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## Ideological Use of Rhetorical Structures in American Newspapers Reporting Human Rights Violations in Iraq

**A B S T R A C T**

News outlets can manipulate media discourse to promote their hidden ideologies regarding specific cases, such as human rights. Language is no longer a mere means of communicating information; but it also generates and shapes the social interaction with such issues. That is, Language used in newspapers can influence the readers' view on the issues published in them. This could be achieved through the effective representation of these issues using linguistic structures and choices. Therefore, this study investigates the ideological use of rhetoric structures in selected American online newspapers (Washington Post and New York Times) reporting human rights violations through 2019 protests in Iraq as a Muslim and Middle East country. This study employed a qualitative approach to analysis 12 news articles, focused on metaphor, parallelism and hyperbole as rhetoric structures. The findings revealed that the American newspapers used the rhetorical structures based on their ideology in reporting the protests in Iraq, supporting Iraqi protesters and portraying them as the positive "Self," emphasizing their actions and calling for government change, while criminalizing the Iraqi government and its forces and portraying them as the negative "Other," de-emphasizing their reaction and violations against the protesters.

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الاستخدام الأيديولوجي للهياكل البلاغية في الصحف الأمريكية التي تغطي انتهاكات حقوق الإنسان في العراق

فؤاد حسين علي القيسي / جامعة تكريت

**الخلاصة:**

يمكن لوسائل الإعلام التلاعب بالخطاب الإعلامي للترويج لأيديولوجياتها الخفية بشأن قضايا محددة، مثل حقوق الإنسان. لم تعد اللغة مجرد وسيلة لنقل المعلومات؛ بل إنها تولد وتشكل التفاعل الاجتماعي

مع هذه القضايا. أي أن اللغة المستعملة في الصحف يمكن أن تؤثر في وجهة نظر القراء حول القضايا المنشورة فيها. يمكن تحقيق ذلك من خلال التمثيل الفعال لهذه القضايا باستعمال الهياكل والاختيارات اللغوية. لذلك، تبحث هذه الدراسة في الاستعمال الإيديولوجي للهياكل البلاغية في بعض الصحف الأمريكية الإلكترونية المختارة (واشنطن بوست ونيويورك تايمز) التي تغطي انتهاكات حقوق الإنسان من خلال احتجاجات عام 2019 في العراق كدولة مسلمة في الشرق الأوسط. استعملت هذه الدراسة نهجاً نوعياً لتحليل 12 مقالة إخبارية، مع التركيز على الاستعارة، التماثل، والمبالغة كأشكال بلاغية. كشفت النتائج أن الصحف الأمريكية استعملت الهياكل البلاغية بناءً على أيديولوجيتها في تغطية الاحتجاجات. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** الهياكل البلاغية، الصحف الأمريكية، انتهاك حقوق الإنسان، الاحتجاجات، الأيديولوجية.

## Introduction

The newspaper as a media type is considered as a preferred readable source of information in the world, from which people receive adequate updates on current events and issues in the world (Lamichhane, 2017). A newspaper is regarded as a medium of “shaping public opinion and policy” (Haque & Sheikh, 1993, p. 1). Due to the nature of news discourse as being ideologically loaded and manipulative (through language), its discourse attracts the attention of researchers in the critical discourse analysis (henceforth, CDA) field, (Elyas et al., 2020; Ahmadian & Farahani, 2014). Hence, Fairclough (1995) considers language as the primary means for persuading people to accept specific representations of news events. In this sense, reporting of issues (such as human rights violations (henceforth, HRVs), immigration, trafficking) or groups such as (Muslims, immigrants, Middle East people) in the newspapers through effective use of language are described based on the news producers’ ideology (Algamde, 2019; Dodantenna, 2020).

Following the fall of ISIS in Iraq, the country experienced challenging and volatile conditions such as demonstrations, HRVs, and government replacement (Georgis, 2017, Eriksson & Khaleel, 2019). The force was used to suppress the demonstrations, infringing the right to peaceful assembly and expressing thoughts and attitudes by killing, kidnapping, and injuring numerous protesters (Dodge, 2018). HRVs based on the context of this study are defined by Banerjee (2021) as violations of basic personal rights of individuals by the state or its representatives.

Such basic human rights include the right to freedom of speech and expression, as well as the right to be safe from being killed, kidnapped, and imprisoned. These actions attract the attention of media worldwide, American newspapers (Washington Post and New York Times) are among these media. These newspapers are within the elite or high quality news media sources in the United States and around the world, as evidenced by their renowned international publishing (Abed, 2015; Al-Gamde & Tenbrink, 2020; Cushion et al., 2018; Li, 2009). They have a long history of reporting on human rights concerns in many countries in the world (Iqbal et al., 2020; Kalsi, 2017; Le, 2002; Yin, 2007).

Hence, American media frequently portrays human rights in the Muslim and Middle Eastern countries negatively, through the effective use of language, in order to justify the intervention in these countries' affairs (Brandle 2018; Brooten, 2004, 2015; Cheng & Lam, 2010). It additionally aims to influence and shape the audience opinions and attitudes toward such issue by ideologically employing particular vocabulary and sentence structures (Cheng & Lam, 2010). This shows the effective representation of news events through ideologically loaded linguistic choices. Such representation requires the use of CDA to identify the relationship between linguistic structures and ideology. Van Dijk (2013) argues that a critical analysis is required when studying such terms as legitimacy, violation of human rights... as CDA works on revealing the discursive abuse of power.

Furthermore, Van Dijk (1977, 1980) states that the news discourse structure comprises both macrostructure (thematic) and microstructure (semantic, syntax, and rhetoric), particularly, this study interesting in examining how the Washington Post and New York Times employ the rhetorical structures in reporting HRVs in Iraq. This is to comprehend the significant and crucial relationship between socio-political concerns and this particular media discourse.

This in turn highlights the importance the critical analysis in studying the linguistic and ideological representation of news events related to different socio-political issues, like HRVs. It is a fact that CDA is contributing to the examination of HRVs in media and politics (Belajeva, 2018; Cheng & Lam, 2010, Iqba et al., 2020; Iskandar et al., 2018 Le, 2002; and Yin, 2007); however, more studies are required to better understand how HRVs are represented linguistically and ideologically in discourse, particularly newspaper discourse.

## Literature Review

### Newspaper Discourse

Newspaper discourse has recently piqued the interest of critical analysis researchers, because articles in newspapers can be examined in order to reveal the underlying motives concealed beneath its discursive structure (Ali, 2017; Dezhkameh et al., 2021; Elyas & Al-Zahrani, 2019; Sadeghi et al., 2014). Based on Dezhkameh et al.(2021) opinions, it is feasible to investigate the underlying ideology and biases of specific social groups through the medium of text in newspapers. The language of the newspaper does more than simply relay the information that it expresses explicitly. According to Wodak (2001), language is an instrument of dominance and social power. Therefore, the language of newspaper discourse is an appropriate medium for revealing hidden ideologies that determine societal norms and values (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 2001). As diverse language choices is used in news discourses to reflect certain world realities, the function of newspaper discourse in shaping the representations and ideologies of certain groups exposes it to the process of critique (He & Zhou, 2015).

### The Selected Newspapers (The Washington Post and New York Times)

The Washington Post is also a US daily newspaper, found in 1877 and published in Washington D.C., one of the biggest cities in the world. The Washington Post is considered one of conservative US newspapers that support the Right Wing press in the USA. Similar to New York Times, Van Dijk (1998) states that Washington Post is “more conservative”. While Veenstra, and Koehn (2009) have different view point, they asserted that the Washington Post is neither conservative nor liberal newspaper.

The New York Times is a daily broadsheet and national USA newspaper published in New York City that was founded in 1851. It is regarded as one of the liberal US publications that support the Left Wing press in the United States. It expresses “a variety of more or less liberal opinions and ideologies depending on the issues at hand” (Van Dijk, 1998). The newspaper is owned by the New York Times Company, which is controlled by the Ochs-Sulzberger family (New York Times Company, 2022). In general, these newspapers play an important role and have a long history of reporting on human rights cases around the world (Kalsi, 2017;

Suzor et al., 2019). They have a nationwide readership and long-held experience in foreign reporting (Maier, 2019). New York Times and Washington Post are considered as the most influential media source in the agenda-setting process, both among policymakers and other media organizations (Gulati, 2011).

### **Human Rights Violations (HRVs)**

HRVs are defined as any activity that violates a person's personal freedom and rights (Douzinas, 2007). According to Anthonissen and Blommaert (2007), HRVs are any damages done to people by others or by the state, including torture, injuries, and death. HRVs are defined, similarly by Banerjee (2021), as violations of individuals' basic personal rights, by the state or its representatives. In Iraq for example, HRVs mostly committed by the state's regime (Horowitz & Schnabel, 2004; Arif, 2021). According to Horowitz and Schnabel (2004), the principal HRVs of the Iraqi dictatorship can be divided into two categories: (1) war crimes; and (2) violations of individual civil and political rights, as well as the right to life and the protection of civilians from torture.

### **Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association Rights**

One of the fundamental rights for every person in collective expression, and their ability to gather and voice opinions or tendencies that are in opposition to authorities or a certain governmental approach, is the right to freedom of peaceful assembly (Jarman & Hamilton, 2009). This right is a part of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which establishes the freedom of peaceful assembly as a basic human right that must be protected and promoted under Article 20. The right to peaceful assembly, for Černý (2020), remains the only effective way of expressing certain groups or the representatives of minority views, who may not have access to the media or sufficient funds to spread their ideas. While for Alsamee (2022) protest is a peaceful gathering of people in public places to express a particular viewpoint or demand a specific order.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Kazemian and Hashemi (2014) defined CDA as a multidisciplinary theoretical paradigm that focuses on the relationship between discourse and power, namely how written texts and words establish, maintain, replicate, and oppose authority, as

well as social inequities. CDA is referred to as having a critical ethical viewpoint, with the adjective critical being central in CDA (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Its origins can be traced back to the Frankfurt School and Jurgen Habermas' critical theory (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; also see Forchtner, 2011). Huckin (1995), Van Dijk (1993), and Wodak (2001) all agreed that critical theory is vital in understanding the notions of ideology and criticizing them since it aims to improve the perception of society. CDA adopts a different critical approach to social issues, such as sexism, racism, and other forms of social inequalities (Van Dijk, 1995; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). CDA seeks to make clear power dynamics and ideology, which are typically hidden, and focuses on the relationships between discourse and society (Wodak & Myer, 2009). However, Van Dijk (1980) in his approach (Sematic Macrostructure or Socio-cognitive approach) indicates that the discourse analysis can be done through both macrostructure (thematic) and microstructure (semantic, syntax, and rhetoric) to uncover the ideologies behind using the linguistic structures. That is, this study is interesting in examining the ideological employ of rhetoric structures (within the microstructure of the discourse) based on Van Dijk's (1980) approach (Sematic Macrostructure).

### **Microstructure: Rhetorical Structures**

Van Dijk (1998) defined rhetoric as the system of special rhetorical figures such as metaphors, euphemisms, repetition, hyperbole, irony alliteration, comparison, parallelism and interviews and so on that have specific persuasive functions. Rhetoric deals with the persuasive dimension of language use, it deals with the properties of discourse that can make communication more persuasive (Dadugblor, 2016; Sahmeni & Afifah, 2019). The rhetorical structures of discourse according to Van Dijk (1988) are featuring the figures of speech, and they are based on grammatical structures but are not themselves linguistic or grammatical. Rhetorical devices, such as metaphor, parallelism, and hyperbole represent essential devices in discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1993; 1995).

Metaphors are seen as significant rhetorical tools that affect political behaviour and cognition (Beer and Landtsheer, 2004 cited in Salahshour, 2017). According to Van Dijk (1988), metaphors are among other rhetorical tools that manage the recipient's comprehension of the discourse and influence his mental models, as well as the rhetoric figures certain representations in the recipient's or reader's

mind about the world. Other rhetorical devices like parallelism and repetition may strengthen the considerable focus given to these features of the news text structure. Van Dijk (1998) indicated that these structures described as classical rhetorical devices are used to attract or manage the attention of recipients, and thus increase their chance to be kept in the favored form of an event. Moreover, it is possible to use hyperbole when arguing the other's negative features or to use comparisons of the same types (Burgers et al., 2016). Hyperbole is usually used to create humour and sensational effect in order to make the ideas more manipulative, which lead to exploit the reader (Mahmood et al., 2014). In sum, the selected rhetorical choices above are utilized to examine the ideology of the Washington Post and New York Times online newspapers. In more focus to establish the polarizations of the ideological square, the positive "Self" (in-group) presentation and negative "Other" (out-group) presentation.

## Research Method

This study is qualitative in nature in order to provide an in-depth analysis for the issue under study. It is based on CDA to examine the ideological use of rhetorical structures in the selected American newspapers reporting HRVs of a different social group, in which the representation of Self and Other occurs particularly based on religion and nationality, race, etc., in the Washington Post and New York Times online newspapers. The ideological use of rhetoric choices by the newspapers is carried out in accordance with Van Dijk's (1998) "Ideological Square" for exposing the opposite groups' ideology hidden in the text of news articles. As a research design, this study employs qualitative approach in order to gather and evaluate data related to the reporting of controversial issues (HRVs) in the micro (rhetoric) structures of the Washington Post and New York Times online newspapers discourse. The corpus of the study consists of news articles obtained from the Washington Post and New York Times online newspapers (official websites of the newspapers) on the HRVs that occurred in Iraq through 2019 demonstration.

Purposive sampling is used to select the study corpus, as it satisfies the objectives and answers the questions (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Purposive sampling is a strategy of selecting texts for analysis depending on their relevance to the research

topic (Brooten, 2015; Hart, 2020). The New York Times and Washington Post newspapers were selected for their vast distribution throughout the United States, as well as their status as the elite media in the United States and around the world. Furthermore, the Washington Post and New York Times online newspapers are well-known English-based publications on a global level. Since these newspapers have a lengthy history of reporting on human rights concerns in numerous nations around the world, they are the most favored, trusted, and preferred sources by many CDA experts in politics and media studies, particularly when discussing human rights issues (Kalsi, 2017; Suzor et al., 2019).<sup>12</sup> news articles were chosen from the selected newspapers (6 news articles from the Washington Post and 6 news articles from The New York Times). Articles selected based on relevance to the topic of this study, and directly addressed the demonstration, HRVs, post-ISIS Iraq, protest, free expression, killing, injuries, and abductions.

That is, the rhetoric analysis, which includes rhetorical devices such as metaphors, parallelism, and hyperboles, which represent essential devices in discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1998) will be examined. The next step is identifying the ideology behind employing these structures by the American online newspapers (Washington Post and The New York Times) in their news articles through reporting demonstrations and HRVs in Iraq in 2019.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **A-Metaphor**

This section clarifies the metaphorical use by the Washington Post and The New York Times in their news articles to highlight different meanings. According to Bradford-Watts (2007), metaphor is one of the lexical patterns that contribute to the structure of a specific text type and "could be employed, consciously or subliminally, to shape the development of a text, as the organising principle that gives the text lexical cohesiveness". Tables below, table 1.1 presents examples of metaphors used in the Washington Post news articles, and table 1.2 presents examples of metaphors used in the New York Times news articles.

Table 1.1: Rhetorical device of metaphor in the Washington Post

No.	Example
WSP1	<b>Tendrils of fear</b> are creeping through the protest movement
WSP2	The violent crackdown appeared only to have <b>drawn out</b> more protesters
WSP3	Iraq is <b>spiraling</b> deeper into violence
WSP4	At least 30 reportedly killed as Iraqi security forces clash with protesters in <b>fresh unrest</b>
WSP5	We need a <b>fresh start</b>
WSP6	<b>With Iraq on edge</b> , prime minister's resignation sets up political crisis

Table 1.2: Rhetorical device of metaphor in the New York Times

No.	Example
NYT1	The respite rests <b>on a knife's edge</b>
NYT2	But on Thursday, instead of using tear gas or sound bombs, <b>the hard-line</b> reinforcements from the Interior Ministry's Quick Reaction Forces opened fire on mostly unarmed protesters in the early morning hours as they <b>held a sit-in</b> , killing at least 25 and wounding 160
NYT3	Iraq has <b>lurched</b> from one crisis to another over the last 16 years
NYT4	The <b>war-weary</b> country could face a new round of instability
NYT5	The people of Iraq are at a <b>boiling point</b>
NYT6	But Mr. Mahdi's resignation may <b>not spell</b> the end of the turmoil that has <b>racked</b> the nation over the past two months

Firstly, the tables above show some metaphors used by the American newspapers are very much different from their literally meaning. For example (the Washington Post), in WSP1 the word *tendril* means a thin, curly piece of something, In WSP2, the literal meaning of *drawn out* means lasting a very long time, often too long, in WSP6, the word on edge means nervous or worried, with this usage. Example in (the New York Times), NYT6, the first metaphor "spell" literally refers to form a word or words with the letters in the correct order, or have something unpleasant,

and the second metaphor "racked" literally refers to causing physical or mental pain, or trouble, to someone or something. Other metaphors as shown in the tables are appearing not much different from their literary meaning.

However, regarding the metaphors in the Washington Post, with this usage for example WSP1, the newspaper hopes to evoke a mental picture for the reader (local and global readers) about the violence that the Iraqi government has committed against the protesters, who claim their rights. In WSP2, The newspaper reveals the Iraqi government's violations against the protesters were opposite government's expectations. The newspaper wants to refer to the large number of protesters joined the demonstration although they know will face government's violations. So, the literary use depicting the Iraqi protesters' surge for demonstrating and calling for their rights in the face of the government's violence. In WSP3, the word spiraling literally means a shape made up of curves, a situation gets worse, and it is not much different from the metaphorical use in the above example. With this usage, the newspaper is indicating how the violence continues by the government lead the country in more violence actions, and accordingly more victims. It shows the extent of violence that government committed against the protesters through using violent procedures and weapons. The use of unrest metaphor in WSP4 highlights that there is a real clash between two opposing groups (protesters and government forces). Referring to the government and the security forces uses illegal and violent means and weapons such as fire with water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets to control the protest movements and prevent the protests from spread across the country. It is linked with the use of the fresh start metaphor in WSP5 highlights that the Iraqi people refuse the political system that was established after the 2003 war and the political parties that rule the country after the US invasion. The result of the violence actions appear in the last metaphor in WSP6, the word on edge means nervous or worried. That is, the newspaper wants the readers to imagine the situations in Iraq that will become worse with the continuation of the protests, the prime minister's resignation, and the disagreement in parliament over who will lead the country. It is sequence use of metaphors employing by the newspapers to describe the situations in Iraq, the human rights and how the government violated them.

In the same vein, the New York Times employed metaphors ideologically as appeared in the table above. In NYT1, the metaphor (on a knife's edge) shows that the country (Iraq) is in a difficult or dangerous situation, in which a very small change can cause a fall out (literally or figuratively) at any moment. The editors of the newspapers seek to create an image in the minds of their readers of the perilous situations in Iraq that could erupt at any time, due to the government's and security forces' ruthless treatment of protesters demanding their rights. In NYT2, hard-line literally means: advocating or involving a rigidly uncompromising course of action, and it is not much different from the metaphorical use. The newspaper reporters want to refer to the huge numbers of forces through using the word (reinforcements) to indicate the government procedures to control the protests in the country. In NYT3, the newspaper described the situations in a country (Iraq) that witnessed various wars and conflicts. This country moved (lurched) from one crisis to another, especially after the US invasion. Such use of metaphors describes the negative actions of the government, political parties and politicians. In NYT4, the metaphor "war-weary" shows that there is a new conflict between two opposing groups (protesters and government forces). This conflict could cause more instability in a country that has been through many wars. The use of such metaphors at the start of a NYT4 indicates that this country (Iraq), which has already exited a difficult conflict with extreme fighters (ISIS), will face another conflict. The newspaper reporters want to structure this NYT4 discourse based on their ideology about the complex situation in Iraq due to the continuous conflicts and wars in this country. This example of metaphors is consist with the next metaphor In NYT5 which refers to the extent of situations in Iraq, as the Iraqi people reached their highest point of anger towards the government for its failure to improve people's lives and the political parties for their corruption. Reporting such kinds of metaphors in the news article (with referring to protesters demands, violations, and attacks) reveals (based on the newspaper's editors ideology) the complicated political scene and the government's problems to affect the readers' emotions towards the protests against the government and its forces, showing their negative actions.

### **Parallelism**

In the newspaper discourse, parallel structures are used for the purpose of persuasion. That is, the newspaper shows the acts of the in-group positively or

emphasises the bad actions of out-group to create a rhetorical effect (Khan, 2018). Table 1.3 and 1.4 presents examples of parallel structures used in the American newspapers news articles.

Table 1.3: Rhetorical device of parallelism the Washington Post

No.	Example
WSP1	These were never meant for crowd control, these were never meant for civilians.
WSP2	the Reuters news agency reported. Early Thursday, the U.S.-led coalition reported explosions
WSP3	"We're not leaving!" ... "Look what they're doing to us!"
WSP4	Security forces fired volley after volley of tear gas
WSP5	"Witnesses also said security forces attempted to run them over with vehicles," Amnesty said, citing reports that 14 protesters were killed.
WSP6	"Iraq has a historic chance to form a strong <i>government</i> , a <i>government</i> free from outside interference"

Table 1.4: Rhetorical device of parallelism the New York Times

No.	Example
NYT1	"There is no security <b>solution</b> ," he added. "We reject repression and the use of force and violence. The <b>solution</b> is in reforms."
NYT2	the military commander in charge of the forces in Nasiriya, who <b>had been sent</b> there just a few days earlier to rein in the protesters, <b>had been recalled</b> to Baghdad.
NYT3	But overall the <b>government was silent</b> ...and <b>Parliament was unable</b> to muster a quorum
NYT4	One protester <b>was killed</b> and dozens <b>were injured</b>
NYT5	"a <b>criminal</b> , armed attack carried out by <b>criminal</b> and outlaw gangs."
NYT6	Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi of Iraq formally <b>submitted</b> his resignation to Parliament on Saturday and <b>asked</b> lawmakers in a televised national address to quickly agree on a successor.

Table 1.3 above show that the newspaper uses reported speech in WSP1, and refers it to former intelligence officers to indicate that the information mentioned in the report is formal information reported from former officers, who participated in the war against the ISIS. Secondly, the parallel structure is using the verbal phrase (were never meant) to make the utterance unacceptable. It is obvious that this sort of parallelism can serve to strengthen, underline, or amplify almost the particular message that the newspaper wanted to convey (Oo, 2021; Zghayyir, 2016). The past tense is used to refer to two facts: the first is that the protesters are unarmed, and they are civilians who faced violence from the security forces using weapons used in wars only; the second fact is that these weapons were never used before against the protesters and civilians, or to control demonstrations. That is, the repeated structure is an attempt, not only to capture the interests of the readers, but also to represent the protesters positively. At the same time, this shows the act of the state (out-group) violating the people's rights for free expression, and show them negatively. In WSP2, the newspaper used parallel word (reported) in the previous sentence and next sentence to show its objectivity and neutrality in reporting news about sensitive events and cases.

The third example indicates two facts. The first is that protesters decide to continue their demonstrating and not leave the protest fields. The second fact is that the government uses violence against protesters who exercise their right of free expression. The newspaper used parallel words and sentences in WSP4 and WSP5. The examples refer to using a repeated word (volley) and (said) to emphasise the kind and extent of violent weapons used by the security forces in their clashes with the protesters. At the same time referring to the source of information to emphasise the violent action and reveal its truthfulness, credibility, and neutrality. That is, the using of parallel words is to make the utterance more unacceptable. Additionally, the use of such parallelism may confirm the message of the government's violent dealings with the protesters that the newspaper wanted to convey. The agentive active sentence shows two facts; the first is that the security forces are responsible for violence and started the clash with the protesters.

The New York Times also used parallel words and sentences ideologically as shown in 1.4above. The first example refers to a quoted sentence by the country's president, with repeated word (solution) to emphasise the kind of solution that

must be followed in this complex situation, and that should be adopted. Parallel sentences are used in NYT2, it is using the depended verbal clause (had been sent-had been recalled) to make the utterance more unacceptable. The parallel structure and tenses reported in NYT3 refer to the authorities' disability to response to the protests, violations and the protesters accusations about the security forces firing at them as Iranian or from the Iranian political parties. With repeated the past tense (was silent/ was unable), the newspaper wants to emphasise that the different authorities in Iraq (government and Parliament) were unable to provide solutions to the situations in the country, respond the protests or calm the streets. In NYT4, the newspapers' reporters are using passive/agentless verbs such as "was killed" and "were injured" in order not to accuse a specific side, but leave it to the readers to guess based on the historical background information, or infer from the rest of the news article. In NYT5, the use of the parallel word (criminal) in the quoted statement from the highest power in the country (the President Salih) is to gain the readers trust regarding reporting the attack. In NYT6, the repeated structure of simple past tense "submitted" and "asked" in active form emphasizes the prime minister's resignation and indicates that the resignation has happened and the matter is done.

## Hyperbole

The use of hyperbole is intended to have an impact on people's opinions and attitudes, as well as to leave a significant impression on them because the statement may go beyond normal bounds (Burgers et al.,2016; Kuriata & Kasatkina-Kubyshkina, 2022). This improves the reader's memorization, and hence, increases persuasion. News reports may use words that function as hyperboles (overstatements, exaggerations) or understatements, or word and sentence meanings that establish contrast or build a climax. These structures further contribute to a tighter organisation of news information, and thus, may lead to better memorisation by the reader, while enhancing persuasion. They may also activate particular scripts or attitudes, for instance, when a demonstration is rhetorically framed in terms of violence by the use of comparisons or metaphors borrowed from military scripts (attack, defense, etc.). It may be anticipated that political speeches are loaded with hyperbolic expressions to derogate the alleged

bad actions or properties of nations or persons that challenge policies of the challenged groups or institutions, which are often described in mitigated, euphemised, or self-glorified terms. Next tables 1.5 and 1.6 present examples of hyperbole used in the selected newspapers news articles.

Table 1.5: Rhetorical device of hyperbole in the Washington Post

No.	Example
WSP1	Hundreds of protesters have been arrested.
WSP2	Several thousand demonstrators were gathered in the center of the city.
WSP3	The six days of street protests are the largest challenge yet to the fragile government.
WSP4	At least 165 people were killed and more than 6,000 injured in the last round of clashes.
WSP5	At least 83 people have been killed across Iraq since a new round of demonstrations.
WSP6	The demonstrators, thousands of whom are camped out in Baghdad's Tahrir Square

Table 1.6: Rhetorical device of hyperbole in the New York Times

No.	Example
NYT1	when security forces killed nearly 150 protesters
NYT2	security force gunned down more than two dozen.
NYT3	the overall death toll from the past two days stood at about 60
NYT4	One protester was killed and dozens were injured
NYT5	We were surprised by heavy shooting and many vehicles. There was a literal massacre.”
NYT6	The resentment of Tehran's insertion into Iraqi affairs is running so high that protesters burned the Iranian Consulate.

In WSP1, table 1.5, the hyperbole is used to captivate the audience with the violence endured by the large number of protesters arrested on their way to hospitals or returning home. Van Dijk (1988) indicates that news reports excessively use numbers (whether correct or not) to rhetorically signal their exactness, and hence, their objectivity. The use of hyperbole places an increased

emphasis on the issue under study. The hyperbole is used in the WSP2 example to exaggerate the protesters number (several thousand demonstrators) as the journalists want to reveal that regardless of the government violations, protesters continued to gather in thousands to express their opinions and attitudes towards the government, refusing the political parties' rule of the country. The use of the hyperbole in the WSP3 example is to impress the audience about the political system and the weak government that established after the ISIS era in Iraq. In the WSP4 extract, the journalist exaggerated the description of the victims' number of the protests who clashed with the security forces though the source of the information (the country's human rights commission) is mentioned. This way of describing those victims in the lead sentence of the news article portrayed the protesters victims positively as they are practicing their rights to free expressions through call for changing the government. The hyperbole in the WSP5 extract describes the extent of violence that the demonstrators faced from the government forces, which resulted in (at least 83 people have been killed). The WSP6 example refers to the rise of the protest movements using the plural noun "thousands" to indicate the demonstrators' decision to camp in one of Baghdad's central places, which is Tahrir Square. Therefore, the hyperbole is used to magnify a fact or an emotion, allowing the newspaper to highlight the importance of the protesters' sacrifices to obtain their rights in a truthful manner, emphasising the in-group's good actions, while also de-emphasizing the state's reaction to anti-government protests demonstrating violations of the rights to peaceful assembly and free expression, where civilians (Iraqi people) demand a change in the political system.

While table 1.6 shows the hyperbole used by the New York Times in news articles reporting HRVs in Iraq. In NYT1, the hyperbole highlights the use of force to deal with protesters, using past verbs, as the journalist wants to refer to the violence perpetrated by the government through protests. Reporters and editors generally validated their point of view by highlighting previous bad actions of the out-group in the next phrase or paragraph (when killed nearly 150 protesters). In NYT2, the hyperbole structure informs the readers about the violence faced by number of unarmed protesters (blocking bridges) who gunned by security forces. The newspaper wants to make exaggeration about the victims to inform the global readers about violent practices by the government which lead to more victims

every day. That is, in NYT3, the newspaper provides more details about the protests victims' numbers (the past two days stood at about 60) to assert facts, evidence and truth based on an official source (the Iraqi High Commission on Human Rights). In NYT4, the hyperbole structure describes the violations by the government's forces and the results of the violent practices against the demonstrators that led to (One protester was killed and dozens were injured). The hyperbole in NYT4 is used to exaggerate the facts about Iraqi people, who were largely driven by economic issues, improving public services, and providing jobs. While the hyperbole in NYT5 shows the violent actions, describing the extent of violence that the government forces, armed groups, and outlaw gangs committed against the peaceful protesters. That is, the use of hyperbole increases emphasis on the issue under investigation. Last but not least, the hyperbole in NYT6 is used to exaggerate the reaction of the Iraqi people and their resentment towards Iran and its insertion into Iraqi affairs. Also, it shows the sequence of Iran's influence on Iraqi politics, accordingly, among the protesters demands is the end of Iran's interference in Iraqi policy.

To summarise, the Washington Post and New York Times employed such rhetorical devices as metaphors, parallelism, and hyperboles. The online newspapers used metaphors of violence, clashes, and security to depict the complex situation in Iraq, referring to the massive protests across the country, and the support of Shiite clerics, and thus, accusing the Iraqi government, political system, and security forces of inciting the protests and violence. The Washington Post and New York Times hope to evoke a mental picture in their readers' minds of the 2019 protests and confrontations between protesters and government forces in this manner. To make the utterance more objectionable, parallel phrases and structures are generally employed to emphasize the type and level of brutality committed by the security forces against protesters. Hyperboles are employed to exaggerate facts and descriptions of the number of protesters killed, as well as to convey to readers the extent of the violence endured by the protesters. These rhetorical devices were used, in order to emphasize the positive actions of protesters, as they are (in-group), in their rallies against the negative actions of the Iraqi government and its forces, as they are (out-group).

Although Van Dijk (2000) indicated that rhetorical devices depend on which opinions are formulated about whom, the analysis of the corpus showed that the online newspapers rely on more than one official information source, such as (Human Rights Commission in Iraq, Medics and human rights officials, and former officers) by using reporting verbs (such as said) to free themselves of any responsibility, thus confirming their objectivity and legitimacy. Simultaneously, they relied on precise numerical references to achieve the same result, attempting to avoid bias in their news article.

However, the Washington Post and New York Times added importance to the sacrifice of the protesters to get their rights in the way of the truth, emphasizing the "Self" good actions, and de-emphasizing the reaction of the "Others" dealing with anti-government protests. This concedes with Castello's (2015) statement that rhetorical choices contribute to the legitimization or de-legitimization of political agendas advocated or indeed proposed by the media themselves. Ideologically, the newspapers, through employing these rhetorical structures, presented the Iraqi protesters and victims as positive "Self", while the Iraqi government and its forces were presented as negative "Other".

## Conclusion

News outlets can manipulate media discourse to promote their hidden ideologies regarding specific cases, such as human rights, which is the focus of this study. The study's findings revealed the Washington Post and New York Times online publications' attention and focus in reporting HRVs in Iraq, committed during the 2019 protests, and portrayed in accordance with the newspapers' ideology. The usage of varied linguistic structures by American online newspapers revealed their ideological bias in depicting protests and HRVs. These linguistic structures (including rhetorical structures) demonstrated the newspapers' support for Iraqi protesters, alongside portraying them as the positive "Self," emphasizing their actions and calling for government change, while criminalizing the Iraqi government and its forces and portraying them as the negative "Other," de-emphasizing their reaction and violations against the protesters. This fact is confirmed by Fowler's (1991) viewpoint, which states that media language is not neutral, but is extensively constructed as a mediator to infer various meanings, themes, and ideologies.

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