

## ON DÁVID KAPOSI'S "VIOLENCE AND UNDERSTANDING IN GAZA. THE BRITISH BROADSHEETS' COVERAGE OF THE WAR" (PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, LONDON, 2014)

WAZIR ALI<sup>1</sup>

It has not been easy to develop a comprehensive understanding of this protracted conflict, especially given the backdrop of regularly occurring incidents of war/violence in Gaza. Many authors have approached the conflict with a variety of perspectives. Within this context, Professor Dávid Kaposi, who works at the University of East London UK, has published the book: *Violence and Understanding in Gaza: The British Broadsheets' Coverage of the War*. In the book he applies both quantitative and qualitative methods to reveal different aspects of the 'Gaza War' (the Israeli-Palestine conflict). He has also comparatively analyzed the coverage of mainstream British newspapers/broadsheets about the Israel-Palestine conflict, classifying them into two main categories: conservatives or left-liberal. Following the above-named book, Dr. Kaposi published different material about the same topic, including a research report entitled *Antisemitism, Israel and the limits of criticism* in 2012 for the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University, in addition to articles in peer-reviewed journals entitled *The Breakdown of discourse Post-Holocaust Jewish identity and the Scholem-Arendt correspondence* in 2015 for the European Journal of Jewish Studies, and *Methodological implications of a large-scale study: The British broadsheets' coverage of the first Gaza war* in 2015 for the Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research.

Dr. Kaposi reviews the Israeli-Palestine conflict in general and the 'Gaza War' in particular. His analysis focuses on the events from 2008 until Israel's withdrawal of its forces from the Gaza strip. Later, there were a number of events which are mostly referred to in the different media as the 'Gaza War' and the

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<sup>1</sup> Wazir Ali is Ph.D. student at the Corvinus University of Budapest; e-mail: ali.wazir@stud.uni-corvinus.hu

'Gaza conflict' which refer to this stage of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The analysis of the broadsheets covers the main events that have occurred since the withdrawal. The author provides a comprehensive understanding of the events before and after the conflict. He has made an attempt to evaluate the literature available about the withdrawal of Israel, and also focuses on the other side of the conflict, generally from a Palestinian perspective, but with a particular focus on Hamas, which is regarded as a militant organization. It should be noted that Hamas is generally conceived of as being a terrorist organization in different international platforms. Nevertheless, Hamas is one of the key stakeholders in the Gaza Strip with its belief in resistance against the Israeli Occupation of land in Gaza. Here, Dr. Kaposi reviews the literature and demonstrates that Al-Fatah lost the election and Hamas emerged as winner. In other words, the moderates were defeated in the election, which led to the civil war in the Gaza strip. This also resulted in the emergence of the powerful Hamas in the Gaza strip and was one of the reasons that the group adopted aggressive action against Israel in the form of the launch of rockets (small-, medium- and long-range). This created the intense war-like posturing between Hamas and Israel. With this backdrop, different cease-fire agreements have been signed between the two parties under pressure from international communities (with the help of Egypt), but these agreements did not last long.

Dr. Kaposi has closely analyzed the events and made these the focal points of the different book chapters. He analyses the nature of the British broadsheets and explains how the Israeli-Palestine conflict is generally reported and understood in the media. Because it is one of the oldest on-going conflicts in which there are many factors to take into account, journalists not only have to follow events but present them from different angles and from different perspectives. In this book, Dr. Kaposi also presents the emergence of 'new anti-Semitism theory' and tries to explain it with the help of different historians who have written about the conflict. Dr. Kaposi mentions that methods are changing when it comes to writing about the conflict in relation to this topic. Journalists who write about conflict may use anti-Semitism as a tool by which to present arguments in support of Israel, while on the other hand anti-Semitism is considered a critique of the activities of Israel. In other words, the debate about anti-Semitism takes different shapes, and provides the reader with different perspectives to understand the situation. The main objective of Dr. Kaposi is not only to interpret events in the way they are presented in British broadsheets, but to explain the sources which offer interpretations of the different events related to the conflict.

The book includes nine chapters. Chapters One and Two are about (1) violence and its understanding in the armed conflicts of the Gaza, and (2) methods of analysis and the general characteristics of the newspapers. In these chapters the

author emphasizes the importance of conflict and reviews the conflict and research methods that have been applied in the book. Later chapters (from three to eight) cover (3) action and death in war, (4) engagement with history, (5) engagement with criticism (6) engagement with anti-Semitism, (7) the war – purity of arms and souls in the conservative press, (8) the war – purity of arms and souls in the liberal press, all analyzed according to empirical frameworks with a focus on the major events related to the conflict. Different arguments based on findings about the events of the conflict have been analyzed in order to discuss the main goal, which is to analyse the ‘Gaza War’ and its coverage by main British newspapers. At the end, Chapter Nine concludes by summing up the general findings of the analysis presented in the chapters of the book.

What is interesting is that Dr. Kaposi has used very simple but effective language throughout the book. The author raises important questions at the beginning of the chapters which then connect to the ‘discussion’ part of each chapter of the book, presenting what has been achieved and analyzed throughout the chapters, and how it connects to upcoming chapters. Research design is always considered one of the important components of any academic research book, and is considered a distinctive factor for justifying the use of different methods used in an analysis. Dr. Kaposi has devoted a whole chapter to the methods of analysis and general characteristics of the British broadsheets. In this chapter, the author defines the rules, and the need for the sample sizes of newspapers that should be taken into account in the analysis. This is another strength of the book: there is clear roadmap leading towards the other chapters. The time period for the analysis in the book is fixed as the period of intense conflict among Israeli forces and militant organizations, especially from 20<sup>th</sup> December 2008 – 25<sup>th</sup> January 2009. Dr. Kaposi has divided the newspapers into two distinct categories; ‘conservative’ (*Daily Telegraph* and *The Times*) and ‘liberal’ (*Financial Times*) or ‘left liberal’ (*Guardian* and *Independent*). In addition to these sources, the author has also included the Sunday editions of the newspapers that are mentioned and categorized in the book. It is important to mention that the methods that were employed have been specified (quantitative or qualitative) but also that the particular methods that enable the author to draw potential conclusions have been justified. The author used Nexis UK as a primary data source for all the newspapers, which, according to author, has a comprehensive enough scope to permit the collection and analysis of newspaper texts. Unfortunately, though, the number of texts or articles that were analyzed is not mentioned.

Dr. Kaposi analyzed the texts in the newspaper by coding different topics. Results are then presented in different tables that help the reader to understand the newspapers’ orientation towards the events of the Gaza war. For example,

when it comes to reporting fatalities the *Telegraph* and *Independent* devote more attention to the topic than *The Times* and *Financial Times*. The *Telegraph* and *Guardian* enhance the national perspective on fatal events, whereas *The Times* focuses on the humanitarian aspects of the fatalities. It can be seen that the conclusions which are drawn from the databases ensure the presentation of different opinions about the events which took place during the war. In the same way, the author has tried to closely analyze the databases of both conservative and left-liberal newspapers to see how and to what extent the newspapers differ. What is more interesting in the structures of the chapters is that the author first attempts to explain certain concepts, and then tries to apply the concepts in the databases of the newspapers to distinguish how British newspapers are different or similar when it comes to reporting events. Another of the author's distinct approaches is that each chapter which describes the empirical analysis consists of a discussion of both challenges and opportunities, which are also linked to further topics and chapters.

Dr. Kaposi's findings make for interesting conclusions and emphasize that the coverage and critical assessment of any conflict between humans is preferably carried out within a discursive framework. The author further builds his argument by distinguishing between the nature and ideologies of British broadsheets, where these broadsheets' main focal point has merely been based on events alone. This approach of broadsheets is sometimes to produce only news and allow no distinction when it comes to understanding real events. In other words, there should be a more balanced approach when it comes to covering any conflict that has not only historical relevance, but which can affect in one or another way factors such as the rise in anti-Semitism (that itself may lead to other incidents which can be related directly or indirectly to the violence). The author also emphasizes the sense of responsibility which broadsheets should have, indicating that papers should more clearly identify what is actually good and evil.

In summary, the main aim of the book is to provide a better understanding of the violence stemming from the Gaza War and the Israeli-Palestine conflict using two different categories for British broadsheets. The main arguments of the book are that the conservative British broadsheets such as the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* support Israel when it comes to covering the events of the Gaza War. On the other hand, left liberal newspapers such as *Guardian*, *Independent* and *Financial Times* support Palestine in general, although not necessarily Hamas. To reach this conclusion, the author used both qualitative and quantitative methods. One of the other revealing conclusions in the book is that there have been quite significant differences in coverage when it comes to political issues in general, and conflict in particular, in the British newspapers. This book is a unique and interesting contribution to the field of conflict studies in particular, and also to

the field of international relations, as well as a distinctive contribution to the field of media and communications. Many authors have already analyzed the Israeli-Palestine conflict, mostly with the help of qualitative methods, and there is very little literature available which has examined the latest developments in the conflict using quantitative analysis. Dr. Kaposi not only explains and analyses the conflict, but also raises questions about the British broadsheets in terms of how they report the events of the Israeli-Palestine conflict. The book can also be regarded as a key source of literature for the study of Israel-Palestine. It also deals with the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe and the UK, including the historical debate on both sides, and casualty reporting from different incidents. Dr. Kaposi, with his diverse analysis of newspaper articles, has covered the main areas of the conflict, and this book actually supports the proposition that the news provided by different broadsheets should not be taken for granted.

Different people may benefit from this book depending on their field of interest. Media-related individuals (scholars, policymakers, students) and journalists would benefit through strengthening their views about the coverage or reporting of any conflict. Students and scholars of conflict studies would also benefit. Indeed, this book adds to the existing literature about the Israeli-Palestine conflict by providing a different perspective with which to understand those who write about the conflict. In other words, this book develops the critical lens of the reader regarding the conflict and the related events. Nevertheless, there are limitations to this analysis: the time period is one such limit (the book covers British broadsheets from the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2008 – 27<sup>th</sup> January 2009) while another is that it only focuses on two categories of British newspapers. These limitations can serve as motivation for further analysis which includes other newspapers, other time periods, or even other countries.