Overview and summary

Examining the British broadsheets’ engagement with the armed conflict of Gaza, this book narrated a story of the war. By and large, it started with consensus. As the coverage of ‘building blocks’ with which the narrative of the war was constructed was examined, whatever differences we found were coloured by grey and not categorical black and white. Regardless of political affiliation, newspapers agreed on which conceptual areas and which topics within conceptual areas to prioritize. Any divergence occurred only in the shadow of these broad similarities and may therefore be judged relative rather than categorical.

As for these relative differences or shades of greys, they occasionally appeared in unexpected patterns. Regarding the general importance attributed to fatalities, no left-right axis was discernible, as it was the conservative Telegraph and the left-liberal Independent that referred to fatalities most frequently. And if this preference was not for the same reason, no ideological divide could be detected regarding specific categories of fatalities either: whilst the Telegraph and the Guardian displayed an interest in the nationality of the victims (focusing on Israelis or Palestinians, respectively), The Times and the Independent focused more on humanitarian status (focusing on combatants or civilians, respectively). What is more, even though conservative newspapers attributed more importance to topics representing action and events in war than their (left)-liberal counterparts, all general differences disappeared when specific categories of action were consulted. Indeed, it was the magnitude of the Telegraph’s coverage of the Zeytoun incident and that of The


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... regarding the Israeli deployment of the chemical substance white phosphorous that stood out amongst individual topics.

Whilst still coloured by the shades of grey, important divergences started to emerge in Chapter 4, where historical context and the critical perspective it implied was examined. The chapter reported that each of the liberal newspapers attributed more importance to historical context than either of the two conservative ones, and that conservatives devoted far more attention than liberals to the issue of Hamas rockets fired into Israel when compared to the Israeli economic blockade of Gaza. A conservative pole of historical coverage emerged, characterized by the neglect of historical issues; indeed, even Hamas rockets were reported less often than what would have been expected on the basis of *Telegraph’s* and *The Times’* general presence in the database. As for the liberal newspapers, it was less than clear as to what qualitative difference their pronounced focus on historical issues derived from. In the case of the *Independent*, no meaningful pattern emerged regarding the target of their criticism; and whilst the *Financial Times* appeared to direct a consistent critical perspective to both participants of the conflict, of the newspapers, they neglected most the seminal issue of Hamas rockets. It was only the *Guardian* where the magnitude of coverage appeared to have been translated into a systematic qualitative difference. The left-liberal newspaper was the only one consistently deploying a critical perspective as it wrote a considerable amount not just about the Israeli economic blockade and occupation, but also about Hamas rockets fired into Israeli civilian territory.

In line with this, as the perspective of the book has been broadening and as analysis turned from facts towards the context of criticism, a recognizable and systematic gap has been opened between the conservative and (left)-liberal coverage of the war.

This tendency characterized Chapter 5 where the subject of analysis became how the act of criticism was constructed in the broadsheets’ comment pieces. First, as the first half of the chapter demonstrated, when the ratio of positions indicating a broadly ‘pro-Israeli’ or ‘anti-Hamas/Palestinian’ stance versus positions suggesting a broadly ‘anti-Israeli’ or ‘pro-Hamas/Palestinian’ stance was calculated, a contrastive picture appeared between conservative and (left)-liberal newspapers – one ever more pronounced in the case of *The Times* and the *Independent*. Second, there was virtually no occasion where an overlap of these positions would have been showcased across the spectrum of the broadsheets. What is more, qualitative analysis was capable of looking into