

PAULINA KRÓLIKOWSKA  
University of Łódź

## **The Mechanism of Activating and Realizing the Context of the Middle East Conflict in the Israeli Political Discourse**

### **Abstract**

Based on the assumption that a long-lasting political/social conflict is a phenomenon determining potentially all communicative events in which political speakers representing the conflicted parties participate, irrespective of their individual time and place, this article illustrates an interesting mechanism of activating and realizing the context of the Middle East conflict in the Israeli political discourse, which has been identified in a detailed study of 2009–2014 speeches of the Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu. The above mentioned study revealed that this specific mechanism is one of proofs that the Israeli party to this conflict has developed their own, distinguishing way in which they discursively (re)construct the situation in the Middle East. As such, this mechanism also turned out to be one of the key elements responsible for some major regularities in structure, content and functions of Netanyahu's speeches destined and delivered to audiences either in Israel or outside, which in turn enabled to approach it as a potentially new political genre. The goal of this article is to illustrate how, in the course of six years, Netanyahu activated and realized the context of Middle East conflict in front of diverse audiences, and how this mechanism governed the distribution of preferred messages about the Israeli stance in this struggle across time and settings.

*Keywords:* Israeli political discourse, Middle East conflict, discourse of conflict, legitimization, context-activation, context-realization, political genre.

### **1. Introduction**

Discourse of conflict, understood as a set of communicative events in which speakers *negotiate meanings* about the conflict in order to achieve particular goals in it – just as other larger structures or patterns of communication – is shaped and characterized by specific structural, content-related and functional

properties. This, in turn, makes it conceptually overlap with some only recently evolving approaches towards genres in political communication (*cf.* Cap & Okulska (eds.) 2013; Lauerbach 2013; Malkmus 2013), and sheds the much needed light at some familiar political-communicative practices, which can be examined from a broader perspective to see how the communicative choices of a given speaker reflect and adopt to the changing situational requirements in the pursuit of the general goal of legitimization in a specific socio-political setting (*cf.* Hart 2010; van Leeuwen 2007). In the analysis of political discourse, this entails taking, for example, conflict, economic crisis, environmental issues such as global warming, or the growth of terrorism as phenomena that range beyond the immediate (local and micro-) context and that are combined with issues of global/transnational politics, *i.e.* the macro-context. In each of these cases, the macro-scale contextual phenomenon may potentially shape the discursive choices of the speaker to such an extent that in search for a label that would encompass all the discursive regularities that appear, the only valid category that remains seems to be the one of a “political genre” (*cf.* Bauman 1992; Paltridge 1995; Lauerbach 2004) – and essentially a new generic category in political communication. The clue to checking whether any conventionalized goal-oriented discursive forms do arise from the imperatives of such macro-contexts lies in analyzing diverse data, such as speeches with various micro-contexts (written for diverse events of national or international importance), delivered in front of various audiences (local/international and homogeneous/heterogeneous audiences, as each of them shares a different amount of background knowledge with the speaker), and covering a period of time.

This article briefly presents an excerpt from such a research project, where the 2009–2014 speeches of the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, due to their significant saturation with the themes of the Israeli-Palestinian and the Israeli-Iranian struggle in the Middle East and a number of other distinguishing properties, have been classified as an exemplification of the discourse of conflict and approached as a potentially new political genre (*cf.* Królikowska 2015). In this respect, the very mechanism of activating and realizing the context of the Middle East conflict in Netanyahu’s speeches illustrated how the speaker introduced these themes to diverse audiences, what interrelations his public performances had with and those of his opponents, and how all these properties contributed to the legitimization of Israeli conduct in the Middle East and on the international political arena.

## 2. Method and implications for the interpretation of the results

The clue to the identification of this mechanism was a close examination of the micro-contexts of each of the analyzed Netanyahu’s speeches and, most importantly, the ways in which he used them to activate and realize the macro-context of the Middle East conflict. This has been done with the following motivation: if the instances of this mechanism appear repeatedly in other speeches (possibly, across the entire corpus of 21 speeches selected for the study), it might be assumed that, as a whole, they contribute to the formation a larger abstraction that exists above and beyond individual text structures (and individual micro-contexts). This larger abstraction is, essentially, the macrostructure of the discourse of conflict, which gets realized in specific structural regularities (in this case, individual text structures) and content-related regularities (in this case, references to various aspects of the Middle East conflict). In this vein, I incorporated a bottom-up approach of looking for the content-related regularities in speeches delivered over a period of time, in different settings and in front of different audiences, which I controlled top-down, having assumed that

whenever such regularities appear, they contribute to the formation of the macrostructure that exists in the macro-context of the Middle East conflict.

The analysis of data has revealed a number of such content-related regularities that appeared repeatedly in different micro-contexts, over a period six years and in front of various audiences inside and outside Israel, and in each case, specific elements of particular micro-contexts were used by PM Benjamin Netanyahu as “anchorage points” that enabled him to activate and realize the larger context of a particular idea or an aspect related to the Middle East conflict. This way, the Middle East conflict was effectively brought by the speaker from the contextual background to the foreground of his speeches, and, as a result, it encompassed both the context and the content of all text structures analyzed.

When it comes to the exact content-related regularities shared by all Netanyahu’s speeches, they are all organized around two governing ideas of this discourse of conflict, which develop over time and across different audiences, that is: the recognition of the Israeli statehood and the security of Israel. This way, all the content-related regularities that were identified are either explicitly or implicitly linked to these two ideas, making them two main legitimization premises in Netanyahu’s 2009–2014 speeches. This, in turn, revealed itself in a massive number of examples illustrating the speaker’s commitment to these recurrent themes, some of which occupy as much as several paragraphs of a particular speech in a row, and recur in this form in other speeches. In every single speech and in the case of every single content-regularity identified, this mechanism has been performed through, essentially (and obviously), discursive means. This entails that the large number and volume of examples illustrating particular content-related regularities translates into a large number of linguistic tools such as implicatures, presuppositions, specific patterns of speech acts, *etc.* that Netanyahu used in this vein, but these will only be signaled here, since I shall focus more on the specific aspects of the macro-context that these devices activated and realized in the speeches of the Israeli PM.

### 3. The mechanism in practice

Netanyahu’s speeches analyzed manifested content-related regularities entailing repeatable activation and realization of the following aspects of the Middle East conflicts:

1. premises legitimizing the existence of the state of Israel, its territorial area and the capital in Jerusalem;
2. mutual recognition of statehood of Israel and the Palestinians as the proposed solution to the Middle East conflict;
3. non-recognition of the Israeli statehood by Israeli opponents (the Palestinians, Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, ISIS) as the root of the Middle East conflict, the reason of deadlock in peace negotiations with the Palestinians, the motivation behind the Palestinian hostility towards Israel (*e.g.* manifested through Bil’in demonstrations<sup>1</sup>); also, non-recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel;

---

1 Bil’in is a Palestinian village located in the central West Bank, around 12 kilometers from Ramallah, the administrative capital of the State of Palestine. Since February 2005 Bil’in is the venue of weekly protests against the ongoing construction of the Israeli West Bank separation barrier that restricts the movement of the Palestinians in this territory and is said to annex some of the Palestinian land. Bil’in weekly protests take the form of mass marches from the village to the fence, with crowds

4. threats to the existence and security of the state of Israel as a result of: terrorist activity of Hamas, Hezbollah and ISIS, development of nuclear weapons in Iran, the Arab Spring and post-Arab Spring destabilization of the Middle East;
5. post-factum legitimization of military actions taken by Israel (*e.g.* Operation Cast Lead, Operation Pillar of Defense, Operation Protective Edge) as self-defense;
6. accounts of attempts of international forces to externally stimulate the resolution of the Middle East conflict (featuring mostly unsuccessful ones and those that included criticism of Israel, *e.g.* UN Security Council report on Gaza War; successful accounts were limited mostly to the American or Italian initiatives supporting Israel);
7. accounts of peace-oriented initiatives taken by Israel (*e.g.* calls to the Palestinians to begin direct negotiations, liquidation of checkpoints and roadblock, territorial withdrawals, plans for or execution of settlement construction moratorium, investments into increasing life standards of the Arab citizens of Israel, building Israeli field hospitals, *etc.*).

The points on this list relate to various content-related regularities that appeared across all speeches analyzed that Netanyahu delivered in the years 2009–2014, inside and outside Israel, and in front of diverse audiences. What is important, as far as individual speeches are concerned, on the one hand there were cases in which the speaker covered all seven points from the list above, but on the other hand, there were also speeches, in which only selected aspects were explored. To illustrate, on balance, the greatest and the most multidimensional group of content-related regularities was identified in Netanyahu's 2009 Knesset Swearing In speech and in his 2010, 2011 and 2013 Knesset Winter Session Opening speeches. This might be motivated by two reasons. First, all these addresses have had major press coverage inside and outside Israel, this way enabling the speaker to communicate messages covering all the topics that he deems important and representative of the Israeli stance in the Middle East conflict. Second, the specific micro-context of these two types of speeches delivered in Israel was potentially most flexible in providing the speaker with "anchorage points" for all the seven content-related regularities from the list, as the Knesset Swearing In speech and the Knesset Session Opening speeches were (sub)types of the genre of an inaugural address, where the speaker can cover a range of topics.

Other speeches delivered by Netanyahu in the Knesset, for example, during the Knesset Session in Honor of the PM of Italy Silvio Berlusconi, the Knesset Herzl Day or Jerusalem Day celebrations were less diversified in terms of content-related regularities listed above, but this seems to result from the limitations imposed by their micro-contexts which provided the speaker with less "anchorage points" to elaborate to in relation to the Middle East conflict. Nevertheless, these "anchorage points" still were there – even if only a few; to illustrate, such an anchorage point for Netanyahu in his speech to Silvio Berlusconi visiting the Knesset were the Italian-Jewish historical relations and mutual ideological inspirations, having discussed which Netanyahu established common ground between Israel and Italy

---

of people attempting to stop the construction and dismantle the existing parts of the barrier. In each case, the protesters are halted by the Israel security forces, which leads to the eruption of mutual physical violence and the use of various weapons (rubber bullets, tear gas, stones, *etc.*). In the course of nine years, Bil'in demonstrations have attracted large media attention and support from various international organization. In 2013, the then Palestinian Authority PM Salam Fayyad said that these protests have become "a shining example of popular resistance against the occupation, the settlements and the fence" (quote from an article on Fayyad's visit to the Bil'in demonstration published in *The Times of Israel* on March 1, 2013; article available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-soldier-lightly-wounded-in-west-bank/> [ED 9.01.2016].

that he used to outline the importance of Zionism and the Jewish national revival in the pursuit of Israeli statehood. Following this, he mentioned Berlusconi's long-lasting support for Israel, expressing his gratitude for Berlusconi's initiative to include Hamas on the European Union's list of terror organizations, his criticism of the Goldstone Report and boycott of the Second Durban Conference,<sup>2</sup> and, finally, his calls to the international community to target the threat of a nuclear Iran – this way briefly recontextualizing points 3–6 from the list above.

Coming back to the general discussion of the workings of these seven content-related regularities in the speeches analyzed, there is one particularly interesting observation that I would like to make. It is related to the issue of Iran's non-recognition of the Israeli statehood and, most importantly, to the issue of the development of nuclear weapons in Iran. Although these specific aspects of the Middle East conflict (covered by points 3 and 4 above) were frequently recontextualized by Netanyahu in his speeches delivered in the Knesset, the analysis of his 2009–2014 UN General Assembly and AIPAC Policy Conference speeches revealed major domination of this topic – especially from 2012<sup>3</sup> on. This peculiarity is even more remarkable when we consider that, for example, the time span between Netanyahu's speech at the Knesset and his speech at the UN General Assembly was only 2–4 weeks long. There are at least two potential explanations for this difference: first, Netanyahu's speeches during events with large press coverage and international audiences/addressees (UN representatives or – in the case of AIPAC Policy Conference – American Pro-Israeli lobbyists, American Congressmen and, as in 2012, even the American President Barack Obama) were dominated by the Iranian issue to proximize the nuclear threat as one with global range and to persuade the international community to set an ultimatum for the Iranian nuclear program – notwithstanding President Obama's disagreement to do it. The second explanation relates specifically to the micro-context of the UN General Assembly and the fact that Netanyahu delivered his speeches after the speeches of the Iranian Presidents: in 2009 and 2011<sup>4</sup> one day after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speeches, in 2013 and 2014 several days after President Hassan Rouhani's speeches to the UN. Probably for this reason, in each of these cases, Netanyahu devoted the majority of his address to commenting on the content of the Iranian Presidents speeches, recontextualizing their words in order to delegitimize them almost immediately in front of

2 The "Second Durban Conference," *i.e.* the United Nations World Conference against Racism organized in 2009 in Switzerland, was boycotted by the USA and seven other countries including Italy based on their concerns that Arab countries would again (like eight years before) demand denunciation of Israel and insist that all criticism of Islam be banned. During the 2001 edition of this event organized in Durban, South Africa, Canada, the USA and Israel walked out of the rooms when Arab states submitted a draft resolution criticizing Israel and equating Zionism with racism.

3 In this respect, year 2012 can be treated as a particularly interesting point of Netanyahu's discourse of conflict and the issues of activation and realization of the "threat of nuclear Iran" theme in front of the 2012 UN General Assembly audiences. It was this particular speech, in which Netanyahu called for setting an ultimatum ("a clear red line") for the Iranian nuclear program and equated Iran (as "the world's most dangerous terrorist regime") with al-Qaeda (as "the world's most dangerous terrorist organization"). The trend represented by this specific speech (domination of the topic of "the threat of nuclear Iran" over other content-related regularities) was then very much followed by Netanyahu's 2013 and 2014 UN speeches, as each of these speeches features all the seven points listed above, but with major prevalence of the topic of Iranian nuclear program and potential consequences of the use of its weapons.

4 The 2011 and 2012 UN speeches also included a number of quotes from the Palestinian President Abbas' UN speech (delivered the day before), which Netanyahu recontextualized in order to invoke larger accounts of the Israeli peace-oriented initiatives that the Palestinian side did not – in the Israeli PM's opinion – seize, or to discuss the non-recognition of the Israeli statehood by the Palestinians as the core reason of the conflict since 1948.

the same audiences. At the same time, these specific references to their speeches also served as “anchorage points” that Netanyahu used to activate and realize other aspects of the Middle East conflict manifested by the content-related regularities listed above, repeatedly referring to the topic of, for example, non-recognition of the Israeli statehood by the Palestinians and the considerable Israel’s vulnerability to attacks of various terrorist organizations operating, both, regionally and globally.

Interestingly, Netanyahu’s AIPAC Policy Conference speeches delivered in the same years as the UN General Assembly speeches followed similar patterns, but with only one exception – a speech that Netanyahu delivered during AIPAC on March, 6, 2012, six months before his “red line” speech to the UN. Surprising as it is, this is the only speech in the entire corpus, in which Netanyahu does not refer to the Palestinians. Instead, he focuses on the “nuclear Iran” and uses very much the same linguistic devices to activate and realize this specific aspect of the Middle East conflict that he used half a year later during the UN General Assembly – this we will see based on selected examples in section 3 below. Still, however, the remaining points from the list of content-related regularities are covered, *i.e.* Netanyahu talks about premises legitimizing the existence of the state of Israel, local and global dimensions of threat to Israeli security, issues of Israeli self-defense and the crucial role of the Israeli-American alliance. But why does Netanyahu devote virtually entire speech to the “nuclear armed Iran”? The answer is simple: two days before, on March 4, 2012, President Barack Obama delivered a speech at the AIPAC Policy Conference, during which he stressed the importance of diplomacy, sanctions and time in solving the Iranian nuclear issue, which Netanyahu received with rather mixed feelings, as he expected a firmer and more supportive stance of the American President. The exact thing that he expected was probably a clear American declaration to take (or to join Israel in taking) military action against Iran if it exceeds the set limits of enriching uranium, so in the absence of such a declaration, Netanyahu might have decided to elaborate on the potential consequences of the use of nuclear weapons by Iran to signal that solutions proposed by Obama might be ineffective – which he skillfully did in several points of the speech. Additionally, this is probably the reason why six months later in the UN, Netanyahu called for an ultimatum for Iran to relinquish its nuclear program.

Another link between this speech and the speeches that I commented on earlier lies in its specific micro-context. Just as in the case of Netanyahu’s 2009, 2011, 2013, 2014 UN speeches, in the case of his 2012 AIPAC speech the content-related regularities concerning Iran had their “anchorage points” in speeches delivered by key actors in the conflict short time before particular Netanyahu’s addresses. The 2012 AIPAC speech, however, is in this respect different from the UN speeches in terms of the intensity of impact of Netanyahu’s recontextualization of Obama’s words, as obviously the Israeli PM expressed his criticism much more diplomatically than in the case of the Presidents of Iran, which he did this way in order not to imperil the Israeli-American relations – and, most importantly, the general political and financial American support which is undeniably important for Israel in the Middle East conflict.

Notwithstanding this one exceptional Netanyahu’s address, all the remaining 2009–2014 UN General Assembly and AIPAC Policy Conference speeches in the corpus of my analysis featured all the seven content-related regularities which I listed at the beginning of this section. In search for their “anchorage points,” apart from those that I have already mentioned in my discussion of four UN Netanyahu’s speeches (2009, 2011, 2013, 2014) and his 2012 AIPAC Policy Conference address, there were also several other interesting elements of the micro-contexts of these events that Netanyahu strategically made use of to bring the Middle East conflict to the foreground of his speeches by activating and realizing particular aspects of its macro-context. To illustrate, in the case of the UN, he would refer to

its mission as an organization that was founded after WWII to prevent similar atrocities from happening in the future, based on which he would make elaborated historical analogies between the threats to Israel that started – and continue – since 1948 and those that had materialized earlier, as a result of the Nazi ideology. Alternatively, in times of harsh UN criticism of Israel, he would pick instances when the Israeli opponents and/or representatives of countries associated with terrorism and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law headed various UN bodies,<sup>5</sup> based on which he would elaborate on the past and current instances of hostility of these countries towards Israel. On balance, however, in each case also the general idea behind the micro-context of a General Assembly as a meeting of a body concerned with international peace and security immediately provided Netanyahu with an “anchorage point” which has been grounded in the lack of stable peace and security in the Middle East, including the post-Arab Spring further destabilization of this region.

The same applies to the micro-context of each AIPAC Policy Conference, as the “anchorage points” for Netanyahu’s major coverage of the Middle East conflict in his speeches delivered there are also “right there” in the very mission and scope of this event. As we read at the official AIPAC website, the committee of this conference openly declares itself as Pro-Israeli activists concerned with “impact for Israel’s future”<sup>6</sup> – this way, the micro-context of each of the AIPAC Policy Conferences together with the general fact that the Middle East conflict has remained unresolved for over 60 years also, as if automatically, provided Netanyahu with numerous opportunities to communicate content that followed all the seven patterns listed at the beginning.

In this respect, several speeches that Netanyahu delivered on various occasions in Israel have turned out to have particularly interesting “anchorage points” of their micro-contexts that the Israeli PM used to activate and realize the macro-context of the Middle East conflict. Although, as we will see, these speeches might not necessarily include all seven content-related regularities listed in section above, they well-illustrate how Netanyahu could skillfully (and strategically) use various bits and pieces of micro-context to direct the attention of his addressees/audiences there where he exactly wanted.

My discussion starts with two speeches, the micro-context of which were 2009 and 2010 Special Knesset Sessions Commemorating Late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The first of these two speeches – the one delivered on October 29, 2009 – possesses some typical properties of a “commemoration” genre: Netanyahu vastly comments on the positive traits of the late former Israeli PM and presents his activity as a major contribution to the Israeli independence in events that are perceived as the Israeli highlights in the Middle East conflict. Example (1), which is in fact the very opening paragraph of the 2009 speech, well-illustrates these micro-contextual properties:

- (1) Yitzhak Rabin was the quintessential “sacra” – idolized commander of the Hare Brigade during the War of Independence, victorious IDF commander of the Six-Day War, highly regarded ambassador to the United States, the first native-born Israeli to serve as prime minister, a leader who strove for peace – and achieved it with Jordan, “Mr. Security.” (B. Netanyahu, October 29, 2009)

5 These include, for example, 2003 when Libya chaired the UN Commission on Human Rights and Iraq headed the UN Committee on Disarmament (with Iran as the co-chair of the UN Conference of the UN Disarmament in Geneva) or 2011 when Lebanon presided over the UN Security Council.

6 Quoted directly from the official website of the AIPAC Conference registration for the 2015 edition of this event available at: <http://www.aipac.org/act/attend-events/policy-conference> [ED 21.11.2014].

These get intensified at the point, at which Netanyahu refers to Rabin's assassination that took place 14 years before:

- (2) On that night that none of us will ever forget – and that will always be part of our nation's history – on the night of November 4th, a despicable murderer aimed his gun at the Prime Minister's exposed back. **On that night, an Israeli patriot was vanquished by a murderer who fired a bullet at the heart of the nation.** (B. Netanyahu, October 29, 2009)

In the context of these events, Rabin's activity as a military and a politician is presented as exemplary patriotism that gets culminated in his assassination, but to grasp the connection between these events and the Middle East conflict, a bit more background knowledge is required. Yitzhak Rabin was shot by an Israeli ultra-national activist Yoga Amir who opposed to the signing of the Oslo Accords and several other peace initiatives taken by the then Israeli government, because he perceived the Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank as a denial of the biblical heritage that Jews reclaimed by building their settlements there. Although all these events are related to the past – and to the past phases of the conflict and the peace process – Netanyahu recontextualizes them in probably the most important paragraph of this speech, where he relates Rabin's death to the current reality inside Israel – and, most importantly, the current (2009) phase of the conflict:

- (3) **Fourteen years have passed since then** and I believe that the vast majority of the public has internalized the lessons of tolerance and restraint. Our conduct in difficult situations over the past few years proves this true. **But** there are still a few among us who are unwilling to accept democratic decisions and the primacy of law. They do not represent the majority of Israelis. They are a small, insignificant minority. **But** we have already witnessed the power of a single murderer and the damage he can cause. (B. Netanyahu, October 29, 2009)

The first two sentences of the excerpt in example (3) are Netanyahu's post-factum legitimization of the internationally criticized "Operation Cast Lead" / Gaza War that I already commented on in this chapter, which was officially legitimized as an act of Israeli self-defense in response to rockets targeting Israeli civilians that were fired from the Gaza Strip. By the use of implicatures (both triggered by "but" marked in bold above), Netanyahu extends this context and, through a historical analogy, compares<sup>7</sup> those who (now) dissent over the rationale for the Gaza War to Rabin's assassin (14 years earlier). The implied addressees of the message are, potentially, some Members of Knesset from the Kadima party, which in Netanyahu's opinion "failed during the Second Lebanon War and in the current conflict with Gaza militants."<sup>8</sup>

The same pattern is followed by a speech delivered by Netanyahu in the same place and on the same occasion, but a year later, on October 20, 2010. This time, however, Netanyahu relies on a different type of intertextual references in his "commemoration": instead of listing Rabin's merits, for the majority of the speech he quotes excerpts from the last pre-assassination speech that Rabin delivered in the Knesset

<sup>7</sup> The comparison of his/Likud's critics to the Rabin's assassin in this speech implies another comparison – one in which Netanyahu compares himself to Yitzhak Rabin; nevertheless, this is quite a peculiar link, as initially, the Likud party (led in the years 1993–1999 by Netanyahu) also widely criticized Rabin's stance in the Middle East conflict and rejected the Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank as a removal from the Jewish tradition.

<sup>8</sup> Taken from an article on the Likud's 2008 election campaign published on Hareetz.com. Article available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/netanyahu-s-election-slogan-likud-because-the-state-needs-to-be-run-1.259913> [ED 5.01.2016].

in 1995. The most important feature of these quotes is that they are all related to the topic of the Israeli-Palestinian / the Israeli-Arab conflict through: providing arguments legitimizing the right of the Jews to have their state on the current territory of Israel (as in example (4) below), recalling past events that involved aggression of the Israeli opponents targeted at the Israeli citizens (as in example (5) below), or discussing issues connected with the peace process and, most importantly, the Israeli conditions to be met by the Palestinian Authority (as in example (6) below):

- (4) In that speech, Yitzhak Rabin said: “The land of the prophets, which bequeathed to the world the values of morality, law and justice, was, after two thousand years, restored to its lawful owners – the members of the Jewish people. On its land, we have built an exceptional national home and state.” (B. Netanyahu, October 20, 2010)
- (5) “However, we did not return to an empty land. There were Palestinians here who struggled against us for a hundred wild and bloody years. Many thousands, on both sides,” he said, “were killed in the battle over the same land, over the same strip of territory, and were joined by the armies of the Arab states.” (B. Netanyahu, October 20, 2010)
- (6) “We would like this to be an entity which is less than a state, and which will independently run the lives of the Palestinians under its authority. The borders of the State of Israel, during the permanent solution, will be beyond the lines which existed before the Six Day War. We will not return to the 4 June 1967 lines.” (B. Netanyahu, October 20, 2010)

The central point of this speech that links these past events with the current (2010) phase of the Middle East conflict is the following excerpt:

- (7) **These things were said 15 years ago, and naturally I have a great deal to add to them after so many years.** But on this special day, I ask that the words and voice of Yitzhak Rabin echo and be heard without any additions and without interruption, **other than two short remarks.** (B. Netanyahu, October 20, 2010)

In (7) Netanyahu presupposes that the most fundamental for the Israelis issues have not been resolved by the Palestinian side and its Arab supporters, this being an implicit reference to the fact that they still have not recognized the Israeli statehood. Additionally, using an almost identical construction (“these things were said 15 years ago”) as in (3) (where he said “fourteen years have passed since then”) he presupposes that for over a decade after Rabin’s speech, again, little has changed and that there have been, possibly, many further instances of aggression targeted at Israel. Netanyahu immediately uses this presupposition of the intractability of the Middle East conflict to outline that his Prime Ministerial stance as to this issue is a continuation of Rabin’s stance, aided by “two short remarks” – something that is, possibly, meant to be interpreted as two minor comments. Nevertheless, as we will see in the discussion below, these seemingly minor additions are, in fact, two skillful implicatures that relate to one of the most seminal dimension of the struggle with the Palestinian neighbors, *i.e.* the (mutual) recognition of statehood. Example (8) features the first of these “two short remarks”:

- (8) The first brief remark is an obvious one regarding construction and the moratorium: I already said that **the temporary construction moratorium was a gesture made by no other previous government**, and I believe that Yitzhak Rabin’s words in this regard are an additional confirmation of this observation. In addition, construction in existing communities in Judea

and Samaria **does not contradict the aspiration for peace and an agreement.** (B. Netanyahu, October 20, 2010)

The excerpt in example (8) includes a presupposition that the 10-month moratorium on the construction of new Israeli settlements in the West Bank that Netanyahu introduced in early 2010 was an exceptional concession (“a gesture”) towards the Palestinian Authority, which implies the positive (self-) presentation of the Israeli side as one that wants to achieve peace. This message is immediately juxtaposed with a completely opposite, negative (other-) presentation of the Palestinian side, which is carried by an implicature that the current resumed building works in Judea and Samaria are treated by the Palestinians as a pretext for not entering into peace negotiations. This particular implicature has already been made by Netanyahu in a speech that he delivered nine days earlier, at the Opening of the Knesset Winter Session on October 11, 2010. In that address, Netanyahu said that the Palestinians “wasted those ten months” and that he hopes “they are not doing so [demanding the extension of moratorium] to avoid making the real decisions necessary for a peace agreement.”

This, in turn, brings us to another important element of the macro-context which Netanyahu activates and realizes across these speeches, and which is strictly connected with the idea of intractability of the Middle East conflict, *i.e.* mutual recognition of statehood perceived as a solution to this conflict. This brings us to the second Netanyahu’s “short remark” in example (9):

- (9) The second remark has to do with his reference to the Palestinian entity that would be established. Yitzhak Rabin spoke of, and I quote: **“less than a state.”**

I do not know what he intended at the time. Today, we say **“a demilitarized state that recognizes the state of the Jewish people.” We do not want to deny the Palestinians their right of self-definition. We do not want to rule them.** (B. Netanyahu, October 20, 2010)

In example (9), Netanyahu focuses on the taxonomy of statehood that is – or should be – applied by the conflicted parties as part of mutual recognition. Although he rejects Rabin’s way of addressing “the Palestinian entity” as “less than a state,” it is difficult to escape the impression that the label of “a demilitarized state that recognizes the state of the Jewish people” that Netanyahu offers instead is anything more than just a euphemistic reformulation of Rabin’s idea. This interpretation becomes even more salient when we try to answer a question that arises when we critically approach Netanyahu’s proposal and ask ourselves whether a state without its own military forces can indeed be perceived as a truly sovereign state. This, in turn, directs the attention of Netanyahu’s audience to, first, the ongoing non-recognition of Israel by the Palestinians as the core reason of the conflict and, second, to the accusations of the Palestinian Authority and the international community who claim that Israel wants to gain permanent control over the Palestinian population. In (9) Netanyahu tries to refute this criticism by saying that Israel does not deny the Palestinian right of “self-definition” and self-governance and implicitly communicates that it is rather the Palestinians who continuously and persistently deny the Israelis such rights.

This way, both of these speeches delivered by Netanyahu during special Knesset sessions commemorating late PM Rabin turn out to serve as pretexts to draw their audiences’ attention to those aspects of the Middle East conflict that lie at the foundations of the rather fixed Israeli stance at any of so far stages of the peace process. As the analysis of Netanyahu’s 2009–2014 speeches has shown, the idea that irrespective of the passage of time and the initiatives taken (by Israel or by international community), little has changed in the Israeli-Palestinian relations, and that the Palestinians are to be

blamed<sup>9</sup> for that, are one of the most prominent ideological messages that Netanyahu communicates in this discourse of conflict. The potential impact of this content increases even more once we notice that Netanyahu produces such messages in a very similar way, including reuse of the phrase “the demilitarized (Palestinian) state that recognizes the state of the Jewish people” with this specific wording in a number of speeches delivered in front of as diverse audiences as he had in the corpus analyzed. This way, we may assume that since he consequently repeats this message, he wants all the potential recipients to internalize it as an overarching motivation that Israel has, and to, most importantly, increase the chances of this conflict to be solved in favor of Israel. By this I mean that, should an end to this conflict finally come, irrespective of the specific territorial or political arrangements made, the thing at stake will be the publicity, *i.e.* the opinion that the contemporary and future generations will have. As the history has shown, once finished, virtually any conflict has had its “winners” and “losers,” and from the point of view of a political leader – and political communication – becoming the “winner” equals back-legitimization of nearly all that the “winning side” has ever said or done.

Another interesting manifestation of the mechanism of pushing the macro-context of the Middle East conflict to the foreground comes with speeches that Netanyahu delivered in the micro-context of the official Jerusalem Day celebrations. Nevertheless, in this case as well, the illustration of a surprisingly uniform pattern of activating and realizing the context of conflict in these speeches requires a short introduction to the ideological background of this national Israeli holiday, because this is the key to understanding its role – and the role of Jerusalem – in the Middle East conflict. Jerusalem Day is, officially, a national holiday in Israel since 1998,<sup>10</sup> although it was first proclaimed in the aftermath of the Six Day War, when in 1967 Israel gained control over East Jerusalem (previously controlled by Jordan). Following these events, Israel joined East Jerusalem with West Jerusalem – the then capital of the state and the headquarters of the Israeli government and the Knesset since 1948 – making the “unified” city its capital, which until now remains an internationally disputed and criticized issue,<sup>11</sup> also with respect to religious matters, as the city is an important religious site for believers of Judaism, Islam and Christianity. What is interesting, also the very idea of celebrating Jerusalem Day raises concerns among some Israelis in the country and some Jews worldwide, as it is mostly observed by Religious Zionists and openly rejected by some Orthodox communities.

9 This entails that in the discourse of conflict the speakers tend to locate the (past, present or future) events taking place and the attitudes of the “us” and the opposing parties on a conflict neutralization–conflict intensification scale and – as long as in such an arrangement the speaker’s side to the conflict is most likely to be presented as conflict-neutralizing – the other side(s) are most likely to be presented as conflict-intensifying.

10 In 1998 the Knesset passed the Jerusalem Day Law, thus making it a national holiday in Israel.

11 The actual legal and diplomatic status of Jerusalem outside Israel raises many concerns. The UN Partition Plan introduced in 1947 made it an international city, and the UN and many international organizations still adhere to this status. For these reasons, many countries have their Israeli-based diplomatic representations in Tel Aviv and not in Jerusalem. In 1980 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 478 in which it demanded that Israel rescinds declaration of Jerusalem as its unified capital, but Israel rejected to do it. The same reaction on the part of Israel followed the opinion of the International Court of Justice issued in 2004, in which East Jerusalem was named “Occupied Palestinian Territory.” Full texts of Resolution 478 can be accessed here: <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/DDE590C6FF232007852560DF0065FDDB> [ED 6.01.2016]. Full text of the 2004 opinion of the International Court of Justice can be accessed here: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?pr=71&code=mwp&p1=3&p2=4&p3=6> [ED 6.01.2016].

Irrespective of all these controversies, Benjamin Netanyahu, both as a Zionist and as the Israeli Prime Minister, forces the perception of the “unified” city as the only legitimate capital of the State of Israel and eagerly uses occasions such as the official celebrations of Jerusalem Day as a setting for various arguments supporting the claim that under the Israeli control the “unified” city has flourished. Consider the following examples:

- (10) That was the reality of a city which was shriveled and suffocated; a city that did not develop; a city that simply froze. All this changed at once, within a period of six days in 1967. And since the end of the Six Day War, when Jerusalem was united under Israel’s sovereignty, Jerusalem has breathed, thrived and developed, and the city is whole again. Jerusalem’s unification was the catalyst to its progress. (B. Netanyahu, June 1, 2011)
- (11) I believe the most appropriate words were actually written in modern times by Uri Zvi Greenberg: “and I say: there is one truth and not two. As there is one sun and as there are not two Jerusalems.” We know it, and you said it, that the Eternal City belongs to the Eternal People and we want to preserve Jerusalem’s unity and integrity in words and actions, because it is not only a spiritual, celestial city, but also an earthly city, and it is not only a city of yesterday, but also a city of tomorrow. (B. Netanyahu, June 1, 2011)

Example (10) manifests a generally frequent pattern of comparison-making that Netanyahu uses in this and other speeches to presuppose that the Israeli control over Jerusalem is the decisive factor stimulating its development. The same idea reverberates in example (11), where the main message is that Jerusalem (“Eternal City”) is currently in the hands of its rightful owners (“Eternal People”), and that these rightful owners not only preserve their (eternal) heritage, but also contribute to development of the city to an unparalleled extent. This, in turn, also enables Netanyahu to politically realize the myth of the Chosen People, under which he communicates that any other parties that ever controlled (any of the parts of) Jerusalem, neither had the right to do it, nor preserved or developed the city to the extent that is required considering the city’s importance – this being, both Jerusalem’s objective religious importance and its strategic political-symbolic importance in the Middle East.

An exactly the same pattern is followed by Netanyahu in his 2014 Jerusalem Day speech. Consider the following examples:

- (12) Jerusalem has developed remarkably. Jerusalem after the Six Day War was not a small village, but it was not exactly a big metropolis either. Today, Jerusalem is a big metropolis. It stands out in all its glory. (B. Netanyahu, May 27, 2014)
- (13) We preserve our heart, the heart of our nation. We will never divide our heart – never. As we believe that our capital is the heart of our nation, it must be united, as the Rabbi just said, it must be connected to the great soul of Eternal Israel, to the Torah and to the intellectual assets created by our Sages throughout the generations. (B. Netanyahu, May 27, 2014)

In example (12), just like in example (10) from his address delivered three years earlier, Netanyahu uses a comparison (although this time implied) of the life conditions in Jerusalem under the Israeli control with those from the period surrounding the Six Day War. Again, this way he presupposes that the Israeli influence on Jerusalem is solely positive and that no other entities governing any of the city’s parts managed to do as much for it.

Example (13), in turn, is much of a build-up of the content of example (11). Once again, Netanyahu presupposes that the “united” Jerusalem is the preservation of the eternal right of Jews to this city and, as a consequence, the right of Israelis to have their capital there. Again, this is a salient allusion to the politically realized myth of the Jewish chosenness, and an implicit response to the international pressures put on the Israeli government to give East Jerusalem (and, in fact, also West Bank) back to the Palestinians. This demand has particularly gained in force in 2014 surrounding the United Nations General Assembly, because as part of their initiatives oriented at independence and full UN recognition, the Palestinians started pushing a draft of a resolution forcing Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories, *i.e.* West Bank and East Jerusalem, by November 2016. Although Netanyahu’s 2014 Jerusalem Day speech precedes these specific events, Netanyahu’s words “We will never divide our heart – never” well-illustrate the general Israeli stance on this subject, which has remained fairly unchanged<sup>12</sup> for nearly 20 years. Another suggestive illustration of the general Israeli position comes in example (14):

- (14) There is also a great deal of **hatred, anti-Semitism and slander** directed at us, but there is also great **admiration** because many among the nations of the world know that there is something special **here**, a spiritual spark, an eternal spark, a people that survived for thousands of years against all odds, **returned to their homeland, rebuilt their homeland**, established their state and built an unprecedented military force. There is a unique spirit **here**, and it all concentrated in one place – **Jerusalem**. (B. Netanyahu, May 27, 2014)

Example (14), which is an excerpt from Netanyahu’s 2014 Jerusalem Day speech, essentializes two frequent ideological messages reproduced by the speaker in different settings and in front of various audiences. The first message relates to the (regional and international) attitudes towards Israel in relation to the Middle East conflict: “hatred, anti-Semitism and slander” are the properties typically ascribed to the Israeli direct opponents (but, also, potentially those who are the Israeli non-supporters), while “admiration” is the quality ascribed to those countries that, potentially, act in favor Israel and openly support it in the conflict in the region. This way, Netanyahu also reproduces the general arrangement of conflict-related roles and patterns of behavior that I described in macro-criterion 5.

The second recurrent ideological message lies in the presuppositions triggered by verbs “return” and “rebuild” in the phrases marked in bold: on the one hand, due to the micro-context of the Jerusalem Day celebrations, Netanyahu, again, presupposes the eternal Jewish – and the consequent current Israeli – right to this city, but on the other hand, when we look at how this message is reproduced in other Netanyahu’s speech, it occurs that this is a systematically used metonymic representation of the entire State of Israel. This metonymy is particularly productive for the persuasive potential of interpreting the deictic marker of space “here,” which in example (14) is used twice and rather ambiguously, as it can be understood as either “in Jerusalem (only)” or “(generally) in Israel (including Jerusalem).” Nonetheless, this ambiguity disappears when more material is analyzed: as the analysis of all speeches (including those delivered during the UN General Assembly and the AIPAC Policy Conference) has shown, Jerusalem was used in this metonymic fashion across different micro-contexts and audiences, each time with the function of legitimizing the Jewish right to, both, this specific city as the Jewish capital (of course, in its “unified” form), and the State of Israel with the specific territories that it covers (of course, including the “unified

12 Apart from Netanyahu (during his both terms of office), other Israeli Prime Ministers who categorically rejected the idea of withdrawing from East Jerusalem and dividing the city were Yitzhak Rabin and Ariel Sharon. This view was not fully shared by Ehud Barak and Ehud Elmert.

capital of Jerusalem” and other places referred to by the UN as “occupied territories”). Simultaneously, what is particularly important for this mechanism, each of these cases enabled Netanyahu to activate and realize one of the major aspects of the macro-context of the Middle East conflict described under content-related regularity number 1, *i.e.* the territorial disputes between Israel and its opponents in the region and the international community, some of which have remained unresolved for as much as several decades.

#### 4. Conclusions

The mechanism of activating and realizing the context of the Middle East conflict is but one, yet compelling, illustration of numerous regularities that have been shaped in the Israeli political discourse order to negotiate meanings and achieve specific goals related to the situation of Israel in the region and on the international political arena. A closer examination of such repeatable and often surprisingly fixed properties reveals how the Israeli PM – who is officially managing all political negotiations of the State of Israel – aims to manage and maximize the aura of his credibility to ensure its successful enactment especially in more controversial messages. In period of time covered by the analysis, these were for example times when Netanyahu struggled to legitimize the Israeli calls for international military intervention in Iran as explicitly threat-preventive – this threat being the development of nuclear weapons and the construction of nuclear facilities in Iran as targeted, both, at Israel and the entire “Western world”. Generally, however, (this) discourse of conflict was to a significant degree governed by implicitness, because the existence of a range of potential interpretations which Netanyahu could enforce or cancel accordingly, increased his rhetorical safety and the audience’s chances of avoiding cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957 and later reformulations).

What is important, in this discourse of conflict, Netanyahu attempts to conceal the potential offensive role of Israel (and, thus, rebut criticism and accusations of genocide made by the United Nations Human Rights Council following Israel military standoffs against the Palestinians), and replace it with an image of a peace-oriented state that justly defends itself and its citizens against a range of threats. For these purposes, all goals that he expresses in individual speeches feature an element of (presupposed or implied) peace-orientation or security-orientation, skillfully combined and intertwined by the Israeli PM as two necessary conditions for peace in the Middle East conflict. As a result, all his attempts to legitimize Israeli military operations, investments into Israeli self-defense facilities and equipment, or calls for the financial, military or political support of international community are legitimized as resulting from, first, lack of peace with all the parties that do not recognize the Israeli statehood and, second, as resulting from threats to the Israeli security caused by the hostility of Israel-belligerent parties.

#### References

- Bauman, Richard (1992) “Contextualization, Tradition, and the Dialogue of Genres: Icelandic Legends of the *Kraftskald*.” [In:] Alessandro Duranti, Charles Goodwin (eds.) *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 125–146.
- Cap, Piotr, Urszula Okulska (eds.) (2013) *Analyzing Genres in Political Communication*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

- Festinger, Leon (1957) *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Hart, Christopher (2010) *Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Science: New Perspectives on Immigration Discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Królikowska, Paulina (2015) *Discourse of Conflict as Political Genre*. Ph.D. dissertation. Łódź: University of Łódź.
- Lauerbach, Gerda (2004) "Political Interviews as a Hybrid Genre." [In:] *TEXT* 24 (3); 353–397.
- Lauerbach, Gerda (2013) "The Television Election Night Broadcast: A Macro Genre of Political Discourse." [In:] Piotr Cap, Urszula Okulska (eds.) *Analyzing Genres in Political Communication: Theory and Practice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins; 135–186.
- Leeuwen, Theo van (2007) "Legitimation in Discourse and Communication." [In:] *Discourse and Communication* 1; 91–112.
- Malkmus, Thorsten (2013) "Macro and Micro, Quantitative and Qualitative: An Integrative Approach for Analyzing (Election Night) Speeches." [In:] Piotr Cap, Urszula Okulska (eds.) *Analyzing Genres in Political Communication: Theory and Practice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins; 267–296.
- Paltridge, Brian (1995) "Working with Genre: A Pragmatic Perspective." [In:] *Journal of Pragmatics* 24; 393–406.

### Online sources

- AIPAC Policy Conference. Attendees. Available at: <http://www.aipac.org/act/attend-events/policy-conference> [ED 21.11.2014].
- International Court of Justice (2009, July 9) Press Release 2004/28: Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Available at: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?pr=71&code=mwp&p1=3&p2=4&p3=6> [ED 6.01.2016].
- Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (n.d.) Israel-Palestinian Negotiations. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/israel-palestinian%20negotiations.aspx> [6.01.2016].
- Mualem, Mazal (2008, December 20) Netanyahu's election slogan: 'Likud – because the state needs to be run.' [In:] *Haaretz*. Available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/netanyahu-s-election-slogan-likud-because-the-state-needs-to-be-run-1.259913> [ED 5.01.2016].
- Prime Minister's Office (n.d.) Briefing Room. Available at: <http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/default.aspx> [ED 6.01.2016].
- Prime Minister's Office (n.d.) Knesset Inaugural Address (2009, March 31). Available at: <http://www.pmo.gov.il/SiteCollectionDocuments/PMO/32communication/speeches/2009/03/knessbENGi310309.doc> [ED 6.01.2016].
- United Nations Security Council (1980, August 20) Resolution 478 (1980) of 20 August 1980. Available at: <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/DDE590C6FF232007852560DF0065FDDBB> [ED 6.01.2016].
- Yaakov, Yifa (2013, March 1) Palestinian PM evacuated from Bil'in protest. [In:] *The Times of Israel*. Available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-soldier-lightly-wounded-in-west-bank/> [ED 9.01.2016].

*Academic  
Journal  
of  
Modern  
Philology*