



UN AND PEACE DISCOURSE AND
THE PALESTINE QUESTION:
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

BY

ALADDIN ASSAIQELI

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Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge
and Human Sciences
International Islamic University
Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Struggling in an age of Zionist dominance, of dominant *Zionist discourse*, it is maintained throughout this *critical* conscious-raising *discourse study* that the way the *Palestine Question* has been discursively constructed “along certain lines rather than others” is what has kept Palestine and the Middle East and much of the turbulence engulfing the world in the way it is now. It is also maintained that discourse is employed by the powerful to enact, normalise and sustain domination and control. Using the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study has sought within the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to examine UN resolutions and ‘peace’ discourses on the Palestine Question to find if they are *bona fide* and *practical* and accordingly whether they have contributed and if so in what ways and to what extent to the protracted status quo, and the abortive attempts of years of negotiations. The study has found that temporisation of the issue, of finding an amicable solution to the Palestine State problem was an indirect but calculated result of the *bad faith* and *linguistic manipulation* of the powerful forces; that those *discursive practices* are responsible for reproducing domination rather than trying to work out a “just, lasting and comprehensive” solution as articulated; that the way those discourses is structured does not lay the ground for justice and peace, but rather *indefinite protraction* of the *Palestinian struggle against Israeli occupation* where, given the current imbalance of power, the Palestinians would continuously remain the main “losers” within this form of social life. The study has detailed that the whole basis for the ‘peace process’ - UN Resolutions 242 and 338 - is flawed, *mala fide* and *impractical* in ending *Israeli occupation* and implementing the Palestinian refugees *Right of Return* and the Palestinian people *Right to Self-Determination*. So found to be little more than war against *the powerless* by other means, those UN resolutions and ‘peace’ discourses as they stand are meant in light of the *bad faith* underlying them to provide for *the powerful* the means to further consolidate their domination and control, and indefinitely. In this context, the study has revealed that the apparent pursuit of ‘*peace*’ as an American-Israeli means to sustain *war* (the status quo) need not be a paradox. The study draws its significance from its demonstration of the centrality of each of the Palestine Question to peace, discourse to power relations, and CDA to social change. The study is expected to make us, rulers and ruled, far conscious of domination in its linguistic forms, and of the role of those linguistic forms in the reproduction or transformation of the status quo.

خلاصة البحث

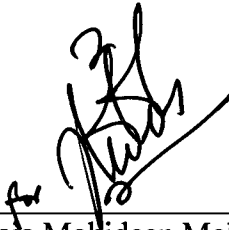
حاولت هذه الدراسة في خضم مواجهة هيمنة "الخطاب" الصهيوني، تبيان أنّ الطريقة اللغوية الانتقائية التي تم من خلالها صياغة "الخطاب" المتعلق بالقضية الفلسطينية هي ما أدى إلى بقاء الوضع المضطرب الذي تمر به فلسطين، والشرق الأوسط والعالم. كما أن حقيقة "الخطاب" الذي يتم توظيفه من قِبل القوى الكبرى يستخدم لإرساء الهيمنة على الشعوب المستضعفة، وتكريسها وتصويرها على أنّها هي الوضع الطبيعي. وبناء عليه يهدف البحث لمعرفة ما إذا كانت الممارسات "الخطابية" المتعلقة بالقضية الفلسطينية ذات نوايا حسنة، أو كان لها مساهمة في إدامة الوضع الراهن وإجهاض المفاوضات طيلة السنوات الفائتة، وإذا كان الأمر كذلك فبأية طريقة وإلى أي حد كان ذلك؟ وقد استخدم هذا البحث منهج "التحليل النقدي للخطاب" لقرارات الأمم المتحدة ذات الصلة بالكفاح الفلسطيني ضد الاحتلال الإسرائيلي، وخطاب عملية السلام. ولقد وجدت الدراسة أن المماثلة في حل القضية الفلسطينية وإيجاد حل سلمي لها يعود بشكل غير مباشر إلى سوء النية المبيت، والتلاعب اللغوي للقوى الكبرى، كما أن هذه "الخطابات" مسؤولة عن إعادة إنتاج الهيمنة بدلاً من العمل على حل "عادل ودائم وشامل" مثلما تم الإعلان عنه، وأن الأساس الذي تم بناء هذه "الخطابات" عليه لا يعد منطلقاً صالحاً للعدل والسلام، بل يؤدي إلى إطالة لانهاية لهذا الصراع الغير متكافئ، ويجعل الشعب الفلسطيني الخاسر الأوحده في ظل عدم توازن القوى. كما أوضحت الدراسة لغوياً أن قرارات الأمم المتحدة 242 و338 التي ترمي إلى إنهاء الاحتلال الإسرائيلي وتنفيذ حق العودة، وحق تقرير المصير، تعد أساساً معيباً وماكراً وغير عملي، وبناءً على ذلك فإن مثل تلك القرارات و"الخطابات" في ضوء سوء النية المبيت، تعدّ حرباً صهيوي-أمريكية ضد الفلسطينيين تعمل على استمرار الوضع القائم، لتمكين إسرائيل أكثر من تحقيق أهدافها الأساسية وأطماعها التوسعية. وبيّنت الدراسة كذلك أن السعي الإسرا-أمريكي إلى السلام هو في حقيقته وسيلة لإدامة الاحتلال الإسرائيلي، موضحة عدم التناقض في هذا السياق. وتكمن أهمية هذه الدراسة في بيان أهمية كلٍ من القضية الفلسطينية في عملية إحلال السلام، و"الخطاب" في موضوع ميزان القوى، و"التحليل النقدي للخطاب" في مجال التغيير الاجتماعي، والمساهمة في تحقيق السلام، وفي توعية القراء حكماً ومحكومين بالدور الذي تلعبه الأساليب اللغوية في بناء الواقع وتصورنا له، وفي إرساء علاقات غير متكافئة للقوى المختلفة وتكريسها.

APPROVAL PAGE

The dissertation of Aladdin Assaiqeli has been approved by the following:



Subramaniam Govindasamy
Supervisor



Haja Mohideen Mohd Ali
Internal Examiner

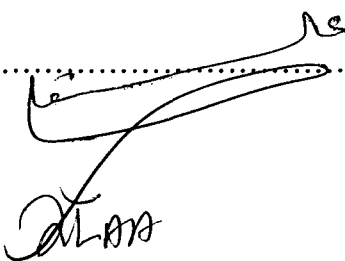
Theo van Leeuwen
External Examiner

Wan Sabri Wan Yusof
Chairman

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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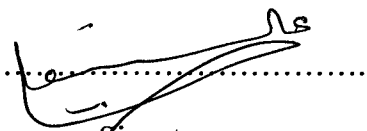
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**UN AND PEACE DISCOURSE AND THE PALESTINE QUESTION:
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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*To those
“reluctant warriors,”
Those self-immolators,
“victims of discursive injustice,”
“veterans of creative suffering”*

...

•

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in this work has not developed out of vacuum. I wanted to pursue a PhD, not out of a desire for personal promotion and self-aggrandisement or just as a sort of intellectual luxury or a form of escapism from a bitter reality, but rather out of a burning interest to contribute to transform such a bitter reality - the reality caused by occupation and *discursive injustice*; the reality that results from the *discursive polarisation* between image and reality and hence the perpetuation of domination or such injustice; the reality that makes the apparent advocacy of 'peace' to be nothing more than a means to sustain **war** (the status quo); the reality that as a result of such *abusive military and discursive practices* has provoked even maidens in quest for freedom in occupied Palestine to become self-immolators. More specifically, I have been driven by a searing pain to help empower - through a critical analysis of the discourse declared to end this reality - the powerless in this dystopia. Now, along with this intrinsic drive, much of the inspiration I received - directly and indirectly - has come from a number of noble quarters, to whom - below - I register my gratitude:

This heartfelt gratitude and indebtedness, first and foremost, go to the One Who says: "Announce, (O Muhammad) unto My servants that verily I am the Forgiving, the Merciful". Indeed to Allah, the Absolute Reality, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Supreme Power, the Most Compassionate, All-Knowing, All-Beautiful, Most Just," and Most Loving, Lord of the Universe that I wish to register my words of love and acknowledgment for His countless bounties and heart-touching Mercy, for without such Soothing Mercy, this PhD project would have been one of loss and despair.

Enshrined in my heart is also my gratitude to the one whose presence in my firmament, has - along with the glorious Quran and noble prophetic precepts - inspired me to pursue knowledge wherever it is, and in light of such knowledge, combat - in an objective and balanced manner - *injustice* and oppression, my dissertation mentor Dr Subramaniam Govindasamy, along with Prof Theo van Leeuwen, the External Examiner, whose help and counsel have expanded my mind and made the journey less thorny.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

A vital ingredient in the rise of almost any *éminence grise* or many of those in actual or official positions of power, and the resounding success or failure of many of those seeking power, language is “something one cannot afford to neglect” (Amer, 2009: 26). Away from its being a medium of communication, the centrality of language to power relations, and indeed to the very essence of human life and existence – right from the moment of birth to the throes of death - is again “something one cannot afford to neglect”. Indeed, beyond its role as a tool for communication and social interaction, language is used to effect a myriad of other crucial or more crucial roles.

The way we think, the way we perceive or conceptualise the world, the way we conceive of reality, the way we rationalise things, form opinions, and ideologise them, the way we represent and picture events and realities around us, the way we construct our experience of the world, the way we enact social relations, the way we build our meaning potential since childhood, the way we picture social wrongs, the way we stabilise or even intensify social wrongs, the way we become members of a certain culture or group or a *discourse type*, or construct an identity, the way we take a stroll down memory lane, the way we conceal, mitigate, legitimate, or reproduce a certain political event, the way we perpetuate an ideology, the way we brainwash and get brainwashed for war, the way we programme and become programmed to kill, the way we problematise a figure or a people, etc., are *all* languaged.

In other words, all those ways and many others are all constructed, carried out, shaped and reshaped by and through the *apparatus of language*. They are all constructed through the power of *logos* (see Section 1.9), the uniqueness of *beyan* (see Section 1.9), or the working of discursive processes (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999).

Similarly, the way “consent,” as a form of hegemony is manufactured, the way we are socialised, produced as “social subjects” and made to occupy certain “subject positions,” the way certain implicit or background assumptions or presuppositions (e.g. “*The Soviet threat cost the West dear*”) are subtly imposed upon us as readers and interpreters, the way a certain ideology becomes “common sense” and thus the accepted norm or practice of a certain institution, the way a discourse type becomes normal or “naturalized” (i.e. appearing to be devoid of a particular ideology) and thus commonsensical and thus dominant, the way victim-agent reversal (e.g. Palestinians and Israelis) takes place, etc. (Fairclough, 2001a) are also *all* constructed through certain “twisted and sinister” selections of language.

Thus, beyond communication language is an instrument of wealth, authority and action; power, dominance and hegemony; manipulation, mystification and discrimination; inequality, injustice and domination. In the words of Blakemore (1992: 48), “we need to view language as a vehicle for social action rather than as a vehicle for thought”. Hence, it seems that the notion that language is a means of communication is an incidental function of language given its many other hegemonic functions. Language, for example, according to Montgomery, Durant, Fabb, Furniss and Mills (1992), is an instrument of conceptualising and constructing reality in particular expedient ways. Austin (1962) sees it as a “form of action;” Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter (2000) as a “form of social behavior;” Fairclough (2001b) as a “mode of action;” and a powerful tool for leverage according to Misaddi (2007).

Therefore, *language-conscious* Machiavellians “seeking to control and influence our ideas in the service of some vested political or commercial interest” (Cook, 2003: 63) will use or abuse; indeed butcher language in “subtle ways” to influence and in many cases mislead the masses.

While this concise account might be a revelation to the unpractised eye, to the perceptive observer of language and politics or those cognizant or conscious of the power of *logos*, and of *critical language awareness*, it is not. For them, it is something established as the authority of language or the role of discourse or discourses in shaping and reshaping perception and reality is central. For them, discourses are central in constructing the political event; in constructing or manufacturing social categories or “relatively powerless people,” such as “factory workers, criminals and juvenile delinquents;” in constructing “particular people (‘criminals’, ‘deviants’, teenage mothers’) as targets for social control and [...] the form the control itself will take” (Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton and Richardson, 1999: 141-142). For them, the role of discourses in power relations and the perpetuation of power asymmetry; in “maintaining and legitimating unequal social arrangements” (1999: 142) is uncontested. It is uncontested as they can see the relationship between language and power or meaning and power or the “interplay of power and knowledge,” to draw on Michel Foucault (1926-1984), a central figure in this field.

A double-edged weapon, language is central to the construction of political and geopolitical entities, and individual, national and political or ethnic identities, and the dismantlement of existing ones; it is central to the *hegemonic construction* of experience and reality “along certain lines” or “angles of telling” rather than others (Montgomery et al., 1992: 76); it is central to power and control, to social, political, and cultural transformation, or formation, to lies and vilifications, to the

misrepresentation of reality and the distortion of facts, to protraction and filibuster, to trickery and treachery, to camouflage and window-dressing, to temporisation and the creation of “facts on the ground,” to enslavement and subjugation, to the politicide or dismemberment of existing nations and the formation of new ones, to cession or secession, to inner emancipation and political liberation, etc. Hence, according to Jaworski and Coupland (1999), the global or *macro-structures* that take place in and shape the real world are carried through the local or *microstructures* of language or discourse.

Such emphasis on the role and significance of language in the construction or distortion (i.e. hegemonic construction) of a certain reality and our conceptualisation or perception of it, and of the role it plays in social struggle and the change or maintenance of power relations, along with the need to increase consciousness of such significance as a way to resist manipulation, constitute one of the two main objectives of this study.

Hence, for the purposes of this study, I am going to focus - in relation to the *Palestine Question* (see Section 1.9) - on language in its relation to power and the manufacture of ideology and master narratives and hence control and domination. Accordingly, one of my prime targets is to *increase our consciousness* of the role of language in the exercise of dominance and hegemony and its centrality to colonialism and the exercise of domination and their perpetuation on the one hand, and the transformation of the status quo or emancipation on the other (Fairclough, 2001a).

So more than “naked violence,” language particularly in modern times plays a role central in enacting and sustaining social control and power and domination. An act of murder or a protracted conflict or any other “social wrong” can transpire or be prevented, for example, through *words*. Though - as told in the Biblical and Quranic

story - Cain, for instance, is charged with the act of murdering his brother Abel; it is *words* that ignited this tragic end, this first incident of murder in the history of mankind.

Through his provocative *words*, Abel - in a way - pushed his spurned brother, Cain, to murder him. This can be better grasped if we are to imagine Abel using rather sympathetic or emollient *words* to mitigate the severity of the ordeal wroth Cain was undergoing, following the rejection of his offering, rather than enraging him further by representing himself as “righteous” and “God-fearing,” and qualifying his brother with *words* such as “evildoer” and as a “habitant of the Fire” (Quran, 5: 27-30).

Thus, whether on an individual, familial, national or transnational level, vendetta or rapprochement, warmongering or peace-offering, acts of construction or acts of distortion, social inclusion or social exclusion of specific groups, etc. can all be (re)produced - besides coercion or physical force - by discourse. In this sense, both peace and violence are discursive (Buttney and Ellis, 2007).

Thus, conceptions of war and visions of peace are discursively produced. Buttney and Ellis (2007: 141) state - with reference to the “intractable ethnonational” “Arab-Israeli conflict” as it is called - that “In the interactional realm, language use is not a mere epiphenomenon of one’s position in the intractable conflict, but becomes the central feature in the production and reproduction of social relations and social structure” and thus the conflict or occupation in this case. Indeed, as Amer (2009: 26) puts it, “conflicts and wars begin and end with *words*. Before guns are fired and bombs start falling, words commit the first act of war”. Emphasising the same point, Nelson (2003) observes:

Human conflict begins and ends via talk and text. We generate, shape, implement, remember and forget violent behavior between individuals, communities or states through a specific discourse. It is discourse that

prepares for sacrifice, justifies inhumanity, absolves from guilt, and demonizes the enemy (449).

Thus - the means to establish every paradigm, discipline and movement, democracy, autocracy and any other system, etc. - *words* underlie almost every rightful or wrongful act and social practice. They initiate and then either perpetuate or defuse any culpable act, conflict or foreign occupation. They *enact* and *sustain* power relations. They *naturalise* and *normalise* us into accepting what we thought of - at one time - as bizarre and unacceptable, and what we thought of as acceptable, as bizarre and unacceptable. They “make notions which are in fact debatable seem like ‘givens’” or “questionable ideas or issues more palatable and ‘normal’” (Thomas, Wareing, Singh, Peccei, Thornborrow and Jones, 2004: 52), or in the words of George Orwell: “make lies sound truthful [construction through distortion] and murder respectable (quoted in Sant, 2008: 35), and hence the victim the aggressor, and the aggressor the victim.

In absence of morality or presence of immoralism or Machiavellianism, words make the vulture appears to be the prey, and the prey the vulture. In other words, words cause the victimiser to appear as the victim, and the victim as the heartless victimiser. They *delegitimise* the powerless as “violent, confused and irresponsible” and *legitimise* the powerful as “peaceable, rational and flexible” (Amer, 2009: 26). They enslave and subjugate. They cause personal or political paralysis.

In this context, Bennabi (1998) - though indirectly - limns in a book that was originally written in French and translated into English and Arabic, a metaphorical picture of the power of *words* - in relation to colonialism - in effecting a general paralysis in a certain system or network of social relations:

Thus, the activities of colonialism are regularly promoted in more subtle and complicated ways to such an extent that it becomes almost totally beyond our ability to perceive their far-reaching implications. This is because our mental status and attitudes prevent us from following the

intrigues and discerning the grain-of-sand like means used by colonialism. In such a situation, it would suffice that a single grain of sand enters the engine to put it out of order. In other words, *just as a 'nothing' would suffice to paralyze the nervous system of a living being, so too would a 'pin sting' in a sensitive area be sufficient to bring paralysis into the social relations network of a colonized country* (100).

Apart from the concrete manifestations of colonialism or occupation and in an indirect attempt to increase our consciousness of the power of the word - represented here in the slight but fatal *grain of sand* or *pin sting* - Bennabi attempts to draw our attention to the subtle ways imperial powers use in their domination of the less powerful. Hence, Bennabi's (1998):

We are unfortunately unable, due to our mental attitudes and traditions, to perceive the activities of colonialism unless they are performed with much noise like that of guns, tanks or bombers. In contrast, when these activities are performed by expert artists or rodent-like agents, they reach beyond our awareness for the only reason that they make no noise (103).

As language is a “key to understanding both colonialism and the process of becoming emancipated from the strictures of foreign domination” (Divine, 2008: 3), it thus has the power to create ‘facts’ and inequalities, and the power to address and redress them. Seeing how colonialism/imperialism/occupation/foreign domination, social control or global dominance, etc. can be discursively forged or imperilled, justified and perpetuated or how it begins and ends through discourse is central to this study. In other words, central to this treatise is how language can be used or abused to *enact, normalise and sustain* domination or “facts on the ground” or “social wrongs,” and how it can be sought to address and redress them through the exposition of the discourses or “abusive discursive practices” that have given rise to them.

Hence, one of the objectives of this treatise is to stress - through reference to the Palestine Question – “the [Hallidayan] notion of the *multifunctionality of language* in texts” (Titscher et al., 2000: 149), and its centrality to power creation and power

perpetuation on the one hand, and equally its centrality to social change and emancipation.

Accordingly, the study seeks to *increase* our consciousness of the central role discourse plays in altering people's perceptions; in manufacturing ideology and consent and domination; (Fairclough, 2001a). It seeks to make us conscious of the "reciprocal influences of language and social structure;" of the assumption that there is a dialectical relationship between discourse and reality; that language leads to power and that power is, *inter alia*, constructed and maintained (or abolished) through language (Titscher et al., 2000; Fairclough, 2001a). It seeks to clarify how influential language or the linguistic sign is. It aims to let us recognise that language can control cognition and draw its responses (al Ghathami, 2004), shape and manage the mind (Van Dijk, 2008), divert or deflect attention, narcotise or deaden the senses (Misaddi, 2007), "naturalise us into accepting certain ideas..." (Thomas et al., 2004: 33), "induce the readers into occupying reading positions," nudge or inveigle the target audience into adopting certain views and rejecting certain others, instil into our subconsciousness certain notions, suggestions, (background) assumptions and conceptions, and "project positions and perspectives". It endeavours to show language, when used by the powerful, as a "means of domination" and distortion of reality, a tool employed to sustain and reproduce or perpetuate "hegemonic relations or unequal relations of power" (Simpson, 1993; Fairclough, 2001a); to enact, conceal, legitimate, or reproduce power and dominance, hegemony and inequality (Van Dijk, 1993; quoted in Titscher et al., 2000), and to "represent social realities in determinate ways" (Montgomery et al., 1992: 74), etc. It seeks, especially in this "age of political spin and soundbites" (O'Halloran, 2003: 1-2) to make us read newspapers, listen to politicians and defense intellectuals/analysts, watch television and interact with any

semiotic form or *media* differently - with a pinch of salt - to make us aware of such assumptions about language usage and language capabilities or the mind-taming, perception-shaping potentials to which language can - through such awareness - be put to.

The study endeavours to make us aware of and be “sensitized to the linguistic practices” that are deployed to maintain “unequal relations of power”. It seeks to make us conscious of the assumption that the “angles of telling” (from Simpson, 1993) we adopt through the lexical and structural selections we make are not the same and that they are meticulously calculated to serve particular cognitive purposes; and to induce, through the drug of a certain discourse, the illusion of optimism, and hence the maintenance of the status quo. It seeks to *sensitize* our awareness of the presence of difference in media coverage of events on the one hand, and the significance of such difference or differences in reportage or discourse, as each discourse producer - “depending on their political perspective” (Montgomery et al., 1992: 76) - is motivated by different agenda, on the other hand. In other words, the study aims to *sensitize* our awareness of the *media text* or *discursive event* orchestrated by a certain discourse producer to frame or represent a certain *political event* as not being the same as another *news text* or discursive event representing the same political event. Each *linguistic representation*, depending on the motive and *ideological* viewpoint or affiliation of its producer, has its own ensemble of lexical and structural items and thus implications, which can, not only be quite different, but quite significant as well.

Representing, for example, what took place in 1948 in Mandate Palestine, as “voluntary exodus” or “voluntary transfer” as maintained by the official Israeli version (Pappe, 2006), or as forced hijra/“Forced Exile”/“forced relocation”/“forced expulsion”/“forcible removal” or “mass expulsion” as maintained by Arab academics

(Khalidi, 1992; Masalha, 1992; Saleh, 2003), or as a crime of “ethnic cleansing,” as revealed by Israeli New Historians (Morris, 1988; Pappé, 2006), or as (population) *transfer* as it was originally conceived or represented by Theodore Herzl (1895), or “compulsory transfer” as was framed by David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973), is *not* the same, though the event being represented *is* the same: the removal of “around a million people” (Pappé, 2006) from their homeland or the homelessness of “85%” (Badil Resource Centre: Facts and Figures) “of the Palestinians living in the areas that became the state of Israel”.

Thus, here we can see “how the same event can generate two different stories” and hence reactions with significant political and ideological implications, or at least “a difference in perspective” (Thomas et al., 2004: 63). Each discourse producer wants the masses to react and interpret the event in a particular way; to experience it and conceptualise reality from their own perspective or ideological stance. So while the event or people represented *is* the same, the way they are being represented is *not* the same. This is a fact that brings language at the heart of the political event, not as “a mere epiphenomenon” or tool of mere reflection or neutral narration but construction of the event (Montgomery et al., 1992), of the version deemed expedient of the event.

In the media coverage of events representing the December 17, 2010 popular revolt against the political establishment in Tunisia, different media outlets/discourse producers framed the event in quite different terms; each in accordance with their political stance and ideological affiliations.

Al Arabiya, (14/1/2011), a generally pro-government news channel, for example, chose to frame Tunisia’s president Ben Ali’s action, following the *Tunisian Intifada* against his “23 years iron-fisted rule,” with *discursive qualifications* such as ‘quitting’ and ‘leaving,’ as in the headline: “Ben Ali quits after 23 yrs in power &