Ideological or International Move? A Critical Discourse Analysis toward the Representation of Iran Sanctions in Western Printed Media

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Abstract—The media are not neutral, common-sense[d], or rational mediator of social events, but essentially help reproduce preformulated ideologies (van Dijk, 1988, p.11). Adopting the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, the present study focused on the headlines and lead paragraphs of a corpus of twenty news reports released by ten well-established western newspapers and examined the coverage of Iran sanction imposition by western printed media. Working within the ideological framework of news production and reception (van Dijk, 1988, p. 248), this study further explored the western press coverage of Iran sanctions to demonstrate how the arguments made by western newspapers via heads and leads were encoded in ideologically biased discursive patterns (e.g. lexical and grammatical choices, intertextual choices and ideological *us* versus *them* binary opposition) in an attempt to justify and legitimize the so-called "international move" against Iran (van Dijk, 1988, p. 248, as cited in Sheyholislami, 2001, pp. 3-4). Interestingly, the findings suggested that there were strong ideological proclivity and orientation in the western newspapers' reports of the event.

Index Terms—critical discourse analysis, media bias, language, ideology, Iran sanctions, western printed media

I. INTRODUCTION

It is very common, nowadays, to hear people say "Nulla nuova, buona nuova," the old Italian adage meaning "no news is good news," which seems to be true in the ambience of too much news of disturbing nature pouring in from all directions all the time nolens volens. The news, however, is a must for everyone to lead an active life and nothing but the news can help us to keep in touch with the milieu which we live in. The main conveyor of the news, though old-fashion, is still newspapers that are incomparably superior to any other forms of the media (Heek, 2004, para. 1, 2). However, the news and information we pick up through the media, including newspapers, might not reflect the sound realities. They might be politically or ideologically biased and manipulated (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009, p. 33; Lee, 2010, pp. 8-9). According to van Dijk (1988), media massage is not transparent but rather is intricately ideological. "The media", as he further argues, "are not a neutral, common-sense[d], or rational mediator of social events, but essentially help reproduce preformulated ideologies" (van Dijk, 1988, p. 11). To this end, the media symbolically employ *language* to represent and maintain social power and exercise the ideologies (Popp, 2006, pp. 5-17).

Language, for Fairclough (1992), is by no means a neutral object (Moreno, 2008, p. 34). It is overly simplistic to view language as nothing but a tool for communication; on the contrary, it is a potentially manipulative instrument which reflects ideologies through lexical, syntactic and discoursal choices (Munday, 2009, p. 197). The dominant groups in society (i.e. those in power), fully aware of the potential of the persuasive media and its powerful medium – the language, subtly imprint their views on widespread discursive practices by having privileged access to and control over public discourse via the media and its language. In turn, discourse contributes to supporting and legitimizing those views as part of a consensus which is unwittingly accepted and taken as 'natural' by the majority in society; and this may cause social problems – inequality and injustice in societies, to be more precise. Thus, there is an urgent need for studies on media language and discourse within an appropriate paradigm to address these social problems. The paradigm in question, according to Bloor and Bloor (2007), is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (p. 12).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA, as Brown (2005) puts it, is founded on the assumption that texts and talks play a key role in maintaining and legitimating inequality, injustice, and oppression in societies (p. 290). Van Dijk (1993) offers further explanation as he argues that CDA is a field which is basically concerned with and explores the way in which powerful social agents influence social beliefs and values, and shape ideologies, through the standards they set for what is and is not acceptable, therefore revealing the power asymmetry in discourse (Bhatia, 2006, p. 178). Coffin et al. (2010), using the work of Fairclough and Wodak (1997) summaries the general principles of CDA as follow:

1) CDA addresses social problem
2) Power relations are discursive
3) Discourse constitute society and culture
4) Discourse does ideological work
5) Discourse is historical
6) The link between text and society is mediated
7) Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
8) Discourse is a form of social action (pp. 98-109).

In sum, CDA, seeking to achieve these principles and objectives, investigates and attempts to illustrate 'a relationship between text and social conditions, ideologies and power-relations'. From this, four central and main themes of CDA can be identified: the constituted and (re)creative character of discourse; power and social relations in discourse; ideology; and hegemony (Richardson, 2007, pp. 26, 27). The concepts of *ideology*, *hegemony*, *power* and *discourse* will be discussed in further details in the following sections.

B. Ideology, Hegemony, Power and Discourse

There is no universally agreed-upon definition for ideology (Cassels, 1996, p. 1), nor do any exist for power, discourse and hegemony (Gallie, 1955, as cited in Richardson, 2007, pp. 29, 30). *Ideology*, however, is defined by most scholars as "ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the interest of a ruling group or class by distortion or dissimulation" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 30, as cited in Calzada Perez, 2003, p. 4). In Richardson (2007) rather neat turn of phrase, "*hegemony* is the process initiated by ruling class to persuade and convince all other classes to accept and submit to the authority and subordination of the ruling class" (p. 35). *Power*, in crude terms, refers to asymmetrical relationships in which some participants are more powerful than others to shape what occurs or how it is interpreted. Said another way, power is a special privilege one subgroup or one person "has" and others don't: power stems from social status (Johnstone, 2008, pp. 129, 130). The term *discourse*, another incredibly slippery concept, is simply defined here as "language in use" since this definition is not only precise enough and further suffices to grant *language* a central role in discourse, but still flexible enough to be able to denote all other definitions that exist for this elusive term (Richardson, 2007, pp. 237, 238).

C. Directions in CDA

Many theorists, belonging to different schools have prominently figured in attending to CDA from different scholarly angles (Wodack, 2006, pp. 2, 4). CDA, however, is most often associated with researchers such as Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk and Ruth Wodak (Wooffitt, 2005, p. 137). Their proposed models for CDA are the points we briefly return in the following paragraphs due to the substantial contributions they have made to overall development of the field.

Fairclough's (1992, 1995) framework for discourse analysis has three levels: the text, the discursive practice, and the socio-cultural practice. The first level is text analysis which involves the study of the language structures produced in a discursive event. The second is analysis of discourse practice, through which texts are produced, consumed and reproduced. The third level is the analysis of social practices, focusing in particular on the relation of discourse to power and ideology (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 371). He is, in a nutshell, advocating a detailed analysis of the form and function of the text, the way that this text relates to the way it is produced and consumed, and the relation of this to the wider society in which it takes place; and these, according to him, are a must if a full understanding of the nature of discourse and the way it operates is really desired (Richardson, 2007, p. 37).

Van Dijk's (1988a, 1988b, 1991) socio-cognitive framework for discourse analysis, like Fairclough's, has three levels, which illustrates how societal structures can be related to discourse structures only through social actors and their minds: mental models mediate between ideology and discourse. Therefore, three main components are identified in his approach: discourse, cognition, and society where cognition mediates between discourse and society. By discourse he simply means the discourse structures that are manifested in different forms, such as written text, speech, gestures, facial expressions, etc. Cognition here refers to personal/social beliefs, understanding, and evaluation engaged in discourse, whereas society concerns local interlocutor relationships or global societal structures such as political systems and group/subgroup relations. Although van Dijk's model bears a close resemblance to Fairclough's, there is still a clear distinction between them regarding the second level: while the second dimension in Fairclough's model namely, discourse practice, mediates between the other two, it is the social cognition and mental model mediating between discourse and social in van Dijk's approach. Van Dijk's proposed model for CDA also analyzes both microstructure level (e.g. vocabulary and syntax) and macrostructure level which is represented in news headlines and lead paragraphs (Kuo & Nakamura, 2005, p. 398; Wang, 2009, p. 748; Sheyholislami, 2001, p. 7).

Ruth Wodak's model of CDA, namely discourse-historical approach (DHA), is an interdisciplinary, multimethodical and multitheoretical approach which attempts to incorporate the historical perspective with CDA since "social processes are dynamic, not static" and this "has to be reflected in the theory and in the methodology" (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, pp. 63-64; Isbuga-Erel, 2008, p. 65). The term historical holds a key position in her framework where there is an attempt to take into account all available background information in the analysis and interpretation of the many layers of a written or spoken text. In other words, DHA highlights the discourse is historical, closely connected with events which have happened or are happening. What really distinguishes this approach from previous attempts in CDA – van Dijk's model, in particular – is its focus on the historical contexts of discourse in the process of explanation and interpretation (Sheyholislami, 2001, p. 5; Bhatia, 2006, p. 178).

D. Linguistic Toolkit for CDA

A core group of linguistic features ought to be examined in the search of the ideological underpinnings of discourse (Hakam, 2009, p. 37). The features most relevant to the present study are as follows:

1. Lexical Choice

Lexicalization, or word choice, as van Dijk (1995) points out, is 'the major dimension of [ideologically controlled] discourse meaning' (Johnson et al., 2010, p. 248). There is a widely held view that the choice of words in news reports is by no means arbitrary, nor it is journalist's own creation; but is systematically determined by societies (Pan, 2002, pp. 51-52). For Richardson (2007), all types of words, but particularly nouns, adjective, verbs and adverbs carry connoted in addition to denoted meanings. Thus, the analysis of particular words used in a newspaper text is almost always the first stage of any text or discourse analysis (p. 47).

2. Metonymy

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which the name of an attribute of an entity is used in the place of the entity itself (Crystal, 1980, p. 291). What make metonymia, amongst other linguistic devices, an important feature of language use for discourse analysis, are the ways that they are employed and not their presence. Metonyms may 'enable the speakers [or writers] to conjure away responsible, involved or affected actors (whether victims or perpetrators), or to keep them in the semantic background' (Richardson, 2007, p. 68).

3. Presupposition

Van Dijk (1995) defines presupposition in this way: proposition *q* is presupposed by *p*, if it is implied by *p* as well as by *non-p* (original emphasis) (p. 273). It is a frequently referred linguistic/pragmatic property of language use which might be systematically employed to serve ideological and/or political purposes in news discourse (Bekalu, 2006, pp. 151, 169).

4. Modality

Modality refers to judgments, comment and attitude in text and talk and is indicated through the use of modal verbs (such as may, could, should, will and must), their negations (may not, couldn't, shouldn't, will not, and must not) or through adverbs [such as probably, possibly, certainly and so on] (Richardson, 2007, p. 241). As it functions 'to express group membership', the use of modality is crucial to signaling the alignment or 'affiliation' of the writer (Stubbs, 1996, p. 202, as cited in Hakam, 2009, p. 37).

5. Metaphor

Metaphor, broadly speaking, is a literary device or special 'way of saying' in literature (Lotfipour-Saedi, 2008, p. 96). Metaphors, as Lakoff (2003) argues, can be instrumentally applied to exercise ideologies and ideological concepts (Billig & MacMillan, 2005, pp. 459-478).

6. Transitivity

Transitivity, as Richardson (2007) puts it, illustrates the relationships between participants in communicative events and the roles they play in the processes described in the reporting (p. 54). Subjects of interest include, for example, the application of passive forms ("twelve rioters were shot") and nominalizations ("a shooting"), the use of which enables a speaker/writer to obscure, downplay, or omit mention of agency—whoever did the shooting (Fitch & Sanders, 2005, p. 258). As suggested by Simpson (1993), transitivity is employed to offer some explanation of how some meanings are foregrounded, whereas others are obfuscated or suppressed. Thus, it is a crucial aspect of the relationship between language and ideology (Simpson, 1993, p. 104, as cited in Marco, 2004, p. 77).

7. Collocation

A careful examination of co-occurring words in a large body of texts (a corpus) and observing the way they are applied, according to Bloor and Bloor (2007), can prove fruitful to reveal the sort of meaning and message people associate with a particular word (p. 130).

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Corpus

The data of this study is based on the coverage of Iran sanctions imposition by UN and western countries, culled from the websites of 10 western English language newspapers – 10 British papers and 10 American papers, 20 copies in total (i.e. 2 copies from each website). The selected newspapers were the Daily Mail (DML), the Guardian (GU), the

Daily Telegraph (DT), the Daily Mirror (DMR) and the Independent (IN) from UK; and The New York Times (NYT), the USA Today (UT), the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), The Washington Post (WP) and the Los Angeles Times (LAT) from USA. The aggregated data included news texts dating from 8 June through 8 October 2010, and 1 January through 3 July 2012, when the contentious issue of the new rounds of Iran sanctions still hit the headlines and the sanctions, both unilaterally and internationally, were imposed on the country. The selection of newspapers was limited by certain parameters. Firstly, they are among the most well-established, influential and highly circulated newspapers which are read and viewed not only nationally but internationally. Secondly, they look at the international affairs from the western perspective and angle. And finally, they are all available online providing a worldwide population with easy access to the latest news and information. It should also be noted that the researchers conducted the electronic search only for those news articles whose headlines included the phrase or term 'Iran Sanctions,' 'Sanctions' or 'Embargo'.

B. Procedure

The researchers hypothesized that the western newspapers misrepresented Iran and Iran affairs via their headlines and leads paragraphs – how these newspapers articulated ideological positions via language in the headlines and leads of their reports of Iran sanctions imposition, in an attempt to justify and legitimize the so-called international and unilateral sanctions against Iran which were, in effect, imposed by the west. Recurrent stereotyping and negative reporting in their reportage of the event leading to sanctions imposition are due to not only the various types of linguistic choices, but also construction of their news stories.

To meet the objectives of the study, and following the argument put forward by van Dijk (Sheyholislami, 2001, p. 4), the headlines and leads paragraphs of all news texts were isolated and carefully examined in terms of both linguistic devices (i.e. lexical choices, transitivity, modality, metaphor, metonymy and presupposition) and metalinguistic features (i.e. ideological square and intertextuality). The choice of the headlines and leads for a close examination of ideological constructions is motivated by general importance of the opening parts of the news articles – a subject broached by van Dijk (1988) and Thetela (2001) (Sheyholislami, 2001, p. 4; Thetela, 2001, p. 351). Finally, the present study focused on verbal features of the news stories and the way they were structured in the papers; and consequently non-verbal properties – graphical organization and graphic format of the pages, pages layout and photographs – were not considered in the analysis.

C. Analytical Method

Van Dijk (1998), Weiss and Wodack (2003) argue that an integrated approach to analyze text and talk is crucial if a satisfactory form of multidisciplinary and methodological CDA is really desired (van Dijk, 1998, p. 363; Hart & Lukes, 2007, p. ix). This attitude lends support to the view that a single method and approach may not produce the desirable results in doing CDA. Bearing in mind this argument, therefore, the approach to CDA we felt most satisfied with was an eclectic method of analysis – van Dijk's notion of *"ideological square"* and Fairclough's concept of *"intertextuality"* – which together with linguistic features were well suited to meet the goals and objectives of the present study.

Van Dijk (1998) contributes a useful theoretical concept he calls the 'ideological square', which encapsulates the twin strategies of positive 'ingroup' description and negative 'outgroup' description (Hakam, 2009, p. 37). Ideological Square, for van Dijk, equips the language users with a conceptual tool to determine choices between referential strategies. Dichotomous character of this conceptual tool helps to place the *Selves* in a positive light and simultaneously to put the *Others* in a negative light; it is a way of perceiving and representing the world – and specifically ' 'their' and 'our' actions, position and role within the world. To be more precise, 'their' bad qualities and social behaviors are emphasized – or foregrounded in technical term – and 'their' good qualities and social behaviors are de-emphasized – or backgrounded. Conversely, 'our' good qualities and social behaviors are foregrounded and 'our' bad qualities and social behaviors are backgrounded. The ideological square can be traced across all linguistic dimensions of a text. Starting with referential strategies, positive terms are used to refer to 'Us' and 'Our country' and negative words being used to refer to 'Them', 'Their country', Their values', etc. (Richardson, 2007, p. 51).

Intertextuality, as Jorgensen (2002) points out, is the foundation for Fairclough's model of CDA without which a text can never be understood or analyzed (Jorgensen, 2002, p. 70, as cited in Richardson, 2007, p. 100). For Fairclough, intertextual analysis is a way of building bridge between text and discourse practice that makes it possible to follow and discover the traces of the discourse practice in the text (Sheyholislami, 2001, p. 8). Two different types of intertextuality are generally identified by Fairclough: 'manifest intertextuality' and 'constitutive intertextuality' (Li, 2009, pp. 92, 95). While the former refers to how quoted utterances are selected, changed, and contextualized, the latter is concerned with how texts are made up of heterogeneous elements: generic conventions, discourse types, register, and style. In news discourse, quotations and reports of news actors' speech, both direct and indirect, are an important aspect of referring to news actors and constitute what Fairclough calls 'manifest intertextuality' of text. The quotations, as Teo (2000) puts it, are neither transparent nor simple citations, rather involve (re)interpretations of events and power relations between news participants. Van Dijk (1989) further argues that in the process of their selections, quotations, and changes of the speech of various news actors, news texts redefine the power structure and create meanings about the world that news actors inhabit. Therefore, the study of the representation of social actors through quotation patterns can also reveal the ways certain actors and groups are systematically empowered as oppose to simultaneously silencing of others. This, in turn, sheds further light on a newspaper's perspectives on the relations social actors have with the world and with other

actors, and the ways in which news events and actors are interpreted and represented by the newspaper (Li, 2009, pp. 94, 95).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Headlines ant Lead paragraphs

In the analyzed headlines and lead sentences of the data, we found that the newspapers employed different linguistic features (e.g. lexical choices, transitivity, modality, metaphor, metonymy, collocation and presupposition) to project a negative image of Iran as an unfavorable element in international community, in an attempt to justify and legitimize the imposition of Iran sanctions. Van Dijk's proposed framework namely, "Ideological Square," and Fairclough's concept of "Intertextuality" were also of invaluable help in unraveling the western newspapers ideological stance and the ways they choose to achieve their political objectives. Before moving on, one final point that needs to be made is that there was an attempt to include, where possible, those samples which could cover the occurrence of different linguistic devises in headlines or leads simultaneously; to avoid any instances of circumlocution. Here are some examples:

Lexical choice, Metonymy and Presupposition:

Headline → (Daily Mail, 9 June 2010)
UN hits defiant Iran with new sanctions as Tehran refuses to drop nuclear programme

The headline informs the reader of hitting somebody with something. People usually do *hit* the enemies or foreign aggressors when they invade their country; or *hit* their children *with* something as a kind of severe punishment when the children do something terribly wrong. Through the clever and metaphorical application of the phrasal verb '*hit* somebody *with* something' (usually associated with genres of war and family), Iran is represented as an enemy and foreign aggressor, or as a disobedient child in international community and family that deserves to be severely punished (Oxford, 1948, p. 615; Longman, 2006, p. 726). The word *defiant* helps to reinforce the negative image of Iran as a belligerent country and as a real threat that should be immediately dealt with. Another key word which plays a pivotal role to justify and legitimize the imposition of the sanctions is the verb *refuse*. Any reader familiar with the latest political news and events of Iran is well aware of the fact that the country has long been alleged to have a covert military nuclear program capable of developing atomic bombs. When a country like Iran with a suspicious nuclear program *refuses* to comply with the international community's demands to stop its nuclear program, this *refusal* could only mean the country is really ill-indented to build a nuclear bomb. In this case, Iran is represented as belligerent country which endangers the international security and peace; and consequently, anybody would be reasonably convinced that a common-sense approach is really needed to stop such a dangerous state: the imposition of the sanctions (or even if needed, a military strike).

Lead Paragraph → (Los Angeles Time, 21 June 2010)
House and Senate negotiators reached agreement Monday on legislation that would impose additional U.S. sanctions against Iran in hopes the economic pressure persuades Tehran to curb its nuclear ambitions.

The main argument for additional sanctions imposition against Iran, according to the lead, is to put "economic pressure to persuade Tehran to curb its nuclear ambitions." The lead attempts to justify the imposition of the sanctions through the clever application of the words and phrases *negotiators*, *agreement*, *legislation*, *curb* (to control or limit something, especially something bad) and *nuclear ambitions* (Oxford, 1948, p. 307). The words *negotiators*, *agreement* and *legislation* suggest that House and Senate members are rational people whose decisions are based on reason and law rather than emotion and arbitrariness (the lawfulness of the sanctions is explicitly stated in eighth paragraph to reassure the reader of legitimacy of the congress's move); that is to say any decisions they come to are reasonable, appropriate, legitimate and justifiable. On the other hand Iran, according to the lead, has a lofty and burning *ambition* to deliver *nuclear* weapons. Therefore, the decision made by House and Senate negotiators to control such a bad country – to *curb* it – through additional precautionary and punitive measures is absolutely rational, appropriate and easy to justify.

The metonymic use of *Tehran* as the political, economic capital of Iran in both headline and lead may suggest that the sanctions are directed against Iranian government rather than Iranian people, to preserve or improve the positive image of UN among readers, particularly Iranian readers reading English papers.

The defiance of Iran is presupposed and taken for granted through the application of the adjective *defiant* in the headline. The modifiers *new* in the headline and *additional* in the lead also presuppose the fact that there were previously old sanctions that apparently didn't work or were not enough – which may give the impression that a fresh and stricter set of sanctions is needed if a workable solution to Iran crisis is really desired. Iran's *nuclear ambitions* is further presupposed and taken for granted in the lead through the application of the possessive adjective *'its'*.

Modality and Metaphor:

Headline → (The New York Times, 30 June 2012)
U.S. Bets New Oil Sanctions Will Change Iran's Tune

From modality perspective and through the employment of the modal verb *will* – a model verb with the highest degree of certainty – the certainty of the upcoming phenomenon (i.e. the change in Iran's tune) is taken for granted in the head (Azar, 1999, p. 184). This, in turn, may help to persuade the readers to think of the sanctions as the appropriate and justifiable measures. The skillful use of the verb *bet* in metaphorical sense (i.e. to be almost certain that something is true or that something will happen) further helps to reinforce the sense of certainty among the readers about the claim; that is, new oil sanctions will definitely cause some changes in Iran's behaviors (Oxford, 1948, p. 133).

Lead Paragraph → (USA Today, 8 June 2010)
The United Nations Security Council has approved new sanctions against Iran over its suspect nuclear program that target the country's powerful Revolutionary Guard, ballistic missiles, and nuclear-related investments.

Through metaphorical use of the word *target* in the lead (a word ubiquitously employed in war reporting), Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard – a blacklisted militant and terrorist group – is considered as enemy that should be attacked and shot by sanctions as bullets (Longman, 1992, p. 1421; Cooper & Fathi, 2007, para. 1).

Transitivity:

Headline → (The Washington Post, 29 September 2010)
Obama orders sanctions on Iranian officials for human rights abuses

Obama, *sanctions* and *Iranian officials* are the senser, phenomenon and indirect object of the mental process *order*, respectively. From transitivity perspective and through the skillful use of active structure, the positive role of Obama as an active, powerful and legitimate authority to sit in judgment on the case, capable of giving orders and punishing lawbreakers, and the negative role of Iran as a passive patient and violator of human rights that really deserves to be legally punished are foregrounded in the headline.

Collocation and Ideological Square:

Headline → (Los Angeles Times, 2 July 2012)
Iran plans war games as EU oil embargo begins

The co-occurrence of *war games* with *Iran* in the head seems to be ideologically motivated. It is fairly clear that *Iran* is collectively used with *plan* and *war game* to project a negative image of Iran as a war-loving country who only seeks for aggression and is getting prepared for a real conflict in the future.

The binary opposition created through the application of Ideological Square has placed EU (*in-group: we*) in a superior position, capable of punishing Iran via the imposition of oil embargo against the country; in contrast, this ideological strategy has put Iran (*Out-group: they*) in a negative inferior position. Put this way, the readers become almost convinced that the country really deserves to receive the punishments in the form of sanctions.

Intertextuality:

Headline → (Guardian, 25 January 2012)
Iran sanctions need to be tougher, Israeli defence minister warns

The headline is a reported speech of Israel's defense minister in which he asks for *tougher sanctions* to be imposed against Iran. As it is seen, the editorial board of *Guardian* has decided to regard this plea as a *warning* through the purposeful application of the verb *warn* – while other neutral choices were also possible: *said, told* or *asked for*, for instance – to report the given official's request. Put this way, Iran has been represented as real threat to international peace and security, which should be urgently dealt with. Also, from syntactic perspective, Israel's defence minister is the agent of the headline and he is the only one whose voice has been empowered through the use of intertextuality – Iran's voice, on the other hand, has been completely silenced through the avoidance of reporting Iranian officials' statements and justifications for the case. Consequently, the reader is effectively left to only hear the voices and arguments of Israelis, yet deprived of the right to hear the other party – Iranians.

V. CONCLUSION

A close look at the data in this study revealed the fact that Iran and individuals or firms associated with Iran were misrepresented in the headlines and lead paragraphs of the western newspapers via the ideologically motivated application of linguistic features (i.e. lexical and grammatical devices); and the findings further unveiled a significantly strong ideological proclivity and orientation in the analyzed data to project, explicitly or implicitly, a negative image of Iran and Iranian officials/organizations in an attempt to justify and legitimize the sanction imposition against the country. Van Dijk's notion of "ideological square" (Hakam, 2009, p. 37) – which is characterized by positive in-group description and negative out-group description – provided a more plausible and logical explanation for the finding expressed in this study. Also, Fairclough's concept of "intertextuality" shed light on newspapers perspectives and stance on the matter in hand. The analysis of intertextual properties in some newspapers headlines and lead sentences showed that particular verbal processes were systematically selected for characterizing the reported speech, in an attempt to

depict Iran or Iranian officials/organizations as "*belligerent and guilty, unwise and irrational, brutal and betrayal to their own people, powerless* **and** *mismanagers*." Furthermore, it was revealed that the inclusion of Westerners' voices in the headlines and leads of news articles through intertextuality served to empower and justify what they said or did; whereas the systematic exclusion of Iran or Iranian officials' voices helped to totally silencing them or to disempowering their arguments and justifications. In this case, the reader was effectively deprived of the right to hear the voices and arguments of the other party – Iranians.

It is hoped that the multidimensional analysis of language and ideology in media discourse – printed media, in particular – in this study has brought some insights into the complex process of (re)producing discourse to represent the world. The question of why news texts are produced in the ways they are is always a complex one and seemingly will continue to be. While this study has looked at language and ideology in analyzing various meanings about the headlines and lead paragraphs of news texts, there are certainly other variables that may also shape our understandings of news texts, such as the medium of communication (e.g. TV news or internet-based news) and socio-cultural specific media practices.

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