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Invoking Genocide: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Strategic Deployment of “Genocide” in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Diplomová práce

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Anotace

Uprostred kritiky Izraela a akútnej humanitárnej krízy v Gaze po 7. októbri 2023 sa diskurz stretáva s označeniami masového násilia, najmä pojmom „genocída". Táto diplomová práca skúma, ako izraelskí a palestínski reprezentanti v Bezpečnostnej rade OSN strategicky nasadzujú tento pojem. Použitím kritickej diskurzívnej analýzy skúmame, ako obe strany konštruujú identity a legitimizujú svoje pozície prostredníctvom manipulačných stratégií. Výskum v závere odhaľuje rámcovanie zodpovednosti, mentality obete a právnych či morálnych tvrdení. Zistenia poukazujú na širšie sústredenie diskurzu okolo pojmu „genocída", ktoré funguje ako výkonný akt usilujúci sa o mobilizovanie podpory, posilňovanie pozícií a ovplyvňovanie zaužívaných interpretácií na medzinárodnej scéne.

Abstract

Amid criticism of Israel and the acute humanitarian crisis in Gaza after 7 October 2023, the role of discourse stands at the forefront with labels of mass atrocities, notably "genocide". This thesis investigates how Israeli and Palestinian representatives at the UNSC strategically deploy the term. Drawing on CDA, we examine how both construct identities and legitimize their positions through manipulation strategies. The research, in its conclusions, uncovers competing narratives framing responsibility, victimhood, legal and moral claims. Widely centring on "genocide" functions as a performative act mobilizing support, reinforcing positions, and influencing interpretations on the international stage.

Declaration

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci na téma **Invoking Genocide: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Strategic Deployment of "Genocide" in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict** zpracoval sám**.** Veškeré prameny a zdroje informací, které jsem použil k sepsání této práce, byly citovány v textu a jsou uvedeny v seznamu použitých pramenů a literatury.

Brno December 7, 2025 .....

Bc. Matej Golis

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations 13

List of Appendices 14

1 Introduction 15

2 Discourse Over Genocide: An Overview 18

2.1 Academic Debate 19

2.2 Legal Proceeding 22

2.3 Institutional and Political Recognition 23

2.4 Weaponizing Memory and Language 27

3 Concept of Genocide 30

3.1 Lemkin´s Contribution 30

3.2 Meaning Behind Genocide 31

4 Methodology 33

4.1 Selection Procedure & Data Collection 33

4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis 34

4.3 Concept of Discourse 36

4.4 Power of Discourse 36

4.5 Discourse and Ideology 37

4.6 Ideological Square 38

4.7 Othering 39

4.8 Discourse and Manipulation 39

4.9 Framework Assembly 42

4.10 Operationalization 43

5 Analysis of Israel 46

5.1 Diachronic Analysis 46

5.2 Positive Self: A Law-Abiding Democracy 47

5.3 Negative Other: Genocidal Terrorist or Jihadist? 49

5.4 Dehumanization: Embodiment of Evil 50

5.5 Victimization: Another Jewish Genocide....51
5.6 Manipulation: Those Solely Responsible....52

6 Analysis of Palestine 54

6.1 Diachronic Analysis....54
6.2 Positive Self: In Show of Solidarity....55
6.3 Negative Other: Netanyahu´s War Machine....56
6.4 Victimization: Humanity Left Under the Rubble....57
6.5 Manipulation: For Generations to Come....58

7 Discussion 60

8 Conclusion 62

Bibliography 65

Primary Sources....65
Secondary Sources....66

Appendix A Codebook 70

List of Abbreviations

CDA	–	Critical Discourse Analysis
EU	–	European Union
ICC	–	International Criminal Court
ICJ	–	International Court of Justice
IHRA	–	International Holocaust Remembrance Association
IR	–	International Relations
PA	–	Palestinian Authority
PLO	–	Palestinian Liberation Organization
UN	–	United Nations
UNGA	–	United Nations General Assembly
UNRWA	–	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
UNSC	–	United Nations Security Council

List of Appendices

Text Appendices

Appendix A Codebook 70

1 Introduction

On October 7, 2023, a significant rupture occurred in the already fragile status quo of the long-brewing tensions in the region of the Middle East. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was abruptly thrust back into the international spotlight. Spanning decades of unease and apprehensions turned into hostilities between the Israelis and Palestinians, rooted in a complex mutual interplay of national and religious partitions, were reignited by the launch of Operation "Aqsa Flood" by Hamas (Badarin, 2024; Orhan Çağlayan, 2024). Initiated by a massive amalgamation of violence against Israeli civilians, it incited a reciprocal military retaliation by Israel. In turn, Israel´s reactionary measures sparked a polarized global response, generating both strong expressions of solidarity and widespread condemnation. Emergence of an acutely dire humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, which still continues to be a nightmarish reality, put Israel´s overarching strategic goals and agenda into question (Reingewertz, 2025). Coming to transpire into South Africa's charge for the Crime of Genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the International Criminal Court´s (ICC) request for arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas political leaders reaffirmed the desperate need for contextual willingness to determine responsibility, and to revoke inaction (Segal, 2024; Van Hout et al., 2024).

At the time of writing, overstepping its 650-day milestone since the war began, the death toll inside Gaza has surmounted to 60,000 casualties, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health (UNRWA, 2025; Al-Mughrabi & Farge, 2025). United Nations Relief and Works Agency´s (UNRWA) (2025) report warns about the worst-case scenario brought by the spread of famine that is currently playing out, with mounting evidence showing widespread starvation, malnutrition, and diseases, which are now driving a rise in hunger-related deaths, including children, who do not have access to drinking water and substances containing nutritional value (UNRWA, 2025). Furthermore, the acute response to such a human-made disaster is being hampered by obstacles in providing safe movement, from blocking the entry points for medical supplies and fuel, leaving out the resumption of much-contemplated risky airdrops provided by the European states (UNRWA, 2025).

Frequent occurrences of Israeli retaliatory strikes, bombings, and sieges have seen the displacement of more than 85% percent of the population living in the territory, over 7,000 persons injured, and another 7,000 are either dead or missing under the rubble (Abu Salmiya, 2024). These numbers have been exemplified by April 2024, while the situation has set off an urgent precedent in the form of announcements by the United Nations (UN), launching multiple investigations by human rights organizations like Amnesty International (Amnesty International, 2024) or Human Rights Watch (check World Report 2025 by Human Rights Watch, 2025), and evoked the

interest of other non-governmental subjects to expose the uneven disproportionality and indiscrimination resulting from the destruction.

Falling under close watch, the arrests of civilians that have been put in detention to be used as "human shields" by the Israeli military to infiltrate objects, belong to another unbelievably frustrating aspects exposed in this conflict, squandering the principle of non-combatant immunity in the process (Liu, 2024). The Israeli policies have also led to the downfall of critical infrastructure in Gaza. This includes almost all hospitals, with only a limited count standing in the southern venues, some with only barely functional equipment and electricity, along with the bombings of educational and cultural sites (Abu Salmiya, 2024).

Under the delimitations of the United Nations, whose role in maintaining international peace and security remains critical to the future developments of the conflict, it obliges member states to prevent and punish the crime of "genocide" (United Nations, 1945). The institutional language employed in its largest binding organ, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), frequently reflects not only obligations but also devolves into political calculations by its member states when drafting or voting for resolutions (Olayiwola, 2024). During meetings at the UNSC, the importance of the capacity to shape global discourse could be regarded both as a tool of accountability and a site of divisive behaviour (Badarin 2024; Ringrose 2020).

The related considerations in the recognition of Palestinian statehood by a select group of countries from the Caribbean and Western Europe serve not merely as diplomatic acts but also as performative gestures to address Israel´s unsolicited actions (Badarin, 2024). The gestures can have a double-edged response, as with the United States, which allows these actions to go unaddressed (Shaw, 2024). In this context, analysing the displays of communication becomes an essential feature for understanding how international actors may construct or impose their own narratives or frame around designations of mass violence. Deeming a careful examination into how language reflects and reinforces these political agendas, particularly in relation to the "genocide" recognition, a relevant inquiry. The semantic framing of atrocities like "genocide" may hold significant implications for further international legal action, humanitarian response, and historical memory remembrance (Briggs, 1997). Referencing past failures to adequately label, recognize, and respond to mass atrocities, such as in Rwanda and Srebrenica, further underscore the stakes involved in the terminology used by states and institutions (Ringrose, 2020).

Apart from the international rebuke and institutional investigations into the acts, the questions generated by the conflict would require a detailed inspection through academic affirmations. The fields predominantly associated with the studies of the Holocaust and Genocide have increasingly engaged with evolving case studies such as the conflict in Gaza. Scholars often prompt a response looking back at previous episodes and urge a renewal of scholarly debates and re-evaluations. This sort of engagement tends to reveal a contested terrain, particularly regarding the applicability of legal

comprehensions and conceptual frameworks for identifying and categorizing mass atrocities (Bolton 2024; El-Affendi 2024; Shaw 2024). Divergence in the assessments of whether recent developments meet the definitional markings for "genocide" has led to disagreements over both the interpretation of events and the institutional mechanisms capable of addressing them. Central to them has been the growing invocation of the term "genocide", which has gained prominence in public discourse and academic inquiry alike.

In light of unveiling the involved contextual dynamics, this thesis seeks to examine how the term "genocide" may be strategically deployed by the representative parties of the State of Israel and the Observer of the State of Palestine in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the United Nations Security Council. Observing the discursive patterns in speeches, dating from October 7, 2023 to September 2025, that are shaped and framed around "genocide" inside the institutional boundaries of the UNSC, we apply Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), with the aims to expose the political and ethical implications emergent from "genocide" recognition by interpreting discourse exhibitions (Van Dijk, 1998; 2006; 2012; Wodak, 2014; Meyer, 2001). We intend to contribute to and update ongoing debates within the Holocaust and Genocide Studies and other associated fields with new insights from recent developments and by confronting current theoretical positions with our empirical findings. Concretely, doing that by interrogating the intersections between language, power, interest, and accountability in the responses by both involved international actors around the designation of mass violence.

2 Discourse Over Genocide: An Overview

To provide an overview of how scholars, legal teams, and international actors assess the actualities inherent to the conflict, we preface our investigation by posing several discrepancies first. Discrepancies, which are supposed to reflect the complexities of an unfolding clash, and the discourse it managed to spawn. First and foremost, the accelerating importance that individuals (from academic, activist, and public backgrounds) assign to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been almost unavoidable. It not only assisted in abandoning the hopes of finding a unanimous voice, but rather helped to feed the inevitable realization that the discourse concerning the subject has turned fragmented. Put simply, there is no precise common ground to be declared in the course of the flowing expediency of interactions.

When we talk about the contemporary circumstances and temporality of events that indicate the conflictual outlines, and continue to develop to this day, October 7, 2023, has sparked something quite unprecedented. An outrage over how unsustainable tensions, now in a more curtailed apprehension, resulted in the decision to pursue military self-defence measures by Israel initially gained its own wave of unwavering support. Essential to state that among one of the first responses by the international community, none of the prevalent issues nowadays had been as imperative at the time of the havoc ignited by the attack, including the extensive humanitarian crisis bestowed upon the Palestinian population living in Gaza.

Persistent to this day, additional and simultaneous to what is happening in the occupied territory, would be the ongoing and intensifying Israeli settler-violence, as Segal (2024) alerts to. Expressing the crucially overlooked understanding that the elements of wrongdoing do not exclusively fall to Israel´s disproportional military policies in the Gaza Strip, but are also realized in the obstruction and "weaponization" of discourse in relation to what is happening in the larger area of the West Bank. This would play into sidelining and blurring of lines when it comes to settler colonialism, aimed at rejecting and excluding people who are being directly threatened - linguistic and cultural Arabs, as well as multiple Jewish identities (Segal, 2024). Emphasized in the persistence to uncover persuasive evidence, this has served to revitalize another aspect that has proved to fall under "weaponization" dating back almost three decades ago - the discourse about antisemitism (Segal, 2024).

The eventual competing narrative construction, resembling the way we can grasp and create the past and the present in real time, discussions of "genocide" quickly began to turn into political invocations (Briggs, 1997). As Briggs (1997) came to argue, discussions hold a powerful legacy of creating, legitimating, and challenging acts pertaining to genocidal intent. Language, positioned firmly in the centre, the labelling of a "genocide" may bring implications for the future and the remembrance of an event, where on one side stand those who maintain to remain silent (usually the perpetrator),

and on the other, those who amplify concern and arouse attention, and ultimately attempt to uncover "slept-on" genocides happening in plain sight. Following this logic, the perpetrator would use any means necessary to obstruct, erase, or suppress evidence brought forward by the latter using all available resources, including legal, political, and medial countermeasures to their favour. All things considered, Briggs (1997), in focusing on a few concrete cases (AIDS activism in the United States, Chernobyl health-related claims, Basque nationalism, etc.), delineates that discourses of "genocide" constitute a symbolic capital, and a hierarchy to diminish legitimacy, making the task to assign meaning and define acts and events for the activist groups and the scholarship that much trickier to comprehend.

2.1 Academic Debate

Overseeing the accumulation of thought around the concept of "genocide", the scholarship has been sharply divided, and this has produced extensively varied viewpoints and trends. Scholars like Yaniv Reingewertz (2025) entertain the idea that most members of academia manage to fail to capture the intricacies, nuances, and multidimensional realities significant to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Highlighting the abandoned value of immense characteristics (contributing to convolution), which goes largely unaddressed, more weight should be represented in territorial, legal, and historical devoutness. When these features are cross-examined in the frameworks of international law, they do not strictly fall under "genocide" but elicit characteristics evident in asymmetric warfare or a territorial dispute (Reingewertz, 2025). He argues that there are limitations in pitching analogies like the apartheid system of South Africa, in that its proportionalities and differences present in a uniqueness in geography, and claims over sovereignty, which cannot fathomably resemble what we are witnessing in Gaza. The suggestion here settles upon the view that Israeli patterns of military operations, provisions of humanitarian corridors, and precisely stated objectives in Gaza seem to evoke signs exemplifying an asymmetric conflict between state and non-state actors, where principles of military necessity, proportionality, and civilian protection are playing the definitive role (Reingewertz, 2025).

In a critique of the legal "tick-boxing" criteria and rhetorical approaches to labelling the Gaza conflict as "genocide", Shaw (2024) finds that the exposed divisions do not dynamically converge on an absence of a hybrid assessment. Giving us an indoctrination from a "war-genocide" perspective, based on a counter-genocidal familiarity from historical-colonial contexts, Shaw (2024) understands that Israel´s doctrine of using disproportionate violence in bombings, the misinterpretation in the invocations of humanitarian law, the neutralization of global surveillance, and the reflection of Gazans as enemies represents a strategic choice rather than a mere tactical decision. Shaw (2024) insists that it is the missing problem of social destruction, which is

connected to the notions of the concept, and represents a larger issue that is persistent within the field. Finally, by ultimately deeming that the simultaneous indication of a "genocidal war" stems from the view that policies with the intention to radicalize, and a dependency on responses, public utterance, and a wider tolerance from allies in Western countries, as those in the region, have become supplementary to the main goals. Shaw (2024) states that the concept´s discursive inescapability gives it a proportion to the naming of the concept, alongside "war", and that the essential element in understanding mass atrocities is a historical paradigm.

Brushing down the animosities around the template of "genocide", Divine (2019) remarks that the status of Israel has been withstanding practices of accusation, even before recent times, and that the trend of a discursive shift we are witnessing inside the intellectual groupings is filled with vocabulary radical to alternate perceptions. This alteration, per Divine (2019), is mostly felt in a moderate hold over opinions of students, as well as distinguished scholars, misrepresenting both the picture of the Israelis and the Palestinians. Continuing to argue that some university professors on campuses seem to be engaged in or advocating for an anti-Israel discourse that has been slowly infiltrating the media and political discourse. Furthermore, criticizing the process of "truth-distortion", laid down by the attempt to deconstruct Western imperial discourse and advance the perception of justice instilled by advocating for language dissection (dominated by Said, 1977, in his work *Orientalism*), has started to transform what constitutes fact. As a result, facts have become stitched into narratives that affect loyalty rather than verify assertions, rendering a moral or ethical definitiveness to judgment. To conclude her entry, she asserts that Israel should not be condemned based on false analogies, misplaced modifiers, or mistakenly applied theories. She advocates that the focus of the Zionist movement was always willing to make room for others, and that the perceptions that reinvigorate identity politics fall short of an accurate interpretation of events such as the post-1967 development, military strategies employed in the first Arab-Israeli War in 1948, among other wrongly reinstated illustrations, permitting the massacre in the village of Deir Yassin to point exclusively to fault of the Israelis (Divine, 2019).

Conversely, in the marginal scholarly and public response to violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, McDoom (2024) recognizes that certain scholars exhibit a tendency towards a pro-Israeli bias by condemning violence from Hamas, but remain largely uncritical or cautiously non-engaging regarding Israel´s military response. The contrasting factions, affected by polarization and emotional bias, resemble a stark difference represented by the Israel-uncritical section and those who warn of the dangers of "genocide" directly. Complemented by opinions reaching outside the field, the expertise spanning the non-governmental sectors, UN´s special investigatory bodies, and scholars from other disciplines, fits into the perception of a biased argumentation (McDoom, 2024). The rapidly mounting civilian death toll has provided the indicators elicited by the Israeli government´s actions, in which it realizes its genocidal counter-

argumentative pattern (McDoom, 2024). Seemingly important to bring up, the internal contexts of wars leading to "genocide", specifically the past indicators evoked in Rwanda, Bosnia, or Darfur, are essential in our understanding of how perpetrators invoke security concerns or present themselves as victims. McDoom (2024) portrays the inadequacy with which warnings, humanitarian access, and guidance to safe zones have been reported. Surmounting an unbalanced nature of the statements generated by the academic community members siding with Israel without any acknowledgement of a Palestinian right to self-determination, self-defence against occupation, entitlement to a state, as opposed to anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment and discrimination, historic suffering, or victimization. Scholars, having an ethical commitment to accuracy and impartiality in reasoning, are required to provide a rational link when engaged with the public sentiments (McDoom, 2024). Political advocacy in this matter serves as an identifiable marker of bias found in prosemitic views and presents a conflict of interest. What should become a practice is for scholars to disclose their ethnicity and religious endearment that would provide transparency and strengthen public trust, altogether exposing their ethical integrity (McDoom, 2024).

The estimations surmising profound theoretical and discursive limitations and tendencies to succumb to influences prowling through the recently posited debacles are not just overtly encapsulated to seek varied explanations of the phenomena, but rather to expressively ordain "genocide". Some devote themselves to accepting and embracing the concept and sustain the space needed for further clarifications and stances. El-Affendi (2024) critiques the greatly delegated commitments in the field of Genocide Studies, which should strive to adopt the inbuilt condemnation and a mission of prevention, instead of seeking a merely normative state-centric undertaking.

Spelled out in an approach that synthesizes focus on "securitization" narratives, El-Affendi (2024) questions the aims of genocidal violence, which may not always aim at the group's physical destruction, but instead pursue a social destruction through total domination and a denial of collective rights. Progressing in the footsteps of an ideological complementarism, "hypersecuritization" narratives (predominantly those stemming from insecurity, fear, threat, and urgency) delve deeper into signalling the dehumanization behaviour eradiated onto the targeted groups (El-Affendi, 2024, p. 3). By doing so, he senses a far more reliable framework in narratives, in order to render the tactics providing justifications for action (El-Affendi, 2024). The failures of the international audiences and intellectuals to address and to condemn the pretexts of self-defence and insecurity have been standing in the way of recognizing particular actions through formally denouncing "genocide" and affirming the need to reclaim ethical clarity (El-Affendi, 2024).

Raz Segal (2023), one of the most prominent scholars of "genocide", refrains from distant calculations and reaffirms the evocative intent in the proclamations by Israeli spokesmen, not exclusively limited to public speeches from "states-people" like the former Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant, but also expanding into statements circulating

over social media. Suspicious of intent in his previous works on Jewish supremacy, settler colonialism (see article by Segal, 2024), "weaponization" of antisemitism, and a racist Israeli apartheid regime, he clearly reasons that Israel´s goal is to destroy Palestinians in Gaza. Indicators that Israel violates international humanitarian law, not only violating conditions under the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment for the Crime of Genocide (United Nations, 1948), but also has been engaged in a cycle of systematic destruction through the campaign siege of Gaza preceding the current crisis. The reinforced rhetoric, permitted by the Western actors, assists in a calculation of dehumanizing language that purposefully elides the distinctions between Hamas and civilians on the ground, which plays provocatively into the broader context of colonization and occupation, as shunted by Segal (2023).

2.2 Legal Proceeding

The entitlements expressed in the ongoing crisis, invoked by either side of the debate, have led to a critical reception in determining the legal outlines of norms; moreover, in settling upon the conceptual understanding of "genocide" as part of the overwhelming decision. The lengthy (a rough estimation) procedural legal proceeding, initiated by South Africa in the late 2023 at the International Court of Justice, which requested "provisional measures" on the suspicion of an alleged genocidal targeting by Israel, has demonstrated difficulty when it comes to proving genocidal intent (Van Hout et al., 2024). The case, as it was set, argues that Israel´s actions, including assaults on healthcare infrastructure, infliction of mental and bodily harm, forced displacement, mass killings of civilians, and measures designed to prevent births, constitute a pattern of genocidal conduct aimed at destroying Palestinians in Gaza as a group. To include the counterargument by the Israeli side, it had ostensibly claimed its right to defence, and attested that any forced measures against it would leave it in an indefensible position security-wise (Van Hout et al., 2024).

If we indulge in a closer look at the proceedings, including the direct references to the passages codified in the Genocide Convention (United Nations, 1948), the immediate recognition of a difficulty in proving the mental accessory paired with physical acts is apparent. According to Van Hout et al. (2024), it required putting the political rhetoric of Israel into context and linking it to government policies. Van Hout et al. (2024) provide space to carefully ascertain what was included in the demonstration based on publicly available evidence put forward by South Africa´s legal team. As it turns out, the legal team would depend on using discourse strategies to specifically point out the pervasiveness, scale, execution, and language-weaponization, while attempting to maintain neutrality for overlooking the case.

In said demonstration, the legal team would observe the reproduction of quotes and reported speech by Israeli officials (including the representatives from political,

administrative, and military positions) and conclude that the intention to promote and support the acts was ever-present (Van Hout et al., 2024). Indicative of the embrace of the sense of victimhood and fearmongering in a fierce campaign of public messaging, the Israeli representatives aimed at uniting and shifting the ways the population viewed the attacks, reaching global audiences on the sidelines. Through the utilization of systemic language, pervasion, and most conditionally pursuit of action, it would not cease to deny highlighted propaganda, "weaponized" utterances, and tactics to manipulate the perception around the involved groups (Van Hout et al., 2024).

Whether this strategy to assess the legal sincerity through discourse would be attentive to questions raised by academia, such as the incorporation of other dimensions (historical, social) or hybrid explanations, has become unclear. Ostensibly, the distinctions from other conceptual determinants, such as "crimes against humanity" or "ethnic cleansing," have likely formed another legal battleground, recognizing the inevitable application of the Genocide Convention (Shaw, 2024; Bolton, 2024; United Nations, 1948).

To refute the claims of the intent of systematic destruction, Bolton (2024) argues that there is no foundation to them. The terminological deprivation of "genocide" has instead caused great misfortune in distinguishing it from different modes of violence. The rise of the charge of Israeli "genocide" in street protests, online discourse, and in the prosecution process at the ICJ, represents a factual error based on the decision to use the concept of "genocide" not driven by dispassionate analysis, but pinned to the centrality in anti-Israel discourse (Bolton, 2024). If we forego the exact definition, which we investigate in Chapter 3, Segal (2023), on the opposite side of the spectrum, declares that falling under the Genocide Convention (United Nations, 1948), five facts out of three were in violation, making it clear in the instigation of the international humanitarian law, when it comes to "genocide". Considering that discourse has played an imperative role in providing the legal arguments against Israel, later we look at how the articulations in speeches comes to resemble the categorization of authority in subsidizing particular adjacency to normative, and factual strategies.

2.3 Institutional and Political Recognition

Michelle Ringrose (2020) raises up to another motivational factor shaping this research´s outlined objectives. In that, international actors often tend to avoid the label or framing a particular situation as "genocide" because they are driven by their political motivations. The rationale behind politically-motivated drivers is often to intentionally divert legal obligations to not lose diplomatic, strategic, or economic alliances. This alleviates the widespread utilization of euphemisms for "genocide", in the case of historic examples found in the substituted usage of "ethnic cleansing" or "genocidal

acts". She attempts to convey it with evidence exemplified in three case studies about previous genocides in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur (Ringrose, 2020).

Conveniently, assessing debates in the United Nations Security Council on the Srebrenica genocide, she spots how inaction and denial, which is imbued predominantly in language use, can serve to suit such avoidance (Ringrose, 2020). In recognizing that language, power, and conspicuously politics constitute a particular way of alignment and narrative-making around the label, which disturbs the inherent impartiality and consistency. Although it is important to keep in mind that the complex field of language surrounding international relations (IR) is predominantly a culmination of dominant ideologies, and therefore does not perpetuate a single reality. A bit remote from the point, but the recognition and ability to name and advocate could amount to mobilization and provide a base to reduce "othering" based on cultural, national, religious, or ethnic grounds in the body accustomed to making decisions and authorizing interventions, the exact statutes of the Security Council (Ringrose, 2020). Undoubtedly, she makes a critically captivating elucidation:

> *"When an atrocity is not recognized as a genocide, a dangerous precedent is set for future acts of semantic avoidance, and the ability of areas affected by genocide to recover is severely hampered." (Ringrose, 2020, p. 124)*

Building on concrete findings, the importance of explicit semantic "genocide" recognition acts not only as an important legal determinant, but one that might affect acknowledgment and mediation processes (Ringrose, 2020). When values are placed upon a "previously-agreed language" as an indicator of consensus, they may profoundly promote a frame through processes of repetition that may become normalized over time, and diverting from them might be a difficult feat, as may be the case with what is happening nowadays in the occupied territories (Ringrose, 2020, p. 128-137). Inasmuch as the acts of repetition go adhering with "genocide", this might prove useful to illustrate and determine whether "genocide" is utilized in regards to its legal foundations, or whether it distances from that convention, suiting a personalized convenience of the individual actors.

2.3.1 Security Council

Why is recognition, constipated by institutional language, a dominant aspect not to overlook? The maintenance of international peace and security, being the primary mandate of the UNSC, which works on behalf of its member states that repose their trust and responsibility into it (United Nations, 1945). Despite the frequent failures of

the Security Council to prevent conflicts, its power and the broadly regarded duties of the United Nations as an influential international organization are tightly imbued with the following aims: prevention of wars, global peacekeeping, and the protection of fundamental rights (United Nations, 1945). By means of passing binding resolutions or a more delineated function through its peacekeeping operations, the impending efficiency, as well as a felt stagnation, can be ascertained in its structural design.

Olayiwola (2024) narrows down these institutional weaknesses and finds that the "leakage" of national politics of the conflictual states, contradictions within the international political environment, impose pressures and put certain constraints on their intervention policies and strategies. Inherently, agreement or disagreement could lead (or not) to vouching support to mediation and arbitration processes, which are very much connected to how members react and behave. Still, considering a floating obligation spelled out in the dogmatisms of the UN Charter (United Nations, 1945), both from permanent and non-permanent members cannot guarantee accurate prediction of their voting behaviour and patterns. Seeing as one of the latest interposed passing of a resolution demanding immediate ceasefire, release of hostages, and expanding the flow of aid into Gaza in March 2024, it showed that position-taking through institutional processes can present an impediment to the maintenance of peace and security in the Middle East (Olayiwola, 2024). Especially if we look at the United States, one of the permanent members, and signs that point to complacency and bias in an unconditional support of Israel´s cause (Olayiwola, 2024; Badarin, 2024). Debates calling for a reform of the Security Council, spelled out by Olayiwola (2024), warrant and serve to encompass the functions of the simple institutional processes, allowing for the principles of democracy and the doctrine of equality to be undermined, attributing the main source of criticism to the power of veto.

These dynamics converge on a possibility that recognition or non-recognition of "genocide" at the level of the Security Council might not function as a neutral legal descriptor, but may input a deeply political, discursive tendency that shapes how violence atrocities are framed, understood, and acted upon – underscoring our need for an examination of how different actors construct and contest the label of "genocide" in this specific institutional context.

2.3.2 State Recognition

We perceive that there is yet another undervalued aspect that might daringly capture how discourse over "genocide" comes to trigger many different responses. Recognition of Palestine as a state, referring primarily to the bilateral extension in 2024 from Ireland, Norway, and Spain, along with four Caribbean states (Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago), expresses the will to reconsider the roles of performance and presentation in the politics of state recognition. Badarin (2024) projects

that emitting signals could influence the behaviour of other states and induce them to make similar policies, which can be viewed as a significant game-changer. Since the acts themselves can be crucial in fast-forwarding much-needed solutions, the performance, narration, and presentation duly hold their importance as well. The predominant focus on aspects encompassing security, politics, and historical context provides value as they inform this decision-making process of recognition. Another dominant value-holding factor in driving convenient justifications is the individual pursuit of foreign policy ambitions that diplomatic actors strive for. Influencing the debate and the agenda, specifically in the region of the Middle East, may present an opportunity to mould the international consensus, while abating to resolve contradictions and/or the window to apply the same norms. The current foreign policy setting of the European Union (EU) resonates with exactly the same predetermination, and to eventually shift out from the policies´ zeal guarantees for Ukraine (Badarin, 2024).

State recognition, as Badarin (2024) defines it, would be a fundamental condition in the process of state creation, involving the ambition of seeking legitimacy and legal personality in the eyes of other states or international organizations. It consists of the acceptance of the criteria set by the 1933 Montevideo Convention (Organization of American States, 1933) or, in the instance of external recognition, the approval of both the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the Security Council. However, the consistent lack of authorization from the Security Council, which requires nine affirmative votes and no veto from any of its permanent members, affirms that Palestine´s legal status remains contested. Not to leave out the one special instance, in terms of previous pursuits for "international legitimacy" under the requisition of the Palestinian Authority (PA), these attempts to attain the full UN membership or recognition had been far from elaborate, apart from gaining the status of an observer non-member state (Badarin, 2024).

To say that these encounters have only halted the condition-seeking would be an understatement. Postulating that the gradual shift surmounting in public discourse has been inconsiderate in the wake of the situation in which the Palestinian people have been stuck stems from a number of occurrences (Badarin, 2024). With the onset of the Trump administration, the only "principal" recognition from the EU and the Abrahamic Accords, this further stipulated the normalization and continued to exclude the Palestine question. Cynically, the launch of the brutal operation by Hamas and the other Palestinian groupings has helped to pull the question back onto the international agenda, including the often-reiterated two-state solution. Where it counts, the domestic support from countries that already recognize, or at least for now exemplify the readiness to do so, has been posed as a key denominator. The consequentiality here will be endured through the political effects of an official recognition, and whether it will retain or change depending on the persuasion by current or successive governments, and if the significance of the act will remain on the same level (Badarin, 2024). Today, the propositions and statements from governments like the United Kingdom to extend the

recognition effort to limit Israel´s persuasion to its standing policies inside Gaza have been echoed (Adams, 2025). Canada and France, accordingly, have stated their own ambition to jointly make up a band of signatories to bring the issues to the fore of the conversation (Roth, 2025).

2.4 Weaponizing Memory and Language

The analytic works that dominate in deciphering how "weaponization" of language serves to justify or legitimize actions raise an important cautionary tale. Best exhibited from the Israeli point of view. Omer Bartov´s (2024) critical essence of the instrumentalization of the Holocaust memory highlights the distinctions vividly encouraged by trauma in guiding and shaping national identity and policy. In his view, allegations of genocidal intent appear to legitimize genocidal intentions by the other actor. In providing contextual relevance to how contorting both the Holocaust and antisemitism in public discourse really thrives, the critics of Israeli occupational policies are being reciprocally labelled as "anti-Semites" or "Nazis", permeating to smear Israel´s namesake by siding with the "Hamas terrorists". Looking at the impact of varieties held inside a past trauma, it can mould the perception of reality and shape modes of behaviour of individuals and groups living under profoundly differing circumstances that existed at the time of the original traumatic events (Bartov, 2024).

The emblematic affinity anchored in the messages of the Holocaust is accompanied by a contemporary influence over policies, replicated in the resilient reaction of Germany in a slew of previous commitments after the traumatic events of World War II (Bartov, 2024). Germany´s behaviour would be most visibly solicited in the rejection of the rulings by the ICJ towards Israel. Likewise, it influenced the attitudes towards Jewish masses from the Israeli government, serving as a mechanism of integrating social solidarity between secular and religious communities in response to the Yom-Kippur War of 1973, and in the rise of Menachem Begin´s Likud Party to power. Through a common derivative instilled in the uniqueness of the Holocaust, the pledge of "never again" or the "never again syndrome" relies on the fact that the creation of Israel in 1948 underscored the importance of insurance against any threat, for similar acts not to be repeated. Particularly, it helped to devote to the notion of victimhood by broadcasting its effect on the West, and viewing the mission in Gaza as attuned to prevent "yet another instance" of the massacre, associated previously with genocidal totalitarianist expansionist policies in Eastern Europe. According to Bartov (2024), this mentality has been cultivated in the present by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and the reliance on the criticism is tantamount to antisemitic "finger-pointing", which has been both rhetorically and institutionally prevalent. The abuse of terminology has become both a tool of policy and an instrument of obfuscation and propaganda (Bartov, 2024). Calling for a repurposed application of terminology, Bartov (2024) contends

that political leaders and their policies should be discredited and replaced, and the recognition of international intervention and commitment needs to be taken seriously.

Serving to complement and to shift from the protection of Jews to the protection of Israel from criticism has been highlighted by an investigation into how it has constituted its role in the institutes of global Holocaust memory, such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) (Segal, 2024). It is best exemplified by looking at the positions of power aligned with control over museums, memorials, and research centres dedicated to the Holocaust remembrance. Culminating with the 2016 adoption of the "working definition on antisemitism" by the IHRA, this would claim in its definitional conception to now stretch to the existence of the State of Israel and would be perceived as a racist endeavour (Segal, 2024).

Encountered in the diligence of the Israeli high-positioned political figures, the render of disavowal and absent presence in linguistic and physical traces, analysed in detail by Segal (2024), inescapably embody policies of deprivation, occupation, and military rule against the inconvenience of the Palestinians. In turn, the historical ambience of the Palestinian people, for example, is tightly attached to the Nakba[1], which plays a role in reinforcing the contractiveness imbued in these controlled processes. The trademark of an intensified "weaponization" of antisemitism by Israel, and the proliferation of language dehumanizing and pinning Palestinians as "Nazis", and encumbering October 7 as a "continuation of the Holocaust", works in order to add to the dimension of the disavowal of Israeli settler colonialism. It did not add, however, to the sharp divide that maintains those who are fond and persistently maintain the idea of the uniqueness of identities and events used to disavow mass violence and those who challenge it head-on (Segal 2024).

Granted that the mutual reinforcement of political theologies, both on the side of Jewish settler factions and Hamas, has been addressed based on the pattern of a conceptual frame that mirrors this genocide rhetoric. Di-Capua (2024) iterates that the imagining of the disappearance of "the other" via extermination or expulsion has led to the establishment of narratives that rationalize, justify, and explain unimaginable brutalities. There is an existential and purposeful accumulation of structural vertical violence that lets this particular approach to violence as a unidirectional force, embellish in its truth, ethic, and theology. Analogous to Bartov´s (2024) observations, Di-Capua (2024) reiterates that narratives written from a deep sense of victimization sanctify the everyday politics and add to the relational interplay between both groups. It is certainly not a new phenomenon, seeing as the mindset around "genocide" has been evolving since the late 1960s, with theological and specifically mesianistic interpretations over the Six-Day War victory as a divine opening to the Jewish settler movements, and Zionism as a leading secular liberal perception.

[1] Author´s translation: "calamity"

Viewing this from the opposite side, the explanation of how these perceptions bounce off of each other is perfectly intuitive when we aspire to involve both (Di-Capua, 2024). The reflection knocked off in the form of Hamas, and its militant wing, the metamorphosis after the first Intifada gathered the alleviation towards liberation through Jihad[2], making for a self-constitution by taking resistance to Israel´s establishment and future occupation. All in all, the deeply rooted genocidal cultures are based on the commitment that the annihilation of the "other", be it Israel or Hamas, as an identity, serves as a project of religious self-constitution to both parties. This became clearly embellished after the failure of any hopes in proliferating peace efforts, such as the Oslo Peace deal, following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 (Di-Capua, 2024).

The reactions are equivocal on the side of the media, approving legitimization of actions further by Israel has been subject to several analyses as well. On the platform of X (formerly known as Twitter), the concrete humanitarian sentiments expressed by adamant adjective usage, which seeks to gain appeal through discourse of dehumanization, have been exemplified by Netanyahu, the Western allies of Israel, and former President of the United States, Joe Biden. In their utilization of appeal, the distortion of reality, which became constructed on social media, the public opinion would be forced to look at the Palestinian issue from the framework built by Israel (Orhan Çağlayan, 2024). As stated before, in other analytic works, the pattern would be resoundingly the same – the "weaponization" of antisemitism, positioning Hamas as the legal representative of Palestine, and victimization. The mobilization of an emotional and conscientious language would help to deepen the dichotomy of the self/other, sedimented by Orhan Çağlayan (2024), empowering authority over a confrontational structure, based on a national identity. The differentiation between "victims and innocents", "axis and terrorists" would assist in reinforcing the negative insinuation of an "Islamic threat", not just to the Israeli people, but to the whole Western world. Attached to this rhetorical conception would be elements like Jihad, linking Hamas to Iran, the radical Islamism threat, and an interest in achieving security in the region. Concluding that the reducing and dehumanizing explicitness found in hate speech had served to undermine and recede the distinctions between civilians and terrorists, tweaking the perception covered in the international laws of war (Orhan Çağlayan, 2024; Liu, 2024).

Delving further into the laments of language, Maalej & Zibin (2024) continue to explore the role of metaphors in the dehumanization tactics by Israeli officials and collaborators. Metaphors, such as "cockroaches", "rats" and "human animals" would become indistinguishable from denying Palestinian personhood. The metaphoric framing of genocidal ideologies would, according to Maalej & Zibin (2024), enable and justify action, which functions as a precondition for mass violence. This must be critically interrogated as part of both political analysis and genocide prevention efforts.

[2] Author´s translation: "holy war"

3 Concept of Genocide

The impediment with which we nowadays mostly apprehend the established definition of "genocide" is greatly associated with what was outlined at the onset of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the United Nations. Signed in 1948, and entered into force in 1951, the document codifies genocide as:

> *"Acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such" (United Nations, 1948)*

Spelled out in Article II (United Nations, 1948), the definition further clarifies what infractions the genocidal intent entails to be regarded in breach. It involves acts employed with the intent of:

a) Killing members of the group;
b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

3.1 Lemkin´s Contribution

Contemplating upon the reaction of the destruction of whole populations on pretences set by the Nazi regime in World War II, the concept of "genocide" saw its first iteration. Most referenced to merit the coining of the term, Raphael Lemkin, a jurist and lecturer from Poland, would connote these motivations, basing them on racial, national, or religious interrogation; linking them to a cultural personality embodied in the morphisms of denationalization (Moses, 2012). Genocide was, in its early formation, understood as:

> *"The crime of destroying national, racial or religious groups" (Lemkin, 1946, p. 228)*

According to Lemkin´s (1946) understanding, the term could not be fashioned as a national crime, because its very nature was firmly committed to the idea of the state or powerful groups backed by the state, but rather needed to receive an internationally-admitting treatment. Soon, he would accustom himself the concept to the Charter of the United Nations (1945), which would provide the international protection of human rights. A set legal framework for its recognition, and the punishable requisition through international cooperation would be important to translate the principle into a status of delicta juris gentium[3]. Submitting a proposal later to the UN, that together with other invited nations, would enter into an international treaty which would formulate "genocide" as an international crime, providing its assured prevention and punishment in both times of peace and war.

As Moses (2012, p. 23) suggests, there would be three formative discourses responsible for the evolution of the concept: the social ontology of "groupism", a Western legal tradition of international law critical of conquests, and aggressive wars that target civilians. The culmination of the concept directs attention to the long tradition of European legal and political critique of imperialism and warfare against civilians, therefore jolting out of the context of conquests and occupation, whose critic was Lemkin himself (Moses, 2012). Publishing work (named *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, released in 1944) that would address the brutality of the Nazi empire and spreading the word about exterminatory intentions toward European Jewry, Lemkin would engage in a lobbying campaign during the Nuremberg Trials of 1945 to include the definition in the indictment; sadly, it would only gain rhetorical flourish. It was not until the adoption of a resolution by the United Nations General Assembly that would help appoint Lemkin as an expert to draft a working version of the Convention. In its very broad sense, as some critics point out to this day, it would include the definition and list four genocidal techniques, adding a fifth later upon a disputed debate of including "cultural genocide" (Moses, 2012).

3.2 Meaning Behind Genocide

Is the meaning of genocide being "emptied"? As we have already pointed out in Chapter 2.2, the issue with which the legal proceedings have been most associated has been in proving genocidal intent. The conditionality of naming the perpetrator, determining action, and ultimately proving intent would be incremental to discern from the conditions of political debate and relativization (James, 2025). James (2025) contends that the concept has been too often instrumentalized, mostly as a result of being "emptied" of its defined meaning. These predominant views rely on the concept being isolated on coming out as a performative gesture for identification, and need to be re-embedded

[3] Author´s translation: "international crime"

in verifiable and defendable narratives. The difficulty in rearranging the standing definition is in putting boundaries around phrases - “in part”, “intent to destroy”, and “as such”, which pose questions of qualitative judgment. Likewise, the unresolved accumulation of international law in giving legal definitions to terminologies esteemed to the “crimes against humanity”, “ethnic cleansing” endorsement, as they continue to exist without any legal standing (Bolton, 2024; James, 2025). The difficulty of assurances in some of the legal determinants that prolongedly prod the stretching of the concept in proving intent, collide with the implications of distancing itself from that law-abiding affirmance. If “genocide” doesn´t astute to its definitional markings, the potential to see it as a highly instrumentalized tool is not as minimal. To reference its legacy and the codification into the Convention (United Nations, 1948), we hope that the attached original meanings provide an informativeness towards our methodology.

4 Methodology

To establish a coherent methodological framework, this research adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is embedded in the previously outlined contextual background of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the following chapter, where we dissect the individual parts of the methodology, we intend to construe the conceptual and structural reasonings behind a normative, along with a symptomatic configuration, in an attempt to uncover the (de-)construction of discourse and identity-formation in a societally-conditioned environment. To spatially accommodate for our choice in methodological heading, we focus on a specifically predetermined dataset, composed of the UNSC meetings, and compress it into single speech acts across a suggested timeframe.

Our binding objective was to examine how "genocide" discourses may be strategically deployed by institutional actors, who had been ordered into our two primary bodies of text actor denominations - the State of Israel and the Observer of Palestine. We focused on their respective roles as representatives, in accordance with the formal and conventional dictates of the United Nations Security Council and its procedural fixations. In order to enhance the conceptual prowess, as well as the objectives of this thesis, we focus not on the individual position-making in the construction of meanings from each personality of the diplomatic figures, but rather their exclusive group capacity to act for their vicarious collectives (van Dijk, 1998; 2006; 2012).

To efficiently sum up our next advancement, we decided to apply van Dijk´s (1998; 2006; 2012) socio-cognitive approach to suit our analytical goals. In the analytical section, we prioritize the notions of ideology (coalescing with a conceptual relatedness to "othering"), enriched by the "prototypical" strategies of manipulation. At times, the abstractive ideas of these semiotic collaborations within the meanings of power, ideology, and cognition put the general nature of our paradigmatic proposition under the pressures of scrutiny. The integral vision was realized by the decision to operationalize predominantly on van Dijk´s notions of the "ideological square" (1998; 2012), and his arguments in reference to the strategic actualization of manipulation (2006), with an additional broadly-captured self/other dichotomy (Brons, 2015). Everything acts as an obligation to abide by meaningful additions to the conceptual realities and to feature additional evaluations by the substantiated literature.

4.1 Selection Procedure & Data Collection

In deciding on our timeframe, institutional, and participatory foundations, we chose to pursue a detriment to our previous engagement. That includes sentiments to contextual, academic, and institutional underpinnings (from a legal, formal, and critical point of view), as well as the theoretical augmentation sparked by the postmodernist turn in

the form of social constructivism. We collect our data from the publicly available database of the United Nations Digital Library (https://digitallibrary.un.org/).

Subsequently, in the database, we start by filtering our search down to the selection of a UN Body, basing it on our preoccupancy with the UNSC as a decision-making organ capable of voting for binding resolutions. Proceeding, we picked our country/organizations that are directly engaged in the conflict, which were the State of Palestine and Israel. Jointly, we restricted these to three subject (agenda) contextual criteria closely related to the background of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The Middle East Situation, the Palestine Question, and Territories Occupied by Israel. Last but not least, we finalized with our specified timeline, which dates from October 7, 2023 (beginning with the October 16th meeting). To shed some light on our thinking process here, we concentrate on capturing the epitome of the most recent escalation in the conflict, closing it off, at the time of writing, that is, until the September 2025 timestamp (last meeting recorded on the 18th of September).

Proceeding with our data collection, we pulled every meeting, progressing with application of the declared search filters, to then enhance them by curtailing the speeches from each of the speakers into their own segments in a textual format, but still retaining the whole meetings for maintaining contextual devoutness, although as will be remitted later in the analysis, turn-taking or power-emanating constraints had been only very marginally intruding in the discourse. To the improvement of better visibility and synopsis of the texts, we tread on a carefully-sensible ideal of providing the enclosed surveillance around the designations of “genocide”, by elucidating it to search-word lemma of genocid* (including other variations such as “genocidal” or “genocide-loving”). Altogether, it provided for a better coverage of verbalization throughout the texts. Together, we managed to pull excerpts from 75 meetings combined – 24 meetings for Israel, and 51 meetings for Palestine. Out of these meetings, there were 269 units of genocid* lemma, which included 78 counting for Israel, and 191 for Palestine. For better approachability, the addition of a freeware corpus analysis toolkit, AntConc, served as an enhancing tool to centre on these concretely-specified evocations, observe alignments and sorting (Anthony, 2005).

4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

This study adopts CDA not only for its interdisciplinary analytical capacity, but also because of its problem-oriented inquiry, spanning diverse engagements into how language shapes social phenomena (Wodak, 2014; Meyer, 2001). CDA´s fixations are useful in uncovering the ways in which language constructs power relations by demasking injustice and exposing economic, social, or cultural changes in society (Meyer, 2001). Aligning with the specific aims of this research to uncover how the term “genocide” is strategically invoked, framed, or resisted in speeches, the recurring linguistic patterns

and identity constructions enable a deeper understanding of how these narratives shape international perception and political responses. Sharing a considerable paradigm with the field of linguistics, but allowing for a more far-reaching and ambitious orientation (Hodge, 2017). CDA´s depository, convenient to our objectives inside the UNSC, seeks to expose the ties of social practice, inherent in its focus on power, ideology, and inequality among our actors (Wodak, 2014). A seemingly "unlimited" share of approaches seeks to demystify how discourses reinforce, challenge, or transform power structures, and how their proponents deliberately challenge the contemporary social and political practices. The methodological criticality functions to "make the implicit explicit", vowing to remain, at the same time, self-reflective and self-critical of its positioning (Wodak, 2014, p. 304).

To better distinguish CDA from the conventional branding of Discourse Analysis, like-mindedly, it seeks to consider the social conditions of "meaning-craft", much like the former, but instead prefers an understanding of long-term patterns and possibilities rather than concretely isolated events (Neumann, 2008). Upon the basic condition of a cultural competence expected from the researcher, it strives to conjure socially-constructed representations (Neumann, 2008). It ultimately aims to unveil the cultural scope and degree of the relationship between fact and these representations (Neumann, 2008). Opposing CDA´s persistent principality of critical attentiveness, which seeks to challenge social phenomena imbued in ideology, power, and inequality (see Meyer, 2001; Wodak, 2014; Van Dijk, 1998)

The contextual emphasis of the method´s approach, linked to the cultural, ideological, and institutional backgrounds of both of our parties in their representative roles at the UNSC, provides for an invaluable insight into the possibility of recognizing injustice and focusing devotedly on a political orientation (Meyer, 2001). As we have mentioned before, interdisciplinarity ranging from the humanities, psychology, linguistics, to political theory gives us a particular multiplicity of interpretation. Many criticisms of CDA stem from its exposure to risks of ideological bias and claims based on insufficient grounding (Meyer, 2001). And, at times, for being too polemical, knowing in advance what its analytic conclusions will be (Hodge, 2017). To be able to address these criticisms, as most practitioners of CDA conversely address them, we want to negate these supposed downsides through strategies such as triangulation, reflexivity, and theoretical openness (Meyer, 2001). To ensure the validity and depth of our research, we consider the findings to span across different types of data and levels of context. CDA, despite its often-felt critique, stands to be equipped with tools that provide useful information for both critical scholarship and social intervention as a whole (Meyer, 2001).

4.3 Concept of Discourse

Colluding together and briefly tracing outlooks on how to "rightly" define discourse as a conceptual enigma, there is a tranquil agreement among scholars. It digresses in ways regarding who follows what approach, but still retains a thread along the lines of discourse analysis research at large. Widely, discourse could be defined as "language-in-use", citing Hodge (2017, p. 520). The tradition of linguistics, which was developed from the early influences of division in comprehension of language in the American, French, and English linguistic departments, acted as an especially formative cornerstone to the concept´s signature self-constitution. Linguistics, as a theory of grammar and application, was prior to the challenges of the fundamental structure, where the concept becomes central to the study of language (Hodge, 2017). Wodak (2014) takes this a step further, in defining discourse as a process, a product of social interaction or practice. Undisputedly, this might take shape in anything which reinforces meaning through verbal or non-verbal means (for example, a policy, monument, strategy, or narrative) professed by language. For the purposes of this thesis, discourse is best understood if we distance ourselves from the established detriments of language and view discourse as a system of representation, which could extend from a set of ideas to norms, to narratives that produce and shape knowledge, identities, and primarily meaning (Milliken, 1999; Wodak, 2014). Treating discourse as representations allows for examining how language frames events, actors, and actions (Milliken, 1999).

4.4 Power of Discourse

From a social constructivist perspective, the world of IR concerns the use of discourse in shaping and transforming international norms. Thus, meaning-negotiation and norm-creation are at the centre, fusing historic patterns and social conventions. Holzscheiter (2011), in her analysis of the norm-setting process of negotiations leading to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, recognizes two-fold interests – one, which investigates the agent-structure divide exerted by "power in discourse", and the other, which emphasizes structural constraints related to the "power of discourse". According to her proposition, the latter "discourse as structure" approaches investigate the position of the "power of discourse" as a presupposition that compelling discursive formations limit how individual speakers can meaningfully relate to reality and construct political issues. Backed by a logic of critical preservation that echoes determination by addressing inequality, stigmatization, or silencing, this intense focus on the exclusionary dimensions of discourse is what we want to highlight. However, this still operates at an apprehensively abstract level, to grasp the social reality created by dominant discourses (Holzscheiter, 2011). To echo the overwhelming argument here, the discursive interaction in international negotiations rests on a basis of collectively

congruent interpretations of reality, as shown in the richer understanding revealed in the interplay of multidimensional discourse analysis (Holzscheiter, 2011).

That collective nature of interpretation inherent in Holzscheiter's (2011) evaluation of the upsides of a multidimensional discourse analysis could rub against another instance. Subotić´s (2015) narrative analysis demasks narratives as agents of change, and interludes with a dialogical approach to help unload the competing "genocide" narratives over the wars in Yugoslavia during the 1990s. The nationalization (tweaking the state identity) of both the victims and perpetrators has become politically activated or "weaponized" to come in to convenience for a nationalist mobilization by the construction of the victim/perpetrator identity matrix. Suiting our dedication, the powerful reaches of the "genocide" narrative, as she remarks, has been infused with an almost symbolic, discursive trigger serving to set parameters of political action by setting these identificatory boundaries (Subotić, 2015). The traction of a storytelling authority of actors boils down to what Milliken (1999) stresses through her bundles of theoretical claims over discourse. The explanation of how discourse produces our world enlightens how discourse productivity and a play-in-practice seek to underline underappreciated concepts in producing discourse, common sense, and policy practices. The introduction of subjugated knowledges, as a result of an authority assumption, also serves well the aims we seek to profess here, in that, through them, resistance efforts are evoked against a hegemonic discourse (Milliken, 1999).

4.5 Discourse and Ideology

Reminiscing over only a few of the described aggregates aroused in our broader engagement within the research program of CDA, mostly noticeably through the diverse number of approaches and theoretical roadmaps available, we wanted to be astute to the pervasiveness of Teun A. van Dijk´s (1998; 2006; 2012) framework. A framework that manages to triangulate discourse, cognition, and society. Van Dijk´s (1998; 2012) role in determining how shared social representations evoke a specific function is to be found in his views purporting to ideological foundations prominent in discourse. Ideology in discourse permeates a persuasive function, in that the speakers want to change the mind of the recipients based on their beliefs, intentions, and goals (van Dijk, 1998). Subsequently, ideologies become acquired, constructed, used, and changed in a manner dedicated to the activities of their social group members (van Dijk, 1998). Touching again upon the group-based nature, ideology is viewed as: "some kind of basic self-schema of a group, featuring the fundamental information by which group members identify and categorize themselves" (van Dijk, 2012, p. 32). Greatly enhanced through the contextual dependency of discourse, these categories would be typically designated by membership criteria, group activities, aims, norms, relations to others, resources, etc. (van Dijk, 2012). Or as the earlier predicament from van Dijk (1998)

dictates, the type of communicative event/genre, types of participants and participant roles, and properties of the intended recipients.

All this seemingly synthesizes and realizes the close relationship between identity, identification, and ideology (van Dijk, 1998). The discourse structures surmise a possibility in the assumption that the processes of reception and persuasion stick closely to the expressions of ideologies (van Dijk, 2012). There are two caveats that need to be pointed out in composing our framework. The first one contends that there are no specific structures used for ideologies. The second is that the same discourse function may function ideologically in one context and not in another, which makes the argument without guarantees by omitting the contextual constraints. For our research, it was absolutely crucial to address the contextual structures when engaging with the analysis of discourse, and whether or not the mental models may encompass ideology proliferation because beliefs in event models are selectively constructed to form the semantic representation of text and talk (van Dijk, 2012).

4.6 Ideological Square

Ideologies typically organize people and society in polarized terms (van Dijk, 1998). The contrasting collapse of the surrounding information, leading to its presence (and absence) in semantic representations, derived from event models, would serve to convey the function of expression and suppression in the interests of the speaking side. A complete account of this stems from van Dijk (1998), who concludes there to be an overall strategy of ideological communication, or as he designates it, the "ideological square". This would serve to actuate the role of a broader contextual strategy of positive self-representation (in-group) and its corollary, negative other-representation (out-group). Four possibilities arise from his conceptual square (van Dijk, 1998, p. 267):

- Express/emphasize information that is positive about Us
- Express/emphasize information that is negative about Them
- Suppress/de-emphasize information that is positive about Them
- Suppress/de-emphasize information that is negative about Us

Since we have established that ideologies are social and group-based, the ideological opinions expressed in discourse must have implications for group and social issues (van Dijk, 1998). Then there is the ambiguity of delinquency on the local meaning, where information may be expressed, and other information may be left out, carrying implications for the biased construction of attitudes. Or rather the opposite scenario, where discourses may be relatively overcomplete, contributing to contextually irrelevant comprehensions of an event. To recognize a biased discourse, it tends to either be

very detailed about "their" bad acts and "our" good acts or stay quite abstract and general about "their" good acts and "our" bad ones (van Dijk, 1998). Not to mention, other valuable devices that could be used in ideological discourse. We cannot abide by the criteria of expressing or leaving out information, but supportive in discerning these qualities in our discourse additions, we regard some of these bias tendencies to present an overdetailed or omitted characteristics to overlap with how both identities (positive and negative) are constructed in the two cases. For the application purposes of this thesis and the contextual adherence, let us predominantly tackle lexicalization and rhetorical figures, which serves to endure more as a socio-political contribution, rather than a socio-linguistic one.

4.7 Othering

To valuably reaffirm the meaning behind the overall ideological strategy of the "ideological square", which presupposes the notions of Self (Us) and Other (Them), all of it boils down to the enduring ideas that were present decades ago (Brons, 2015). Developed predominantly in movements actuating in feminist and post-colonial thought, as a "politically charged self-identification by means of distantiation from the other", it became known as the notion of "othering" (Brons, 2015, p. 70). "Othering" has been towered by simultaneous political and psychological eminences, and may be grasped as an accusation of political incorrectness. Down to earth, it could be perceived as the process by which both identities are simultaneously constructed in an unequal relationship. Although, as Brons (2015) declares, the implied superiority/inferiority that is conveyed by this unequal determinacy is nearly always left implicit. The conclusion to othering is that the "self-other" distantiation, but also dehumanization of "the other" does not have to take the form of an affirmation of superiority/inferiority. Still, it creates a particular distance by the dehumanizing over-inflation of otherness, where the other is portrayed as being radically alien, or through justifications of social exclusion, discrimination, or subjection, and vice versa (Brons, 2015).

4.8 Discourse and Manipulation

Van Dijk´s (2006) notion of manipulation clearly stipulates the involvement of both power and an abuse of power (i.e., domination), as an exercise of a form of illegitimate influence by means of discourse. Happening through the form of talk-in-interaction, this suggests the abuse may take place when a manipulator exercises control over other people, against their will or their best interests. Manipulation, therefore, may be vehemently conflated by interactional and communicational practices. A cognitive account ascribed to those who are "being manipulated" may be subsumed to human beings (or the recipients of discourse), as this typically occurs through the influence of

the mind. In our specific case, we intend to investigate whether manipulative practices may be present in the framework befitting the institutional setting of the UNSC, composed of representatives of respective countries.

Van Dijk (2006) clarifies the fuzzy boundaries to discern between manipulation and persuasion (illegitimate and legitimate forms), which are always context dependent, in that some recipients may easily succumb to manipulation tactics, while others may prove to be more resistant to them in the right context (dissenting voices or people with differing mental properties). In persuasion, as a form of influence over the recipients, the recipients are free to accept or reject the speaker´s arguments, implying a conscious evaluation by them. By contrast, manipulation, as a form of domination, in which the speakers abuse their power and impose control or interfere with people´s understanding, implies acting against the will and full awareness of the recipients. Van Dijk (2006) puts all this triangular interplay inherent to manipulation into one cogent sentence:

> *"That is, manipulation is a social phenomenon – especially because it involves interaction and power abuse between groups and social actors – a cognitive phenomenon because manipulation always implies the manipulation of the minds of participants, and a discursive-semiotic phenomenon, because manipulation is being exercised through text, talk and visual messages." (van Dijk, 2006, p. 361)*

Evocative, especially in a democratically dependent social setting, since the overwhelming reaches and effects of manipulation are imprinted onto people´s beliefs (knowledge, opinions, ideologies that in turn control their actions) might mean violation of human or social rights, even though these norms and values predicate a difficulty in their precise formulation (van Dijk, 2006). On the route to defining the markings of manipulation are the social criteria or context models, which are attuned to group membership, institutional position, profession, material or symbolic resources. Looking back to the established contents in conducting a CDA, manipulation may serve to reproduce inequality, because it may work in favour of the interests of the speaker (or the powerful group), and on the other hand, may hurt the interests of those in a less powerful position. Bouncing forth to the ethical implications (Van Dijk, 2006; Milliken, 1999). Van Dijk (2006) builds on these assumptions that when a manipulation retorts to a form of domination, it needs to be defined in terms of social groups, institutions and organizations – when speakers are manipulating others in their collective role/identity. Something, which we have tried to rely on by focusing on the representativeness inherent in the collective capacities (membership), rather than individual coverage of personas.

4.8.1 Strategies of Manipulation

Strategically-evident, the "preferred" models of speakers consider that which is both consistent (emphasis) and inconsistent (de-emphasis) with their best interests (van Dijk, 2006). One of the prevailing formulations might be the contention to a reattribution of responsibility of action, by for example, blaming the victim. The influential forms of manipulation tactics do not focus on the specific creation of these "preferred" models, but focus on the shift to general or abstract beliefs instead, or "socially shared attitudes". This strategy of generalization works to provide a striking intuitive acting rationality behind the interests of the participants, and work in the inconvenience of the recipients. The novelty here lies in the individual understanding of events that could turn into very emotional and opinionated control proliferating shared fears, attitudes and ideologies.

Van Dijk (2006) points out that the best way to detect and resist these attempts is through a strong sense bestowed in the knowledge, norms and values of the recipients; a sentiment which we assumed in assessing their characteristics. There exist a number of ways, through which these could be proliferated, but are not explicit – repeated messaging, polarization, events exploitation, emotional resonance, and so on. Logically, it would be in the interest of the dominant group, to not allow for critical knowledge to be (re-)distributed, or that it only needs to be interpreted as partial, misguided or biased. Proven to oscillate in the interests of the speaker is integrated a strong polarization mechanism, which works on a much-biased account that serves to underline another dominant strategy in manipulation. It dwells on the "ideological square" conditions, purporting the contrasts in the positions of Us and Them. This emphasis was explained in detail in Chapter 4. 6.

Despite sometimes very abstract ideas involved in traversing the manipulation criteria, and "inner-clashing" of the manipulation with ideological discursive strategies and structures (found in both the generalization, as well as positive self-representation and negative other-representation), there are ubiquitous "manipulation prototypes", which should be recognized when it comes to the context of manipulation. As we have mentioned before, supposing the self-critical assumption through constraints on manipulation reception, there are a few discourse structures formulated presupposing these constraints (van Dijk, 2006, p. 376):

- Emphasize the position, power, authority or moral superiority of the speaker(s), or their sources – and, where relevant, the inferior position, lack of knowledge, etc. of the recipients
- Focus on the (new) beliefs that the manipulator wants the recipients to accept as knowledge, as well as on the arguments, proofs, etc. that make such beliefs more acceptable.
- Discredit alternative (dissident, etc.) sources and beliefs

- Appeal to relevant ideologies, attitudes and emotions of the recipients

We find, and it is very important to note for the sake of the conclusions of the thesis, that not all discourses may correspond to already abstract manipulative content conditions. There are only functions or effects in specific communicative situations that could occur as the illegitimate forms of control, but are especially hard to determine from the legitimate ones due to abstract boundaries between persuasion and manipulation (van Dijk, 2006). To prevent the mere enrichment from these presuppositions of strategies to become exploitative in the capacity for our interpretative judgement, we chose to engage with the context models for each of the analysed participant and recipients, forming our dataset. In line with our research aims and the nature of the collected data, we chose to focus on socio-political adversity, analysing it through lexical semiotics and rhetorical devices (such as metaphors and euphemisms) in our coding procedures (Chilton, 1987). Outside of the scope our research were the non-verbal characteristics (sounds, visuals, gestures, facial expressions) of the speakers, to which we did not dedicate our attention to of coding the lineup of transcripts.

4.9 Framework Assembly

This diploma thesis surmised together an analytical framework that integrates the ontological assertions of social constructivism with that of the CDA methodology, drawing on van Dijk's (1998; 2012) "ideological square", complemented by the related notions of self/other dichotomy or "othering" (Brons, 2015), and strategic models of manipulation (van Dijk, 2006), colluding into one triangular model. Constructivism here provides the theoretical foundations by positing that language does not merely reflect reality, but actively constitutes it. Through the concept of discourse as "system of representation" or "process" (Milliken, 1999; Wodak, 2014), political actors may converge in the construction of identities, define moral boundaries, and legitimize their actions. The invocations of the term "genocide" in the UNSC could be understood as a genre of a performative speech act, one that may invent and construct polarization, establish normative hierarchies, and mobilize moral leniency, deciding whether or not these practices are manipulative in their nature (Subotić, 2015; van Dijk, 2006).

In the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and its latest turns, such discursively-loaded acts are dangerously potent, as they unfold within an institutional space where admittance to international law, legitimacy, and emotional responses overlap. We assumed that the UNSC´s institutional setting produces a formal, elitist, and rational predisposition to both the speakers and their respective audiences (i.e., recipients) composed out of its members. Our other predisposition, coming out of the contextual advocacy criteria, relies on the transcription segmentation; therefore, we had

to omit the implicit and non-verbal characterization, but also some semiotic devices, which may count as vague.

The first layer of our methodological framework applied van Dijk's (1998) conceptual frame of "ideological square", which most of all conceptualizes discourse as a mechanism for constructing the positive self-representation, and negative other-representation through four possible ideological communication structures. This model guides the identification of how Israeli and Palestinian representatives position themselves as collective ideological groupings and engage in a very interconnected notion of "othering" around the "genocide" designation. It intends to uncover the processes of self-legitimation (including dehumanization, victimization parallels) and polarization that shape how each side frames the conflictual residues in their context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, dating back to October 7, 2023 (Brons, 2017; Subotić, 2015). Yet, focusing solely on identity-building through ideologically imbued construction risks overlooking the strategic (manipulative) dimensions of discourse in institutional use, which are intuitive to our research question.

To adequately address this, the framework was enriched by the incorporation of van Dijk's (2006) strategic model of manipulation, which conceptualizes manipulation as a form of discursive power operating on three interconnected levels (discourse, cognition, and society). This model allows for an examination of how actors attempt to persuade or control (manipulate) interpretations, emotions, and legitimacy within the supposedly asymmetrical relations correspondingly incentivized in our first layer.

4.10 Operationalization

The integration of two theoretical structure frameworks resulted in a two-layer design. The "ideological square" served as the basis for mapping identity construction, while the strategies of manipulation captured the dimensions of how discourse may influence or control participants. Together, they provide a holistic framework that traces how the term "genocide" is used to define both social realities and strategically shape understanding. To further operationalize this framework, a Codebook (see Appendix A) was developed through an iterative process of combining theory-driven and inductive reasoning. Initially, coding categories were derived deductively from the literature (van Dijk, 1998; 2006; 2012; Brons, 2015; Subotić, 2015), focusing on actor representation/identity-building and discursive strategies, predominantly interpreting lexical semiotics and rhetorical figures in speech acts.

Before we address the practicality of our operationalization, we want to draw attention to a few minor issues we encountered during the development of our Codebook. By retaining a consistent and systematic approach, abiding by the theoretical framework and the basic principles that functioned in accordance with CDA's criteria,

we were able to adhere to the research's objective of how "genocide" is strategically deployed in the UNSC meeting speeches by both representative parties.

To address our premature estimates outlining the coding schema, we designed operational definitions and a characterization for each category. During this adjustment, we stumbled upon an issue, which we have come to acknowledge over time. A small convolution towards the identity criteria, in that we initially referred to a neutral perception of our startup position, rather than the favourable or unfavourable positioning of both categories in the identity-construction layer, which envelops the crucial understanding of the *Positive Self* and *Negative Other*. It turned out to be a false measure to pursue, despite the reminder through our theoretical foundations that explicitly maintained the convenience of the positive and negative stipulations in analysing the subjects.

Likewise, we needed to attentively affirm the attachment of the identity enhancements (*Dehumanization*, *Victimization*), in order to further advance the ideological proclivity of the subjects at hand. What definitely became fixed from this decision, as we moved along with our piloting, was that we needed to amend the strict criteria that made up the *Control of Knowledge* category, specifically because they had proved to coalesce with parts of the characterization for the *Position of Authority* that had shown as problematic. Measures that were designated for the former category, in that they no longer comprised any elements of normative, institutional, moral, or legal adherence, but instead continued to be definitional for the latter category. In the first case, we focused predominantly on a fact-based lexeme and rhetorical devices that helped sell this particular angle. Achieved by extensions of the viewpoints on how the subjects may construct the reasoning conditioned over factuality with such concepts as chronology, placement, or observation (similarities to a witness statement).

Now, at large, "tinkering" with our analysis resoundingly echoed the remaining overlaps and inconsistencies that we could have engaged with, were we to involve implied discursive utterances. From the get-go, it was evident that this destination could not have been realized. As a result, we did include none of the implied or "suppressed" information due to leniency of the fact that we worked within a purely textual formatting that lacked any visual or sound elements that could have been discernible or at least left to a valid impression over unsure interpretation. The same goes for the tonal appraisal. Still, we would like to attach our interpretations to these, as they might prove too important to render positioning of both parties.

In a total of three rounds of coding, each occurrence around the lemma genocid* in the dataset was coded according to these dimensions represented in our Codebook (Appendix A - Codebook), allowing for both a quantitative mapping of patterns and a qualitative interpretation of meaning and strategy in our analysis sections. Through this combined theoretical and methodological approach, the framework captures how discourse simultaneously performs constitutive (identity-building) and strategic (manipulative) functions in international politics. It enables the analysis to trace how both

Israel and Palestine deploy their discourses around "genocide" not only to describe events but to legitimate their political positions, appeal to collective memory, and invoke international norms. By embedding van Dijk's models (1998; 2006; 2012) within a social-constructivist ontology and linking them to a transparent coding process, the framework provides both theoretical depth and methodological rigor. It ultimately exposes how the invocation of "genocide" in the UNSC operates as a site where meaning, power, and morality intersect - revealing the intricate ways discourse constructs and contests political realities on the international stage.

5 Analysis of Israel

Steadily progressing through our predetermined datasets and the theoretically corresponding coding categories, we started systemically applying them to the assembled units. Beginning with the operationalization and analysis of the State of Israel, the corpus consisted of quoted utterances taken from the UNSC meetings, dating from October 2023 until July 2025. It focused on the occurrences, which demonstrated a clear incidence of the term "genocide" or, more technically, its lemma genocid*. Statements featured in this dataset originated from the appointed representatives by the General Assembly, namely, the Permanent Observer Gilad Erdan, Ambassador Deputy Permanent Representative Jonathan Miller, Political Coordinator Reut Shapir Ben-Naftaly, and Ambassador Danny Danon. In the secluded transcripts, we did not intercept any interruptions caused by interaction or exchange of arguments during the monologues.

5.1 Diachronic Analysis

Convening on the exploration of observable patterns pertaining to a yearly diachrony, it was evident that the Israeli speakers in the initial period of 2023 demonstrated a strong alignment with both layers, synthesizing the ideological square and manipulation (van Dijk, 1998; 2006). Evidently, the *Negative Other* and *Dehumanization* coding categories employed historical analogies (often WWII-related). They legitimized the images of graphic atrocities, including a heavy *Victimization* campaign consistent with the alleged genocidal suppression of the "self". Exemplifying the referenced assertions associated with manipulation, mainly those concerning an institutional and legal authority, the *Positive Self* had an implied tendency to disapprove of the credibility of other actors or institutions that aligned with the consensus of the international community. Judging by these mentioned preferences, the disapproval of credibility in *Discredit Alternative* category, which had a profound effect in giving the "in-group" an ambivalence of a moral arbiter abiding by universal principles and values, is attached to the characterization in our second layer.

In recounting 2024´s incidence, we had noted an evident rise in the deployment of manipulation strategies exemplified through both *Control of Knowledge* and *Discrediting Alternative* categories that aimed to adhere to epistemic and fact-affirming capacities of the "in-group´s" identification with a wide-ranging intersection attempting to expose, blame, and ultimately deflect allegations over "genocide", which endured in their conventional usage. By disputing claims from the ICJ and the ICC, and by sticking with the institutional disapproval over drafting resolutions, the Israeli representatives had resorted to shifting the blame and exhorting to legible ridicule and/or irony. By this point, the recognition of the opposing identity of "Hamas", portrayed as an adversary, was evident, also by an affirmation through tactics embodied in the *Control of*

Knowledge. However, a rise in mentions of the "other" broadly revealed Iran's involvement (with the addition of slogans), which slightly unbalanced this one-sided appearance of identification. A special side-note, in the admittance of civilians' identities into one's own *Positive Self*, we had logged an isolated inclusion of Palestinians as "co-victims" inside the "in-group" identification.

Concluding with 2025´s smallest discursive catalogue, and as the most recent rendering of discourse, we registered profanities over a significant manipulation effort with *Discredit Alternative*, including a virulent repeated focus on the opposite identity of Iran and its supposed subparts, complemented by an "allegedly" asserted nuclear threat metastasizing as an urgent or overtly-dramatized *Emotional Appeal* content. Extending the roster of the unfavourable "other", the *Negative Other* was imprinted onto other entities and officials from the UN´s admittance, as well. Lastly, Israeli representatives collided with the accusatory mannerism that enunciated "antisemitic" judgemental attitudes.

5.2 Positive Self: A Law-Abiding Democracy

In the entry category designated the *Positive Self*, Israeli speakers had a very discernible (in non-concordance with the Palestinian dataset), reliably and visibly exhibited, positive self-identification within their own "in-group" adherence. What had marked inclusivity within the "in-group" was that they mostly contextualized their belonging through the use of pronouns such as "we", which were spotted numerous times throughout the excerpts. This pronoun attachment helped narrow down the category itself in places where it was left more implicit. Under the most common denominators (keywords and phrases), those that directly assumed the identity-construction criteria by the representatives, and which, stemming from the contextual adherence to "genocide", were predominantly verbalized in instances such as "Israel"; "Jewish people"; "Jewish state"; "Jews" and "its citizens".

Now, approaching the contested playfield, there were a few instances in which a shift occurred outside these commonly perceived identificatory wavelengths. In these observable excerpts shown below, we want to demonstrate, in detail, our interpretation through predominant patterns. First of all, the highly explicit pattern was incentivized by exhibiting "the self" as the righteous, morally exempt captivation in an actualization acting under universally recognized principles, norms, and values, linked to manipulative concordance with the *Position of Authority*. To illustrate, let us observe the first excerpt:

> *"The words of genocidal terrorists are accepted at face value, while the irrefutable evidence of a law-abiding democracy is tossed aside." (United Nations Security Council, 10. 11. 2023)*

In the discursive pronunciations, the identity-construction positioning seems a fairly straightforward affair, in that it completes the identification of the *Positive Self* and the *Negative Other*, conditioned in a contrasting relationship with each other, as in their "genocide" usage. While "the words of genocidal terrorists" are pressed against "the irrefutable evidence of a law-abiding democracy". Therefore, the two primary identifications – "genocidal terrorists" and "law-abiding democracy" provide a case of relying on antithetical morality through which this identification is procured. As we interpreted, the excerpt seeks to convey "the self" as closely and evidently abiding by legal norms, and segments itself as a "country" within a fully integrated democratic system of governance by clinging to morality and universalism. The other excerpts, less evidently, provide the same pattern based on that logic, such as in instances like "democratic country"; "sovereign country" and "leaders of the law-abiding State of Israel". Marching onwards, we have identified an interesting digression that hints at inclusivity outside of one´s own grouping:

> *"What it does not respect is the South Africa's blatant abuse of the Court and its procedures or the country's unconscionable efforts to distort the truth in support of a genocidal terrorist organization, at the expense of both Israelis and Palestinians, who both deserve a peaceful and prosperous future, free of the death cult of Hamas." (United Nations Security Council, 31. 1. 2024)*

Pronouncedly, we took this excerpt from a two-part coded sample from one UNSC meeting (transcripts from the start of January 2024), which could explain this only marginal and isolated occasion, as it was never repeated afterwards. Coming back to contemplate this particular extract, the connection to "peaceful and prosperous future" is not only limited to "Israel", but extended to "Palestinians". Suppose we wanted to delve even further to try and determine who constitutes the designation of "Palestinians" to the perception of the "in-group". In that case, we can only assume that would be a problematic attempt to declare it from the statements alone. Although in a closely resemblant example to this one, there are also mentions of "Palestinian civilians", which leads one to perceive an evident continuity regarding civilian casualties as a discursive component of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Besides this isolated incident, in situations where the speaker would digress to highlight themselves as part of a larger collective (members of the Security Council), it advances the natural selectiveness to engage and overstep into our second layer within the *Position of Authority* category. Speakers did so by asserting their right to self-defence, and by viewing and treating it under the international law stemming from their

reading. At other times, the overextension to a manipulative position would be affirmed by overlapping one´s own identification with a position of a victim, such as "real genocide victims"; "our civilians".

By presenting recipients with a positive link between righteousness and the *Positive Self*, and by shaping its own image through universalist, moral, and inclusive language overlapping with the *Position of Authority*, "genocide" functioned in an antithetical capacity. Through the process of moral distinction, the term was used to delineate "right" from "wrong". "Genocide" reinforced the claim of reasserting moral integrity by referencing shared values and norms, like democracy, self-defence, or the protection of civilians, to convey an attempt to weaken claims of others, while reinstating the speaker´s position in a favourable light.

5.3 Negative Other: Genocidal Terrorist or Jihadist?

Claiming the utmost spot for its most vivid and proportionally most significant coded category would be putting it somewhat lightly. Israel's unrestrained utilization and a staggering application of the "other" by stacking of adjectives and analogies on each other, corresponding frequently to "terrorism", "Nazism", previous Israeli-Palestinian encounters, and "the Holocaust", was a common element in deciphering the meaning behind how they would identify the *Negative Other*. For the purposes of our research, the main link for this category would be in the utilization of "genocidal" as an adjective. Recognizing it as a common signifier, which worked by one-upping it with other labels used to position the *Negative Other* in adjourning to the unfavourable relatedness. Concluding the year 2023, we present a dominant example here, when there would be a multitude of different identifications allocated to this one sentence:

> *"While Israel is at war with Hamas — and only with Hamas — it is also defending itself against murderers and numerous other terror threats: the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza, Hizbullah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Syria. Those are all tentacles of the same genocidal octopus — the Ayatollah regime in Iran." (United Nations Security Council, 10. 11. 2023)*

Viewing the dataset in its entirety, "Hamas" was an entity with a strangely underrepresented occurrence, most times being left implicit. "While Israel is at war with Hamas – and only with Hamas" largely captivates this differentiation between "Israel" and "Hamas", but also works as a self-legitimating meddling with the "in-group" portrayal, something pointed out in Chapter 5.2. By using "only" to reaffirm the identification, the

speaker would highlight this shutting out of other entities as a sign of manipulation, aiming to deny any involvement in other conflicts. Likewise, by imposing a specific belief about the nature of the conflict in that "it is also defending itself". Beholding "Hamas" as merely the outstanding constituency in this sequence, other entities here are considered prominent in their positional structurization, based on their continuous political insinuations. Additionally, prevalent through an assertion coded as *Dehumanization* – "tentacles of the same genocidal octopus"; "the Ayatollah regime in Iran" was recognized to be the excessive or primarily controlling entity that inconveniently and intently is made to supersede the "other terror threats", in the end, bearing the crown for itself. This type of metaphorization, and exclusion by subsuming the "other" into one as colloquially connected, which at the same time convenes the inhumanity in the stretch of agency to other entities.

A considerable number of instances, paralleling what we previously observed with references to "Hamas", focused on the implicitness and on reducing the actor through non-denominative metonymical constructions. Israeli speakers frequently abstracted opposing subjects into impersonal concepts or inanimate formulations such as "agenda"; "ideology"; "terror" or "campaign". In this excerpt, therefore, we note a similar leniency, one where the "other" is diminished through its reduction to "obsessions":

> *"If nothing is done about these openly genocidal obsessions, then the Council will finally lose even its pretension as a force for peace." (United Nations Security Council, 17. 7. 2024)*

5.4 Dehumanization: Embodiment of Evil

Dehumanization, working mainly as an attempt to strip the "out-group" of its human agency (for a specific characterization see the Codebook), was a present tactic to delimitate an opposing entity in a pronouncedly bad guise or demeanour. Continually, it had the most metaphorical, hyperbolic, and image-emulating effect linked to an emotion-evoking overlap with the *Emotional Appeal*. Take, for example, this instance:

> *"Not only has the Palestinian Authority not condemned the 7 October massacre, but they are also paying monthly salaries to all the terrorists who took part in it, rewarding the rapists. It is a genocide-loving entity that does not deserve any status here." (United Nations Security Council, 18. 4. 2024)*

Taking a step backwards, if we come back to the identity-construction of the *Negative Other*, here, the "out-group" is identified as the "Palestinian Authority", that being the political rival to Israel in the regional political rivalry. Putting the testament of an aspiration for Palestinian statehood to the test, it makes for an association from the Israeli speakers to register the PA as an accessory to "terrorists" and "rapists". The second layer of manipulation, particularly *Dehumanization* category utilized here, therefore, expresses this interplay by not guaranteeing it to be seen as a respect-worthy actor, but rather a "genocide-loving entity" undeserving of any human characterization or an empathic tinge, and attempts to convert the recipients´ cognitive abilities against it, to make its cause feel null or void from the UNSC´s participation. A strong association with "genocide" use works to elicit this stripping of human agency, coherent with the atrocity that systematically aims at mass murder.

5.5 Victimization: Another Jewish Genocide

Tacitly, serving to deepen and restore the historic suffering of the "Jewish people", the *Victimization* category embodies a profound inclination towards historical analogy-making and reviving rhetorical functionality that largely corresponded with the 2023 period. From all of the excerpts, this one was conditioning the "antisemitic narrative", which seems to function as a defensive utility for the "in-group". During this defensive tactic in deflecting accusations from other members, alternating viewpoints or processes of decision-making, discussions and diplomatic escalations, the "in-group" relies strongly on its past perceived wrongdoings, strongly coalescing with the conceptual foundations of "genocide" to equip its rhetoric, and in accordance with what is presently at stake. True to this rhetorical composition, we denote it from this example:

> *"This institution was founded upon the ashes of the Holocaust, the genocide of the Jewish people, and just over a week ago, we witnessed yet another attempt at Jewish genocide — the Nazi Hamas massacre of babies, mothers, fathers and the elderly." (United Nations Security Council, 16. 10. 2023)*

By attaching an attribution to the "out-group" with "Nazi" and "massacre", it proceeds to repetitively coalesce it with the collective suffering of "Jewish people" in the form of "genocide". The term "genocide" connotes the institutional rooting, which is connected directly to the "ashes of the Holocaust", and is prone to deepen with the use of "witnessing" and "yet another attempt" that utilize the manipulation by asserting factual and observing capacity over all of these listed notions. Of course, the emotional frontier

works efficiently, and in tandem with profiling the impact of "massacre", and by providing the specificities to name the categorical demographic of those who are perceived to be under threat. Here, "genocide" becomes a central performative label, which compresses past and present into one continuum of Jewish victimhood and thereby frames Israel´s current actions as an existential defence rather than a contestable policy choice.

5.6 Manipulation: Those Solely Responsible

> *"Hamas is entirely to blame for this conflict. It launched an unprovoked, brutal invasion of Israel, a sovereign country, murdered innocent civilians and took hundreds of hostages. They are still holding our loved ones in Gaza, while continuing their attacks on Israel. They use Gazans as human shields, while pursuing their genocidal aims." (United Nations Security Council, 25. 6. 2024)*

To confirm responsiveness over factuality, either by assisting in collapsing other categories or by framing factual information itself, the *Control of Knowledge* served as a hand-in-hand tool to profess different attitudes from the speakers. Consistent was the affirmation of blame, not shifting it as in the *Discrediting Alternative* category, but rather having a profound effect on the portrayal of the *Negative Other*. Controlling the narrative of responsibility and the observational capacity surrounding the eventuality and chronology of how information is relayed to the recipients. In this excerpt, the categorization responds to the claim that "Hamas is entirely to blame for this conflict". Proceeding by other assertions that "it launched…", "they are still holding…" and "they use…", which worked as a gradual device, beginning at the start of the sequence, and only propelling it further. In assuming the epistemic continuity, the one sample treating the epistemic shaping in its entirety would be found in this excerpt:

> *"That word carries more weight than any other accusation; to use it falsely is to dishonour the memory of real genocide victims and endanger more lives by fuelling hatred." (United Nations Security Council, 23. 7. 2025)*

By relying on the meaning of "genocide", the speaker sought to control the epistemic qualities inherent in its original authenticity. Literally, contending with the

overdramatization and the universal ingenuity, the subject would assert its own self-reflection that to “use it falsely is to dishonour the memory…”, which works as a sort of pre-emptive advert towards the utilization of the term itself. If we look at emotionality, there is a clear accentual stress and a consequential conclusion about what would come if we didn’t abide by the epistemic authority of the speaker. This portrays how illustrative the meaning of “genocide” is to the segmented transcripts and the body of text as a whole, in terms of institutional convenience and position-taking.

6 Analysis of Palestine

Following up on the sizable body of text pertaining to the State of Palestine, we identified utterances spanning October 2023 to late September 2025. The Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations consisted of representatives appointed by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), recognized as the official representative of the Palestinian people and holding "non-permanent observer state" status at the UN. Featured were transcripts from the Permanent Observer Riyad Mansour, Ambassador Majed Bamya, Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Malki, Deputy to the Permanent Observer Feda M. Abdelhady, and Foreign Minister Varsen Aghabekian Shahin. Just like with our previous dataset, there were no interruptions or interactions denoted during these meetings that would compromise the possibility of contextual completeness, despite the consecutive procedural follow-up by both parties.

6.1 Diachronic Analysis

Commencing with identifying patterns in their diachronic development, 2023 marked a prerendered focus on the international law - *Position of Authority*, which would subsequently be used together with the *Control of Knowledge* category. In the limited window that was 2023, the speakers usually pointed to observable information to spur on the criminalization effort, on the onset of Israeli policymaking in Gaza, as a focal base point, with accusatory and expository demands to reveal mass death and humanitarian collapse. This preoccupancy established a sort of unacceptability and unsustainability in the enactments of the *Negative Other*. The speakers voiced their concerns about non-compliance with international law and the laws governing warfare, while primarily employing moral universality and legal vocabulary to support their position. At the same time, the speakers had gently incorporated the suffering of the Palestinian people, which had grown in emotional intensity and dramatization as the two next consecutive years unfolded.

The established narrative in 2024 has consistently pressed on the occurrence of "genocide", not only as an occasional arbitration against the rights of the Palestinian population, but has been more visibly recognized through the captions of legal plausibility. This narrative resulted in turning the supposed Israeli violations from the narrowly focused criminal activities inside the Gaza Strip, onto the violation of the entire international legal system, abandoning the framing of conflict between two exclusive camps, but now broadening the issue to the global law system mechanisms.

In 2025, the narrated eventual comprehension would morbidly deepen regarding profiling Palestinian suffering and endurance, as indicated by the inclusion of statements not from our analysed subjects but from other UNSC speakers who described

the events from their own expert perspective. An emerging rhetorical primacy of mobilization and global responsibility had been put into hypotheticals about the future of legitimacy and justice-seeking. Linking accountability and "genocide" into a single moral-political horizon, it served to merge both solidarity and criticism of blocking resolutions in a future-oriented collision.

6.2 Positive Self: In Show of Solidarity

Equivalent to this subchapter´s title, the evident alignment of the self-representation through *Positive Self* and its relation to other actors symbolized a magnitude of inclusivity that underlined the in-group's identification spectrum. Displaying gratitude through appreciation and the gesture of thankfulness for initiatives and resolve in the context of the current situation. The *Positive Self* functioned predominantly as unitary statements, which had a profound effect when coordinated with the *Emotional Appeal* category to strike at the heart of the recipient audiences' consciousness. Thus, complementing a broader proficiency in cooperation and a combined support from some members of the UNSC. An overt belonging to the "Palestinian people" grouping was not, most of the time, directly assumed, and therefore quite tricky to determine. Given the fact that "Palestinians", "they" or "Palestinian people" are almost in none of the cases put in a favourable association in the identity construction that would integrate them successfully into a positive sentiment from the speaker's way of rhetoric. Demonstrating this pattern, we explore this instance:

> *"We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the countries and peoples that supported our efforts to achieve a ceasefire, including among the members of the Security Council and General Assembly, and all those who worked to stop the genocidal war against our people and hold Israel accountable for its crimes, including the States that supported us before international tribunals, in particular South Africa, which referred the case to the International Court of Justice to bring an end to the crimes of genocide against our people." (United Nations Security Council, 20. 1. 2025)*

Realising that the gesture exhibition that puts in its diameter "the States that supported us", enables a suggestive manner that is sustained by attending to the *Position of Authority*, especially through institutional and judicial collaboration in "international tribunals", and specifically the "International Court of Justice". There had been a reoccurring inclination towards mentions of "South Africa", but also "Algeria", which markedly resorted to convenience the legal process that helped to "hold Israel accountable", and

hinted at a possibility to "bring an end to the crimes of genocide against our people". Asserting this inclusivity in linguistic elements that are used to structure sentencing and convey the meaning implied by the gratitude of the Palestinian speakers. The term "genocide" for our first category did not present a reliable or efficient means to the description of subjects, but merely touched upon the identificatory borders of the optimistic layout represented in *Positive Self*, without directly painting the Palestinian people into a positive picture. It had pushed the boundaries of other categorizations from the Codebook (Appendix A) that succeed this effort to construct a unitary mission or cooperation efforts and complementing a larger narrative of agency within the UNSC in the process.

6.3 Negative Other: Netanyahu´s War Machine

Both our representative parties of Israel and Palestine had a strong inclination towards slating the *Negative Other*, seeing as in both datasets it was an especially immoderate category. Still, the Israeli dataset proportionally dominated this notion, accounting for the behind-the-scenes aptness to the theoretical characterization of this category. The common ambience through which the representatives of Palestine had declared its opposing entity was most inherently summarized in "Israeli officials", "Israel", and "occupying Power". In a few special instances, the role of the Prime Minister of the State of Israel was brought up in accordance with the actions and aims that created a negative collocation:

> *"The Israeli Prime Minister and his coalition of Government extremists and military commanders believe there will never be a cost for their crimes. They believe they can literally get away with murder, get away with genocide against the Palestinian people." (United Nations Security Council, 31. 7. 2024)*

Condemning and assaulting the credibility of the actions of the defined "out-group" of "Israeli Prime Minister" and "his coalition of Government extremists and military commanders", it was galvanized through the notions of interlocking *Discrediting Alternative* with the notion of the *Negative Other*. By a compact moral indictment such as this one, the speakers may embellish the audience into reaction over irony that invalidates the rationale and beliefs of "the other" as a suitable strategy, building on a repetition of "get away" that is even further pillared on words possessing emotional gravity – "murder" and "genocide". Dysphemism and labelling overlapping with the *Emotional Appeal* category, elapsed with the use of "genocide" as a signature that did not directly

relate to the identification of "other", but was associated with its actions or aims being pointed out.

Trivially, we were unable to capture any reliable instance of *Dehumanization* that would persist across the first layer of our framework in this dataset. There were only the excluded signs of a reported dehumanization effort, which sought to frame the discourse of "the other" but did not engage in dehumanizing the opposing entity itself. Merely naming the discursive process (a meta-discourse) as a mechanism that inverts the conceptual rigidity for its own use, together with other categories, *Dehumanization*, therefore convened into the second layer with categories such as *Control of Knowledge* or *Discrediting Alternative*. Below we show a particular case of this metanarrative, which serves to give an account of history with "Across history" that very closely surmises the mass atrocity labels, along with "genocide". During this factual positioning, the narrator implies the blame onto the "other" entity without expressly naming it, but stemming from the context of the meeting, there is an indisputable possibility to this instance:

> *"Across history, ethnic cleansing, apartheid and genocide have always been made possible by dehumanizing a nation." (United Nations Security Council, 29. 5. 2024)*

6.4 Victimization: Humanity Left Under the Rubble

Instrumentalizing the rhetorical figures of gradation and heightening of fears, the key role of *Victimization*, along with the *Emotional Appeal*, convincingly makes the realization of graphic and uncomfortable content that rallies emotional unease and a grounded metaphorical rendition, which sustains it as much enduring. By using expressions such as "terrible", "horrific", "cold-blooded", or "abhorrent", the speakers may usually succeed in fulfilling the emotional resonance that echoes not only the wickedness of actions done by the "out-group" categorized as the *Negative Other*, but also point out the disastrous conditions that were achieved as a result of those actions. To illustrate this point:

> *"Amid the terrible loss, pain and suffering that our people are enduring today, as the genocide continues to unfold before our eyes — with the aim, once again, of uprooting our people — and while hunger and famine are tearing their organs apart, our people are still concerned about the fact that a generation of Palestinians have missed a full*

> *school year and may miss another." (United Nations Security Council, 12. 11. 2024)*

The compelling positional prowess of the depiction of "pain and suffering" that uncompromisingly exposes the goals of the opposing identity encirclement, as well as structurally positioning the degree of stakes involved, from a generally-described components of suffering, lets them throttle into an effect by uttering "while hunger and famine are tearing their organs apart". Concluding this excerpt´s messaging, the generational implications from the past to the future, and the education of the younger demographic. These postulations about the future, but also over the kind of hypotheticality over certain scenarios, are frequently employed to lodge urgency of the responsibility and accountability of the world and the UNSC members. However, that also relies more on the *Position of Authority* category, for one thing. In this sense, "genocide" is being employed with convey, illustrate, and in general boost the suffering of an implied entity, in which a part is made to feel that it represents the whole by synecdoche as a figure of speech.

6.5 Manipulation: For Generations to Come

Many of the emotionally driven passages were agency-affirming next to their rhetorical applications, which attempt to deliver a hard-hitting delegitimization of the "other" through manipulative strategies. Most evidently, this delegitimization was inherent to the *Control of Knowledge* and *Discrediting Alternative* categorizations as a means of exposing hypocrisy and criticizing the inaction of the opposite constituents:

> *"The fact that Netanyahu and his Government are actively pursuing the transformation of Gaza into a land without a people through genocide and ethnic cleansing under the unconvincing disguise of voluntary migration has only been made possible by the impunity they enjoy." (United Nations Security Council, 23. 7. 2025)*

The secondary category of our strategies of manipulation, the *Control of Knowledge*, is in this excerpt highlighted as to preface the start of the sentence by using "The fact" and "are actively pursuing" that drives the factual framing effort and structurally encourages the recipients to perceive certainty and sincerity in the speakers´ judgemental capacities. Much of the time, the speakers use epistemic modality in such instances, where factual verbs are used to present, according to one's own perception, the established reality and/or to present a loop of causal logic that helps improve upon that

truthful reality. Overall, the considerable epistemic strategy took "genocide" and conditioned it as an empirically undeniable or irrefutable fact. It had also been utilized as part of a frequent legal pursuit, relying on the first category of that second layer, to structure frames that adhere to legal reference points.

The attentiveness and yet sometimes implicit rendering, not very fruitful to the purposes of capturing evident deployment, the utilization of a duty-bearing institutional actor or normative principles helped to internationalize the conflict and situate it within a universal normative order. The commonality of interlocking between the *Position of Authority* and *Control of Knowledge* prevailed. It professed not only that especially resonant shift from a narrow perception to a more globalized one, but also involved stakes meant to speak to international bystanders as a test of withstanding the global moral reaction. It reflected repercussions following from it that put a sort of pressure on those addressed:

> *"Mark my words, Israel's genocide in Gaza will redefine the region and our world for generations to come, and what we do next will determine how it does that." (United Nations Security Council, 23. 7. 2025)*

The speaker, giving himself the seemingly "unquestionable" epistemic authority, lays barebones how the irrefutable "Israel´s genocide" will have a long-lasting effect and will be able to "redefine the region and our world", but also "for generations to come". Observing this particular tendency, where he posits himself as a progeny of a factual postulation, combined with the stemming accountability and leaving the rest of the decision-making on the shoulders of others. By bridging the chronological repercussions with those of the fictional future, "genocide" streamlines the responsibility and accountability inherent in the term's deployment. Prefacing "genocide" with "the", which was mostly the case, implied factual assertions that converged the terminology as an undeniable, rather than something left to legally or conceptually contest. However, we notice that "genocide" had been prevalent in a legal decorum, or rather a legal phraseology, together as a triad of "apartheid, ethnic cleansing, genocide" that referenced the Convention, and alongside other mass atrocities, something we highlight at the end of Chapter 6.3.

7 Discussion

Judging by the speaker's discursive patterns raised in the analytical section, it was detected that the invocations of "genocide" do not function merely as a designation of a violent act or a legal statute of perpetration, but constitute a strategic discursive utility. This strategic utility was mobilized to shape identity boundaries, legitimacy, and a moral threshold for both of our representatives. They engaged correspondingly with the identity-construction categories provided by the criteria in the "ideological square" (van Dijk, 1998; 2012) and "othering" (Brons, 2015) along with the strategies of manipulation (van Dijk, 2006), but were noticeably distinct in how they accomplished this. Confirming the central theoretical proposition that discourse around "genocide" operates on ideological, cognitive, and strategic levels, aligning with the triangular foundations of our methodological framework (Brons, 2015; van Dijk, 1998; 2006; 2012).

The Israeli discourse emphasized moral and universal absolutism, as evidenced by a substantial account of positive self-representation. The *Positive Self* assisted in constructing democratic legitimacy, historical victimhood (connections to the Holocaust), and existential insecurity. The *Negative Other* was primarily asserted through associations with unfavourably coloured terms such as "terrorism" or "Nazism", as reflected in insights on labels and their "weaponization" (Bartov, 2024; Di-Capua, 2024; Orhan Çağlayan, 2024; Segal, 2024). Overall, Israeli speakers ran on an established defensive, imbalanced, reactive attitude towards institutional and regional actors alike, with a considerable desire to stack descriptives and dehumanize the "out-group", including the usage of "genocidal" as an adjective (Maalej & Zibin, 2024; Segal, 2024).

Meanwhile, the Palestinian representatives employed similarly moral, universal, and absolutist conditions, mirroring their approach but with varying mechanisms and quantities (Di-Capua, 2024). Mechanisms that hung onto the legal framework and pushed it to interplay with epistemically relating certainty about "genocide" and related acts of mass atrocities (Bolton, 2024; Ringrose, 2024). Normative intentions were indicative in terms of the vocabulary used. While the Israeli side would essentially employ merged wordings and enhanced stakes, the Palestinians would employ legal terminology, and, at times, also strong emotional victimization acts. In general, the suggestion is that the Israeli appointees were taking a defensive stance towards "other" actors, and adhered more to the *Positive Self* than to the *Negative Other* in seeking legitimization. Palestinian actors were strongly attested to using a legal terminology in the *Position of Authority* that was utilized together with discrediting beliefs and epistemically expressing certainty over acts committed, witnessed, and enumerated.

UNSC's institutional setting, which presupposes rational, formal, and quasi-elitist input, has been contrary to the assumption that these conditions constitute a limiting convention against manipulative discourse. The results show that, despite these

limiting presuppositions, the representatives attempt to engage in subtle, adaptive forms of manipulation that are distinct from legitimate persuasive tactics implying a consciously evaluative acceptance of the speaker´s arguments (van Dijk, 2006). There is no indication of overt coercion or control, except for the use of broad claims about collective intent and global consequences; depictions of suffering and existential threat to amplify emotions; moral certainty without any legal specifics; and epistemic certainty that amounts to irrefutable truth. Van Dijk (1998; 2006; 2012) stresses the contextual sensitivity required to differentiate persuasion from manipulation, yet the discourse demonstrates a tendency to shape recipients' interpretive frameworks that serve individual representations' strategic interests.

Despite the aforementioned, there are apparent asymmetries in what setting both parties deploy the term "genocide". Whereas Israel may benefit from the prestige and power of a recognized state with strong international alliances, Palestine, as an observer state, may be limited in its power-affirming resources. Palestine relies more on moral authority, humanitarian framing, and appeal-to-appeal to institutions or international law. Consequently, its discourse is more assertively normative, positioning "genocide" as a decisive moral and legal indictment aimed at mobilizing accountability. This might indicate that discursive strategies may not only be conditioned by ideological frameworks but also by power relations within the UNSC, something possibly pinpointing in politically affirming positionalities (Olayiwola, 2024; Ringrose, 2020). Possibly caught in the motion, where the positionally-weaker actor leans on normative language to compensate for its hierarchical power deficits; the positionally-stronger actor works to delegitimize that same language to maintain control over narrative and institutional legitimacy.

A core implication of this thesis was that "genocide" differed from an often-perceived formative academic and legal perspective, which treated it as a term that adhered to precision and the fulfilment of conditions/criteria (Bolton, 2024; Shaw, 2024; Segal, 2023) - in this particular case, assuming that "genocide" functions as a floating signifier within institutional political discourse. Its deployment often precedes legal verification, fails to meet evidentiary thresholds, and becomes a site of heated political struggle rather than providing clarity. That aligns with the academic debate that warns about the risks of the concept being "emptied" through improper instrumentalization (Bolton, 2024; James, 2025). UNSC´s importance as an institution maintaining peace and security inadvertently amplifies its politicization by providing a discursive arena where actors might strategically shape the global narrative (Ringrose, 2020; McDoom 2024). This poses questions about how discourse may influence humanitarian response, collective memory, and so forth, that extend beyond the immediacy of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East.

8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has set out to examine how both representatives, the State of Israel and the Observer of the State of Palestine, strategically deployed the term "genocide" within the institutional setting of the UNSC in the context of the 7 October 2023 escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By instrumentalizing a socio-cognitive approach grounded predominantly in van Dijk´s (1998; 2006; 2012) frameworks of "ideological square" and his "prototypical" model of strategies of manipulation, supplemented by the concept of "othering" (Brons, 2015), our research sought to uncover how discourse constructs identities, legitimizes politically-ideological positions, and shapes interpretive frameworks.

Our findings demonstrated that "genocide", in the contextual setting of the United Nations Security Council, was exercised far more than a mere legal designation of mass atrocity (Segal, 2023; Bolton, 2023; James, 2025). We found that it functions specifically as a performative signalling device, one that constructs collective identities and, at least attempts to, steer the cognitive orientation of recipients in the UNSC, and in the broader international reception. Both parties, as we analysed them through our datasets of selected speeches from the UNSC meetings, rely on a polarized relationship through the function of identity-building, in that positive self-representation has consistently been paired with negative other-representation with appeals to shift rhetoric to thematic instances such as historical trauma, humanitarian suffering, and legal disclaim (Di-Capua, 2024). These reinforced moral implications, stemming from recurring themes each side utilizes in its own disproportionate way, serve to interpret the conflict through their distributed interests (Di-Capua, 2024). Through lexical signs, meaning, and rhetorical figures, contributing to a socio-political account, articulate these narratives, but also attempt to pre-structure interpretive possibilities available to the UNSC.

Although both actors drew on some shared discursive mechanisms, their divergence was in their individual strategic aims. Palestinian representatives mobilize "genocide" as an organizing frame to internationalize the conflict, foreground suffering, while abiding closely to moral and legal accountability. Israeli representatives, on the other hand, rely on a more defensive and reframing strategy, rejecting the binding applicability of "genocide", while attributing "genocidal" intent directly to the opposite entities of Hamas and others (Iran, Hizbullah, etc.), and posit themselves as the essence of democratic legitimacy. These patterns may reflect asymmetries in political power within the institution, in which actors with limited decision-making authority compensate for their claims through normative positioning, while the powerful actors contest or delegitimize those claims (Badarin, 2024; Olayiwola, 2024; Ringrose, 2020).

Interestingly, our research relates to a much larger phenomenon. We can reasonably assume that "genocide" presented a capability working as a particular signifier

with increased fluidity and politicization in international discourse. Actors might use the term to compete for legitimacy, accountability, and morality, contesting its meaning and destabilizing its epistemic clarity.

At large, this thesis sought to contribute to the interdisciplinary fields of Genocide and Holocaust studies, discourse analysis, and international politics by postulating how language, power, and identity can be mutually expressed within institutional settings. The necessity of critically examining and uncloaking the power relations underpinning not only how the representatives of states behave but also how they indicate that behaviour is detrimental to uncovering meaning through discourse. Discourse, in this sense, may hold effects on international law, political responsibility, and lastly the collective memory of mass violence. While this thesis focused on a specifically defined timeframe and dataset, the implications for future studies suggest pathways for conducting comparative analyses of additional conflicts, incorporating the roles of non-state actors, and examining, over long time periods, how "genocide" discourses evolve. Conflicts that continue to unfold might represent global institutions as sites of political struggle. Therefore, an understanding of the strategic deployment of discourses remains an important detriment of interpreting actor-to-actor dynamics within the realm of IR.

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Appendix A Codebook

Identity-construction (Ideological Square; Othering)	Coding Categories	Operational Definition	Characterization	Keywords/Phrases	Lexical Semiotics & Rhetorical Figures
A1	Positive Self	A positive identification of the in-group (The Self/Us). Extends to encompass the perception of entities considered to belong to this collective identity.	Corresponds to a positive and favourable adherence to the identity-construction criteria established by the in-group. It demonstrates leniency towards the perceived legitimacy of the subject´s identity and is typically associated with the expression of loyalty, morality, legality, rationality, modesty, and other related virtues.	"a law-abiding democracy"; "Jewish people", "moral leadership", "Palestinians"	Ethos, Contrast, Rhetorical Inclusivity, Antithesis, Universalism, Morality
A2	Negative Other	A negative identification of the out-group (The Other/Them). Extends to encompass the perception of entities considered to belong to this collective identity.	Corresponds to a negative and unfavourable (adverse) adherence to the identity-construction criteria. It demonstrates leniency towards the perceived delegitimization of the subject´s identity and is typically associated with the expression of condemnation, immorality, evil, violence, and other related virtues.	"genocidal terrorists", "Hamas"; "Israel", "occupying Power"	Hyperbole, Labelling, Antithesis, Dysphemism, Stacking, Metonymy, Synecdoche
A3	Dehumanization	An expansion of the identity-construction criteria through the removal of human agency from *The Negative Other* , employing remarks that negate the perceived humanity of the entity in question.	Refers to the expressions originating from the in-group that are directed towards the out-group, aiming to erase or diminish the latter´s individuality and humanity.	"cancerous"; "inhumane violence"; "war machine"; "genocide enterprise"	Noun, Metaphor, Synecdoche
A4	Victimization	An expansion of the identity-construction criteria through the framing of the in-group as a victim, employing the narratives of suffering or innocence.	Refers to the expressions of the in-group´s suffering that constructs that self as a victim, typically achieved through the exaggerations of innocence, pain, suffering, or perceived threats to existence.	"carry out another Jewish genocide", "massacre us again"; "genocide against the Palestinian people", "terrorize, kill, maim, displace and starve them"	Pathos, Historical Analogy, Synecdoche
Discursive Strategies (Manipulation)	Coding Categories	Operational Definition	Characterization	Keywords/Phrases	Lexical Semiotics & Rhetorical Figures
B1	Position of Authority	Discursive acts aimed to emphasize the in-groups´ positioning, authority or moral superiority by appealing to the recipient´s normative and institutional sentience.	Affirms the in-groups identity through appeals to law, universally recognized rights, shared principles, norms, values, and institutional convenience (commonly accepted frameworks). Can be identified in expressions that promote inclusivity, cohesion and moral alignment within the in-group.	"just and moral war", "right and duty to defend"; "International Court of Justice", "coming together"	Collective Pronouns, Legal Lexicon, Ethos, Universalism, Exhortation, Tricolon, Rhetorical Question
B2	Control of Knowledge	Discursive acts aimed to modify, limit or reframe knowledge, in order to be accepted as novelty. Observed through the linguistic constructions that reorganize factual information, point out the absence or incompleteness of prior knowledge.	Refers to discursive processes that assert control over the framing of information by presenting arguments, evidence, and factual claims while establishing chronology and spatiality. Can be identified through the selection of facts, omission of relevant contextual information, and the use euphemistic substitutions.	"In fact...", "became a reality"; "real target", "code name for..."	Epistemic Modality, Euphemism, Passivization, Nominalization, Quantifier, Meta-Discourse, Comparison, Factual Framing, Chronological Finality, Repetition, Epistemic Correction, Anaphora
B3	Discrediting Alternative	Discursive acts aimed at discrediting alternative sources, arguments, beliefs, or expressions of dissent.	Refers to the practices that dismiss alternative viewpoints through the use of ridicule, irony or disregard. This is achieved by invalidating opponent´s claims, motives or credibility.	"outrageous distortion", "throw numbers around like that"; "meritless and baseless", "believe they can literally get away with"	Ridicule, Irony, Sarcasm, Rhetorical Incredulity, Rhetorical Question
B4	Emotional Appeal	Discursive intensification of emotions in order to elicit an affective response from recipients.	Refers to emotionally-charged language, dramatization effect or shock. Can be identified through the evocations of trauma, fear, anger, compassion and other related virtues.	"shockingly", "fuelling hatred"; "gang rape", "death and devastation"	Repetition, Metaphor, Hyperbole, Analogy, Narrative Sequencing, Gradual Dramatization, Pathos, Rhythmics, Contradiction, Oxymoron, Absolutism, Intensifier