Introduction

The previous chapter started with what may be regarded as the ultimate, unalterable outcome of war. It was the newspapers’ representation of death as a result of the conflict that was first engaged with. Subsequently, the chapter went on to examine how the broadsheets accounted for death: what the sequence of events directly leading to people having died was, and who or what might have been responsible for that. Thus, the previous chapter examined basic facts, events, acts, and acts of explanation. In the main, it was found that whilst representation of death differed between publications, no such systematic difference could be found when it came to provide an account for it. For this reason, it was concluded that further investigation of different contexts is required. This is the first in a succession of chapters that occasion such investigation.

Context may be understood here in two senses. The traditional account values context inasmuch as it gives more information to the reader, and contributes to their understanding of the importance of facts reported. It is context in this sense that recent examination of media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict focused on (Philo & Berry, 2004, 2011). However, the concept may also be understood to refer to something more fundamental. Namely, in line with post-structuralist philosophical (Rorty, 1999), literary (Fish, 1980), historical (White, 2010), anthropological (Geertz, 2001) and psychological (Billig, 1996; Engel, 2000) explorations, we may conceive of context not as something additive but constitutive to the report of facts and events. This would mean that instead of adding something more to already available building blocks of facts, examining them in context reveals that it
is this very context or perspective that lends the ‘building blocks’ their meaning.

As the book progresses, these two senses of context will be accounted for in turns. The present chapter will take more of an ‘additive’ view on context, whilst Chapters 7 and 8 take a nearly exclusively ‘constitutive’ one. What will be of interest, in both cases, is similar though. The question that these chapters will engage with is how the relative consensus manifest in the newspapers’ coverage of facts, events, and acts of explanations changes as we learn more and more about their (critical) perspectives: will the general agreement between conservative and liberal newspapers as to what matters and how it matters hold? Or will differences in degree become differences of kind?

To tackle these questions, 28 topics were identified, and the newspapers’ paragraphs coded for them. By their nature, some of these codes may be more political than historical. Some reach back to a distant past, others (such as the Israeli elections that were held after the war) even refer to a near future. As such, the conceptual area is by nature a rather heterogeneous one. Still, it was found that to account for everything that might go under historical context, considerably more codes would be needed. The code ‘other historical events’ was thus created to capture every topic that is historical but is not pre-determined in the codebook.

As in the previous chapter, at first historical context in the entire database will be analysed, with details pertaining to specific newspapers to turn to afterwards.

**Historical context**

In general, 1949 paragraphs were coded with 2744 occurrences of ‘historical context’ codes. Historical context featured in 24.9 per cent of the database’s paragraphs: a smaller percentage than of action but considerably more than that of fatalities. Due to the daily character of the publications, the newspapers’ foremost task is to cover news, with, arguably, only the second being to contextualize them. (Fatalities, at the same time, feature mostly in introducing some action or context, but not in the main body of the articles.) Besides, though numerically less frequent, historical context had a tendency to occur in editorials, comments and analysis: in spaces, that is, which may be argued to carry more weight for readers, as it is there that the political-moral perspective of the publications is communicated.

As can be seen, historical context is a more heterogeneous area than either of the two engaged with in the previous chapter. Topics are