



Coming to terms: a conflict analysis of the usage, in official and unofficial sources, of 'security fence', 'apartheid wall', and other terms for the structure between Israel and the Palestinian territories

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Abstract

The official terms for the dividing wall are 'security fence' on the Israeli side and 'apartheid wall' on the Palestinian side. Both terms fuse two contextually charged notions to describe the construction project. Beyond the two official terms, the structure has been given other names by sources appearing in the media space (e.g. the International Court of Justice's 'West Bank wall') or by news organizations covering the issue (e.g. 'barrier wall'). Using data from Google News, which includes official NGO as well as news sources, this article offers a media monitoring method that also seeks to create conflict indicators from the shifting language employed by officials, journalists and others to describe the structure. The authors discovered that the Palestinians and Israelis choose their words differently: the Israelis are consistent (yet relatively alone) in the way they use their terms; the Palestinians adopt their terminology according to the setting, using different terms for the structure in diplomatic and international court settings than 'at home'. Having identified 'setting' as an important variable in the study of language use as conflict indicator, the study also includes an analysis of diplomatic language in key debates on the obstacle at the UN Security Council. In all, it was found that, at particular moments in time, Israeli and Palestinian actors 'come to terms' most significantly around 'separation wall', coupling the Israeli left-of-centre adjective and the Palestinian noun, implying a peace-related arrangement distinctive from either side's official position (as well as the current peace plans), and ultimately undesirable to those who share the term.

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Introduction: terms, actors and side-taking adjectives and nouns

Throughout the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, terms have always been charged with condensed symbolism and contradictory meanings, often embedding the severity of disagreement between Israelis and Palestinians: Israel’s 1948 ‘Independence War’ is the Palestinian Catastrophe (‘Al Nakbah’); ‘Al Quds’ and ‘Jerusalem’ are used by each side to refer to the same holy city, but for different religions; a Palestinian ‘martyr’ is called a ‘terrorist’ by Israelis; a ‘liberated territory’ for Israelis is an ‘occupied territory’ for Palestinians. The construction of the obstacle in the West Bank has added a new layer to the conflict, and to the disputed terminological landscape. Whilst the arguing parties invent and employ different terms to refer to the obstacle, media sources and other actors striving to take non-positions in the conflict, yet provide an accurate description, face difficulties in finding the right term to name the structure. Across the media landscape, including governmental, inter-governmental and NGO sources, the words ‘fence’, ‘wall’ and ‘barrier’ are combined with the descriptive terms ‘security’, ‘separation’, ‘apartheid’, ‘anti-terrorist’, ‘West Bank’ and a few others. Almost every combination has in-built connotations, receptive audiences and associated imagery as well as affiliations to one side or the other in the conflict.¹

‘Fence’ is a term employed by the Israeli political establishment. Currently, it is officially the ‘security fence’, a term formulated by the Israeli Government under Ariel Sharon. The notion seems to imply a temporary, even neighbourly, means of handling a threat.² Within Israel, there are fundamental adjectival divides and the occasional noun rejection, too. Whilst security fence has been the preferred term of the official Israeli position, the original Israeli notion coupled with the structure was ‘separation’, a term formulated by Yitzhak Rabin as part of the concept for an obstacle between Israel and the Palestinian Territories.³ To separate would lessen tensions between peoples, and remove the terrorist threat from inside Israel. Rabin’s vision – ‘to take Gaza out of Tel-Aviv’ – culminated in the construction of the Israeli Gaza Strip barrier in 1994, the forerunner to the West Bank obstacle under construction between Israel and the Palestinian Territories (Makovsky, 2004). The term ‘separation fence’ avoids the security aspect, and associates it with the lessening of tensions as well as a recognition of the future establishment of two neighbouring states. Nowadays it is used by both left-leaning Israeli media (e.g. *Ha’aretz*) as well as by the Israeli High Court, when ruling on the route of the structure and other matters (Goldberg, 2004). Certain left-leaning Israeli NGOs, including peace and solidarity movements, often use ‘separation wall’, whereby the two peoples and, potentially, states are divided in a less neighbourly fashion. Here, the notion of ‘separation’ is less benign, as the motives may run deeper than reducing friction. And the mere mention of ‘wall’ is an act of terminological solidarity with the Palestinians.

Indeed, to introduce the notion of ‘the wall’ into the discussion is to cross discursively into the Palestinian space.⁴ In the language of the Palestinian side, encompassing official agencies, large international human rights, peace and solidarity networks as well as

critical media, 'wall' is necessary terminology. The question remains how to describe it, especially if one takes the point of view that terminological choice is both conscious and indicative (points to which we return). The official Palestinian term is 'apartheid wall', put forward by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and the PNA's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (although the latter uses other terms, too). By implication, the term assumes an immovable stance in the conflict by making an association with the former South African regime (see Table 1).⁵ The immovable stance is also in evidence with the less frequently encountered terms – the 'annexation wall', the 'colonization wall' and the 'expansionist wall'.

Table 1. Is it an 'apartheid wall'?

Apartheid wall: terminological debate, July 2005	
Pro	Con
	Wall? (Only 7 % of the barrier is walled, 93% is fenced.)
	Apartheid?
In distinguishing between Israelis and Palestinians in terms of who can enter and exit the gates along the barrier, it is racist in nature.	Apartheid was a system established to disenfranchise citizens, based on skin colour, from their own country; however, West-Bank Palestinians were never citizens of Israel, and Jews and Palestinians are not racially distinct.
By confiscating Palestinian farmlands and leaving them on the 'Israeli' side, it crowds the Palestinians into as little an area as possible while leaving as much of the land as possible to Israel.	The goal of bantustans was to eliminate the rights of the majority South African black population, while the goal of the barrier is to protect Israeli civilians from terrorist infiltration and attack.
Its main purpose, just like the South African apartheid policy, is to separate two peoples, and they point out that its current route on confiscated Palestinian land is, according to them, hardly one that is based only on security. This is corroborated by Israeli left-wing groups such as Gush Shalom and more recently by the Israeli State Prosecution itself (referring only to the part built beyond the 1949 Armistice lines).	The barrier is clearly not intended to separate Jews from Arabs, as over 1 million Arabs on the 'Israeli' side of the barrier are full citizens of Israel, and constitute 15% of Israel's population.
It serves to subjugate the Palestinians by separating them from Israel and the rest of the world, and controlling all entry and exit.	Bantustans were created in order to force legal borders; however, the barrier is a temporary defensive measure, not a border, which can be dismantled if appropriate.
	Apartheid involved the forced removal of about 1.5 million Africans to bantustans, but the barrier causes no transfer of population.
	South African blacks did not seek the destruction of South Africa, but merely the reformation of the government; however, the majority of Palestinians in the territories dispute Israel's right to exist.

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Apartheid wall: terminological debate, July 2005	
Pro	Con
	Wall? (Only 7 % of the barrier is walled, 93% is fenced.)
	Apartheid?
	Apartheid was an outgrowth of imperialist, colonial policy; Israel's Jewish population consisted mostly of refugees with a deep historical relationship to the land.
	If this separation barrier is an expression of apartheid, then any number of similar defensive barriers around the world must also meet that definition.
	The Israeli Supreme Court ruled that the barrier is indeed defensive and accepted the Israeli claim that the route is based on security considerations (Articles 28–30).

Source: Wikipedia, 25 July 2005. Reformatted by authors.

To use ‘separation’ is to reach out to an Israeli position, discussed earlier, that concerns diffusing tensions and eventually agreeing on state divisions. To elaborate the term in the form of the ‘racist separation wall’, though, is to specify a further motive of ‘separation’.

Terminologically speaking, there are other options that are more or less off the table. Employing ‘security wall’ would yield to the Sharon governmental rationale. ‘Fence’ is similarly unspeakable, however much such an utterance could be seen as both conciliatory as well as hopeful of a temporary structure. Finally, to say it is theirs, and theirs only, is in part what the PLO Negotiations Affairs Department implies in its preferred term, ‘Israel’s wall’.

Remarkably, the more or less official Palestinian adjectives preceding wall – ‘apartheid’, ‘Israel’s’ – often are not brought along on official visits outside the Middle East. For example, when the head of the PLO Negotiations Affairs Department had a press conference exchange in the US with President George W. Bush in July 2003, the then Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas corrected Mr Bush’s use of ‘security fence’ neither with ‘apartheid wall’ nor with ‘Israel’s wall’ but with ‘separation wall’ (see Table 2). In the Palestinian oral statement to the International Court of Justice in The Hague in 2004, Ambassador Nasser Al-Kidwa of the Palestinian permanent mission to the UN spoke only of ‘wall’, without a descriptive, also pointedly taking issue with the ‘security’ rationale, and thus the term:

This Wall is not about security: it is about entrenching the occupation and the de facto annexation of large areas of Palestinian land. This Wall, if completed, will leave the Palestinian people

with only half of the West Bank within isolated, non-contiguous, walled enclaves. It will render the two-State solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict practically impossible ... The Wall is not just a physical structure; it is a whole regime. (Al-Kidwa, 2004)

Thus, in the context of international diplomacy, the Israeli term remains ‘security fence’ (as ‘at home’), but the Palestinians employ a different language abroad – ‘separation wall’, or ‘wall’. Official third parties (other countries, that is) in such settings as the UN Security Council have the opportunity to choose a term, which, considering the sensitivity of the issue, may well indicate an official view of the conflict. For example, to Sudan it is the ‘expansionist wall’, to Germany ‘security fence’, with the former firmly in keeping with stronger Arab language, the latter the official Israeli.

Journalists strive to find the right words, in some cases adopting a policy, in others grasping at some variety of couplets, depending, it seems, on what is happening in the news more generally. To seek neutrality is to put forward one of the more distant, technical expressions, such as ‘barrier’. Indeed, ‘barrier’ became something of a preferred expression in news and diplomatic circles, albeit with opportunities for ‘side-taking’ adjectives

Table 2. Terms and audiences

US–Palestinian exchange, 25 July 2003 (White House, 2003a)	US–Israeli exchange, 29 July 2003 (White House, 2003b)
PRESIDENT BUSH: Israel will consider ways to reduce the impact of the <i>security fence</i> on the lives of the Palestinian people.	PRIME MINISTER SHARON: [A] number of issues came up: the <i>security fence</i> , which we are forced to construct in order to defend our citizens against terror activities ... The <i>security fence</i> will continue to be built, with every effort to minimize the infringement on the daily life of the Palestinian population.
PRIME MINISTER ABBAS: [T]he construction of the so-called <i>separation wall</i> on confiscated Palestinian land continues ... [T]he <i>wall</i> must come down.	
[JOURNALIST] QUESTION: Would you like to see Israel ... stop building this <i>barrier wall</i> ?	[JOURNALIST] QUESTION: Mr. President, what do you expect Israel to do in practical terms in regarding the <i>separation fence</i> that you call the <i>wall</i> ? Due to the fact that this is one of the most effective measures against terrorism, can you clarify what do you oppose – the concept of the <i>separation fence</i> , or only its roots?
PRESIDENT BUSH: Let me talk about the <i>wall</i> . I think the <i>wall</i> is a problem, and I discussed this with Ariel Sharon. It is very difficult to develop confidence between the Palestinians and the Israel – Israel – with a <i>wall</i> snaking through the West Bank.	PRESIDENT BUSH: I would hope, in the long-term a <i>fence</i> would be irrelevant. But, look, the <i>fence</i> is a sensitive issue, I understand. ... [W]e'll continue to discuss and to dialogue how best to make sure that the fence sends the right signal that not only is security important, but the ability for the Palestinians to live a normal life is important, as well.

Source: Open Society Archives, 2004. Reformatted by authors.

inserted before or after the word. With ‘security barrier’ and ‘separation barrier’, we note the Israeli right-leaning and left-leaning adjectives, respectively, with the latter adjective now occasionally acceptable to the Palestinian official diplomatic position (vis-à-vis the US and the International Court of Justice [ICJ]), but only together with ‘wall’. Thus the intriguing notion of ‘barrier wall’, used by a journalist at the press conference at the US White House (and infrequently in such outlets as the *International Herald Tribune* and *Agence France-Presse*), would seem to move the structure more towards the Palestinian frame. (‘Barrier’ on its own would not.) It should be noted that ‘barrier wall’ is a term used in the concrete structure and paving industry, often associated with sea barriers, but also referenced in connection with the structures being erected elsewhere, such as between the US–Mexican border in southern California. When the concrete slabs went up around Jerusalem and elsewhere in 2004, the engineering literature would now call at least a portion of it a ‘barrier wall’ (Gomaco, 2004).

The timing of the ICJ ruling (July 2004) may explain in part why the court used neither the new technical term nor ‘fence’ (whichever the adjective), but instead chose ‘West Bank wall’, declaring its construction in breach of international law, and calling for immediate removal and compensation. (The ‘barrier wall’ had been in place by the time of the ruling.) In employing ‘wall’, the court also came out in favour of the Palestinian side terminologically. The other important context of the ICJ ruling relates to the competing imagery associated with it (see Table 3). Whilst 2002 and 2003 saw the predominance of images of ‘fence-like’ structures with sophisticated surveillance systems, by 2004 there were rows of concrete slabs, with manned ‘pillbox’ watchtowers borrowed from British colonial security design earlier in the century. Thus the distinct fence and wall parts make for suitable material in the image clash.

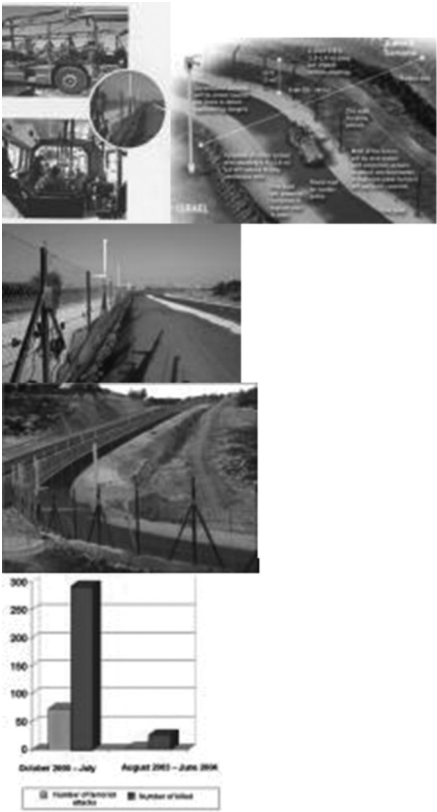
The status quo, described earlier in terms of the two official (terminological) positions on the structure since at least 2002, is a baseline against which movements may be monitored. That is, it would be almost unthinkable to hear either side use the other’s language – a Palestinian utterance of ‘security fence’, or an Israeli using the term ‘apartheid wall’. As noted, however, the official Palestinian choice of ‘separation wall’ over ‘apartheid wall’ (during the White House press conference) shows movement. In the event, it brings the Palestinians into alignment with particular left-of-centre NGO Israeli language. In the language of political language monitoring, one would say that the Palestinian position (abroad) is currently on the Israeli far left (at home).

This study suggests a political monitoring practice for the terms used by official, unofficial and media sources to refer to the structure, looking for movements in term usage as indicatives of conflict escalation or mitigation. There are, however, complications to this political monitoring practice. Palestinian officials, it appears, may use different notions depending on where they are speaking. Thus, to the question of reading conflict levels from changing term use by each side of the conflict, we would like to add the complication of official actors changing terms depending on the setting.

Generally, the official Israeli usage has not changed according to (diplomatic or non-diplomatic) setting, whilst Palestinian usage has. Thus, in the proposed monitoring practice, we also seek official (or unofficial) instances where Israelis and Palestinians are in some form of terminological alignment, and inquire into the implications of that particular constellation of actors and terms (and setting) for a peace arrangement. In which setting and

Table 3. Fence or wall? Image clash: five of the top ten image search results for ‘security fence’ and ‘apartheid wall’

‘Security fence’



‘Apartheid wall’



Source: Google image search, <http://images.google.com>, 25 July 2005.

with which language and actors is there closer alignment, and what peace arrangements are implied? Thus, at the outset, we do not privilege one setting over another as the most significant for the peace process, e.g. those hosting an approach from Washington, DC (Roadmap) or from the region (as the civil initiatives, the Nusseibeh–Ayalon Peace Plan or the Geneva Initiative). Nor do we assume that one particular peace arrangement (or plan) is ‘better’ a priori, for example, owing to its conceptual brilliance, or the current powerful forces behind it. Ideally, the actors behind the peace plans would organize settings in which terminological alignments are evident. Remarkably, however, none of the current official and unofficial peace plans make mention of the structure. For that reason, we seek actor sets in terminological harmony, inquire into the peace arrangements implied by the shared language and contemplate accommodative settings.

As we noted in passing, the one instance we have found, initially, concerns an alignment between the Palestinian language used abroad – in diplomatic and court settings – and far left Israeli NGO and critical media language used more regionally. This particular alignment would imply that the term ‘separation wall’, at least at the time of study, is the only language bridging the Palestinians and Israelis. It also implies that a ‘wall’, not, say, a neighbourly fence, is separating peoples, as opposed to ‘securing’ a people. The actors using the language, however, are not in the same ‘place’, or setting, which may open up arguments for the creation of new settings – ones we shall allude to by way of conclusion.

Media monitoring: terminological usage as conflict indicator?

Certainly, when terms are used consistently, changes in term use by one side or another may provide an indication of the current level of the conflict. Here we first join with the recent literature on the media framing of issues, where the emphasis has been on the intentional or conscious selection of a frame (Koenig, 2004). Given the sensitivity of the issues, the Palestinian–Israeli conflict appears to be a well-suited case for applying the finding of ‘conscious frame choice’, and changes thereto.

In order to position our proposed monitoring practice, we would like to mention two examples of language analysis of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict in academic and non-academic literature, the first in the area of frame analysis. In this context, Gadi Wolfsfeld (1997) conducted ‘meta-frame’ analysis on the news coverage of the conflict during the first Intifada. Wolfsfeld defines two competing meta-frames, employed more generally in conflicts between parties that are unequal (or have ‘asymmetrical’ strength). The first frame, ‘law and order’, serves the powerful antagonist, and is driven by the need to justify the use of force in response to a perceived threat. The second, ‘injustice and defiance’, serves the weaker antagonist, as a call to confront the powerful enemy in light of a general injustice, or a more specific act triggered by the powerful enemy. After one peace process and a second Intifada, these meta-frames still obtain. Generally, the continuing, terminological competition between ‘security fence’ and ‘apartheid wall’ seems to fit within the Israeli frame of ‘law and order’ and the Palestinian frame of ‘injustice and defiance’, respectively.

Applied frame analysis, usually associated in governmental and non-governmental circles with ‘media monitoring’, often focuses on frame success, that is, on the extent to which the Palestinians and the Israelis have their terms resonate in the media (Dunsky, 2003; Philo and Berry, 2004). In examples of this type of research by critical media and NGOs, now with the internet, ‘security fence’, ‘apartheid wall’, and the other notions are queried in search engines, and each term’s relative standing on the web, overall, is shown in hit counts (Klein, 2003; Parry, 2004) (see Table 4). Which term is ‘winning’ on the web?

Here we would like to shift the focus from overlaying broader narratological frameworks on conflict coverage, or from measuring success of competing frames. Instead, we wish to explore how each combination of terms, used by the Israelis and the Palestinians, may imply descriptions of the current state of the conflict, and the prospects for some form of reconciliation implied by shared language. We are also interested in the parties (on both sides) that use the same or similar language, as well as any setting they may share.

Table 4. Media monitoring for frame success with the web. Which terms receive the most hits?

Terms queried in Google	Jewish Agency for Israel's search, 24 Dec. 2003	%	Electronic Intifada's search, 2 March 2004	%
Security fence	25,300	29	92,300	32
Security barrier	14,100	16	41,900	14
Apartheid wall	13,300	15	44,600	15
Security wall	12,300	14	40,400	14
Separation wall	8,730	10	30,800	11
Separation barrier	7,330	8	17,500	6
Separation fence	5,990	7	19,300	7
Terror prevention fence	n/a	n/a	664	n/a
Anti-terrorist fence	n/a	n/a	1,050	n/a
Totals	87,050		290,800 (334%)	

Source: Parry, 2004. Reformatted by authors.

In order to ascertain whether conflict indicators may be created on the basis of a monitoring practice, we analyse the terms used by official sources and news media sources, monitoring over time (using snapshots) how the official sources as well as the news call the structure. Data from Google News serve as our source, in the first instance, for Google News includes the kind of variety in source type that the research requires. (We return to the complications of Google News in the next section.) To our analysis of the news (where news may be implicated in conflict escalation or dampening), we add an analysis of a diplomatic setting. Does the diplomatic setting provide indications of conflict de-escalation, distinct from other settings? Is it currently 'the place' where peace is being arranged?

In the analysis, terminological shifts by official sources and by the news are monitored over time. We assume that an alignment of terms is an indication of advancement in relations, inquiring, too, into relations between *whom*. Dis-alignment of terms (and term deletion from previous settings) shows regression, again between particular actors. When terms from both sides align, we discuss the kind of future that particular alignment implies. We also discuss whether there is, or may be, a setting whose current absence belies conflict mitigation. In other words, where is the conflict not being resolved?

Complications of media monitoring with Google News

Google News has been redefining 'news'. News, to Google, is comprised of both primary and secondary sources, official and unofficial. A White House press release, with the exchange between leaders, is 'news', as is the press release from Relief Web, the organ for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, about Security Council deliberations, for example. The articles covering the exchange and those deliberations, published in the mainstream press, are news. Stories by anti-wall campaigners on ZNET, the 'online community of people committed to social change' from Massachusetts, USA, are news to Google News.⁶

On news aggregators there are small bodies of technical literature (Gulli, 2005), critical work from journalism studies and media watchdogs (Kramer, 2003; Lasica, 2004; Sherman, 2004; Sreenivasan, 2003; Newsknife, 2005; Ulken, 2005a, 2005b) and new media software applications that build on top of them, either to provide different views on the news outputs ('topic maps'), or, in one instance, to perform detective work, 'sniffing' Google News for its source list, which is not listed by the company, and is said to number some 7,000 in total, or 4,500 for English sources alone (Weskamp, 2004; Migurski, 2005; Private Radio, 2005). In the journalism and media watchdog literature, discussions about the 'automated' or 'non-human' news trawling and story ranking machine are often critical. In some sense, it is a familiar reprise in the old media/new media wars. Not only has Google News redefined news in terms of source type (the inclusion of primary and secondary sources), but at least originally it also flattened reputation, in two senses. First, Google News, it appears, is following a similar historical trajectory as search engines more generally, moving, in the early days, from a seemingly egalitarian listing of sources returned per query to, recently, a more familiar hierarchy of credibility. Not very different from AltaVista in the 1990s, early Google News outputs tended to return the obscure and the well-known source 'side-by-side' (Rogers, 2004). According to the trade press, it was precisely the source side-by-sideness, and the critiques made of it, that prompted the company to change the ranking algorithm (Fox, 2005).

Whilst Google is following one old media logic (if you will) in its plans to build in off-line reputation in its definition of 'relevance' in the ranking system, another leading new media logic ('freshness') continues to hold sway, and faces critique from the journalism and media watchdog literature. Google News, in other words, does not (as of now) reward the source that provided the scoop or the 'exclusive' (Arthur, 2004).

Our work has been conducted prior to the implementation of off-line hierarchies of credibility in ranking results. Additionally, Google, at the time of writing, has not expanded its regional or foreign-language news services to the Arabic and Hebrew spaces; we use Google's 'international' news in English, with the largest source count of all its services. We confine our terminological analysis to English terms, while acknowledging the losses caused by not looking at the Arabic and Hebrew terminological equivalents (Cohen, 2001).

The online media space and the dynamics of multiple term usage

In June and July 2004 and in January and April 2005, we queried Google News for the following terms: 'security fence', 'separation fence', 'security barrier', 'separation barrier', 'security wall', 'separation wall', 'apartheid wall' and 'West Bank wall'. For each query, we gathered the top 100 results (news items) containing each keyword in the past 30 days (which is what Google News makes available). Using Réseau-Lu, the software for co-occurrence analysis, we then visualized the relations between sources and terms, creating a series of snapshots of the actor-term space.⁷ Considering the large amount of data, and in order to identify the space's most prominent actors, we limited our analysis to news sources that provided more than six items containing any of the terms. Over time, however, the amount of data changed considerably. As findings from our analysis show, the volume

of international media's coverage of the issue greatly depends on the current level of the conflict (a point to which we return). In cases of 'coverage overload', we applied another filtering criterion, and mapped the top 50 per cent of the actors in the issue space. In cases where the number of results was relatively low, we first lowered the inclusion threshold to four items, and then mapped all 100 per cent of the actors. Following our choice of Google News as the data source that does not differentiate between official and unofficial sources, we treated the official sources as any other media actor and did not privilege the official sources when applying the filtering criteria. Their appearance in the issue space at different points of time thus depends on the extent to which they provide enough news items to be included in it.

Subsequently, we turned to the diplomatic setting, which we had identified as significant from our preliminary work concerning the official Palestinian and Israeli visits to the US White House, where we noted that the setting appears to have an impact on the terms used by Palestinian officials. We analysed transcripts from the two significant UN Security Council debates on the issue, in October 2003 and July 2005. The timeframe for the analysis of the diplomatic setting is therefore wider than the one used for the media space (June 2004 to April 2005.) These differences are taken into account when comparing official term usage between the media space and the diplomatic setting.

While the shifts in language used by official Palestinian and Israeli sources are indicative of the state of the conflict (we would argue), the role international media play in covering the Palestinian–Israeli conflict is a complicated one. On the one hand, great effort is made in covering the conflict with sensitivity, particularly as quality newspapers debate and justify a consistency in term use (Okrent, 2005). On the other hand, there is some inconsistency in language use for the obstacle, although certain sources will avoid one side's language.

In order to shed light on terminological policy, we identified the top 30 per cent of the media actors, and queried each for the different terms in the period from 3 April to 3 May 2005 (see Table 5). It was found that a third of the sources use an exclusive term (giving the appearance of terminological policy), where 'security-related' terms are used more exclusively than others. Quality international media (e.g. *The New York Times*'s 'separation barrier' and *The Guardian*'s 'security barrier') appear to follow a term policy, where 'barrier' is preferred over 'fence' or 'wall'.⁸

Certain sources use a number of terms, but still have a preferred term, e.g. *Al-Jazeera*. *info*'s 'apartheid wall' (the official Palestinian term) and *Jerusalem Post*'s 'separation fence' (the term of Israel's left establishment). We do not interpret multiple-term usage as unconscious, random editorial decision, though, but rather focus on the *unmentioned* terms as more revealing. *Electronic Intifada*, for example, alternates between 'separation wall', 'separation barrier', 'apartheid wall' and 'West Bank wall', but does not use any of the terms containing 'fence' or 'security', thereby consciously opposing the Israeli justification of the obstacle. On the other side, the right-wing Israeli news source, *Arutz Sheva*, uses 'security fence' and 'security barrier' and ignores all other terms that include 'wall' and 'apartheid' (thereby resisting the Palestinian claims against the obstacle), or 'separation' (thereby positioning themselves against the Israeli left). The terminological space of the issue is thus comprised of conscious selections and avoidances.

Table 5. Newspaper terminological policy?

Publication	Location	Term(s) used	Term(s) not used
<i>Ha'aretz</i>	Israel	Separation fence ; security fence; security wall; separation wall; separation barrier	Apartheid
<i>Ynet News</i>	Israel	Security barrier	
<i>Arutz Sheva</i>	Israel	Security barrier; security fence	Separation; wall; apartheid
<i>Aljazeera.info</i>	USA	Separation fence; apartheid wall ; West Bank wall; Separation wall; Separation barrier	Security
<i>Electronic Intifada</i>	USA	Separation wall; separation barrier; apartheid wall; West Bank wall	Security; fence
<i>Ramallah Online</i>	USA	Separation barrier; separation wall	Fence; security; apartheid
<i>IPC Palestine</i>	Palestine	Security barrier	
<i>Al-Ahram</i>	Egypt	Apartheid wall; separation wall	Security; fence; barrier;
<i>New York Times</i>	USA	Separation barrier	
<i>Guardian</i>	UK	Security barrier	
<i>Jerusalem Post</i>	Israel	Security fence ; separation wall; separation barrier; apartheid wall	
<i>Palestine Chronicle</i>	International	Separation fence; West Bank wall; apartheid wall	Security; fence; barrier
<i>Express Newslite</i>	India	No results	
<i>Washington Times</i>	USA	Separation wall; separation barrier	Security; fence; apartheid
<i>Keralanext</i>	India	Security fence; security barrier	Wall; separation; apartheid
<i>Palestine News Network</i>	Palestine	Apartheid wall	
<i>ABC Online</i>	Australia	Security fence	
<i>Palestine Media Center</i>	Israel	Security fence	
<i>Media Monitors Network</i>	International	Separation fence; West Bank wall; apartheid wall; separation wall	Security; barrier
<i>Xinhua</i>	China	Separation barrier; separation wall; security wall	Fence; apartheid
<i>People's Daily Online</i>	China	Separation wall; security wall	Fence; barrier; apartheid

Bold indicates terms used with greatest frequency. Sources without a bold term use the terms with similar frequencies. Source: Google News, April/May, 2005.

Furthermore, and in passing, we note that the proverbial view that the Israeli–Palestinian issue receives too much attention from international media may be questioned. Findings from our analysis show that during conflict escalation, such as around the ruling of the ICJ, there is indeed copious coverage by international media sources. During calmer times, though, the international media lack interest in the issue, leaving the sides to their own devices, and, it appears, back to their own, ‘harder’ terms. Our data from June and July 2004, and from January and April 2005, reflect these differences in conflict level and its subsequent level of media coverage, respectively.

An internationalized and neutral media space during periods of conflict

In June 2004, the online media space was full of items discussing the legality of the construction of the structure; the most frequent term was ‘apartheid wall’, yet with the fewest sources repeating it over and again in individual stories, especially the Palestinian governmental press agency, the *International Press Center*, and a pro-Palestinian media aggregator, the *Al-Jazeera Information Center*⁹ (see Figure 1). There are no Israeli official sources on the map, and the Israeli local media are alone in employing the term ‘fence’, with left of centre newspaper *Ha’aretz* using ‘separation fence’ and right-winged media actor, *Arutz Sheva*, the official governmental ‘security fence’. The international media do not adopt any of the official terminologies, and prefer terms such as ‘separation barrier/wall’, and ‘security wall’. International media outlets do not use the term ‘fence’.

On 9 July 2004, the dispute reached a climax after the ICJ in The Hague ruled on the construction of the obstacle. A day after the ruling, we queried Google News again for the same terms. With three weeks separating the first and the second query, the spatial organization of the media space has changed dramatically (see Figure 2). The extensive coverage of the issue by the world news media resulted in a media space of multiple and neutral terms. Intriguingly, each term organizes distinctive types of media sources.

The Palestinian official sources do not appear in the Google News issue space at this point in time. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs appears in its usage of ‘security fence’, together with the Israeli English-language newspaper *The Jerusalem Post*, US media sources such as *The Washington Times* and *The Washington Post*, and new media sources such as the weekly email magazine of *Aish*, dedicated to Jewish issues, and *Truthnews.com*, a Christian-operated news magazine. The cluster around ‘security fence’ is the only one that has no outside links.

With the absence of the official Palestinian sources, the term ‘apartheid wall’, now the smallest node on the map, is in stories by international press agencies such as *Reuters* and the *Associated Press* (AP), the latter cited by US regional newspapers such as the *Bradenton Herald* and the *Lancaster Newspapers*. For terms other than the official ones, we have found a divide between international and regional media. As in June 2004, the more neutral terms ‘security barrier’ and ‘separation barrier’ are popular among international news sources, but it seems that their use of terms depends mostly on the cited press releases of news agencies. The less neutral ‘security wall’, is employed by a different kind of international media, namely, new media-style alternative sources, such as *Democracy Now* and *antiwar.com*. Finally, the ICJ-framed term ‘West Bank wall’ is used by a heterogeneous group of mainstream international media such as *The Guardian* and

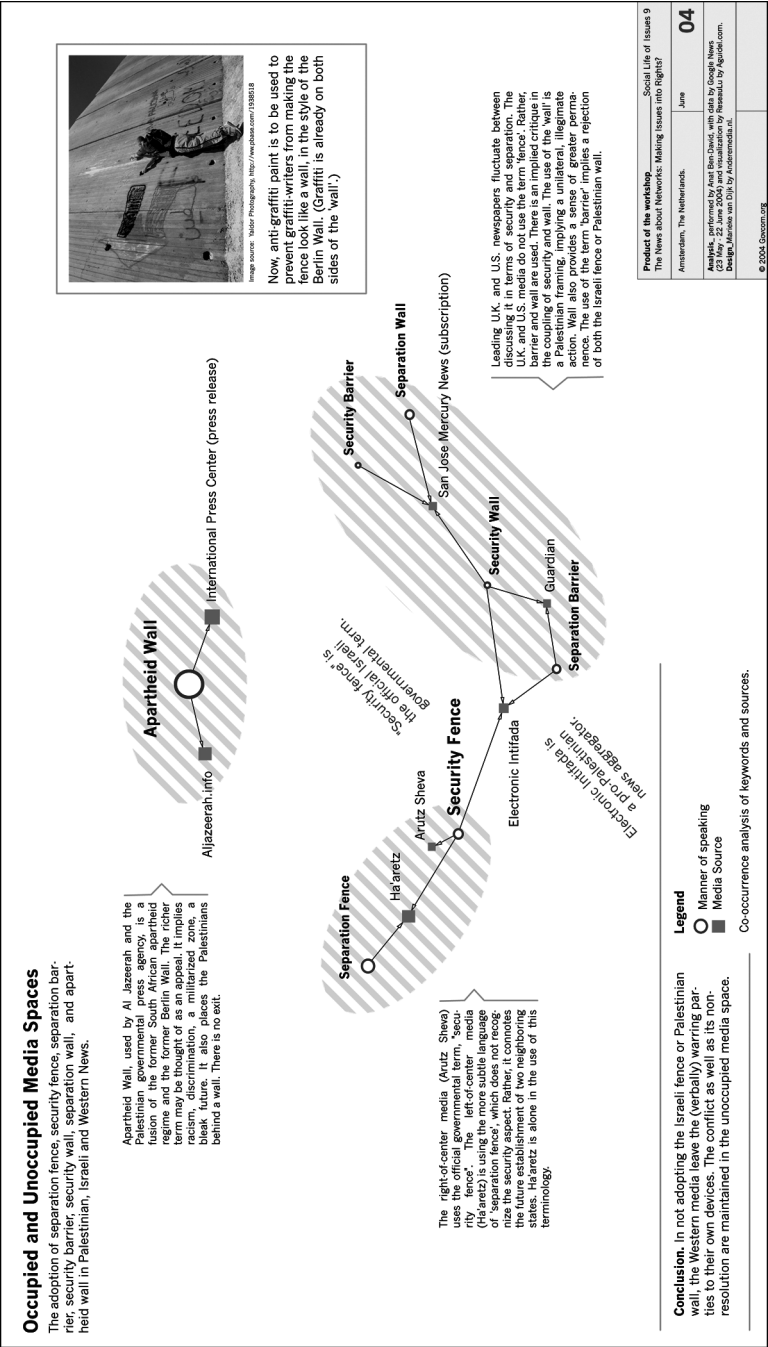


Figure 1. Occupied and unoccupied media spaces, June 2004. The adoption of 'separation fence', 'security fence', 'separation barrier', 'security barrier', 'security wall', 'separation wall' and 'apartheid wall' in Palestinian, Israeli and Western news. Source: Google News, June 2004. Data from IssuesCrafter by Govcom.org Visualization from Réseau-Lu by Aguidel.com Design by Andermedial Figure by the Govcom.org Foundation, Amsterdam. Reproduced with permission.

the *Financial Times*, the Middle-Eastern *Albawaba News* (that provides news feeds to agencies such as *Reuters* and the *Financial Times*) and the *Irish Examiner*. The international news section of these sources is comprised of both feeds from the news wire, as well as self-reporting or special sections dedicated to the issue. Considering the filtering criteria that were applied to the data, news sources that are both quoting feeds from the news wire as well as editorializing have a larger number of mentions per term, and therefore become prominent network actors.

Regionally, 'separation fence', still employed exclusively by *Ha'aretz*, is now the largest node of the map. The term 'separation wall' organizes an even more specific group of news monitoring sources dedicated to the Palestinian case such as *Palestine Chronicle*, *Electronic Intifada* and *Arabicnews.com*

The issue space is thus dominated by terms that are relatively neutral, and popular among international media sources. Neutral term usage by international media, however, does not imply advancement in the official positions. As we will show, official (harder) terms return when the level of international media's coverage decreases. A certain terminological alignment, on the other hand, is implied by the distinctive term usage of unofficial, regional media sources. That the most prominent regional media actors employ 'separation fence' (on the Israeli side) and 'separation wall' (on the Palestinian side) may be interpreted as a first indication of at least a shared adjective. Our findings from January and April 2005 describe a more peaceful period, in which the level of international media's involvement decreases. This results in a sharpened usage of the official terms, but at the same time, unofficial regional sources become terminologically aligned.

A regional media space and sharp term usage on the road towards reconciliation

In the months after the ICJ ruling, the impact of the international court's advisory opinion declined. Whilst the Israeli High Court discussed its legal implications, construction continued. Significantly, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs attempted to replace the term 'security fence' with 'anti-terrorism fence', as if to emphasize that there is still great need for its construction, one that is more in line with the current Western concern with terrorism. In other words, the Israeli stance hardened considerably. With the passing of Yasser Arafat in November 2004 and the election of Mahmoud Abbas as President of the Palestinian Authority in January 2005, Israel's dismissal of Arafat as an irrelevant partner for negotiations could no longer hold. With Abbas in power, Israel's unilateral security measures became increasingly questionable. Also, the 'popularity' of the issue declined in favour of the new Israeli 'Gaza disengagement plan', therefore charging the political sphere with new tensions and hopes. On 9 February 2005, Palestinian President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Sharon met in Sharem Al Sheikh, a meeting followed by a declaration of a ceasefire and a termination of the Second Intifada.

On 10 January 2005, a day after the Palestinian elections, we queried Google News to track any transformation in the media coverage of the issue, with a keen eye towards our previous observation of the conceptual potential of 'separation wall' and 'separation fence' as indications of conflict mitigation. The distinctive, almost evenly distributed, clustering around neutral terms that characterized the issue space in July 2004 was

replaced by a space divided by the Palestinian and the Israeli framed-terms, this time showing a dense clustering around 'security' and 'separation' related terms (see Figure 3). The Israeli information agency, the Israel Hasbara Committee, employs 'separation fence' thereby aligning (domestically) with the position of the Israeli opposition. However, we are set back. The Palestinian official sources, this time apparent on the map, return to 'apartheid wall' and start to use 'West Bank wall' as well, appealing to the language of international solidarity (and human rights) networks and Arab sources as well as to The Hague, respectively. The geographical divide between international and local media, reported earlier, increases. Palestinian sources are again alone in using 'apartheid wall' and 'West Bank wall'. American media citing the AP press releases prefer using pro-Israeli terms, as well as the Israeli left-of-centre adjective, 'separation'. They couple it with the neutral noun – 'separation barrier'. It becomes the dominant term in the media space. Despite the geographical divide, and the apparent international media alignment with the left-leaning Israeli-framed terms, one still can speak of a movement of the organization of the issue space towards the concept of 'separation', regardless of the noun followed by it. Evidently, the network's largest nodes are 'separation fence', 'separation barrier' and 'separation wall'. The answer to the question of whether this alignment is mediated by the lack of involvement of international media is evident in the following snapshot, dated 10 April 2005.

By April 2005, the international media had abandoned the issue. With the exception of *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*, only Middle Eastern sources continued to cover the subject (see Figure 4). With the disappearance of the multiple and neutral terms employed by international media from the issue space, the official terms have retained their status. 'Apartheid wall' is again the most mentioned term in the issue space. Despite this regression, we notice signs of reconciliation on the part of Palestinian official sources. (Israeli official sources do not appear in this news space at this point in time.) The Palestinian press agency *International Press Center*, responsible for the spreading of the term 'apartheid wall' in June 2004, begins using 'separation fence' and 'security wall' as well. Most remarkably, the PLO official press agency, *Palestine Media Center*, employs 'security fence'! Another indicator for rapprochement is evident in that none of the sources employs an exclusive term, as was the case in July 2004. In this case, multiplicity of terms by local sources is seen as acknowledgment of the claims of the other side.

After mainstream international media have left the scene, non-mainstream media outlets become responsible for shaping the issue's terminological space. Pro-Palestinian NGO sources such as *Electronic Intifada*, *Ramallah Online* and *AlJazeera.info* influence the amount of results returned by Google News, by releasing numerous items. They are responsible for the high mention rate of the term 'apartheid wall', but at the same time, frequently use 'separation fence' and 'separation wall' as well.

So far, we have examined alignments and dis-alignments of terms employed by Palestinian and Israeli official sources in the overall media space, also providing some thoughts on the impact of the presence or absence of the international media and other online sources on the language used by either side. Generally speaking, the international news media space does not appear to be a setting (if you will), in which official terminological alignments can be found. Moreover, international media involvement did not

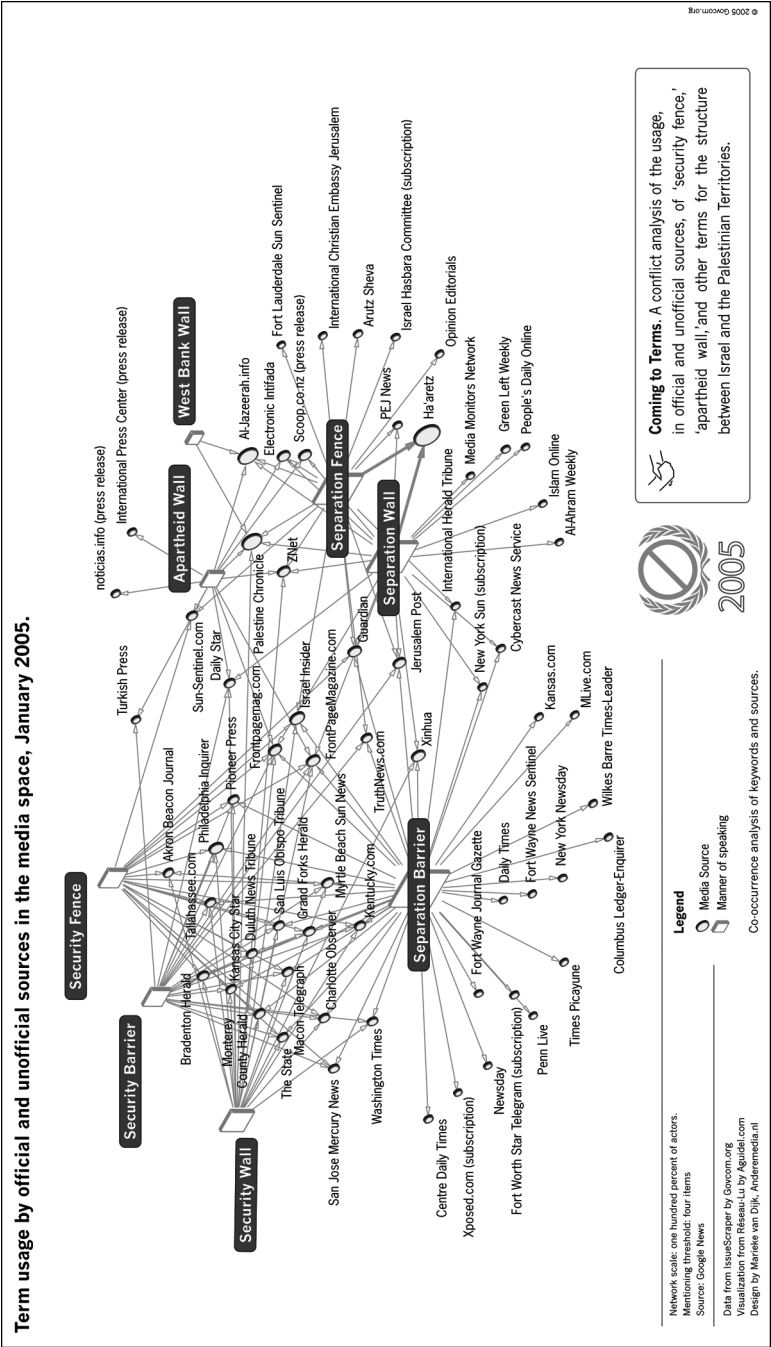


Figure 3. Term usage by official and unofficial sources in the media space, January 2005. Network scale: 100 per cent of actors. Mentioning threshold: four items.
Source: Google News, January 2005. Data from IssueScraper by Govcom.org Visualization from Réseau-Lu by Aguidel.com Design by Andermedia.nl Figure by the Govcom.org Foundation, Amsterdam. Reproduced with permission.

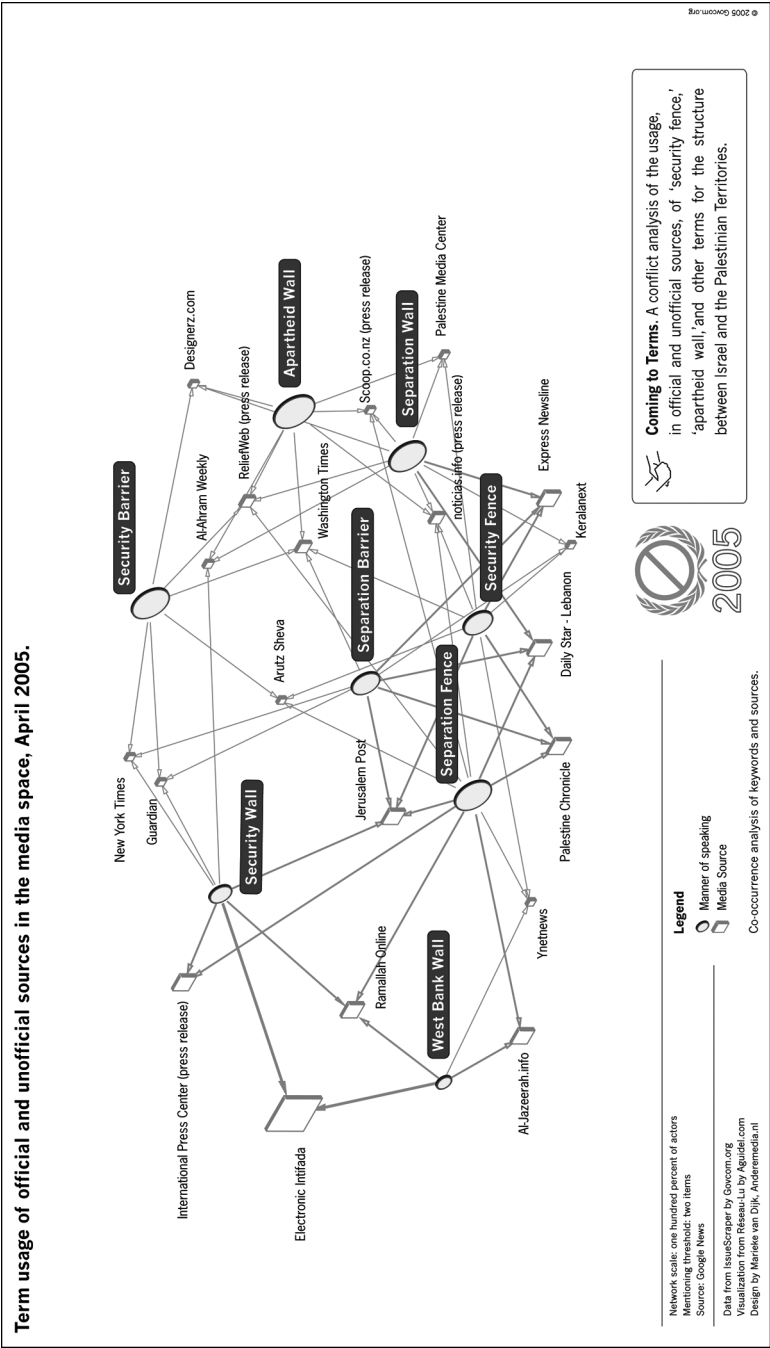


Figure 4 . Term usage of official and unofficial sources in the media space, April 2005. Network scale: 100 per cent of actors. Mentioning threshold: two items.
Source: Google News, April 2005. Data from IssueScraper by Govcom.org Visualization from Réseau-Lu by Aguidel.com Design by Andermedia.nl Figure by the Govcom.org Foundation, Amsterdam. Reproduced with permission.

play a significant role when alignments did take place. The Palestinian movement away from 'apartheid wall' was witnessed when international media were largely absent. Moreover, as international media sources clustered around multiple and neutral terms, regional media sources were relatively alone in their mutual terminological advancement towards the terms 'separation fence' and 'separation wall'.

We would like to further our analysis by looking at term usage in another setting – the diplomatic, that is, language use by state members of the UN Security Council (as well as the Palestinian representation). This enables comparative work, allowing us to introduce thoughts on whether the diplomatic setting has the language in place for conflict mitigation. Is the diplomatic setting leading the way, so to speak, in 'coming to terms'? On the contrary, our analysis of transcripts from meetings of the UN Security Council shows processes similar to those found in the media space. The terms 'competing' in each setting are different, however. By and large, the official Israeli and Palestinian terms are ignored.

Terminological shifts in the diplomatic setting

In the diplomatic space, consistent use of terms may be viewed as a reflection of a country's view on the issue and, perhaps, an embedded political statement. The sensitivity of the choice of words is evident in the letter written by the UN's Secretary General Kofi Annan, addressed to the General Assembly, on 11 January 2005. In the letter, the term 'the wall' is consistently used to refer to the structure, but in a footnote, Mr Annan emphasizes that 'the term used in the present letter, "the wall", is the one employed by the General Assembly' (Annan, 2005). This is not only a case of conscious term selection, but also a recognition that other terms exist, from which 'the wall' was chosen.

Since sensitivity towards terminological usage is expected, shifts in language may serve as strong indications for policy change. To draw those indicators, we compare two transcripts from meetings of the UN Security Council discussing the construction of the structure (UN Security Council, 2003, 2005). The first, dated 14 October 2003, took place in the midst of the Second Intifada, where hopes for reconciliation and advancement in the peace process were low. The second, dated July 2005, took place only a few weeks before the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza strip, and the atmosphere was charged with new hopes for peace.

Regardless of the political situation, or the rotation of the members of the Security Council, the majority frames the structure as a 'wall'. In October 2003, most of the council's members used 'separation wall' and 'the wall' (see Figure 5). In an isolated cluster, the Palestinians used the term 'expansionist wall', together with Yemen, Sudan and the Organization of Islamic Conferences. Israel and Germany were the only countries using 'security fence'. The official UN term (derived from the briefing at the beginning of the transcript) is 'the barrier'; the US and the UK refer to 'the fence' (although the US representative mentions 'wall' as well); the EU, represented by Italy, employs 'separation wall'. Among the more poignant terms are the Palestinian 'walled Bantustans', the Iranian 'racist wall' and the Saudi Arabian 'racist wall of separation'.

In July 2005, however, the term 'barrier' becomes more popular, and the clustering around terms represents a sharper geographical division (see Figure 6). The countries

that cluster around 'separation wall' are mostly Middle Eastern, including the Palestinian representative. Europe clusters around 'barrier'; other members speak of 'the wall'. The US representative refrained from mentioning the structure. Israel is persistent yet alone in employing 'security fence'. A few Arab countries continue to use such terms as the 'colonial separation wall' (Syria) and 'wall of injustice' (Sudan). 'Apartheid wall' is introduced to the space by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (and not employed by the Palestinians). Following the same analytical angle of seeking non-mentions (as previously applied to the media space), here again we found that 'fence' is rejected by all of the Council's members (except for Israel and Kuwait), 'wall' is rejected by the 'West' and adjectives other than 'separation' are less popular.

If, in the media space, the status of 'security fence' and 'apartheid wall' depended, it seemed, on the presence or absence of international media, in the diplomatic setting, the official terms are almost ignored by the international community. This appears to be the significant contribution of the diplomatic setting; official home terms are not embraced abroad by third parties, and opportunities arise for movement in official positions owing to the change of setting. As at the White House previously, when abroad in the diplomatic setting of the UN Security Council, we notice a softening of the Palestinian position, by aligning itself with the term 'separation wall'. Like in the news setting, in the diplomatic setting, the official Israeli representation abides by 'security fence', and is alone in this as the US does not use a term. But there are blocs, perhaps 'predictable' ones. Joining the Palestinians in 'separation wall' are Tunisia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Morocco, India, Yemen, the League of Arab States, Iran, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Cuba. 'The wall' is used by South Africa, Algeria, Indonesia, Benin, Brazil, Egypt, Libya, China, Tanzania, Russia, France and (notably) Japan. Whilst Denmark and Greece also employ 'separation', together with the UK, the EU, Norway, Argentina and Romania, we notice the adoption of the more neutral 'barrier'. With the actors terminologically in dis-alignment and in language blocs, the diplomatic setting, at least on the surface, appears to be a rather unsuitable place for coming to terms.

Conclusion: Shared language and undesirable outcome

Our proposed conflict monitoring method – tracking key words used by actors from (new) media sources over time – was an attempt to follow terminological shifts between Palestinian and Israeli officials as well as other parties, as indications of advancement or regression in relations. First, we examined the media space (using Google News), populated by official and unofficial sources, implicitly putting forward that space as a setting where conflict may be seen to escalate or dampen. We sought what we called terminological alignment, both in times when the international media were present and rather absent. We found that the absence of international media coincided with the return of harder official positions by the conflicting parties.

With that finding, we also have been interested in the contribution of media monitoring more generally. Unlike the practices that seek to ascertain 'frame success' of the terms coined by one of the conflicting sides, ours has been an attempt to find conflict-moderating indicators. Whilst we appear to have found one kind of contribution media monitoring could make to media, we would not like to argue that there should be more

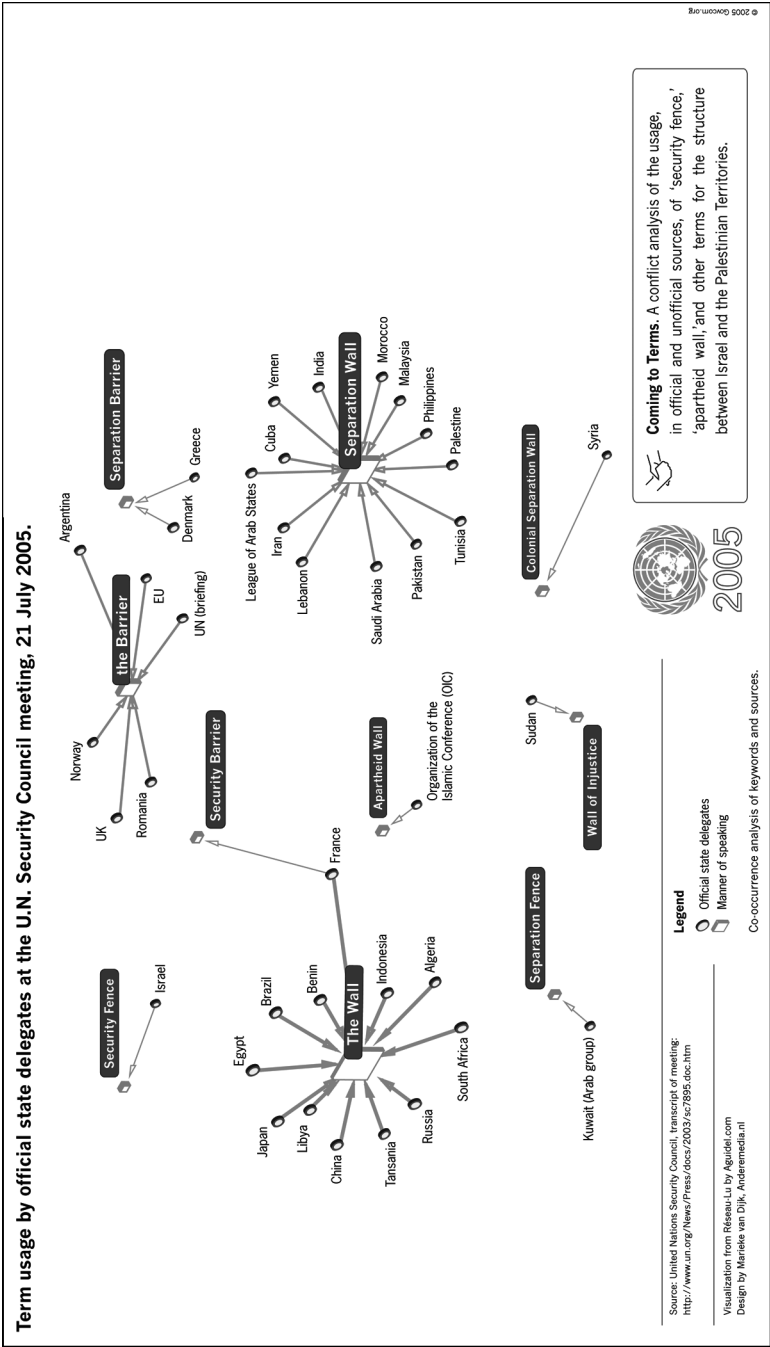


Figure 6. Term usage by official state delegates at the UN Security Council meeting, 21 July 2005.
Source: United Nations Security Council, 2005: Visualization from Réseau-Lu by Aguidel.com Design by Andermedia.nl Figure by the Govcom.org Foundation, Amsterdam. Reproduced with permission.

coverage merely on the basis of the coincidence of increased international news and conflict dampening. Rather, our practice concerns finding language that aligns sides. Is there a shared language? Among all the terminological combinations that exist to refer to the structure between Israel and the Palestinian Territories, we are looking for the terms that bring sides together, inquiring into the constellation of the two sides. When there is alignment, we ask, whom is it between?

As we were alerted to Palestinian language shifts according to setting (the White House and the ICJ, initially), we also found it important to add setting as a variable to language monitoring. Additionally, in the analysis, we learned that Palestinian officials may use certain terms for the regional news, and other terms elsewhere, not always picked up in our media space. Seeking a diplomatic setting abroad, ultimately we checked the floor of the UN Security Council (still via the web), where two significant debates have taken place concerning the structure during our period of study. In using 'separation wall' abroad in the diplomatic setting, the official Palestinian position, we found, aligned with the language of the non-establishment Israeli left, found on the web. (Those are the two 'sides', see also Figure 7). At the UN, however, we witnessed language blocs. As obvious as it may be, it should be stated that with the absence of the non-establishment Israeli left in that setting, we view, largely, one particular grouping using the term. On the graphic and beyond, it appears as only one 'side'. We have been interested in which setting may accommodate shared language between the sides. The question arises if the UN Security Council is such a place, at least at the time of study.

As for other potential settings for shared language, one may consider those arising around the joint Palestinian–Israeli (civil) peace plans, formulated in the past few years. The plans, such as the Geneva Initiative and the Nusseibeh-Ayalon Plan, have been initiated by unofficial actors within the regional political sphere, and enjoy certain international favour.¹⁰ The setting for the Geneva Initiative, for one, is complicated. Coming to a similar conclusion as the analysis in this article, the initiators of the Geneva Initiative sought a new setting removed from the official diplomatic abroad, as well as that 'at home'. The 'people-to-people' plan comes from the 'region'. The question arises whether the region can host a plan. The parties to the Geneva Initiative have met, quietly, in automobiles at checkpoints, in Jordan as well as on the side of international (academic) conferences (Beilin, 2004; Klein, 2007). Moreover, the plans are rejected by the current official Palestinian and Israeli leadership (much as the term 'separation wall' is rejected by the Israeli officials, and to some extent by the Palestinian official language employed 'at home'). The terms that are currently employed in these plans speak of 'provisional borders', and do not mention the structure as an issue that has to be resolved in order to reach reconciliation. Since the obstacle is already in place, its mentioning seems unavoidable. Provisional borders, however, assume temporary obstacles, ready to be removed once peace is in place. 'Separation wall', as an arrangement, seems less so.

What kind of arrangement is implied in 'separation wall'? The adjective recognizes the acceptance of the Israeli left establishment's position that the two peoples are to be separated, as opposed to one people being secured from another. It entails the Israeli left establishment's position that with it comes a two-state solution. 'Wall' implies the acceptance of the Palestinian position that the structure, as it is being currently built, stands in the way of reaching a two-state solution, as among other reasons its durability over a

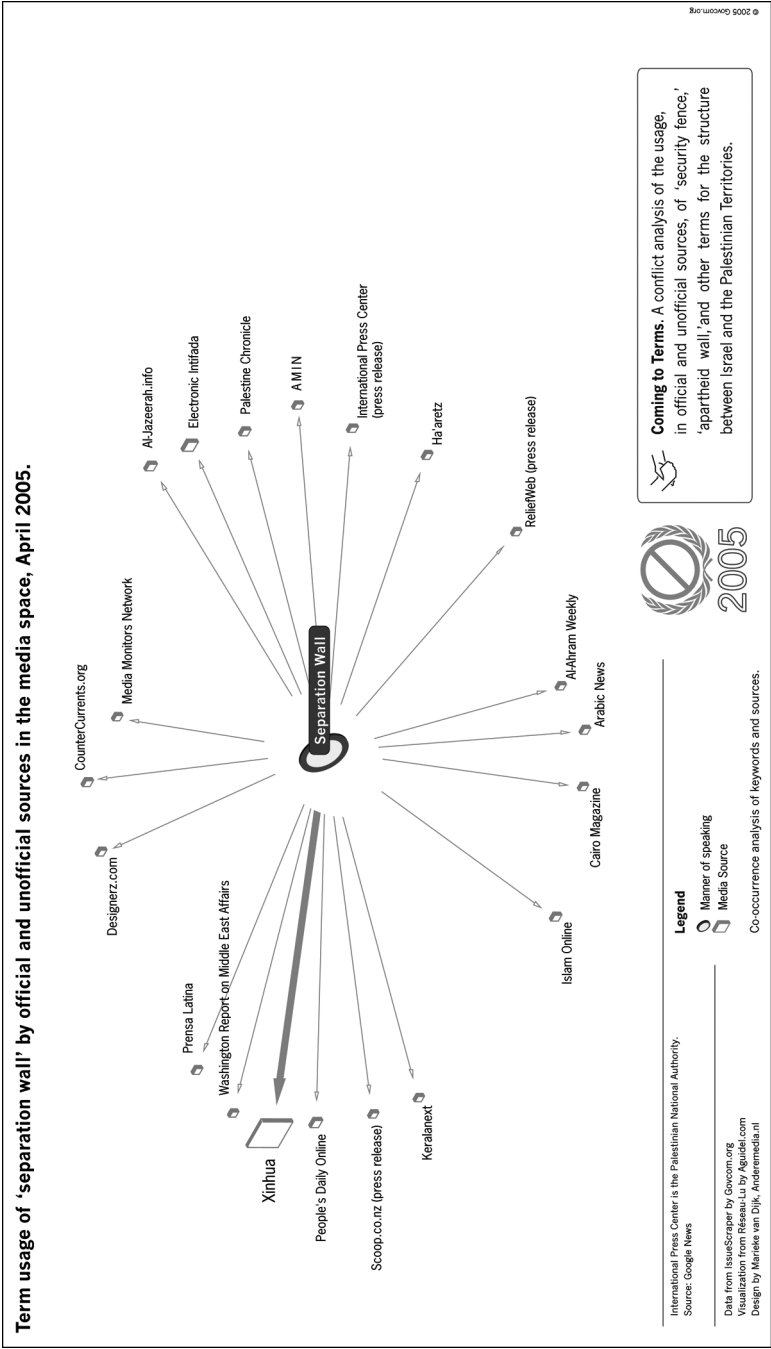


Figure 7. Term usage of 'separation wall' by official and unofficial sources in the media space, April 2005. Reproduced with permission. Source: Google News, April 2005. Note: International Press Center is the Palestinian National Authority. Data from IssueScrapper by Govcom.org. Réseau-Lu by Aguidel.com. Design by Andermedia.nl. Figure by the Govcom.org Foundation, Amsterdam.

temporary fence implies permanent border-stating. But the term's implications also may be considered not from knitting together its parts, but by taking the term as a whole. To the actors using the term in full, 'separation wall' represents a position, held by both Palestinians and the Israeli far left, that the structure does not separate peoples as much as the Palestinians from their lands. 'Separation wall', perhaps more than any other term, is also concerned with the long-term consequences of the structure. It implies that its construction fixes the conflict (as opposed to a peace), and that in the long run a wall will separate both Israelis and Palestinians from living together, making the shared language an undesirable outcome to those who employ it.

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Notes

- 1 Open Society Archives, Budapest, used a quotation by Robert M. Cover to open its 2004 exhibition, 'The Divide', at Gallery Centralis. 'A wall begins to form, and its shape differs depending upon which side of the wall our narratives place us on' (Open Society Archives, 2004).
- 2 Another official Israeli term, the 'anti-terrorist fence', is raised less frequently and at particular points in time. It provides a more poignant description of the purpose of the still temporary structure.
- 3 The question of how to name the area populated by the Palestinians is subject to dispute. For the 'neutral point of view' dispute surrounding 'Palestinian Territories' (without the 'occupied' adjective in official use by the United Nations), see, for example, the *Wikipedia* entry on apartheid wall (*Wikipedia*, 2005).
- 4 This also marks the shift on the ground and in media imagery from the light-weight fencing and monitoring system in 2002 to a concrete canvas painted with political graffiti in 2004.
- 5 'Apartheid' may be translated from the Afrikaans (and Dutch) to 'segregation', but the historical association is arguably stronger than the definitional.
6. The complications in the monitoring practice mentioned earlier, which necessitate the examination of language usage across different settings, has made Google News a better data source than other conventional data sources for media outlets (such as Lexis-Nexis), as its multiplicity of official, unofficial, mainstream and alternative media sources introduces a greater variety of settings.
- 7 The Réseau-Lu software is by Aguidel, Paris.
- 8 The adjectives 'separation' or 'security', however, would be readily interpreted regionally as a political inclination, or partial frame victory.
- 9 Aljazeera.info should not be confused with the Qatar-based news organization, *Al-Jazeera*.
- 10 The Geneva Initiative is supported by such actors as the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (an initiator), Swisspeace (Geneva) and the Olof Palme International Center (Stockholm), with diplomatic support from Labour parties in the respective countries and further afield.

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