A Saturday Like No Other. The Beginning of the Latest Military Conflict in the Middle East – a Cross-Linguistic Analysis of News Headlines from British, German, Bulgarian and Turkish Media

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"If we do not remind ourselves of the possible faces of peace, if we do not continuously endeavor to imagine it as a realistic option, as an alternative to the existing condition, we will remain with nothing but the desperation caused by war and occupation and terror – the desperation that causes war and occupation and terror."
D. Grossmann, "Contemplations on Peace" (2008: 87)

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze and compare the language used by the *Guardian* from the UK, *Der Spiegel* from Germany, *Dnevnik* from Bulgaria and *Cumhuriyet* from Türkiye to report on the events of Oct. 7th, 2023 starting with Hamas' attack on Israel and continuing with Israel's military response to it. The cross-linguistic critical analysis is limited to the headlines of the published articles and attempts to reveal whether the events in question are reported in a similar way considering the fact that all four media outlets are seen as left-liberal and in the case of differences whether and to what extent these are determined by national historical and/or political realities.

All four media outlets report on the events of Oct. 7th as they develop; however, the Bulgarian and the Turkish newspaper lack the resources to do this as extensively as the *Guardian* and *Der Spiegel*. There are differences both in the presence of victims in the headlines and in the way Hamas and its attack are referred to. While the *Guardian* talks about 'militants', *Der Spiegel* prefers 'terrorists' and *Cumhuriyet* uses more agentless structures. All four media outlets publish videos of the military conflict but *Der Spiegel* limits itself to showing only Hamas' attack and not the destruction caused by the Israeli army in response. Possible explanations for such

differences are belonging to the same religion in the case of Türkiye and historical events like the Holocaust in the case of Germany.

1. Introduction

October 7th, 2023 marks the beginning of the latest in a row of military conflicts in the Middle East which have determined the news flow for decades and accompanied the lives of several generations of media consumers on all continents. Those of us in their 40s still remember symbolic faces of the Israeli-Palestinian relations like Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin, the never-ending reports and discussions on the so-called peace process which never really seemed to have a chance to succeed, the news coming every now and then of Palestinian attackers and Israeli military response. With time, we, the media consumers especially in Europe, simply got used to this status-quo forgetting even the fact that the Gaza strip has been under blockade since 2007 with all the humanitarian consequences there have been to it. Then the events of October, 7th threw us back in the midst of the latest wave of violence and bloodshed, and we again turned to our media to tell us what was happening this time.

2. Theoretical background

The role of the media as our main source of information is undeniable. At the same time, it cannot be ignored that the information we receive has been carefully selected, filtered, shortened, modified, interpreted, retold and the form it is presented to us reflects not only certain journalistic rules related to news structure but also the viewpoint and the values of the journalists themselves (Bell 1998: 64). The central role of media in our lives has inevitably prompted numerous researchers in the fields of language and communication to study different aspects of media discourse. One reason for this is that "the media reflect and influence the formation and expression of culture, politics and social life" (Garrett & Bell 1998: 4). Describing

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journalism as a "powerful genre of communication", Richardson (2007: 181) points out that "through employing argumentation – predominantly rhetorical moves placed in the normative framework of objective reporting – [journalism] can help organize people's understandings of the world".

In spite of the popular image of the professional journalist as strictly following the principles of objectivity and impartiality, Fowler (1991: 1-4) draws attention to the fact that 1) "the 'content' of newspapers is not facts about the world, but in a very general sense 'ideas'", that 2) "news is a practice: a discourse which, far from neutrally reflecting social reality and empirical facts, intervenes in what Berger and Luckmann call 'the social construction of reality'" and that 3) "differences in expression carry ideological distinctions". In a recent interview for the German magazine *Der Spiegel* Yuval Abraham, an investigative journalist and filmmaker from Israel, confirms Fowler's analysis from the practitioner's point of view by saying that all journalists make political decisions and that there is no such thing as neutral journalism which floats above things (*Der Spiegel*, 2024).

Korn (2004: 211) citing van Dijk (1988) and Hall et al. (1978) states that reproducing the dominant ideology and constructing the consensus for the social order are actually the main functions of journalism. A concrete example of this phenomenon is found in Korn's analysis of the media representation of the al-Aqsa Intifada in the autumn of 2000, in which she concludes the following:

> The sensational coverage of terrorist attacks, the focus on Israeli victimization and suffering, and the disregard for the catastrophe we are inflicting on the Palestinians have all contributed to an increased fear and the presentation of Palestinian terrorism as a threat to the survival of the state of Israel (…). The public panic constructed around the terrorist threat is an important element in the ability of the military elite

to cross more and more red lines, mobilise public support, and convince the public of the necessity of 'extraordinary' means and operations to 'root out' and destroy 'once and for all' the 'terrorist infrastructure' (Korn 2006: 151).

According to Richardson (2007: 180-181), especially in times of war, "journalists are exposed to propaganda from all sides, most notably from organizations and institutions with a stake in the killing", as a result of which "journalism becomes shaped and driven by this propaganda". In order to explain how this happens, Richardson (ibid.) refers to Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis. According to Fairclough's model, each discursive event has the following facets: 1) it is a spoken or written language text, 2) it is an instance of discourse practice involving the production and interpretation of text and 3) it is a piece of social practice (Fairclough 2010: 94).

Richardson (2007) looks at the "interaction between the discursive practices of journalism and the social practices of the world", the latter in cases of military conflicts being represented mainly by governmental and military organizations which together with "the rest of the security state, want to use journalism to promote their version of the war to the world and hence shape the behaviour of the public in their favour". One practical aspect of this is related to the sources journalists base their texts on in their attempt to be objective. Naturally, 'authoritative' sources, namely those possessing practical knowledge of a certain event, are preferred, but according to Richardson (2007: 182-183) "[u]nfortunately, during wartime, the mainstream media interpret this to mean military or governmental sources – basically, people who are involved in killing or who help to justify the killing" because opting for alternative sources and points of view bears the risk of the journalists being accused of bias.

When analysing media content and more specifically printed news items, one can choose to look at the full text of the articles or

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limit oneself to the headlines only. Headlines, as "part of news rhetoric whose function (…) is to attract the reader" (Bell 1991: 189) will either prompt the reader to read further or to disregard the rest. According to Iarovici and Amel (1989: 441-443), headlines perform a double function – "a semantic function, regarding the referential text, and a pragmatic function, regarding the reader (the receiver) to whom the text is addressed." Therefore, "[t]he main function of the headline (or title) is to alert the reader (receiver) to the nature of the content of the text. This is the pragmatic function of the headline, and includes the semantic one" (ibid.). Iglikova (2017: 72) points out that compared to headlines in print, headlines online play an even more important role because unlike on a real piece of paper, headlines online often appear by themselves, especially when a mobile phone is used. Or as Orendorff (2014) states "[T]he headline is the most important element of any page. It isn't just your audience's first impression; sometimes it is their only impression". It is for these reasons that we have decided to limit our investigation to headlines only and consider how these present the dramatic events of October, 7th, 2023.

3. Methodology

The main method of analysis used in this paper is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA aims to bridge social and linguistic theory and according to van Leeuwen (2009: 277) "is based on the idea that text and talk play a key role in maintaining and legitimizing inequality, injustice and oppression in society". CDA is characterized by its eclectic nature and heterogeneity. It is based on various theories and its methodology is as diverse. However, as van Dijk (2013) points out, the unifying part is that "being critical, first of all, is a state of mind, an attitude, a way of dissenting, and many more things". When analyzing language, CDA profits greatly from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, in which language is not seen as a formal system but as a means of communication where, depending on

context, different but interrelated linguistic choices (systems) are available for the expression of meaning (Flowerdew 2013: 18).

Applying a critical approach, this investigation aims to reveal what linguistic choices have been made and what strategies have been applied in the formulation of news headlines reporting the events of October, 7th. Special attention is paid to how different actors are presented and how these are fore- or backgrounded through the choice of subjects and patients. An attempt has been made to explain differences in presentation with certain historical and political realities in the respective societies. For the purposes of the investigation, this article adopts a contrastive approach. This enables us to systematically analyze, compare and contrast text material on the same topic in several different languages, to establish global patterns and individual particularities.

4. Corpus of the study

For the purpose of the current investigation, the online editions of the *Guardian* from the UK, *Der Spiegel* from Germany, *Dnevnik* from Bulgaria and *Cumhuriyet* from Türkiye have been chosen. We have decided to limit our investigation to serious press only and not to look at the tabloid presentation of the dramatic events of October 7th, 2023. These four media outlets have also been chosen because they are considered left-liberal and it could be expected that they would present events in a similar way. In the case of differences, it would be interesting to find out what national and/or international realities determine these.

The corpus for this investigation consists of the headlines of all the news articles published online on October 7th, 2023 related to Hamas' attack on Israel and the subsequent developments. On that day, the *Guardian* published 14 articles in total, five of which consisted of short videos with captions and one of photos with captions. The news items in *Der Spiegel* were 20 in total, with two video-only publications, one consisting of photos only and a news-update where

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short texts appeared regularly which were either shortened versions of longer articles or carried new information not published in the longer articles. The Bulgarian newspaper *Dnevnik* published 9 articles, two of which consisted of video material with a short text underneath. The Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet* produced 15 articles, three of which being videos.

	Total number of articles published	Photos only	Video only
The Guardian	14	1	5
Der Spiegel	20	1	2
Dnevnik	9	0	2
Cumhuriyet	15	0	3

Table 1. *Articles published online on Oct. 7th, 2023*

5. Discussion

5.1. General overview

It can be seen that the German media outlet offered its readers the highest number of articles and the Bulgarian media outlet the lowest. A factor to be considered here is the fact that the events under investigation took place on a Saturday which for a lot of newsrooms means fewer journalists on duty. The four media also differ in terms of their financial resources and network of affiliated journalists. Yet, not only the high number of articles but also their sheer length and variety of subtopics reveals that *Der Spiegel* not only had enough journalists at hand but also showed special interest in the events of that day and mobilized its resources to present its readers with the lengthiest and most varied information. Indeed, the amount of text published by *Der Spiegel* is bigger than the total material found in the other three media outlets taken together.

When it comes to the authors of the news items (the news items consisting of photos and videos only are not considered here), the *Guardian* offers three pieces, one of which an analysis, written by their Jerusalem correspondent Bethan McKernan, an analysis written by their former Jerusalem correspondent Peter Beaumont, an article by

the Istanbul-based journalist Ruth Michaelson, an article by the USA-based journalist Coral Murphy Marcos, a so-called 'explainer' by the *Guardian*'s Europe live blogger Lili Bayer and a piece taken from the news agency PA Media. Thus, it can be said that the *Guardian* counts on expertise and employs a variety of local sources in an attempt to enhance the truthfulness and reliability of its publications. There are no articles in the *Guardian* without an author.

On the other hand, ten of the articles which appeared in *Der Spiegel* do not bear the name of a concrete author. What these articles have in common is that they all report specific events or sequences of events without making explicit comments or offering an analysis of the situation. Apart from these, there is a news story from one of the media outlet's senior journalists Sebastian Hammelehle who happened to be on an assignment in Jerusalem on the day in question. There are also five other authored items, three of which belong to Richard Schneider. Schneider, who spent years in Tel Aviv as the chief foreign correspondent of the German state-owned ARD channel, is a popular German journalist of Jewish origin who still lives in Israel and works freelance. The authors of the other two texts are Monika Bollinger – a Swiss journalist with an expertise in Middle East politics and Muriel Kalisch who is an international editor at the *Spiegel* magazine. In addition to these relatively more analytical pieces, there is one quite emotional commentary written by the senior *Spiegel* journalist Felix Dachsel. It can be said that like the *Guardian*, *Der Spiegel* also tries to offer a varied presentation of the events of Oct. 7th making use not only of the journalists on duty in the newsroom in Hamburg but also of freelance staff abroad.

Unlike the *Guardian* and *Der Spiegel*, the Bulgarian and the Turkish newspapers do not have foreign correspondents in the region in question and their articles are written by newsroom staff relying mostly on information from news agencies. The news items in *Cumhuriyet* have no authors and the main source of information is the Turkish national news agency Anadolu Ajansı. Instead of publishing

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new pieces, the news editors from *Cumhuriyet* kept updating the 12 already available articles as information kept flowing in. The articles in the Bulgarian *Dnevnik* all bear an author's name. The reporters Vyara Nikolova and Elena Gelovska have a piece each, the international editor Angel Petrov has authored three items mostly reviewing the developments as they unfold and two belong to Peter Karaboev – the deputy editor-in-chief of the newspaper who provides an analysis of the situation.

Three of the four media outlets in question established special news sections for the flow of information, analyses and commentaries on the military conflict which started on Oct. 7th, 2023. The *Guardian* called the section "Israel-Hamas war", *Dnevnik* – "Войната на Израел с 'Хамас'" (Israel's war against Hamas) and *Cumhuriyet* kept the news items on this topic under the regular section "Dünya haberleri" (World news). *Der Spiegel* is the only media outlet which changed the initial name of the section from "Angriff auf Israel" (Attack on Israel) during the first days of the conflict to "Israel-Gaza-Krieg" (Israel-Gaza war) in the following weeks. In both cases these are interesting word choices. The first version does not name the attacker, only the attacked creating the impression that Israel remains a passive receiver of dramatic events even though its military response was almost immediate. It also emphasizes its innocence presenting it as a victim. The second version of the section's name is also worth discussing. Such a formulation equates Hamas with Gaza and implies a national participation as is the usual interpretation when two states possessing armed forces are at war. The sections headings in the *Guardian* and *Dnevnik*, on the other hand, can be described as neutral as they do not put weight on any of the conflicting parties but simply follow the chronology of events where Hamas' attack on civilians lead to Israel's almost immediate announcement that the country is at war.

Der Spiegel is also the only medium which offers a brief explanatory note under the section's name in the form of a summary of the current military conflict. When one only quickly scans the text,

what is immediately visible are the date of the Hamas attack and the numbers of Israeli victims and hostages – "mehr als 1200 Menschen kamen ums Leben, rund 240 Geiseln wurden nach Gaza verschleppt" (more than 1200 people have died and about 240 hostages have been abducted and taken to Gaza). If one wants to find respective information about the other side in the conflict, one has to read the whole text until one finds the word "Tausende" (thousands) in the last sentence: "…dennoch kamen bei der israelischen Offensive Tausende Zivilisten ums Leben" (however, thousands of civilians have died during the Israeli offensive).

5.2.   Headlines

Hamas' attack on Israel in the early hours of Oct. 7th marked the beginning of a full blast war in Gaza which as these lines are being written has claimed the life of more than twenty-six thousand people [January 31st, 2024] there, most of whom civilians. For Israel, the war is being led in self-defense as a response to a terrorist attack from a terrorist organization which does not accept Israel's right to exist. However, as Butler (2016: xviii) states,

> [t]he idea of a legal war or, indeed, a just war, relies on the controllability of instruments of destruction. But because uncontrollability is part of that very destructiveness, there is no war that fails to commit a crime against humanity, a destruction of civilian life. (…) …if there is no stable way to distinguish permissible collateral damage from the destruction of civilian life, then such crimes are inevitable, and there is no non-criminal war.

Indeed, wars inevitably make us think in terms of numbers of victims. Therefore, one would expect to find this information as early as possible in the headlines of the news articles. However, in the

Guardian this is the case only once in the headline "Hundreds die and hostages held as Hamas assault shocks Israel".

Der Spiegel mentions victims in four headlines, namely "Israels Armee erklärt den Kriegszustand, erste Todesopfer bestätigt" (Israel's army declares a state of war, first victims confirmed), "Mehr als 40 Tote durch Hamas-Angriff auf Israel" (More than 40 dead as a result of Hamas' attack on Israel), "In Israel und im Gazastreifen steigen die Opferzahlen stündlich" (The number of victims in Israel and in the Gaza strip rises by the hour), "Israels Luftwaffe beschießt Ziele in Gaza – viele Tote gemeldet" (Israel's air forces shoot at targets in Gaza – a lot of dead reported).

Although the Bulgarian *Dnevnik* has published only nine articles, in three of them the headlines mention victims. These are "'Във война сме', каза Нетаняху след атаката от 'Хамас', десетки израелци за убити" ('We are at war' said Netanyahu after Hamas' attack, tens of Israelis have been killed), "След въздушни удари на Израел в Газа жертвите са над 300" (After Israel's air strikes the victims in Gaza are over 300), "Нетаняху предложи 'правителство' на извънредното положение, жертвите са близо 500" (Netanyahu suggested an emergency government, the victims are almost 500).

In the Turkish *Cumhuriyet* we find just one headline in which victims are mentioned: "Hamas roketlerle vurdu… İsrail operasyon başlattı! Yüzlerce ölü, binlerce yaralı" (Hamas hit with rockets… Israel started an operation! Hundreds dead, thousands wounded).

It can be seen that in some of the headlines the victims are explicitly defined as Israeli or Palestinian whereas in other cases one has to infer which side is being referred to. Thus, the *Guardian* has one mention of Israeli victims, *Der Spiegel* mentions victims on both sides twice and in one case the reader infers that these are Israelis. In *Dnevnik* Israeli and Palestinian victims are mentioned once each in addition to a headline where the reader presumes the victims are Israeli. Only *Cumhuriyet*'s headline does not name sides but leaves it to

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the readers to infer that the situation is dramatic both for the Israelis and for the Palestinians.

	The Guardian	Der Spiegel	Dnevnik	Cumhuriyet
Total number of articles	*14*	*20*	*9*	*15*
Number of headlines featuring victims	*1*	*4*	*3*	*1*
Israeli victims	1	2	1	0
Palestinian victims	0	2	1	0
Presumably reference to Israeli victims	0	1	1	1
Presumably reference to Palestinian victims	0	0	0	1

Table 2. *Mentions of victims in the four media outlets*

When we turn to those responsible for the victims, on the one hand, we have those who started the whole chain of events by attacking Israel, namely Hamas, and on the other hand Israel whose armed forces reacted by initiating air strikes on Gaza. Indeed, Hamas and Israel are the main actors named in the headlines in the *Guardian*. Alternatively, there is one mention of "Hamas militants". What Hamas did appears as "surprise air and land attack", "surprise attacks", "surprise attack", "Hamas attack", "Hamas's murderous attack", "Hamas assault". Israel's reaction appears as "military response" and "Israeli airstrike".

In the headlines in *Der Spiegel* there are not that many alternatives. Apart from using Hamas and Israel, the German media outlet mentions "Israels Armee" (Israel's army), "Israels Luftwaffe" (Israel's air forces), "Hamas-Terroristen" (Hamas terrorists) and the "Hamas-Angriff" (Hamas' attack). It can be noticed that differently from the *Guardian* where an emphasis is laid on the element of surprise, *Der Spiegel* does not mention this at all in the headlines. Another difference is that "Hamas-Angriff" (Hamas' attack) is only

used once. Preference is given to headlines worded as finite clauses containing action verbs like 'angreifen' (to attack) and 'entführen' (to kidnap) in the case of Hamas, and 'Kriegszustand erklären' (to declare war) and 'beshießen' (to shoot) in the case of Israel and its armed forces, which adds dynamic to the reports of the situation. For example, "Hamas-Terroristen haben Israelis entführt – Militärsprecher bestätigt Geiselnahmen" (Hamas terrorists have kidnapped Israelis – the military spokesperson confirms the taking of hostages"), "Israels Luftwaffe beschießt Ziele in Gaza – viele Tote gemeldet" (Israel's air forces shoot targets in Gaza – a lot of dead reported).

The Bulgarian newspaper *Dnevnik* uses only the name Hamas in its headlines and describes what it did as an attack without any attributives. The other side in the conflict appears either as Israel or the Israeli army. We find headlines like "Хамас започна атака срещу Израел с много ракети и бойци" (Hamas launched an attack on Israel with lots of rockets and fighters) and "След въздушни удари на Израел в Газа жертвите са над 300" (After Israel's air strikes in Gaza the victims are over 300).

The situation is similar in the Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet* where all headlines naming the conflicting parties only use Hamas and Israel. There is no separate mention of Israel's army or air forces. When it comes to what the two parties did, for the first time here we find three mentions of the rockets Hamas fired, in two of which, however, the agent is not named as either a noun phrase or a passive structure has been used: "Gazze'den İsrail'e roketli saldırı" (Attack with rockets on Israel from Gaza) and "Abluka altındaki Gazze Şeridi'nden İsrail'e 150 roket atıldı!" (150 rockets have been fired towards Israel from the occupied Gaza Strip). By adding the attributive 'occupied' *Cumhuriyet* reminds the reader of the conditions Palestinians there have been living under. Another difference here is that the word 'attack' (saldırı) has been used to describe acts of violence by both sides: "Gazze'den İsrail'e roketli saldırı" (Attack with rockets on Israel from Gaza) and "İsrail Gazze'ye saldırı başlattı: Savaş ilan etti" (Israel started an attack

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on Gaza: declared war!). For the first time here, we find the name of Hamas' operation in a headline. The other three media outlets also published this information but not as early as the headline: "Hamas açıkladı: İsrail'e 'Aksa Tufanı' operasyonu" (Hamas explained: operation 'Al-Aqsa Flood' against Israel).

What can also be noticed in the naming of Hamas is that even though the UK, the USA, the EU and some other countries like Canada, Australia and Japan, have officially recognized Hamas as a terrorist organization "because of its armed resistance against Israel" (Council on Foreign Relations), *Der Spiegel* is the only media outlet which uses the word 'terrorists' in a headline as a journalistic choice: "Hamas-Terroristen haben Israelis entführt – Militärsprecher bestätigt Geiselnahmen" (Hamas terrorists have kidnapped Israelis – the military spokesperson confirms the taking of hostages) which is in unison with the comment made by the German foreign minister: "Baerbock verurteilt 'die terroristischen Angriffe' aus Gaza" (Baerbock condemns the terrorist attacks from Gaza). Otherwise, when at all, 'terror' and 'terrorists' appear in headlines only in citations from various politicians: "Премиерът Денков обвини 'Хамас' в тероризъм, Радев също осъди атаките над Израел" (Prime minister Denkov accused Hamas of terrorism, Radev also condemned the attacks on Israel), "İsrail Büyükelçiliği Türkiye'den destek istedi: 'Teröre karşı omuz omuza'" (Israel's embassy asked for support: 'shoulder to shoulder against terrorism').

There are, indeed, different politicians, institutions and countries present in the headlines of the four media outlets though the choices of public figures and/or bodies vary from media outlet to media outlet. The *Guardian* limits itself to one mention of Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu with his statement "We are at war", one mention of the White House in "White House condemns Hamas and pledges support for Israel after attacks" and talks in a third headline about "Condemnation and calls for restraint after Hamas attack on Israel" without specifying by whom in the headline.

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In the headlines of *Der Spiegel*, we find the German foreign minister Baerbock condemning the terrorist attacks from Gaza ("die terroristischen Angriffe aus Gaza"), German politicians who demand that the German government should act without specifying what exactly is meant by that in the headline ("Deutsche Politiker fordern Bundesregierung zum Handeln auf"), "der Nahe und Mittlere Osten" (the Near and the Middle East) and a quotation by Benjamin Netanyahu, however without specifying whose words these are. This is the only media outlet which focuses on reactions from the Arab countries in a separate article indirectly implying that these probably differ from the reactions of Europe and the USA but giving no hints in the headline: "So reagiert der Nahe und Mittlere osten" (That is how the Near and the Middle East react). As for the citation "Wir sind im Krieg" (We are at war), although it was a statement the Israeli prime minister Netanyahu made at about lunchtime on that day, this information is not given in the headline, but appears much later on in the article. Thus, the focus is on the statement itself, on the 'wir' (we) in it creating the feeling of strong unity and a whole nation standing behind it.

The Bulgarian *Dnevnik* also quotes the above statement but together with the name of the Israeli prime minister ("'Във война сме', каза Нетаняху след атаката от 'Хамас', десетки израелци за убити" - 'We are at war' said Netanyahu after Hamas' attack, tens of Israelis have been killed). and reports in a separate article Netanyahu's offer to establish an emergency government ("Нетаняху предложи 'правителство' на извънредното положение, жертвите са близо 500" – Netanyahu suggested an emergency government, the victims are almost 500). Apart from that, we find the words of condemnation from the Bulgarian prime minster Denkov and from the Bulgarian president Radev already mentioned above.

More variety is found in the headlines of the Turkish *Cumhuriyet*. Netanyahu's war statement figures in a headline but not as a quotation from him: "İsrail Gazze'ye saldırı başlattı: Savaş ilan etti" (Israel

started an attack on Gaza: declared war). And while all four media outlets mention this statement in one form or another, only *Cumhuriyet* gives one more quote from Netanyahu who says "in a critical statement" that all civilians should leave ("Netanyahu'dan kritik açıklama: 'Tüm siviller terk etsin'"). The headline does not reveal whether Israeli or Palestinian civilians are meant, but by describing the statement as critical, the newspaper gives a hint that these must be Palestinian which is then confirmed in the body of the article. In *Cumhuriyet*, there is also a quotation from the Israeli president who says that Israel is going through a difficult time ("İsrail Cumhurbaşkanı: 'İsrail zor zamandan geçiyor'") and the call for support by the Israeli Embassy in Turkey, already mentioned above. The Turkish and the American foreign ministers figure in a headline too with their telephone conversation about the situation in Israel. Joe Biden, "siyasiler" (politicians) and "Avrupa" (Europe) are also mentioned as they comment on the events of the day, however whereas in the case of Biden and the Turkish politicians the headlines only introduce the statements which are then covered in the body of the articles ("Joe Biden'dan İsrail'e yapılan saldırıya ilişkin acıklama", "Siyasilerden peş peşe Hamas-İsrail açıklaması"), in the case of Europe the reactions are summarized in the headline as "Avrupa'dan İsrail'e destek, Hamas'a tepki" (Support for Israel and reaction to Hamas from Europe).

Going back to the civilian population on both sides of the fence, we notice that apart from the information about victims discussed above, there is little information in the headlines about the Israelis who were kidnapped during the Hamas attack. This is given once in the *Guardian* in "Hundreds die and hostages held as Hamas assault shocks Israel" and once in *Der Spiegel* in "Hamas-Terroristen haben Israelis entführt – Militärsprecher bestätigt Geiselnahmen" (Hamas terrorists have kidnapped Israelis – military spokesperson confirms taking of hostages). *Cumhuriyet* reports one concrete hostage situation in which

a high rank Israeli military commander has been taken hostage and *Dnevnik* does not include such information in the headlines at all.

Civilians appear in two further headlines, this time as those who are going to suffer most in the coming days and months. The *Guardian*'s headline "Civilians will pay price for biggest challenge to Israel since 1973" does not differentiate between civilians in Gaza and in Israel whereas probably having in mind the extent of previous Israeli retaliatory attacks on the Palestinian territories *Der Spiegel* opts for "Die Palästinenser wissen, was jetzt auf sie zukommt" (The Palestinians know what is going to happen to them now). These two articles with particular focus on the civilian population are analytical pieces authored by the Jerusalem correspondent Bethan McKernan in the case of the *Guardian* and by Monika Bolliger, a Near East editor at *Der Spiegel* who has previously worked as a correspondent in Israel, Egypt and Lebanon.

There are also other analytical pieces published on the day in question. Richard Schneider, at present the "voice" of *Der Spiegel* from Israel, has a three long pieces, in which he focuses on the military and political responsibility for the failure to anticipate and prevent Hamas' attack: "Wir sind im Krieg" – We are at war (the citation without a source already mentioned above), "Eine unglaubliche Schmach für die stärkste Armee des Nahen Osten" (Unbelievable shame for the strongest army in the Near East) and "In Israel beginnt nun die Schulddebatte" (The debate about guilt begins now in Israel). Similarly in the *Guardian*, the headline of Schneider's colleague Peter Beaumont is "Hamas's murderous attack will be remembered as Israeli intelligence failure for the ages". On the other hand, Peter Karaboev, deputy editor-in-chief of *Dnevnik*, in his article "'Хамас' напада от всички страни точно 50 години след войната от Йом Кипур – какво следва" (Hamas attacks from all sides exactly 50 years after the Yom Kippur War – what happens next) offers a lengthy analysis of how the conflict could further develop and what the strategy followed by Hamas could be.

As already stated above, when referring to political and/or military statements in the headline, the *Guardian*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet* always name the source, too. Only *Der Spiegel* sometimes prefers to give just the quotation in the headline and to reveal its author further on in the article making way for speculations on the part of the readers and forcing them to read on if they want to find out whom these words belong to. This is done three times in total – "Wir sind im Krieg" (We are at war), "Wir leben jetzt in einer falschen Realität" (We are living in a false reality now), "Niemand, wirklich niemand scheint damit gerechnet zu haben" (Nobody, really nobody seems to have expected this). All three headlines are emotionally charged and serve to express the dramatism of the events of the day. The same mode of presentation creates the assumption that the source is either the same or at least of the same category. Chronologically, "Wir sind im Krieg" appeared first in *Der Spiegel* and readers who had already found out that these were Netanyahu's words could easily conclude that the following citations also came from him or other state officials. Yet, this is not the case at all. The other two pieces turn out to be video materials, in the first of which it is an Israeli civilian, a man of about 40 years of age, who talks about living in a false reality after describing an explosion in his street and in the second, Richard Schneider himself who makes the comment that absolutely nobody had expected an attack like this while discussing the events with a colleague in the newsroom in Hamburg.

In news reporting, providing the reader with background information is usual practice as background is an integral part of the discourse structure of news texts (Bell 1998: 67-68). Background (called 'history' when going back beyond the near past), commentary and follow-up are considered additional categories of material in a news story (ibid.) normally found in the body of the article. However, the magnitude and the impact of the events of Oct. 7th must have played a role in *Der Spiegel*'s decision to include a separate piece which only focuses on historical developments and announces this in the headline:

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"20 Jahre Gewalt in Gaza – der Rückblick" (20 years of violence in Gaza – the retrospection). Historical references are also found in the *Guardian* and *Dnevnik*, both of which mention the 1973 Yom Kippur War, a signal to the reader that the body of the article will elaborate at least on that one historical event: "Civilians will pay the price for biggest challenge to Israel since 1973", "'Хамас' напада от всички страни точно 50 години след войната от Йом Кипур – какво следва" (Hamas attacks from all sides exactly 50 years after the Yom Kippur War – what happens next).

If we only regard the headlines of video materials found on the webpages of the four media outlets, of 12 videos in total 7 show moments of Hamas' attack and 4 – of the Israeli response. The *Guardian*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet* offer videos of both sides in the conflict, the videos found in *Der Spiegel* focus only on Hamas' attack. The headlines accompanying the videos are sometimes more general as in "Israel 'at war' as Hamas militants launch surprise attack", "Israel launches military response as war with Hamas escalates", "Кадри от нападението на 'Хамас' срещу Израел" (Pictures of Hamas' attack against Israel), "Hamas, İsrail askerini İHA ile vurdu" (Hamas hit the Israeli soldiers with drones) or more concrete as in "Israel: Bulldozer filmed taking down section of Israel-Gaza border fence" or "Hamas, İsrailli komutanı esir aldı: Tankları ele geçirdi" (Hamas took an Israeli commander as hostage: captured his/their tank).

One of the memorable scenes of this first day of the war was the destruction of a high rise building in Gaza while an Al Jazeera journalist was broadcasting live. The video of the missile hitting the building was soon to be seen on news sites and channels around the world. Three of the media outlets under investigation also placed the video on their web pages with the following headlines: "Moment Israeli airstrike hits Gaza tower block after Hamas attack", "Моментът, в който израелската армия разруши 11-етажна сграда в град Газа" (The moment the Israeli army destroyed an 11-storey

building in Gaza city), "İsrail, Gazze'de 14 katlı binayı vurdu!" (Israel hit a 14-storey building in Gaza). As can be seen, there is a difference in the number of storeys the destroyed building had and there are no specifications as to what kind of building this was. This information is found only in *Cumhuriyet* at the end of the caption under the video: "Yetkililer, 100'den fazla ailenin binada yaşadığını belirtirken ölü sayısına ilişkin net bir rakam vermedi" (Officials pointed out that more than a hundred families lived in the building but didn't give a concrete number of victims.) Only *Der Spiegel* doesn't mention this attack at all even though the video is quite impressive and a clear readers' catcher. A natural question arises whether this media outlet deliberately preferred to focus on destruction caused by Hamas and not to visualize the results of Israel's retaliatory attack.

Conclusion

Comparing the news reports of the events of Oct. 7th in the four media outlets under investigation we have found both similarities and differences.

In terms of the quantity of the published material, *Der Spiegel* is the absolute leader offering its readers tens of pages of detailed reports, background analyses, commentaries and news updates both from local staff and foreign correspondents. Even though the amount of text published in the *Guardian* is much lower, this media outlet also offers varied content relying on several different authors. The Bulgarian *Dnevnik* and the Turkish *Cumhuriyet* cannot compete with the British and the German media outlet as they lack the resources and the network of affiliated journalists.

Apart from *Cumhuriyet*, the media outlets under investigation immediately created a separate section for the news flow related to the developments of Oct. 7th, with the *Guardian* and *Dnevnik* opting for very similar names while *Der Spiegel* renames the section and chooses namings with a slightly different focus.

There are also differences related to the presence of victims in the headlines of the published materials. While there is only one mention of victims in the *Guardian* and three in *Dnevnik*, victims are found 5 times in the headlines of *Der Spiegel*. In *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet*, it is not always clear which party is referred to.

Differences are also spotted in relation to the different namings and attributes used to refer to Hamas and its attack. The Hamas members are 'militants' in the *Guardian* and 'terrorists' in *Der Spiegel*. The *Guardian* stresses the unexpectedness of the attack, *Der Spiegel* uses action verbs in finite clauses to describe it in a more dynamic way and *Cumhuriyet* prefers agentless structures which background the attackers.

The four media outlets report statements from national and international actors. The Israeli prime minister is present in all of them, however with slight differences in the presentation of his words. The American president Biden appears in the *Guardian* and *Cumhuriyet*, Europe in *Cumhuriyet*, the Near and the Middle East in *Der Spiegel*. *Der Spiegel* and *Dnevnik* cite local politicians in the headlines – the foreign minister in Germany's case and the president and the prime minister in the case of Bulgaria, and *Cumhuriyet* only introduces politicians' statements to be found in the body of the article.

When only the headlines introducing video materials are considered, a major difference between *Der Spiegel* and the other three media outlets under investigation becomes visible. Only in *Der Spiegel* there are no videos showing Israel's military response to Hamas' attack and the fact that even a spectacular explosion which found broad coverage internationally was not published there speaks in favour of a deliberate choice on the part of the news editors.

All in all, it can be said that even though the *Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Dnevnik* and *Cumhuriyet* are all considered left-liberal and it is natural to expect them to present international events and conflicts in a similar way, national realities in the countries of origin of these media outlets also play a role in the news reporting. Turkey as a Moslem

country naturally feels closer to the Palestinian people and *Cumhuriyet* opts for more agentless structures in its headlines when talking about Hamas' attack, mentions the fact that Gaza is occupied and gives the name of Hamas' operation, which is also the name of one of the most important mosques for Moslems worldwide. As for the possible reasons for both the quantitative and the qualitative differences found in *Der Spiegel*, these can be related to Germany's history, which has had effects on the developments in German society and on forming public opinion on certain topics. Today Germany is one of Israel's closest allies and the roots of this policy towards Israel are found in its darkest past when millions of Jews were killed during the Holocaust. As the journalist William Noah Glucroft (2023) puts it, "For Germany, the past is always the present" and this determines Germany's official position on matters related to Israel, namely that Israel's security is Germany's reason of state. In the case of the UK and Bulgaria, we find a similar way of reporting which can be considered relatively straightforward, but even here we must not forget how news items are produced in the first place – that in any case selection has taken place and the information has been modified, interpreted and retold according to factors like media outlet policy and journalistic choices based on personal viewpoints and values.

The comparative approach chosen for this article has revealed how the news coverage of the same events can differ even among similar news outlets based on journalistic choices, sentiments in society and official national policies. This confirms once again Fowler's (1991) position, cited at the beginning, that newspapers offer us ideas about the world rather than facts, contribute to the social construction of reality and their texts can be ideologically loaded.

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