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Calvin Pollack
Carnegie Mellon University

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Ideographic Analysis of Israel Prime Minister Rhetoric during the 2008-09 armed conflict with Hamas in Gaza

by Calvin W. Pollak

H&SS Senior Honors Thesis

Carnegie Mellon University

English Department

Prof. David Kaufer

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Abstract

From December 27, 2008 through January 18, 2009, the Israel Defense Forces engaged in hostilities in the Gaza Strip. Official discourse explaining and justifying the effort ubiquitously employed the word “terror”, in its various forms, in descriptions of Israel's enemies. The prevalence of this linguistic feature alone suggests that it is rhetorically significant. As we will see, its discourse function is consistent with patterns previously observed by scholars of American war rhetoric. My analysis contributes to that scholarship by showing that ideographs such as “terror” can emerge from any nationalistic ideology. In my work, I ask: how did an ideology of nationalism inform wartime discourse during Israel’s Gaza offensive? How does “terror” function as an ideograph in Israeli public discourse? And more generally, I seek to contribute to the central question of ideological criticism (Foss 2004), how does discourse legitimize some ideologies while de-legitimizing others? Equipped with the awareness my work seeks to foster, we can predict that political rhetors who seek to justify state violence anywhere will do so from a dichotomizing stance juxtaposing “us” (those within our culture) and “them” (those outside of it).

Introduction

From December 27, 2008 through January 18, 2009, the Israel Defense Forces engaged in hostilities in the Israeli-occupied, Hamas-governed Gaza Strip. This military action—named "Operation Cast Lead" by the IDF, after a line from the poem "For Hanuka" by H.N. Bialik—resulted in the deaths of at least 1,400 Gazans, over 900 of those non-combatants (Palestinian Centre for Human Rights "PCHR contests..."). The IDF has disputed these casualty figures, claiming that in actuality about 1,100 Gazans died (~300 civilian) (State of Israel "The Operation in Gaza..."). I am unable to resolve this disparity, but I can report that both the IDF and the PCHR agree that a total of thirteen Israelis died in the operation. It is also worth noting that the PCHR has recently condemned Hamas' practice of housing weapons in densely populated civilian areas (PCHR "PCHR calls upon..."), a policy that Israel claims has contributed enormously to Gazan civilian deaths in recent years—including during Cast Lead (State of Israel 55-70). It seems, therefore, that the PCHR is a relatively neutral observer of human rights issues in Gaza, something that cannot likewise be claimed about the IDF. In particular, since the IDF is the standing military of a nation with robust democratic institutions and a relatively healthy deliberative process (see Gerstenfeld 2010 for a discussion of the political climate surrounding the early-2009 parliamentary elections in Israel, which immediately followed the Operation), its discourse—including its official enemy casualty reports—must be properly regarded as Public Address. What I mean to say is that the symbolic action associated with IDF operations is rhetorical in nature: it serves strategic political goals, it addresses and constitutes a deliberative audience, and it reinforces dominant ideology. So, as I say, I cannot offer an objective account of the human casualties of Operation Cast Lead. But whether 1,400 or 1,100, public discourse was

crucially related to a very deadly outcome, and explicating that relationship is my scholarly aspiration.

To do so, I will examine a corpus of relevant press releases from the Israel Prime Minister's Office during the 22-day operation. As a critical starting point, I will pay particular attention to the uses of the ideograph (McGee 1980) "terror" and its interaction with other ideological terms in the texts. My discussion of ideology will also permit me to more broadly analyze the identities being constructed and juxtaposed as a justification for war in the texts. Generally, I will draw on a robust critical tradition in Rhetoric and Public Address beginning a little over thirty years ago which regards war rhetoric as a distinct discourse genre, exhibiting both epideictic and deliberative qualities. While most of this prior literature deals with American war rhetoric, I will take the liberty of bringing it to bear on Israeli war rhetoric, noting the special military relationship between the United States and Israel as well as the "shared rhetoric" of the two nations' political leaders on terrorism (Khalidi 2005; see also Beinin 2003, Shlaim 1996, Winkler 2006). My central argument will be that these texts employ an epideictic juxtaposition of the Israeli/IDF "us" and Hamas "them" to generate a deliberative argument for war.

To begin, then, I will review the significant prior literature. After that, I will engage in an ideographic analysis of the texts, primarily as a critical frame with which to analyze their construction of identities and other persuasive strategies. Lastly, I will synthesize my discussion of past research with my own criticism's contributions and discuss the state of scholarship on war rhetoric today, in the age of the global, US-led "war on terror."

Prior literature on war rhetoric

Over the last thirty years, war rhetoric has been viewed by scholars as a distinct genre exhibiting predictable generic conventions, each serving some strategic discourse function. Through these conventions of discourse, scholars argue, presidents and other public rhetors legitimize their choice to send young people off to war and delegitimize alternative choices. In sketching these patterns of rhetoric, we engage in the "identification of recurrent form" (Ivie 1980); in other words, we consider what makes war rhetoric both unique and uniquely predictable. From my point-of-view, war rhetoric emerges from a nationalist ideology, and this ideology is most observable in the linguistic data of "ideographs" (McGee 1980); specifically, in the Manichean juxtaposition of positive ideographs (such as "peace") and negative ideographs (such as "terror"). My study focuses in large part on enemy identity construction, because this is the usual site of negative ideographs—the key terms we use to denote what is not *us*, what is anathema to our values, and what it is therefore our urgent duty to defeat. It is useful now to explore where the past literature informs my work's methodology, object, and context.

Campbell and Jamieson (1990) analyze the war genre's historical, political, and cultural exigencies, most notably the president's obligation to justify his role as commander-in-chief to the nation. They identify five recurring conventions of war discourse, each of which, they argue, serves to "recast situations of conflict in terms that legitimize [military] initiatives" (105). One of the patterns they discuss is how public rhetors frequently engage in strategic deception in order to garner support for the war effort. These rhetorical effects, obscuring conflict and achieving strategic deception, are each accomplished through ideographic language as well. By aiming all discursive fire at a negative ideograph, the war rhetor obscures the role that his side plays in the conflict. And conflating the current enemy with a negative ideograph is really a form of strategic

deception, because it disingenuously ignores the differences between them in order to fit them into an ideological system. In these ways, Campbell and Jamieson's work brings out elements of mine, but they only hint at the role that ideology plays in war discourse, and they use broad rhetorical situations and responses, rather than individual words marking ideology, as data for their analysis.

Cherwitz (1978) and Cherwitz and Zagacki (1986) also take rhetorical situations as their data, but they approach the war genre as a form of crisis rhetoric, wherein the rhetor narrativizes some series of events such that it constitutes a crisis, and the existence and urgency of that crisis justifies war. In certain respects, this perspective is quite relevant to the present study; for instance, the narrative of rocket fire from Gaza terrorizing Israel's southern communities is frequently invoke in the corpus as a crisis to which Operation Cast Lead responded. In addition, these papers give some space to ideology, noting for example that Lyndon Johnson's construction of the Tonkin Gulf crisis framed the incident as a *Communistic* insult to world *freedom* (Cherwitz 99). But these dichotomous ideological pairings are viewed as just one predictable feature, among many, of crisis rhetoric, and in particular these studies do not place enough emphasis on enemy construction.

The role of dichotomies is, in my view, given proper focus by Hogan and Williams (1996), who ascribe the emergence of enemy demonization in American war rhetoric to the discursive action of Thomas Paine and others in the American Revolution. Rather than examining specific ideological terms, though, they too contemplate overall rhetorical situations. Still, they consider dichotomies to be formative in the genre, and they mark Revolutionary rhetors' transition to a rhetoric of war by the way that they began demonizing the enemy. Flanagan (2004) shares that sentiment, and looks to the discourse and surrounding context of

Woodrow Wilson's presidency for evidence. There he finds the construction of the German Other and the American self as villain and hero, respectively. He believes this to be the number one hallmark of the war genre, and in his conclusion he briefly mentions the applicability of this schema to then-current President George W. Bush's “war on terror.” Smith and Dionisopolous (2008) go ahead and apply it, and indeed they find that Bush's discourse established a hero/villain frame intended to condition audiences to translate new events in the war according to this dichotomy. Unfortunately for Bush, they argue, the Abu Ghraib scandal as well as the release of government torture memos constituted breaks in that frame. Each of these studies, though they note the importance of ideological dichotomies in wartime texts, chooses not to analyze specific ideological markers nor to fully describe the ideology that produces them.

But for Wander (1984), ideological description is the goal. He describes two ideologies of foreign policy: 1. prophetic dualism, which emerges from Eisenhower-style Republican politics and the dominant Christian value system of the 1950s, and 2. technocratic realism, the pragmatic stance of John F. Kennedy and other center-left politicians of the 1960s. As its name might suggest, prophetic dualism is prone to the dichotomous framing that I have been alluding to; under prophetic dualism, the cause of the United States is a holy one and its enemy is unholy, and the only way for the holy to vanquish the unholy is through “total victory” (157). Technocratic realism tends to use more complex, less dualistic language, emphasizing the importance of effective *management* of the war effort, and underscoring the pragmatic advantages of victory, as opposed to engaging in moralistic, epideictic-style sermonizing (168). (Think of this as the distinction between the foreign policy discourse of President Bush and that of President Obama.) But Wander argues, using specific discourse examples, that both ideologies can occur in the same speech because they both imply a more ubiquitous American political

ideology—nationalism, the view that "nations are the irreducible units in foreign affairs" (170). This nationalism is, in Wander's view, so endemic to the way we think about foreign policy that we barely even notice it; it is hegemonic. The power of this ideology of nationalism for war rhetoric is that it renders opaque the death and destruction inherent in war by remaining silent about the human individuals involved. Wander's work is crucial to mine because it notes the importance of nationalism in the genre, but he also uses broad rhetorical situations, rather than specific linguistic markers, as the data for his ideological description.

Lakoff (1991) contributes linguistic analysis to the discussion of nationalism in wartime discourse, describing it as a conceptual metaphor system which takes the broad form of "the State-as-Person" in language. Thus, in our culture, we are able to say "the United States is strong", or "Iran is acting irrationally"—to talk about a whole nation as a single entity and ascribe it characteristics usually reserved for people. Lakoff argues that due to the preeminence of this conceptual metaphor system in our language, these expressions barely register *as* metaphors to American audiences (for more discussion of conceptual metaphors, see Lakoff and Johnson 1981). But I should take a moment to say something here about how Lakoff's and Wander's discussions of nationalism interface with my study, because both seem to suggest that war rhetoric talks solely about nations, and I will be dealing with war rhetoric about a non-state actor (Hamas). Indeed, when Wander's and Lakoff's pieces were published, such was the state of international relations; nonstate actors were not at all significant players. But today, foreign policy in both the American and Israeli context is intensely concerned with armed nonstate political organizations, referred to by both countries' leaders as "terrorist groups." Has something fundamental changed, then, about wartime rhetoric in an "age of global terror"? Was Wander's hypothesis wrong? I would argue that the core of Wander's argument was actually a

claim about individuals versus masses. That is, wartime discourse deals with the enemy as a mass, not as a group of individuals. In grammatical terms, rhetors of war employ formal rather than notional agreement. This is the ethical upshot of appealing to nationalism, that it enshrouds the pain and suffering of *their* soldiers as well as *our* soldiers by framing war as a clash between groups rather than individual human beings. So it does not matter if we call our enemy "Afghanistan" or "al-Qaeda", "Hamas" or "Palestine", so long as we never call it "a large group of individuals whom we are engaged in battle with"; by keeping opaque the damage that wars do to individual life and liberty, rhetors of war are able to maintain the moral high ground.

In addition to excluding nonstate actors, Lakoff's data is invented rather than sampled; he generalizes based on the sorts of things you often hear people say, but he does not analyze any actual, organic examples. For the rhetorical analysis I am seeking, only real political discourse, which has had real social and political effects, will suffice; I want to trace the causal connection between wartime discourse and wartime itself, and were I to proceed in Lakoff's style I would fall far short of that goal. Ferrari (2007)'s work is more in my direction, analyzing Bush rhetoric for its dichotomous spatial metaphors, but in my view she misses the most important dichotomies—the ones that are ideographic.

Robert Ivie's 1980 paper "Images of Savagery in American Justifications for War" is an ideographic analysis in spirit if not in name. He uses a similar concept from classical rhetoric, *topoi*, to analyze the discourse of numerous commanders-in-chief throughout history. He finds three topoi to be recurrent in the genre: force vs. freedom, irrationality vs. rationality, and defense vs. aggression. Each of these dichotomous pairs, he argues, serves to construct the enemy as savage and the United States as human. This works rhetorically to make war against the enemy both morally acceptable and, since the enemy is irrational and aggressive (i.e., a

constant threat), pragmatically unavoidable. With its emphasis on dichotomous ideological enemy construction, this study is without a doubt a model for my work. Where I diverge from it is in critical perspective, because while topoi are *generative* of specific discourse patterns, ideographs in themselves are real, organic linguistic units. Ivie extracts from large presidential discourses the topoi at work, but for me the value of ideographic analysis is that such a procedure is not necessary. Conclusions must be drawn out of the text, to be sure, but ideographs, unlike topoi, are already present, and usually they are self-evidently central to the text's argument.

Winkler (2006) combines ideographic analysis with other critical methodologies, and her focus, like mine, is on "terror." As she explains, American culture today in large part defines itself by its opposition to terrorism; this is why "terror" must be considered a negative ideograph in our culture. She discovers the "terror" ideograph's origin in the language of President Reagan, language that inaugurated terrorism as the heir to communism, as "[the new] threat to America's positive ideographs, namely, democracy and freedom" (209). This work presents a clear model of analysis, in which the ideographic dichotomy is found in the text and analyzed for the rhetorical effects it generates. But despite Winkler studying many cases throughout her work, all are in the context of the American public sphere—as has been the case with all the literature reviewed thus far.

My study, on the other hand, examines discourse from Israel's public sphere. Erjavec and Volcic's findings from 2007 help to justify this move, because they point out that the ideographic language of the War on Terror has been recontextualized in Serbia by elites there. The "War on Terror" style can be used to engender national unity, they argue, because it creates social cohesion through construction and condemnation of the negative ideograph enemy, the "terrorist" (130). In Serbia's public sphere, the attacks perpetrated by Muslims during the former

Yugoslav wars are compared to 9/11, and thus the "terrorist" label is applied regularly. However, there are significant differences between the two situations. Similarly, in the Israeli public sphere the attacks perpetrated by Hamas are cast in much the same terms as attacks perpetrated by al-Qaeda upon the United States, and military action against the Palestinians is frequently constructed as essentially related to the US-led, global "war on terror." Nevertheless, too few rhetorical scholars have examined the war rhetoric of Israel in particular, despite historians such as Beinin (2003) and Khalidi (2005) having noted that since the 1980s Israeli war discourse has not just recontextualized dominant American military ideology but has more or less replicated it.

This, along with the special military relationship between the United States and Israel (see Berrigan 2009 for an excellent breakdown of this relationship, including figures for both direct military aid and general aid used for arms purchases), suggests that the rich and diverse findings in the field of American war rhetoric can be applied equally well to an Israeli discursive context. Specifically, I believe that an *ideographic* analysis of Israeli public talk is fruitful. What I will propose, by demonstrating the abundance of the negative ideograph "terror" in public discourse justifying Operation Cast Lead, is that opposition to "terror" is not simply a marker of American ideology, but is more generally a marker of nationalist ideology. Nationalism, then, stands as the dominant persuasive ideology of public rhetors seeking to justify state violence.

Ideographic Analysis of Israel Prime Minister's Office Press Releases (12/27/08-01/18/09)

Methodology, object, and context

Before getting into the analysis itself, I want to say a few things about its methodology, object, and focus, all of which distinguish it from the studies just reviewed. First, I am aware that Michael Calvin McGee's 1980 paper "The 'Ideograph: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology", much like the critical method it spawned, is not without its detractors in Rhetoric and Public Address (Cloud 1994). Nevertheless, as should be immediately apparent from my analysis, the prevalence and importance of the negative term "terror" to Israeli arguments for Operation Cast Lead all but jumps off the page, so when I became interested in the rhetorical dynamics of this war, that word was the very first thing I noticed. As a result, I knew that my reading of the texts would have to begin there, and I know no critical approach better than ideographic analysis for drawing out the significance that a single term holds for an argument. McGee defined an ideograph as,

> an ordinary language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable. (McGee 15)

McGee's critical framework calls for a two-part examination of the chosen term, consisting of: 1. a diachronic analysis, which is a history of the term's usages in the culture (10-11), and 2. a synchronic analysis, which is a description of the term's location and role in contemporary discourse, including its relationship to other ideographs (12-14).

My object of study is a corpus of press statements released by the Israel Prime Minister's Office during the Operation. I have sampled this corpus from the PMO website, located at "http://www.pmo.gov.il." This choice of object seems straightforward: I want to uncover the connection between Israeli state discourse and Israeli state violence, and this seems like the ideal source for that discourse.

Obviously, the elephant in the room for my study is that the events and discourse I am engaging with take place in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rhetoric and Public Address has not engaged with the discourse of this conflict with regularity, which is part of the reason I am doing so. However, one notable exception is *Shared Land / Conflicting Identity: Trajectories of Israeli and Palestinian Symbol Use* (2003) by Robert C. Rowland and David A. Frank, a text which does a great job of introducing the roots of the conflict from a rhetorical perspective. Rowland & Frank's central thesis is that unhealthy symbol use on both sides has precluded reconciliation between the two, keeping Israelis in a state of constant fear for their security and keeping Palestinians stateless and largely voiceless. But Rowland & Frank take great pains to present an "even-handed" analysis of the conflict, an effort whose credibility suffers thanks to their repeated quotation and citation of pro-Israel-biased commentator/author Thomas Friedman (see Amer 2009 for an excellent critical discourse analysis of Friedman's op-eds about the conflict).

This "even-handed" approach is not something that I will concern myself with, for two reasons. First, I believe that the presumption of mutual victimhood with regard to this conflict is no longer valid today. Historical scholars such as Edward Said (1978, 1980, 1989, 2004), Joel Beinin (2004, 2005) and Rashid Khalidi (2005, 2007) have all endeavored to dispense with this presumption. Their basic claim is this: since Israeli independence in 1948—and even moreso,

since the Six-Day War in 1967 and the ensuing occupations of the West Bank and Gaza—the difference in material power between the two "sides" in the conflict has been immense. The best data supporting that conclusion, for me, is the amount of military and general aid Israel receives from the United States on an annual basis (Berrigan 2009), not to mention the vast differences in their respective populations below the poverty line and other standard of living indicators (see individual sections for "Gaza Strip", "West Bank", and "Israel" of Central Intelligence Agency "The World Factbook" for poverty statistics from 2009). The second reason I will not concern myself with presenting an "even-handed" analysis of the conflict is that I am a proponent of a truly *critical* rhetorical criticism, a rhetorical criticism that speaks truth to United States power. It is obvious that the US supports Israel—diplomatically, economically, and militarily—much more than it supports the Palestinian Authority in West Bank or certainly Hamas in Gaza. Thus, I will point my critical lens at Israel's war-justifying discourse, rather than that of Hamas or other militant groups opposed to Israel. If an additional rationale for this decision is sought, again, look no further than the respective sides' casualty figures in the war I am studying. It does not seem to me unreasonable to investigate the rhetoric of the side that killed over 1000 rather than that of the side that killed just thirteen; the former total constitutes enough death for ten critical analyses.

Diachronic Ideographic Analysis

The usages of the ideograph "terror" in Israeli political discourse have, at each historical stage, been crucially connected to concurrent usages in US political discourse. The already-established connections between the two political cultures might suggest that this is an unremarkable finding, but what may surprise is the causal direction of the connection: it seems that American usages originally followed Israeli usages, and not the other way around. From that point on, the two parlances merged.

Shlaim (1996) discusses the ways in which the Likud Party in Israel, and the pro-settlement, pro-Greater Israel ideology it represents, constructs Israeli history and contemporary political conflict. In particular, he discusses Benjamin Netanyahu's influential views on terrorism:

> While serving in the United States, he also gained for himself a reputation as a leading expert on international terrorism, and he became a frequent participant in talk shows dealing with the subject. His family set up the Jonathan Institute, named after his elder brother "Yoni" who had served in the same IDF elite unit, and who was killed in the raid to rescue the Israeli hostages in Entebbe in 1976. The main aim of the Institute is to mobilize governments and public opinion in the West for the fight against terrorism. A volume edited by Netanyahu under the auspices of the Jonathan Institute, *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*, greatly impressed President Ronald Reagan and apparently inspired the air strike he ordered against Libya in 1986.
>
> *Fighting Terrorism* is a little book, forcefully argued and rich in unintended ironies. Netanyahu defines terrorism as "the deliberate and systematic assault on civilians to inspire fear for political ends." Ironically, by this definition both Menachem Begin and

> Yitzhak Shamir had been leaders of terrorist organizations in the pre-independence period, although Netanyahu is unlikely to have had them in mind when formulating his definition. For him terrorism is not what the weak do to the strong but what dictatorships do to democracies. More precisely, he regards international terrorism as the result of collusion between dictatorial states and an international terrorist network—"a collusion that has to be fought and can be defeated." There is, of course, a view which holds that terrorism is the result of social and political oppression and cannot therefore be eliminated unless the underlying conditions change. Netanyahu mentions this view, only to reject it out of hand.
>
> To Netanyahu's way of thinking, the PLO is nothing but a terrorist organization working in collusion with dictatorial states. Israel's destruction of the PLO base in Lebanon, he claims, deprived the Soviets and the Arab world of their most useful staging ground for mounting terrorist operations against the democracies. Hisballah [the Party of God], which was born in the aftermath of Israel's invasion of Lebanon and continues to fight Israeli forces and proxies in southern Lebanon, is presented by Netanyahu as a terrorist organization sponsored by Iran. But although Iran supports Hisballah, it does not effectively control it. Moreover, guerrilla warfare would be a better description than terror for Hisballah's operations, because, for the most part, they take place on Lebanese territory, under battlefield [*sic*] conditions, against Israeli soldiers. (15)

Winkler (2006) corroborates the view that the US' ideographic understanding of terror can be traced back to the Reagan Administration, following Israel's lead. Reagan's internal memos as well as public speeches reveal how at different moments in his presidency, he reframed his conception of terrorism based on the foreign policy objectives of his administration. At one

moment, the fight against terrorism was equated with the fight against the Soviet Union; at another, it was constructed as emanating from five enemy states: Iran, Cuba, North Korea, Nicaragua, and Libya; at still another, it was portrayed as essentially related to the US war against drug trafficking in South America (71-91). "Reagan's focus was not random; it had important implications for the implementation of his foreign policy agenda" (70), Winkler writes; in other words, his definition of terrorism was a cypher for whatever external power his administration currently opposed, while "terrorism" was discursively positioned as an existential threat to the positive American ideographs "freedom", "democracy", and "peace."

Khalidi (2005) follows Israeli leaders' discourse on terrorism from their Cold War-era portrayal of the PLO as essentially connected to the Soviet Union (129) all the way to their War on Terror-era "ideological convergence [with the US] over terrorism in the wake of 9/11" (146). In short, then, there has been and continues to be a coordinated US-Israeli parlance on "terrorism" and the positive ideographs it opposes, just as the US and Israel closely coordinate their foreign policy strategies. What terrorism is for these states is whatever contravenes their momentary strategic objectives. Meanwhile, what "terrorism" is for these states is a destructive, unholy threat, hell-bent on annihilating "peace." I will transition now to my case study, where these ideographic dynamics can be witnessed in their organic discourse context. Throughout, I will take the stylistic liberty of **bolding** significant ideological terms in the excerpts.

Synchronic Ideographic Analysis

On December 27, 2009, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert delivered his first press briefing "on the Operation in the Gaza Strip." The briefing begins,

> Ladies and Gentlemen,
>
> For the last seven years, the Hamas and other **terrorist** organizations, [*sic*] were attacking **innocent** Israelis in the south part of the country and threatened the lives of many thousands of Israelis that wanted to live **peacefully** in their homes and to carry on their lives in a **comfortable** and **normal** way.

Right at the start, we can see the interaction of the negative ideograph "terror" with several positive value terms: "innocence", "peace", "comfort", and "normality." Of these, the one that makes the most sense to label as an ideograph is "peace", suggesting a subordination of the others beneath it as their ideological God-term; Israelis and the IDF will be consistently constructed as wanting peace in these texts, while Hamas is portrayed as essentially warlike and savage. Also in this excerpt, the "seven years" of Hamas attacks are narrativized as a crisis in order to justify the Operation, echoing the case studies in Cherwitz (1978) and Cherwitz and Zagacki (1986). This crisis narrative is crucial to the justifications throughout the corpus, and indeed, "the south", "Israelis in the south", and "the people of the south" emerge as rhetorically important figures, serving as the defenseless victims whose suffering necessitates the IDF's heroic intervention. A bit later, Olmert reinforces the ideographic contrast between "terror" and "peace":

> Everyone who heard the leaders of the Hamas in the last few days can easily understand easily [*sic*] that they are not looking for **peace**, they are not looking for **relaxation**, they are not looking for **ceasefire**, they are looking for a country to continue

> their **attacks** and to try and do everything in order to upset the lives of so many **innocent Israelis** in our part of the country.

This excerpt is rhetorically interesting for a couple of reasons. First, again we have the opposition of "[terrorist] attacks" to "peace", "relaxation", "ceasefire", and "innocence." In effect, the negative ideograph is positioned as a wrecking ball crushing any and all positive ideographs in its path. Second, this construction of Hamas terrorism as blind rage is reinforced by Olmert's claim that Hamas is simply "looking for a country" to destroy, no matter which. That claim serves two purposes: 1. it serves to compound the "crisis" element of the Hamas threat by removing any semblance of logic from their actions and suggesting that they might strike a different country if Israel does not stop them, and 2. it serves to reject out of hand the notion that terrorism might be a result of social and political oppression, a notion that—as Shlaim (1996) noted (15)—Benjamin Netanyahu explicitly rejected in his influential writings on terrorism in the 1980s. The tendency towards denial of this sort is a pattern well-represented in the corpus.

The briefing concludes with two paragraphs devoted to addressing objections to the Operation out of concern for noncombatant casualties in the south of Israel and Gaza, the possibility of humanitarian crisis, and political disunity in Israel. Here they are, quoted in full:

> The operation in Gaza intends primarily to change the situation in **the south** part or [*sic*] our country. It may take some time and all of us are prepared to carry the burden and the pains that are an inseparable part of this situation. Already today, we lost one Israeli citizen in Netivot, Beber Vaknin, of blessed memory, and a few Israelis were injured and of course I offer my sympathies to the families of those who suffered from these **attacks**. We did everything in order to make sure that **Israelis in the south part of the country**

> will be protected under the circumstances. Its' [*sic*] not going to be easy. It's not going to last just a few days. It may continue and one thing must be clear. We are not fighting against **the people of Gaza**. I take this opportunity to appeal to **the people of Gaza**. As I have said several times in the past, you, **the citizens of Gaza** are not our enemies. Hamas, Jihad, the other **terrorist** organizations, are your enemies as they are our enemies. They brought **disaster** on you and they try to bring **disaster** to the people of Israel. And it is our common goal to make every possible effort to stop them, so that we will be able to establish an entirely different type of relationship with us and them.
>
> The efforts that we made today were focused entirely on military targets. We tried to avoid and I think quite successfully, to hit any uninvolved people. We attacked only targets that are part of the Hamas organizations where they manufacture their Kassem Rockets and the mortar shells and the headquarters and the command positions of this organization and other organizations. We'll continue to make an effort to avoid any unnecessary inconveniences to **the people of Gaza**. I promise you on behalf of the Government of Israel that we will make every possible effort to avoid any humanitarian crisis in Gaza. **The people of Gaza** do not deserve to suffer because of the **killers** and **murderers** of the **terrorist** organizations. I am certain that the Israeli public is united behind the goals of this operation. I was encouraged today by the announcement made by the head of the opposition, Mr. Netanyahu, who supported the attack initiative of Israel and by the leaders of other major parties and of other prominent figures from the State of Israel.

There is a lot going on in this excerpt, from an ideological perspective. For one thing, the term "the people of Gaza" emerges as a kind of ideograph in the corpus; or if it is not quite an ideograph, it certainly holds rhetorical significance for Olmert, because he goes to it again and

again. By repeating the phrase, he seems to want to demonstrate his sensitivity and his commitment to "peace" as a foundational positive ideograph. Ultimately, he wants to escape moral culpability for damage to Gazan civilians by stating upfront that he has good intentions with regard to them. As with the above excerpts, the negative ideograph "terrorist" (surrounded by such negative ideological terms and descriptors as "killers", "murderers", "attacks", and "disaster") stands opposed to positive ideographs, including "[the people of] the south" and (now) "the people of Gaza"; this serves to construct the Operation as actually *beneficial* for "the people of Gaza", because its target is Hamas "terrorism", a term which is opposed to "the people of Gaza" in Olmert's ideographic system.

Also worth noting is the effort in this passage to construct unity, an element of war rhetoric well-established in the literature (see prior literature section above). Olmert alludes to the unity of all Israeli citizens, the unity of Israel with the people of Gaza, as well as the unity of the various political factions within Israel. In a sense, this is an attempt to justify war by unanimous vote: we all support this, we are all united behind it, ergo it must be good and prudent.

The next press release in the corpus is "Security Cabinet Decision on the Continuation of IDF Operations in the Gaza Strip", from January 3, 2009, the date when IDF ground troops entered Gaza. The meat of it is below:

> In continuation of the Ministerial Committee's 24.12.08 decision, in the framework of which approval was given to the operational methods that were recommended by the IDF and security establishment vis-a -vis action against Hamas and the other **terrorist** organizations in the Gaza, the Committee decided to instruct the IDF to continue operations and proceed to the stage that includes a ground entry into the Gaza Strip.

> The goal of the operation is to continue advancing the goals that the Government has set for the operation as a whole, including striking hard at Hamas's **terrorism** infrastructure and changing the security reality for **residents of the south**.

This release largely sticks to the script established by Olmert's opening remarks above. The ideographic system is such that, again, "terror" opposes "residents of the south", and war against the source of that terror is justified thusly.

January 4, 2009 saw four press releases. The first is "PM Olmert Speaks with German Chancellor Merkel", and it again employs oppositions of "terrorism" with "residents," adding "[right to] defense" as a positive ideograph. The second is "Excerpts from Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's remarks at the start of the weekly Cabinet meeting." Here, a more in-depth justificational argument appears, and it is worth examining pieces of it:

> In a **responsible** and **determined** country, it cannot be that the home front will be subject to **attack** and a **daring, strong and well-trained military** does not **defend** it. Last Friday, we decided in accordance with a proposal that I submitted along with Foreign Minister Livni and Defense Minister Barak, as per the recommendation of IDF Chief-of-Staff Lt.-Gen. Ashkenazi and the security services, to send our boys to **defend** their parents, brothers, sisters and neighbors that they left at home. We did not reach this conclusion lightly. For many months, we gave the calm a chance in the hope of avoiding a wide-ranging military operation. Our hopes were dashed. [...]
>
> This operation was unavoidable.

The only ideographs appearing here are an ellipsis, "[terrorist] attack", and a variant of "right to defense", "defend." However, there is significant identity construction occurring as well. Olmert ascribes a number of qualities to the Israeli/IDF "us" that subsequently warrant the decision to go

to war: “responsible”, “determined”, and “daring, strong, and well-trained.” By virtue of possessing those qualities, Olmert implies, Israel is uniquely capable of both judging that war is necessary and executing war successfully. By virtue of being “responsible”, Olmert “[does not] reach this conclusion lightly”, but that same responsibility forces him to speak the truth to his constituents, and tell them that “this operation was unavoidable.” He continues:

> Parallel to the military operation, a diplomatic campaign is also being waged. In recent days, I have been in continuous contact with most leaders of the **free world**. I briefed them on Israel's position and goals and I spoke with them about the unavoidable constraints that caused the State of Israel to reach the conclusion that there was no alternative to the use of force in order to bring about a change in the situation. [...]
>
> I am greatly encouraged by the position of US President George Bush, who told me that we must ensure that Hamas not only stops firing but is also unable to do so in the future.

Here, Olmert constructs Israel as unified with the other nations who make up the “free world.” These other nations, presumably, are “responsible” and “determined” like Israel is, and therefore they are capable of understanding how the Operation was “unavoidable” for Israel. In this way, the support of President Bush, also a “responsible” and “determined” leader of the “free world”, is—ironically—stated as an additional point in the war’s favor. Meanwhile, the excerpt below introduces the Manichean dualism of the Israeli/IDF “us” and the Hamas “them” that will be a running theme in the corpus:

> Israel is not at war with **the Palestinian people in Gaza**. They are not our enemies; they are also victims of **violent** and **murderous repression** by those same **terrorist** organizations. To them I say, on behalf of all of Israel, that we will not allow a

> humanitarian crisis to be created in the Gaza Strip. We will help supply food and medicines like any **enlightened** and **moral** country must do.

Our old friend, "the people of Gaza", returns here, as does "terrorist" and the accompanying negative descriptors "violent" and "murderous", the latter modifying the "repression" unleashed by Hamas upon "the people of Gaza." This contact of identities and ideographs achieves the same things, argumentatively, as it did above, with the additional claim being the one about "repression", which serves as a further warrant for using force against Hamas: the possibility that it might produce a net gain of rights and freedoms for Gazans. Lastly, when promising to avoid a humanitarian crisis, Olmert adds "enlightened" and "moral" to his ongoing construction of the Israeli "us." These traits, again, imply that the audience should simply accept Israel's decision to go to war, because it is an "enlightened", "moral", "responsible", and "determined" country and thus possesses excellent judgment on these matters.

The third release from 01/03/09 describes a meeting between Olmert and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. This one, much like the one about the meeting with Merkel, reinforces the ideographic pairings underpinning Israel's overall justification for the war, including "residents of the south" vs. "rocket threat" and "citizens" vs. "terrorist organizations." Similarly, the fourth release discusses a phone conversation between Olmert and French President Nicholas Sarkozy, discussing the war, in which Olmert "pointed out that the military steps that the government has approved up to now are not designed to reoccupy Gaza and that the distinction between the **terrorist** organizations and their members, and **the innocent people living in the Gaza Strip** is clear." The first part of that, about "reoccupying Gaza", is interesting given that according to norms of international humanitarian law, the Gaza Strip is territory *currently* occupied by Israel, even after Israel's "unilateral disengagement" of 2005 (Darcy and Reynolds 2010). Darcy and

Reynolds' paper summarizes the merits of each side of the legal debate on this issue and concludes:

> While events in Gaza have departed from traditional conceptions of warfare and occupation, and international humanitarian law's own limitations have been exposed by the many grey areas that arise in its application therein, sufficient clarity is retained when it comes to the effective control exercised by Israel over the Gaza Strip in order to categorize the territory as occupied. Embedded in the law is an assumption that occupation is a temporary situation which all parties to a conflict are to work in good faith towards remedying, as part of an agreed upon and sustainable resolution of the conflict. Otherwise and until that occurs, the Gaza Strip will remain occupied territory for the purposes of international humanitarian law. (243)

Nevertheless, Olmert's choice of vocabulary demonstrates that Israel's leaders maintain a formal policy of denial with regard to Gaza being occupied territory. This is a policy that manifests itself again and again in the corpus, as it did in the earlier contention that Hamas just wants terror *for the sake of it*. The second part of the above quote again pairs "the people of Gaza" (positive) with "terror" (negative), justifying war by way of a commitment to destroy the negative ideograph before it destroys the positive.

Positive/negative ideographic juxtapositions continue throughout the release of January 5, which summarizes a phone conversation between Olmert and Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek in which Olmert updated Topolanek on the proceedings of the war. This time, "Hamas firing" and "Israeli communities" are paired up, constituting a villain/victim frame which, again, commands the IDF's intervention as hero.

The release of January 6 is rhetorically similar; it announces the Israeli decision to "establish a humanitarian corridor in the Strip to assist the population", and "terrorists" is opposed to "civilian population." Olmert places all blame for the rapidly worsening humanitarian situation on Hamas, and thus he presents the "humanitarian corridor" as a kind of begrudged favor from Israel to the Gazans, emphasizing the "difficulties" that will be involved in its execution. This style of blame-shifting for the war and the ensuing humanitarian crisis has considerable rhetorical purchase: it allows the rhetor to trumpet positive ideographs of "enlightenment", "freedom", and "peace" while acting in ways that threaten them, e.g. authorizing vastly disproportionate military action.

The releases of January 7 and 8 again discuss official meetings, the first between Olmert and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, the second between Olmert and leaders of the Israel Manufacturers Association. Both releases position "terrorist" negatively and "the communities of the south" positively, with the release of Jan. 7 focusing especially on joint Israeli-Egyptian efforts to stop the arms struggling of "terrorist organizations" in the Strip.

The two releases of January 9 serve as responses to two significant situational exigencies of that day: 1. United Nations Security Council Resolution #1860 on Operation Cast Lead, which "urgently determined the need to create a mechanism to prevent the smuggling of war materiel [*sic*] and to establish a stable **ceasefire**, as conditions for the departure of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip, and called for the cessation of **terrorist** actions against Israel", and 2. the continuation of rocket fire from Hamas and other groups in the Strip. For the Prime Minister's Office, Resolution #1860 was a counterargument to the ideologically-rigorous tack they had been taking since December 27, and so Olmert responded to the first exigency by reporting upon the existence of the second: "it should be noted that since this morning, the **terrorist**

organizations have continued to fire rockets at **Israeli communities**. The State of Israel has the right to **defend** its citizens and, to this end, the IDF will continue acting in order to attain the goals of the operation" (first press release, 01/09/2009), he said, adding later: "this morning's rocket fire against **residents of the south** only proves that the UN Security Council Resolution #1860 is not practical and will not be honored in actual fact by the **Palestinian murder organizations**" (second press release, 01/09/2009). That last characterization, "Palestinian murder organizations", is the most brutal and incendiary seen so far in the corpus. Olmert's earlier constructions of the enemy were carefully framed so as to distinguish Hamas from Gazans or Palestinians more generally; here, however, the Manichean frame is injected with cultural/racial specificity.

"PM Olmert's Remarks at the Start of the Weekly Cabinet Meeting", the release from January 11, takes the form of a narrative of the Operation to that point. He begins:

> For three weeks now, the State of Israel has been making an **impressive** military effort in the Gaza Strip in order to change the security situation in **the south of the country**. For many years we've demonstrated **restraint**. We reined our reactions. We bit our lips and took barrage after barrage. No country in the world, not even those who preach morality to us, would have shown similar **patience** and **self-control**. At the end of the day, the sense of **responsibility** and the **obligation to defend our citizens**, after endless warnings, led us to the unavoidable decision to defend **our children** and **our residents** whose lives had become intolerable.

This passage contributes each of the following to Olmert's ongoing construction of the Israeli/IDF self: "impressive", "restrained", "patient", "[full of] self-control." Meanwhile, the passage's narrative presents Israel as a perfectly responsible and friendly giant withstanding sting

after sting after sting, all unprovoked, from an unfriendly, merciless wasp, until one day the giant could stand it no longer and snapped. Unsurprisingly absent from that narrative—and from the releases in the corpus in general—is the surrounding context of the giant occupying the wasp's territory and denying the wasp its most basic waspian rights. Olmert continues:

> [...] We did not delude ourselves that what seemed natural, clear and self-evident for any other country, would be received with a proper measure of agreement given that the State of Israel is involved. This did not impair, and does not impair, our determination to **defend our residents**. We have never agreed that someone should decide for us if we are allowed to strike at **those who bomb kindergartens and schools** and we will never agree to this in the future. No decision, present or future, will deny us our basic **right to defend** the residents of Israel.

The first sentence illustrates Olmert's frustration with Israel being singled out for criticism by the international community. Again, the occupation—which such criticism is almost always premised upon—is a conspicuous blindspot in his worldview, and thus his frustration is doomed to persist. The latter part of the excerpt contributes to the construction of the Hamas enemy by adding that they "bomb kindergartens and schools", an image of savagery (Ivie 1980) if ever there was one. The remainder of Olmert's remarks includes two more instances of the negative ideograph "terrorist", opposed first by "impressive achievements in the operation" and second by "IDF soldiers." He concludes with the following, a stunning callback to the importance of unity-constructing language in war rhetoric: "we must not, at the last minute, lose what has been achieved in an unprecedented national effort that restored the spirit of unity to the nation." This statement suggests that no matter the wrongs committed throughout it, no matter the strategic or pragmatic utility or disutility of it, the Operation will have been justified because it was

instrumentally good, because it "restored the spirit of unity to the nation." That is quite a remarkable claim, in that it explicitly confirms the findings of Erjavec and Volcic (2007) with regard to "terror" rhetoric fostering unity through national condemnation of the "terrorist" Other.

Two days later, on January 13, the PMO released a relatively ideologically-innocuous brief announcing Olmert's appointment of Isaac Herzog to a temporary position coordinating humanitarian assistance for "the civilian population" in war-torn Gaza. The brief notes that this decision takes place "against the background of requests by bodies and countries around the world that have expressed their concern over the developing humanitarian situation in the Strip." While none of the already-noted strategies or themes are on display here—other than the rhetorically positive term "the civilian population"—this brief does hint at the international condemnation that was growing at this stage in the Operation, such that Israel was forced to respond by increasing its humanitarian efforts.

Two briefs followed on January 15: 1. "Govt. Ministers to be Dispatched on Information Missions Abroad" and 2. "PM Olmert Speaks with US Secy. of State Rice." In the first, the one positive rhetorical term that appears is "residents of the south" and no negative terms appear. The brief describes Israel's plan for "sending abroad **residents of the south** in order to give firsthand accounts of the security reality in which they have lived for years." Here, the PMO is showing a good deal of self-awareness with regard to its own rhetoric; it wants to bolster its villain/victim frame by bringing the victim itself to the audience. This self-awareness, in turn, bolsters my claim that the villain/victim frame is rhetorically significant. In the second brief, the negative value term "smuggling" opposes the positive term "ceasefire." In one interesting line, the brief reads: "US Secy. of State Rice said that the US would be prepared to assist in resolving the smuggling issue and in signing a memorandum of understanding with Israel on the matter." This

is interesting because it underscores the ways in which the US assists the "defense" interests of Israel while sabotaging those of Hamas. But under the US-Israeli ideographic system, as soon as "Hamas" appears in discourse it projects the accompanying terms "terrorism" or "murder", never "defense." Meanwhile, "IDF" projects "defense", but never "terrorism" or "murder."

The final two days of the Operation, Jan. 17 and 18, saw several extended discourses released by Olmert and the PMO. They are each transcripts of spoken oratory, and within each the Operation is narrativized, justified, and in general trumpeted as an unabashed success.

The first is a "Statement by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to the Foreign Press." It begins with the announcement of the signing of the "bilateral" agreement Olmert discussed with Rice on the previous day:

> [...] The Israeli cabinet decided tonight to approve the request made by the Egyptian government represented by President Hosni Mubarak, to hold the fire by the State of Israel as part of the bilateral understanding between Israel and Egypt that will act together in order to prevent the continued smuggling of arms across the border into the Gaza area. This is a major step forward and I want to take this opportunity to first thank President Mubarak for his leadership and his understanding of the situation and also to thank the President of the United States, George W. Bush, the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, for their endless efforts throughout the last three weeks in order to protect **the right of Israel for self-defense** against **terrorist** activities and at the same time to help create the necessary international environment that will bring an end to hostilities while guaranteeing **the right of Israel to defend itself** against any aggression perpetrated by **terrorist organizations** from whichever direction.

There, like clockwork, we see two consecutive ideographic pairings of "right to defense" with "terrorist", demonstrating the tight connection of the two terms in Olmert's rhetoric. He continues:

> [...] I want to make a special appeal to **the people of Gaza**. Time and again, I talk to you and I appeal to you and I try to explain to you that Israel is not your enemy. Hamas is your real enemy. Hamas is our enemy. Hamas is your enemy and so are the other **terrorist** organizations. We genuinely never wanted to cause any discomfort, to attack any uninvolved civilian in Gaza. We regret very much the fact that there were so many, who in spite of the genuine efforts made by the Israeli army, suffered from this confrontation and I want to apologize on behalf of the Government of Israel for everyone who was unjustly affected in Gaza by this operation. I believe that there will be an international effort to help recuperate Gaza and the Government of Israel will make every possible effort in order to help the humanitarian organization together with us in order to improve the situation and to remove the suffering from the daily routine of the Palestinians who are captive of **terrorist** organizations that were using them in order to try and achieve their conditions.

Visible in that excerpt is Olmert's careful discursive effort to oppose "the people of Gaza" and "[Hamas] terrorists", an effort intended to stifle backlash against the Operation from the Gazan street as well as the international community by way of blame-shifting. Next, we see the re-emergence of the positive ideograph "peace":

> The ultimate goal of this government [...] is to achieve **peace** with the Arab countries; first and foremost, with the Palestinians, and hopefully in the future with others. This is our desire; this was the focus of the efforts that this government made for a lot of time. We hope that we will continue to negotiate with the Palestinian authority in order to bring

> **peace** to this area and it will start with the **peace** on the basis of the vision of President Bush of a two-state solution: a homeland for the Palestinian people in a Palestinian State and a homeland of the Jewish people in the State of Israel. This is the goal, this is the spirit, this is the idea, this is what we want to achieve and I hope that tonight we are making a first important step in trying to change the security situation in the south part of the State of Israel in order to advance the chances that ultimately will bring **peace** to our area.

Fundamentally, Olmert's insistence that "[peace] is what we want to achieve" shifts blame for the occupations of Gaza and the West Bank onto the Palestinians much like the ideographic pairing of "terrorists" vs. "the people of Gaza" shifts blame for the Operation and the resultant death and destruction onto Hamas.

The second release of Jan. 17 is "PM Olmert's Statement after the Cabinet Meeting", addressed to the Israeli public. The most rhetorically interesting elements involve the continuing characterization of the Israeli/IDF "us" and the Hamas "them." Olmert assigns the Israeli/IDF self such traits as those bolded below:

> [...] The IDF and the General Security Services have succeeded in conducting an **outstanding** operation, utilizing all the elements of Israel's force, on land, at sea and in the air. The military operation was characterized by **determination**, **sophistication**, **courage** and an **impressive ability** in intelligence and operations, which led to significant and numerous achievements. The current campaign proved again Israel's **force** and strengthened its deterrence capability vis-a -vis those who threaten us.
>
> The reserves soldiers, who are the foundation for the IDF's **strength**, proved that the spirit of volunteerism and a willingness to **sacrifice** still very much exist. These forces

> were made ready in a thorough manner, equipped with all they needed and thus could demonstrate their **professionalism** and **fierceness of spirit**.
>
> During all the days of fighting, the Israeli home front demonstrated its strength, despite hundreds of rockets and mortar shells indiscriminately fired at a population which numbers one million residents; it was the home front that created an **unshakable** foundation which strengthened us and gave us the ability to continue fighting. Two years of preparation on the home front proved that we learned our lessons and were properly **organized**. The Government and the heads of the regional local authorities under attack demonstrated the **patience**, **endurance** and that same strong spirit which allowed the political echelon to make the **right decisions**, knowing that the home front could withstand the consequences of those decisions.
>
> As a decision-making body, the Government of Israel demonstrated **unity** with regard to goals, and acted **professionally** and in coordination to achieve those goals. The decisions were all made in a **responsible** and **educated** manner, following clarification and in-depth discussions. As an executive branch, the Government met the demands and needs of the population and the fighting forces.
>
> [...] I have no doubt that were it not for the determined and **successful** military action, we would not have reached diplomatic understandings, which together create a **full picture** of impressive accomplishment.

Indeed, Olmert himself acknowledges that "together [all these elements] create a full picture of impressive accomplishment", again displaying a significant degree of rhetorical self-awareness. By virtue of the Israeli people, the IDF forces and leadership, the Israeli government, and Israel's "free leader" allies possessing these positive traits, *their* unified belief in the success and

justification of the war serves as a warrant for the claim that it was successful and justified; at root, this is an argument from authority. Later in the speech, Olmert contributes additional images of savagery to his ongoing construction of the Hamas enemy: "Hamas' methods are **incomprehensible**"; "[Hamas] operated among a civilian population which served as a **human shield** and operated under the aegis of mosques, schools and hospitals, while making the Palestinian population a **hostage**"; "if Hamas decides to continue its **wild terrorist attacks**[....]" Finally, he reasserts his belief that Gaza is no longer occupied, stating "Israel, which withdrew from the Gaza Strip to the last millimeter at the end of 2005[....]"; this, too, serves to construct a particularly savage enemy identity, by removing any possible justification or logic from Hamas' attacks (such as, for instance, the fact that Gaza is still occupied territory).

However, that savage enemy identity construction is accompanied by a concurrent *scheming* and *cunning* construction, one which usually involves reference to Iran. In this speech, it occurs here: "Hamas in Gaza was **built by Iran as a foundation for power**, and is backed through funding, through training and through the provision of advanced weapons. Iran, which strives for **regional hegemony**, tried to replicate the methods used by Hizbullah in Lebanon in the Gaza Strip as well." In the first speech from Jan. 18, it occurs here: "The **free world** understands, and has internalized, the fact that Hamas **operates at Iran's behest** as the vanguard of dark and extremist terrorist forces that are trying to **undermine regional stability** by any possible means." The two constructions are merged in that last passage, such that Hamas is scheming to spread "dark and extremist [terrorism.]" However, there is something fundamentally contradictory in this conception. Either there is *no* logic to Hamas' actions, and it simply wants to "watch the world burn" (Nolan 2008), or there is a logic, a goal, perhaps one of power, i.e. "regional hegemony." By asserting the latter on top of the former, Olmert exposes a weakness in

his rhetoric of war, because if Hamas is guided by a strategic logic, then dialogue with the intent of power-sharing may in fact be a feasible alternative to war. The remainder of the first speech from Jan. 18 includes widespread references to unity (”the spirit of unity, social solidarity and brotherhood of the entire nation”) as well as rhetorical blame-shifting to Hamas, with additional images of savagery involved in the latter (”every civilian who was injured despite their non-involvement is a victim of murderous Hamas [...] [and] Hamas-instigated murder”).

The final release in the corpus marks the “cessation of hostilities”, and it takes the form of a speech which Olmert delivered in the company of several EU member-state leaders. The same strategies, themes, and identities that we have seen so far are recapitulated throughout, including some profoundly Manichean enemy constructions, such as: “we signed a memorandum of understanding on [...] actions which will prevent the **terrorist** organization, Hamas, from rearmament. This is in the supreme interest of all those who fight **the forces of evil**.” Also included in this release are the statements of each of the EU leaders, but their rhetoric is not the concern of the present study.

To recap and sum up, my synchronic ideographic analysis of these 20 texts has unearthed several broad rhetorical patterns, or persuasive strategies, with which Olmert and the Prime Minister’s Office justified Operation Cast Lead in Gaza. These amount to the following:

1. A Manichean self/enemy frame, grounded in crucial ideographic pairings of “peace” vs. “terror”, “defense” vs. “terror”, and “innocence” vs. “terror.” On the side of “peace”, “defense”, and “innocence” is Israel and the IDF, characterized variously as: “peaceful”, “innocent”, “united”, “responsible”, “determined”, “daring, strong, and well-trained”, “free”, “enlightened”, “moral”, “impressive”, “restrained”, “patient”, “self-controlled”, “outstanding [soldiers]”, “sophisticated”, “educated”, “courageous”, “able”, “willing to sacrifice”, “professional”, “fierce

in spirit", "unshakable", "organized", and "[showing] endurance." On the side of "terror" is Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza, who are described as "Palestinian murder organizations"; "killers" and "murderers" bringing "disaster" and "[committing] murderous repression", "who bomb kindergartens and schools", who are "incomprehensible", who "[use] human shields", who "[take] hostages", who are "[prone to committing] wild terrorist attacks", who lack logic, who were "built by Iran as a foundation for power", who "strive for regional hegemony", and who "operate at Iran's behest", at "the vanguard of dark and extremist terrorist forces." This epideictic characterization of the Hamas enemy as anathema to all that the Israeli/IDF self stands for served as a deliberative argument for the war. By virtue of this enemy identity construction, war against the enemy was rendered both ethically-acceptable and pragmatically-unavoidable.

2. Shifting blame for the Operation and more broadly for the occupations of Gaza and the West Bank onto Hamas and the Palestinians, respectively. This process relies upon an official policy of denial with regard to the fact that both West Bank and Gazan Palestinians are occupied peoples lacking basic human, civil, and political rights. This stance of denial is well-represented in the corpus and my analysis.

3. Crisis narratives. Cherwitz (1978) and Cherwitz & Zagacki (1986) suggested that war rhetoric often relies upon a narrative of crisis as justification for military action, and that finding has been validated by my analysis. In this particular case, the crisis facing Israel was the situation in the south, where communities had for years been experiencing rocket attacks from Gazan armed groups. "Our citizens in the south" thus emerge as the victim element of a victim/villain frame, where Hamas (of course) is the villain. Their victimization at the hands of the villain served as an urgent warrant for the IDF's heroic intervention.

4. Unifying vocabulary and statements. This pattern demonstrates nicely the prior findings of both Ivie (1980) and Erjavec and Volcic (2007), who argued that condemnation of an Other fulfills a unifying role in political culture, especially during wartime. Olmert and the PMO spared no discursive expense in arguing that Israel was unified throughout the Operation. The poll numbers bear that particular claim out, with 93% of Israelis polled supporting the Operation (Ben Meir 2009).

Foss (2004) described the primary goal of ideological criticism as uncovering the ways in which discourses legitimize some ideologies while delegitimizing others. What the preceding criticism has demonstrated is that an ideology is particular to a nation, to a people, to a "mass consciousness" (McGee 4). In short, then, each of the four persuasive strategies just identified can be reversed by reformulating them from a *Gazan* perspective, such that they justify the rocket attacks against Israel by Gazan armed groups. Under such a reformulation: 1. the IDF would be constructed as an indiscriminately terrorizing, bombing, and occupying murder organization, committed to maintaining its regional hegemony with the support of regional hegemon the United States; 2. Israel would be presented as responsible for the rocket attacks and the occupation; 3. the occupation would be narrativized as an urgent crisis necessitating armed resistance in the form of rocket attacks; and 4. the unity of the Gazan people would be derived from the condemnation of this Israeli Other. What this thought experiment ought to demonstrate is that the narrow perspective of a particular nation, culture, or group—in other words, a perspective of *nationalism*—is quite effective for generating moral and practical arguments for state-sanctioned violence. More importantly, though, it ought to demonstrate how nationalism, and particularly the rhetoric it generates, is fundamentally immoral and generative of unsound

reasoning. The upshot is that those very same aspects afford anti-war rhetors a whole host of potential counterarguments.

Conclusion

My review of literature demonstrated how Rhetoric and Public Address has, in general, viewed war rhetoric as possessing both epideictic and deliberative elements. However, my particular case study revealed a more complex relationship. That is, the epideictic juxtaposition of the Israeli/IDF self and the Hamas enemy, by itself, served as a deliberative argument for the war. The argument was, in short: "their" identity is so fundamentally opposed to "ours" that it is in our best interests to go to war against them.

Revolving around these two identities were two groups of ideographs, positive and negative. The negative group's main God-term was "terror", while the positive's was "peace." These ideographs, like the characteristics ascribed to each character, served to identify. Thus, the Israeli/IDF self's "right to defense" was just as much a part of its core individuality as its being "courageous."

The diachronic analysis of the "terror" ideograph produced the conclusion that "terror" has, since the 1980s, typically been applied in public discourse to any political actor opposed to the strategic interests of the United States and Israel. Thus, it makes a good bit of sense that the synchronic analysis produced ideographic encounters between "terror" and "peace", "defense", and "innocence"; the latter group served as primary defining characteristics of the Israeli/IDF self, and Hamas is indeed opposed to that self's strategic interests. Hamas is a complicated organization whose tactics are immoral, but above all else it is an entity that is incredibly *inconvenient* for Israel, strategically. The most inconvenient aspect of it is that it was democratically selected by the Palestinians in free and fair elections in 2006 (CFR "Hamas").

I believe that a particular focus on identity construction reveals how today's war rhetors in the United States and Israel—two relatively free, democratic societies—are able to legitimize state violence on a massive scale, and moreover, how they are able to do so without depriving their cultures' core ideographic ideals of "peace" and "freedom" of meaning—indeed, by making direct reference to those ideals! The trick is in constructing an Other so stupid and monstrous that it is unfit to live under, or even understand, those ideals; even better if you can construct it as determined to destroy them. Applying this formula again in Israel is likely to have rhetorical success, if the polls from Operation Cast Lead are any indication. But American and Israeli scholars can help prevent such an outcome by continuing to engage in critical criticism—that is, criticism that lays bare the discourse of the powerful so as to empower audiences and rhetors.

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