CHAPTER 7
Malaysian Humanitarian Aid to Gaza in Media Headlines: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Ummu Zainab Al-Abidah Zainal Abidin and Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor

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7.1 INTRODUCTION

The Palestine issue is a familiar topic in Malaysian media; from time to time, it constantly reported on the events and people involved in the Palestine-Israel conflict. The conflict takes many forms; be it political, military or economic, and more often than not it involves other international interests. One of these international interests is the humanitarian aspect of the conflict; a conflict in which the Palestinians have been considerably pressurised due to their existing oppressive situation.

Gaza has commonly been described as ‘the largest open air prison’ due to the blockage by the Israeli authority. Based on a World Bank report (2015), Gaza’s economy experienced a dire crisis; one in which the Palestinians were mostly dependent on international assistance. All of this made any effort to sustain the region almost impossible without external intervention. Additionally, four out of five of its residents required humanitarian aid (UNRWA, 2015).

Malaysia played a significant role in the humanitarian work for Palestine. Malaysians have also been active in the Palestinian cause ever since the time of Malaysia’s first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman (Asmady, 2012). Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) contributed in various ways, including financial and humanitarian aid, both at the Malaysia level as well as extending its cooperation to other international groups. As a result of these events, the Malaysian media has been at the forefront in highlighting and reporting them. Even though Malaysia’s NGOs have been active in Palestine, the global media seldom reported on those Malaysian groups – as compared to other nationalities – that directly confronted the Israeli authority. In a few incidents Malaysians were involved and confronted its authority; one was the Freedom Flotilla (FF) case that occurred during 2010, and the other was the Women’s Boat for Gaza event that took place in 2016. Both events captured the interest of Malaysia’s media when the envoys, with Malaysian participants among them, collided with Israeli forces.
In this regard it is therefore interesting to explore the Malaysian media’s coverage of the Palestine-Israel issue; the question that crops up is: ‘how was the conflict portrayed when local citizens were directly involved?’ In what was otherwise commonly associated with the idea of a foreign conflict, these events drew national interest due Malaysian activists’ participation. These events, in fact, can be viewed differently from other humanitarian aids because the aspect of conflict involved ‘life and death’ and the ‘Israeli army’ as commonly depicted in the media is now linked to Malaysians. Other related questions that come to mind are: ‘How was language used to report on the events and what kind of overlying themes were the focus at that time?’ Additionally, ‘what can we glean from the language and themes of the news that would be able to tell us about Malaysian views toward the conflict in general and toward the respective incidents in particular?’

This essay’s central focus was the headlines which reported the two incidents; they were the Freedom Flotilla in 2010 and the Women’s Boat to Gaza in 2016. The headlines were accessed from a news archive of The New Straits Time Press, which are the New Straits Time and Berita Harian. The headlines were analyzed at the lexical and thematic levels respectively, and the implicit ideologies were linked to the incidents; it was thus demonstrated how they figured in the Malaysian context.

For that purpose, this essay has been arranged into several parts. After the introduction and a brief background of the study, a literature review on the theoretical framework is discussed. This section is then followed by the methodology section, analysis of the collected data, the findings and discussion, and it finally ends with the conclusion.
7.2 BRIEF BACKGROUND

7.2.1 Palestine-Israeli Conflict in Malaysia

Malaysia has no explicit policy with regards to the Palestine-Israel conflict. However, it is well known that Malaysia has been advocating for the recognition of a free Palestinian state at the United Nations, and it has never formally acknowledged Israel as a *bona fide* state. Malaysians in general and Malaysian Muslims in particular, have always been conscious of their views toward Palestine. First, the Palestine crisis was considered as a critical humanity issue, and secondly, Palestine was and is still seen as one of the sanctified lands by Muslims; the Palestinians were generally regarded as their brothers/sisters. Malaysians’ effort, at various levels, can be traced back to these two views. Humanitarian aid, for example, has been one of Malaysia’s biggest contributions. Aid from the government, the NGOs, or the common public has been continuously sent to Palestine, and Malaysian aid workers have participated in various endeavours and this included the Freedom Flotilla in 2010 and Women Boat to Gaza in 2016.

7.2.2 Freedom Flotilla and Women Boat to Gaza

Since the blockage of the Gaza Strip by Israel after 2009, many goods were banned from entering into that region. Humanitarian aid organizations have been keen in ‘breaking the siege’ of Gaza. Freedom Flotilla, the largest flotilla movement bound for Gaza to date, was organized by the Free Gaza Movement and the Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (İHH). Activists from various countries, including 12 from Malaysia joined the international effort, which consisted of eight ships carrying aid workers as well as medical and construction aids. The ships set out on 30 May 2010, and these were attacked the next day. Subsequently, 9 Turkish activists were killed. But while the Malaysians were by and large safe, 10 of them who were on *Mavi Marmara* that boarded and its workers were detained in
Israeli prison for a short time. Two other activists were on another ship, namely Rachael Corrie that started sailing a bit later. Rachael Corrie was eventually forced to turn around without any casualties. As will be seen in the analysis of the Malaysian newspaper headlines, the news included all the events related to the Malaysian activists on both ships.

‘Women’s Boat to Gaza’ in 2016 was an initiative that was started as a result of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition; this was, however, set up after the Freedom Flotilla incident in 2010 (Women’s Boat to Gaza, 2016). While many other flotillas have been organized between 2010 and 2016, it was only during this particular year that Malaysia had a representative, and this particular event was considered significant because only women participated; hence the name ‘Women’s Boat to Gaza.’ Like the previous ships, this one was also forced to stop on September 9, 2016 and all the activists, who were on board, were detained.

7.3 LITERATURE REVIEW: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In selecting the framework for this study, the nature of the headlines was considered; especially in how these headlines featured in the larger discourse of the Malaysian media. It was observed that when one reflected on an issue’s socio-political background, it was a decisive factor in the manner the events were depicted in the media; in addition, the depiction was usually aligned with the political interest of a particular country that reported that special event (Seo, 2013 cited in Zagorcic, 2015: 16). As such, the view that this study holds in regard to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach is that its goal was

“to uncover the ways in which discourse and ideology are intertwined. [...] every linguistic choice – every choice about how to produce discourse [...] every choice about how to interpret it – is a choice about how the
world is to be divided up and explained” (Johnstone, 2002: 45).

While examining Malaysia’s headlines regarding the two international incidents involving Malaysian activists, the main interest in discussing ideology was largely to do with understanding Malaysia’s own stance towards the incidents from the choice of language as reflected in these headlines. In this regard, van Dijk’s (1998) ideological square can be a useful tool in categorizing different ideologies that ‘divide and explain’ how the Malaysian media viewed the humanitarian incidents. In van Dijk’s ideological square, the categorizations of ideologies are on based on the following:

1. Emphasize our good properties/actions;
2. Emphasize their bad properties/actions;
3. Mitigate our bad properties/actions; and
4. Mitigate their good properties/actions.

According to van Dijk (1998: 33),

“(t)hese functional moves in the overall strategy of ideological self, which appear in most social conflict and actions (e.g., in racist, sexist etc. discourse), may be expressed in the choice of lexical items that imply positive or negative evaluations […] Here ‘our’ may refer to the in group or its friends, and ‘their’ to the out-group and friends or allies.”

Based on van Dijk’s theory, the findings from the surface level (linguistic and thematic analyses) provided the evidence for the underlying ideologies that circulated in the Malaysian media in regard to the Freedom Flotilla and Women’s Boat to Gaza incidents.
7.4 METHODOLOGY: DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

For the data collection, the study selected a database, *News Image Bank* (NIB), managed by the *New Straits Time* Press for three of its published newspapers; they were: *New Straits Time, Berita Harian, and Harian Metro*. Although the database is operated on pay-per-view basis, basic information such as the headlines, names of newspaper, names of the writer(s) and page numbers were made available without charge. A sample of information on a specific headline found in NIB was as follows:

| Headline: Malaysian doctor detained by Israeli navy |
| Publication: NST |
| Date of publication: Oct 6, 2016 |
| Section heading: Main Section |
| Page number: 011 |
| Byline / Author: By Zafira Anwar |

**Figure 7.1** Sample of headlines and related information from NIB

The two incidents that took place in May 2010 and September 2016 respectively were selected on the basis that these international incidents share some similarities; one of them was that these incidents involved Malaysian activists. For these two incidents, the date range in which the headlines were collected was one week prior and one week after the incidents. This was done in order to compare the scale in which the two incidents were reported in the Malaysian newspapers. Two separate searches were carried out according to the events. For the Freedom Flotilla incident, the assault incident took place on 31 May 2010. Therefore, the date range for the headlines was 24 May until 7 June 2010. The keyword used was ‘Gaza’. The results from the website generated a total of 150 news related to the incident. Similarly, the keyword ‘Gaza’ was also used for the second incident, with the date range from 30 August to 30 September.
2016. The number of search results returned a list of 25 headlines which have reported on *Women’s Boat to Gaza*.

Based on the number of search results, it can be seen that the ratio of headlines by the New Straits Time Press in their respective newspapers for Freedom Flotilla and Women Boat to Gaza was at 6:1. Thus for the purpose of this study, the number of news headlines that were selected for the analysis; there was a total of 77 headlines, with 66 headlines related to the incident in 2010, and 11 for the incident in 2016. Incidentally, only news from *New Straits Times* and *Berita Harian* were considered for this analysis.

### 7.5 DATA ANALYSIS

As the present study also intends to compare the two events, their respective headlines were separately analysed. However, the steps in analysing the headlines were similar and they were based on the following steps:

1. Headlines were grouped based on the sub-events, and based on a chronological timeline. The sub-events were separated into two main categories, news relating to the attack by Israel (31 May 2010 and 6 September 2016 respectively), and the news regarding the immediate aftermath for a period of one week. It should be noted that during the data collection stage, the date range entered for the search did include a period starting from one week before the attacks, but for both incidents, no headlines were found, as all the search results were related to the attacks and aftermath of the respective incidents.

2. The headlines were then categorised based on the types of news that they reported. For example, in the aftermath of the incident of Freedom Flotilla, Malaysians’ reactions can be divided into several types, such as internal reaction (e.g., concern for the captured activists), and external reaction (e.g., anger towards Israel).
(3) The third step that was taken was the analyses at the lexical, thematic and ideological levels. At the lexical level, words were examined for frequency use and lexical choices, namely the use of content words, including nouns, verbs used with these nouns as well as adjectives associated with them. At the thematic level, headlines were grouped based on the patterns of news that they reported. For example, from the categorisation in (2) above, internal reaction was one type of theme, with further sub-themes, such as reactions by political parties and reactions of the activists’ families. From these two analyses, lexical and thematic, the third level of analysis was made possible when the use of words and existing patterns revealed the ideological underpinnings of these headlines.

7.6 FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

7.6.1 Lexical Analysis

At the surface analysis stage, the words that came up most frequently in the headlines were identified. The purpose of identifying most frequent words was to ascertain the most common words that were associated with the incidents. How the words were used in their respective headlines were analysed at the next stage; this hopes to reveal how most common words were used, namely the context and other words that were used with them.

For example, if the word was a noun, (such as, the name of a person), was there any adjectives that described the person, or was it used with a specific verb to signify the actions of the person in the events. The main reference for the grammatical aspect of the content words was the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber *et al.*, 1999), and cross-checked with *Tatabahasa Dewan* (Nik Safiah *et al.*, 2015) for the Malay language.
7.6.1.1 Word Cloud Analysis

An online software package known as ‘Word Cloud’ was used to generate the findings. This was a simple frequency analysis, where words were displayed in size, based on their frequencies. This meant that the more frequent a word appeared its relative size would be bigger in comparison to other words. This software was selected, rather than other software with frequency counts using percentages because of its simplicity; after all the main purpose of this first lexical analysis was purely to identify common words. The findings were as follow:

7.6.1.1.1 Freedom Flotilla (2010)

The most frequent words that appeared in the headlines and associated words were ‘Israel’, ‘Malaysia’, ‘sukarelawan’ (volunteers), ‘Zionis’ (Zionist), ‘Rachael Corrie’, ‘kita’ (us/our), kutuk (condemn), Gaza, pengganas (terrorist) and rejim (regime). Of these words, ‘Israel’, ‘Zionis’, ‘pengganas’ and ‘rejim’ refer to the same entity.

7.6.1.1.2 Women Boat to Gaza (2016)

In this event, the most common words that came up in the headlines were ‘Israel’, ‘Fauziah’, ‘doctor’, ‘tahan’ (detain), ‘Palestin’ (Palestine), and ‘aktivis’ (activist). Of these, Fauziah and ‘doctor’ refer to the same entity, and they could also be connected to ‘aktivis’.

7.6.1.2 Content Words Analysis

Analysis at this level examined words at a closer level from the meanings they denoted. For consistency, words were identified based on their word class, namely nouns, adjectives and verbs. Below were selected examples from both incidents:
7.6.1.2.1  Freedom Flotilla

(i) The use of content words across headlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Nouns/Names</th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FF03</td>
<td>(1) Isteri sukarelawan Malaysia (3) misi (ke) Gaza</td>
<td>(2) yakin</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF05</td>
<td>(1) Malaysia (3) world (5) ship attack</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(2) urges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) dunia antarabangsa</td>
<td></td>
<td>(4) to condemn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF50</td>
<td>(1) Flotilla of hope (2) (for) people of Gaza</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF53</td>
<td>(1) Tindakan Israel (4) dunia antarabangsa</td>
<td>(2) agresif</td>
<td>(3) hina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By categorising individual words in each headline into their word class, it can be seen that headlines may contain (a) only nouns, such as in FF50; (b) nouns and adjectives (e.g., FF03); (c) nouns and verbs (e.g., FF05); and (d) nouns, adjectives and verbs, as in the case of FF33. Due to the nature of the headlines, the numbers of words were reduced, and thus depending on the focus of a respective headline (and the subsequent news article), the writer of the headline would make choices on which aspect to focus on. Via this method, the individual used of nouns, and the certain patterns were also revealed; and these are discussed below.

(ii) Noun usage and patterns

It should be noted that none of the headlines were without a specific noun, which showed that the main focus of a headline was almost always a specific entity, which were mostly nouns. Biber et al. (1999: 232), in comparing news extracts with and without nominal elements (by purposely taking out the elements), found that texts with only nominal elements ‘are far
more informative’ as these elements indicate ‘who’ and ‘what’ a given text (or headline as the case may be) was about. In the analysis, the most common nouns in the headlines found in the headlines may function in several different ways. Take ‘Israel’ and ‘Malaysia’ for example:

- **Israel**
  - (FF21) *Israel* tiada hak tahan *rakyat kita* (Israel has no right to detain our citizens)
  - (FF26) *Israel* bebas 12 *sukarelawan kita* (Israel freed our 12 volunteers)
  - (FF35) *Mahasiswa Malaysia* kutuk *Israel* (Malaysian students condemn Israel)
  - (FF37) 1,000 *demonstrasi kutuk Israel* (1,000 at demonstration condemning Israel)

In FF21 and FF26, Israel was in the act of doing (‘tahan’ and ‘bebas’) an action on another entity, ‘*rakyat kita’ and ‘*sukarelawan kita*’ (the Malaysians). Putting Israel in the active position illustrated it as a free entity that has control over its actions, while Malaysians were (viewed as the) victims of Israel. In contrast, Israel was on the receiving end of actions of others in FF35 and FF37. In these instances, Israel was not the active agent, but rather the focus was on the ones carrying out the action (‘*mahasiswa’ and demonstrators). By this was meant to position the doer of the action as one entity, and Israel as the other entity; thus pitting the one against the other.

- **Malaysia**
  - (FF02) *Malaysia* kutuk *kezaliman Israel* (Malaysia calls out Israeli’s cruelty)
  - (FF05) *Malaysia* urges world to condemn ship attack
  - (FF62) *Malaysia* hubungi sekutu kuat *Zionis* (Malaysia contacts strong ally of Zionist)
In most headlines which placed Malaysia in active actions (‘kutuk’, ‘urges’, ‘hubungi’), Malaysia was employed as an entity that engaged in specific actions; that is, directed in direct response to Israel’s actions, or other actions which meant to show opposition to Israel in general.

It was noted that several words may refer to one entity. Fairclough introduced the concept of ‘overwording’, for the use different synonyms and near synonyms (Johnstone, 2002: 49). Overwording was also a sign that indicated ‘intense preoccupation’ (Todolí Cervera, Postigo, and Herrero, 2006: 12). Thus, the use of Israel with its related terms including Zionist, regime, and Tel Aviv highlighted that most of the headlines were mostly concentrated on Israel as one evident entity that was active in the event.

Another aspect of using multiple words for one entity also demonstrated that when choices were available; the chosen word would bring along with it certain connotations or implicit ideas. It was observed that when an entity was given a name, a claim was constituted about it (Johnstone, 2002: 48). Therefore, between the use of Israel, Tel Aviv, and Zionist for example, the different names may also indicate a specific claim on that said entity. ‘Israel’ was the name of a country, while ‘Tel Aviv’ was the name of its capital city. The use of capital of a country may refer to its direct power or its government, which indicated responsibility and formality.

Another concept which may be worth discussing was the idea of “labelling.” According to Matheson (2005: 24), while labels remain useful in news due to the fact that they were able to “compress so much meaning into a few words”, they can also often incorporate people into “rigid social categories”, and by labelling an entity, it also “defines how members of the society can understand and judge any action done by that person and allows them to generalise about them.” Among the most pervasive use of
labels in the headlines were used to depict Israel, even when their actions might not be mentioned explicitly in the headlines. Some of these included ‘pengganas’ (terrorist), ‘keganasan’ (violence), and ‘kekejaman’/‘kezaliman’ (cruelty), as in the following:

- (FF29) Kabinet bentang usul kecam keganasan Zionis (Cabinet condemns the Zionists’ violence)
- (FF17) Perbuatan Tel Aviv serang kemanusiaan patut dilabel pengganas dunia (Tel Aviv’s attack on humanitarian ships should be labeled as world terrorists)
- (FF34) Kota London bergema suara protes kutuk kezaliman Israel (The city of London echoes with voices of protest condemning the cruelty of Israel)

(iii) The use of verbs

As can be seen from the some of the samples above, the use of verbs in the headlines was directly connected to their respective nouns, and the majority of headlines were in active voice. Additionally, the verbs also have core meanings and thus can be categorised as such. For example, “activity verbs” (Biber et al., 1999: 361) “denote actions and events that could be associated with choice”. Consider the following usage of verbs:

- (FF01) ‘Freedom Flotilla carries hope, not weapons’
- (FF08) ‘We are praying for the best’
- (FF13) Rachel Corrie elak risiko (Rachael Corrie avoids risks)
- (FF48) Parliament to condemn attack on Monday

The significance of verbs in the case of these headlines has much to do with the meaning of actions they carry for the nouns. As been noted previously, due to the different entities
positioned in opposite sides, their actions also do oppose each other. Such as the activities that were associated with the Israeli entity; these were mostly suited along with the labels given to them.

(iv) The use of adjectives

Adjectives were less commonly found in the headlines compared to nouns and verbs, and like verbs, they were used to give more information to the nouns that they accompanied; these tallied with the functions of adjectives that were to describe and characterise “the referent of nominal expression” (Biber et al., 1999: 506). Sample of headlines which employ the use of adjectives included:

- (FF10) All 12 Malaysians on ship safe
- (FF53) Tindakan agresif Israel hina dunia antarabangsa (Israel’s aggressive action offend international community)
- (FF54) Aktivis tekad teruskan misi kemanusiaan (Activists resolved to continue humanitarian mission)

In some headlines, like FF10, the adjective was indispensible to the headline because it was part of the main information. However, there were instances where the absence of a specific adjective or even the use of a different one would have given a different impression. In FF53 for example, compare between two headlines with and without the adjective:

- Tindakan agresif Israel hina dunia antarabangsa (Israel’s aggressive action offend international community)
- Tindakan Israel hina dunia antarabangsa (Israel’s action offend international community)

The use of the adjective placed ‘Israel’ in a different light, compared to when it was not used. When the word ‘agresif’ (aggressive) was added, Israel’s action seems more
despicable and violent, which also suggested that there was a receiver of their actions. When there was a victim in a violent situation (especially when it was unnamed), the named aggressor, in this case Israel (which was clearly named), readers would tend to take sides, and channel negative impressions and beliefs towards the other side; and in this type of headlines it was easier to focus all the negativity on Israel without having a divided attention. Similarly, in FF54, the interest would be on the activists, and thus, their determination would seem to be all the more pronounced when they were described as ‘tekad’ (resolved).

7.6.1.2.2 Women’s Boat to Gaza

Patterns and uses of words may be less detectable in headlines relating to the event in 2016, due to the significantly less number of headlines available. However, the application of nouns, verbs and adjectives in this incident can be said to be similar to that of the previous incident, with slight differences. Below are instances of the use of content words in the headlines.

(i) The use of content words across headlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Nouns/Names</th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WBG03</td>
<td>(1) Ministry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(2) working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(3) to free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) doctor</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBG05</td>
<td>(1) ‘Dr. Fauziah</td>
<td>(2) kental</td>
<td>(3) hadapi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) provokasi</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5) Israel’</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBG09</td>
<td>(1) Aid ship (was)</td>
<td>(2) (so) close</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) (to) Gaza</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The headlines can be categorised in terms of the words they contain in the combination of (a) nouns and verbs (e.g.,
WBG03); (b) nouns, verbs and adjectives (e.g., WBG05); or (c) nouns and adjectives (e.g., WBG09). The only difference with the Freedom Flotilla incident was that there were no headlines that employed nouns only.

(ii) Noun usage and patterns

Similar to the first incident, the use of nouns can be seen in the contrast between two different entities based on their roles in respective situations. For example,

- (WBG01) *Malaysian doctor* detained by *Israeli navy*
- (WBG02) *Israel* tahan kapal bantuan *ke Palestin* (Israel detains aid ship to Palestine)

In WBG01, the Malaysian doctor was positioned against Israeli navy, through an active action by the Israeli force. Similarly, in WBG02, Israel was positioned opposite of the aid; and here again it was through active choice of its own. In both instances, the ones who were in the opposition of Israel were seen without control and thus victims of Israel.

However, in this incident, there was no apparent use of overwording or labelling. An alternative word for Israel included the words ‘army’ or ‘navy’, but other popular uses such as Zionist were interestingly not found in the headlines.

(iii) The use of verbs

The use of verbs also depended on the nouns that were used in the headlines in the ‘Women’s Boat to Gaza’ incident.

- (WBG06) *Israel* beri pilihan aktivis keluar *ke Eropah, Jordan* (Israel gives activists choices to leave for Europe, Jordan)
• (WBG07) Gesa PBB kutuk Israel tahan Zaytouna-Oliva
(Urge the UN to condemn Israel detaining Zaytouna-Olivia)

In WBG06, for example, Israel was shown to be in the position of authority over the activists that they were detained; this thus gave them the power to provide ‘choices’ to the activists. For WBG07, there were four verbs involved with specific nouns or entities:

• ‘Gesa’ (verb), entity unnamed
• ‘kutuk’ (verb), ‘PBB’ (entity)
• ‘tahan’ (verb), ‘Israel’ (entity)
• verb indirectly indicated, ‘Zaytouna-Olivia’ (entity)

In this headline, a myriad of relationships was indicated by the verbs associated with them. Entity (a) (Malaysia was one possible candidate) that was positioned against entity (c) (Israel) was actively doing an action on entity (b), due to an action of (c) which affected entity (d). Through the different verbs, readers of the headlines were made aware of the different positions of different groups in the incident.

(iv) The use of adjectives

• (WBG05) ‘Dr. Fauziah kental hadapi provokasi Israel’
(Dr. Fauziah resolute in facing Israeli’s provocation)
• (WBG08) Dr. Fauziah tidak serik bantu Palestin
(Dr. Fauziah is not discouraged from helping Palestine)
• (WBG09) Aid ship was so close to Gaza

Compared to Freedom Flotilla related headlines, adjectives were far less common. In the three headlines where adjectives were found, the main focus was on the activist (e.g., WBG05 & WBG08) and the ship in WBG09, which were all humanitarian
aid-related. The use of adjective in WBG09 can be considered part of the main information that the headline aimed to deliver, while in WBG05 and WBG08, the purpose of the adjectives was to highlight the determination of the activist involved; one of the main topics in the headlines of the incident was, indeed, the activist herself.

7.6.2 The Thematic Analysis

In the thematic analysis, the purpose was to identify the patterns in which the incidents were reported by the headlines. The themes centred on events and people (nouns) involved as revealed by the headlines. For Freedom Flotilla, for example, the themes were identified based on the main incident(s), which was the attacks by Israel, the Malaysian activists, the situation in Malaysia (mainly concerning Malaysians), and the situation of Rachael Corrie, one of the ships that was still continuing its journey at the time these headlines were made. Below are the themes that have been identified, as well as some sample headlines under each theme.

7.6.2.1 Freedom Flotilla

(a) Reports on the attack and ongoing situation
   - (FF04) *Fate unknown*
   - (FF06) *Nasib 11 rakyat kita masih samar (HL)* (The fate of our 11 citizens is still unclear)

(b) Headlines relating to the activists after they have returned to Malaysia

   (i) News about the activists

      - (FF25) ‘*Pulang pakai baju penjara*’ (Came home with prison clothes)
      - (FF42) ‘*Sayur tempe sambut Dr. Selamat*’ (Tempe greets Dr. Selamat)
(ii) The activists’ reactions

- (FF33) “It was pure hell”
- (FF66) ‘Jiwa saya masih di Gaza’ (My heart is still in Gaza)

(c) Headlines on Malaysians’ reactions to the incident

(i) Internal reaction (within Malaysia)

*The Government*

- (FF14) Wisma Putra diarah usaha bawa pulang sukarelawan (Wisma Putra instructed to bring the volunteers home)
- (FF24) *Special motion in Dewan*

*Political Parties*

- (FF07) Parti politik sebulat suara kutuk serangan rejim Zionis (Political parties unanimously condemn the attack of Zionist regime)
- (FF15) PAS gesa sidang khas Parlimen (PAS calls for immediate Parliament special session)

*Families of Activists*

- (FF20) Ibu syukur Ashwad ditawan selamat (Mother of detained Ashwad is grateful he is safe)
- (FF22) Keluarga Hasanuddin bimbang (Hasanuddin’s family worries)

(ii) External reactions (towards others)

*Israel*

- (FF19) Tentera, rejim haram Israel pengganas sebenar (Military, illegal regime of Israel the real terrorists)
Malaysian Humanitarian Aid to Gaza

- (FF36) *Serangan Mavi Marmara serlah kebiadapan Israel* (Mavi Marmara attack highlights Israeli’s foul manner)

*America/the U.S*
- (FF60) *Sokongan Amerika punca keangkuhan Israel* (America’s support the reason for Israeli arrogance)
- (FF63) *Obama shouldn’t turn a blind eye*

*International Bodies*
- (FF09) *Calls to haul Israel to ICJ*
- (FF32) *United Nations powerless*

*Gaza/Palestine*
- (FF46) *Dunia tidak akan biar penduduk Gaza menderita* (The world will not let people of Gaza suffer)
- (FF50) *Flotilla of hope for people of Gaza*

(d) Reports on Rachael Corrie
   - (FF44) *Rachel Corrie tak berdepan ancaman* (Rachael Corrie does not face threat)
   - (FF45) *‘We will press on’ (HL)*

7.6.2.2 *Women’s Boat to Gaza*

(a) Headlines on the attack on 6 Oct 2016
   - (WBG01) *Malaysian doctor detained by Israeli navy*
   - (WBG02) *Israel tahan kapal bantuan ke Palestin* (Israel detains aid ship to Palestine)

(b) Headlines relating to activists
   - (WBG04) *Dua aktivis WBG dibebas* (Two WBG activists freed)
   - (WBG10) *(Insiden kena halau tentera)* (Eviction by army incident)
(c) Headlines on Malaysians’ reactions to the incident
(i) (WBG07) Gesa PBB kutuk Israel tahan Zaytouna-Oliva
(Urge the UN to condemn Israel detaining Zaytouna-Olivia)
(ii) (WBG11) Tindakan Israel halang misi kemanusiaan patut didakwa
(Israeli’s action preventing humanitarian aid should be charged)

7.6.3 Ideological Analysis

As mentioned in the literature review, van Dijk’s (1998) ideological square was used to analyse the ideologies that underlie the headlines related to Freedom Flotilla and Women’s Boat to Gaza. In the framework, four categories of ideologies that were in dichotomic relations were identified as (a) emphasis on our good properties/actions; (b) emphasis on their bad properties/actions; (c) mitigation of our bad properties/actions; and (d) mitigation of their good properties/actions. The relationships can be seen from various angles, namely (a) our/us against their/them; (b) good against bad; and (c) opposing properties and actions. As have been established in the findings, these elements can be found in the headlines, where it can be seen that the nouns or names (the different groups that have been named) as used in the headlines are positioned with specific stance, as indicated by the use of specific verbs and adjectives.

7.6.3.1 Freedom Flotilla

Through the identification of these different elements, the following ideologies were observed to be most prevalent when:

(a) There was the idea of ‘us’, engaged in ‘good’ ‘properties or actions’. For example,

(i) Solidarity among Malaysians.
(FF07) *Parti politik sebulat suara kutuk serangan rejim Zionis* (Political parties unanimously condemn the attack of Zionist regime).

(FF15) *PAS gesa sidang khas Parlimen* (PAS calls for immediate Parliament special session).

(FF30) *UMNO mahu PBB segera henti serangan rejim Tel Aviv* (UMNO wants UN to stop the attack of Tel Aviv regime).

When reflecting upon the Malaysian political landscape, the different Malaysian political parties were usually seen on opposing sides and it was naturally part of the Malaysian (media) political discourse. However, the Freedom Flotilla incident created an opportunity for these parties to be on the (same) side of ‘us’. This is apparent in FF07 with the use of ‘sebulat suara’ (unanimously). Nevertheless, their more practical actions were distinguished based on their known labels (e.g., PAS, UMNO), as the media needed to explicitly point out which political parties did what and said when. This indirectly illustrated that the concept of different political parties as fixed entities was very much imbedded within Malaysian media and society, and it presented the idea of ‘solidarity’ among them all the more significant.

(ii) Solidarity with the rest of the World

(FF34) *Kota London bergema suara protes kutuk kezaliman Israel* (The city of London echoes with voices of protest condemning the cruelty of Israel)

(FF46) *Dunia tidak akan biar penduduk Gaza menderita* (The world will not let people of Gaza suffer)

(FF53) *Tindakan agresif Israel hina dunia antarabangsa* (Israel’s aggressive action offend international community)

Malaysians were shown not to be alone, whether for the activists or the support for their cause. Reference was made to protests that were also taking place elsewhere (e.g., FF34),
showing a shared action and concern for Palestine (e.g., FF46) among the international communities. Incidentally, Israel’s action was shown not to only have offended and affected the activists, but it also influenced and affected the world community (e.g., FF53). In fact, although the incident of the Freedom Flotilla was of immediate concern, this also extended towards the larger context of Palestine-Israel conflict. FF46 can be seen to refer to not just the failed attempt of delivering the humanitarian aid, but also to the dire situation in Gaza. Therefore, the protest against the cruelty of Israel in FF34 was also about the on-going cruelty and not just about Freedom Flotilla.

(iii) Heroism of the activists

- (FF64) *PM: They are national heroes*
- (FF28) *28 jam rasai azab Palest*in (28 hours experiencing the Palestinian torment)
- (FF41) *10 sukarelawan kita tidak serik* (Our 10 volunteers are not discouraged)
- (FF42) *‘Sayur tempe sambut Dr. Selamat’* (‘Tempe greets Dr. Selamat’)

The activists were heralded as heroes of the nations, for what they had to go through (uncommon experiences of being detained by Israel), as exemplified by FF28. However, as with any heroic trait, adversary does not deter a hero (e.g., FF41), and would be willing to go again. One of the activists was given a hero’s welcome in FF42, as his name indicated his Javanese origin, and ‘tempe’ was a well-known Javanese food, which also emphasised his local root, for a hero who returned from a perilous situation in foreign waters. The direct statement by the PM also established the idea (e.g., FF64) of national heroes.

(b) There was the idea of ‘them’, engaged with ‘bad’ ‘properties or actions’. Such instances are:

(i) Condemnation on Israel’s actions
Malaysian Humanitarian Aid to Gaza

- (FF18) *Sampai bilakah Israel dibiar terus mengganas* (How long should Israel be left to violence)
- (FF21) *Israel tiada hak tahan rakyat kita* (Israel has no right to detain our citizens)
- (FF40) *Israel niat bunuh* (Israel was intent on killing)
- (FF56) *Tuntut semula barangan dirampas Israel* (Demand the goods seized by Israel)

Condemnations on Israel can either be on Israel in general (e.g., FF18), or its specific actions, such as detaining the activists (e.g., FF21). In FF18, the general tone was based on the rhetorical question that the headline posed: ‘*Sampai bilakah*’; this implied more than the attack on Freedom Flotilla, and it referred to an action that was on-going for a long time (i.e., violence against the Palestinians). The other three do refer to the explicit incident, with three criminal acts of Israel that have been associated with Palestinians, but that were not usually experienced by the Malaysian themselves: arrest, (intention of) murder, and the pillage of goods.

(ii) Condemnations on others

- (FF27) *To choke rogue state, cut off its funding*
- (FF60) *Sokongan Amerika punca keangkuhan Israel* (America’s support the reason for Israeli arrogance)
- (FF63) *Obama shouldn’t turn a blind eye*
- (FF32) *United Nations powerless*

While outright condemnation on Israel has largely to do with the raid on Freedom Flotilla, criticism on others who were seen as indirect contributor of the incident mainly take the form of blame. America, known as a staunch supporter of Israel, was clearly attacked in the mentioned headlines. Additionally, the UN was also blamed in regard to its ‘inability’ to specifically prevent
such incidents and to end the whole Palestine-Israel conflict in general.

7.6.3.2 Women’s Boat to Gaza

In this incident, the small number of headlines made it difficult to name definitive ideas as above. However, in general, the main underlying ideology remained the same, in regard to ‘us’ against ‘them’. The idea of ‘us’, engaged in ‘good’ ‘properties or actions’ can be seen in the following:

- (WBG05) ‘Dr. Fauziah kental hadapi provokasi Israel’
  (Dr. Fauziah resolute in facing Israeli’s provocation)
- (WBG08) Dr. Fauziah tidak serik bantu Palestin
  (Dr. Fauziah is not discouraged from helping Palestine)
- (WBG07) Gesa PBB kutuk Israel tahan Zaytouna-Oliva
  (Urge the UN to condemn Israel detaining Zaytouna-Olivia)
- (WBG11) Tindakan Israel halang misi kemanusiaan patut didakwa
  (Israeli’s action preventing humanitarian aid should be charged)

The idea of ‘them’, engaged with ‘bad’ ‘properties or actions,’ was quite evident in the following headlines:

- (WBG01) Malaysian doctor detained by Israeli navy
- (WBG02) Israel tahan kapal bantuan ke Palestin
  (Israel detains aid ship to Palestine)
- (WBG10) (Insiden kena halau tentera)
  (Eviction by army incident)

In regard to the ideological square as a whole, overwhelmingly the headlines concentrated on the two out of four levels of the square, namely ‘emphasising on our good actions’ and ‘emphasising on their bad actions.’ One of the reasons was that the choice of words and the patterns in which they were employed
were explicitly sending the message that conformed to the main ideological dichotomy of the ‘us’ versus ‘them’.

The discussion of ideology should not be considered in a vacuum; it should be taken by considering the larger socio-cognitive aspect in which the headlines appeared. Malaysians’ general stance towards Palestine and Israel as well as their experience in the conflict has much to influence the formation of the headlines; in other words, they do not just influence the respective incidents. Malaysia has a specific standpoint when it comes to the conflict, which can be described as ‘pro-Palestine;’ this is visibly evident from Malaysia’s past experience in relation to the question of Palestine. Therefore, in regard to the headlines, i.e. lexical choices, thematic patterns and underlying ideologies, serve towards conforming to the existing notion that Malaysians already had towards the conflict. In these headlines, much of the confirmation has to do with how Malaysians see Israel and its role in the conflict. As Matheson (2005: 18) suggested, “the news is not telling us something new, but reminding us of the resilience of the already known structures of knowledge.”

7.6.4 Other Comparison between Freedom Flotilla and Women’s Boat to Gaza

In addition to the discussion of specific findings on lexical, thematic and ideological level on the two separate incidents, there were also aspects of the comparison that warrant further discussion.

7.6.4.1 Ratio of Headlines

So far this study compared and contrasted how the media depicted and reported the two separate incidents in Malaysian news headlines; one of the initial major differences that was observed was the disparity between the numbers of news that were related to the respective incidents. As noted in the Methodology section, Freedom Flotilla garnered a total of 150 news items as compared
to the 25 on ‘Women’s Boat for Gaza.’ The large ratio of 6 to 1 may be considered very significant when one asks: ‘what were the conditions in which each incident was reported?’ And when posing a follow-up question: ‘why did the first incident receive such extensive coverage, compared to the second one?’

One explanation could be that the Freedom Flotilla was a novel experience for Malaysians, and thus with any other ‘first-time’ event would be considered extraordinary and capture much interest. Secondly, the number of activists may also be a factor, as there were 12 of them that were further split into second group. While the first 10 was detained, the other 2 were still on board a sailing ship; moving towards its destination. Therefore, while interest was captured due to the detainment of the first group, it was maintained with the second group.

7.6.4.2 News Coverage

Another similarity was the lack of headlines in the week prior to the incidents. For the Freedom Flotilla, this was perhaps not unexpected as Malaysia had no prior experience, and outside of the immediate circle of Malaysians who had a sustained interest in the issue, not much would have been said; and 16 May 2010 was the closest date to 31 May 2010 that made mention of the envoy. On the other hand, it might not be unreasonable to expect that ‘Women’s Boat to Gaza’ would have garnered more interest, due to the 2010 experience. Additionally, the sole activist this time was a woman, along with other women activists, the first of its kind among (Malaysian) Palestinian humanitarian aid groups. Despite that, it was similar to 2010, there were no headlines that made mention of the event; it was not until 6 September 2016 when the ship was detained that the media brought it into focus as noteworthy report.

It could be said that the significance of such an event can only be seen by those with an avid interest in the Palestine-Israel conflict. Among the NGO groups (through their websites and social media), the event was well-circulated. However, since
Malaysian humanitarian aid groups have been active regardless of the situation, it was possible that it was considered just like any other humanitarian endeavour. Even with the possibility of danger, it was taken ‘for granted’ in the sense that ‘it is what the NGOs do anyway.’ Therefore, the only time when the event did make it into the headlines was when it became serious; hence, the report on the day of Israel prevented the boat from reaching Gaza. Zagorcic (2015: 12) made a point when he mentioned that “a reoccurring trait of international news is that it is largely produced for, because, and during major events, but usually, very little hits the news, once the conflicts have calmed down, or the horrific situation is over.”

7.7 CONCLUSION

The essay explored how the Palestine-Israel conflict was manifested in Malaysia’s media headlines when the conflict involved its own humanitarian activists in two separate incidents; namely, the Freedom Flotilla that took place in 2010, and the Women’s Boat to Gaza that occurred during 2016. The essay was mainly interested in examining the use of language in these headlines; particularly in terms of its lexical and thematic patterns. From there, the underlying ideologies associated with the events were uncovered, and they were discussed within the larger consideration for Malaysia’s own background and its past experiences with the Palestine-Israeli issue.

At the lexical analysis stage, the employment of content words class, namely nouns, verbs and adjectives revealed specific uses and patterns. Nouns associated with the participants in the events were divided into two distinct categories; the one side was ‘Malaysia’ and the other side was ‘Israel.’ Additionally, in the case of the latter, there were scenarios of overwording and labelling. The verbs in the headlines were employed to highlight actions by the participants, either as actively engaged in the respective activities or experiencing them due to actions of others. The verbs
also served to focus on the opposing roles of Malaysia and Israel and their counterparts. Adjectives were also similarly patterned, although the instances in which they were used were fewer than the verbs.

Themes were organized based on the events and participants of the incidents. The themes in Freedom Flotilla were much more apparent compared to Women’s Boat to Gaza as the number of events and people involved, as mentioned by the headlines, was considerably higher. However, in general these two events did share similar threads of thematic patterns.

From the two analyses, the ideological undercurrents in the newspaper headlines were made conspicuously clearer. Based on the ideological square as advocated by van Dijk, the ideologies were posited on two opposing sides, namely ‘emphasising on our good actions’ and ‘emphasising on their bad actions.’ This particular dichotomy confirmed the existing stance that was adopted by Malaysia for a considerable time and this was supportive towards the Palestine cause in opposition to Israel’s actions towards the Palestinians.

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