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Media as Civil Society Actors in Israel and their Influence on the Israel-Palestine Conflict

Rabea Hass, Marburg University

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
Research Question, Methodology and Structure of the Paper.....	4
2. The Media as an Actor of Civil Society	5
The Civil Society in Israel	6
The Media in Israel's Civil Society.....	9
3. The Copenhagen School's Theory of Securitization.....	10
4. The Role of Media in Conflict Environments	13
5. The Analysis of Five Media Actors.....	19
Overview of the Media Landscape in Israel.....	19
The Analysis of Mainstream Media Actors.....	21
The Analysis of Alternative Media Actors.....	27
6. Conclusions	34
Abbreviations	37
Literature	38
Appendix I: List of Interviews	42
Appendix II: Leading Questions of the Interviews.....	43
Appendix III: List of Articles Used for the Media Analysis.....	44

1. Introduction

“All the news seems to repeat itself. The subtext is always about ensuring security even as insecurity spreads. Week after week, month after month [...] It’s cycle of violence time again. The images are as familiar as the words. Bearded Israeli men out searching for body parts in the streets and Israeli soldiers filling body bags in the ‘territories’. It is a familiar script of a predictable and depressing scenario that seems to escalate whenever peace threatens to break out, even on the smallest scale. The media focus on these incidents, on the bloodshed, just reinforces the sense of tragedy and futility of two peoples pictured only as hating each other. The cumulative impression: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is beyond redemption, beyond solution” (Schechter 2003).

Danny Schechter, a former ABC News and CNN producer, describes in a rather resigned tone the role of the media in the Middle East Conflict. His quotation points at the violence-centred way of reporting, and accuses the media of fuelling the conflict between Israel and Palestine instead of making an effort to contribute to peace.

It also shows, that the media have a great significance in the conflict-torn society of Israel. “The media have acquired power and status equal to politicians in the new media-centred politics. Now the media are full partners in policy making, and the logic of media drives the fusionist system” (Peri 2004: 297). As in most developed countries with a free economy, in Israel the media gained great power and at the same time have become subject to economical rules, trying to increase circulation; in dire times sometimes at the cost of professional standards of good journalism, e.g. by not verifying information on location, but quoting secondary sources.

In Israel, the citizens are always looking for news, consume mass media, especially news, more extensively than inhabitants of other Western nations (Peri 2004: 3). One reason might be that the media are just about the only source to get information from the “other” side, from the Palestinians living in the Gaza strip and the West Bank. Another motive for the great demand of news is fear. The concepts of fear and threat play a great role in the self-conception of the state of Israel, and are part of the national narrative. Some of its direct neighbour states still do not accept Israel’s right to exist. Israel had to fight more than half a dozen of wars in its sixty years of existence (Peri 2006: ix); and suicide bombings, especially during the second Intifada, have threatened the Israeli population strongly. So there are “real” reasons to be afraid of. But there are also powerful individuals, politicians, decision-makers, and media actors, who misuse the feelings of fear and exaggerate threats to pursue selfish aims, or to legitimate violations against international law and human rights.

Therefore, I would like to analyse the role of the Israeli media¹ in the Israel-Palestine conflict with a special focus on the question, to what extent the Israeli media have an escalating or a de-escalating impact on the conflict, or no influence at all. To examine this issue, I will exploit the theory of securitization, since the examination on what scale media support securitising moves, or not, or even counteracts such moves, can be an indicator for the media’s overall influence on the conflict’s (de)escalation.

1 Unfortunately, the design and structure of this paper do not allow to also look at the Palestinian media. The main reason for that is that the Palestinian media is structured completely different and has – since not rooted in an established state with democratic principles – a completely different position as does the media in Israel. Therefore most of the theoretical part does not match the Palestinian case and therefore, for analysing Palestine’s media landscape, a completely different approach would be necessary.

Research Question, Methodology and Structure of the Paper

This paper is based on the fieldtrip to Israel and the Occupied Territories in spring 2008 within the framework of the SHUR.

During the fieldtrip, I conducted qualitative interviews with persons who are working in the NGO and media field (see Appendix I: List of Interviews).² Thereof five interviewees are media actors and one is an expert organisation, called *Keshev-The Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel*, that systematically watches and analyses the six main sources of Israeli media.³ The other interview partners were active in NGOs that deal with the conflict as such, or with special conflict issues like the fence/wall⁴, or human rights.

The paper is composed of three main parts. In the first part I will locate the media in the concept of civil society in general and explain its role in the Israeli civil society specifically.

In the second part, which provides the theoretical framework for this paper, I will pick up the concept of securitization which is part of SHUR's theoretical concept and add a chapter about the role of the media in general and its special role in conflict environments. While introducing these theories, I will also apply them on the case of Israel.

In the empirical and third part of the paper, I will give a brief overview of the media landscape in Israel with a focus on those media sources that I will analyse. In a next step, I will look at five exemplary media actors in detail. I will take a look at two examples of mainstream media, precisely the two big newspapers *Haaretz* and *The Jerusalem Post* (JP). I selected these two newspapers because they represent two different stands. While *Haaretz* can be considered a liberal paper, *JP* is rather conservative. Furthermore, the choice is based on the mere practical reason that they are available in English language and have well-accessible online-archives. I interviewed one journalist of each of the two newspapers, namely Amira Hass for *Haaretz* and Etgar Lefkovits for *The Jerusalem Post*.

Since a newspaper cannot be judged by the view of one single journalist, I also conducted an exemplary media analysis of the two papers, examining their stand on the Israeli High Court of Justice's judgement and the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on the security fence/wall, both released in the summer of 2004.⁵

In addition to the two examples of mainstream media, I will analyse the work of three "alternative" media actors, i.e. actors who are not institutionalised to such a degree as big newspapers or main television channels, and who usually present a narrative different from the one highlighted in mass media. These "alternative" actors are *bitterlemons.org*, the *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* (PJI) and *The Alternative Information Center* (AIC). All three of them are working in bi-communal activities, where Israeli and Palestinian journalists or activists cooperate. In the first instance, I will rely on the interviews for the analysis but I will also evaluate exemplary publications of the respective organisations. I will look at the purpose and aim of the organisations' work, their political stand and their influence on society. On this basis I will

2 I stuck to leading questions in the interviews, but did not conduct them according to a strict questionnaire, since the interviewees were too different. So I posed rather open questions and adjusted the SHUR-questionnaire to each interview partner. The leading questions are attached in annex II.

3 *Keshev* analyses systematically the three newspapers *Maariv*, *Yediot Ahronot*, and *Haaretz*, and the three main television stations, *Channel 1*, *Channel 2* and *Channel 10*. For further information see: <http://www.keshev.org.il> (2 September 2008).

4 In Israel, the security barrier is officially called "security fence" or "anti-terrorism fence", implying that its purpose is to secure the Israeli population. "Security fence" is also the term, used by the Israeli High Court of Justice (HCJ). The Palestinians and other opponents of the fence, call the barrier "wall" or "apartheid wall", implicating that it prohibits the free movement of the Palestinians. Also the International Court of Justice (ICJ) chose the term "wall" for its Advisory Opinion in July 2004. Since the aim of my paper is not to judge on the purpose of the fence/wall, I will use both terms without supporting the one or the other narrative.

For further discussion on the use of different terms for the barrier, see Rogers/Ben-David 2008.

5 For more details on the media analysis, see Haß 2008.

answer my leading question, in how far they contribute to a securitization or de-securitization and therefore to an (de)escalation of the conflict with their efforts.

Throughout the paper the building of the security fence/wall will serve as an example for an extraordinary measure following a securitising move in the Israeli society. I will not go into detail on the whole process of the building of the security fence/wall, but rather use it as an illustration for the theory of securitization and how media treats security-relevant issues by placing my showcase media analysis around the discussion on the fence/wall.

2. The Media as an Actor of Civil Society

In order to anchor media in the concept of civil society, I am referring to the general definition of civil society as presented in SHUR Working Paper 03/07:

“Civil society is the space between state, the family and the market. At the same time it interacts with the state, both influencing the state and being influenced by the state. [...] In democracies civil society should act in surveillance and critique of the state within clear albeit unspelt ideological confines” (Marchetti/Tocci 2007: 5f.).

So media fits exactly into this definition. Media can be seen as the fourth power in a democracy. It should always influence the state/government by monitoring its policy. At the same time, media is influenced by the state, e.g. because it depends on the official information policy or because the media are entangled with the government. This is especially true in Israel, where media and politics are and always have been strongly intertwined. Within civil society, media can have a second role, by acting as transmitter and the organ of ideas and projects of civil society actors. “Media can be seen as an element of civil society or it can be viewed as an instrument of the institutions of civil society including NGOs” (Price 2004: 119).

In my analysis, I will take a look at both of these ways of influence, which actually cannot be clearly separated anyway. Besides analysing traditional mass media (only print media), I will take a look at the influence of “alternative actors”.

“Alternative media actors” should be seen as the counterpart of the so-called “power-penetrated public sphere” (*vermachtete Öffentlichkeit*), as defined by Jürgen Habermas:

„Due to the commercialisation and the compression, due to the increasing capital investment for an increasing level of organisation of the publishing institutions, the channels of communications were regulated to a greater extent. Therefore the access to public communication was increasingly limited to certain actors. Hence a new sphere of influence arose, namely a media power, which, if used in a manipulative way, dispossessed the publicity of its innocence. The public sphere, structured and controlled by mass media became a power-penetrated arena. In this arena various topics and contribution compete not only for influence, but also try to control latently the flow of communication” (Habermas 1990: 27f.; own translation).

So according to Habermas, “not power-penetrated sphere” (*nicht vermachtete Öffentlichkeit*) consists of institutions, which have to a certain extent impact on the public opinion, but are not part of the institutionalised channels of mass communication.

Habermas also underlines the difficult relationship between mass media and alternative actors, because alternative actors always have to fight for their space and their audience in the modern networks of communication. Thus it is uncertain,

“if and to what scale a public sphere, controlled by mass media, gives space to civil society actors so that they can concur promising with political and economic invaders and get a chance to change,

filter and refute values, topics and reasons in a critical and innovative way, that are channelled externally” (Habermas 1990: 47f.; own translation).

For the specific case of the media’s influence on conflict issues in the Middle East, alternative actors can also be characterized as done in the WP 03/07: “Alternative media groups encourage peace journalism programmes for local and international journalists in conflict countries, diffusing alternative information and rearticulating conflict narratives” (Marchetti/Tocci 2007: 16).

Furthermore, alternative media actors do not follow any economic purposes. All alternative media actors, that are subject of my analysis, are based on voluntary work or financed by donors, so that their reporting does not have to meet the interests of the market in order to finance itself.⁶

Though alternative media actors usually offer a rearticulated conflict narrative, it is important to keep in mind that this alternative narrative does not necessarily have to be right and just and can be biased and/or be means to an end.

The Civil Society in Israel

As well shown in SHUR Case Study Report 04/08, Israel’s society is state-oriented and demographically, politically and ideologically diverse. On a lot of central issues, the society is deeply divided. There are controversies between the religious and the secular Jews, between Arab Israelis and Jewish Israelis, between the *Aschkenasim* (Jews from Europe and North America), and the *Misrachim* (Jews with oriental origin), between the different positions regarding the peace process and a future solution to the conflict, to name only some of the poles of public opinion in the Israeli society. In addition, the large number of immigrants from all over the world, and especially from the former Soviet Union,⁷ reveal further cultural differences and mark a line between new immigrants and long-established communities (Yishai 2002: 217-225).

In 2005, there were 32,000 non-profit associations registered in Israel, e.g. for civil rights, nature conservation, sports activities, animal rights or anti-militarism (Eliezer 2005: 50). However, in all these NGO-activities

“local politics frequently assumes greater importance than national politics. At first this seems to be an extension of the democratic process. However, it might have a different meaning: an indication that many Israelis seem to have grown weary of the big questions, and the difficulties of finding solutions to them. They now prefer to lock themselves into narrow frameworks, communities and even sectors” (Eliezer 2005: 51).

Though there are a lot of activities in Israel’s civil society in various fields, the great part of them does not deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself, but with local problems. “A tendency towards an isolated, separated, apolitical, post-material perspective is a chronic difficulty for the embryonic Israeli civil society to serve as a harbinger for peace” (Eliezer 2005: 52). The impression is, that Israel’s society is weary of the conflict, that has gone on in different forms since the foundation of Israel 60 years ago.

To understand this societal mood at least rudimentary, I will point at some key issues and developments of the conflict, without going into detail.⁸

In the nucleus two peoples claim the right to live on the same territory. To justify their existence on this very territory, they both have their own narratives, both constitute the claim also on religious

6 All those dependent on donors have the pressure though to cover “sexy“ topics that are relevant for the particular donor, in order that sponsorship continues. This can also lead to adjusting statements and evaluations in a way that makes them fit into the donors policy and expectation.

7 Since 1989, over one million people from the former Soviet Union have settled in Israel. See: Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/People/SOCIETY-+Jewish+Society.htm> (5 August 2008).

8 For a precise conflict analysis see Case Study Report 04/08.

sites and century-old myths. While the date of the foundation of the Israeli state in 1948 is a national holiday, celebrating independence for the Israelis and also for many Jews around the world, the Palestinians refer to this date as *nakba*, the catastrophe. Each party tries to convince the international community and other nations to support their narrative. Both narratives have in common that each side perceives itself as a victim, and in the consequence all violent actions against the counterpart are justified as self-defence. While Palestine is first and foremost supported by all Arab nations, the USA and Europe are the most important allies of Israel.

Right now, the main conflict issues are centred on a final status, preferable a sovereign state for the Palestinians to end occupation.⁹ This should give the right of self-determination to the Palestinian people, and at the same time end violent Palestinian attacks against the Israeli population.

However, these considerations about a final status are entangled with further problems and questions, which are all well analysed in the SHUR case study report 04/08.

All those questions are discussed extremely emotionally and each side has a completely different perception of what should be the “right and just” solution. For example when talking about the wall/fence, even the positions within the Israeli society are extremely diverse. Ilan Tsion, chairman of the organisation *Fence for Life*, pleads for the construction of the fence as fast as possible and no matter at what costs:

“And you have to see another thing, there is another code word of the Palestinians here, the ‘right of return’. ‘Right of return’ is a code word for ‘we don’t want any peace with you, we want to demolish you’. Because if you bring 4 millions Palestinians back or I don’t know any number, this means that they are back to every place here. And by the way I am not saying that they are wrong from the way of looking at it. They feel this is their place, it is not a question of who is right. It is a question of survival. This is like the Indians come to America, they would be right, they were there before, yes, but still, if the Indians were 300 millions and wanted to come back to the USA, sorry, I cannot give you that. This is the background like we [Fence for life] see it” (Tsion 2008).

Here, Israel’s fear of loosing its Jewish identity is clearly seen. At the moment, 20% of the Israeli population in Israel proper is Arabic and the proportion will grow according to demographic predictions (Timm 2003: 287).

Whereas Michel Warschawski from the AIC sees the wall/fence as absolutely disproportional reaction to a kind of fear that is used to manipulate the Israeli society:

“Security is legitimate, but it cannot be the absolute, your personal security. If in Damascus there is one person who intends to put a bomb in Tel Aviv, I have no right for security to destroy Damascus, there is a principle of proportionality. There is no absolute security and there is no absolute right to protect your security.

Fear today is a main tool of our enemy, fear of the other, fear of Islam. It is not a concrete fear, it is the concept of threat. You don’t speak anymore about enemy. When you speak about enemy it is usually quite identifiable, this is an enemy, this state, this person, this government. When you speak about threat it is something indefinable and connected immediately to threat is a permanent global pre-emptive war. You have to try to stop the threat before, the whole concept of the permanent war, the war of terror globally and locally is built on an undefined threat. The concept of threat is the opposite to the concept of proportionality” (Warschawski 2008).

9 Most interviewees and the great part of the societies on both conflict sides are pleading for a two-state-solution at the moment, though this might also bring problems. Besides the almost irresolvable conflict aspects like the separation of Jerusalem and the return of the Palestinian refugees, many critics of a two-state-solution doubt that Palestine can ever gain economic independence. In Israel this solution is favoured now especially because it could guarantee the maintenance of a Jewish identity, whereas in a one-state-solution the Palestinians could gain the majority within some decades and threaten this very same identity (Timm 2003: 228ff.).

The discourse about the wall/fence is especially emotional, because it cannot be separated from the discourse about future borders, settlements, water resources and economic issues, nor from the series of suicide bombings that concussed the Israeli confidence in the counterpart strongly. Though the Israeli government stresses the non-permanent character of the fence and its mere security purpose over and over again, Palestinians are convinced that its real purpose is to mark a future border. This of course gives reason to objection due to the route of the wall/fence, which still – even after the adjustment by the High Court of Justice ruling in 2004 – is in many parts far east of the Green Line. Furthermore, the wall/fence cuts the human rights of many Palestinians drastically, for example by preventing them from going to their agricultural land or to the next hospital. Therefore, it caused a severe deterioration of the overall economical and social situation in the West Bank, which then again leads into a vicious circle of hopelessness and in a next step to radicalisation and extremism in the Palestinian society.

So today, the result of this circle of violence is obvious and has reached a point, where the resumption of peace talks seems almost impossible: hopelessness in both societies and a total lack of trust in the other side shape the civil mentality on both sides. Or as Yossi Alpher explains it:

“I believe the suicide bombings had a very profound influence on the Israeli psyche, of their image of Palestinians and this explains a lot: the fence, lack of faith in the other side. We because of the bombing, they because of our reactions to the bombings. The suicide aspect and celebrating this aspect is so against our psyche, the Jewish psyche if you like and it made people much more suspicious” (Alpher 2008).

So under these premises the renewed peace talks of Annapolis are only little promising. This is also the opinion of all civil society actors I talked to. No one expressed great expectations in the Annapolis peace talks, since the key issues are again not treated in this peace process and the gap between the two peoples has grown too deep for fruitful negotiations as Daniel Dor, member of *Keshev* and head of the Department for Communication at the University of Tel Aviv, puts it:

“During the first months of the Intifada, the Jewish public in Israel went through a radical transformation in its perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In social-psychological terms, this change can be characterized on the basis of the distinction between tractable and intractable conflicts” (Dor 2004: 155).

Due to the lack of hope for a fast solution¹⁰ of the conflict in an otherwise relatively calm period regarding suicide bombings, Israeli citizens try to avoid and forget about the ongoing conflict, wherever and whenever possible. Amos Harel, *Haaretz* military correspondent, describes how he experiences the situation:

“For the average Israeli, what’s going on in the West Bank could be happening on the other side of the moon. Soldiers, reservists, settlers and peace activists all together comprise less than 10 percent of the Israeli population. My father hasn’t been in the territories for 20 years; my wife for 10 or 15; my daughter, never. To them, it’s something that happens on TV” (Wilson 2003).

When talking to Israelis during my field trip, especially to young Israelis in Tel Aviv, this impression was more than affirmed. Most of them are not willing to talk about the conflict at all, though they are confronted with it daily, through the media or their obligatory time in the Israeli

10 According to the War and Peace Index, at the end of 2002 only 22.8% of Israelis believed in peace during the next few years; in 2000 before the outbreak of the second Intifada 39.5% had this hope. In April 2008 “some 75% of the Israeli Jewish public thinks that in the next five years Israel will find itself at war with one or more Arab states” (Yaar/Hermann 2000; 2002; 2008).

Defense Forces.¹¹ They try to focus on their private life, practicing for example an excessive free-time and travel culture. This attitude also results in a strategy of avoidance and exclusion of the “others”. According to a survey conducted in 2001, about 72% of Israeli society prefer living in a state without any Arabs who are seen as a threat, though one fifth of the population in Israel proper is Arabic (Yishai 2002: 226). Since the second Intifada, 49% of Israelis see the deepest divide in society between Arabs and Jews. Before 2000, 54% named the difference between secular and orthodox Jews as the most challenging gap in society (Timm 2003: 220). These figures also indicate that the Israeli society is full of fear, especially since the last wave of suicide bombings, when fear reached a new dimension and penetrates the whole Israeli society. As a consequence, all Arabs are perceived as a danger. One example for that is a discriminating procedure of “security checks” for Arab Israelis during job applications, presented by the trade union activist Jihad Akel:

“There are also companies who hardly employ any Arabs or they expose Arabs to severe security checks, so that they leave the company. For example an Arab woman applied to a quite simple job in the national electricity company. This company is actually known as a good working place, with high salary and well organised. But for ‘security reasons’ there are almost no Arab workers, though the government decided to open the company for Arab workers. This woman had to go through three committees who interviewed her, the last committee gave her a lot of forms to complete, about the whole family” (Akel 2008).

As a further consequence of fear, the political right wing gained power, leading for example to the election of Ariel Sharon in 2001, who has always stood for hardliner politics (Timm 2003: 221). The number of persons engaging in peace movements also decreased rapidly during the last years due to weariness and hopelessness as Michel Warschawski, who is himself an activist for decades, explains:

“[The] feeling of failure today is the present of the separation. Not just the physical separation, the politics in the last 10 years have succeeded to keep each one in its mentality, on its side of the wall. The Palestinians and their problems have been pushed behind the wall. We still have the nucleus of a few thousand activists in Israel who care and try to keep the connection, but what was called peace movement and used to go behind the boarder 15 years ago is not existing anymore. It can emerge again in two years” (2008).

And those civil society actors, aiming for contributing to a de-escalation of the conflict and a lasting peace, have difficulties being heard, because they do not possess the means and ways for reaching a big audience, nor the interest of the big masses in their activities. “Making a voice [of civil society] effective depends on having access to authoritative forums of decision making” (Yishai 2002: 219).

The Media in Israel’s Civil Society

Thus, under the above explained conditions, the role of the media in Israel’s civil society is very important and interesting. Especially mass media definitely have the access to forums of decision making. They could influence the government as well as society in a positive way. According to figures from 1998, the media have a great influence on the public attitude towards the peace process. 61% Israelis estimated that the media influenced it to a large or very large extent, and only 33% ascribed little influence to the media on this subject (Peri 2004: 305).

Especially when one bears in mind that Israelis have a special relationship to the media, the importance of the very same in the conflict becomes obvious. Israelis consume mass media extensively compared to other nations. In 2003 80% of all adults read regularly a daily newspaper,

11 Young Israeli men have to serve for three years, while women usually go to the army for two years. A refusal of service is especially for men almost impossible and socially disrespected.

60% watched the main television news every evening, compared to only about 40%, who did so in the United States (Peri 2004: 3). One reason for this widespread use of mass media is presumably the conflict environment in which Israeli society has lived since decades. “This boundless need for news is in part explained by the external reality in which Israelis live: almost one hundred years of prolonged conflict with their neighbors, and outbreaks of war occurring almost once a decade” (Peri 2004: 3). Looking at the quality of papers, one can assert that the most popular newspapers are the yellow press papers *Yediot Aharonot* and *Maariv*, both appear in a tabloid format with a high portion of coloured photographs and striking headlines. *Yediot Aharonot* reaches between 45% to 60% of the Israelis, *Maariv* 24% to 33%. Whereas *Haaretz*, considered as the most sophisticated paper in Israeli, reaches only about 10% of the population (Hasebrink/Schulz 2004: 905f.).

To examine, to what extent the media contributes to the conflict, whether in a de-escalating or an escalating way, the theory of securitization shall be introduced in the next chapter, for the theory indicates, how an object or a subject is socially constructed as a threat. As I will explain later, especially the media can contribute to the creation and spread of threats and fears. And whenever something is labelled a threat, thus *securitised*, it usually leads to an escalation of the conflict, because the issue is responded to by emergency means and an “agenda of panic politics” (Buzan/Wæver et.al. 1998: 34), e.g. a military strike against the securitised issue. Vice versa, by *de-securitising* an issue, a de-escalation can be effectuated, when something or somebody always seen as a threat is proved harmless.

3. The Copenhagen School’s Theory of Securitization

The theoretical framework of securitization entered the forum of international relations in the mid 1990ies. It was developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver in the context of European security dynamics (McDonald 2007: 2); this new approach resulted in the Copenhagen School, represented by Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan, and Jaap de Wilde.

The nucleus of their approach is that security is seen as a discursive construct. Through a mere *speech act*, a certain issue is presented as a threat and by designating an issue a threat, it is securitised. So Ole Wæver describes the concept of security and securitization as follows:

„Security is about survival. In security discourses, an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object. The designation of the threat as existential justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle it. The invocation of security has been the key to legitimising the use of force, and more generally opening the way for the state to mobilise or to take special power. [...] ‘Security’ is the result of a move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue as above normal politics. [...] The process of securitisation is a *speech act*. It is not interesting as a sign referring to something more real: it is the utterance itself that is the act” (Wæver 2003: 9f.).

Which objects, goods or values are in particular necessary for survival, is a matter of definition and depends on the ideals of the respective society. In democracies for example, a sovereign state and national identity are regarded as vital. Thus survival here does not just refer to the bare physical endurance, but as well to the maintenance of certain ideals and values (Wæver 2003: 15). Since identity is regarded as an essential component of one’s survival,¹² the concept of “we” and “them”

12 Though the Copenhagen School places importance on identity for their securitization concept, their understanding of identity, which is considered a static dimension, is often subject to critic. The critics argue, that identity concepts can also change over time and for example are influenced by the securitization process (Bürger/Stritzel 2005: 120f.).

plays a significant role in securitising processes, as stressed for example by Bürger and Stritzel, and a concept also highly important for the two counterparts in the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Furthermore the definition clearly shows that security is not a static value, but of discursive nature and matter of the point of view: „To register the act of something being securitised, the task is not to assess some objective threats that ‘really’ endanger some object, rather it is to understand the processes of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat” (Wæver 2003: 10).

Wæver and Buzan define securitization as a “successful speech act ‘through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat’” (Stritzel 2007: 358). Stritzel himself suggests a concept of (*threat*) *text* instead of a *speech act*. For him, *speech act* is an event whereas the term ‘*text*’ refers to a longer time period, consisting of more complex configurations which stem from various influences. With this embedding of the concept of securitization Stritzel wants to take for example proportions of power and socio-political aspects into account (Stritzel 2007: 374).¹³

McDonald claims though the focus is on *speech* here, “such an approach allows for the inclusion of written representations. It is language that positions particular actors or issues as existentially threatening to a particular political community, thus enabling securitization” (2007: 5). Therefore, written press releases or publications can also contribute to the securitization of a certain issue.

No matter whether one considers securitization a *speech act* or a *threat text*, as suggested by Stritzel, whether spoken or printed, an audience is needed, to make the securitising move successful. In democratic states, the audience is ideally ‘the population’ or citizenry, but can also vary. Generally speaking, the audience are those “who have to be convinced in order for the securitising move to be successful” (Wæver 2003: 11).

Since security is a public good, the state can oblige citizens to contribute to it, for example by paying taxes that are used for the defence budget or by general conscription (Doron 2008: 149). Therefore, the audience has to be convinced that certain security measures are necessary. Here, the media often functions as transmitter: “Security itself is often media-dependent because it is defined in part by the images its producers wish to arouse among adversaries” (Doron 2008: 151). Media can carry threat images and produce a feeling in society that some of its core values are threatened, and extraordinary measures are needed to defend them. If so, society is very likely to support these extraordinary measures, e.g. financially or also by accepting some disadvantages like restrictions to their freedom of speech or limited privacy.

Wæver introduces “facilitating conditions” that make some threats more likely to be accepted by the public than others. He names three main factors:

1. the speech act must follow the grammar of security and construct a plot with existential threat in order to be successful;
2. the more authority the securitising actor has, the more likely is a securitising move successful;
3. conditions historically associated with a threat, e.g. tanks or hostile sentiments (Wæver 2003: 14f).

He does not explain these factors, especially those conditions mentioned in the third point, in more detail; a lack that became also one of the strongest objects to criticism in the securitization theory. Possible facilitators could be geopolitical factors or certain historical events that relate to the respective threat. In the case of Israel, neighbour states who do not recognize Israel’s right to exist,

13 Further criticism is uttered in regard to the audience. Some critics question, how the speaker-audience model could be applied to non-democratic states and accuse the theory of being only applicable on Western democracies (Stritzel 2007: 363). Furthermore Stritzel points to some inconsistencies of the theory: “Less optimistically, however, theoretical contradictions, anomalies and inconsistent empirical applications of securitization cannot only be celebrated as ‘diversity’, but they also have clear disadvantages. Most importantly, they prohibit the improvement of existing concepts in the light of (comparative) empirical findings” (Stritzel 2007: 359).

pose a threat, or those Palestinians who cling to certain radical Islamic movements, who in the historical experience supported suicide bombings.

Furthermore, the more drastic a threat seems the more likely it is to be accepted as a “real threat”,¹⁴ which has to be met with extraordinary measures. It is sometimes very difficult to decide whether something is a real threat or just a challenge that can be met with ordinary measures. Recognizing a threat at the right time is always a tightrope walk. “Setting the trigger too low on the scale risks paranoia, waste of resources, aggressive policies and serious distortions of domestic political life. Setting it too high risks failure to prepare for major assaults until too late” (Buzan 1991: 115).

Generally speaking this is the usual classification of threats: “The most drastic threat is to the existence, and then comes the threat of self-determination, it follows the threat of being expelled, and the least drastic threat is to one’s values“ (Bonacker/Gromes 2007: 16).

Once a threat is designated as a security issue and accepted by the audience, extraordinary measures are usually taken in a second step. In a third step, the consequences of the extraordinary measures become obvious. If the speech act is not accepted and it is opposed by the audience for being exaggerated or illegitimate, this results in non-securitization and the issue is responded to with normal policy as it was before (Bonacker/Gromes 2007: 18f).

From that moment, when an issue has been successfully securitised, it immediately has priority in all political decisions and the real relevance of the threat or the efficiency of the extraordinary measures is not traceable for the citizens. Very often a securitization also has negative consequences for parts of the population or – in a conflict environment – for the other conflict party and thus leads to an escalation of the conflict (Bonacker/Gromes 2007: 12). For example, while spending more money for the defence budget, social benefits are cut, or in a conflict zone like in Israel, a plus in security for the Israeli population is very likely to be connected with restrictions for the Palestinian population.

Here is an example: During the Second Intifada the government claimed that all the suicide bombers invaded the Israeli territory from the West Bank. Through this speech act, the Palestinians, living on the West Bank, were regarded as a vital threat to the Israeli population without distinguishing between suicide bombers and non-violent Palestinians and thus securitised collectively. In a next step, the government supported by parts of civil society (represented e.g. by *Fence for Life*) planned a fence/wall as an extraordinary measure, that separated the West Bank from Israel. It started building the fence/wall in 2002. In 2004 78% of the Israeli population supported or strongly supported the construction of the fence according to the Peace Index (Yaar/Hermann 2004), though this means also very high costs, namely over one million US-dollar per kilometre, mainly paid for by taxes.

By May 2008, 409 out of 720 kilometres were already built¹⁵ and it is obvious that the fence/wall involved severe restrictions for the Palestinian population, cutting till today some of their most important human rights, like the freedom of movement, but at the same time, the number of suicide bombings in Israel proper decreased.

Here, one has to think about the proportionality of the extraordinary measures. The Israeli government claims: “The right of Palestinians to freedom of movement cannot take precedence over the right of Israelis to live. Saving lives must always come first!”¹⁶ Here the government uses a classification of rights to justify the own extraordinary measures and emphasises the threat to life continuously in its argumentation. And the Israeli public supports this view widely, because as already mentioned above, the Israeli society is penetrated by fear. Therefore, “the general public is

14 Here a further criticism can be mentioned: the Copenhagen School ignores fully all objective threats, for example an ongoing armed conflict or an obvious hazard like a hurricane (Bonacker/Gromes 2007: 5f.).

15 See: B’Tselem: http://www.btselem.org/english/Separation_Barrier/Statistics.asp (4 August 2008).

16 Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: PowerPoint Presentation “Why does Israel need a security fence?” http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2003/11/Saving+Lives+-+Israel-s+anti-terrorist+fence+-+Answ.htm (8 January 2008).

willing to sacrifice most or all of the human rights of Palestinians in exchange for some vain promises of security” Dan Yakir, legal adviser to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, claims in a roundtable in Jerusalem in 2003 (quoted after Pogrund 2003: 71).

The problem is that the impact of the fence/wall on the actual threat, the suicide bombers, cannot be measured. Though the number of bombings decreased,¹⁷ the reason may not necessarily be the fence/wall. Military actions and the overall political climate could have contributed to the decrease as well. That is exactly the problem of security, threat and extraordinary measures: a threat is always projected in a future happening. If the designated threat does not become real, it is impossible to judge retrospectively whether the taken extraordinary measures helped and were worth their negative “side-effects” or whether they were totally needless or exaggerated (Wæver 2003: 20).

Another danger of securitization is its misuse. Not seldom do politicians claim for security reasons in order to enforce extraordinary measures, with which they actually pursue personal goals. This is also true for Israel: “It has often been publicly noted that in order to advance party interests and personal goals, Israeli politicians had readily taken advantage of the (security) ‘situation’ (as it is popularly called) and released classified information” (Doron 2008: 159).

In Israel for example, the fence/wall was not built on the Green Line but in many areas east of it, reaching into Palestinian territory. International experts but also Israelis question the need for exactly this route of the fence, which did not seem to be chosen by security means only but to annex Palestinian territory and to legitimise settlements that were built on Palestinian territory, and belong to the “Israeli side” of the fence/wall now. Even though the Israeli High Court of Justice forced the government to change the route of the fence/wall closer to the Green Line, it still confiscates about 8% of the West Bank.

When not fulfilled with caution, extraordinary measures can even be counterproductive, as explains Yossi Alpher in reference to the fence in its present form, since it could support a move towards radicalism in the Palestinian society: “You are not making them [the Palestinians] hate Hamas and love you, but vice versa. Not only does it deny them basic rights, but it does not work for your own people” (Alpher 2008).

Especially in those cases of misuse, the media should function as fourth power in a democracy, watch the securitising moves carefully and analyse the advantages and disadvantages of extraordinary measures for all parties involved. The media should always follow this task and regard itself as a “watchdog”. This, however, becomes especially important in times of conflicts, as the next chapter will explain.

4. The Role of Media in Conflict Environments

Media are the organ for political processes. They are the transmitter between politics and citizens; they make political decisions and events public, which otherwise the citizens could not recognize: “Free and independent news media are a key element in democracies, where they play a vital political role in keeping governments and citizens aware of, and in contact with, one another” (Caparini 2004: 17). Media can be regarded as fourth power in democracies:

“The media performs that role by monitoring power, by giving voice to a diversity of views and opinions, by providing information to the public to enable it to understand and critically assess state action, including through the presentation of alternative viewpoints and policy options, and by fostering public debate on issues of public concern” (Caparini 2004: 16).

17 Compared to 2002 the number of suicide bombings decreased by 30% in 2003, the number of casualties decreased by 50%. See: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2003/11/Saving+Lives-+Israel-s+anti-terrorist+fence-+Answ.htm#9 (8 January 2008).

Here, Caparini describes the ideal role of media. But in their reports, journalists usually filter the available information and present issues from a certain point of view. Therefore, the media can also manipulate or focus on a specific discourse. By stressing their own convictions, rendering only part of the facts, or even publishing wrong facts, the journalist could deliberately produce a one-sided perception by the public. In democracies this is not a daily occurrence, since the media usually adhere to professional and ethical standards that forbid e.g. the spread of false information on purpose. For example, in Israel the Press Council was founded in 1963 in the style of the British Press Complaints Commission. On a voluntary basis the Press Council protects the freedom of the press in Israel, maintains professional ethics, and ensures free access to information. It also enacted a code of ethics in order to provide guidelines for the press.¹⁸

In Israel, the media and politics are and always have been strongly intertwined. For example, a lot of politicians also work(ed) as editors. For example Zalman Shazar, former third President of Israel, was editor of the newspaper *Davar*, which was published until 1996 (Peri 2004: 1f.). Of course there were also exceptions, e.g. Gershon Schocken, editor of *Haaretz*. He followed the rule whereby an editor should not develop friendship with politicians about which his paper writes (Peri 2004: 299). Though the new generation of Israeli editors and journalists turns more and more away from “party-journalism”, they are not independent either. There is a new challenge, since they now have to subordinate to economic demands of a free market:

“The reaction against the old model was so strong that the supporters of the new model ignored the fact that in the market model journalists’ behavior is dictated by the profit motives of news organizations. Journalists lose their autonomy no less than in the old model, but now they become enslaved to the wishes of the public, which is now beholden to commercial and consumer logic, in contradiction to the ideals of democracy (Peri 2004: 314).

Also here, there are always exceptions, and some journalists stick fully to their ethical and moral standards of independent reporting.

“Only a few of them know that there also exists a third model of journalism, which offers them a much higher degree of autonomy, and which in the end will enable them to better serve the public interest. This is the trustee model, based on the principle that journalists provide the news that they believe citizens should receive in order to be informed participants in a democracy. In this trustee model, journalists should provide news according to what they as a professional group believe citizens should know” (Peri 2004: 314).

As we see, there are different types of journalists. In most plural societies where the right to freedom of speech is seen as an important value, the media landscape is manifold. So it is in Israel, where you find certain media that can be regarded as “watchdog media”, meaning that they act as controlling organ for politics, as well as media that report always in favour of the government or even try to polarize the society by fuelling conflicts (Müller 2002: 2f.). However, the more important security issues are involved, the more the Israeli media adjust to the official government language. But at the same time the media are especially important when it comes to foreign policy and security policy. Regarding those topics the public does not have an alternative to the reporting of the media since the issues of foreign and security policy are very complex, sometimes subject to secrecy and for the single citizens not possible to achieve if not through any medium (Müller 2002: 2). Hence especially here, the media have, in all their variety, a monopoly and influence the public discourse strongly.

18 See: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts About Israel/Culture/The Printed Media-Israel-s Newspapers](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts%20About%20Israel/Culture/The%20Printed%20Media-Israel-s%20Newspapers) (2 September 2008).

When it comes to a conflict, maybe even an armed conflict, the importance of the media increases again. Whenever the military is involved, the media mostly depend on the information of the armed forces, since the army is a closed institution. Therefore, journalists must work together with the military, because only through cooperation it is possible to gain information (Limor/Nossek 2008: 125).

Furthermore, journalists are not indifferent to the well-being of their own country which especially at war times might be at risk.

“Journalists are not indifferent to acts of terrorism or to the fate of their country. However, knowing that they, like all people, have such feelings is all the more reason to be vigilant so that no one manipulates these honest emotions. In the fog of war, truth is the first casualty” (Ward 2004: 141).

So, during conflicts, media might try to support their own troops, e.g. by convincing the international community with their narrative and gaining legitimacy with the story for their (military) actions (Goodman/Cummings 2003: 11). At the same time, the media are often the only source for what is happening in the society of the counterpart, what the “others” think and how they perceive the conflict. In their own coverage, the portrayal of the “others” is mostly rather negative in times of conflicts, since the other side is regarded as hostile.

“The description, coverage, and portrayal of the ‘other’ in the media, whether based upon religious, national, ethnic or other differences, is accompanied in many other countries by the widespread use of generalizations, stereotypes, and prejudices, and ignores the background, causes, and political-social context that has given rise to difficulties and crises involving minorities in many areas” (First/Avraham 2003: 2).

Keshev comes to a very similar result, when looking at the Israeli media in conflict:

“Moreover, studies show that in a violent ethnic conflict, news serves as an important forum for expression of public hatred towards the enemy, and for reflecting and strengthening stereotypes. The Israeli media treats the Palestinians as enemies, first and foremost. The primary emphases of coverage of the Palestinian side are the threat they pose and the actions taken by the state to curtail this threat. Other topics regarding the ‘enemy’, such as Palestinian daily life, Palestinian suffering and casualties, have almost no place in the usual media coverage”¹⁹

On what scale the “others” are degraded depends on various factors according to Wolfsted. For example “leaders employ a less extremist form of rhetoric when they find themselves talking to multiple audiences” (Wolfsted 2001: 14). Furthermore, it depends on the scale of violence in the conflict. The more violent the environment is, the more likely it is that the media focus on the reporting about the own victims and therefore automatically blame the “others” for the harm to the own people. In addition there is the economic component of reporting about conflicts. “The terrorist image is more newsworthy” (Wolfsted 2001: 25), thus reports about victims and violence are usually a guarantor for a high circulation, since sensationalism sales. Coverage of bad news is also easier, cheaper and more attractive. Recently, media in Western societies also started mixing news and entertainment (Bertrand 2004: 82). One can report in a striking way, without doing much background research, leaving the frame of the whole story out. This makes it much faster and cheaper at the same time, two characteristics today’s global media and entertainment business needs to live up to. At the same time, due to saving measures, reporters do not necessarily visit the spot of incident but rely on the information of news agencies. Besides possibly wrong information, this also leads to identical news in different media organs, so that the audience gets the impression, this certain news item is very important and definitely correct, though there might be other –even more

19 *Keshev*: <http://www.keshev.org.il/siteEn/FullNews.asp?NewsID=74&CategoryID=3>
(6 September 2008).

– important news that just are not covered by any agency and therefore not reported anywhere (Peri 2004: 304). This rather superficial way of reporting suggest to the reader/viewer that he/she is informed and knows something about the “others”, though he/she only gets striking stereotypes that are not embedded in the mostly more complex context of the conflict reality (Bilke 2002: 56-59).

“When media provide news, they practice ‘iceberg journalism’. Covering the small, visible part of reality and ignoring the huge part of it under the surface. This is how it has always been done, it is less difficult, less dangerous, and mainly, less expensive. What is dramatic about such coverage is that when problems affecting security and security forces come to the surface, it is often too late” (Bertrand 2004: 82).

Therefore, quality media, which mass media often is not due to lack of time and money, should fulfil five basic functions according to Bertrand (2004: 81):

- report fully on the political and social environment;
- provide an accurate image of the world;
- serve as a forum for consensus-making;
- transmit culture;
- and entertain.

It is also important for a high-quality medium that wants to hold the position of a “watchdog” to have distance from the state and the ruling government; furthermore, journalists also need measures of protection, so that they cannot be easily sued or accused and therefore can report freely without fearing any personal consequences; in addition, qualitative media should enjoy economic independence (Caparini 2004: 43).

In the Middle East conflict, the mass media of Israel and the Occupied Territories are completely separated.²⁰ Only some alternative actors, like *bitterlemons.org* or the *Palestine-Israel Journal* publish for and from both conflict sides.

So this separated media landscape is already a prerequisite for a rather biased reporting. At the same time, the two societies, the Israeli and the Palestinian one, live almost completely detached. Even in times of low tensions, Israelis are officially not allowed to enter the territories under Palestinian control.²¹ Vice versa, since the construction of the separation fence/wall, Palestinians from the West Bank are only allowed to enter the Israeli territory with special permissions, e.g. for work. About 250,000 Palestinians live permanently on the Israeli side of the fence/wall, most of them in East Jerusalem. But almost no Jewish Israeli goes to the eastern part of Jerusalem, out of fear and prejudices. Ziad Abu-Zayyad, Palestinian editor of the *PIJ* said in an interview: “Jerusalem is divided, Israelis don’t feel secure here, there are two different sides, only on the official level Jerusalem is unified. You don’t see many Israelis around” (2008). His Israeli colleague Hillel Schenker, who, as an exception, comes from Tel Aviv to their shared office in East Jerusalem daily, added: “If I come from Tel Aviv, reach West Jerusalem and want to take a taxi, there are a lot of Jewish taxi drivers who would say, ‘I don’t go there. I am afraid.’ They don’t come, because they have this image that it might be dangerous” (2008).

So the two societies know each other first and foremost from media reports. The consequence is a rather one-sided and biased picture full of stereotypes that each conflict party has of the other side. “The stereotypes are on both sides, the Israeli stereotypes are that Palestinians are either terrorists or

20 The Palestinian media translates quite a lot of articles from the Israeli press and reprints them in the Arabic dailies. Vice versa this happens almost never (Warschawski 2008).

21 Due to security reasons Israeli citizens are always prohibited by the IDF to enter area A, which includes the biggest Palestinian towns in the West Bank and the whole Gaza strip. In times of high tensions, Israelis might also be restrained from entering area B, which consists of 68% of the Palestinian territories (Johannsen 2006: 46). There are exceptions though, e.g. journalists can enter all areas. Israelis only pass parts of the Occupied Territories, when they go to settlements.

moving towards fundamentalism, and on the Palestinian side they see Israelis as settlers or soldiers” (Schenker 2008).

In times of war the retention of information is common, even in well-established democracies, where the right of freedom of expression is actually anchored in the constitution and generally respected. The latest example in the Israel-Palestine conflict of limited press freedom occurred during the Israeli attacks on Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009. During this period no foreign journalist was allowed to enter the Gaza. The government often justifies censorship with the claim of security reasons. Even according to the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), article 19, paragraph 3, it is allowed to cut down the freedom of expression if certain criteria are met:

“1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

- (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;
- (b) For the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals.“

So for the “protection of national security” the freedom of expression can be limited. This can endanger the media itself and they can become a victim of a securitising move. On the other hand, media can force and disperse a securitising move and therefore contribute to an escalation of the conflict or vice versa account for a non-escalation by opposing a securitising move and the extraordinary measures involved or even contribute to a de-escalation by reversing security measures back to “normal policy”.

In my analysis, I will focus on the influence of media on (de)securitization and will not look at the media as victims themselves.

The Media’s Role in Securitization Processes

As explained above, according to the definition by the Copenhagen School, security is a *speech act*. „Security is a self-referential practice. It is by labelling something a security issue that it becomes one – not that issues are security issues in themselves and then afterwards possibly talked about in terms of security“ (Wæver 2003: 11).

An object is, moreover, regarded as a threat to *national* security, when certain values and ideals of a nation are threatened, or the physical survival of the nation itself. The more drastic the threat, the more likely it is that the audience tolerates extraordinary measures that contradict international or democratic rules. In Israel, the society is generally willing to sacrifice rights. Due to the Jewish and Israeli history, fear is so internalised that the Israeli public is keen on every bit of safety it can get, no matter at what price, as claimed by Dan Yakir, legal adviser to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel:

“Because of the Israeli psyche, maybe because of the Holocaust, for many Israelis, survival is above everything and justifies everything. [...] Because of the Holocaust on the one hand and suicide bombers on the other, most Israelis are willing to sacrifice basic human rights and to cross every red line in order to achieve security and survival” (quoted after Pogrund 2003:75).

So in Israel, the audience is willing to sacrifice the human rights of the Palestinians in order to gain a more secure feeling, but they are also willing to give up some of their own civilian rights for security reasons and accept for example a restriction to the freedom of speech.

“In general, public attitudes regarding the media in times of national emergency show overwhelming support for subordinating the principles of free expression to the needs of censorship and considerations of national interest. [...] A large majority of respondents (74 percent) felt that the Israeli media should express greater empathy towards Israel during the period of violent confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians. At the same time, about half of the respondents agreed that the Israeli media must present a balanced and objective account of the conflict” (Sherman/Shavit 2008: 192).

These are results from a survey, conducted in November 2001. The survey also reveals that the media in general is perceived as too critical towards the Israeli state and its armed forces (Sherman/Shavit 2008: 194). It seems that great parts of Israeli society long for a “rally around the flag”-mentality, in which the national policy is supported unquestioned.

No doubt, the security sector and the media are dependent on one another. Not only does the media rely on information, which can only be attained directly from the army of other high ranking national security institutions, but also does the government depend on the public support of their policy. Since the media is just about the only transmitter in these complex policy processes, the cooperation between the two spheres is essential.

But the media must take care of not limiting itself to be a mere transmitter of facts and statements, presented by the government. More importantly, the media has also the obligation to watch the decision- and policy-makers carefully and intervene in case of misuse of extraordinary measures and pretended security instruments in order to prevent unnecessary escalation.

“The idea that special times call for special measures is fraught with danger. The primary ethical duty of journalism, even in times of crisis, is not patriotism of blind allegiance, or even a journalism of muted, careful criticism. The primary duty of journalists is not to the state, but to the public. This public duty calls for hard-edged news, investigations, analysis and multiple perspectives on the most important issues” (Ward 2004: 140).

To sum up, the media can have three different roles in the process of securitization.

First, they can serve as an organ for the speech act, so that an audience can be convinced of the necessity of extraordinary measures to meet a threat. Only if the audience supports the speech act, it will be successful. The success or failure of the speech act, therefore, depends partly on the way of reporting, whether the media support a securitising move or not.

Secondly, a medium can also start such a speech act and make a securitising move, thus becoming the securitising actor itself. As Wæver suggests, in his facilitating conditions, the more authority or credibility a medium has, the more likely it is to become a successful securitising actor. A medium could also introduce a speech act of de-securitization, suggesting that someone/something treated as a threat, does actually not constitute a danger and should rather be met with ordinary means.

The third task, the media should – but often does not – fulfil, is their function as a “watch dog” when a securitization has already taken place. It is the media’s responsibility to analyse carefully the aftermaths of extraordinary measures and to keep decision-makers from misusing security claims for personal goals.

5. The Analysis of Five Media Actors

Overview of the Media Landscape in Israel

Since Israel is a well-established democracy, its media landscape is manifold and the right to press freedom can be taken for granted.²² The most important newspapers published in Hebrew today are *Ma'ariv*, *Yediot Aharonot*, *Haaretz* and *Globes*. While *Yediot* and *Ma'ariv* are tabloid newspapers, *Globes* is a financial daily. *Yediot Aharonot* has the highest circulation, some two-thirds of all Hebrew newspaper readers consult this paper (Hasebrink/Schulz 2004: 905).

Haaretz, one of my main sources for the following analysis, always was and still is regarded the most liberal and most sophisticated paper in Israel. Founded in 1919 by Russian immigrants, its audience consists mainly of a well-educated public and elites (First/Avraham 2003: 5). During the week it has a circulation of 75,000 copies, on weekends of 95,000. Since 1935, the paper is owned by the Schocken family. It is also translated into English.

Besides these big papers, there are many local newspapers, some of them in the various languages of the Israeli immigrants, such as Russian and English. The most important English publication, which will be the second source for my media analysis, is the daily *The Jerusalem Post*. It was founded in 1932 by an American citizen. The paper is read mainly by immigrants who do not speak Hebrew and also by diplomats and foreign journalists living in Israel. It is also an important source for people all over the world who are connected to Israel in some way. Thus the newspaper has a huge impact, even if its circulation is rather small. About 15,000 copies are printed during the week and 40,000 on weekends, plus at least one million online users from all over the world consult the paper each month.²³ In the first decades of its existence the *JP* was regarded as a leftist and liberal paper. Since the Canadian Hollinger Group bought it in 1989,²⁴ its orientation changed. Now the *JP* is considered rather as the organ for a right-wing and conservative position and can thus be regarded as the conservative antagonist of *Haaretz*.

Furthermore, one Arabic daily, *Al-Ittihad*, is published in Israel. The papers edited by political parties, very common in the first decades of Israel's existence, are now disappearing. Only some such newspapers remained and are intended especially for religious readers. And a new, rather alarming phenomenon is entering the Israeli media landscape: freely distributed newspapers, often of low quality, owned by rich persons who want to spread a personal conviction. These papers have a very high circulation, but since they are distributed freely, it is hard to measure who really reads them and in which households the papers go directly to the garbage. Hillel Schenker describes one of those papers:

“Now there are even worse elements entering, there is something called *Israel HaYom*, a free newspaper that is being given out. It is financed by Sheldon Adelson, he is possibly the richest Jew in the world. He is an American who got his money from casinos and other shady businesses. He is supporter of the right, now he puts out a daily newspaper, which is clearly against the peace process, in favour of Netanjahu. It is distributed all over the country, it is in my mailbox every morning” (Schenker 2008).

22 Israel has like Canada or New Zealand no written constitution, but already in its Declaration of Independence from 1948 Israel declared: “Citizens are guaranteed full democratic and human rights, ranging from freedom of speech, religion, universal suffrage and equality before the law. Freedom of the press, of political affiliation, of occupation and of strike and demonstration are embodied in Israel's laws and traditions.” See: Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/Looking+at+Israel/Looking+at+Israel+-+The+State.htm> (2 September 2008).

23 See Rami Tal: The Israeli Press. Jewish Virtual Library: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/press.html (18 February 2008).

24 Since 2004 the paper is owned by the Mirkay Tikshoret Group Ltd and the Canwest Global Communications Group. The new sale of the paper has not changed its conservative and rather right-wing reporting.

Next to printed media, radio and television have gained great influence since the 1970s.²⁵ Especially the hourly news on the radio are very important for the Israelis. *Kol Israel* (Voice of Israel) offers radio programmes in 17 languages with various contents, ranging from news to entertainment. In addition, two stations of the IDF broadcast around the clock, featuring news and music as well as programmes of special interest to soldiers.

Israeli television offers two state-run channels and since 1993 also private channels, which expanded tremendously during the last years, ranging from sports over shopping channels to a children's channel (Hasebrink/Schulz 2004: 907).

Regarding the development in the Israeli media landscape, with a focus on printed media, one can assert that financial considerations determine the spheres and scope of coverage for many media channels increasingly (Limor/Nossek 2008: 134). Exemplary of this development is the fact that Russian immigrants were denied a translation by *Haaretz*.²⁶ In addition, the press tends to a more sensational way of reporting, including more pictures and less information:

“A systematic examination of the printed press over the years reveals a steady decline in space allotted to text and an increase in the relative share of headlines and photographs. The same is true for electronic media.[...] The result is that readers, viewers and listeners receive less information than they did previously” (Limor/Nossek 2008: 135f.).

Though Israel also experiences this global decline in quality journalism, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs states proudly “relative to its size, Israel is the world's largest source of news. In no other country are events reported so copiously and in such detail to television viewers and radio listeners, by one of the largest contingents of foreign journalists anywhere in the world.”²⁷

But the mass of news does not say anything about the quality, it just shows that national and international actors are following events in this region closely. About the quality, one can have a look at the world-wide press freedom index of the organisation *Reporters without Borders* from 2007. Here, Israel ranked on 44 out of 169 evaluated nations, behind Germany (20), but ahead of the United States (48).²⁸ This figure hints at the fact, that the press freedom, though of course in its basic principles existing, has limitations. These limitations are mostly justified by security reasons. As stated by the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs “Israel's commitment to freedom of the press applies to all communications media, with only security matters subject to military censorship.”²⁹ This quotation reveals, that the interest of a free press and security regards of the government might clash constantly. In 1989 the Israeli High Court of Justice established a "committee of three", composed of a member of the public who serves as the chairman, a representative of the army and a representative of the press. A medium can appeal to the committee, whenever an item is censored. The decisions of the committee are binding, and over the years it has in many cases overruled the decision of the censor. All in all, “the Israeli media reports mainly about what is happening in Israel. Its news sources are also limited: the reporters are Israelis, mostly Jews, and their sources for coverage of the conflict are almost exclusively members of the political and military leadership in

25 Though not relevant for the analysis in this paper, the most important radio and television channels are mentioned here, to give a more complete picture of the Israeli media landscape, without going into detail on the radio and television sphere.

26 Russian immigrants who longed for a high-quality paper recently asked *Haaretz* to translate parts of its daily edition. They were rejected due to financial shortage (Schenker 2008).

27 Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfaarchive/1990_1999/1998/7/the_israeli_press (29 August 2008).

28 See: Reporters without borders: http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=24027 (29 August 2008).

29 See: Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/Culture/CULTURE-+Media.htm> (29 August 2008).

Israel. Thus a closed circle of interpretation is created: Israelis talking to Israelis about Palestinians.”³⁰

Another remarkable point is, that in the Israeli press, editors have much more influence than for example in Germany.³¹ With their position they strongly shape the newspaper, since they usually produce all the headlines – sometimes even before they have seen the corresponding article – and decide on what page which article is printed (Dor 2004: 159ff.). So their job is completely different from that of a journalist. The work of an editor can change a text – by creating a certain context – dramatically:

“Let us think of editors and reporters as producing two very different types of text, performing, in other words, two very different types of speech acts. Reporters produce a certain type of text *for their editors*, that is, an accumulation of pieces of information gathered from the field and accepted from sources. Editors receive this text as input, and produce a very different type of text – one which addresses the *readers*” (Dor 2005: 11).

But the danger that arises here, is that an editor is mostly in the office, away from the arena, but at the end, he/she judges and classifies reality, though not having experienced it on his/her own.

“What matters to me is the fact that, whereas editors [...] only have access to *descriptions of reality*, reporters have some access to reality itself, in the sense that, if they do their work correctly, they experience things on the ground. As different reporters experience different aspects of the way things are, their reports do *not* accumulate into a coherent, clear-cut description. It is exactly because of this, because the different reports tell different stories, that we can think of all of them *together* as a first-approximation to reality, and it is because of this that the comparison with the editorial text – which is coherent and clear-cut – is so important” (Dor 2005: 12).

With these circumstances and developments of the media landscape in mind, the next chapters will look at concrete examples, beginning with the samples from the printed mainstream media and continuing with three alternative actors.

The Analysis of Mainstream Media Actors

As can be derived from the previous chapter, a newspaper cannot be judged by a single journalist. Especially since the work of editors is so important, one also has to look at the final product. So I will – next to the interviews with the journalists – rely on a media analysis, which I conducted for an unpublished paper.³² The analysis looks at the reactions to two judgments on the security fence/wall in the newspapers *Haaretz* (English version) and *The Jerusalem Post*. I analysed all relevant articles between 1st and 15th of July 2004.³³ Within this period, on the 9th of July 2004, the Advisory Opinion (AO) of the International Court of Justice was released, claiming that the “wall” is breaking international law:

“In sum, the Court [...] is not convinced that the specific course Israel has chosen for the Wall was necessary to attain its security objectives. [...] The construction of such a wall accordingly

30 *Keshev*: <http://www.keshev.org.il/siteEn/FullNews.asp?NewsID=74&CategoryID=3> (6 September 2008).

31 For example in the offices of the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, the editor of each department has the final say where to place an article and which headline is taken. However, the decision is usually accompanied by a discussion, where every journalist can contribute his/her opinion. In addition, headlines are never created before the appropriate article is written.

32 Due to the limited scale of this paper, the media analysis did not include an evaluation of where and how the articles were placed. This was not possible, since the articles in the archive are without pictures and the *Haaretz* archive does not even reveal the page on which the article was originally printed. Since *Keshev* looks in its full account analyses at exactly these issues, their results are used for examining how newspapers frame certain information.

33 By choosing this period I could capture the reaction to each judgment during the week after its release.

constitutes breaches by Israel of various of its obligations under the applicable international humanitarian law and human rights instruments” (ICJ 2004: 15).

Some days before, on 30th of June 2004, the Israeli High Court of Justice released a seminal judgment, in which it obliged the Israeli government to change the route of the fence in order to stick to the principle of proportionality and obtain the guidelines of the Geneva Convention, because “only a Separation Fence built on a base of law will grant security to the state and its citizens” (HCJ 2004: 33). At the same time the judgment accepts the barrier as a legitimate security measure that does not necessarily have to be built on the Green Line if security considerations suggest another route:

“We approve the construction of the obstacle for the prevention of terror activities. [...] It is the security perspective – and not the political one – which must examine a route based on its security merits alone, without regard for the location of the Green Line.” (HCJ 2004: 7-12).

All in all, I analysed 29 articles from *Haaretz* and 27 articles plus 25 letters to the editor from the *JP*³⁴ (Haß 2008). The list of articles, used in the analysis can be found in Appendix III.

The Jerusalem Post

The result of my media analysis makes it quite obvious that the *JP* perceives the ICJ-judgment as negative and unfair. This happens in a rather striking way, always with the tone of defence in the line of argumentation. Positions from politics and society are quoted selectively. Especially American politicians, who support Israel, come to speech in the *JP*. The fence – this term is used throughout all articles – equals a life-saver. For example Radler writes in an article on 11th of July 2004: “There is no way the fence is going to come down nor should it. Anyone who cares about saving human life would not let the fence come down” (Radler: US fight for fence). The editorial from the following day asks “Does Europe place a higher value on Palestinian property than on Jewish lives?” (Editorial: Europe and the Fence, 12 July 2004), after some European politicians have publicly appreciated the ICJ’s judgment .

Also the reactions to the HCJ are affected by intractability and outrage. Goell writes in an article, „these efforts have cost the lives of close to 1,000 Israelis over these four years. Shouldn’t this fact place Palestinian interests somewhat lower on the court’s [HCJ] balancing scale?” (Goell: Pardon the inconvenience, 5 July 2004). This reaction shows, that Goell supports a collective suffering of all Palestinians and regards it as appropriate. Furthermore, the Palestinians, almost exclusively seen as homogenous, are blamed for their own fate:

“And now, thanks to the latest Palestinian miscalculation, the fence is establishing a new boarder, in which a future Palestine will lose at least 10% of the West Bank, including east Jerusalem – all territories it could have possessed had the Palestinian leadership negotiated in good faith. [...] Where is the debate about whether four years of suicide bombings were a wise response to the Israeli offer of Palestinian statehood – let alone a debate about the moral and spiritual consequences of turning Palestinian Islam into a satanic cult?” (Halevi: The pattern of Palestinian rejectionism, 9 July 2004)

Next to its exculpatory tone, this article also contains false information, by stating the fence would establish a future border; its non-political and temporary character which is always stressed by the government and the HCJ, is suppressed.

Until the appearance of the AO of the ICJ, the judgment by the HCJ which pleads only for a *change in the route* not the destruction of the fence, is reviewed negatively, accusing the HCJ of judging military affairs of which the judges lack the necessary expert knowledge. Only after the ICJ

34 My research resulted in more than 40 articles per newspaper, but some did not fit into my categories, e.g. because they dealt with the fence/wall but not with the judgments.

released its AO, the judgment of the HCJ gains positive connotations. Because after the 9th of July, the HCJ judgment is only quoted in one key issue, the legitimacy of the fence as such: „Israeli High Court was correct under the guidelines of international law when it ruled last month that the government had a right to build a security fence to protect its citizens” (Lazaroff: Court could undermine rules of self-defense, 11 July 2004).

The one-dimensional reporting on the highly emotional topic of the fence is also reflected in the letters to the editor. 24 out of the 25 letters opposed the two judgments and pleaded for the construction of the fence on its original route as quickly as possible and no matter at what costs for the Palestinians. This one-sided opinion expressed in the letters could show that the editor rejected all letters not in accordance with the general tone. Yet it could also show that the *JP*'s readership and thus part of the Israeli society, is not interested in the fate of “the others” and very concerned about their own security. At the same time, the way of reporting shows the sensitivity to any criticism towards Israel. This attitude of defence would correspond with the figure, quoted above, that a great part of society longs for a pro-Israeli reporting (Sherman/Shavit 2008: 194). It would also substantiate the thesis, that society is sick of the conflict, just wants a calm life without thinking about the “others”. By not admitting any guilt, it is much easier to forget about what is happening on and to the other side. Furthermore, seeing themselves as victims is and always has been an essential component of the Israeli conflict narrative (Bar-Tal/Salomon 2006: 28).

The interview with Etgar Lefkovits, Jerusalem correspondent of the *Jerusalem Post*, was not very fruitful. He evaded most of my questions, especially when it came to the role of the editor in the composition of the *JP* and Lefkovits relation to the editor. However, it became obvious from the very beginning that his job as a journalist demands a lot and his working schedule is extremely busy. He had to cancel several meetings with me and finally I could only interview him on the phone. His day begins in the morning, ends at night and on the next day, a completely new circle of 24 hours starts all over again. It did not seem as if he had much time for research or double checking of information. Lefkovits covered all suicide bombings in the last seven years in Jerusalem, so he had to report about 130 killed persons in that period. “This time was extremely hard for me, physically and emotionally” he said (Lefkovits 2008). He stated his principle was to always go to the scenery, to talk to eye-witnesses. “It is very challenging”, but he tries to “always be objective, also when Arab inhabitants were injured or killed, not to distinguish between them” (Lefkovits 2008). However, Lefkovits does not speak Arabic for example, so whenever he comes to a scenery, he can only talk to those people speaking Hebrew or English. The *JP* has Arabic speaking correspondents, one for Gaza and one for the West Bank, but they normally do not partake in media coverage within Jerusalem.

Lefkovits stated that he feels a certain responsibility towards society since he is reporting in a conflict environment, but he could not give examples or describe this circumstance in more detail. He also added, that there is no special training in Israel, how a journalist should behave in an (armed) conflict.

Overall it can be observed that the *JP* supports the fence as extraordinary measure continuously in all articles. The fate of the Palestinians is subordinated to the security needs of the Israeli population. In addition, the threat to Israeli lives is quoted regularly, so the *JP* confronts its readership with the most existential threat, though during the relevant weeks of the media analysis “just” one terror attack took place, in which one person was killed. With regard to the bloodshed in 2002 and 2003 this could be seen as an easing of tensions. At the same time Palestinian victims are not mentioned, or they are blamed themselves for their death/suffering. The “others” are only seen as a collective, like this quotation by Dan Gillermann, permanent Israeli representative in the United States, shows: “The Palestinians who want to stop this fence simply want to kill more Israelis. The Israelis who are building this fence simply want to live” (quoted in Radler: US Jews to fight for fence, 11 July 2004).

A discussion about the effectiveness of the fence is missing completely. In a quite simplified scheme the fence is equated with life and its absence with death. Also the route of the fence is not discussed at all. Alternative narratives, for example about critics of the fence within the Israeli civil society and their point of view or about non-violent resistance against the fence by Palestinian farmers, do not find a way into the *JP*.

The analysis also reveals that there is no discussion at all, whether the legal decision of the HCJ has to be obeyed or not, even though the overall climate is not in favour of the judgments. Its authority within the democratic system is fully accepted no matter if one personally appreciates it or not.

Haaretz

The media analysis reveals that *Haaretz* reports in a more differentiated way than does the *JP*. The HCJ's judgment is seen very positive, the idea of proportionality is widely supported. In some articles the journalists point directly at the misuse of the concept of security and criticise those, responsible for the original route of the fence/wall:

“The reason for the High Court's involvement in the fence issue was diluted to a single element in the decision-making process: excessive arrogance among the planners and the officers, which led them to blatantly ignore the rights of the Palestinian residents. [...] It is worthwhile to foresee the future and return the route of the fence closer to the Green Line” (Benzimann: Forseeing the future, 4 July 2004).

“The ruling's overall message is that security is not a ‘magic word’. The court will accord greater weight to the opinions of the people actually responsible for Israel's security than to outside experts [...]. That gives the court great power to overrule military security considerations” (Segal: Rare Ruling, 1 July 2004).

In the duct of the securitization theory, *Haaretz* questions the concept of security in many articles and scrutinises the consequences of extraordinary measures carefully, also with regard to possible consequences in the farer future, for example in these two articles:

“It [the fence] is a massive, crude and destructive response to genuine distress. It embodies the modern Israeli spirit: the power to get things done, financial resources, good intentions and apathy all wrapped up in one. The fence basically amounts to an admission by the state that it is unable and unwilling to reach an agreement with the Palestinians. [...] It is a declaration of Israeli society's intention to close itself off behind ghetto walls, to give up on a connection with its neighbors and to disregard, because of an excessive sense of power, their needs and troubles” (Benziman: Corridors of power, 2 July 2004).

“A decision [by the HCJ] that is respectable, reasoned and just, and which misses the main point because even the High Court cannot ask the real, critical question: Is there any need at all for a fence? [...] The fence may prevent the next attack for a while [...] but it exacerbates the Palestinians' hatred and despair. It will create 10 terrorist attacks in place of the attack it prevents. Life without a fence was terrible, but at least it created a sense of urgency; that we have to do something to stop the killing; to solve the conflict; to make peace. The fence creates an illusion that we can ‘manage’ the conflict instead of resolving it, another dubious invention of recent years” (Esteron: Let's dismantle the fence, 7 July 2004).

Especially the last quotation hints at the fact that there is a necessity to discuss alternatives to the fence, to the extraordinary measure and the emergency politics which will not solve the conflict and could even backfire by producing counter-securitization on the Palestinian side, e.g. in form of a new wave of terror attacks.

The tone in *Haaretz's* coverage after the release of the Advisory Opinion by the ICJ changes a bit. *Haaretz* is still self-critical to a certain extent and journalists hold also the Israeli government

responsible for the unwise planning of the fence/wall which now led to the damage of Israel's international reputation by the World Court. But there are also statements, pointing at the number of Israeli victims in order to defend Israel's emergency policy and to stress Israel's right to protect its citizens. Some articles now even aim at stoking fears, like this example:

“Meanwhile, at a distance of a few kilometres, sometimes merely dozens of meters, from that backward Third World country, will be an industrialized Western welfare state that provides a high standard of living and whose citizens hold valuable assets. [...] If an effective fence does not divide the two, life in Israel won't be liveable, and a quick process of abandonment will begin. Whoever claims there is no need for nor point to the fence has in fact come to terms with Israel committing suicide as a Western Jewish state, en route to establishing a binational Middle Eastern state” (Tal: A fence that cannot be condemned, 12 July 2004).

Avraham Tal's article also shows that the fence might not serve solely as protection of lives, but also as a shield for the Israeli-Jewish identity and thus in long term potentially as a political fence and a state border. This is a good example for the Copenhagen's School definition of security, which states that “vital goods” that have to be defended also include values and identity and not the sheer physical survival (Wæver 2003: 15).

On the other hand, many articles in *Haaretz* make reference to individual fates of the Palestinians who for example cannot reach their agricultural land anymore. This gives them a human face and helps softening the stereotype of the Palestinian as a suicide bomber. It de-securitises “the” Palestinian seen as a terrorist to a certain extent.

Haaretz is to a certain degree willing to contribute to the conflict in a positive and de-escalating way. As an example, *Haaretz* employs the exceptional journalist Amira Hass. She is the only Israeli journalist living in the Palestinian territories. During the Oslo accords, she lived in Gaza; few years ago she moved to Ramallah. She decided to live among the Palestinians because “I wanted to taste the feel what is occupation, directly, not as a visitor, but really to have the rhythm of life of occupation” (Hass 2008). But not everybody appreciates the tone of Amira Hass' articles, as she is often found to be “pro-Palestinian”. “Some don't understand my journalistic work at all, they think what I am doing is propaganda” (Hass 2008). While the Israeli army was very critical towards her reports in the beginning, they soon realized that all the facts in her articles are true and her reports are very accurate. But Amira Hass faces also difficulties and criticism from her colleagues and editors at *Haaretz*, often in a subtle way, but still obvious:

“There is no direct censorship of course. But I would say the facts that I wrote from the start, from Oslo on, that my facts did not go conform with the general understanding that it is a peace process and that's why these facts that I brought were never highlighted in the paper.³⁵ They were printed, but pushed aside. My editors were not happy, they thought that I was just repeating and not seeing the situation correctly. But of course I saw it. So they didn't believe me when I warned about the Palestinians are not happy. [...]

So it is not about not publishing but about hierarchy. You have a hierarchy in the news, when you have certain items on the front page, this is what the editor thinks is important, this is what the readers remember. But if my articles always are on page number seven or eight, then also the readers get the message that it is less important” (Hass 2008).

So actually the politics of *Haaretz* are two-fold. On the one hand, they employ someone like Amira Hass and gloat over this extraordinary journalist. On the other hand, they do not give her views sufficient space and attention. As a consequence of the rather difficult relation to the editors, Amira Hass herself does not see any success or positive impact of her work on Israeli society. “In an absurd way, I think I have more influence on the Palestinians than on Israeli society. Not only

35 Amira Hass stressed already early in the Peace Process, that this process is very likely to fail, since she saw that Palestinians were not satisfied with the negotiations and felt betrayed in many key issues (Hass 2008).

me, but all Israeli groups which are active against the occupation. They serve as examples and tell Palestinians that not all Israelis are settlers and soldiers” (Hass 2008).

In addition Amira Hass also has substantial influence on the international press, where she is often quoted. Generally, Amira Hass is well-known abroad and often invited to speeches or conferences. But the Israeli society, which actually is her main audience, is widely not reached. So her personal motivation to continue the difficult work is rather anger, not hope: “I don’t have hope. I know it will change, but I don’t think it will change for the better. There might be happening something very violent that could bring change. It won’t be a smooth and logical change. It is difficult for me to admit, but injustice will not just change in justice” (Hass 2008).

At this very moment, due to continuing arguments between Amira Hass and *Haaretz*-editors, she does not publish any articles in the paper. This example shows that even in a well-established, liberal newspaper, too critical voices do not find their way onto the front pages. Alternative narratives are downplayed in order to not shock the readership, especially when the critic points to security issues or the treatment of the “others”:

“In many other issues, like the president, prime minister etc, Israeli journalists understand their role of monitoring power, they are criticising power. They are not shy, they are not polite with power. But when it comes to Palestinians, they accept the army’s version, they accept the army, they accept the government. So they are part of power, as all Israelis, because we benefit from it” (Hass 2008).

According to Amira Hass’ thesis all Israelis are entangled with the power, because they belong to the side of the “occupiers”. And especially journalists, no matter of what medium, are usually with the power when they report from the Occupied Territories, since a good relationship to the IDF is often the prerequisite for such a job.

To sum up, *Haaretz* gives space to alternative narratives, the perspective of the “others” and is critical towards securitising moves like the construction of the fence. But all this critique has limits. However, in times of great fear and increased violence, *Haaretz* often has difficulties to position itself, between a liberal high-quality paper and a national stand:

“During operation Defensive Shield, *Ha’aretz* can best be described as communicating a sense of *unease*: the paper has a hard time deciding where it wants to position itself with respect to the conflict, and, even more importantly, with respect to the question of guilt. On the one hand, it remains the same newspaper it always was: the style is reserved, the headlines are informative, significant exposure is given to the Palestinian perspective, and the paper generally respects the opposition and offers ample criticism of Sharon’s policies. On the other hand, just like the other newspapers, *Ha’aretz* is convinced that Arafat is the single real culprit in this tragic story, and is consequently struggling to reposition itself closer to the *new consensual narrative* of the beginning of the Intifada, the narrative which, more than anything else, asserts that Barak’s ‘generous proposals’ at Camp David acquit Israel from any accusation regarding the continuation of the occupation” (Dor 2005: 43).

So to overcome this situation of unease, articles with a pro-Palestinian perspective are often placed in back pages while the front pages express support for military action and justify Israel’s security policy (Dor 2005: 43). This *Haaretz*-policy was especially visible during the last years, when the conflict became more violent again. The editors occasionally defended the change of policy by “pointing to economic factors: many readers, they argued, were cancelling their subscriptions because the paper was projecting a leftist perspective” (Dor 2005: 51).

Though *Haaretz* makes a lot of information available, it does not contribute actively to spreading an alternative narrative and therefore does not contribute to a de-escalation of the conflict, while it does not fuel the conflict either.

The Analysis of Alternative Media Actors

All three alternative media actors, who I am looking at in this chapter, work on a bi-communal basis. This is a good prerequisite for journalism prone to contribute to peace, since for example media with multiple audiences usually use a less extremist form of rhetoric (Wolfsted 2001: 14). In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, these bi-communal activities of civil society actors have become very rare due to three main reasons.

First of all, it is not easy for persons willing to cooperate, to meet physically. Secondly, the will to cooperate has decreased dramatically on both sides after the new outbreak of violence during the second Intifada. One of my interview partners stated as follows:

“It is harder and harder physically to get people together because of security issues, and also if you compare it to ten years ago, people are more cynical about it. The logistics are extremely problematic. [...] [A further] reason is that people are angry, after the suicide bombings, after the Israeli military incursions, people are just angry, they don't want to get together” (Alpher 2008).

A third reason is credibility. Many Palestinians who cooperate with Israelis are seen as collaborators and “normalisers”. In interviews with civil society actors, I often heard the word “normalisation”, always with a negative connotation. The term describes the illusion of normality. Especially at this point of the conflict so many key rights on both sides are massively violated, Palestinians cannot move freely anymore, Israelis still fear for their lives due to terror attacks. Therefore, it is impossible for the two conflict parties to meet, talk about trivial topics, and leave the key issues out of the room, as Hagit Ophran from *Peace Now* explains the decrease of joint activities in her organisation:

“The character of people to people used to be mainly ‘let's put the conflict outside of the room, to get to know each other, you are human I am human.’ But leaving the occupation out of the room was always a problem but now it was not possible anymore” (Ophran 2008).

So especially bi-communal activities are often accused of intentional “normalisation”. Here is an example, given by Michel Warschawski from the *AIC* about bi-communal projects, financed by the European union:

“Create illusion of Israeli-Palestinian something, you take ten kids from here and ten from there, often out of NGO families and bring them in a high quality summer camp in Florence and you have made peace. The EU often gives a lot of money for projects that the Arabs call normalisation, meaning the illusion of normality, this is very badly invested money. Not only it is not a good direction, it is in a bad direction. It is offering a wrong image of reality, it is also detaining Israeli, but mainly Palestinian organisations from what they should do” (2008).

Therefore, individuals working in a bi-communal activity like Hillel Schenker and Ziad Abu-Zayyad of the *PIJ* require credibility in their own societies. The two of them have this credibility, Abu-Zayyad through his various detentions in Israeli jails, which proofs his rejection of the Israeli occupation, as he explains:

“I have been in and out in Israeli jails. 1991 I was six months in administrative detention in the central jail in Nablus, so I have my own credibility on the Palestinian side and people respect me and respect my views. So if they know I am working together with an Israeli or an Israeli is coming to my office, I am not a collaborator, and the Israeli is not an occupier. If he is working together with Ziad, then they are ok” (2008).

Schenker, the Israeli editor of the *PIJ*, gained his credibility in Israel's society through his army service:

“On the Israeli side, I have my credibility, because I was in the Israeli army, which might be another form of jail if you want to look at it this way. But the fact that I was on the front line when the Yom Kippur war happened, like all of my colleagues, the fact that we were ready to defend, when it was justified, our country, gives credibility, to say, now there is an alternative, now we must put a high priority to achieve peace” (2008).

I chose exactly these three alternative media actors, because first of all, they have all existed already for several years, have a solid organisation and funding, so that one can assume that their work is enduring and therefore has at least some kind of impact on the two conflict societies.

Furthermore, all three, though all working in bi-communal projects, have a different approach. Therefore, they represent a quite wide spectrum of alternative media activities. Whereas the *PIJ* publishes its own journal and tries to distribute it to an audience, as wide as possible, the *AIC* next to information campaigns also collects and prepares information for journalists. Both have in common that they also want to state an example with their bi-communal work, to bring individuals from both societies together in one office, to “keep a window open in the wall. We live a Israeli-Palestinian connection, even though in a very reduced way. [...] don’t allow a wall to be put inside our work” as Michel Warschawski from the *AIC* puts it (2008).

bitterlemons.org has a different approach: it is a mere virtual project, with the intention showing completely conflicting views on a topic. The main aim is to demonstrate, one can disagree completely, but discuss the issues in a civilized way. The two editors, Yossi Alpher and Ghassan Khatib, only meet physically once in a while and mostly in places outside of Israel and the Occupied Territories. So their intention is not to make any statement against the separation of the two peoples, but to show that one can disagree in a respectful manner.

The Alternative Information Center

The *AIC* was founded in 1984 in the aftermath of the first Lebanese war. The idea of the *Center* was, according to its founder and director Michel Warschawski:

“We have been a group of several Israeli and Palestinian activists working together against occupation and we shared the idea that very important new developments were happening in the Israeli society as well as in the Palestinian society. [...] And our joint feeling was that neither society was aware of what was happening on the other side, but it was extremely relevant for the future. So the idea of the *AIC* was and is to inform the Israelis about the social-political movement in the territories and informing the Palestinians what was emerging in the Israeli society” (2008).

The *AIC* has an official political stand, in which it claims to be against the Israeli occupation policy and rejects the separation fence/wall in its very idea.

In the focus of the *AIC*’s work are information campaigns on three different levels: on the Israeli side, the Palestinian one and on an international level.

They usually focus on certain subjects in their campaigns, e.g. they have a special campaign about the wall/fence with video documentations, printed publications and news about the construction and land confiscation, all substantiated by well-researched facts. Published in booklets or newsletters, these facts and figures can then be used by journalists and private citizens. For example in the booklet *A Wall on the Green Line?* the author Andreas Mueller questions not only the *route* of the wall/fence, but the project as such. He challenges the extraordinary measure of the wall and doubts its necessity for security reasons (2004: 27f.). According to the *AIC*’s director “security is legitimate, but it cannot be the absolute, your personal security. If in Damascus there is one person who intends to put a bomb in Tel Aviv, I have no right for security to destroy Damascus, there is a principle of proportionality” (Warschawski 2008).

Generally, the *AIC* makes an effort to always provide an alternative narrative, look beyond events and provide comprehensive background researches on certain topics. For example the *AIC*

did an in-depth research after two incidents in Jerusalem in July 2008. In the two incidents vehicles driven by Palestinians from the neighbourhoods of Jerusalem ran into crowds of pedestrians; three Israelis were killed. While Israeli officials stubbornly clung to the terrorist-attack-explanation and proposed to strengthen repressive measures against the Palestinian population around Jerusalem, Palestinians claimed that the first incident involved a person with deep personal problems who ran amuck, while the second involved a traffic accident in which the driver panicked following the intervention of armed Israelis.³⁶ The *AIC* found substantial evidence to support this theory and gave the public with its research an alternative account of the events different from the news of another terror attack.

In addition, the *AIC* staff edits original documents of relevance, e.g. by translating statements of Hamas leaders into English and Hebrew. Another example of the *AIC*'s work was given by Warschawski:

“I give a last example: what is Hisbollah? No one in Israel, including the social movement had a clear idea of Hisbollah. We had something about them, even before the war [against Lebanon in 2006], translated, being able to give lectures and write articles about political Hisbollah. We gave information and then everyone drew its own conclusion.” (2008).

Furthermore, the *AIC* provides contacts for Israeli, Palestinian and international journalists for interviews or background information from the “other” side.

Usually all information edited by the *AIC* is available in English, Arabic and Hebrew. The main target audience of the *Center* is not *the* public, but rather “these 10,000, people who are already sensible to the situation and difficulties – to try to provide them tools of better understanding” (Warschawski 2008). The *Center* thus reaches the main part of the audience, because the recipients look actively for additional information and alternative narratives.

Though the *AIC* has contacts also to Israeli newspaper editors and especially international journalists call for information regularly, the *AIC* has difficulties to get access to the communication channels, a problem for the “not power-penetrated sphere” (*nicht vermachtete Öffentlichkeit*) as already seen by Habermas. Warschawski gives an example of when his organisation failed to participate in the institutionalised system of communication:

“To give you an example, which is so typical for Israeli mentality and media. During the Lebanese War in 2006 we translated into Hebrew some speeches of Hisbollah-leaders and some analysis made by the research centre close to Hisbollah. I met the chief editor of *Haaretz* and said, look you should be interested in that, here is the translation, we don't ask you money. The speech was in some parts addressing the Israeli public, so the Israeli public should know what they are saying. All they knew was that they are sending missiles. But there was no interest, I was so surprised. You could have half a page very interesting from the journalistic and social point of view. People would be interested, but no, they said, we have no interest” (2008).

So all in all, the *AIC* can be categorized as a “watch dog” medium, always looking at the negative impacts of security measures and the occupation as such, informing an elite audience about what is happening on the other side and trying to build a bridge between the two societies. The target audience is small though, and in spite of being a well-established institution for over twenty years in the Israeli society, the *AIC* lacks access to the communication channels of mass media. Though mass media actors regularly take into account the background information which the *Center* provides, they do usually not present the information gathered by the *AIC* as a whole, but only some aspects.

36 See: *The Alternative Information Center*:
http://www.alternativenews.org/component?option=com_news_portal/Itemid,495/ (17 August 2008).

To sum up, the *AIC* tries to have a de-securitising and thus deescalating impact on the conflict. This happens on two levels: first with their information campaign in which they provide the viewpoint of the other side, alternative narratives, reveal unknown facts and present therefore manifold critique to extraordinary measures. For example by refuting that any incident involving Palestinians is a terror attack the *AIC* initiates a de-securitization itself with the aim, that these Palestinians are treated with ordinary measures instead of a military response. Due to the small audience, these de-securitising moves often fail though.

On a second level, the *AIC* also tries to overcome the Israeli separation policy by keeping their bi-communal work running. They meet physically with their colleagues from the “other” side and thereby show that some people do cooperate also on the Palestinian side, thus present a human face of the “others”.

Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture

The *PIJ*, founded by Ziad Abu-Zayyad and Victor Cygielman,³⁷ was first published in January 1994. The two founders were inspired by the Oslo agreement, they thought a new era of peace might begin and wanted to contribute to the peace process by trying to address issues related to the negotiations and making them available for a wide audience in both societies (Abu-Zayyad 2008).

Eight editions of the *PIJ* are published every year, each one dedicated to a certain aspect of the Middle East conflict and coordinated by a bi-communal team of Israelis and Palestinians: “For every issue we designate [...] an Israeli and a Palestinian coordinator. We always choose coordinators who are knowledgeable about the thing and they sit together with the editors and we plan out how to do the issue. This is a real joint issue” (Schenker 2008). The persons contributing to the journal can be journalists, as well as experts from different fields, academics or “ordinary” citizens. All writers and editors of the *PIJ* follow high professional standards, and commit to dialogue, democracy, human rights and the effort to contribute to a peaceful solution of the conflict. Almost everyone is allowed to write, no matter from what political or ideological background he/she comes, as long as the text lives up to the journalistic standards and the author respects the right of existence of the counterpart:

“We are not labelled as left wing, and not as right wing and the journal is giving a platform to all kinds of views, we publish people from the right wing of Israel like Moshe Arens³⁸ and people from the left. The only thing that we don’t like is, if some Palestinians say that Israel has no right to exist, or an Israeli says that Palestinians have no right to exist. As long as you give right to existence to the other side, you can say what you think” (Abu-Zayyad 2008).

Next to the conflict-related topics, each issue contains a literature section. This section aims at revealing the human face of both societies. By printing short stories, poems or book reviews, the *PIJ* tries to show that the society from the other side has a cultural life.

Along each issue, there are also side events: a round table discussion with Israelis, one with Palestinians and a third joint discussion. This is another attempt to bring people from both sides together, but also to bring different views of the own society together to discuss contrary opinions. The *PIJ* often invites journalists to these discussions to enable them to get background information and experience different point of views.

The outreach of the *PIJ* is comparatively large. Since 2006 some articles of each issue are translated into Arabic and Hebrew and distributed as supplements with newspapers: 75,000 with *Haaretz* in Israel and 22,-25,000 copies with *Al Quds* or *Al Ayyam* in the Palestinian Territories.

³⁷ Recently Hillel Schenker is the Israeli co-editor of the *PIJ*.

³⁸ Moshe Arens was Israel’s Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1988-1990 and afterwards Minister of Defense. He has been member of the Knesset till 2003. As a member of the right-wing Likud party he can be labelled a hardliner.

This has enlarged the audience of the *PIJ* a lot and currently, also people who do not speak English and not necessarily belong to the so-called “elite audience” can be reached:

“Most of our target audience knows English, they are students, academics, NGO activists, opinion makers, decision makers, community leaders. They will tend to know English, but there are many people out there who would be interested, if they had access, which was the importance of having these supplements. It tremendously increased our outreach and our impact” (Schenker 2008).

Even though the outreach increased, the *PIJ* can certainly not be regarded as mass media. The aim of the editors is rather to reach especially these persons in both societies who are influential in changing the overall situation of the conflict:

“But we are not mass media, a journal of our type cannot be mass media, we do not presume to reach hundreds of thousands of people the way *Yediot [Aharonot]* does it. We are reaching our target audiences, and they are key elements in bringing about change. That cannot be done by big headlines, but by serious exploration of the issues what we are doing” (Schenker 2008).

So, regarding the input of the *PIJ* on the conflict environment, first of all they definitely set a positive example by meeting everyday physically. Especially the above-mentioned example of Hillel Schenker explains to his society that at least part of their fear is unfounded.

“And I know when friends from Tel Aviv hear that I am coming here, first of all they say, ‘are you not afraid?’; second comment is, ‘we are very happy and proud to hear that something like this is going on’, and in the best circumstances they say, ‘you are representing us by doing that’” (Schenker 2008).

Furthermore, the *PIJ* shows a picture of the “others”, which is completely different from the established stereotypes. Not only do they present unknown aspects of each society, like recent developments in the literature and cinema sector, but also do they present authentic views and narratives from both societies *and* of different positions within each society. By doing so, they present alternatives to the persistent images through both articles and round-table-activities. Their activities do, therefore, not involve many people, but still have considerable success:

“Very recently we had a big event together with an Israeli NGO, about settlements. We had very prominent Israeli guests. We had people from a Palestinian organisation, who is monitoring the growth of settlements in the West Bank. This event was held in a synagogue and there were also Palestinians there. So it is a challenge. If you bring a Palestinian with self-dignity to speak to Israelis, they don’t always want to hear, but if you argue and discuss with them, even if they don’t recognize or admit, it has influence, it starts making them think” (Abu-Zayyad 2008).

Through this work the *PIJ* contributes to present a more human image of the others and to strengthen the confidence in the counterpart. By doing so, the others are de-securitised to a certain degree. The contributors of the *PIJ* are very critical about extraordinary measures, and always show the flipside of each securitising move taken. Though not being comparable with mass media, the *PIJ* has in relation to other alternative actors a wide outreach. Therefore, the UNESCO awarded the *PIJ* deservedly with the “Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence” in 2006 for their positive influence on the Israel-Palestine conflict.

bitterlemons.org

The first edition of *bitterlemons.org* was published in November 2001 by Yossi Alpher from Tel Aviv and his Palestinian partner Ghassan Khatib. Both of them were experienced in the political arena. While Khatib is vice-president of Birzeit University and former Minister of Planning and

Labour within the Palestinian Authority, Alpher is a writer and consultant on regional strategic issues, and director of the Political Security Domain. Furthermore he served as special adviser to the former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Alpher and Khatib first met at Track II meetings, and it was precisely the format of these meetings that inspired the idea of *bitterlemons*:

“In many ways the idea of *bitterlemons* draws on Track II, it is kind of virtual Track II. [...] I met Ghassan Khatib in Track II discussions and we never agreed on anything of substance, but we liked one another. When we sat down to discuss the idea of *bitterlemons*, we recognized that the fact that we would not agree would give us a far larger audience, than if we were one of those Israeli-Palestinian projects who agree on everything and who find themselves talking to a very small audience, of people who agree among themselves on everything” (Alpher 2008).

So, the two editors try actively to disagree on their weekly topic. Apart from their views, a second Palestinian view and a second Israeli opinion is chosen, so that four opinions on a certain topic are presented in each edition – ideally every one disagreeing with the other three ones. Alpher and Khatib never have troubles finding writers for their project and include also rather radical views in their discussions:

“One interesting thing is that because Israelis and Palestinians are used to talking to one another, not solving the problem, they can get people from Hamas, I can get settlers, everyone is prepared to put their views on the web, knowing it is going to appear with someone they don’t like“ (Alpher 2008).

Thus *bitterlemons*’ aim is to have contradicting opinions next to each other, opinions of people who would never meet in real life. Their hope is that for example a settler visits the website to read the settler’s view and then continues reading so that he/she also gets an impression of the other three perspectives represented on the internet.

Furthermore, *bitterlemons* is meant to provide an alternative to the mass media, which according to Yossi Alpher “does not give enough perspective of the other side, and it does not give you different views right next to another” (2008). Thanks to the disagreement they reach a great audience and this concept is also responsible for the authenticity of the project. When they would stop disagreeing, their project could quickly fall under the accusation of doing ‘normalisation’:

“Again, we are not looking for warm and fuzzy consensus. If we have it, we could loose readers. If it looks like what we are doing falls under the Arabic perception of normalisation, we would loose readers. We will loose all those readers who are against normalisation. By ensuring we have different points of view, we avoid this perception. [...] Because we know, the settlers are reading, Hamas is reading, they are looking for their point of view and by there they get the other point of view. Our message of normalisation is a very subtle one: civilised discussion, which is the most normal thing possible” (Alpher 2008).

For example, on July 12, 2004 *bitterlemons* released an edition about “The courts and the fence/wall.”³⁹ Besides the two editors’ views, Diana Buttu, legal advisor in the Negotiations Affairs Department of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Michael Eitan, member of Knesset for the Likud party and chairman of the Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee, expressed their opinions.

Khatib claims in his article, that the Palestinians are deeply gutted about the negative reactions in Israel to the ICJ’s Advisory Opinion. He explains that this destructive behaviour towards the ICJ can lead to an enduring degradation of the efforts in Palestinian society to use legal measures instead of violence in its struggle against the Israeli occupation.

39 See: *bitterlemons.org*: <http://www.bitterlemons.org/previous/bl120704ed25.html> (4 September 2008).

Alpher expresses his pride in the HCJ that did not put security considerations above all humanitarian aspects. At the same time he criticises the ICJ for not mentioning in its 50 page long AO the Israeli terror victims, which were the primary motive for the fence. Alpher concludes that both court decisions reveal Israel's government has abused the fence. This is also his personal opinion.

Diana Buttu criticises the HCJ for not having mentioned the link between “the wall and the colonies” as she calls the settlements. In her opinion “coveting Palestinian land (and water) is the real reason behind the wall.” While glad about the ICJ ruling, she knows that Israel will not accept the verdict of the International Court. But Buttu sees at least one victory in the World Court's ruling, “the reframing of the conflict. No longer is this an issue of two equal parties who cannot get along; it is about Israel's 37-year military occupation and the inherent power imbalance.”

The fourth discussant, Michael Eitan, argues that the international court completely ignored Israel's security needs and states, that the fence cannot be moved towards the Green Line, because the settlements have a right to protection. He is convinced “that under any final status agreement this dense Jewish population will be included within the sovereignty of Israel.”

This is one example, how different opinions are presented and when read completely give a wide range of arguments and viewpoints from both sides.

Since *bitterlemons* is a virtual project, it is difficult to identify the audience. The website has two million users every year from all over the world. To encourage readers to subscribe to the project, no personal data is asked,⁴⁰ so that one cannot identify from which parts of the world they come. The only figures available are that each edition is read by about 200,000 persons. If a reader spreads the articles again among many friends and colleagues this further impact cannot be measured. Furthermore, it is known that 98% of the users go to the English site, so that the Hebrew and Arabic versions of *bitterlemons* were dropped some time ago. This indicates that *bitterlemons*, like the other two alternative actors pictured above, addresses first and foremost an “elite audience”. Newspapers are allowed to reprint articles. *Haaretz* does so occasionally, but the chief editors could not be convinced to reprint each edition in full length.

bitterlemons represents an example of the tight entanglement of media and politics, since both editors are connected with the political fields and political players regularly contribute. But since contrasting views are presented, even from extreme positions, the entanglement does not lead to a biased overall picture, but instead to a very precise mosaic of the atmosphere and different flows within both societies. Though *bitterlemons* does not state an example of overcoming the separation in its daily work, their idea of disagreement is very successful and reaches out far. Overall *bitterlemons'* message is to accept different point of views, listen to other opinions and discuss in a civilised way. The project thus at least makes an attempt to contribute to a different way of conflict resolution, even though single views can also fuel the conflict by representing radical opinions or presenting a narrative of fear and threat. Especially when newspapers reprint part of an edition, but not all four statements, this can lead to a fuelling effect, which cannot be controlled by the editors of *bitterlemons*.

However, all in all, *bitterlemons* gives an important platform especially to the Palestinian view, as Ghassan Khatib explains in the forward of *The Best of Bitterlemons*:

“And what I have discovered is that while other solely Palestinian publications have also portrayed the breadth of Palestinian thought, the fact that *bitterlemons* has Israeli interlocutors gives it unprecedented traction in the West. This is a sad comment on the persistent blind spot of many Americans and Europeans to Palestinians and their case. [...] Through the *bitterlemons* publications, Palestinian voices have made their way into the most elite corridors of power” (Alpher/Khatib/Seitz 2007: 13).

40 The editors assume that many users also come from Arabic countries like Iran or Syria, where the freedom of press is not guaranteed and where the use of *bitterlemons* is officially not allowed.

Therefore, if an edition is read completely, *bitterlemons* shows with its four views very clearly, that a securitization for one side usually has negative effects for the counterpart and thus provides a good tool of reflectiveness for every reader.

Moreover, the whole work of *bitterlemons* displays clearly how debatable almost every single issue of this century-old conflict is and that the positions of the Palestinians and the Israelis, but also among different actors in each society seem often insurmountable.

6. Conclusions

On five typical examples of Israeli media actors, this paper showed how alternative media actors and mass media report about the Israel-Palestine conflict.

One positive result of the analysis is that if someone is actively looking for information, also for diverging kinds of information, a variety of versions and narratives is theoretically accessible. Thanks to the freedom of press in Israel and various sources, especially in the field of alternative media, the quantity, but also the quality of information is good. This only has limits in very delicate security aspects, when every medium has to rely on the information of the army and alternative sources are not available.

But on a second and closer look, one can clearly discern that the Israeli mainstream media usually does not give the same weight to all information or neglects the context of events. The media watch organisation *Keshev* calls attention to this problem:

“Basically the Israeli media does a simple story, we are the good guys, Palestinians are bad. We are always trying to do gestures, they always attack us – well not always but this is basically the story. [...] We find the same patterns in *Haaretz* as we do in *Yedioth*. Although *Yedioth* is more yellow press, *Haaretz* does not do it in the same way, but it also downplays some information like the other newspapers” (Mandel-Levy 2008).

One reason for the biased coverage in mainstream papers might be that most of Israel’s mainstream media stick to an already predictable story: “All the news seems to repeat itself. The subtext is always about ensuring security even as insecurity spreads. Week after week, month after month...” (Schechter 2003) as already quoted in the introduction.

A second reason is definitely that strikingly sensationalist reports with fear-producing headlines, rather not stories about the daily life of the “others”, sell newspapers. “Palestinians are not selling the newspaper anymore. The owner of *Yediot* wants one thing – money,” Ronni Shaked, *Yediot Ahronot*’s correspondent for the Occupied Territories, explains the low coverage of Palestinian stories in the paper (quoted after Wilson 2003).

The deteriorating economic situation of newspapers is not an Israeli phenomenon, but a worldwide development. But in Israel, due to the context of an ongoing conflict, the impact of the media is much more important. As a consequence, this trend of decreasing quality in the media is potentially harmful for the overall situation. For the Israeli society, as their only access to information from the “other side”, it are the media that shape images and stereotypes of the counterpart. At the same time, it is much harder for Israeli journalists than for any journalist in a peaceful environment to be neutral and take into account all perspectives. The journalist Ronni Shaked explains his own difficulties in the daily work:

“I do my best to not let my emotions affect the truth, but it’s not always easy. It’s my country. I live under the threat of terrorism. I know that my job is to show people everything that’s happening here, the ugly things and the good things, to give them tools to use in elections so they will have the opportunity to vote, not from their stomachs, but from their heads. If you ask me if I’ve succeeded, I’d say no” (quoted after Wilson 2003).

Despite being aware of the importance of unfiltered news, the challenge is huge. In addition, not only the single journalist struggles with his/her task to put fears and feelings aside when reporting, but also the editor has to withstand a patriotic or one-sided way of reporting. The editor may also consider economic issues, such as the biases and wishes of the public.

The underlying tendency is that the Israeli public is tired of the conflict. Hagit Ophran from *Peace Now* explains why many of her stories do not enter the newspaper or do less than before the second Intifada. “People don’t want to listen anymore. We are sick and tired of this conflict, we just want to live. I mean the Israeli public was only talking about that, even on family meals: that’s all Israelis did the whole time, arguing about what to do about the territories” (Ophran 2008). The only chance to enter the press for *Peace Now* is, according to Ophran, when they have catching photographs to a story.

Regarding the wider context of the SHUR project which examines the influence of civil society on human rights, the role of media in Israel is also ambivalent: though media do point at human rights violations, e.g. by quoting reports by human rights organisations like B’Tselem, human rights are also exploited by the mainstream media in some cases. E.g. when looking at the argumentation of the *Jerusalem Post* in chapter 5.2 it becomes obvious that the pointing at human rights for example when writing “Anyone who cares about saving human life would not let the fence come down” (Radler: US fight for fence) is used to attract attention. It makes it easy for the journalist to just mention the “buzzword” “human rights” without going into more detail and even more important, without looking at the human rights situation of the other conflict side. So human rights are sometimes used selectively to reach a certain aim, in the quoted example to justify the construction of the fence/wall.

In summary, though the mass media landscape in Israel is diverse, especially between actors and individual journalists, the results of this study reveal the general impression that the printed mass media in Israel does not contribute to a de-escalation and de-securitization of the conflict – at least in the case of the fence/wall.⁴¹ A few newspapers, like *Haaretz*, might contribute to a holding of the conflict, meaning that their impact is neither negative nor positive, but neutral; whereas *The Jerusalem Post* gives the society enough facts to develop a feeling that securitization is justified with all its negative consequences for the “others” and on the full scale necessary for Israel’s survival.

Looking at the alternative media actors, there is a great effort to contribute to the conflict in a positive way. Through the way in which some of them work in bi-national activities and the alternative narratives they present, especially the *PIJ* and the *AIC*, counteract the demonisation of the “other side”. They base their narratives not on the question, on which side is the victim and on which one the perpetrator, but show that on both sides, there are good and bad, just and unjust tendencies. Instead of the common black and white image of the counterpart, they try to promote a multi-coloured picture with all its light and shadow. Yet in the end, all these activities reach first and foremost those that already are sensitive to the conflict and interested in its multi-layered narratives. And here the nucleus of the problem comes again to surface: the majority of Israeli society is not willing to think and hear about the conflict anymore or even contribute to it in an active way.

However, when claiming being the fourth power in the state or a “watch dog”, exactly in such a situation of tiredness and shrinking interest, it is the media’s obligation to go against these societal

41 Due to the limited scale of the analysis, it is not possible to generalise the findings and transfer the results to all other securitising moves that have taken place in Israeli society.

developments.⁴² By only meeting the masses' demands, the media degrade themselves from shaping powers to mere suppliers and marionettes of the general atmosphere.

Moreover, the Israeli mass media pretend to provide the public with facts, not with a certain perspective, as Daniel Dor argues in his analysis of the media coverage during the Operation Defensive Shield:

“What they [the media] do is send their audiences two different messages at two different levels. At the declarative level, they deny that they provide them with a perspective designed to reflect what they already think and feel. They tell their audiences, that they provide them with *news* [...]. At the tacit level, however, they do signal to their audiences that they provide them with an *Israeli* perspective [...], but here they deny that this *perspective* is simply an opinion. They insist that the perspective emerges from a certain *perception of reality*. This is evidenced most clearly in the fact that the media consistently advise their audiences not to listen to what the foreign correspondents have to say. The foreign correspondents, they say, are hostile witnesses. [...] What they signal by this is a very simple message: we, the Israeli media, have sent our *own* reporters to the field, and *what they saw there was completely different*” (Dor 2005: 104f).

The Israeli news consumer usually does not treat the information sceptically, since he/she lives in a democratic state, where the supply of information is unrestricted. Thus the Israelis accept information on the conflict and the adversary almost without reservation, and rarely seek confirmation from additional sources nor apply independent criticism; this is, according to examinations by the media watch organisation *Keshev*,⁴³ especially true in times of crisis, when Jewish Israelis tend to perceive foreign sources of information as anti-Israeli or anti-Semitic.

Therefore, if mass media at least disclosed more clearly that their coverage is just *one* perspective and not necessarily an ultimate truth, this could already give some more weight to and interest in alternative media actors who mostly provide balanced and well-researched perspectives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but are barely heard these days.

42 *Haaretz* for example claims in its self-portrayal: “*Haaretz* plays an important role in the shaping of public opinion,” and therefore describes its role in society as an active player in forming discourses.
<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=51345&contrassID=2&subContrassID=0&sbSubContrassID=0> (12 September 2008).

43 See: *Keshev*: <http://www.keshev.org.il/siteEn/FullNews.asp?NewsID=74&CategoryID=3> (12 September 2008).

Abbreviations

AIC	The Alternative Information Center
AO	Advisory Opinion
HCJ	High Court of Justice in Israel
ICCPR	International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
JP	The Jerusalem Post
PIJ	Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture
SHUR	Human rights in conflict: The role of civil society

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Appendix I: List of Interviews

- All interviews were conducted by Rabea Haß, if not stated otherwise –

Abu-Zayyad, Ziad & Schenker, Hillel. Editors of the *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*. Interview conducted on April 8, 2008 in East Jerusalem, Israel.

Akel, Jihad. Chairman of *Hadash/Histadruth*. Interview conducted on April 9, 2008 in Tel Aviv, Israel. Interpreted by Gideon Spiro.

Alpher, Yossi. Co-editor of *bitterlemons.org*. Interview conducted on April 9, 2008 in Ramat HaSharon, Israel.

Baskin, Gershon. Co-director and founder of the *Israel-Palestine Centre for Research and Information*. Interview conducted on April 2, 2008 in Tantur, Israel.

Hammouda, Dawood. Member of the organisation *Stop the Wall*. Interview conducted on April 1, 2008 in East Jerusalem, Israel.

Hass, Amira. Journalist of *Haaretz*. Interview conducted on May 22, 2008 in Berlin, Germany.

Lefkovits, Etgar. Jerusalem correspondent of *The Jerusalem Post*. Phone interview conducted on April 10, 2008.

Mandel-Levy, Naomi. Member of the organisation *Keshev*. Interview conducted on April 3, 2008 in West Jerusalem, Israel.

Ophran, Hagit. Head of the settlement watch in the organisation *Peace Now*. Interview conducted on April 1, 2008 in West Jerusalem, Israel.

Tsion, Ilan. Chairman and founder of the organisation *Fence for Life*. Interview conducted on March 28, 2008 in Herzlia, Israel.

Warschawski, Michel. Founder of the *Alternative Information Center*. Interview conducted on April 2, 2008 in West Jerusalem, Israel.

Appendix II: Leading Questions of the Interviews

- Introduce yourself and explain why you decided to work for the organisation... / in the media sphere/ founded the organisation.....
- Can you describe your daily work? / Would you give us one or two concrete examples of actions or campaigns?
- Is 'dialogue' a matter of concern for you? To what extent might bi-communal activities be realistically or ideally possible or useful ?
- What is your aim / the purpose of your work?
- What kind of impact do you think you have? Can you measure it somehow?
- Where do you face difficulties? Where do you see successes in your work?
- How do the media actors / you as a media actor generate information in Israel (especially about security issues)? How do you / other media actors generate information from the "other side"?
- What influence do the media have in Israel according to you? How is your relation to the mass media?
- Only to journalists: What role does the editor play in your newspaper? What is your relation to the editor?
- What opinion do you have on the fence/wall? To what extent are security measures like the wall/fence justified according to you?
- What would be a just and realisable resolution of the conflict according to you / your organisation? How might the competing definitions given by the two parties of 'rights' and 'obligations' be reconciled?

Appendix III: List of Articles Used for the Media Analysis

Articles in *The Jerusalem Post*

Author	Headline	Date
Tovah Lazaroff	Security fence rerouted closer to Green Line	14 July 2004
Herb Keinon	EU: Sharon must be ready to 'tango' on fence	13 July 2004
Arieh O'Sullivan	Blips in the stats	12 July 2004
Editorial	Europe and the ICJ	12 July 2004
David Rudge	Northern quiet proves worth of security fence	12 July 2004
Yaakov Katz	One dead as bomb ends Gush Dan lull	12 July 2004
Herb Keinon	Sharon orders work on fence to continue	12 July 2004
Yaakov Katz	TA residents sceptical on fence	12 July 2004
Tovah Lazaroff	Court could undermine rules of self-defense	11 July 2004
Tovah Lazaroff	Fence battle moves to United Nations	11 July 2004
Dan Izenberg	High Court, ICJ take different approaches to security fence	11 July 2004
Alan Dershowitz	Israel follows its own law, not bigoted Hague decision	11 July 2004
Khaled Abu Toameh	Palestinians laud decision	11 July 2004
Herb Keinon	PM, ministers hope to minimize damage from ICJ ruling	11 July 2004
Janine Zacharia	US dismisses ICJ ruling	11 July 2004
Melissa Radler	US Jews to fight for fence	11 July 2004
Yossi Klein Halevi	The pattern of Palestinian rejectionism	9 July 2004
Evelyn Gordon	Judges play soldiers	6 July 2004
Nina Gilbert	Fence ruling based on timing – Defense Ministry	6 July 2004
Yosef Goell	Pardon the inconvenience	5 July 2004
Herb Keinon	PM: we will retaliate if Kassams continue	5 July 2004
Tovah Lazaroff	Fence ruling won't sway The Hague	2 July 2004
Caroline B. Glick	Supreme injustice	2 July 2004
Dan Izenberg	A petition per kilometer next?	1 July 2004

Ohne Autor/Opinion	Judges in Jerusalem	1 July 2004
Dan Izenberg	Barrier violates rights - ACRI	1 July 2004
Tovah Lazaroff/Dan Izenberg	PM accepts ruling	2 July 2004
Letters to the Editor in the <i>Jerusalem Post</i>		
Melvyn Millman	Obvious to us, less to them	14 July 2004
Miriam Nathans	Repeat of history?	14 July 2004
James Mullen	Fence 'victory'	14 July 2004
Joseph Peet	Fence support	14 July 2004
Kfar Saba	...take it down!	14 July 2004
Paul Yarden	Justice a la Hague	14 July 2004
Dave Loev, Abe Krieger, Sharon Benzel, et. al.	Bigots' court	13 July 2004
Pnina Isseroff, Stephen J. Kohn, I. Kemp, et. al.	After the Hague verdict, 'Post' readers have their say	12 July 2004
Fay Dicker	Challenge to governance	8 July 2004
Frederic Sroussi, Michael Garkawe, Sam Katz	The High Court – highly undemocratic	4 July 2004

Articles in *Haaretz*

Author	Headline	Date
Shlomo Shamir	Dershowitz slams ,illegitimate' ICJ	14 July 2004
Ze'ev Schiff	Two messages from The Hague	13 July 2004
Avraham Tal	A fence that cannot be condemned	12 July 2004
Aluf Benn/Gideon Alon	Sharon links TA bombing to ICJ ruling	12 July 2004
Aluf Benn/Shlomo Shamirand/Yuval Yoaz	Israel firmly rejects ICJ fence ruling	11 July 2004
Arnon Regular	Despite court ruling, fence construction work continues apart	11 July 2004
Yair Ettinger	Arab wall of silence surrounds the fence	11 July 2004
Aluf Benn	Analysis/Israel's image dealt a hard blow	11 July 2004
Ze'ev Segal	Analysis/This is not how you judge a wall	11 July 2004
Editorial	Between Jerusalem and The Hague	11 July 2004
Editorial	Palestinians rejoice at fence decision	11 July 2004
Sharon Sadeh, Shlomo Shamir	Friends unwavering in Israel's support, foes praise ICJ's verdict	11 July 2004

Lily Galili	Wall annexes Rachel's Tomb, imprisons Palestinian families	11 July 2004
Yair Ettinger	Till barriers do them part	9 July 2004
Amira Hass	What really influenced the High Court	8 July 2004
Yoel Esteron	Let's dismantle the fence	7 July.2004
Gideon Alon	PM will not push for legal detour around fence ruling	5 July 2004
Editorial	Fencing in the High Court Ruling	5 July 2004
Uzi Benziman	Foreseeing the future	4 July 2004
Uzi Benziman	Corridors of Power/Overriding considerations	2 July 2004
Gideon Samet	You can't see that you're stuck	2 July 2004
Aluf Benn/Yuval Yoaz/Arnon Regular	Sharon orders illegal sections of fence rerouted	2 July 2004
Sarah Bronson	Bad fences make good neighbors	2 July 2004
Dephna Berman	The ADL school of journalism	2 July 2004
Danny Rubinstein	Analysis/Fencing in the fence	1 July 2004
Aluf Benn	Analysis/PM stays mum	1 July 2004
Gideon Alon	Decision draws fire from the right, praise from the left	1 July 2004
Ze'ev Segal	Analysis/A rare ruling	1 July 2004
Yuval Yoaz/Aluf Benn	Court nixes route of fence near J'lem	1 July 2004