macron, has called for the urgent release of all hostages.” (Fox News, Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup>)

17. “Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Saturday that Israel has "moved to a new phase" in the war to eradicate the terrorist group Hamas.” (Fox News, Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>)

As regards (de)legitimization strategies, personal authority is employed to assign legitimacy to statements uttered by individuals who have recognized positions or status such as the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu as in example (15) above which shows that Netanyahu is making statements and declarations based on the personal authority that he has as an Israeli leader. Personal authority also appears in other examples in which some international leaders and politicians express their support to Israel in its attempt to protect the Israeli people from the terrorist attacks as in example (16) above. Hence legitimacy of Israeli actions and reactions is granted through the credibility of prominent figures.

Categorization is concerned with presenting social actors in terms of the identities and functions they share with others rather than representing social actors in terms of their unique identity. Categorization is of two types, functionalization and identification. With functionalization, social actors are depicted with regard to the activities they perform, their professions or roles. But in case of identification, social actors are represented with respect to “what society believes them to be” rather than the activities they perform” (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 42). Table (2) above shows that Palestinian, Israeli, and international actors are functionalized in percentages of (68.21%), (9.09%) and (3.03%). The majority of the functionalized Palestinian actors, are *Hamas* fighters since they are described in terms of what they do i.e., *terrorists* who target and attack innocent people according to the Fox News depiction as in (example 16 above). Israeli actors are functionalized in a few instances only as in (example 11 above) in which they are functionalized as *Israeli officials*. Palestinian actors i.e. Hamas are functionalized more than Israeli ones to reinforce their stereotypical image as terrorists whose actions are illegitimate. With respect to identification, Israeli actors are identified in a percentage of (18.17%) since they are represented in terms of what they are whereas Palestinian civilians are identified in a percentage of (1.50%). In example (18) below, Israeli civilians are classified in terms of their religion i.e. *Jewish people*. Through these identifications, the writers of the news articles concentrate on the point that Israeli civilians are targeted and killed because they are Jewish. Hence, Fox News stresses the existence of hatred towards Jewish people. In example (19), for instance, Israeli civilians are identified since they are represented by relational identification as being members of the same family through using terms like *his wife* and *his six kids*. Categorizing Israeli civilians more than Palestinian ones is used to personalize Israeli suffering in order to make the audience sympathize with Israeli victims and portray the death of Palestinian victims as less tragic.

18. “Antisemitism and other hostilities towards **Jewish people** are on the rise as Israel continues to fight against Hamas, the terror group that carried out the deadliest terror attack in Israel's history on Oct. 7.” (Fox News, Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>)

19. “One man, Amichai, which in Hebrew means "my people live," held the door of the shelter where he was with both his hands while the terrorists were targeting **him, his wife, and his six kids**, Klein said” (Fox News, Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>)

Appraisalment is concerned with the use of words that evaluate social actors in a positive or a negative way. In the (500) random examples on terrorism selected by Antconc, appraisalment is carried out by a set of adjectives and nouns that create a stereotypical image of Hamas fighters and Israeli civilians. Hamas fighters are presented in a negative way in (88.23%) of the total percentage whereas Israeli civilians are presented positively in a percentage of (11.77%). Other Palestinian and Israeli social actors are not appraised since the main focus is on Palestinian military actors exemplified by Hamas and Israeli civilians. Fox News uses adjectives and nouns such as *terrorists*, *a terror group*, *extremists*, *brutal*, *radical*, *dangerous terrorist group*, *a new axis of evil*, etc. to describe Hamas as in examples (20-22) below. Hence, Fox News’ depiction of Hamas is negatively oriented through the use of the above-mentioned adjectives and nouns. This negative description is employed to stress the cruelty of this group and to reflect the ideological stance of western media outlets that depict Hamas as an illegitimate and a violent organization and thus to justify military retaliation against them. Israeli civilians, on the other hand, are described by adjectives like *innocent* and nouns like *victims* as in example (23) to demonstrate that they are suffering from undue violence and ultimately to present Israel as the defensive side in the conflict.

20. “Thousands of Israelis were murdered and maimed in the Hamas **Nazis' barbaric terror** attack. And tens of thousands more will be massacred in the future if this savage terror group is not obliterated, Erdan wrote.” (Fox News, Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>)

21. “Netanyahu also said Hamas was a member of a new "**axis of evil**" alongside Iran, its chief financial sponsor, and Hezbollah, a Lebanese terror group that has launch several anti-tank missiles onto northern Israel in recent days.” (Fox News, Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>)

22. “The **terrorist** group Hamas **unleashed pure, unadulterated evil** in the world," Biden said. "But sadly, the Jewish people know perhaps better than anyone that there is no limit to the depravity of people when they want to inflict pain on others.” (Fox News, Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>)

23. “Exactly 3 weeks ago, Hamas murdered over 1400 Israelis, more **victims** for their population than the militant Islamist organization **al-Qaeda** murdered in the US on **9/11**.” (Fox News, Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>)

24. “We don't believe that those who support a genocidal organization like Hamas, and Hamas equals **ISIS**, and they behave exactly like the **Nazis**, the death squads of the Nazis ... what can I tell them? he asks.” (Fox News, Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>)

25. “What happened in Israel is unbelievable," Ronny said. It's exactly like what happened to us in the **Holocaust**.” (Fox News, Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>)

In terms of (de)legitimization strategies, Fox News uses evaluation to legitimize certain actions and delegitimize other ones through the use of expression of approval and disapproval. Through these evaluations, journalists construct an ethical scheme to legitimize certain actions and delegitimize others. In example (20-25) above, Fox News journalists use evaluative expressions such as “barbaric terror attack”, “savage terror group”, and “pure unadulterated evil” to describe Hamas’ actions as unjust and cruel. Using the expression “axis of evil” (example 21 above) to refer to Hamas constructs an ethical framework that depicts Hamas as a universally condemned group. Evaluative expressions like *savage*, *barbaric*, *evil*, etc. demonstrate that Israel is leading a war against terrorism and evil. Hence, Fox News depicts Hamas’ actions as a threat to peace and stability in the area whereas Israel’s military response is morally justified and legitimized since it is a moral act of defending humanity against evil. Another prominent legitimization strategy is analogy that is a form of moral evaluation. Fox News employs analogies to legitimize Israel’s actions and delegitimize Hamas’ actions. Hamas’ actions are compared to globally recognized acts of terror such as the 9/11 events (example 23) in the USA and the holocaust (example 25). Through these analogies, Fox News equates Israel’s retaliatory attacks to the US response after 9/11 since both reactions are viewed as a kind of self-defence. Hamas is also compared to other terror groups like ISIS and Al Qaeda as in examples (24 and 25). In these two examples, Hamas is equated with genocidal organizations like ISIS, Al Qaeda and Nazis. Universal negative connotations of terrorism, brutality, and mass murder are attached to these groups. This creates a binary moral framework that depicts Israel as a civilized, legitimate and defensive country whereas Hamas is portrayed as a terrorist, genocidal and Nazi-like group. Through these analogies, Fox News legitimizes Israel’s military operations as a war against terrorism while Hamas is described as a terrorist organization and its actions are delegitimized as acts of terror.

In terms of activation and passivation, Van Leeuwen (2008, pp. 33-34) states that activation takes place when “social actors are represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity”, while passivation occurs when “they are represented as undergoing the activity, or as being at the receiving end of it”. Passivation is of two types, namely: subjection and beneficiation. Through subjection, social actors are represented as objects in speech. In the target corpus, *Hamas* fighters are subjected in a percentage of (14.69%) in terms of Israel responding back to their attacks as in examples (26). In this example, Israel is depicted as responding back to Hamas attacks in order to defend itself against terrorism. In this case, Hamas is the passivated social actor that is treated as a goal while Israel’s actions are shown as mere reactions to Hamas deadly attacks. Israeli

actors, on the other hand, are subjected in a percentage of (23.88%) since they are depicted as the social actors who suffer from Hamas violent actions as in example .

26. "Israel's war on Hamas has continued for nearly a month after the terrorist group slaughtered 1,400 people in an unprecedented Oct. 7 assault." (Fox News, Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>)

27. "Hamas, classified as a terrorist group by the U.S. State Department, has brutalized and killed thousands of civilians, including several Americans, during a surprise attack on Israel the morning of October 7, firing rockets from the Gaza Strip." (Fox News, Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>)

Beneficiation takes place when social actors negatively or positively benefit from the actions of other social actors. In some instances, Palestinian actors are passivated and beneficialized in a percentage of (1.83%) and Israeli actors are passivated and beneficialized in a percentage of (1.31%). In example (28), for instance, Israel is said to be a beneficiary actor since it benefits positively from the support presented by some celebrities whereas in example (29) Hamas, is also a beneficiary actor as it positively benefits from the support offered by Hezbollah.

28. "Former champion boxer Floyd Mayweather expressed his **support for Israel**, writing on Instagram that I stand with Israel against the Hamas terrorists. Hamas do not represent the people of Palestine but are a terrorist group that are attacking innocent lives" (Fox News, Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>)

29. "Hezbollah forces have repeatedly clashed with Israeli troops along the border as the Lebanese terrorist group has condemned the bombardment of Gaza and voiced **support for the Palestinians** against Israel". (Fox News, Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>)

In terms of activation, table (2) above shows that Palestinian actors are activated more than Israeli ones since the percentage of their activation amounts to (26.50%) in comparison to the percentage of activating Israeli actors that amounts to (15.22%). Hamas fighters are the most activated actors in the (500) random examples selected by Antconc whereas Palestinian authority members and civilians are the least activated actors. Lastly, some international activists and political actors are also activated in a percentage of (13.12%). Activation can be studied in terms of Halliday's transitivity structures since activated social actors can be given the roles of actors in material processes, sensors in mental processes, sayers in verbal processes and assigners in relational processes. Thus, the many categories of transitivity (i.e. material, mental, relational, and verbal processes) are studied to investigate how Israeli and Palestinian actors are activated.

Material processes come first in frequency in relation to different social actors. The process of **launching attacks** on Israel by Hamas is the most prevalent one. Through these instances, Hamas fighters are given the agents' role i.e. the initiators of attacks against Israeli civilians as in example (30). The material process of **responding back to Hamas attacks** is the second most prevalent one in the corpus. In example (31) below, for instance, the Israeli Defence Forces are assigned the

agents' role and depicted as responding back to Hamas attacks in order to defend the country against terrorism. The material processes of **defending the Jewish nation** against terroristic attacks come next in frequency. Isreal is activated and allocated the agent role as a defender of the country against terrorists' attacks as in example (32) in which Israeli attacks are shown as mere reactions to Hamas attacks. The material process of **presenting support to Israel and Hamas** by other international actors comes next in frequency. In example (33), for instance, Iran as an international actor is assigned the agent role as a supporter of Hamas and in example (34) the USA is assigned the agent role of a supporter to Israel in its war against terrorism. The material process of **resisting terrorists** come last in frequency. Israeli civilians are assigned the agents role in a few instances since they are presented as people who bravely resist Hamas terrorists. In example (35) an Israeli civilian activist confronts the terrorist who attack his house and refuses to surrender.

30. "The Islamist terror group Hamas **carried out** an unprecedented attack on Israel Saturday, firing thousands of rockets from the Gaza Strip and infiltrating Israeli territory with gunmen". (Fox News, Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>)

31. "The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has **bombarded** Gaza with airstrikes following an unprecedented attack by Hamas by air, land and sea last weekend. Since then, Israel has declared war on the terror group and has continued to target Hamas positions". (Fox News, Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>)

32. "Israel has **entered** its fourth week of war against Hamas after the terrorist group infiltrated the country on Oct. 7, firing thousands of rockets at residential areas and butchering civilians". (Fox News, Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>)

33. "Iran has also **supported** Hamas, the terror group that massacred hundreds of Israeli civilians on Saturday and provoked a war". (Fox News, Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>)

34. "President Biden said that U.S. intelligence confirmed Israel was not to blame for the attack and **backed up** Israel's military investigation which found the strike was caused by Palestinian terrorist group Islamic Jihad". (Fox News, Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>)

35. "Hamas took hostage the elder Peri and 80 others from his kibbutz after the terror group launched a surprise attack on Israel. Realizing Hamas terrorists were entering his house, the peace activist hid his wife and **confronted the terrorists**, telling them to take him and spare his family, his son said." (Fox News, Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>)

Verbal processes have the second highest occurrence in the corpus. The majority of verbal processes in the target corpus are represented by some international activists and politicians who express their condemnation to the terroristic attacks committed by Hamas and their rejection of a ceasefire (examples 36-38). Those actors are assigned the roles of sayers as in example (39), for instance, in which Ukraine's foreign minister is assigned the role of a sayer as he expresses his support to Israel in defending itself against terrorism. Verbal processes are also utilized by Israeli politicians and military actors who are assigned the role of sayers as they make statements in which they declare war against terrorism and express their intentions to eradicate Hamas as in examples (47 and 48).

36. "Ukraine's foreign ministry said Saturday that Israel has the right to defend itself from invasion by Hamas terrorists". (Fox News, Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>)
37. Clinton continued, "It would be such a gift to Hamas because they would spend whatever time there was a ceasefire in effect rebuilding their armaments, creating stronger positions to be able to fend off an eventual assault by the Israelis." (Fox News, Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>)
38. "White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said ... So, when Jews are targeted because of their beliefs or their identity, when Israel is singled out because of anti-Jewish hatred, that is antisemitism, and that is unacceptable. There is no place for antisemitism." (Fox News, Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>)
39. "Netanyahu has vowed **to destroy** all Hamas strongholds within Gaza, which he referred to as a "**wicked city**" on Saturday. The military says it is working **to free hostages** and evacuate citizens from around the area as army operations begin in earnest." (Fox News, Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>)
40. "Israel has restricted itself to launching airstrikes against Hamas installations in Gaza, but the military appears poised for a ground assault as well. Military experts say such an operation is the only way to ensure the destruction of Hamas, which is Israel's stated goal." (Fox News, Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup>)
41. "Unfortunately, sometimes we have more and more casualties among the Palestinians because of such kind of attitude and behavior of Hamas, Palestinian human rights activist and political analyst Bassem Eid said, accusing the group of physically restraining and blocking people from leaving." (Fox News, Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>)

Relational processes come next in frequency in the target corpus. The use of "verb to be" to express the qualities of Hamas fighters dominates the relational processes in the corpus. In examples (42) Hamas is described as a genocidal organization and its members as terrorists rather than freedom fighters. Mental processes have the least occurrences in the corpus and they are mainly perceptive processes exemplified by the verb *want* as in example (43) below. Through these mental processes Palestinian military actors i.e. *Hamas* are assigned the role of perceivers as they intend and plan to annihilate the Jewish people.

42. "Hamas is a genocidal terrorist organization. Hamas is worse than ISIS. the IDF wrote." (Fox News, Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>)
43. "They **want** to annihilate the Jewish people because they are Jewish people, because they are a Jewish state." (Fox News, Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup>)

As far as delegitimization strategies are concerned, goal-oriented instrumental rationalization is employed in Fox News reports to shed light on Israel's goals and legitimize them as rational ones. Israel's goals are summarized as getting hostages released, eliminating Hamas (example 39) and defending the country against terrorism (example 36). Through goal-oriented instrumental rationalization, actions are legitimized by emphasizing their intended purpose, and violence is rationalized as a logical measure to achieve security and stability. In Means-oriented instrumentality, Fox News focuses on the method used to carry out Israeli attacks, as in example (40) in which the military state that their attacks are accurate and

precise to bring about the desired outcome and minimise the loss of civilian lives. Predication is the last subtype of rationalization that presents a certain action as an unavoidable response based on experts' opinions. In example (40), experts support a predicational claim that launching airstrikes against Hamas is the only way to eradicate the terrorists. Hence, experts' opinions increase the legitimacy of Israeli attacks since they are presented as the only available solution. One of the subtypes of mythopoesis delegitimization strategy i.e. single determination is exemplified in example (37). In this example Hillary Clinton clarifies the reason behind refusing a ceasefire. She believes that giving a ceasefire will give a chance to Hamas to regain its power and launch more attacks against Israel. Thus, Israel's attacks are legitimized and any attempts to achieve a ceasefire are delegitimized. One of the subtypes of mythopoesis delegitimization strategy i.e. cautionary tales is also used in the Fox News coverage as in example (41) to delegitimize Hamas' actions since they led to increasing the number of casualties among Palestinian civilians according to a Palestinian human rights activist. Overdetermination which is another subtype of mythopoesis is enacted as a delegitimizing strategy in example (38) above to delegitimize Hamas' actions since Israeli people are targeted because of their beliefs, identity, religion, etc. Lastly, definition, which is the first subtype of theoretical rationalization, is employed in example (42) above. In this example Hamas' actions are delegitimized since Hamas is defined as a terrorist organization and its members are defined as terrorists rather than freedom fighters. Hence, such a definition is used to legitimize the Israeli military response against terrorists.

## 5. Conclusions

Drawing on van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor analysis and (de)legitimization strategies, the present paper analyzed a corpus of online news reports selected from Fox News online website. The analysis was conducted to answer three research questions regarding the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

Regarding the first research question which reads as follows "how are Palestinian and Israeli social actors represented in the Fox News coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? the analysis reveals that Israeli politicians are the most dominantly included and quoted actors in the corpus. Palestinian politicians, on the other hand, are less frequently included which indicates the absence of the role of the Palestinian authority. Palestinian actors, represented mainly as Hamas fighters, are identified as terrorists whereas Israeli actors are functionalized as Israeli officials, government members, etc. and identified as Jews, Jewish people, etc. to stress the existence of hatred against Jews. Israeli civilians are specified and aggregated by statistics and numbers more than Palestinian civilians to draw the world's attention to the big number of Israeli victims and hostages and to demonstrate that lots of civilians have been killed and hurt due to Hamas terroristic actions. Israeli politicians are nominated more than Palestinian ones to indicate that they are responsible decision makers who have political legitimacy

unlike Hamas members who are less nominated to indicate that they do not have a legitimate political status.

With respect to the second research question which reads as follows “how are Palestinian and Israeli actors activated and what roles are assigned to them?”, Israeli actors are activated and represented as doers in material processes in terms of defending their country against terrorism and responding back to terrorists’ attacks. Israelis are assigned the roles sayers in verbal processes in terms of announcing war against Hamas and vowing to eradicate Hamas. Palestinian actors, on the other hand, represented mainly as Hamas fighters are activated and allocated the role of doers in material processes as far as issuing attacks against Israel is concerned. Hamas fighters are also assigned the role of the identified actor in relational processes when Hamas is identified as a terrorist organization. Palestinian civilians and authority members are seldom activated which indicates the absence of the role of Palestinian authority.

Regarding the third research question which reads as follows “how are (de)legitimization strategies used to (de)legitimized the actions of Israeli and Palestinian actors?” the analysis shows that authorization, moral evaluation, and rationalization strategies are the most prominent ones throughout the corpus. Authorization is employed to assign legitimacy to Israeli actions by referring to statements uttered by individuals who have recognized positions or status such as the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, referring to international law or established systems, or by referring to what the majority of people think or do. Through moral evaluation, certain moral values such as stability, peace, freedom, etc. are employed to legitimize Israeli military operations in Gaza without the need for a detailed justification and delegitimize Hamas’ actions as a threat to peace and stability. Hamas’ actions are also delegitimized and compared to other known acts of evil such as the holocaust and 9/11 events in the USA. Through the strategy of rationalization, Israeli actions are legitimized since they are presented as a logical measure to achieve security and stability by eradicating Hamas and fighting terrorism.

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