

Language Manipulation in Media

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Abstract: *This research paper shall apply critical discourse analysis (CDA) tools to demonstrate how the same piece of news is reported by two different sources of media in a way that attempts to position the reader in a certain stance. By doing so, it will demonstrate how media texts are not as objective or neutral as they claim to be and do not mirror the world but rather shapes it through the way it reports events. The two pieces of news selected for the study are: "Israel Raid Kills Palestinian Civilians" reported by Al Jazeera Online (presented in appendix 1) and "Palestinian Woman Dies in Israeli Missile Strike" reported by the International Herald Tribune newspaper (presented in appendix 2). Background theory to critical discourse analysis will be reviewed along with a discussion of the controversial debate about CDA, followed by an analysis that seeks to compare two news articles using CDA tools such as framing, genre, foregrounding and presupposition, topicalization, agency, modality.*

Keywords: *Tools of inquiry, critical discourse analysis (CDA), framing, genre, foregrounding, presupposition, topicalization, agency and modality.*

1. INTRODUCTION

How we use language –whether spoken or written- and in which context it reflects who we are, what we think value and feel. James Paul Gee (2014) describes a number of “tools of inquiry” and strategies for applying them. For him, “tools of inquiry” are aimed to explain what an academic takes to be essential in “a domain”. Thus, “when theories about a domain differ, tools of inquiry will differ as well”. Discourse analysis is one of these tools of inquiry that as Manning (2008) states “demonstrates the way that the communicative forces of discourse collectively result in meaning” (p. 81). It helps us understand particular language choices and what is meant by them in particular contexts. This research paper will employ critical discourse analysis tools to illustrate how the same piece of news is conveyed by two different newspapers in a way that tries to side the reader in a specific position. By applying the CDA tools to the two texts, the researchers shall demonstrate how media texts are neither impartial nor impersonal. Background theory to critical discourse analysis will be reviewed along with a discussion of the controversial debate about CDA, followed by an analysis that seeks to compare two news articles using CDA tools such as framing, genre, foregrounding, presupposition, topicalization, agency and modality.

2. BACKGROUND THEORY ON CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

People wrongly sometimes view language as merely a means of communicating information. This though is an oversimplification of the multiple purposes of a language. As Gee (2014, p.1) states, human language serves many other functions, and the two most closely related functions would be “to support the performance of social activities and social identities and to support human affiliation within cultures, social groups, and institutions.” This means that language details create social, cultural as well as political activities, values and consequently identities.

Gee (2014, p.35) believes that we need to study discourses and go beyond studying language alone in order to study language in use. He describes discourses as “ways with words, deeds and interactions, thoughts and feelings...that allow us to enact and recognize different socially situated identities”. Yule (1996, p.129) defines discourse analysis as “the study of language use with reference to the social and psychological factors that influence communication”.

Beliefs, values or ethics underlying a text are rarely explicit or directly stated. They usually tend to be hidden or implied and this is where critical discourse analysis (CDA) becomes a valuable approach to

explore a text and reveal these 'hidden' values and ideologies (Paltridge, 2000, 2006). As Thornbury (2005) states, writers use language to create a point of view and to position the reader this point of view. This language in use or discourse is socially influential and gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may help produce unequal power relations between, for example, social classes and ethnic majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people (Van, p.258). CDA is considered a form of intervention in social practice and social relationships. It examines actual examples of social interaction which take a "linguistic form" and deals with discourse as a form of social practice which indicates a "dialectical relationship" between a certain "discursive event and the situations, institutions and social structure which frame it". The dialectical relationship is two-way: "the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them" (Van, p.258).CDA intervenes on the side of the oppressed against the oppressor and openly "declares the emancipatory interests that motivate it" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 259).

Huckin (1997) points out that CDA is 'highly context-sensitive' because it explores a text in terms of the social context in which the text occurred. CDA takes an ethical standpoint and questions social and cultural issues like race, gender, identity and ideology and how they are reflected in a particular text. He believes that we need to go beyond revealing these dogmas and criticize them in order to bring about justice.

In another place, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000, p.10) support this view by stating that the significance of CDA lies in its interest to " expose social inequality as expressed, constituted, and legitimised through language use-notably in the public media..." Critical discourse analysts are convinced that discourse is never neutral though it may appear so with repeated use. Therefore discourse must be analysed in terms of the political and social history that it conveys (Celece-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000).

According to Huckin (1997), this is one of the main aspects that make CDA different from other types of textual discourse analysis. He writes that analysts must always take into consideration the larger context in which the text has occurred rather than look at it in isolation or as words on the page. Fairclough (1992) demonstrates in a diagram this relationship between texts, discursive practices, and social practices. Fairclough believes that a text is a product of discursive practices (which include production, distribution and interpretation) that are entrenched in social practices. Thus when more than one user and social context are involved, a given text will typically have more than one meaning.

Paltridge (2006) points out that it is difficult to have a unified view of what CDA is, Fairclough and Wadok (1997) nevertheless, give an example of CDA based on eight principles of theory to show how these affect the practice of CDA. These principles are summarised by Paltridge (2006, p. 284) as follow:

- social and political issues are constructed and reflected in discourse
- Power and relations are negotiated and performed through discourse
- Discourse both reflects and reproduces social relations
- Ideologies are produced and reflected in the use of discourse

Despite of the apparent just cause of CDA as a tool to analyse written and spoken texts to bring about justice for the oppressed, it has been criticised by some scholars for different reasons. Toolan (1997) argues that CDA needs to be more critical and more demanding of a text linguistics it uses. He believes critical discourse analysts should aim for more thoroughness and strength of evidence in the arguments they make. Van Noppen (2004) points out that CDA is criticised for assuming that the reader of a text is a naïve one who is manipulated, as compared to the insightful academic who can read between the lines and reveal hidden ideology. It is also argued that CDA must not only depend on the analyst's view of the text alone but should also include a discussion of the producer of the text as well as the reader or consumers of the texts (Widdowson, 1998, 2004, cited in Paltridge, 2006, p. 309).

3. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA DISCOURSES

It is important to study media communication in all its form (television, newspapers, and other available communication forms) because of the important role it plays in mediating society to itself.

Fairclough (2002) points out the influential and formative position of the media in contemporary societies which makes the analysis of the construction of relations and identities in media texts a significant constituent in addressing various important socio cultural questions. CDA has been used by several scholars to examine the reproduction of power relations in news discourse. Matheson (2005) believes discourse analysis of the media analyses which representations of the social world predominate and what kinds of interactions media texts set up between people and the world. It analyses how meaning is made differently in different media texts thus showing what different ways of thinking and seeing are found there.

This means that news does not simply mirror the world as journalists may claim (Fowler, 1991; Matheson, 2005; Fairclough, 1995). News makes sense within a social context, and as Fowler (1995) argues news is a practice, a product, of the social and political world on which it reports. Thus when news constructs a picture of the world, that picture is often very close to what members of the society already know (Matheson, 2005). This is why Fairclough (2002) stresses the importance of applying a critical perspective in the analysis of texts from different dimensions. O'Hallorn (2003) states that CDA highlights manipulative news texts in a way that shows how news texts can 'mystify' the nature of the event being reported or who was responsible for actions associated with the event.

To support the notion that news does not mirror the world but rather shapes it through the way it reports events, two news articles from two different sources reporting the same event are critically analysed in this paper to demonstrate how authors of these two news articles use language and words to define the political ideologies they stand for. The first news article is entitled "Israel raid kills Palestinian Civilians" reported by Al Jazeera (presented in appendix 1), an online version of Al Jazeera news broadcasting channel that covers world news targeting the Arab world. The second news article covering the same events is entitled "Palestinian woman dies in Israeli missile strike" (presented in appendix 2). It is reported by the International Herald Tribune newspaper which is published by different publishers around the world.

4. THE ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTS AND DISCUSSION

Although Huckin (1997) admits that there is no standard methodology in analysing a text from a critical perspective, nonetheless he highlights the one that he believes proved to be valuable for him in his work. He recommends in carrying out analysis, to first read a text just like an ordinary reader who would read the text in an uncritical way, and then revisit the text again critically at different levels to explore it as a whole, then at sentence level and then at word and phrase level.

4.1. The Text as a Whole

4.1.1. Genre

Paltridge (2006) explains that critical discourse analysis begins by determining what genre the text stands for, and then it may examine how far beyond the norms of that genre has the writer of the text gone in order to produce a certain effect on the reader. This genre knowledge allows the analysts to determine and interpret what has been omitted from the text and what was not left out and what purpose that omission would serve the producer of the text (Huckin, 1997).

A question arises here though is how do we assign a text to a particular genre? Paltridge (2006) discusses various factors that help us decide this. The author of the text and the intended audience as well as considering the purpose of the text and the situation in which it occurred could influence our decision. Also the content of the text and the level of formality of the text and the particular uses of language in the text are other factors that help us decide the genre of a text (Paltridge, 2006).

Considering these factors we can assign the two texts chosen here to the genre of 'news report' texts where an event that took place in Gaza Strip is covered. "Media claims of their impartiality" and to cover facts and report them objectively without bias in a clear, undistorted language which is designed to be agreeable to the reader (Pekarová, 2011). To the uncritical reader, the two texts may appear to confirm with these expectations. However, on reading the two texts critically and comparing them together, an analyst would notice that the reporters have inserted what Huckin (1997) has described as 'loaded words' to slant the report. The language used in both reports is not exactly neutral or objective. This will be further demonstrated in analysing the texts at sentence and word level and by highlighting what is fore grounded and back grounded in each article.

4.1.2. Framing

Huckin (1997) points out that framing, foregrounding and back grounding are closely related as they refer to the perspective from which the writer wants to present content of the text; what viewpoints the writer aims to 'emphasise' or 'de-emphasise'. In analysing an extract from radio news, Fairclough (1995) shows how the analysis of 'framing' draws attention to how features of the report can influence the interpretation of the discourse and that is how framing can be deliberately manipulative.

In both news reports by Al Jazeera and the International Herald, the contents are presented in a formal factual language, containing quotes and comments of prominent political figures from both sides of the conflict. Quotes by prominent Israeli political figures are reported in the Herald Tribune while only one Palestinian voice by the Palestinian president is reported. Similarly, quotes by Palestinian political figures are reported and included in Al Jazeera news report as opposed to only one by Israeli air force commander.

In Al Jazeera the news report is framed in a way that foregrounds the suffering and killings of the Palestinian civilians including children as a result of the Israeli occupation and air raids. Images of injured children accompany the news report to highlight the injustice Israel is inflicting on the Palestinians. Huckin (1997) suggests that visual aids are a powerful way of framing a text. Thus, the report frames the shelling and homemade rockets within the context of a violent aggressive Israeli occupation.

On the other hand, the news report in the Herald Tribune is framed in a way that attempts to justify the Israeli air raids on Gaza. It reports the air strikes, but it is framed in a way that foregrounds the crisis these air raids killing civilians are causing in the Israeli government. The report typically frames Israeli missiles within the context of Israeli response to the firing of Palestinian homemade fire rockets into Israel with Palestinians as the aggressor.

The realities of Palestinian life in Gaza are omitted in this news report. Huckin (1997) writes that omission is a form of back grounding, because when a writer does not mention something it puts it in the background and the reader may not raise questions about it. The fact that people in Gaza still experience their lives as controlled by Israeli military occupation through violence, siege, isolation and displacement is totally ignored or omitted in the Herald Tribune report. Images are also absent from this report and one can assume that if images of the civilians killed were present it would not serve the purpose of the writer of this report, that is, to justify Israel's strikes and emphasise that they were not intended to target civilians; they simply 'veered off target'.

4.1.3. Presupposition

Presuppositions are often used by writers to influence the readers and manipulate them. Huckin (1997) defines presuppositions as using the language in a way that takes certain ideas for granted, and Yule (1996, p 25) defines presupposition as "something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance". The two news reports here presuppose the reader to have background knowledge about the history of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict. The way Al Jazeera news report is framed presupposes that what is worth reporting is the devastating effect Israeli air raids are having on the lives of Palestinian people and how the United Nations condemns Israel's attacks, while the way the report is framed in the Herald Tribune presupposes that what is newsworthy is how Israel justifies the air strikes and how the government officials regret that 'innocent people paid the price'.

4.2. Analysis by Reading Sentence by Sentence

4.2.1. Topicalization

Huckin (1997) states that topicalization is a form of sentence level foregrounding which occurs when certain pieces of information appear as grammatical subjects of the sentence. What the writer chooses to put in the topic position creates a perspective that influences the readers' perceptions. The headlines in the two news reports are a very good example of this. They clearly describe the same event, the Israeli missile attack. Al Jazeera's headline reads "Israel raid kills Palestinian civilians" which makes Israel the subject of the sentence who carries out the action of killing Palestinian civilians which are the object. This makes Israel totally responsible for killing more than one person and connotes a more violent description of the event. The Herald Tribune's headline is "Palestinian woman dies in Israeli missile attack". While the Palestinians are still the target of the Israeli attacks, the death of the Palestinian woman appears to happen due to the circumstances and implies that only one person was killed. This makes the event less dramatic than reporting Israel raid killing many civilians.

The topic of sentences in most of the sentences in Al Jazeera report frames it from a Palestinian perspective making what they say more important than anything else. For example, sentences like the following demonstrate this:

- A Palestinian woman and one of her relatives have been killed
- The Palestinian leadership condemned the strike
- The United Nations urged Israel to stop targeted killings of members of Palestinian
- To compare it with the Herald Tribune news report, topic sentences are about what the Israelis say or do:
- The air strikes have swelled into a crisis for the new Israeli government
- Peretz faced great criticism in the Knesset
- Captain Jacob Dallal, a military spokesman, said...
- The Israeli Ynet news service reported...

4.2.2. Agency

The reader needs to pose questions here as to who is the agent. Who is doing what to whom? Language is often used in texts to show certain people as powerful through initiating actions while others are portrayed as being the recipients of the actions and therefore passive (Huckin,1997). In al Jazeera report Palestinians and United Nations officials are shown as the agents condemning the Israeli attacks. This is apparent in sentences like “UN disturbed” and “Palestinian leadership condemned”. Israel is given the agency when it vows to continue the aggression regardless of the lives of civilians lost. Throughout the report in the Herald Tribune, Israeli officials have the agency through their responses and comments about the air raids. Palestinian militants have agency only when they are portrayed to initiate the attacks by firing ‘hundreds of homemade missiles’ and thus justifying Israel’s air raids.

4.3. Analysis at Word and Phrases Level

4.3.1. Connotations/Modality

Paltridge (2000) and Huckin (1997) explain that at word and phrase level we need to analyse some connotations employed by the writer as well as the choice of words that express different degrees of modality depending on how a writer/speaker wants to portray his own level of commitment to an idea or action. According to Fairclough (1992) modality in grammar was associated with the modal auxiliary verbs which are an important means of realizing modality. He reports that Hodge and Kress (1988) draw upon an approach to grammar that considers modal auxiliaries as only one modality feature among many. There are tenses, modal adverbs such as ‘possibly’, ‘obviously’ and their equivalent modal adjectives.

In the Herald Tribune report we can consider the use of the word ‘contend’ in this sentence: ‘Palestinians and human rights contend the Israeli military fired a missile onto the beach’ which implies less certainty to Israel’s responsibility for the beach massacre. Also the modal auxiliary ‘could’ is used in this sentence: ‘The shrapnel could have been from an Israeli shell or a bomb planted by Palestinian militants’. This low modality leaves open the possibility of negotiation. In Al Jazeera report it is noticed that people with a high degree of authority and status use high modality in order to emphasize an idea. For example the UN secretary general says ‘Israeli actions should be proportionate and in accordance to humanitarian law.’ Israeli air force commander uses high modality ‘have to’ to imply that Israel has no other alternative but to fight what they call terrorism and thus continue firing missiles at Palestinian targets. It is worthy of note here that the use of numerous modal verbs in both reports indicates that each journalist’s “subjective assessment” of the news is intended to involve readers in the “communicative context”. “The use of modal verbs allows the writers to engage the readers dialogically in the subjective assessment of any proposition.”(Zarina,P 2013,p.4)

5. CONCLUSION

This analysis of the two news reports has illustrated how the same piece of news from two different sources can be reported from two different perspectives thereby supporting the argument that news

does not mirror the world but rather shapes it through the way it reports events (Fowler, 1991; Matheson, 2005; Fairclough, 1995). Each author of the above mentioned news articles use language and words to state the political beliefs they stand for. The critical analysis of the two reports has also fulfilled the primary purpose of CDA which is to uncover hidden values and ideologies that can propagate injustice and, as O'Hallorn (2003) puts it, to draw attention to how manipulative news texts can mystify the nature of the event or who was responsible for the actions in the reported event.

How a text may influence readers will vary from one reader to another depending on their beliefs and approaches towards different issues in life and depending on how each reader may interpret and comprehend a particular text. As Paltridge (2006) explains, texts cannot be isolated from the social realities and processes they contribute to preserve.

Language and politics are indeed inseparable from one another. Without understanding language, it is not possible to understand politics, because politics exist in language. It is the kind of language we use that defines certain political ideologies we stand for. Language has and still plays a crucial role in framing and shaping the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Analysing the two media texts critically highlights the role discourse (language in use) plays in creating a point of view and positioning the reader that view. Applying CDA tools to the two pieces of news exemplifies how the same piece of news is conveyed by two different newspapers in a way that endeavors to position the reader in a certain position. By doing so, it proves how media messages are not as neutral as they claim to be.

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Appendix 1

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Israeli raid kills Palestinian civilians

by
Wednesday 21 June 2006 4:44 PM GMT

A Palestinian woman and one of her relatives have been killed and 13 people wounded, including children, in a second Israeli air raid on the southern Gaza Strip in two days.

Palestinian security sources said a rocket fired by an Israeli aircraft took aim at a car, missed its target and struck a house.

Local medical sources and witnesses said 27-year-old Fatima al-Barbarawi was killed and 14 others were injured.

One of her relatives, Zakaria al-Barbarawi, 45, later died of wounds suffered in the attack.

The medical sources said that five children aged 1 to 4 were among the wounded and that of the 13 injured civilians four were in serious condition.

Palestinian condemnation

The Palestinian leadership condemned the strike, which came as the international community criticised the death of three Palestinian children in a raid on Tuesday.

Nabil Abu Rudeina, the Palestinian presidency spokesman, said: "The continued escalation and assassinations are exacerbating tensions in the region and compromise efforts seeking to relaunch the peace process."

On June 13, nine civilians were killed in an air raid, and on June 9, eight members of one family were killed while picnicking on a Gaza beach in an attack a rights group blamed on an Israeli shell.

Ryad Mansour, the Palestinian observer at the UN, appealed to the Security Council to demand that Israel, as an occupying power, abide by provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention, which he said were applicable to the occupied Palestinian territories.

UN disturbed



Palestinian medics treat two of the wounded children

name mentioned



Five children were injured in Wednesday's attack

details about casualties

<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/554FAF3A-R267-427A-B9EC-54881BDF0A2F...> 6/22/2006

The United Nations urged Israel to stop targeted killings of members of Palestinian resistance groups in the Gaza Strip.

Briefing the Security Council on the latest developments in the Middle East, Ibrahim Gambari, the UN undersecretary-general for political affairs, said Israel had stepped up its policy of targeted killings and of shelling Gaza areas from which rockets were fired at its territory.

He said Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general, was "particularly disturbed that despite his prior expressions of concern, this pattern was repeated yesterday, when three children were killed and a number of bystanders injured, during another targeted killing by Israel".

"We would like to once again underscore the need for Israel to cease targeted killings, which continue to claim civilian lives"

"We would like to, once again, underscore the need for Israel to cease targeted killings, which continue to claim civilian lives," Gambari said.

Ibrahim Gambari,
UN undersecretary-general for
political affairs

"It is the view of the secretary-general that Israeli actions should be proportionate and in accordance to humanitarian law."

Israel not dissuaded


But Israel said on Wednesday that it would not stop its policy of firing missiles at Palestinian targets despite the civilian deaths.

Major-General Eliezer Shaked, Israel's air force commander, said air strikes remained the most accurate way to combat Palestinian fighters.

Shaked told Israel's Army Radio: "We have to make a great effort to try everything possible to avoid hitting civilians. We have to fight terrorism and we are doing it ... this is more or less the central alternative, the most accurate and the best possible alternative without entering a broad and very significant [ground] operation."

Agencies By

You can find this article at:
<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/664BD904-C91A-4642-AE5B-C9460D253A22.htm>

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Appendix 2

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune

Palestinian woman dies in Israeli missile strike

By Ian Fisher and Steven Erlanger The New York Times
THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 2006

No name of woman mentioned

JERUSALEM A Palestinian woman was killed in Gaza on Wednesday when two Israeli missiles veered off target, the military said, and one of them hit a house. It was the latest in a series of strikes that have killed a dozen Palestinian civilians in eight days.

The strike also wounded 13 people in the southern town of Khan Yunis. It came a day after another missile killed three Palestinian children, whose bodies were paraded on Wednesday through the streets of Gaza before they were buried.

The airstrikes have swelled into a crisis for the new Israeli government, and particularly for Amir Peretz, the dovish defense minister who nonetheless has pledged a tough line on militants who have been firing homemade rockets from Gaza into Israel.

Before the latest strike, Peretz faced strong criticism in the Knesset from leftist and Israeli-Arab lawmakers, one of whom demanded that he resign because of the civilian deaths.

Another Knesset member, Yossi Beilin, leader of the leftist Meretz Party, called on the government to "immediately and unilaterally declare a complete" cease-fire for a limited period, during which the Palestinian "factions' readiness to hold their fire will be examined."

At a conference here Wednesday evening, Peretz was handed a note informing him of the botched airstrike. The Israeli Ynet news service reported that he lowered his head and said: "These days are not simple for me. To my regret I am told that innocent people paid a heavy price for this harsh conflict."

Captain Jacob Dallal, a military spokesman, said the Israeli Air Force fired two missiles at a car carrying militants on their way to carry out an unspecified attack. But for unknown technical reasons, he asserted, the missiles went off course. One hit the house and another landed in a road.

Palestinian press reports said that among the wounded were a pregnant woman and several children. The occupants of the car were not hurt.

"We have to understand why the missiles went off course," Dallal said. He asserted that the air force's record in hitting targets remained accurate overall. And with the military facing criticism for carrying out attacks in populated areas, he defended airstrikes both as precise and as a better option to larger military operations in Gaza.

The Israelis and Palestinian militants are locked in a struggle in Gaza, as militants have fired hundreds of homemade Qassam rockets and Israel has responded with thousands of artillery shells and other weaponry.

Human rights groups have criticized both sides - the militants for firing rockets into civilian areas, and the Israelis for a disproportionate response that has killed many civilians.

On Wednesday, a dispute continued over the most contentious incident in recent weeks, an explosion on a Gaza beach on June 9 that killed eight Palestinian civilians, seven from one family, amid a

dangerous for missile after

http://www.iht.com/bin/print_ipub.php?file=/articles/2006/06/21/news/mideast.php

6/22/2006

barrage of Israeli fire from the air, land and sea.

Palestinians and human rights groups contend the Israeli military fired a missile onto the beach. Israel has denied responsibility for the explosion. On Wednesday, Major General Meir Kalifi of the Israeli Army said that "conclusive tests" on a piece of shrapnel extracted from one of the wounded people showed that it did not come from an Israeli 155 millimeter shell, fired by Israelis that day.

He did not rule out, however, that the shrapnel could have been from an Israeli shell fired earlier that did not explode or a bomb planted by Palestinian militants.

But a statement from Human Rights Watch, which investigated the site the day after the blast, accused the military of ignoring "important evidence," including shrapnel it had gathered from the beach.

Meanwhile, Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, speaking in Jordan to the Petra Conference of Nobel Laureates, said that he could not accept any unilateral borders or political solutions imposed by Israel.

"We cannot, cannot accept a unilateral solution," Abbas said when asked about Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's plan to withdraw up to 80,000 Israeli settlers from the occupied West Bank and establish Israel's borders along the route of its separation barrier. "They may impose," Abbas said, "but it won't put an end to the conflict."

Abbas is scheduled to meet Olmert Thursday morning for the first time since Olmert became prime minister last month.

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