1. Introduction

The Israeli military operation Operation Protective Edge was launched on 8 July 2014 against the Hamas-ruled Gaza strip. The stated aim of the military operation was to stop Palestinian rocket attacks from Gaza into Israeli territory, which had increased after an Israeli offensive against Hamas in the West Bank following a kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens in June 2014. The seven weeks conflict with Israeli bombardment, Palestinian rocket fire, and ground fighting resulted in the massive destruction of the infrastructure in Gaza and in the deaths of over 2,100 people on both sides, the majority Palestinian civilians. The military conflict was broadcasted on international channels and ignited a lively political debate on responsibility for the escalation and justification of the parties’ actions in the war. The U.S. Congress picked up the issue, debated the conflict, positioned itself in the conflict and passed concomitant resolutions. All these reactions have to be understood as interpretive acts achieved through discourse. The Gaza war constitutes an actual happening in the world, nevertheless events do not contain their own interpretation but are made meaningful through language. Moreover, the parties involved in the conflict – Israelis and Palestinians – too are not pre-discursive facts, but their identities are constituted in discourse governed by cognitive and emotional ascriptions. In discourse protagonists are named, motivations ascribed, explanations provided. Following Mitchell (1981) and Bruner (1991) social representations are not simply organized as cognitive categories or concepts, but they contain narrative forms. Narratives are understood as “the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful” (Polkinghorne 1988, 1). Narratives function as an instrument in the construction of reality - in stories and through stories human beings organize their experiences. But stories not only “tell us what happened. They also make us feel” (Martin 2004, 321). Not only are emotions of the protagonists described in narrative, emotions are also evoked in the audience. This emotional potential contributes to the persuasive power of stories. Readers can be positioned to focus on victims and to feel pity and to show sympathy or the narrative may accentuate the deeds of the perpetrator thus evoking antipathy, anger or outrage. Palestinians and Israelis can thus be characterized as victims or perpetrators, their actions as justified or unjustified. Different stories invite different appraisal of events, different identifications, different emotional reactions and different motivations to act. Moreover, shared emotions contribute to the construction of emotional communities with concomitant feelings of identification, belonging and solidarity.

The article will discuss the link between narrative, emotion, identity and foreign policy. Recently, political science in general and international relations in particular started to pay more attention to the construction of narratives in (international) politics (Roberts 2006). Narratives help to construct individual and collective identities, to provide sense, to order experience, and to frame and structure action. Unfortunately, research on narratives in international relations has largely neglected the role of emotions. But narratives not only structure expectations and interpretations, they also evoke emotions. Moreover, the definition of characters such as heroes, victims and villains contributes to the construction of affective identities. Emotional narratives constitute self-other relations and regulate how we perceive others, feel about them and how we are expected to treat them. Mercer
(2010) has introduced the concept of emotional beliefs as generalized beliefs about others, to grasp how emotions influence how we interpret and evaluate the other’s respective actions. Wendy Pearlman (2013, 391) has argued in agreement that emotions influence cognition, motivation and action in systematic ways: emotions affect how people define and rank interests, emotions influence how people assess information, and emotions are powerful motivators of action.

The production of affective identities and the legitimation of American foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict go back at least until the foundation of Israel and the first Israeli-Arab war. In particular relations with Israel are characterized as special and friendly, grounded not only on common interest but also on mutual identification and emotional attachment. Rynhold argues that American support for Israel is based not on national interest or the power of the Israel lobby, but on deep cultural foundations. American sympathy “is deeply embedded in the very foundations of American national identity and political culture” (2015, 9). Opinion polls consistently show that sympathy for Israel is “deep-seated, widespread and increasingly robust” (Rynhold 2015, 1). A recent Gallup poll supports this assessment: Despite the friction between President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Gaza war Israel has retained a favorable image in the U.S. 62% sympathize with Israel, only 17% sympathize more with the Palestinians (Gallup 2015). These affective identities influence the way events in the Middle East are interpreted, moderate “possibilities of engagement” (Leep 2010, 332) and authorizes certain policies towards Israelis and Palestinians. Affective identities have a long lasting effect and are thus not easy to dissipate.

Nevertheless, emotions have to be activated in order to structure the interpretation of events. Similarly, narratives have to be continuously retold in order to compete successfully in the discursive field. Despite the robust construction of narratives and identities increasing divisions among Americans over the Arab Israeli conflict show the potential for change (Hagemann 2014). One important discursive arena for the re-articulation of narratives during the recent military conflict has been the Congress. Members of Congress “contribute to the public’s knowledge of the conflict, shape the public discourse and limit how the President may approach the conflict” (Leep 2010, 340f.). Individual members may articulate their position on the conflict, but the congress also passes resolutions and thus articulates positions with formal authority. Members of Congress therefore are positioned in a privileged institutional position which bestows symbolic power on them. Which stories do politicians tell about the Gaza conflict? Which events are selected, ordered and integrated into a meaningful story? Who is blamed for the violence? How are Israelis and Palestinians characterized? Which side is said to deserve sympathy, empathy and solidarity? Which emotions are evoked? Which foreign policies are legitimized?

In the following article I will develop an understanding of narrative which clearly distinguishes this concept from discourse or framing analysis and which can be operationalized for empirical research. In the second section the interrelatedness of emotion and narrative is discussed and made viable for the analysis of Congressional debates. In the last section, the research design is applied to an analysis of the debates in Congress during the Gaza military conflict. The article contributes both to how emotions can be studied empirically in systematic ways and to the study of American foreign policy towards the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

2. Narratives in Social Science Research
In the wake of the linguistic turn social sciences as well as political science have increasingly directed attention to language and its impact on power relations and the perception of reality. Narratives function as one instrument in the construction of reality - in stories and through stories human beings organize their experiences and memories. Alaisdair MacIntyre even argues that enacted narratives are the most typical form of social life (1981/1990, 129). According to MacIntyre and other proponents of the concept of nomo narrans, story telling is a unique human activity which is all pervasive and occurs in all spheres of life. Human beings constitute the world in stories they tell. Hardy (1987, 1) expresses this understanding when he claims: “We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative”. The idea of human beings as homo narrans must not necessarily be understood as an ontological claim. As Barbara Czarniaswka has rightly pointed out, “life might or might not be an enacted narrative but conceiving of it as such provides a rich source of insight” (2004, 3). Interests in narratives has therefore inspired different disciplines beyond literary theory especially in the humanities and social sciences. But what is a narrative? Davis rightly indicates that the “boundary between narrative and other forms of discourse is simply not sharply marked off” (2002, 11). Literary theory provides different and divergent perspectives on narratives. According to Polkinghorne a “narrative is a meaning structure that organizes events and human actions into a whole, thereby attributing significance to individual actions and events according to their effect on the whole” (1988,18). Similarly, Somers and Gibson (1994) stress that events or elements of the narrative are selectively appropriated, embedded in time and space and ordered sequentially. Not before events are (causally) emploted and transformed into a configuration or a coherent relational whole, a sequence of events turns into a narrative. Maines (1993) therefore defines events, sequence, and plot as the three irreducible elements of narrative. Patterson and Monroe (1998) and Davis (2002) accord with this minimal definition of a narrative but emphasize that plots not only involve events but also actors. “Narrative generally requires agency” (Patterson und Monroe 1998, 316). The character of story agents is developed in the narrative and at least partly defined by their relation to the plot. These elements do not exhaust the concept of narrative but they allow a first distinction to other forms of discourse.

2.1. Approaches to narrative research

Research on narratives in the social sciences oscillates between an analysis of the structures of narratives, which are understood as a (more or less) fixed product, and the process of narration done by actors in a specific institutional and strategic context. These approaches differ in their understanding of narrative analysis and especially on the issue of authorship and the role of actors in narrating stories. Structural approaches focus on structural features of narratives in the widest sense and aim at decoding their inner structure and logic. The basic assumption is that stories share consistent and identifiable components on which generalizations about narratives can be gained (Viehöver 2014, 77). Structural approaches therefore try to reconstruct archetypical characters, actant models, phenomenal structures, genres, plots, scripts or schemas that structure and configure the vast array of stories told. The primary unit of analysis is the text which is largely decoupled from the tellers and their intention and the circumstances of the production of the text. Narratives are understood as basic interpretative schemes or structural phenomena which constitute actors and their identities and can therefore not randomly or intentionally be constructed and reconstructed for strategic purposes. “In other words, there are people and interests behind narratives who bring narratives in the world. But these individuals give birth to narratives only within
the confinements of the available discursive possibilities. Actors cannot freely choose the narratives they deploy. The given discursive possibilities describe the larger reservoir of narratives, which can be mobilized for political purposes” (Gottweis 2006, 469).

The structural bias of many narrative approaches in social sciences came increasingly under critique. Poststructuralists object to the tendency to determine and fix the meaning of a text by applying generalized concepts and schemas. Instead poststructuralist approaches point to the polyphony and contrariness of narratives. Iser (1972: 284f.) for example argues that narratives gain their dynamism precisely through omission which provides an interpretive audience the opportunity to fill gaps, connect the narrative to different contexts and to unfold the power of the imaginative. Narratives can therefore be characterized by a certain fuzziness and inherent tensions. Accordingly, Czarniawska emphasizes the unpredictability of enacted narratives. “Such construction is never finished and in the negotiation of meaning the results are forever uncertain” (Czarniawska 2004: 13). Moreover, by separating the text from individual interpretations and the intention of the author structuralist approaches neglect the sociological context of narratives. Institutional context, pragmatic goals of the narrator, situated meanings and the relationship between teller and audience are disregarded. But, as Jacobs and Sobieraj (2007:7) have argued, the promise of narrative theory is precisely “to show how structural features of specific stories are related to social actions and historical outcomes.”

Actor-centered approaches to narratives pay more attention to the way actors employ narratives in specific historical contexts and as instruments in political communication and decision-making. The majority of narrative analysis in policy studies conceives political actors as producers of narratives who use narratives as an instrument in the policy process in order to expand power and to influence policy outcomes. Narratives are thus understood as strategic means in the political field. Stone (2002: 138) argues that the policy problem is defined in narratives: “Definitions of policy problems usually have narrative structure; that is, they are stories with a beginning, middle, and an end, involving some change or transformation. They have heroes and villains and innocent victims, and they pit forces of evil against forces for the good.” Radaelli (2000) contends that narratives are most often applied to define the policy problem and to influence agenda setting in policy areas of high uncertainty, complexity, and polarization. Under these conditions narratives serve as an alternative to argumentation through the use of symbols, stories, emotions or other “policy surrogates” (Nie 2003, 314). On a meso-level narratives have the function of building discourse coalitions and thereby of expanding the power of political actors. Hajer (1993) argues that story-lines serve as the glue that binds different actors together. Story lines combine “elements of the various discourses into a more or less coherent whole” (1993, 47). Similarly, Lejano, Ingram and Ingram (2013) contend that policy networks and narratives are mutually defining. Stories are “providing them [networks] with a sense of history, common ground, and future, thus enabling them to persist even in the context of resistance” (2013, 2). Narrative analysis can therefore shed a light on why narratives emerge, how members are integrated and attracted and how the policy problem is framed. In a case study of forestry policy, Pralle (2006) shows that narratives are not only used to integrate coalitions but also to divide opponents. The strategic deployment of narratives thus can be aimed at building or dividing coalitions. But how do narratives influence policy outcomes? Hajer (1993) argues that once a story-line becomes dominant and institutionalized it will generate a policy change. Jones and McBeth (2010, 345) are more sceptical and theorize that „narratives likely change little once captured by an institution.“ Instead the influence on policy changes is understood more indirectly through influences on the coalition composition. Other studies show that the construction of narrative characters has a
high level of influence on public opinion but also on decision makers. Schneider and Ingram (2005) theorize that the way advocacy coalitions present narrative characters influences the policy outcome. Especially effective is the construction of victims who are portrayed as deserving and entitled in generating support. Jones (2010) focuses on the hero as the fixer of the problem, whereas Stone (2002) highlights the characterization of the villain as causer of the problem. These studies generally point out that the power of narratives is contingent on the configuration of characters in the story and the construction of their respective identities. Moreover, McBeth et al (2007) have shown that narratives are used by interest groups in order to expand or contain the scope of conflict. The authors demonstrate that especially groups that portray themselves as loosing tend to expand the scope of conflict in order to shift the focus of the debate and to garner more support by broadening the coalition. Accordingly, groups that perceive themselves as winning try to contain the policy issues in order to maintain their dominant position.

Structural and actor-centered approaches should not be considered as incompatible. On the contrary, actor-centered approaches may focus on the act of narration and consider narratives as intentional strategies, they nevertheless also often conduct an analysis of narrative structures such as plot or actant structure in order to discuss the persuasiveness of the stories told and its effect on the policy process. Structural approaches on the other hand only rarely blank out actors and sociological components of narrative communication. Viehöver (2014, 71) therefore suggests a perspective which integrates both dimensions of narrative as a structure (opus operandum) and as a performative strategy (modus operandi). The potential of narrative analysis lies precisely in this dialectical interplay of structure and agency and the linking of structural features with social actions and historical outcomes. Actors can try to employ narratives strategically in political communication (governing narratives), at the same time these actors remain constrained by the repertoire at their disposal and the specific institutional and discursive context (governed by narratives). Understood this way narrative analysis brings together, what Hall (2000) has called the intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of cultural inquiry. The intrinsic dimension relates to situated meanings: “the invented, received, re-presented, transposed, and improvised cultural repertories that individuals and groups use to communicate, strategize, and coordinate their actions” (Jacobs/Sonieraj 2007: 5). The external dimension is concerned with the underlying generic structures or scripts that inform the stories actors tell. Similarly, Bruner (1991) considers the concurrence of particularity and broader types of scripts as a defining characteristic of narratives. “Particularity achieves its emblematic status by its embeddedness in a story that is in some sense generic. (...) But for all that, a narrative cannot be realized save through particular embodiment” (1991, 7).

2.2. Framing, Discourse, Narrative

Telling stories is a way to give meaning to events and things. But narratives are not the only way of making sense of the world. Other concepts such as discourse or framing share the assumption of the constitutive character of language. How do these concepts relate to each other, how do they differ? Discourse can be understood as the broadest concept which is concerned with an analysis of fundamental meaning and action-generating schemata. Foucault, for example, was interested in knowledge configurations governed by rules about legitimate definitions of phenomena. Discourses and their inner structuration can therefore be understood as broad systems which on the hand generate the “formation of concepts” and the “formation of enunciative modalities” (Keller 2011, 47). As quite abstract and long-lasting structures discourses establish knowledge structures, subject positions and practices. Narratives on the other hand are stories which refer to specific events and
actors and relate them to one another in a coherent and systematic way. They cannot remain as a mere concept but are realized by narrators who tell a particular story of what has happened. Narratives can thus be understood as being embedded in discourse as a broader meaning structure. “It is a performance that occurs within a performance-enabling structure” (Lejano, Ingram, Ingram 2012, 54).

The concept of framing refers to “schemata of interpretation” (Goffman 1959) which are used by actors to define situations. The concept of frames more closely resembles the concept of narratives. Consider for example the definition of Entman (1993, 52) who understands frames as “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.” Applied in social movement research, Snow et al (1986) conceive of collective action frames as a conscious effort of groups to define the problem to be addressed and its causes, to delineate possible remedies, to define possible strategies and to give reasons for actions to be taken. Frames are therefore used to make sense of the present, to guide and motivate action, to persuade outsiders to join and to build coalitions. It is therefore no wonder that frames are often articulated in narrative structures. Nevertheless, both concepts are not identical. Lejano, Ingram and Ingram (2013, 53f.) argue that frames might provide the basis for understanding events, but that it comes short of narratives. “But consider how the response to the tragedy of 9/11 was framed, initially as a crime but, later on, as a war. Whether as crime or war, the frames provide a basic source for explaining and understanding the event. But, here lies a difference (...). To simply frame it as a war suggests that a compelling story can be told that traces the origin of the event to an act of war and equates the policy actors with combatants – but the story is not told yet. True, the person using or acquiring the frame can construct a story out of it, but that is only potentially true.” A narrative perspective allows to analyze how successful actors are in telling a complete story, which relates cognitive schemas provided by frames to specific events and which involves “a logical flow of events and complete characterization” (Lejano, Lejano, Ingram 2013, 54). Moreover, Davis criticizes that the concept of framing remains overly cognitive: It concentrates on coherent arguments and reasons for activism in order to explain the power of a frame and thus neglects the role of morality and especially of emotions. “Narrative analysis, by contrast, illuminates persuasion at more subtle, imaginative, and pre-prepositional levels” (Davis 2002, 24).

Narratives offer explanations for and justifications of what happened and why it did so. But the narrative mode of explanation is different to propositional arguments and nomological explanations who make explicit claims to truth and causality and propose law-like hypothesis. Narrative explanations instead are based on the sequential ordering of specific events and on the construction of agency of the characters in the story. Walter Fisher (1987) therefore argues that audiences do not assess stories according to their correct reference to reality but to the principles of narrative coherence and fidelity. Persuasive stories convincingly integrate events into a coherent story line and sufficiently develop the characters so that both together add up “to a reliable claim to reality” (Fisher 1987, 194). Similarly, Bruner (1991) claims that narrative truth is judged by verisimilitude. Through the emplotment of disparate events and actions stories gain their own compelling logic or narrative seduction. While some approaches focus on the causal emplotment, narratives should not be reduced to causal reasoning. Instead, stories do not only appeal to the intellect but also to moral reasoning, aesthetic intuition and emotion. “Through stories, participants, actual and potential, are called not so much to reflect on the merits of coherent arguments or self-consciously adopt an
interpretive schema (...) but to identify and empathize with real protagonists, to be repelled by antagonists, to enter into and feel morally involved in configurations of events (...)” (Davis 2002, 24). Stories want to involve the audience and to engage its moral imagination. Stories do not remain value neutral or objective instead they imply a moral perspective which culminates in the moral of the story. Narratives are thus constructed according to evaluative criteria (Somers and Gibson 1994): On the one hand, the selective appropriation of events and their emplotment in a teleological plot structure not only allow the audience to make moral decisions, they also suggest to take sides and to act according to this moral evaluation. On the other hand, narratives intensify the evaluative structure as the characters of the story are organized in binary relations of similarity and difference, such as heroes and villains, friends or enemies, allies and opponents (Jacobs/Soberiaj 2007, 7). Chilton (2004) differentiates between two types of legitimization in political communities: In the epistemic mode speakers refer to the better knowledge they have, they claim to be “rational” and “objective” and try to bolster these claims with references to statistics or other sources that enjoy credibility among the audience. In the deontic mode speakers do not (only) rely on cognitive arguments but they aim at establishing moral authority and common moral ground. They do so by employing narrative structures in order to generate moral decisions and create a sense of community. The dramatization and moralization in stories can evoke emotional responses - the audience is not to be persuaded by abstract arguments, at least not only. Instead stories produce in his hearers “an imaginative and affective involvement in the state of affairs” (Pratt cited in Davis 2002, 17). The teller is not only reporting, he wants the audience “to share his wonder, amusement, terror, or admiration of the event.” (Ibid.). The concept of narrative transportation describes a situation where the reader is transported into the narrative, he or she gets involved in the story and with its protagonists. Escalas (2004) found in her research that narratives are more persuasive than analytical arguments due to a more effective transportation and affective involvement of the readers. Lausberg (2008, 404) argues that stories contain concrete events, situations and characters which makes it easier for the audience to comprehend and to identify with the action of the protagonists. Moreover, in contrast to analytical arguments narratives make us of metaphors, analogies or images which contain an affective potential. Green and Brock (2002, 328) therefore conclude that narratives “have enduring effects on beliefs because their powerful images [continue] to function as persistent ‘arguments’ in favor of a particular policy (e.g., abolish slavery).” Unfortunately, the evocation of emotions in narratives remain undertheorized. In the following chapter a framework for the analysis of emotion in and through narratives will be developed.

2.3. Framework for a narrative analysis

Narrative analysis comprises two different aspects. On the one hand, narratives can be understood as a “fixed” product of the process of narration. Narratives contain a basic structure or fabula which comprises of the general sequence of events and a set of characters. In order to detect this basic fabula, narrative analysis should not be confined to singular texts. Not every speech or statement has to contain the narrative as a whole, including the entire sequence of events and all characters. Instead, it can focus on a certain episode, which nevertheless remains embedded in the larger narrative. Narrative analysis has therefore to go beyond single text documents and to take into account the narrative structuring of a certain policy field. On the other hand, these structural features have to be actualized by actors in their actual narrating of the story. Narratives are, therefore, performances by specific narrators in a specific context. Differences in narrating the general story, background knowledge, intertextual references, institutional and situational context
and the like have to be taken into account. The concept of narratives tries to capture this interplay of basic story lines with the plurivocity of the stories told by different narrators. In the following I will briefly elaborate on key dimensions of narrative analysis which provides the framework for the empirical analysis.

**Emplotment**
A narrative is more than the mere listing of events. Not before events are selected, temporally and spatially ordered and integrated into a coherent and interdependent whole, a narrative is formed. Ricouer (1984, 65) speaks of configuration to designate this transformation of a mere succession of events into a meaningful story. E.M. Forster (cited in Davis 2002, 14) introduced a widely-cited example to demonstrate what emplotment means:

1.) The king died, and then the queen died.
2.) The king died, and then the queen died of grief.

Both sentences contain a temporal sequence of events, but only in the second case both events are related to one another, thereby introducing a causal connection. The queen died as a result of the grief that was caused by the king’s death. Emplotment therefore designates “how the story is constructed out of disparate events and actions into a sequence that has its own compelling logic” (Lejano, Ingragm and Ingram 2013, 60). Narratives do not only explain how events are related to each other, but also link events and actors providing the rationale and reasoning for the agency of actors. Events and actors are thus connected and integrated into a coherent whole. As was mentioned before, the explanation of events does not always follow the model of cause-and-effect, but can also be based on moral reasoning or emotional persuasion.

One of the core features of narratives is thus the “representation of a sequence of events” (Ryan 2007). Aristoteles has further differentiated this temporal sequentiality of events in his poetics and defined the plot as having a beginning, a middle, and an end. All three parts are closely connected and often exhibit a teleological structure, so that the unfolding of the story reveals the “moral” of the story. “In a well-formed story, the meaning is immanent in all of the events from the beginning, and so beginning, middle, and end are closely and coherently linked” (Davis 2002, 13). Hodges (2011, 43) speaks of precipitating events that act as the starting point and that become the reference point around which the narrative revolves. Quite often a breach of what is defined as normality and canonical behavior serves as such a precipitating event which sets a chain of events in motion that unfolds in the middle of the plot. The starting point therefore structures the story as a whole. According to Lionel Trilling (quoted in Davis 2002, 13) the beginning, “is not merely the first of a series of events; it is the event that originates those that follow.” The selection of the beginning is thus a power-political act which already affects the evaluation of events and actors in the story. In the traditional understanding of the plot the middle of the story comprises of a series of challenges, complications or adventures which are brought to closure and resolution at the end of the story. This traditional concept of the temporal sequentiality was challenged by critics who argue that narratives are often open-ended and sometimes even “open-begininged” (Lejano, Ingram 2013, 51). Moreover, narratives do not always provide solutions and resolutions at the end, instead they explicitly resist closure. “Stories do not necessarily promise (although they may) that conflicts will be definitively resolved or truth manifested once and for all; they promise only that something further will happen, or that there is something else to learn” (Leitch quoted in Davis 2002, 13). The process of story-telling therefore never ends, but must be conceptualized as an ongoing process.

Another feature of narratives closely connected to the emplotment of events is the “selective appropriation of a set of events” (Somers and Gibson 1994). Out of “the vast array of open-ended
and overlapping events” (Ibid.) only those events that are deemed relevant to the teller are selected and therefore endued with meaning while others are left out. Equally not all elements of a story have the same relevance to the story-line and its narrative logic. Certain actions or turning points therefore enjoy more prominence in the plot. Lejano, Ingram and Ingram suggest that “as important to what is linked, revealed, and described in the plot, is what is left out” (2013, 79). Narrative gaps are part and parcel of emplotment as the narrative construction of meaning hinges upon the selective appropriation of certain events and their relationality. By including or excluding events, by making or denying connections to other events or policy areas the definition, scope and salience of conflict is influenced. Lejano, Ingram and Ingram (2013, 71) point out that the selective appropriation of events and the narrative gaps involved constitute a basic principle of narratives - it should not be understood as “spin-doctoring or strategic fictionalizing” although it can be strategically used to broaden the appeal and the resonance of a narrative.

**Characterization**
Traditional approaches to narrative analysis emphasize events, sequence and plot. But both in literary theory and in social sciences characters and their developments became the focal point of the narrative. Narratives are concerned with human action and thus contain a set of characters as a defining feature. Roland Barthes has suggested that plot and character form a reciprocal relationship in which the characters and their actions are defined at least partly by their relation to the plot (Davis 2002, 15). Characters are here more or less reduced to abstract role players or actants, such as hero, villain, betrayer, helper, informant etc. Such a perspective runs the risk of flattening the actors in the narrative by perceiving them as “a byproduct of the function they perform in the plot” (Davis 2002, 15). But the persuasive power of narratives precisely rests on the possibility to identify with or to be repelled by the protagonists of a narrative. In order to accomplish such an affective identification actants need a specific identity and a character with qualities “neither required nor expended in the action” (Leitch quoted in Davis 2002, 15). This process of characterization involves “the simultaneous process of individuation and categorization” (Lejano et al 2013, 63). Abstract role players can be developed into characters by constructing rich, specific, complex and multifaceted personalities which exhibit distinctive features that go beyond their plot function. On the other hand, the particularity of the events and characters has always to be related to the more generic script of the narrative in order to make both intelligible. “One effective means for this is to assign individuals into classes or categories. Thus, a character becomes a union of general and specific attributes” (Lejano et al 2013, 64). The development of characters can be done in various ways. One way is concerned with focalization or the perspective(s) from which the story is being told. By choosing a certain perspective only particular events are selected and given meaning in the development of the story. Moreover, the story can be told by an insider who can claim authenticity and intimate knowledge or by an outsider who observes from the outside and may claim objectivity in his or her telling of the story. Each perspective involves certain claims and opens up different perspectives. Often narratives involve multiple perspectives at the same time. A second way to build a character is to give voice to protagonists in the narrative. It makes a difference whether an outsider tells the story of terror victims or the victim itself describes not only what happened but also about his or her reactions, fears, desires or hopes. To listen to the person in his or her own voice brings the reader closer to the character and more easily evokes an affective reaction. Thirdly, the characterization of protagonists is related to the ascription or denial of agency. The portrayal of actors as active causers or passive sufferers, as intriguer or innocent victim, as cooperative or uncooperative actor is an important element in the characterization. Finally, the identity of characters is developed in relation to other
actors of the narrative. Jacobs and Sobieraj (2007) introduce the concept of character funneling and demonstrate that in narratives the complex set of characters often is reduced to binary oppositions such as heroes and villains, allies and opponents, or friends and enemies. “By reducing the complexity of the narrative to a central protagonist and antagonist, narrators are able to focus attention on who is the main threat, and what kinds of actions are required to eliminate the threat” (Jacobs/Sobieraj 2007, 9). Binary oppositions intensify the evaluation of the readers who are urged to identify, to make judgments and to take a side in the conflict. The construction of identity is closely connected to the construction of alterity, characters are organized into binary relations of similarity and difference. The building of characters and descriptions of similarity and difference between characters make possible identifications. Slater (2002, 172) differentiates three possible channels of identification: a perceived similarity to a character in the narrative, the attractiveness and social desirability of a character and the experience of the story from a character’s point of view. Narratives offer possibilities of identification and make possible to see the stories through the eyes of the character. Moreover, the identification with characters constitutes an important resource in the construction of collective identities: Readers are invited to become involved in the story and to join in the process of narration.

*Intertextual References*

Stories cannot be created from scratch, but they build on and refer to existing narrative structures, interpretive frames and literary devices. The concept of intertextuality is used to analyze how texts refer to other texts. Fairclough differentiates the term further between manifest and constitutive intertextuality. “In manifest intertextuality, other texts are explicitly present in the text under analysis; they are ‘manifestly marked or cued by features on the surface of the text, such as quotation marks” (Fairclough 1992, 104). The term constitutive intertextuality on the other hand refers to broader discourse conventions such as genres, voices or other narrative structures that are referred to.

Examples for references that point outside of the text are symbolic codes such as metaphors, allusions or analogies. “These act like indices to other stories or conditions that inform the text at hand” (Lejano et al 2013, 70). In foreign policy and international relations analogies to and comparisons with historical events, which draw on the collective memory and shared history of the audience, are frequently applied in order to make sense of what otherwise would be incomprehensible. Analogies contain references to both events and characters. Through erasure and focalization similarities between events are highlighted while differences are ignored. This correspondence of events not only makes it possible to understand the present, but also to apply the lessons of the past and the successful models for action in the present (Hodges 2011, 30-32). The categorization of actors also often contains comparisons with archetypical characters of history and thus serves to emphasize either the positive or negative properties of the characters. Another important feature of symbolical codes is to embedd events not only in time but also in space. As Chilton (2004, 149-151) has shown analogies can bring events in distant locations closer to home not only historically but also geographically. By linking remote spaces with the space of the speaker and the audience, the event and its effects become closer and they possibly encroach the space of the self (Chilton 2004, 151). Thus bringing events closer to home involves bringing the danger closer to home and thus increases the urgency to act. Spatial and historical analogies can be understood as complementary as the urge to act is connected to the historical lessons of how to act.

3. **Narrative and Emotion**
3.1. Emotion

Research on emotions has been a desideratum in the social sciences for a long time. This has changed in recent years, some observers even speak of a “boom” in emotion research (Antz 2007) or postulate an “emotional turn” (Wolf 2012). Publications exploring the concept of emotion appeared in all disciplines from literary studies, sociology, ethnology, communication studies, psychology to political sciences. Nevertheless, emotions remain difficult to define. Initially, three main concepts developed in psychology were adopted in the social sciences among them essentialist concepts that understand emotions as psychobiological processes which are (at least partly) universal processes that “retain a robust essence untouched by the social or cultural” (Abu-Lughod/Lutz 1990, 2; cf. Ekman 2002). A second influential concept are pleasure/arousal or core-affect theories who define emotions along two bipolar and orthogonal dimensions. The first axis delineates the hedonic valence of an emotion with the poles pleasure and displeasure, the second the emotional arousal with the poles activation and deactivation (Russel 2003, Reisenzein 1994). A third common approach are multi-component models who define emotions as a complex process in which subjective feelings, physiological activity, cognitive appraisal, motor expressions and behavioral activities interact (Scherer 2005, Ben Ze’ev 1996, Voss 2009). Despite the differences between these approaches, all concepts share some basic assumptions that remain central to understanding emotions. First, emotions involve an evaluative dimension directed towards an object, a person, a situation or an event (intentional character). Appraisal theories for example claim that not an event as such but rather its interpretation elicits emotions. Interpretation with respect to goals, values, norms, desires, needs and beliefs and relevance detection are the two core principles in appraisal theory that are crucial for emotion elicitation (Frijda 1993; Roseman/Smith 2001; Bruder/Fischer/Manstead 2014). A stimulus thus has to be interpreted and to be evaluated in order to evoke a specific emotion such as anger or shame.  

A second common feature of emotions is their motivational dynamic. Petersen (2005) for example argues that cultural schemas are not only cognitive models, but that they entail also emotional schemas that involve certain action tendencies and have the power either to motivate or to dispirit political action. Following the work of Frijda (1986), Petersen treats emotions as action tendencies, "an impulse or state of readiness to act" (2005, 142). Emotions do have specific action tendencies: shame activates an urge to disappear, fear activates fight or flight. The motivational dynamic of emotion focuses on the performative quality of emotions: On the one hand emotions have the ability to motivate action, they are evoked in and come along with action. On the other hand emotional schemas are constituted, actualized and also re-articulated in the performance.

In the social sciences, these two basic dimensions of emotions have been retained, while the tendency to place emotions in the individual, thus naturalizing and individualizing emotions, has been strongly criticized. More and more approaches in cultural studies and sociology have gained influence, which forcefully challenge biological concepts of emotions. Instead social constructionist approaches direct attention to the historical, spatial, social and temporal context of emotions and consider emotions to be influenced by socialization, culture, and tradition. Emotions are no longer

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1 Other approaches go even further and argue that emotions constitute judgements. Nussbaum (2001) for example considers emotions to be a form of thought and thus develops a cognitivist approach to emotions. Slaby (2008), in contrast, highlights the differences between affective and emotional states. For him, affective intentionality is different from a purely cognitive intentionality as “affective states are phenomenologically salient and motivationally efficacious, and moreover, hedonically valenced” (431).
placed within the individual, but are rather to be understood “as produced within the framework of social interactions and communication in the wider sense” (Herbrik 2012, 114). As such emotions can be understood as "discursive practices" (Abu-Lughod/Lutz 1990: 10) that are informed by cultural themes and values and which create effects in the world. Cognitive appraisals for example are no longer individualized but understood as social processes of evaluation that incorporate social knowledge and patterns of interpretation (see Manstead, Fischer 2001). These approaches indicate that emotions "serve as an operator in a contentious field of social activity" (Abu-Lughod/Lutz 1990: 11) and have to be placed in the social field with its power relations. Emotion discourses then can establish or reinforce, challenge or assert hegemonic emotion norms. Likewise Sarah Ahmed (2004: 4) argues for analyzing what emotions "do", how they operate as social practices within various social formations and historical contexts.

A further conclusion from recent research is that cognition and emotion should not be understood as unconnected, isolated and autonomous opposites. LeDoux argues that “emotion and cognition are best thought of as separate but interacting mental functions mediated by separate but interacting brain systems” (1999, 69). Following such an interactive approach which postulates an interlacing of reason, thought and emotion, it is not only that cognitive appraisals lead to emotional reaction but also the other way around: “[...] emotions not only can arise from but give rise to an implicit cognitive predisposition to appraise future events in line with central appraisal patterns or appraisal themes that characterize emotions” (Han et al cited in Kühne 2013, 14). Summing up recent research, Wendy Pearlman (2013) has argued that emotions influence motivation, appraisal and action in systematic ways. She identifies three central mechanisms: Emotions affect preferences and value priorities of individuals, they influence how people assess information and they involve an action tendency as an impulse that motivates action.

### 3.2. Evocation of emotion through narratives

The approaches discussed so far all agree that cognition and emotion are closely intertwined (Schwarz Friesel 2013), that cognitive schemas involve emotional schemas (Petersen 2005) and that cognitive appraisals evoke emotions, but that emotions can also give rise to certain cognitions (Kühne 2013). Despite these claims little attention has been paid to the way emotions can be studied empirically, instead analysis remain mostly limited to the cognitive dimension in discourse or framing studies (Kleres 2010, 182). Other than psychology, political science is not primarily interested in individual emotions but in the social construction of emotions in the political process. How are emotions evoked, suppressed, regulated or changed in the political process? How can cognitive frames or public performances evoke emotions? How do emotions influence perception, evaluation and motivation to act? Bleiker and Hutchinson (2008) argue that methodologically emotions in world politics can be only studied by analyzing how emotions are represented and communicated such as in speeches, declarations but also in performative acts. Although both authors argue that emotions are internal and that representations can bring us only as close as possible to understand emotions thus neglecting the social character of emotions and the constitutive character of language to feeling, they point out that emotions can be observed best in narratives. Narratives seem to have a double quality making them especially productive to analyze. Not only are emotions described in narrative form, narratives also have the potential to evoke emotions in the reader (Ungerer 1997). Nussbaum similarly has suggested that narratives have the ability to evoke emotional activity in the reader and that this is “an activity valuable, again, both for itself and for its epistemological role” (1988, 231).
Narratives thus not only describe or represent emotions of either the narrator or the characters involved, from a performative point of view narratives also evoke emotions.

In the following section I will discuss how the various components of narratives are related to emotions and how a narrative analysis can detect both the described emotions and the potential for emotionalization.

**Structure and Plot**

Structural approaches have differentiated between various narrative forms that are characterized by a certain sequence of events. This emplotment of events into a meaningful whole corresponds with specific emotional atmospheres which are evoked in the unfolding of the story. Emplotment then not only selects, relates and orders events, actions or characters, but at the same time creates an emotional narrative. Frye (1961) has introduced a narrative typology which distinguishes between the romance, the comedy, the tragedy, and the satire. The structural characteristics of these archetypical narratives correspond to specific emotions. The main argument made here is that a certain plot evokes a certain emotion. In the romance, for example, the plot is focused on the adventures of the hero, who has to face a number of challenges en route to his goal. The story ends with victory and the hero prevails over his or her adversaries. The plot is focused essentially on the struggle but with an optimistic emotional state. In tragedy, in contrast, the hero is defeated by his opponents. The plot structure “has an inverted U, with the action rising in crisis to a peripety and then plunging downward to catastrophe through a series of previous acts” (Frye 1961, 592). The tragedy is therefore characterized by a gloomy atmosphere but also by the evocation of tragic emotions such as pity and fear. The plot of a comedy, according to Frye, is U-shaped “with the action sinking into deep and often potentially tragic complications and then suddenly turning upward into a happy ending” (Frye 1961, 592). Because of the climax at the end, the triumph over obstructions and the restoration of social order the emotional atmosphere of a comedy is more joyful than in the romance (Kleres 2010, 192). Lastly, the satire involves both humor and bitterness as the plot provides a cynical perspective on social hegemonies combined with a description of the absurdity of human existence. Each plot structure thus contains a specific emotional significance.

In her research of autobiographies Tuval-Mashiach (1998, 88-105) has shown that narratives of life stories do not strictly accord with the literary archetypes developed by Frye. However, the plot of the life stories all involved a dramatic structure which is closely connected to the unfolding of events over time. Tuval-Mashiach distinguishes between three basic formats: a narrative of progress, a regressive narrative with a course of deterioration or decline and a stable narrative (p. 89). While Tuval-Mashiach does not discuss emotions explicitly, it seems obvious that emotional intensity of the progressive and regressive narrative is higher, as they contain climax, turning points, crossroads etc. that have emotional significance for the individual. Moreover, both narrative formats evoke utterly different emotions: whereas progress is associated with optimism, hope or joy, decline or defeat might evoke sadness, fear or anger. Hudson et al. (1992) similarly distinguish three different types of emotion narratives defined by the plot and the temporal structure: “happiness episodes showed little dramatic action; madness narratives had rising action, a climax and then falling action; scared narratives showed dramatic action rising to a climax but lacking falling action after that” (Kleres 2010, 190). Moreover, the story can be told in different temporal modes with narrations in real-time, slow motion or fast mode thereby influencing the dramatic structure. These general observations give a first indication of how plot and emotions are connected. Nevertheless, these structural approaches remain overly abstract. Tuval-Mashiach (1998) suggested that in social sciences narrative structures
are often combined into hybrid forms which deviate from the literary typologies. She therefore recommends not to narrow the analysis by rigidly applying structural models. Moreover, whereas it seems plausible that the emotions evoked by narratives of progress or decline differ, it remains unclear which emotions exactly are involved. Decline can lead to depression or anger, dispiriting or emboldening emotions. General plot structures alone are not sufficient, instead events, characters and actions have to be taken into account more closely.

Appraisal theories argue that in order to elicit emotions a situation must be relevant for the reader. Narratives provide strategies to create relevance and salience of the events and thereby to increase the emotional significance of the story. One way to increase relevance relates to the setting of the story. The creation of geographical and/or temporal proximity or distance greatly affects the emotional potential of the story. Ungerer (1997) argues that the creation of proximity is a basic mechanism to increase the relevance and arousal among the readers and thus to engage the reader with the story, its events and characters. Only when appraised as relevant, an emotional response and an emotional evaluation will be released. In his analysis of news stories Unger identifies two main strategies to create proximity: The first transfers the events as close as possible to the location of the readers. Especially events that are distant have to be made relevant to the location of the reader in order to evoke emotions. As already discussed above, analogies and comparisons can bring events at locations far away closer to the experiences and the background knowledge of the audience. Events then do not only become more comprehensible but also more relevant, salient, and emotionally significant. A second strategy is to take the reader closer to individual fates. The persuasive power of narratives then does not (or not only) stem from the causal emplotment of selected events but from the power of personalization and identification. Especially when familiarity or similarity are highlighted in individual stories, distant biographies and indirectly also the political and social context in which these individuals are embedded are brought closer to the audience. The degree of details and also the repetition of events or stories increase the emotional intensity of the narrative.

Appraisal theories emphasize various other cognitive techniques to regulate emotions, such as the selection or modification of a situation or the deployment of attention (Gross 2002). Similarly, framing theories especially mention problem identification, attribution of blame/causality, and assessment of efficacy as main components of frames (Benford/Snow 2000). Frames thus define what the story is all about (theme and problem), why it is relevant to the audience and what can be done to solve the problem. The order of events or the selection of beginning and ending can greatly affect what is identified as the definition of the problem. Especially the selection of the precipitating event (or a breach of norms) structures not only the problem definition but also the unfolding of the following events. These elements of cognitive frames are not only closely related to the interpretation of situations but also to relevance detection and to the evocation of emotions. Wendy Pearlman therefore argues that specific constellations of problem definition, sense of certainty and control, blame attribution and (risk) assessment lead to specific emotions. She distinguishes between two clusters of emotions: Dispiriting emotions, such as fear, sadness or shame, “encourage people to resign to political circumstances, even at the cost of accepting indignities” (2013, 392). This is a result especially of a low sense of control of the situation and a pessimistic assessment of future developments. Other emotions such anger, joy or pride have emboldening effects. “They expand one’s sense of identity, and heighten attention to slights to that identity. They also promote optimistic assessments, a sense of personal efficacy, and risk acceptance” (Ibid.). The story-line
therefore greatly influences which emotions are evoked, in which intensity and with which action tendency.

Empirical studies confirm that attribution of blame influences which emotion is elicited by a news story. Nerb (2000) shows in an experimental study that recipients of a disaster more often felt angry when a person responsible was mentioned in the news reports. Anger was even intensified in cases where actors caused the disaster intentionally. In cases where the situation was blamed for the disaster, anger was less often reported and in less intensity. Instead it seems that disasters caused by situational circumstances elicit rather sadness than anger (Pearlman 2013, 392). A study by Kim and Cameron (2011) further indicates that the deployment of attention influences the emotions evoked in the readers. News stories can either focus on the perpetrators and their wrongdoing or on the victims and their suffering. In the former case attention is focused on a (moral) breach and the attribution of blame thus eliciting anger. In the latter case the focus on the victims and their personal fate leads to sadness. Attribution of blame and the construction of agency in narratives thus are closely intertwined. Some emotions need agency and someone to be blamed, whereas the lack of agency may lead to different emotions. Kleres (2010) for example argues that in Aids-NGOs many interviewees were not outraged because “they found no one to ascribe agency to” (192). Instead feelings of helplessness that involve a non-agentive experience arise. Agency and attribution of blame thus refer both to the described and to the invoked emotions.

Characters
The last section already indicated that the elicitation of emotions is not only tightly connected to the plot but also to the development of characters. Thomas Anz (2007) has argued that mechanisms of identification and empathy constitute a basic potential for the emotionalizing power of narrative. To analyze which emotions are elicited by a text, it is not enough to focus on the plot and its development but also on who is acting in the narrative. The death of a person can elicit both pity or relief depending on the characterization of the dead. Prototypical emotional scenarios should therefore not only refer to narrative structures but systematically relate story-line and characters. Anz develops three exemplary basic rules of emotionalization that illustrate the relationship between plot and character:
1) Stories evoke pity or grief when sympathetic characters die.
2) Stories evoke satisfaction, relief or joy when dislikable characters die.
3) Stories evoke indignation when sympathetic characters die and dislikable characters do not die (2007, 322).

Plot and the construction of characters as sympathetic or dislikable therefore influence which emotion is evoked in the reader. Whereas Antz’s work is interested in stories of death, Zillman and Knobloch (2001) formulate a more general approach to narrative empathy. In accordance with basic findings of research on empathic reactivity they argue that “affective reactions are a function of affective dispositions towards the agents to whom good or bad things are happening and who express positive or negative emotions in response to these happenings” (194f.). The main argument then is that the emotional reactions of the audience depend on dispositions of liking or disliking. Following from these basic assumptions Zilman and Knobloch formulate, similarly to the rules of Antz, emotional scenarios: The recipients “will be pleased and joyful when learning about good fortunes of liked others, and they will be displeased and distressed when learning about bad fortunes of liked others” (195). Conversely, readers will become distressed when learning about good fortunes by disliked people and joyful when disliked people experience bad fortunes. Empathetic concerns
therefore are related to the disposition of liking, whereas bad fortunes of disliked persons do not evoke pity but joyful reactions.

Other authors agree that empathy is one of the main mechanisms of narrative impact and persuasion (Schwarz-Friesel 1993, 225). According to classic definitions of Aronfreed (1970), Berger (1962), and Stotland (1969), empathy may be defined as an individual’s emotional arousal elicited by the expression of emotion in another (most often distress). Empathy then involves both a cognitive dimension (the knowledge of another person’s thoughts and feelings and the ability to take the perspective of another) and an affective dimension (feeling for another person) (Batson 2009). Defined as the “embodied (or bodily grounded) capacity to feel one’s way into the other’s affective situation, and to adopt the others perspective” (Engelen/Röttger-Rössler 2012, 4), empathy is a fundamentally social emotion. Some authors even argue that that empathy is triggered by identification (de Waal 2009), others are more cautious and advice against the conflation of empathy and pity. Lui and Laszlo (2009, 23) for example emphasize that empathy does not require a homogenization of attitudes and conformity of opinion. Empathy thus does not necessarily require identity between the individual and the character or situation with which he or she empathizes, although similarity, familiarity, a common cultural background and spatial proximity help to facilitate empathy. Empathic arousal increases the motivation to help or protect the other, it thus transports readers into the story. The audience no longer remains untouched, but becomes involved in the story. Emotions in narratives are therefore not mere descriptions of the emotional experience of the characters, but at the same time they request a re-action of the audience: The display of grief demands comfort, the display of happiness invites others to conjoin.

But how are sympathy and antipathy of characters developed? Studies on narratives and emotions provide various mechanisms of creating identification or distance to the actors in the text. First of all, characters have to be sufficiently developed so that the reader can gain knowledge of their respective thoughts and emotions. Only when characters have individually distinctive features, it is possible to identify with them and to develop empathy. Otherwise the narrative remains an “emotionally flat drama” (Zillmann/Knobloch 2001, 196) unable to evoke emotional responses among the readers. Secondly, a focus on the fate of individuals can increase identification. By telling a single story in detail identification and empathy is more likely. Giving voice to the characters is particularly effective as this narrative strategies allows to capture thoughts and feelings directly. The power of direct speech is even reinforced by the claim of (emotional) authenticity. Sharkey (1993) discusses the effects of character development using the example of a famine in Somalia in the early 1990s. The first reports were met with indifference among the American public, as Somalia was far away and little known about the parties suffering. This indifference was replaced by an emotionally charged call for civic action and governmental relief efforts after news reports supplied sufficient information about the parties and the circumstances of the catastrophe. News reports prominently featured suffering children, thus personalizing the story of the famine. This resulted in the evocation of emotional reactions. Thirdly, the emotional significance of characters is intensified by polarizations and the contrasting of heroes and villains, allies and opponents, friends and enemies. These binary relations of similarity and difference require an evaluative response of the audience. Narratives thus intensify the evaluative and dramatic intensity and demand of the reader not to remain indifferent but to take sides and to support the liked character.

4. Narrating the Gaza war
In July 2014 the third Gaza war between Israel and Gazan militant groups, first and foremost the ruling Hamas, erupted after weeks of tension. The Israeli operation which was given the name Operation Protective Edge officially began on the 8th of July and was expanded considerably on 17th of July with Israel sending ground forces into the Gaza strip. After more than 7 weeks of fighting an open-ended ceasefire was announced on 26th of August. The American Congress has debated the Gaza war on several occasions, and both House and Senate have passed resolutions in which members of Congress debated the war, its meaning and policy options. Moreover, Congress passed the „Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Resolution”, which involved 225 million US-Dollar in emergency aid for Israel in order to resupply ammunition for the Iron Dome System. These resolutions as well as other speeches and statements in the context of special order speeches, one-minute speeches or mourning hour debates provide the material to analyze the Congressional narrative on the Gaza war. The Gaza war as a discursive event provided the space for the Members of Congress to create a narrative that both gives meaning to the war from an American perspective and legitimizes American policy in regard to the conflict. As will be shown in the analysis, congressional debates on the Gaza war are informed by and embedded in larger narratives, such as narratives on the war on terror, friendship with Israel or the American role in the Middle East.

4.1. Reversing a "biased narrative": From victim to perpetrator

Members of Congress frame their narrative as a counter-narrative to what is perceived as a biased discourse against Israel primarily in international institutions such as the United Nations Human Rights Council, in worldwide public opinion and in the international media coverage (including the coverage in the U.S.). The narrative, which serves as a foil for comparison and is repeatedly cited by speakers, refers to a victim narrative in which Palestinian suffering after Israeli attacks gives rise to sympathy or even empathy with the inhabitants of the Gaza strip. “Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks, on our TV screens and computer monitors, in the pages of the newspapers and magazines, we have seen the bloody and brutal results of war. We have heard the reports of so many lives lost. No matter where you come from or what you believe, if you don’t grieve over every innocent killed, you simply don’t have a heart” (Engel H7075). As the number of casualties is unequally distributed among Israelis and Palestinians, reports cover the consequences of the Gaza war primarily among the Gaza population, which is described as innocent victims of the Israeli army. Moreover, the high number of casualties among the Palestinians contributes to the resonance of a narrative, in which a civilian underdog fights against a high-tech army. The depiction of the Palestinians as the underdog evokes analogies and inferences to stories of David and Goliath and elicits sympathy with the weaker side. The resonance of this narrative also relies on basic emotion norms of the American society which sanctifies each individual and mourns the death and loss of (innocent) lives. A counter-narrative therefore has to re-confirm this emotion norm but to provide a different account of what happened and who the victim and perpetrator in this conflict are. As I will show in the following section, the dominant narrative in the Congress indeed tells a different story of the Gaza war, a story which legitimizes the Israeli military operation not only as rational and effective, but also as morally justified. In a reversal of victim and perpetrator sympathy, sadness and empathy with Palestinian victims are transformed in moral indignation over Hamas and support for Israel. The focus no longer rests on the victims of war but on Hamas as the responsible party of the conflict and their immoral deeds. Hamas is characterized not only as the antagonist of the Israelis, but as an evil character which is placed outside of the norms of the civilized world. Sympathy is no longer an appropriate emotional response, instead indignation is evoked. Moreover, the binary characterization of Israelis
and Hamas and the personalization of Israeli victims shifts sympathy to the Israeli side and legitimize American support for the Israeli military operation. This counter-narrative and its plausibility rest, as I will argue, on an emotional evaluation of the conflict. The evocation of moral indignation and empathy involve action-tendencies which demand a re-action, they motivate to take sides and to support Israel.

4.2. Attribution of blame: A war of no choice

The basic structure of the dominant story told in Congress contains elements of a tragedy: Israel is portrayed as the innocent hero which is attacked by an immoral and evil opponent. The relentless attacks pose a dilemmatic situation for the Israelis: In order to defend and protect its citizens, Israel has to resort to violence, thus accidently harming Palestinians. Despite its good intentions and the moral character of Israel, Hamas ropes Israel into a war of no choice. Blame for the escalation into the war is therefore clearly attributed to Hamas. Accordingly, the precipitating event selected as the starting point for the escalation into the Gaza war are rocket attacks by Hamas to which Israel has to re-act. “Israel launched Operation Protective Edge in response to relentless and unprovoked rocket attacks launched from Gaza by Hamas, a brutally ruthless terrorist organization. In just the last 3 weeks, more than 2,500 rockets have rained down on Israel, and the target of these rockets are not military but civilians” (H7044). Blame for the war is not placed on structural conditions or an abstract cycle of violence, but on one specific actor Hamas, who decided to attack Israel intentionally. The attribution of agency to Hamas is intensified by the use of anaphoric structures: “It is Hamas that has chosen to launch 2,600 rockets at civilians. It is Hamas that hides rockets and rocket launchers in UNRA schools, in mosques, and even in hospitals [...]. It is Hamas that chose to spend millions of dollars digging tunnels into Israel to launch terrorist attacks [...]. It is Hamas that is responsible for the miserable condition of the Palestinians in Gaza, even before this military engagement started” (H7077). Hamas is identified as the party responsible, it has intentionally decided to attack Israel and to start the war. This narrative has the potential to evoke specific emotions. As discussed before, the attribution of blame and agency is a prerequisite for the evocation of anger or outrage (instead of sadness in cases of disasters caused by situational circumstances). Both emotions need agency, someone who is responsible and who has caused harm intentionally. Hamas is portrayed as the party responsible which deliberately decided to attack innocent civilians and thus becomes the object of negative emotions.

Israel, on the other hand, is excused from responsibility for the war: it did not choose to attack Hamas militarily, but was forced to respond. “Every nation – every one – has the right and the obligation to defend its people and its territory. The thousands of rockets launched against Israel by the terrorist group Hamas are a deliberate attack on the State of Israel and the Israeli people” (H7031). The military response is thus not only excused, but legitimized as an act of self-defence. The protection of citizens is not only a right of sovereign states but their prime duty. Israel acted as every other state would react. “Israel finally did what any civilization must do under such circumstances: it finally fought back” (H7050). While Israel is singled out in international public opinion, the hegemonic narrative in Congress normalizes Israeli behavior and reasserts the integration of Israel into a value community. Israel harmed Palestinian civilians, but it was forced to do so in a situation of no choice. “What is Israel supposed to do? We all lament the loss of life. It is heartrending. But what else is Israel to do after rocket after rocket plunges into its territory” (S5040). The argument that Israel is the stronger party is refuted by pointing out the responsibility of Hamas and the dilemmatic situation in which Israel is trapped. “If somebody is coming at you with a rock with the intent to murder you
and you have a gun, are you supposed to stand aside and say: Yeah beat me as long as you want to until you kill me. I can’t use a gun because it is more powerful than your rock? Of course not. You can use self-defense when someone has murderous intentions” (H6741). The analogy of the collective threat to an individual being attacked, makes it easier for the audience to take the perspective of the Israeli side and to legitimize Israel’s reaction. It evokes a paradigmatic scenario in which an individual’s life is threatened and finally saved in self-defence. This narrative resonates in American political culture in which the use of force in order to protect life and property is well established.

To make this narrative plausible and coherent, the Gaza war is embedded into a broader narrative of Israel as a peace-seeking country which took risks in order to reach peace, but whose offers were repeatedly refuted by the Palestinians. “Since its founding in 1948, Israel has faced a number of existential threats from all sides, including invasion by its neighbors and terrorism from radical groups operating within Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank” (H7028). The current Gaza war is thus placed into the long history of the Israeli Palestinian conflict which is told as the story of Israel fighting for its survival against enemies in different disguise seeking her destruction. Despite these constant threats, Israel has not given up the hope for peace. Even more, Israel has demonstrated its readiness for peace and even made unilateral decisions in favor of peace, such as the withdrawal from Southern Lebanon, but all these offers were rejected by the Palestinians and Arabs or even led to new attacks against Israel (H6741). The recent history of the Gaza strip is just one last example of history repeating itself. “In 2005, Israel willingly gave up the area called Gaza. Why? Because the Palestinians that were in the area known as Gaza were continually attacking and causing havoc against the Jews that lived in that Gaza area. Jews who had businesses, Jews who had homes, as well as synagogues, relinquished those homes and businesses voluntarily in an effort known as ‘land for peace.’ So Israel gave up its land to Palestinians, and the Palestinians promised there would be peace” (H6809). Israel was willing to pay a high price in order to reach peace with the Palestinians, it had to evacuate its citizens who had built up their life in the Gaza Strip. Mentioning the businesses and synagogues implies the image of a tranquil civilian presence - the Gaza strip had become the ordinary home of Israeli citizens, a home like all other homes, based on earning once livelihood and on the growth of communal ties. Destroying these communities constitutes a high price Israel was willing to pay in order to reach peace. Israel thus was prepared to take risks and to act without an agreement in the interest of Israeli but primarily also of Palestinian citizens. “Israel has gone above and beyond for years now to help the people of Gaza and give them an opportunity for a better life. Nine years ago, Israel moved totally out of Gaza, giving the land and farms and greenhouses to people of Gaza” (H7029). Israel acted in the good interest of the Palestinians and provided them with the possibility to take their fate in their own hand. Gaza had the potential to “flourish” (H7075). But again the Palestinians wasted another opportunity for peace. “The area could have become a jewel of the Mediterranean and a peaceful neighbor to Israel – a model of a two-state solution. Instead, they tore down the greenhouses. Instead of building roads and homes, they built tunnels with the intent to attack and kill Israelis. They voted Hamas in power and turned the area into a terrorist military outpost” (H7029). The Israeli offer for peace was answered by violence. Palestinians did not seize the chance to build up the Gaza strip and to improve living conditions for the Palestinians, instead they chose the path of violence and destruction. Instead of investing into the civilian infrastructure, they chose to invest in military capabilities. The narrative clearly establishes blame on the Palestinians for the dire living conditions in the Gaza strip as it was their deliberate choice to invest in rockets instead of civilian infrastructure. This narrative intensifies the tragic and dilemmatic
story line - whereas Israel is seeking peace, Hamas wants Israel's destruction. Israel did what she can to achieve peace, but without a partner all efforts will remain futile.

Considering that Israel indeed was attacked by Hezbollah after the IDF left Southern Lebanon and by Hamas after the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip this narrative can claim a compelling logic or narrative seduction. But plausibility and coherence rely on narrative gaps. The occupation of Palestinian territory is either not mentioned at all or it is told as something of the past - in 2005 Israel has left the Gaza Strip which is now under full control of the Palestinians. Not mentioned is that Israel still exerts control of the borders of the Gaza strip, imposed a land, air and sea blockade in 2007 and thus continues to be the occupying force according to international law with a responsibility for the civilian population in the Gaza Strip. Instead of placing the Gaza conflict into one between occupier and occupied, the narrative constitutes a binary division between the civilized, peace-seeking Israel and the evil, terrorist Hamas (as will be shown in detail later). Israel is thus absolved from any responsibility for the situation in Gaza. The same applies to the escalation into the Gaza war in 2014. Unprovoked rocket attacks are selected as the precipitating event which lead to the Israeli military response. In some cases the kidnapping of Israeli teens is mentioned, but what is left out is the Israeli crackdown on Hamas in the West Bank and the failure of the peace negotiations initiated by American Foreign Minister John Kerry. Israeli agency and thereby Israeli responsibility is concealed in the hegemonic narrative, making Hamas the sole responsible party for the conflict.

4.3. Moral Shock: The elicitation of indignation

Blaming Hamas for the escalation into war alone is not sufficient to convincingly reverse sympathy and empathy in the conflict. Given the Palestinian victims and their suffering, not only the cognitive framing has to be altered but also the emotional evaluation of the conflict. One strategy to arouse strong emotions is to evoke “moral shocks”. According to Jasper and Poulsen (1995, 498) moral shocks are events or situations that “raise[s] such a sense of outrage in people that they become inclined toward political action.” It is the intensity of emotions aroused that urges the audience to take a stand and to express their outrage instead of remaining neutral or indifferent. Moral shocks do not automatically result from outrageous behavior. They have to be generated by speech or narrative. “The most effective shocks are those embodied in, or translatable into, powerful condensing symbols” (Jasper/Poulsen 1995, S. 498). Condensing symbols involve both verbal and/or visual images which cognitively and emotionally convey the narrative and its moral. Graber defined condensation symbols as “a name, word, phrase, or maxim which stirs vivid impressions involving the listener’s most basic values” (Graber 1976, 289). Similarly, Edelman (1985) stresses the evocative and emotional capacity of condensation symbols: They “evoke the emotions associated with the situation. They condense into one symbolic event, sign, or act patriotic pride, remembrance of past glories or humiliations, promises of future greatness: some one of these or all of them” (S. 6).

Moreover, moral shocks translated into condensing symbols gain their power from evoking moral absolutes that appear unquestionable and indisputable. The verbal symbol which condenses the whole narrative and thus the whole conflict is the term “human shield”. It designates Hamas as an actor, the nature of the threat Israel is facing and it determines the reaction of both Israel and the United States. Hamas not only attacks Israeli military targets, it not only deliberately aims at Israeli civilians, Hamas even uses its own civilian population as human shields in the war with Israel. The narrative extensively focuses on how Hamas calls (or forces) its population to protect potential targets of the Israeli army with their bodies, thus deliberately risking the life of Palestinians. Whereas attacks even against the civilian population of the enemy might still be comprehensible, the
intentional killing of its own population constitutes a breach of fundamental norms. The narrative focuses on situations in which Hamas uses hospitals and schools, symbols of purely civilian institutions, to hide missiles and tells children and women to stay there as a protective shield. This tactic constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law, as is mentioned frequently, but the emotional arousal of the narrative is primarily based on the evocation of a moral shock. “Hamas [...] uses tactics that are beneath the dignity of the human race” (H7026). The use of human shields is described as “appalling” (H7077), “deplorable” (H7076), “abhorrent” (H7077), “heinous” (S5320) or as acts of “pure evil” (H7026), adjective evaluations which denote the moral breach of Hamas. This evocation of moral shock is even intensified in the narrative by directing attention on the emotions displayed by Hamas: Hamas not only uses civilians cold-bloodedly as “weapons” in the fight against Israel, Hamas “seemingly enjoys it” (H7077). The use of human shields thus reveals the “true nature” of Hamas (and the conflict), as an evil organization characterized by a “thirst for death” (H7032) and a “complete absence of moral inhibition” (H7032). The focus of the narrative on acts of the perpetrator and its use of civilians as human shields has the power to evoke the feeling of being repelled by the behavior of Hamas and a sense of moral indignation and outrage. Both emotions can be defined as “power emotions” (Schieman 2006) that “urge to fight and put power in the belly and iron the soul” (Gamson 1992: 32). The emotional intensity of situations of moral shock thus may motivate people not to remain neutral, but to share horror and disgust. Telling stories of how Hamas forces civilians to act as human shields leaves no room for interpretation or ambivalent emotional reactions: A clear moral decision is evoked as the condensing symbols appeals to basic values and moral and emotion norms.

4.4. Character Funneling: Hero and villain, friend and enemy

The persuasive power of the narrative rests on a story that transports its readers into the situation and thereby evokes emotional reactions. But the elicitation of emotions is not only tightly connected to the plot and the use of condensing symbols, the development of characters is closely intertwined with the plot and its affective potential. The emotional significance of characters is intensified by character funneling, which designates the reduction of a complex set of actors into binary oppositions between hero and villain, friend and enemy. The reduction of complexity and the contrasting of the main adversaries is a way to deploy attention, to mark differences and to intensify evaluations. The hegemonic narrative in Congress makes frequent use of binary oppositions and polarizations reinforced by parallel syntactic structures and contrasting juxtapositions. The condensing symbol “human shields” provides the burning glass under which the fundamental difference between Israel and Hamas becomes visible: “Israel has tried to warn Palestinian civilians: Don’t be located where the missiles are because we are going to respond as any sovereign nation will to protect our citizens. What does Hamas say? Hamas tells the Palestinians: Stay there. Picture that for a second. Israel is warning civilians to clear they are because they are going to take out the rockets and they are going to take out the tunnels. The response from Hamas: No. Stay there. Why? Because what they want to see is Palestinian children, Palestinian women killed [...]” (S5010).

According to the hegemonic narrative, the attitude towards the value of life constitutes the moral difference between Israel and Hamas. This polarization is condensed in a phrase which is initially cited as a quote by Benjamin Netanyahu. The Israeli prime minister claimed: “We use missiles to protect our people. Hamas uses their civilians to protect their missiles.” (H7044). This slogan which captures the characterization of both parties and implies a clear moral evaluation is incorporated into the American narrative. It is repeatedly reiterated without acknowledging the source and thus
provides an example of how by intertextual connections an Israeli perspective is retold in the context of congressional debates in the United States. The affirmative citation but even more the re-contextualized use in a different setting indicates that the Israeli reading of events is accepted as more valid. The moral difference between Hamas and Israel is further strengthened with reference to emotion norms. “When Israeli children are killed, it breaks Israel’s heart. When Palestinian children are killed, it breaks the heart of all decent Palestinians, but Hamas sees it as a victory” (S5007) and even “seemingly enjoys it” (H7044). The reference to different emotions evoked by the death of civilians among Israelis and members of Hamas is interpreted as the most authentic indicator for the fundamental difference between both parties. The value of life strongly resonates in American political discourse with its tradition of liberal individualism, whereas the celebration of death evokes repulsion. Hamas is thus not characterized as an ordinary political party whose conduct is based on cost-benefit-calculations but as an irrational and immoral character, “killing in the name of God” (H7044) and seeking death and destruction. Motivated not by anti-Israeli sentiments but by antisemitic ideology the goal of Hamas is clearly stated: “the eradication of Israel” (H7050).

Israel in contrast is characterized as a sacrificial nation: The military reaction taken by Israel is not only characterized as proportionate and legitimate, but as restrained and moral. According to the central plot, Israel came under attack by unprovoked rocket fire but did not react immediately. Instead Israel showed restraint in the hope to find ways to prevent a war and to secure peace. “Israel has proven time and time again that it is a willing partner in the struggle for peace, it continues to endure and defend attack after attack often without retaliation” (H7026). Israel was prepared to make sacrifices and to accept victims in order to deescalate, but as the bombardment intensified, Israel was left with no choice to respond. “I am amazed at how forgiving they are, how patient they are, how tolerant they are, how they have suffered the way they have, and they waited until it absolutely had to be before the order was given to go in and eradicate the tunnels and to take out some of the rocket locations” (H7028). Even in war Israel was ready to make sacrifices and to abstain from using all means at disposal in order to save the life of Palestinian victims. The American narrative reproduces the self-image of the Israeli defence forces as the most moral army in the world: “Israel right now is engaged in something unprecedented in the annals of modern warfare. It is undertaking more humanitarian effort to spare civilian deaths than any military has in recorded history. Before attacking, Israel sends out texts. When they discover a rocket battery they need to take out because it is firing rockets targeting innocent civilians, they send texts saying: Clear out of the area. They try to save the Palestinian citizens. [...] Not only that, they have the practice of sending an initial knock bomb. What does that mean? It means the first bomb lands on the roof and makes a knock. It doesn’t explode; it just makes a loud knock. They do that for a reason: So the people inside the building can look up, can hear the knock, and can flee the building so the second missile can take down the building and the rockets that are housed inside and being used to try to murder innocent victims.” (S5010). Against the background of accusations that the Israeli army committed war crimes, the narrative in Congress tells a different story: The steps taken by the Israeli army are described as extraordinary. From the American perspective Israel is prepared to show restraint in a way that no other army including the US forces is. In view of the threat Israel is facing the moral conduct of the army is told with astonishment and admiration. Israeli behavior deserves praise and support instead of criticism.

4.5. Empathy with a friend
The character funneling with its binary characterizations of the protagonists constitutes two emotion norms or appropriate emotional reactions: To be repelled and outraged by the behavior of Hamas and to show empathy with and support to the Israelis. In narrative and emotion research, empathy is recognized as a main mechanism of narrative impact, persuasion and emotional arousal. Research has shown that empathy is a complex emotion with distinct features: Firstly, sympathy and empathy are connected insofar as a disposition of liking or a positive affective disposition towards the other facilitates empathy. Similarity, familiarity or a common cultural background make it easier to adopt the other’s perspective and to comprehend the other’s affective situation. Empathy is therefore closely related to the construction of similarity and alterity. Secondly, empathy involves a cognitive dimension. In order to take the perspective of the other the recipients have to gain knowledge of the other’s thoughts and feeling and on how the events influence the life of the protagonists. Narratives therefore have to tell a story in a way that makes the protagonists perspective comprehensible.

Thirdly, the protagonists perspective has not only to be comprehensible cognitively, in order to elicit an emotional arousal in the recipients, the story has to make the affective situation comprehensible or better tangible. This involves a double perspective: on the one hand the narrative must contain expressions of emotions of the protagonists and on the other hand evoke emotions in the recipients. Different narrative strategies such as the creation of proximity, dramatization, voice and focalization or concretion and detailing will be discussed below.

The hegemonic narrative in Congress asserts the similarities between Israel and the United States. Israel is perceived as “the most steadfast ally” (H6586), “the most reliable ally” (H7044) and “the closest and most critical ally” (S5299). The adjectives attribute positive moral characteristics to Israel which are highlighted by the use of various adjectives. The bonds between both countries are characterized as durable, reliable, close and of critical importance to the United States of America. The positive disposition towards Israel is further strengthened by an asserted cultural familiarity between both countries. According to the narrative, Israel resembles the U.S. more than any other country in the world. “Both our countries were founded by those seeking political and religious freedom. Israel is the beacon of democracy in the Middle East” (H7028). As pioneering and immigrant societies, founded by settlers in the pursuit of their freedom Israel serves as a mirror of American narratives and myths. In the stories told by Members of Congress, the history of Israel resembles American experiences whereas all differences are erased and concealed. Both countries share common values: “It [Israel] has the only democratically elected government in a very unstable and violent part of the world. It has a vibrant, free capitalistic society that respect human rights, that respect women’s rights, that respects minority rights, even the religious minorities” (H7027). The accentuation of shared values facilitates identification with Israel. Israel is characterized not only as an ally based on shared interest but as a promoter of US culture in the Middle East. The enumeration of the positive, shared characteristics thus constructs similarity between Israel and the US and conversely also reveals the cultural distance towards the Palestinians (and Arab regimes in general). All the values named are absent, the narrative suggests, in Arab societies. Moreover, the asserted exceptionality of Israel as an “island” or a “bright light in a very, very dark region” (H8356) further strengthens similarity with the U.S. and a positive affective identification with Israel. The narrative thus establishes the bonds between both countries as a “friendship”, a concept which implies an affective relationship. The norm of amity encourages emotions such as empathy, grief, pride or

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2 Hamas is interpreted in the narrative as part of the larger category of Islamic extremists and thus exemplifies the deficits of Arab societies. The stories about Hamas are embedded in a larger narrative on Islamic terrorism (see below).
gratitude whereas negative emotional expressions such as fear, anger, disgust or hatred are considered to be inappropriate. Which emotions are evoked is contingent on the situational circumstances and the narrative strategies employed. In case of the Gaza war, ambivalent emotions are evoked: Empathy with Israeli victims but also a sense of admiration and gratitude, as Israel demonstrates steadfastness in its fight against an evil and shared (as will be shown below) enemy. The construction of similarity and familiarity thus facilitate a disposition of liking as a first precondition for the elicitation of empathy.

The narrative employs various strategies to provide the audience with the cognitive and affective knowledge necessary to arouse empathy. Against the background of the asymmetry between the military power of Hamas and the Israel Defense Forces and accusation of a disproportionate use of force, the narrative emphasizes the military potential of Hamas and the threat the rockets are posing to Israel. “Hamas perpetrated the conflict. They wantonly fire rockets, and they don’t care where the rockets go. Hamas has fired almost 3,000 missiles during a 3-week conflict. [...] These aren’t firecrackers. These are very violent, powerful weapons. They have a number of rockets. It is estimated they have 10,000 of them. They have something called WS-1E. It is a Chinese rocket, but they got the blueprints – Iran did from the Chinese – and, of course, they shipped these repeatedly into Gaza. They will travel some 30 miles and they carry about 40 pounds of explosives. They have another one called the Fajir-5. This is an Iranian rocket. It is the most prestigious weapon of Hamas” (S5039f.). The enumeration of the weapon systems Hamas has attained and the detailing of scope and blasting force serve to authenticate and to confirm the harm Hamas can cause on Israel. These rockets are not firecrackers, the narrative asserts, but provided by state sponsors of Hamas. Hamas is thus equipped with weapons comparable to regular military forces. This adequation implies a change in perception of the balance of power between Israel and Hamas. Moreover, the high number of rockets fired upon Israel is repeatedly told in order to concretize the constant threat for Israeli civilians and the disruptive impact on the daily life of ordinary Israelis. “In just the last three weeks, more than 2,500 rockets have rained down on Israel, and the targets of these rockets are not military but civilian” (H7044). The high number of rockets visualizes the threat - the high number of attacks seems to make it impossible to hide. Moreover, the use of the metaphor “missiles rain down” intensifies and naturalizes the emotional arousal. Rain cannot be prevented, it targets indiscriminately all areas and all people. The metaphor further establishes the passive role of Israel - as rain falls irrespective of human behavior, Hamas fires missiles irrespective of Israel’s behavior. “Week after week, month after month, year after year, Hamas has lobbed missiles into the Israeli civilian population – killing Israelis, maiming Israelis” (H6819). The threat posed by Hamas is not limited to certain periods of time, but – as the embeddedness of the plot in a broader narrative of Israel’s fight for survival has already suggested – it is a constant threat in the dimensions of time and space. “Hamas is deliberately targeting Israeli civilians through the use not only of rockets but longer and longer range missiles – 2,500 of these so far – aimed at cities – Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, attempting to attack Israeli communities” (H7075). Hamas can reach all of the Israeli population at any time, the narrative suggests.

To make the experiences of Israelis comprehensible in both its cognitive and affective dimension, the Israeli perspective is narrated in personalized stories. Instead of relying only on abstract arguments, stories of Israelis citizens and communities are told with whom the American audience can identify: “Go to a town such as Sderot and everyone in their household has a bomb shelter. I met with mothers there whose children feel traumatized because they never know when the next potential
rocket may be coming toward their town; and it has very much affected their children. It has affected them so much that when one goes to the playground where the children play, the playground itself contains a bomb shelter. There is a caterpillar which looks like something your kids would play in, but it actually a bomb shelter because this town in Israel has been facing rockets from Hamas” (SS008f.). The abstract threat of Hamas’ rockets is here translated into the story of a community and its civilian inhabitants whose life is gravely affected by the rocket fire. The fear felt by the Israelis encroaches the daily life and its routines. The arousal is further intensified by focusing on the emotions of children, who are generally perceived as the most vulnerable and innocent victims in wars. Even the playground has to provide a bomb shelter, so that in case of rocket attacks children can hide there. In case of this story, the audience is not only provided with cognitive information on the effects of rocket attacks on Israeli society but also about the emotional consequences for the civilian population. Additionally, individualized stories are incorporated and voice is given to Israelis themselves. Eyal Brandeis, an inhabitant of Kibbutz Sufa is quoted: “[H]e says: ‘It is a very pastoral environment. I live in the quiet of green grass, the trees. It is not pleasant, though, that you sit one day on the patio drinking coffee with your wife and a bunch of terrorists will rise from the ground.’ That is exactly what happened a mile from his kibbutz at dawn July 17” (H7033). Israel and its inhabitants are portrayed as peace loving, civilian and passive victims of brutal attacks by terrorists. Giving voice to ordinary Israelis authenticates the narrative and makes identification possible in both the cognitive and affective dimension.

The affective potential of the narrative is further intensified by a dramatic structure of the narrative. Through real-time imaginations of the threat the audience is put into a witness position. “Picture the scene. You are walking down the streets of Tel Aviv. You look around you. You see men, women, and children of all ages. To your right is an elderly man with a walker. A few paces ahead is a mother with her stroller. It is peaceful. It is calm. It is the embodiment of urban normality. And suddenly you hear it. Everybody instinctively knows what it is and, in a split second, everything changes. It is the red alert siren. A rocket is racing toward the city at breakneck speed. Only seconds remain to find refuge in a bomb shelter. And the rocket could land anywhere: on a preschool, on a hospital, on a random family home, or perhaps on the mother and her stroller up ahead” (H7032). The narrative evokes vivid images of normality that resemble life in the United States. The temporal mode is that of real-time, it slows down the narrative and makes a detailed look at one exemplary scene possible. The audience can picture the old man and the mother. But tranquility and peace are disrupted by a siren: The narrative shows a dramatic and rising action with a rocket approaching the scene, a rocket that changes everything and speeds up the temporal structure. By telling the scene in real-time, the narrative invites the reader to take the perspective of Israelis and to imagine oneself in that situation. The audience no longer remains a distant observer but is transported into the events, it is not only brought closer to the fate of Israelis, but imagines to be part of the collectivity under attack (or at least an eye-witness). The story generates an emotional reaction and experience.

To give an understanding of the extent of the threat the current events are put into spatial and historical perspective. Comparisons of the spatial size of Israel with parts of the United States are employed in order to make the scope and dimension of the attacks comprehensible for an American audience. “2,500 rockets fired at any country is a lot. It is an act of war that triggers self-defense military responses. But 2,500 rockets fired at a country as small as Israel is even worse. To put the size of Israel into perspective, Israel is smaller than the Tennessee Valley of north Alabama [...]” (H7044). The comparison with regions in the U.S. gives knowledge on Israel’s spatial dimension and
makes the feeling of being under siege tangible. It further evokes a sense of urgency as the large number of attacks on a country as small as Israel do not seem sustainable for a long time. Moreover, the threat is inflated as the current conflict is put into a broader historical perspective. The rocket attacks are explained as a clear expression of an eliminationist anti-Semitism. By linking the current rocket attacks to the history of anti-Semitism, a causal connection is established that leaves only one conclusion: The conflict is a conflict about the existence of Israel. “As long as you exist, they will want to kill you, eradicate you, and wipe you out. They have said they will create a worse holocaust than World War II [...]” (H6741). The narrative thus establishes an urgency to respond and legitimizes Israeli military reactions. The construction of familiarity and stories about the thoughts and feelings of Israelis bring the fate of Israel closer to the American audience, make identification possible. But empathy and not mere sympathy is evoked by the dramatic structure of the narrative which not only provides the opportunity to take the perspective of the other but to share the feeling of threatened Israelis and to feel for them.

4.6. Relevance detection: Shared enemy, shared responsibility

Appraisal theories of emotion assert that interpretation and relevance detection constitute important components of emotion. To elicit an emotional response, a situation has to be considered relevant and thereby to require attention. Relevance detection is concerned with the relevance of events for an individual or its social reference group, its implications and normative significance (Sanders 2013). The emotional response can therefore be regulated not only by focusing attention on certain events, by providing a narrative explanation and interpretation but also by making events relevant for the recipients. The more relevant a distant event is made for the in-group, the more intense the emotional reaction. The events in the Middle East thus have to be made relevant for the American audience.

The analysis has already demonstrated that the Gaza war has normative significance for the US as basic norms of conduct are violated by Hamas. Moreover, the narrative has taken the audience closer to individual fates thereby creating proximity and making a connection to far away events possible. But relevance is created not only morally or indirectly, the events in the Middle East are also made relevant for the United States: The Gaza war is told as one sequence in the broader “war on terror”. The rocket attacks by Hamas are thus connected to events that affect the United States more closely. Firstly, the characterization of Hamas involves both individuation and categorization. To make Hamas and its actions intelligible and relevant, Hamas is portrayed both as a specific Palestinian organization fighting Israel and as part of the wider category of Islamic radicalism and terrorism fighting the West. “We should also recognize Hamas isn’t a stand alone terrorist organization. Hamas is part of a wider constellation of terrorist organization – franchises, you might say – under an umbrella.” (H6809). Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah, al-Qaeda and ISIS are all subsumed under the same category as terrorist organizations based on radical Islam that have no regard for humanity (S5546; H. Con Res. 107). The confrontation is thus not limited in its relevance and its implications to Israel alone. “Today, all that stands between a peaceful and free world and a fanatical fascist caliphate stretching from the Bosphorus to North Africa is the state of Israel and the influence of the Western democracies, particularly that of the United States” (H7050). The threat that Hamas poses to Israel is embedded in the narrative of a broader struggle between the West and its enemies. Israel and the U.S. share a common enemy and not only Israel but also the United States are threatened by terrorism. The current conflict and its course therefore raise “security issues not only for Israel but for the entire world” (H7030). This argument is made plausible
by linking terrorist organizations to its supporter Iran and her nuclear ambitions and the destabilizing developments in the Middle East. Israel’s fight, the narrative suggests, is also a fight for the security of the United States. “There is a reason why Hamas and Iran refer to Israel as the ‘Little Satan’ and the United States as the ‘Great Satan,’ because their intention with both is the same terror, the same murder, the same death and destruction” (S5011). The repetitive structure emphasizes the shared threat perception, Israel’s fight against terrorism is therefore of great relevance to the U.S. The Gaza war is thus incorporated into America’s war on terror.

Proximity is further created by the evocation of scenarios in which Israel’s current situation is projected onto the United States. “Imagine if you will, that al-Qaeda or ISIS in Iraq has pledged the destruction of the U.S., something which is not hard to imagine. Now imagine they placed a military frigate off our eastern shore. Now, they claim that it is a supply ship, they say it has no military purpose, that it only has civilian and peaceful purposes. But then imagine they start lobbing not a few, not dozens, but hundreds of rockets and missiles along our eastern shore, specifically targeting cities where millions of innocent families live” (H7027). This imagination diminishes the spatial distance between the U.S. and Israel and thus increases the relevance for an American audience. Moreover, the use of historical analogies opens up associations and emphasizes similarities of events at different times and in different contexts. 9/11 as the emblematic date is referred to in order to make sense of the situation and to increase relevance. “The ongoing crisis in Israel may feel a world away, but the significance cannot be understated: a free people and democratic ally of our Nation faces continued war by elements of hate and intolerance similar to those who have claimed the lives of millions, forever scarred the face of the Earth, and brought this battle to our shores 13 years ago” (H7030). Memories of 9/11 are evoked and with it concomitant emotions. By linking Hamas to those groups who perpetrated the terrorist attacks in the United States, the threat for the U.S. is made tangible and possible implications in the future become plausible.

If events in the Middle East are relevant for the United States, what can America do? What is the proposed solution or moral of the story? The narrative is open-ended, as the conflict in Israel and the fight against terrorism has not terminated at the time of debates. Nevertheless, the narrative suggests certain courses of action. Plot, characterization of the protagonists, particularly of Hamas as the villain, and the attribution of blame and agency provide a compelling logic. Peace with Hamas is not possible. Israel has, the narrative asserts, done everything for peace, but Hamas is not interested in compromise and peace, but in the destruction of Israel. “The idea that leaving an area will lead to peace in the Middle East with the Palestinians has not borne fruit” (S5008). The formula “land for peace” which constituted the cornerstone of the Oslo process is thus rejected. The narrative does not provide a solution for the conflict, but a lesson to be learned – with implications for the role of the U.S. in the conflict. “We as Americans understand fighting terrorism is a constant fight, and this is yet another reason we must continue to work towards combating terrorism, not just on American soil, but by supporting our allies in their fights against terrorism” (H7030). Instead of pressuring Israel to make concessions or to agree to a premature ceasefire, the United States as a friend and ally should support Israel in its resolve to fight the common enemy until the elimination of the threat. The characterization of the enemy, the designation of the conflict as an existential conflict, the identification with Israel and the concomitant evocation of emotions such as indignation and empathy motivate an American response. The U.S. cannot remain silent or passive, it has the moral duty to help Israel in her fight. “In this time of great moral crisis, now is not the time for neutrality. [...] Israel must never lose its resolve, its mission, its purpose, or forget its proud history, and the
United States must support our great ally as it fights to preserve its existence” (H7031). Moreover, a defeat of Hamas also serves American national interest: “A defeat of Hamas is not only good for Israel, but a blow against international terrorism and good for our national security” (H6940). The narrative thus links the security of Israel with the security of the United States. To motivate action, the narrative has to provide a sense of control and demonstrate coping potential. If overwhelmed by fear in a decline narrative, the action tendency evoked is rather passive. To retain the capacity to act, the narrative asserts that Israel is a strong society with a strong military which has the ability to cope with the threat. The United States greatly contributes to that potential. The shared development of the Iron Dome which intercepted many missiles fired on Israel is given as one example of American support and as a source of pride. Despite the open-ended narrative and the rejection of any short-term solutions, Israel with the support of the United States has the potential to defeat the enemy. The narrative thus establishes an optimistic assessment of the future.

4.7. Plurivocity: Variations of the narrative

The dominant narrative in Congress speeches is told in various ways by different actors. Whereas the general sequence of events, basic story lines and the set of characters are shared, the plurivocity of narratives allows for multiple and varying ways in narrating the story. Differences between religious and secular, Democratic and Republican Members of Congress are possible within the general narrative. Despite disparate voices the narrative retains a certain coherence and stability.

Firstly, Members of Congress such as Louis Gohmert combine the story-line with a religious narrative, which roots the conflict and Israel’s right to the land in biblical prophecy. “For decades, since Israel came back into the land, it was promised over 3,000 years ago. People are saying, well, you can’t grow grapes there in those mountains. [...] I have been in that area of Sumeria where the prophets said that Israeli grapes would grow and provide great wine. I don’t drink alcohol, but the grapes were amazing, and they are growing where the prophet said they would. So how could land that was in Israel’s possession, that was prophesied would be lost by the children of Israel, but God would return them to the area, and there would be fine grapes and fruit grown in that area, how could that be somebody else’s prior claim when they were longer there than anybody still, any tribes in existence today?” (H6740). The claim to the land is here based on biblical prophecy. The story told by Gohmert refers to the intimate bond between the Jewish people and the land promised by God. This claim is told to be superior to any other claim. Moreover, the story hints at messianic expectations that come with the return of the Jewish people to its land. The land laid bare until it was redeemed by the people of Israel and this blossoming of the desolated land is interpreted as a sign of redemption (vgl. Hagemann 2015). Such a biblical narrative is not shared by most Members of Congress, but it can be told as a religious version of the dominant narrative.

A second area of variance can be found in the evaluation of the Palestinian population. The dominant narrative clearly defines Hamas as the perpetrator of the conflict, but the characterization of the Palestinian population is contested. Whereas in some stories the attribution of agency is clearly restricted to Hamas, others attribute blame also to the Palestinian population. In the former version, Palestinians are characterized as innocent and passive civilians that suffer from both the war and the terrorist regime of Hamas. A clear differentiation is established between Hamas as a terrorist organization and the suffering Palestinian people. “I have nothing against the legitimate hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people to have their own country, to live in peace and prosperity by Israel” (S5007). In the latter version, any differences between Hamas, the Palestinian Authority and
the civilian population are erased. By mentioning of the unity government supported by Fatah and Hamas and by reminding the audience of the election victory of Hamas, blame is attributed not only to Hamas but also to the Palestinian Authority and the population.

Thirdly, the narrative establishes the duty to side with Israel and legitimates the political and military support such as the funding of the Iron Dome and the veto of Security Council resolutions. Members of Congress affirm their commitment to Israel by narrating stories of support and solidarity. Differences exist in the assessment of the executive. Especially Republican Members of Congress question the firmness of the Obama administration’s support for Israel. Kerry’s futile attempts to broker a peace agreement before the war and his calls for a cease-fire are considered to be not only false, but a betrayal of Israel. „This president seems to be more interested in appeasing Hamas, which is a terrorist organization, than he is in comprehending Israel’s desire to end this threat to its people and its existence. This position put forward by the President and his Secretary of State, John Kerry, is an injustice and a betrayal toward a longtime friend and ally in the region. Israel deserves better, and they deserve more, Mr. President“ (Duncan (R-SC) (H7133)). Whereas support for the Iron Dome is endorsed by a large majority, some demand more. By referring to the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006, a couple of Members of Congress call for a suspension of all financial aid to the Palestinian Authority (H7028; H7032). Others link the debate on the Gaza war with the nuclear program of Iran and propose a tightening of sanctions or even a military strike by Israel. „It is time to bomb Iran’s nuclear capabilities. It is time for the United States, if we are not going to stop Iran’s nukes, then let Israel do it. A friend will not put another friends in this kind of jeopardy“ (H6587). The criticism of the administration is framed as a critique of the executive, whereas the bipartisan unity in Congress is praised. Despite the varying stories, the basic structure or fabula is shared.

4.8. Humanitarian Crisis Narrative

Only very few speakers present a humanitarian counter narrative. This contending story is victim-focused and details the humanitarian crisis on both sides. The plot describes a spiral of violence in which neither side can win. “As of today, at least 1,118 Palestinians have been killed, 6,233 injured, and 240,000 displaced from their homes, many of which have been damaged or destroyed. The overwhelming majority of the victims have been civilians. [...] During this same period, 56 Israeli soldiers have been killed, 400 have been wounded, and 3 Israeli civilians have died” (S5293). The narrative recognizes the victims of both sides. At the same time the comparison of the numbers of casualties opens up a perspective, in which not Israelis but Palestinians appear to be the main victims. Further detailing of the Palestinian distress evokes pity for the Palestinians. “But what is often ignored in the impassionate debate over this issue, including by those who rightly point out that the Israeli military provides prior warning to civilians of an imminent attack, is that Gaza is not like anywhere else. Its residents cannot flee to safety in a neighboring country, as millions of Syrians have done. They cannot escape by boat. Shelters in Gaza that should be safe are not safe. The people of Gaza are for all practical purposes, defenseless, trapped, and unable to avoid the violence” (S5293). The narrative rejects interpretations in which the high number of civilians is caused by Palestinian desire to side with Hamas, instead the populations of Gaza is characterized as passive, trapped with no choice and room for agency. The distress and suffering of victims of both sides establishes the urgency to act: “Innocent Israeli and civilians cannot afford another three weeks of rocket fire and further bloodshed” (H7978). Instead the U.S. should push for a ceasefire which is in the best interest of both populations. This conclusion is made plausible by a plot which embeds Israeli efforts to beat Hamas into a historical perspective. “[...] This is not the first time Israel has
sought to achieve these goals only to fall short, at great human cost. Operation Cast Lead in 2008 resulted in 1,400 Palestinian deaths and 6 Israeli soldiers. Then in 2012 there was Operation Pillar of Defense. Each time, despite the destruction of Hamas’s weapons, launchers and command posts, Hamas remained in control of Gaza” (S5293). Hamas, the plot suggests, is indeed a terrorist organization which employs “despicable tactics” (H7078), but Israel military actions have been futile and will be likely so in the current conflict. A happy end (understood as an Israeli military victory) is not in sight, a humanitarian ceasefire the only short-term solution.

Moreover, Israel is not obliterated from responsibility for the conflict and its dynamic. Kerry’s failed attempt to broker an agreement to end the conflict is selected as the starting point for the Gaza war. Escalation is thus explained by the failure of both parties to make compromises. During the war, too, Israel has contributed to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the narrative suggests. “Yet even safe havens, such as clearly marked United Nations Schools and hospitals, have been hit by Israeli bombs and missiles, and at least one may have been hit by a Hamas rocket” (S5293). The narrative challenges the characterization of the Israeli army as a moral army and puts blame on both sides for civilian victims. And finally the narrative suggest a historical-causal entailment according to which the economic restrictions Israel has imposed on Gaza caused the support for Hamas and her demands to end the blockade. The continuous conflict is thus not only caused by Hamas’ rejection of Israel’s right to exist and its use of terrorism, but also by Israel’s refusal to ease the economic sanctions. “That may be the only way to eliminate Hamas’s excuse for rocket attacks, to bring desperately needed economic development to Gaza, and to create the necessary conditions for the disarming of Hamas” (S5293). Hamas as a terrorist actor is denounced, but her demands to alleviate the economic restrictions on Gaza are legitimated as rationale and comprehensible objectives. Peace is not characterized as an utopian wish, but as a realistic possibility, which requires pressure on both sides.

5. Conclusion

During the Gaza war 2014 Israel faced international criticism in light of the high number of civilian casualties in the Gaza strip. Images of destruction and victims evoked emotional responses among societies worldwide and culminated in accusations of Israel committing war crimes. In congressional debates, however, Senate and House of Representatives overwhelmingly backed Israeli actions and offered American support. How did politicians produce support for Israel? How did they justify Israel’s actions? The article found that narrative structures informed congressional debates in order to explain the war and to persuade and emotionalize the American public. Narratives constitute a meaning making process and provide templates for orienting and acting in the world. In contrast to other forms of communication narratives do not only provide logical, propositional arguments, instead the audience is invited to “an imaginative and emotional involvement” (Davis 2002, 19). The effectiveness of narrative persuasion rests thus not only on logical reasons but also on the emotional and imaginative potential. Narratives may transport readers into the story and help to charge events with evaluative and dramatic intensity. Narratives and emotions are therefore closely related in a double perspective: Narratives describe the emotions of the characters in the story and they have the potential to emotionalize the audience. Stories do not only explain the events, they also evoke an emotional and evaluative response of what happened to whom. Narratives thus connect the audience with the characters, establish self-other relations and thus regulate how we perceive others, feel about them and how we are expected to treat them.
The dominant narrative in Congress, which constitutes the reference to competing narratives in this discursive arena, provides a reversal of victim and perpetrator and transforms sympathy and pity with the Palestinian victims into moral indignation over Hamas’ deliberate attacks on Israel. As an innocent hero, Israel is excused from any responsibility for the escalation. Instead “unprovoked rocket attacks” are selected as the starting point. Agency is attributed to Hamas who intentionally decided to attack Israel. This clear attribution of blame to an agent responsible is a prerequisite for the evocation of anger. To make this narrative plausible, the current conflict is embedded in a historical narrative which tells the story of a peace-seeking Israel whose offers were repeatedly rejected by Palestinians. The occupation of Palestinian land and the closure of the Gaza strip are omitted from the narrative. This cognitive and emotional evaluation of the conflict is further intensified by the evocation of indignation. Stories about Hamas using Palestinian civilians as human shields in the defense of their weapons arsenal focus on outrageous behavior eliciting a moral shock among the audience. Narratives of moral shock have a particular emotional potential, they not only arouse repulsion and indignation, but also motivate the audience to take side and to act. Israel, on the other hand, the narrative asserts, was faced with a situation of no choice, in which she had to defend her population.

The emotional potential of the plot is reinforced by character channeling. The many actors are reduced to a binary set of actors, thus simplifying complexity and justifying specific types of policy. The conflict between Israel and Hamas is told as a story between good and evil, democracy and Islamic radicalism, civilization and barbarism. Israel is characterized as a sacrificial nation and as part of a common moral community of Western democracies. Hamas, on the other hand, is placed outside of this community as an ultimate other. Character funneling establishes emotion norms which indicate appropriate feelings towards the actors: To be repelled and outraged by Hamas and to show empathy with and support for Israel. Narrative empathy is a main mechanism of narrative persuasion. Through different mechanisms such as dramatization, detailing and focalization the audience is brought closer to individual Israeli fates in order to imagine to be in the place of Israelis and to feel with them.

As events in Israel and Palestine are distant from the U.S. the narrative links events in Israel and Palestine to the broader struggle against terrorism. Hamas is integrated into the broader category of Islamic radical enemies of the United States and analogies open up associations to attacks on America. Israel and the U.S. thus share the same enemy, so that Israel’s fight is made relevant also for the United States and the protection of its citizens. This emotional potential of the narrative greatly contributes to the persuasive power and the effectiveness of the story.

The narrative in Congress shapes the opportunity structure for political opponents who confront American policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to Hajer (1993, 48) a narrative or story line becomes dominant, once the central actors of a field share the narrative (discourse structuration) and once it is institutionalized and informs organizational practices. In Congress a dominant narrative could be found which structures the discursive field and which was institutionalized in resolutions and legislative acts. This legitimizing narrative establishes moral authority and emotion norms that are difficult to refute. Accordingly, the few voices in Congress which present a humanitarian counter-narrative have to make reference to the dominant narrative. The space for contestation in Congress is thus limited. Nevertheless, in further research the debate in Congress has to be related to broader discursive structures and to be embedded in broader power relations. The narrative told in Congress, although dominant in the political field, is explicitly framed
as a counter-narrative to stories and images in the media and in the public. The perceived necessity to refute arguments, stories and evoked emotions indicates that the public debate is changing. Narratives can challenge dominant discourses but they can also act as means of social control that reinforce dominance. To grasp this dynamic the interactive process of story-telling has to be included as a next step. The narrative approach offers the means to do so, as narratives constitute networks that can be traced. Lejano, Ingram and Ingram (2013, 2) argue that networks and stories are mutually defining. “Stories, or narratives, create the glue that binds people together in networks, providing them with a sense of history, common ground, and future, thus enabling them to persist even in the context of resistance.” Narrative analysis can thus provide insight into how networks emerge, how networks are maintained by a joint narration and how different narratives compete. Furthermore, the paper presented has discussed the emotion potential of the narrative. But in the process of recontextualization which designates the process in which the narrative is taken up in different arena, such as the media or the public, narratives can be reshaped and resisted. The emotion potential can thus remain unrealized. A broader analysis would have to take these dynamics into account.

References


