Framing the Great March of Return: A Pilot Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of *the Palestine Chronicle* and *Haaretz*

Abeer Z.A Alhossary[•], Afida Mohamad Ali[••], Zalina Mohd Kasim[•••], and Sabariah Md Rashid[••••]

Abstract

This pilot study employs corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine media portrayals of the Great March of Return (GMR) in two contrasting news outlets: *The Palestine Chronicle* (PC) and *Haaretz*. A corpus of 11,611 words was compiled from 18 articles published between March 2018 and December 2020. The data were analyzed using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework and Halliday's Transitivity Theory to examine narrative framing. Findings indicate that *Haaretz* emphasizes material processes involving Palestinian actors, which often depict Palestinians as instigators of violence while framing Israel's military actions as defensive. In contrast, PC presents the GMR as peaceful protests while highlighting Palestinian victimization and advocating for nonviolent resistance. Collocation and concordance analyses reveal ideological divergence in framing social actors and events. This comparative approach underscores the role of media in shaping perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and highlights the utility of corpus-based methods in critical media studies.

Introduction

The Great March of Return (GMR), initiated on March 30, 2018, in Gaza, emerged as a sustained series of largely nonviolent protests affirming the Palestinian right of return to lands from which they were displaced during the 1948 Nakba. Organized by a coalition of Palestinian civil society groups and supported by political factions, the protests included mass sit-

[•] Lecturer, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Serdang, Malaysia And Faculty of Humanities, University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS), Gaza, Palestine.

[••] Associate Professor, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Serdang, Malaysia.

[•••] Associate Professor, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Serdang, Malaysia.

[••••] Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences and Liberal Arts, UCSI University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

ins, cultural events, and symbolic acts of resistance. Demonstrators employed strategic symbols such as Palestinian flags, kites, and burning rubber tires to obscure the visibility of Israeli snipers and assert national identity (Abusalim, 2018; Jones, 2023). For instance, burning tires generated dense smoke to shield protesters, while kites, often flown in large numbers, served a dual purpose: symbolizing hope and acting as a diversion to disrupt surveillance systems. Concurrently, artistic resistance amplified cultural narratives of displacement and resilience, as expressed through music, poetry, and the traditional dance of *dabke*. Despite its predominantly peaceful character, the Israeli military response resulted in over 200 fatalities and 36,000 injuries, drawing condemnation from international human rights organizations (Human Rights Council, 2019).

The GMR aimed to globalize awareness of the Palestinian refugee crisis, a core issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 1948. Scholars like Khalidi (1997) and Morris (2008) trace the roots of this crisis to the mass expulsion of Palestinians during the Nakba, a trauma perpetuated by Israel's refusal to recognize refugees' right of return under UN Resolution 194. By 2018, UNRWA reported over 5.4 million registered Palestinian refugees living in camps across Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, often in overcrowded and under-resourced conditions (UNRWA, 2018). The GMR revitalized demands for justice, framing return as a legal entitlement and a collective act of decolonization (Al-Ramahi and Rashid, 2024).

Palestinian civil society and grassroots mobilizations were central to the GMR's endurance. Even as physical protests waned due to repression and logistical challenges, activists expanded their reach through digital resistance. Platforms like TikTok and Twitter (#SaveSheikhJarrah) documented state violence, mobilized global solidarity, and subverted mainstream media erasure (Yousef and Mokadi, 2024). However, digital activism faced systemic censorship and surveillance, necessitating decentralized tools like blockchain to safeguard narratives (Al-Ramahi and Rashid, 2024).

Media Framing and Outlet Orientations

This study analyzes representations of the GMR in *Haaretz* and The Palestine Chronicle (PC), two outlets that reflect divergent ideological perspectives. *Haaretz*, a center-left Israeli daily, often critiques government policies but aligns with national security narratives, framing Palestinian resistance through a lens of threat mitigation (Dridi, 2020; Peri, 2004). Despite its reputation as one of Israel's more liberal newspapers, *Haaretz* operates within the broader Israeli media landscape, where security concerns and national interests shape editorial choices (Cypel, 2022). As a result, its reporting reflects a complex balancing act between investigative journalism

that challenges government actions and coverage that reinforces mainstream Israeli perspectives on conflict and security.

Conversely, PC functions as an independent pro-Palestinian platform, as it does not formally align with any specific political faction, distinguishing it from Palestinian news agencies associated with Hamas, such as Al-Aqsa TV, or Fatah, like Wafa News Agency. Instead, PC seeks to amplify Palestinian grassroots voices, documenting systemic violence and advocating for nonviolent resistance (Hazboun et al., 2019). Its editorial stance reflects a broader tradition of alternative journalism, which challenges mainstream Western and Israeli media portrayals of the Palestinian struggle while focusing on nonviolent resistance, historical memory, and international advocacy. These contrasting approaches exemplify how media framing shapes conflict perception, making them critical case studies for corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis.

Literature Review

Corpus Linguistics is a methodical technique that examines language phenomena and patterns. This method is a data-driven approach aimed at investigating language use in many settings, such as media discourse research (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Meanwhile, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary approach which is a tool that can reveal hidden meanings, social injustices, and hegemonic behaviors in conversation by examining the relationship between language, power, and ideology (Fairclough, 2013).

When combined with corpus linguistics, CDA provides a valuable tool and technique for critical discourse analysis in the media. Using corpora as the primary data source, researchers can methodically examine language use in media texts and uncover patterns, trends, and underlying ideologies that might not be visible through conventional qualitative analysis. Corpus-based CDA allows researchers to identify common language patterns, rhetorical devices, and discursive constructions used in media texts by closely examining language use (Orpin, 2005).

Recent research has examined social media's role in shaping narratives related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which highlights its utility for actors like Hamas to advance their ideological and political objectives. Amer (2023) employed digital ethnography and a discourse-historical approach to analyze 3,500 tweets extracted from the Twitter account *Palinfoen*, which is associated with Hamas. This research examined the discursive practices and representation strategies employed in these tweets. The findings revealed the portrayals of Palestinians, particularly victims such as journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, were symbols of resistance and unjustified victimization, while framing Israelis as aggressors responsible for violence and oppression. The tweets emphasize the legitimacy of Palestinian resistance and foster solidarity by using linguistic strategies that

foreground Palestinian resilience and humanize their plight. This study underscores the role of social media in constructing ideological narratives, reinforcing perceptions of justice, and challenging dominant media representations. These insights highlight the potential for digital platforms to influence public discourse, complementing corpus-based approaches in the critical discourse analysis of media portrayals.

Advantages of using corpora in studying media discourse

Using corpora to study media discourse yields several advantages to the analysis process. First, corpora provide a representative and extensive sample of texts, enabling researchers to analyze media discourse systematically and comprehensively. Corpora also offer various texts from different sources, genres, and periods, which allows researchers to capture the diversity and evolution of media language use (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008). Secondly, corpora facilitate quantitative analysis, which affords researchers with statistical information regarding the frequency and distribution of linguistic features in media texts. This quantitative approach identifies significant keywords, collocations, and patterns of language use that offer insight into dominant discourses and ideological positioning within media discourse (Cheng, 2012). Moreover, corpora enable comparative analyses by contrasting different media sources, periods, or genres. This comparative approach allows examining variations and differences in language use, revealing shifts in discursive strategies, agenda setting, and the representation of social actors or events across various media outlets. Several studies have employed corpus linguistics in analyzing media discourse. For example, Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) employed corpus-based techniques to investigate the representation of refugees in the British press, which uncovered bias and negative portrayal patterns.

A significant approach within corpus linguistics that enhances critical media analysis is Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA). CACDA combines corpus linguistics with critical discourse analysis (CDA) to investigate language use in the large textual dataset (Baker, 2006; Partington, 2008). Unlike traditional CDA, which often relies on smaller qualitative samples, CACDA integrates computational techniques to detect linguistic patterns, collocations and discursive strategies at scale. Scholars such as Paul Baker have widely employed this methodological approach in media discourse research (Baker et al., 2008), while Stubbs (1995) has highlighted its significance in social research.

A key advantage of CACDA is its ability to uncover systematic ideological framing in large-scale media texts. For instance, Baker et al. (2008) utilized CACDA to examine refugee representation in British media, identifying discursive patterns perpetuating bias. The method allows

researchers to analyze frequency distributions, collocation, and concordance patterns, offering empirical support for critical discourse findings.

In a study that employed Corpus Linguistics and critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine news coverage of the Great March of Return, Jendeya (2020) examined how Arabic and English newspapers employed exclusionary strategies in their reporting, utilizing a CDA framework based on Van Leeuwen's (2008) model. The analysis included ten articles: 5 articles in each language, to identify linguistic features such as nominalization, passivation, and backgrounding. The findings reveal distinct patterns. More specifically, Arabic articles more frequently suppress references to Palestinian demonstrators, while English articles demonstrate varied exclusion practices. These strategies influence readers' perceptions by emphasizing victimization, obscuring responsibility, or redirecting attention to events rather than actors. The research highlights the ideological function of media discourse in shaping the representation of social actors and suggests further exploration with a broader dataset for deeper insights.

In summary, combining Corpus Linguistics with CDA provides an effective tool for gaining insight into media discourse analysis. Utilizing corpora provides researchers access to thorough and representative data, permits quantitative analysis, and enables comparative studies. Incorporating CACDA further strengthens this approach by allowing for the systematic detection of ideological framing and discursive strategies on a large scale. Scholars can use corpus-based techniques to reveal implicit meanings, ideological foundations, and power structures within media texts, which advances a more critical comprehension of language use in media discourse (Baker, 2012).

Methodology

Pilot Study Justification

The present study employs a pilot design with a limited dataset as a preliminary step to test and refine the corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis procedures before scaling up to larger datasets. This smaller-scale investigation identifies and resolves potential challenges in data collection, coding, and analytical strategies, which may include selection biases or ambiguities in applying transitivity analysis. By working with a limited corpus, we can iteratively adjust and optimize our methodological tools, ensuring their feasibility and effectiveness in capturing the nuanced linguistic and thematic patterns related to media representations of the Great March of Return. This approach is critical in reducing the risk of methodological errors that could compromise the validity and reliability of the research when applied on a larger scale. As Lancaster et al. (2004) emphasized, pilot studies are essential for testing study designs and analytical procedures prior

to full-scale research, ultimately enhancing the rigor and credibility of subsequent findings.

Justification of News Outlet Selection

Their distinct editorial orientations justify the selection of *Haaretz* and PC. *Haaretz* is widely recognized for its liberal stance and its focus on security issues, while PC provides a counter-narrative that emphasizes Palestinian victimhood and grassroots resistance. By comparing these two outlets, the study offers insights into how divergent political and ideological frameworks influence media representations of the GMR.

Data Analysis Procedures

Two software tools were employed: *AntConc* for quantitative corpus analysis (collocations, keyword frequency, and concordance) and *Atlas.ti* for qualitative thematic coding. Articles were converted to plain text for analysis, and coding categories were developed to capture both overt and subtle framing devices. The methodological rigor is enhanced by detailing the criteria for article selection, primarily article length and direct relevance to the GMR, and by acknowledging the inherent limitations of the pilot study.

Data Categorization Procedures

A pilot corpus was compiled by randomly selecting nine online articles from each news outlet, *Haaretz* and The Palestine Chronicle (PC), resulting in a corpus of 18 articles totaling 11,611 words. The choice of nine articles per outlet was driven by the need for a manageable yet representative sample that reflects diverse text genres (news, opinion, editorials) and ensures both depth and breadth in the analysis. Although the limited corpus size poses certain constraints, it offers a focused basis for examining discursive patterns.

Table 1. Selected articles from the Palestine Chronicle and *Haaretz*

No.	Date	*The Palestine Chronicle*	No.	Date	*Haaretz*
1.	June 19, 2019	March of Return Protest at Gaza border dwindles down; Israeli army says 'Hamas exercised restraint'	1.	June. 13, 2018	This is Terrorism: Israel Farmers Still Reeling from Gaza's Burning Kites
2.	March 31, 2018	Great March of Return: A New Defiance Campaign	2.	March 18, 2019	Hamas to Escalate Nighttime Riots and Weekends Protests along Gaza Boarder
3.	April 3, 2019	Great March of Return is Palestinians' Cry for Justice	3.	May 24, 2018	Opinion: The Arabs Chose to be Refugees

No.	Date	*The Palestine Chronicle*	No.	Date	*Haaretz*
4	March 31, 2018	Palestinians Resistance from Deir Yassin to the Great March of Return	4.	December 26, 2019	Organizers Suspend Gaza Boarder Protests, Signalling Exploration of Long-term Truce
5.	April 13, 2018	Why Israel Fears the Nakba: How Memory Becomes Palestine's Great Weapon	5.	March 28, 2020	Palestinian Groups Cancel Mas Gaza Rallies over Coronavirus Concerns
6.	May 20, 2020	World Refugee Day" Palestinians Keep their Right of Return Alive Through Hope	6.	May 15, 2018	Six Must-reads on Deadly Gaza Protests and US Embassy's Jerusalem Move
7.	June 5, 2018	'Fighter of Return' Thoughts on Razan al-Najjar and Nikki Haley	7.	October 25, 2019	Thirty-one Gazans wounded by Israeli gunfire in weekly border protest, Palestinians say
8.	July 5, 2018	'Bella Ciao' in Gaza 'March of Return' Activists Launch Music Video	8.	May 15, 2019	Thousands of Gazans expected to Protest Nakba Day as Israel Hosts Eurovision
9.	March 29, 2019	Israel End 'March of Return' in Exchange for Easing Gaza Siege	9.	December 26, 2019	Palestinians to Scale Back Protests on Israel-Gaza Boarder

Delimiting the Corpus of Haaretz and The Palestine Chronicle

In the sample of online news texts, the authors are from diverse backgrounds, including site affiliates, guest writers of various nationalities, and contributors from other outlets. This diversity of perspectives provides a deeper understanding of the political viewpoints that shape each website's discourse. Regarding *Haaretz*, nine selected articles were authored by three contributors, including two Israeli opinion writers and one Arab-Israeli journalist, who wrote four of the articles. Some news pieces were also sourced from external agencies, such as Reuters and the Associated Press (AP). Meanwhile, three authors contributed to *The Palestine Chronicle*, which included one Palestinian journalist and two pro-Palestinian journalists from South Africa and Italy. The articles were randomly selected to ensure diversity without influencing the researcher's perspective. Two criteria guided the selection: the length of the articles to enable thorough corpus analysis and relevance to the Great March of Return, which is reflected in both the title and content.

Table 2. Nationality and number of article contributors to *Haaretz* and *The Palestine Chronicle*

Website	Author's backgrounds	Number of authors	Number of articles
Haaretz	- - (2) Israeli opinion writers - (1) Arab-Israeli journalist - External agencies (Reuters, Associated Press) - -	3 (with some articles unsigned)	9
The Palestine Chronicle	- Palestinian Journalist - (2) Pro-Palestinian contributors from South Africa and Italy - - (1) Web source	3	9

Data Analysis Procedures

This pilot study utilized software to enhance the effectiveness of the research, including *AntConc* for corpus analysis and *Atlas.ti* for textual analysis. A total of 18 texts were extracted from the selected news websites. The Palestine Chronicle (PC) corpus comprises 7,504 words, while the *Haaretz* corpus contains 4,107 words. Each corpus was compiled into a .txt file for *analysis using AntConc.* Concurrently, individual news articles were uploaded to *Atlas.ti* for coding and thematic analysis.

Analytical Framework

The study employs three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to analyze texts at the descriptive, interpretive, and explanatory levels. Additionally, Halliday's (1985) Transitivity Theory is used to examine the material processes within the texts. This dual approach facilitates a comprehensive analysis of how language is used to construct narratives around the GMR. Special attention is paid to balancing the portrayal of both Palestinian and Israeli actors by including analyses from both outlets, thereby addressing earlier concerns of over-reliance on *Haaretz* for transitivity analysis.

Research Questions:

1- What themes predominate in the representations of the Great March of Return (GMR) on Palestinian versus Israeli news websites?

2- How do these websites depict the social actors involved in the Great March of Return?

3- How does the discourse of online news position the Great March of Return within the larger Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

Thematic analysis examined the portrayal of key actors and acts of violence within headlines and news texts. Lexical items relating to both demonstrators and Israelis were categorized based on their thematic and structural roles, such as whether they acted as actors or goals within sentence structures. These categories were then analyzed for their positive or negative connotations. Additionally, collocations and concordances were evaluated using *AntCon*c to support the qualitative findings. Following (Fairclough, 2003). This corpus-based analysis provided quantitative evidence to complement the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach.

Findings

Thematic Analysis of Haaretz and the PC Online Texts

This pilot study aims to identify themes or topics related to reporting on the GMR in *Haaretz's* online news articles compared to *The Palestine Chronicle*. Van Dijk (1991) considers the themes essential information for news producers in all news contexts. They also allow news readers to understand and assign meaning to the event. Within this frame, news producers choose what is salient to report and what is insignificant and not reported. This results is consistent with Entman's (1991) perception of news frames. More specifically, the media can frame events in a manner that, for example, humanizes or dehumanizes a person.

From the headlines, one can discern the themes and topics of the news. Van Dijk (1991) elaborated on and explained that topics can be realized in a text by drawing a pyramid, which includes the word and sentence levels at its base. Ascending the pyramid would hierarchically develop the information to the highest level, containing the ideology and the headline. Therefore, journalists and media outlets can interchangeably select the topics and themes of the news they produce, including or excluding information, and place particular information higher or lower in the text hierarchy to influence readers and their opinions.

After reading the online news text and headlines during the pilot study, the textual analysis reveals two predominant themes in the coverage of the GMR. These themes were coded through the texts via the *Atlas.ti* and grouped under dominant themes. Thus, two dominant themes were established from the data corpus. These themes guided the analysis and evaluation of the highlighted events in the news texts. They were considered the primary themes used by PC and *Haaretz*, respectively:

1- Peaceful Resistance Frame:

PC predominantly frames the GMR as a peaceful protest, emphasizing not only the nonviolent nature of Palestinian demonstrators but also the broader humanitarian dimensions of displacement and the fundamental right to return.

2- Violence and Security Frame:

Haaretz, by contrast, foregrounds narratives that position Palestinian actors as instigators of violence. The analysis of material processes using Halliday's transitivity analysis shows that verbs such as "launched," "protested," and "threw" are frequently associated with Palestinian subjects. This linguistic emphasis serves to rationalize Israel's defensive military actions.

To answer RQ1, the textual analysis demonstrated that these two major themes were central to the discourse used to report on the GMR in both PC and *Haaretz*. Moreover, these themes prevailed as every news website assigns responsibility for actions to the Palestinians or Israelis in terms of the strategies used or the lexical choices made in the texts. PC foregrounds the GMR as a humanitarian struggle (e.g., "refugees," "right of return"), whereas *Haaretz* frames it as a security challenge (e.g., "escalation," "clashes"). This strategy aligns with Entman's (1991) framing theory, which posits that media selectively emphasize aspects of reality to naturalize ideological positions.

Textual Analysis of the Transitivity Processes (Material Processes)

To answer RQ2, the study employed transitivity and lexical analysis to uncover the hidden agenda. In systemic functional linguistics, transitivity is a key concept at the clause level, which defines the types of processes and participant roles. Halliday and Matthiessen (1985) categorized processes into material (actions or events, such as "kick"), relational (states or possessions, like "be" or "have"), behavioral (mental actions, like "think"), verbal (communication, like "say"), and existential (existence, like "be").

In CDA, transitivity is used to analyze how process types and participant roles reflect ideological positions. Lukin et al. (2004, 61) highlight that transitivity choices indicate causation, agency, impact, and semiotic distance. For instance, "Coalition forces dropped bombs on Baghdad" involves an explicit external agent, which is the use of the phrase coalition forces. Meanwhile, "Bombs fell on Baghdad" suggests an action occurring absent any agent. This distinction between active and passive constructions often obscures the concept of agency. Lukin (2005) further explained that an actor influencing a goal can represent an action, as in "We can attack the enemy on our terms." Here, the word "we" is the actor and the "enemy" is the goal, as the phrase "on our terms" serves as the circumstance. This clause structure, adapted from Lukin (2005), is used in Table 3 to analyze actor and goal representations in the news websites studied.

Table 3. Basic clause configuration adopted from Lukin (2005)

Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstantial expressions
We	can attack	the enemy	on our terms.

The transitivity analysis has been balanced to incorporate representations of both Palestinian and Israeli actors across the two outlets. For *Haaretz*, the material processes underline actions attributed to Palestinian actors (e.g., "launched," "threw") as well as to Israeli actors (e.g., "struck," "braced"), with the latter being contextualized as defensive measures. In contrast, PC's narrative minimizes the use of active verbs when describing Palestinian demonstrators, favoring terms that stress their peaceful resistance (e.g., "staged," "headed toward"), while attributing more aggressive actions to the Israeli military.

Lexical analyses conducted via *AntConc* further reveal that while *Haaretz's* collocates for keywords such as "Israel" and "protests" support a narrative of organized violence and state defense, PC's lexical choices emphasize the collective identity of Palestinians. Notably, PC employs collocations such as "refugees," "displacement," and "rights" to underscore humanitarian concerns.

Material Processes in Haaretz *Involving Palestinian and Israeli Actors*

This pilot study analyzed articles downloaded from the *Haaretz* and PC websites for transitivity, particularly material processes, and to provide a representative data analysis. The transitivity processes can explain how news outlets presented the procedures of GMR in line with their agendas, which is consistent with the discussion involving Lukin et al. (2004). The articles listed in Table 1 represent a representative sample of the data. The analysis also provides examples of these texts to illustrate the strategies employed. The material processes in the text of the news sites have been categorized according to Palestinian and Israeli actors. The material/action processes were analyzed in all 18 texts using *Atlas.ti* for further elaboration. However, as seen below, two tables have been created to present the data and provide examples of the agents on both news websites.

The analysis of *Haaretz's* articles reveals that the news site focused heavily on applying material processes by positioning Palestinians as actors who are responsible for negative actions toward Israel. In *Haaretz's* reporting, Palestinian actors were frequently depicted performing material processes such as 'launched,' 'throw,' and 'protested,' which positioned them as initiators of action. This pattern suggests a framing that aligns Palestinian participants with the instigation of unrest during the GMR. While this representation may imply responsibility for violence, it should be understood within the context of *Haaretz's* broader security-oriented discourse, as shown in the examples in Table 4.

Table 4. Transitivity Analysis of material/action processes associated with Palestinian Actors in Haaretz

Haaretz	Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstance
Haaretz 1	Tens of thousands of Gaza Strip residents	have been protesting against	Israel	for weeks now,
Haaretz 2	Hamas operatives	play	a rocket siren	over loudspeakers to terrorize
Haaretz 3	They	launched	a war	-
Haaretz 4	The organizing committee	cancelled	the protests	for three weeks in a row
Haaretz 5	Palestinian groups	cancel	mass Gaza rallies	over coronavirus concerns
Haaretz 8	masses of protestors	will converge on	committee's tents	along the Gaza boarder fence
Haaretz 9	people	throw	rocks and firebombs	-

In *Haaretz*, Palestinian actors are consistently portrayed as responsible for all violent actions that occurred during the GMR. This portrayal is achieved by employing terms such as "launched," "throw," and "protesting." These terms foreground Palestinians as instigators of unrest, which justifies Israel's defensive actions along the Gaza border. There is also emphasis placed upon Palestinians attempting to approach the border for weeks, which highlights the security concerns of Israel. As such, responses are precipitated by Palestinians and thus necessitate Israeli action, which is identifiable through words like "struck", as well as "shot" and "wounded".

Although Israel's actions appear aggressive, *Haaretz* justifies these responses as the necessary targeting of groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which are portrayed as terrorist organizations. Phrases like "incendiary balloons launched into Israel" imply that Israel's military only reacts when facing existential threats. Lexical choices, such as using the word "brace" in *Haaretz*, suggest Israel is preparing for violence and frames the Israeli Defense Forces as safeguarding the country. *Haaretz* reinforces this notion by stating the military is "doing everything in its power to avoid" further conflict, which portrays the Israeli side as restrained and defensive. Overall, *Haaretz* presents Israel's military engaging in positive and necessary actions to ensure the state's security in response to provocations from Palestinian factions.

Table 5. Transitivity Analysis of material/action processes associated with Israeli Actors in *Haaretz*

Haaretz	Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstance
Haaretz 2	The Israeli military	struck	Hamas and Islamic Jihad positions	…in early March after more incendiary balloons were launched into Israel
Haaretz 6	Israeli Defense Forces troops	braced	themselves	for more violence on Tuesday

Haaretz	Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstance
Haaretz 7	Israeli forces	shot and wounded	31 Gazans	on Friday during the protest
Haaretz 8	Israeli military	is doing	everything in its power	to avoid (target)
Haaretz 9	Israel	seized	Gaza	in 1967 was

Material Processes in the Palestine Chronicle Involving Palestinian and Israeli Actors

Unsurprisingly, PC presented the material and action processes of the Israeli side using negative words, which include "killed and shot". However, compared with *Haaretz,* what is surprising is the limited use of material/action processes by PC while representing Israeli or Palestinian actors. Table 6 displays the economy in the use of the circumstance, except for the relatively small number of material/action processes when the Israeli army employed violent action against protestors. Table 6 also reveals that PC depicts protestors as "unarmed Palestinians" to indicate they faced unwarranted violence from the Israeli military.

Table 6. Transitivity Analysis of material/action processes associated with Israeli Actors in the Palestine Chronicle

PC texts	Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstance
PC 3	Israel	has killed and maimed	protestors	With impunity
PC 4	Netanyahu's military forces	are mowing down	Palestinian demonstrators	-
PC 7	Israeli forces	shot	Unarmed Palestinians	-
PC 9	Israel	has sent	reinforcements	-

In its representation of Palestinian actors (see Table 7), PC was also economical in using material and action processes (e.g., "head towards," "began staging") that indicate that the GMR protests were nonviolent, structured resistance rooted in historical displacement. The phrase "began staging" (PC 8) emphasizes organized, performative acts (e.g., sit-ins, rallies) rather than confrontational violence, implicitly linking protests to the refugees' Right of Return. By avoiding action verbs like "attacked", PC minimizes connotations of aggression, instead, foregrounding systemic injustice and demonstrators' reclaiming of agency. This strategy aligns the GMR with symbolic resistance and humanitarian claims, countering narratives that criminalize Palestinian activism.

Table 7. Transitivity Analysis of Action Processes Associated with Palestinian Actors in (PC)

Palestine Chronicle (PC)	Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstance
PC 2	Thousands upon thousands	head towards	Homes and lands	From which they were forcibly expelled
PC 7	A child	making	His own anti-teargas mask	-

Palestine Chronicle (PC)	Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstance
PC 8	(Since) Palestinians	began staging	Mass rallies	Near the Gaza-Israeli fence in March 2018,

Lexical references to Palestinians and Israeli actors in the online news texts

News outlets often employ specific lexical choices to shape ideological representations, influencing readers' perceptions. *Haaretz* describes Palestinian actors with neutral or generalized terms like "groups", "residents", "protestors", and "Hamas operatives", which divides them into the public and faction-led groups. This pattern is especially true regarding Hamas, which is framed as a terrorist organization. The omission of the word "Palestinian" and the use of the phrase "Gaza residents" serve to shift the focus from national identity toward affiliation with Hamas. Those generalized terms reduce Palestinian actors to mere numbers, effectively negating any sense of their importance or agency. As such, this indirectly portrays protests as faction-led rather than a grassroots movement initiated by citizens fighting for their rights. In contrast, *Haaretz* humanizes Israeli actors with dignified or official terms like "Kibbutz workers" or "Israeli Defense Forces." This "instrumentalization" Van Leeuwen (1991) presents Israelis as victims and thereby justifies military action, which concurrently reinforces a narrative of Israelis defending against Palestinian threats.

Table 8. Lexical items associated with actors in *Haaretz* online articles

Palestinian Actors	Israeli Actors
Tens of Thousands of Gaza Strip Residents	The Kibbutz workers
Palestinians	Israeli's fire department
They	Israeli forces
Tens of Thousands from the Gaza Strip	Israeli Defense Forces troops
The organization	
Young people	
Hamas	
Hamas operatives	
Organizers	
Palestinian groups in Gaza	
Many protestors	
Masses of protestors	
people	

In contrast to *Haaretz*, Table 9 reveals that PC uses limited lexical categorization for both Palestinian and Israeli actors. PC consistently refers to Palestinian protesters as Palestinians, which emphasizes their national identity and collective unity rather than framing them as merely residents of Gaza. PC highlights that Gaza is a part of Palestine, inhabited by indigenous people and refugees from 1948, while avoiding faction-based distinctions. The usage of words like "thousands" permits PC to portray the protesters as unified in their demand for the right of return, which emphasizes their peaceful nature and lack of threat to Israel.

Table 9. Lexical items associated with actors in The Palestine Chronicle online articles

Palestinian Actors	Israeli Actors
Palestinians	Israeli forces
A child	Israeli military
Thousands	Netanyahu's military forces
	Israel

While PC established the Palestinian social actors as harmless and peaceful, it presented their opponents using words like "military" and "forces". Such lexical choices indicate the level of power these peaceful protestors were facing. In addition, PC explicates that this army belongs to a well-endowed and established state by using words like Israel and phrases like "Netanyahu's military forces." These choices reflect the political agenda underlying the conflict and the disorganized nature of the opposing side's people. Such a representation of actors indicates that the Israeli government is unjustified while concurrently amplifying the abuse of power inflicted upon the Palestinians.

Quotation patterns in Haaretz and the Palestine Chronicle

In addition to reporting actions, *Haaretz* frequently includes quotations from key figures on both sides, a strategy aimed at enhancing credibility (Bell, 1991). Table 10 shows that *Haaretz* frequently quotes authoritative Israeli sources, including the Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and military officials. This action aligns with Bell's observation that citing formal figures lends more credibility to news reports. Additionally, *Haaretz* includes the voice of an Israeli farmer affected by the protests, highlighting the Israeli government's concern for its citizens. This combination of authoritative and personal sources strengthens *Haaretz*'s narrative of Israeli victimhood and institutional response to the unrest.

Table 10. Quotation Patterns in *Haaretz*

Quotation from the Israeli side	Quotation from the Palestinian side
1- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, "It's a great day for peace."	1- Hamas spokesman Abdulatif Al-Kanuwa describes the fire-bearing kites as….
2- When Moshe Dayan said in his 1956 eulogy for Ro'i Rothberg…	2- 'Fatah representatives have said on several occasions recently regarding the Gaza March of Return…
3- Israel's Defense Ministry says…	3- Abu Tha'er (not his real name), 25, reports he flies kites…
4- …says the officer in charge of the operation, Nadav Livni.	
5- Daniel Rachamim's feet is black…	

Haaretz incorporated quotes from Palestinian figures, although these are from faction representatives rather than official government sources. Specifically, the quotes are from Hamas and Fatah. It is important to note that Hamas supports the Great March of Return while Fatah opposes it due to its peace stance with Israel. Since 2007, Hamas has governed Gaza and Fatah has governed the West Bank, which has led to a division between the two factions. *Haaretz* also featured a quote from a young Palestinian

protester named *Abu Tha'er* (a pseudonym), who was involved in flying incendiary kites towards Israeli farmland. This portrayal aimed to depict Palestinian sources as unreliable by highlighting their contradictory and immature political positions, which contrast tremendously with the more formal and significant Israeli sources.

In contrast, PC's quotes were focused on non-official voices. It cited an Israeli site, rather than officials, and did not include representatives from Hamas or Fatah. Instead, PC featured activists like Haider Eid, organizer Ahmed Abu Rtema, and elder Mazen Qumsiyeh, which reflects a preference for grassroots perspectives over official positions.

Table 11. Quotation Pattern in PC

Quotation from the Israeli side	Quotation from the Palestinian side	Quotation Internationals
1- The Israeli site pointed out…	1- Haider Eid, a participant… 2- Mazen Qumsiyeh recalls that dozens of massacres ... 3- Ahmad Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod wrote that "Palestinian memory is… 4- Ahmed Abu Rtema, one the organizers of the March, stated….	1- Nikki Haley, the US Ambassador to the United Nations, was dedicating herself to something completely different. 2- Pompeo said in an interview with Israeli radio…

PC cited international figures like Nikki Haley and Pompeo negatively, which included quotes in support of the Israeli narrative. However, these quotes were sourced externally rather than from direct interviews. This approach suggests that PC avoids aligning with the conflicting views of Palestinian factions and instead positions itself as a representative of Palestinians while simultaneously fostering an internationally accepted discourse. In addition, PC published articles by pro-Palestinian journalists who support Palestinian rights while subtly critiquing Israeli actions.

Collocations and concordance on social actors in Haaretz vs. the Palestine Chronicle

This study combined corpus linguistics methods with qualitative analysis to examine keyword frequencies and collocations in Haaretz and Palestine Chronicle (PC). To identify keywords, the study employed (Baker, 2023) method of "remainder," comparing the corpora of the two outlets against a reference corpus of 50,000 words from mainstream international news outlets (e.g., *The Guardian*, Al Jazeera) that covered the Israeli-Palestinian conflict between 2018 and 2020. This approach ensured that the reference corpus matched the target corpora in terms of genre (news articles), topic, and timeframe, thereby enhancing the relevance of keyword extraction. Using *AntConc*, keywords were statistically identified by significant frequency differences (log-likelihood > 6.63, p < 0.01), with

terms such as "protest", "Gaza"/"Gazans", and "Hamas" emerging as central, despite the small corpus size of 11,611 words.

After excluding grammatical words, collocation analysis revealed a clear contrast. For example, *Haaretz* linked "Israel" with "Jewish" and "blockade", framing the state through a security lens, while "Hamas" associated "escalation", "Jihad", and "Islamic", emphasizing militant associations. Meanwhile, PC collocated "Palestinian" with "refugees" and "right", foregrounding displacement narratives.Furthermore, "protest" is collocated with the "committee," "Friday," and "weekly." These patterns underscore how lexical choices reflect each outlet's ideological priorities, shaping readers ' perceptions of the Great March of Return.

Table 12. Collocation of keywords in the corpus of *Haaretz*

Keywords	Ranking and number of instances of the first five collocations				
Israel	Jewish (3)	Blockade(3)	Founding(3)	Land (2)	Anticipates (1)
Israeli	Forces (9)	Military (6)	Clashes (6)	Military (6)	Boarder (6)
Palestinians	Uprooted (1)	Migrated(1)	Living (1)	Battles (1)	Camps (1)
Palestinian	Groups (3)	Factions (3)	Authority(2)	Deaths (2)	Protesters (2)
Gaza	Officials(5)	Groups (3)	Protesting(3)	Medical (2)	Residents (2)
Gazans	Wounded(3)	Group (1)	Gunfire (1)	Protesting (1)	Demonstrations (1)
Protests	Committee(2)	Friday (2)	Weekly (2)	Organizations (1)	Return (1)
Hamas	Escalation (3)	Jihad (3)	Islamic (3)	Targets (2)	Demands (2)

In *Haaretz*, the keyword "protests" collocates with "committee," "Friday," "weekly," and "organizations," suggesting that the protests are organized events rather than spontaneous actions. This framing legitimizes Israeli responses to protests. *Haaretz's* collocations reflect an ideological stance that views Israel as a Jewish state that is rightfully combating Palestinian rebellion. In contrast, PC's analysis does not include lexical items collocating with Israel, but the word Israeli is linked with government, army, snipers, and occupation. This result indicates PC's portrayal of Israel as engaging in institutionalized violence and colonialism.

Table 13. Collocation of keywords in the corpus of PC

Keywords	Ranking and number of instances of the first five collocations				
Israel	-	-	-	-	-
Israeli	Government (4)	Army (3)	Snipers (3)	Occupation (2)	
Palestinians	Uprooted (1)	Migrated (1)	Living (1)	Camps (1)	Refugees (1)
Palestinian	People (10)	Refugees (7)	Resistance (5)	Memory (4)	Factions (3)
Gaza	Strip (10)	Boarder (7)	Health (2)	Medical (2)	Protests (2)
Gazans	-	-	-	-	-

Keywords	Ranking and number of instances of the first five collocations				
Protests	Wounds (2)	Weekend (1)	Society (1)	-	-
Hamas	Targets (1)	Weapons (1)	Wars (1)	Escalating	-

Several key themes emerged during the analysis of the portrayal of "Palestinians" and "protests". PC's texts frequently collocate the keyword "Palestinians" with terms like "uprooted", "migrated", "camps", and "refugees", which emphasizes their displacement and refugee status. The word "Palestinian" also frequently pairs with the words "people" and "refugees", which highlights their collective identity and plight. Notably, PC avoids using descriptors like "Gazan" or "Gazans", which could imply an identity for Gaza that is distinct from broader Palestine. PC's collocation of the word "Protests" aligns with "wounds", "weekend", and "society", which suggests these protests are portrayed as regular and peaceful community actions that may tragically result in violence from Israeli forces.

Concordance Analysis of the word Protest in PC and Haaretz

The concordance analysis of the word "protest" reveals how *Haaretz* and the Palestine Chronicle (PC) employ divergent lexical strategies to frame the Great March of Return. Drawing on Gabrielatos and Baker's (2008) methodology for analyzing ideological representations, "protest" was selected as a focal keyword due to its centrality in constructing narratives of agency, legitimacy, and conflict dynamics. This word serves a critical nod for comparing how each outlet contextualizes Palestinian resistance and Israeli military responses.

The word "Protests" in PC

1- that they are Palestinian. Gaza **protest** action dubbed the Great March of Return

2- different functions, but of significance here are **protest** and resistance. In her work, Abbadi

3- March of Return **protest** at Gaza border dwindles down; Israeli army

4- Palestinians were killed. In preparation for the peaceful **protest**, Israel has sent reinforcements

5- at 2 pm. Much more than a **protest**, the weekly marches celebrated Palestinian culture

In PC's corpus, "protest" collocates with modifiers such as "peaceful", "cultural", and "weekly" (e.g., "peaceful protest"; "weekly marches celebrated Palestinian culture"). These pairings emphasize nonviolent resistance and cultural reclamation, framing the GMR as a moral struggle for rights rather than a security threat. For example, the phrase

"Much more than a protest" repositions demonstrations as acts of identity assertion, echoing Baker, et al. (2008) emphasis on lexical choices that humanize marginalized groups. In contrast, *Haaretz* links "protests" to terms like "riots", "Hamas-led", and "escalation" (e.g., "Hamas to escalate nighttime riots and weekend protests"), mixing civil resistance with organized violence. This lexical framing aligns with securitization discourses, justifying Israel's militarized responses as necessary defense against factional militancy.

The word "Protests" in *Haaretz*

1- Hamas to escalate nighttime riots and weekend **protests** along Gaza border

2- shot and wounded 31 Gazans on Friday during **protests** along the border, the health ministry in

3- (Reuters) - Palestinians in Gaza will scale back **protests** along the fortified border with Israel,

4- 14 Palestinians have been killed since the Friday **protests** began in March 2018. In that period

5- "Great March of Return" which had prompted weekly **protests** by Palestinians seeking to regain

6- hospitals, which were overwhelmed during the **protests** by gunshot wounds and amputations

7- fence, as they do for the weekly Friday **protests**. Committee members said the protests will be

8- military and demonstrators during Nakba Day **protests** in Gaza on Wednesday, which thousands of

9- The Palestinian decision to restrain the **protests** is linked to the cease-fire deal struck

10- civil society organizations which organize the **protests**, said there will be a protest this Friday

11- have been killed by Israeli troops since the **protests** started, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry

12- tension in the weekly "Great March of Return" **protests**. This comes after Egyptian security officials

13- sniper during the demonstrations. Israel said the **protests** were often used as cover for militants trying

14- the other side of the border during the **protests**, with another 8,000 suffering gunshot wounds. In

In contrast, *Haaretz* constructs a security-oriented and institutional framing of the word "protest", often associating it with organized events and militant actions that exhibit a negative semantic prosody. Semantic prosody refers to the evaluative aura or connotation that a word acquires through its habitual collocational patterns (Hoey, 2005). For example, studies in corpus-assisted discourse analysis have demonstrated that words frequently collocated with terms such as "riots", "escalation", and "clashes" tend to develop negative connotations in media texts Wodak and Mayer (2009). Unlike PC, where "protest" collocates with terms such as "peaceful" and "resistance," *Haaretz* frequently pairs it with "riots," "border," "escalation," and "clashes," positioning the protests as a security threat rather than a legitimate form of civil resistance. This framing is evident in phrases such as *"Hamas to escalate nighttime riots and weekend protests along Gaza border,"* where the term "riots" implies disorder and violence, linking protests to Hamas-led actions rather than spontaneous grassroots activism. Similarly, in *"Palestinians in Gaza will scale back protests along the fortified border with Israel,"* the phrase "scale back" suggests that the protests required containment, while "fortified border" reinforces a military perspective. Additionally, the phrase *"The Palestinian decision to restrain the protests is linked to the cease-fire deal struck"* frames the protests as volatile actions that necessitate external intervention. By using terminology that aligns protests with militant escalation, *Haaretz* legitimizes Israeli military actions as necessary defensive measures, subtly shaping the reader's perception of the conflict.

To answer RQ3, it is found that the discourse's positioning of the GMR reflects broader ideological binaries: *Haaretz* reduces the conflict to immediate security concerns, divorcing it from its historical context, while PC situates it within structural injustice (Khalidi, 1997). This dichotomy perpetuates what Baker et al. (2008) term "conflict polarization," where media narratives entrench divisions rather than fostering dialogue.

Although the current pilot study's small corpus limits the depth of analysis, emerging trends suggest distinct portrayals. These include the tendency of *Haaretz* to frame protests as well-organized, which correspondingly legitimizes Israeli responses. At the same time, PC portrays the protests as peaceful actions that are undertaken by ordinary Palestinians, which also underlines the right to return to their homeland. In the future, larger-scale studies should provide a more comprehensive analysis.

Conclusion

This pilot study has examined the media representations of the Great March of Return (GMR) in *Haaretz* and *The Palestine Chronicle* (PC), through a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA). By analyzing keywords, collocates, and transitivity structures, the study has demonstrated how these outlets, reflecting divergent ideological perspectives, frame the protests in

ways that align with their broader socio-political positionings. *Haaretz,* as a mainstream Israeli newspaper, frequently employs security-oriented discourse, foregrounding threats, violence and state control, while PC, as an alternative pro-Palestinian outlet, highlights Palestinian agency, victimhood, and resistance. These distinct discursive strategies shape public perceptions of the GMR, reinforcing broader ideological narratives about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The findings reveal significant differences in how key social actors and actions are framed within the protest. *Haaretz* predominantly represents the Israeli military as reactive, using passive constructions and nominalization to obscure agency (e.g., "protesters were shot" rather than "Israeli forces shot protesters"). This linguistic pattern minimizes state responsibility while legitimizing Israeli security actions. Conversely, PC employs active constructions that emphasize Israeli aggression and Palestinian resistance, framing the protest as a form of justified struggle against oppression. These framing choices align with existing scholarship on media bias in conflict reporting, highlighting mainstream outlets' tendency to prioritize state narratives while alternative media challenge hegemonic discourses (Entman, 2006; Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008).

A key contribution of this study lies in its methodological approach. By employing corpus-assisted discourse analysis, the research provides a systematic approach to identifying linguistic patterns that may not be immediately apparent through qualitative analysis alone. Combining corpus techniques with critical discourse analysis enables a detailed examination of how media language functions ideologically, contributing to the growing body of literature on the connection of language, media, and power (Baker, 2006; Hart, 2014). The study emphasizes the importance of triangulating quantitative and qualitative methods in media discourse research, an approach that has been increasingly emphasized in CDA and corpus linguistics studies (Baker and Levon, 2015).

The research questions guiding this study have been addressed by analyzing linguistic and discursive patterns in both corpora. The first research question concerning thematic representation revealed clear contrasts in the portrayal of the GMR, with *Haaretz* emphasizing security concerns and PC framing the protests as a struggle for justice and rights. The second research question on ideological positioning demonstrated how lexical choices, collocation patterns, and syntactic structures reflect the broader editorial stances of each outlet. Finally, the third research question, regarding the similarities and differences between the outlets, exhibited that while both acknowledge the presence of violence, their framing significantly diverges in attributing responsibility and agency.

These findings provide broader implications for understanding media framing in conflict reporting. The study reinforces the argument that media

outlets, whether mainstream or alternative, are not neutral conveyors of information but active participants in constructing social reality. Framing decisions shape public discourse, influence policy debates, and contribute to the legitimation or delegitimization of particular actors and actions in conflicts (Reese, 2007). The ideological positioning of *Haaretz* and PC exemplifies how language choices align with broader geopolitical narratives, affecting international perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle.

While this study provides valuable insights, it also has limitations. The corpus, though methodologically robust for a pilot study, is relatively small and limited to English-language coverage, excluding the impact of Hebrew and Arabic media. Future studies should consider triangulating these findings with larger datasets to mitigate potential selection biases. Future research could expand the corpus by collecting all news from both outlets covering GMR over the three years of its lifespan, from its inception to its end in 2020. A comparative study involving Western media outlets could offer further insights into global framing dynamics.

Finally, this study highlights the power of language in shaping conflict narratives. Critically examining media representations of the GMR contributes to the broader field of media discourse analysis and conflict studies. The findings emphasize the importance of media literacy and critical thinking when engaging with news sources, especially in polarized geopolitical contexts. As media settings evolve, further research is necessary to investigate how digital platforms and emerging technologies shape the discursive construction of conflicts in the Israeli-Palestinian context and beyond.

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