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# *Diplomatic condolences: ideological positioning in the death of Yasser Arafat*



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**ABSTRACT** Yasser Arafat was a key figure in the political life of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. As Palestinian president, he was a central player in negotiations over the most contentious issue of the time: Middle East peace. But although his significance is unquestioned, his status is ambiguous: for some he was a freedom fighter, for others a terrorist. It is interesting, therefore, to observe the ways in which different world governments marked the death of Arafat in November 2004, in their official condolence messages. Using the tools of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and systemic functional linguistics (SFL), this article treats the diplomatic condolence message as a recognizable text type that has much to tell us about how governments signal and construct ideological positions and in doing so 'enact' the international community.

**KEY WORDS:** *appraisal, Arafat, condolence, critical discourse analysis, ideology, Israel, Palestine, political discourse, systemic functional linguistics*

## *Outline and purpose of the study*

This article focuses on the discursive strategies of world leaders in the wake of Yasser Arafat's death. In doing so, it demonstrates how global political leaders compose their versions of a world order and position themselves within it. By the end of his life, Arafat had undoubtedly become one of the world's most recognizable political figures, and one who stood at the epicenter of an extremely complex maelstrom of conflicting forces (historical, racial, religious, political, economic) which together constituted the most important locus of global disputation at the beginning of the twenty-first century: the Middle East. So when Arafat died in Paris on November 11, 2004, world leaders marked his passing with official condolence messages that demonstrated great linguistic dexterity and ideological subtlety. These messages represented more than a series of perfunctory sympathy notices – they constituted a conversation within

the international community, in which each contributor commented on the loss of a fellow member, and formulated their own assessment of the significance of the event for the world.

The notion of the 'international community' is interesting for discourse analysts because governments – despite the hugely variant views held by many (on this or any other matter) – inevitably demonstrate their communality through linguistic performance: in this case, by adherence to the generic expectations of the condolence message. This shows how global communities, just like local communities, structure the bonds of membership through the shared formation of registers, and negotiate their position within the group by the manipulation of the structural features of these registers.

The condolence messages studied here come from 12 countries and one organization: the USA, Israel, India, China, Russia, Iran, South Africa, Australia, the UK, Pakistan, Indonesia, Japan and the United Nations (UN). All originated from the official government websites of the relevant countries (and the UN), with one exception: the Israeli leader Ariel Sharon did not post an official message, but instead issued a 'statement' to the press. All the messages were posted in English. Most of the messages were authored (at least nominally) by the nations' individual leaders, but this was not always the case. The message may have been issued by a government office, perhaps 'on behalf' of the national leader. Table 1 explains which website posted each message and who the purported author was.

It is hoped that by analyzing and comparing these messages, we will be able to answer certain questions about the nature of global political discourse at the start of the 21st century. What do the texts tell us about the social function of (international) diplomatic discourse, and about the particular functions and generic structure of the condolence message? How does language enact the international community? What does this corpus tell us about world leaders' attitudes towards Yasser Arafat and Middle East peace?

## *Analytical framework*

The expression 'international community' is regularly used in political discourse, but it remains relatively undefined. This article is built on the basic assumption that, on the one hand, 'communities' (and 'society' in general) are partly created through language, and, on the other hand, that language is constrained by the nature of the particular community in which it is used. Thus, we are able to see that condolence messages are used to signify membership of the international community, but also that there is a certain global diplomatic etiquette that constrains what may or may not be said in them.

Clearly, then, an analytical approach is required that views language and society as mutually sustaining. One such framework is critical discourse analysis (CDA), a basic tenet of which is that 'actual discourse is determined by socially constituted orders of discourse, sets of conventions associated with social institutions' (Fairclough, 2001: 14). Thus, not only are language and society

TABLE 1. *Origin of condolence messages*

<i>Nation/ organization</i>	<i>The website of . . .</i>	<i>Author of message</i>
Australia	Prime Minister of Australia	Prime Minister John Howard's Office
China	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue (with paraphrasing of President Hu Jintao's private condolence messages)
Great Britain	Number 10 Downing Street	Prime Minister Tony Blair
India	President of India	President's Office and President Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
Indonesia	Department of Foreign Affairs	Department of Foreign Affairs
Iran	Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Minister Dr Kamal Kharrazi
Israel	CBS news, Chicago	Prime Minister Ariel Sharon
Japan	Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi
Pakistan	Diplomacy Monitor	President General Pervez Musharraf
Russia	President of Russia	President's Office and President Vladimir Putin
South Africa	Department of Foreign Affairs	Department of Foreign Affairs and President Thabo Mbeki
United Nations	United Nations	Spokesman for the Secretary-General Kofi Annan
USA	The White House	President George W. Bush

linked, they are linked in structured ways – given a certain social institution, we can expect certain sets of conventions and the production of a certain kind of text. The analysis always maintains the dual perspective that Fairclough sees as the ‘felicitously ambiguous’ underpinning of both discourse and practice, i.e. both ‘what people are doing on a particular occasion’ and ‘what people habitually do given a certain sort of occasion’ (Fairclough, 2001: 23).

However, I am also mindful of Martin and Wodak's point that ‘CDA has never been and has never attempted to be one single or specific theory. Neither is one specific methodology characteristic of research in CDA’ (Martin and Wodak, 2003: 5). For this reason, the broad CDA framework is informed, where necessary, by the descriptive tools of systemic functional linguistics (SFL). This approach shares the language–society link with CDA, similarly maintaining that it is ‘the social functions that determine what language is like and how it has evolved’ (Halliday, 1985: 3). A further advantage of incorporating SFL techniques is pointed out by Martin (2000a: 275): ‘one of the strengths of SFL in the context of CDA work is its ability to ground concerns with power and ideology in the

detailed analysis of texts as they unfold'. Thus, detailed grammatical analysis in this article is based on the Hallidayan model of text description (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004), in which the primary motivations for language use are explained as three overarching 'Metafunctions': (i) representation of the world (the Experiential Metafunction), (ii) enactment of social relations (the Interpersonal Metafunction) and (iii) organization of the message (the Textual Metafunction). Additional lexical analysis employs the Appraisal theory pioneered by Martin within SFL (Martin, 2000b; Martin and Rose, 2003). 'Appraisal' refers to how language is used 'for negotiating our social relationships, by telling our listeners or readers how we feel about things and people (in a word, what our attitudes are)' (Martin and Rose, 2003: 22). SFL-specific terms are explained in more detail as the analysis unfolds and are capitalized for ease of reference.

### *Previous research*

The diplomatic condolence message has not been targeted by linguistic researchers before (as far as I am aware); however, various text types that deal with the related areas of 'death' and 'history' have been studied from a critical discourse angle. These text types include obituaries (Moore, 2002), death announcements in ordinary conversation (Holt, 1993), and museum exhibits that reassess traumatic events (Flowerdew, 2003; Schiffrin, 2001). J.R. Martin (2003) has attempted to catalogue some of the typical grammatical resources used in texts that reconstruct past events. He has used Appraisal theory as a way of analyzing the interpersonal pressures that come to bear in history texts (e.g., the construction of 'mourning' in a post-9/11 magazine editorial; Martin, 2004). The Appraisal work is extended in Coffin, who has studied two aspects of historical narratives: the linguistic means for making moral judgments on historical matters (2003), and types of narrative 'voice' in history texts (2004). The Israeli–Palestinian conflict itself has been studied before through the lens of death announcements: Najjar (1995) examined death notices in the West Bank press, and later 'martyr's lists' in East Jerusalem Arabic magazines (Najjar, 1996), and showed how these notices can serve a dual purpose in addition to that of mourning – they can operate as political statements or even as acts of incitement. From the Israeli side, Roniger (1994) analyzed death announcements in the Hebrew press, although his goal was to show how they reflected general shifts in Israeli society, rather than political agendas.

### *Discussion and analysis*

There are four major elements around which the texts unfold. A *typical* governmental response to the death of Yasser Arafat contains most or all of the following:

1. An expression of condolence:
  - (a) an emotional reaction to hearing news of the death;
  - (b) a performative 'enactment' of condolence.

2. An assessment of Arafat as a symbolic figure.
3. A recount of Arafat's achievements.
4. A statement of the government's position on the Middle East peace process.

Not *all* of the texts contain *all* of these elements, but it can be said that most of them do. Also, the elements do not necessarily occur in this order, but steps 1 to 4 represent a very typical sequence. In the analysis that follows, I discuss each of these points in turn.

In carrying out the analysis, it is claimed that certain lexico-grammatical consistencies can be observed across the corpus in the realization of these strategies. However, this is not to deny the fact that these texts emerge from a huge range of cultural contexts and that condolence – and its expression – is more than likely a highly culture-specific phenomenon. It is also accepted that there likely exists a wide variety of English proficiency among the authors. Nevertheless, it can equally be assumed that the authors have an international audience in mind, since we are dealing with messages placed on the world wide web in English by world governments on a topic of huge international significance.

#### HOW IS CONDOLENCE EXPRESSED?

Two major discursive strategies are employed in the corpus for the expression of sadness and grief over the death of Arafat. The first is to describe the circumstances in which the news of the death has been received and the second is to straightforwardly *enact* condolence.

#### *How is news of Arafat's death received?*

Reaction to the news is a feature of the initial sections of those texts that are positively aligned with Arafat: Indonesia, Russia, China, the UN, Pakistan, South Africa (India being the only exception to this pattern). Because we are dealing with *opening* information, we may expect one area of lexico-grammar to be of particular note here: namely, the Textual Metafunction (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004), since it is this area of grammar that is concerned with the organization of messages into beginnings and endings. Furthermore, given the topic (immediate reaction to a death), we may also expect the lexis of Affect (how people express their feelings in discourse; Martin and Rose, 2003) to be a distinctive feature.

Analysis reveals three distinguishing grammatical features: (i) reaction to news as 'hyperTheme', (ii) Theme Predication (or 'cleft' construction), and (iii) Circumstance usage. Beginning with the first point, we can see that all the authors place some comment about receiving the news at the opening of the letter – the most thematically salient position, signaling from the outset the author's stance. The following are examples:

#### **Example 1: China**

*Just several hours ago, we heard of the unfortunate news that Mr. Arafat, chairman of the Palestine National Authority had passed away.*

**Example 2: Indonesia**

*It is with great sorrow and profound sadness that we learned the news about the untimely demise of Yasser Arafat, a leader of the Palestinian people and a hero to us all.*

**Example 3: Pakistan**

*It is with a deep sense of grief that we have received the news of the demise of our dear brother Yasser Arafat and the great revolutionary leader of the Palestinian people.*

**Example 4: Russia**

*It is with great sorrow that I have learned of the death of the head of Palestine national administration and Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation's Executive Committee Yasser Arafat.*

**Example 5: South Africa**

*It is indeed difficult to accept that the greatest leader of the Palestinian people Yasser Arafat, with whom we have shared so many trials and tribulations, has ceased to lead.*

**Example 6: United Nations**

*The Secretary-General was deeply moved to learn of the death of President Yasser Arafat.*

To use the analytical terms of Martin and Rose (2003), all these statements function as hyperThemes for the condolence messages. A hyperTheme functions as a topic sentence for the text as a whole; it 'is predictive; it establishes expectations about how the text will unfold' (Martin and Rose, 2003: 181). So, in the texts quoted above, all the authors have chosen to make an expression of grief the overarching theme of the text. But hyperThemes often fulfil a further function: they 'tend to involve evaluation, so that the following text justifies the appraisal' (Martin and Rose, 2003: 181). Thus, these opening statements also set up an evaluative framework: they give the reader an expectation that what follows will in some way justify a *positive* evaluation of Arafat's life.

Second, we can also observe the repeated use of the anticipatory 'It is . . .' at the beginning of the messages. This structure can be interpreted as a thematic device, since it invests the phrase that follows with added emphasis (Halliday and Matthiessen referred to this process as Theme Predication) (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). This, in turn, relates to the third point about Circumstance usage. Both grammatically and semantically, the *circumstances* in which the news is received tend to be 'thematized': that is, in systemic-functional terms, a grammatical Circumstance is placed in the Theme position in the opening sentence.

**Examples 7 and 8: Circumstance: Manner ('It is' type)**

7 *It is with great sorrow and profound sadness that we learned the news . . .*

8 *It is with a deep sense of grief that we have received the news . . .*

**Example 9: Circumstance: Location: Time**

9 *Just several hours ago, we heard the unfortunate news . . .*

These are all 'marked' Themes (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) because they take the place of the Subject in the Theme position (i.e., the Subject of the clause is not the Theme of the clause, as it usually is), and therefore signal to the reader that 'here is something you should pay particular attention to'. Examples (7)–(9) show how expressions of grief can be given thematic prominence both within the texts as a whole (as hyperThemes) and within the opening clause structure (as marked Themes).

Turning specifically to lexical patterning, it is useful to apply Martin's notion of Attitude here (Martin, 2000b; Martin and Rose, 2003): that is, consider whether the wordings manifest evaluations of things (Appreciation), people's character (Judgement) and/or people's feelings (Affect). The prevailing pattern is one of Affect, construed as a surge of emotion (as opposed to an ongoing mental state), combined with Amplification (techniques for intensifying Attitudes, here underlined) as in: with great sorrow and profound sadness (Indonesia), with a deep sense of grief (Pakistan), with great sorrow (Russia), deeply moved (UN).

Several texts do *not* provide explicit (and sympathetic) reactions to the news of Arafat's death. In the case of Israel's Sharon, Australia's Howard and the USA's Bush, this is not surprising, given their well-known antipathy towards Arafat. Two more have had close economic, political and military ties with the USA: the UK (Blair) and Japan (Koizumi). Another is Iran. Although an Arab nation, over the years its relations with Arafat have arguably been even more strained than those enjoyed by Israel or the USA. A major supporter of Fatah's rival Hamas, the Iranian government's reaction to the Oslo Accords in 1993 are a case in point – here described by Menashri (2001: 285):

The official voice from Tehran, radicals and pragmatists alike, was very harsh. They found it crucial to defend Palestine and focused their attacks on Yasser 'Arafat . . . Khamene'i, calling for an Islamic counterattack to foil the agreement, castigated 'Arafat as a 'notorious, disgraced person' and wondered who had allowed him at all to negotiate in the name of Palestine.

As the analysis will show in following sections, this attitude is never spelt out in the Iranian message, but certainly seems to underlie it.

### *How is condolence enacted?*

The direct and conventional expression of condolence can be observed in every text of the corpus with the exception of Israel (which, as mentioned, is not strictly a condolence message). Because the social function of the text type is to participate in the act of mourning, we can say that some element in the generic unfolding of the text must constitute the expression of condolence. This is what Hasan (1985a, 1985b, 1996) calls an 'obligatory' element of a text type: if it is not present, then the text fails to instantiate that particular genre. Usually one to two sentences in length, this element carries out the act of condolence itself, like one of Austin's (1962) 'performative utterances'.

Two examples (one pro-Arafat, one anti-Arafat) serve to illustrate the key textual strategies in enacting condolence:



**Example 10:** South Africa

*Consequently, and on behalf of the government and people of SA, President Mbeki extends our heartfelt condolences to Suha, his widow, members of the bereaved family, the Palestinian National Authority, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and the people of Palestine during this time of sadness.*

**Example 11:** Australia

*The Australian government extends its condolences to the Palestinian people on the death of the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority Mr. Yasser Arafat.*

The first point is that the main verb in both texts is the same: extend. This is typical of a wider pattern whereby the use of a semantically weak main verb with ‘condolences’ entails intensification of lexis elsewhere. Second, the number of recipients of condolences is quite different: five parties in the South African message but only one in the Australian message. The quantification of recipients serves as a strong indicator of ideological stance.

As in Examples (10) and (11), the word ‘condolences’ collocates with semantically neutral verbs across the corpus. In SFL terms, we can say that *extend* is Process and *condolences* Range, where Range is defined as ‘a nominal group which works together with the verb to express the process’ (Thompson, 1996: 104). In other words, semantic weight is carried by the Range and the Process is a relatively ‘empty’ one. It would be rather awkward to intensify the message by writing, for example, ‘we avow/affirm/proclaim condolences’ (positive Amplification of the Process) or ‘we weep/wail/moan condolences’ (negative Amplification of the Process). There are, in fact, very few projecting Verbal Processes in English that carry an inherent sense of sadness/grief. We can possibly say ‘He grieved that “it was a terrible loss”’ but it is somewhat stretched.

Amplification is, therefore, achieved by the addition of Intensifiers (Martin and Rose, 2003), as shown in Table 2 (Intensifiers underlined).

TABLE 2. Amplification of condolences

High Amplification	<u>deepest</u> sorrow and <u>heartfelt</u> condolences . . . condolences	Pakistan
	condolences . . . <u>deep</u> condolences . . . <u>sincere</u> solicitude	China
	<u>deep-felt</u> condolences	United Nations
	<u>heartfelt</u> condolences	Indonesia
	<u>heartfelt</u> condolences	South Africa
	<u>sincere</u> condolences	Russia
	condolence . . . <u>sympathy</u>	Iran
	condolences	Japan
No Amplification	condolences	UK
	condolences	Australia
	condolences	USA

So, we can see that the same group of nations that did not provide an emotional reaction to the news of Arafat's death also produces the lowest Amplification of condolence: the USA, Australia, UK, Japan and Israel (which does not offer condolence at all) and perhaps Iran.

However, we need not gauge depth of feeling by reference to lexical items alone. We can also make this judgment by asking 'Who do the condolences go to?'. Table 3 shows the individuals, organizations and general groupings that are explicitly mentioned as intended targets of condolences in each of the texts. The list is ordered from the highest number of recipients to the lowest, and the actual wording is reproduced (because the length of the list has a bearing on meaning).

Once again the USA, Australia and Israel are grouped together, at the bottom of the list. The USA and Australia extend their sympathies only to 'the Palestinian people' – not to members of Arafat's family or to any members of the Palestinian leadership. In doing so they signal a detachment from the man both personally (no family ties) and politically (no governmental ties). We can also note that neither the UK nor Japan joins them in this strategy: both refer to government entities, and in so doing indicate a softer line towards the Palestinian movement than that of the USA. At the other end of the scale, Russia, South Africa and India are particularly respectful towards members of the Palestinian government, and also include family and the general populace in their condolences. The Iranian message again suggests personal antipathy towards Arafat, directing condolences to the Palestinian government and people, but not Arafat's family.

#### WHAT DOES ARAFAT SYMBOLIZE?

The second element to consider is the construal of Arafat as a symbolic figure. This is undertaken in all but four of the condolence messages (the exceptions are Australia, Japan, China and Iran). However, the symbolism is constructed in different ways. In some texts, it is Arafat's passing away that is construed as having symbolic meaning, whereas in others it is the figure of Arafat himself. Put more simply, this is a choice between two rhetorical strategies: attaching meaning to his *death* or attaching meaning to his *life* (and possibly a third strategy: not investing meaning in either).

Two of Arafat's harshest critics – the USA and Israel – focus on death, rather than life, in contrast to those sympathetic to Arafat, who do the reverse. We can therefore hypothesize that this constitutes a diplomatic discourse strategy for diluting or avoiding praise of the deceased. It is notable that the other major (western) Arafat critic in the corpus – the Howard government of Australia – does not mention Arafat's life or death in symbolic terms. Thus, all three critics from the pro-US camp avoid the attribution of meaning to his existence.

However, almost all the authors demonstrate the same grammatical pattern in writing about the symbolization of Arafat, *irrespective* of their views on him. This is the grammar of Relational Processes, defined in SFL in the following way:

The fundamental properties of 'relational' clauses derive from the nature of a configuration of 'being'. . . . In 'relational' clauses, there are two parts to the 'being':

TABLE 3. Recipients of condolences: individuals, groups and organizations

<i>Nation</i>	<i>Number of recipients</i>	<i>Recipients as identified in texts</i>
Russia	5	<i>the leaders of the Palestinian national administration . . . Secretary of the Palestinian Liberation's Executive Committee Mahmoud Abbas, acting President of the Palestinian Authority Rauli Fattouh, Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia . . . Yasser Arafat's family . . . and to the entire Palestinian people</i>
South Africa	5	<i>Suha, his widow, members of the bereaved family, the Palestinian National Authority, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and the people of Palestine</i>
India	4	<i>the Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council and Acting President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mr. Rawhi Fattouh . . . the leaders of the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestinian people . . . Mrs Suha Arafat, the wife of the late leader</i>
Iran	3	<i>the chief of executive (sic) committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Mahmoud Abbas, and the head of PLO political bureau, Faruq Qaddumi . . . and the Palestinian nation</i>
Japan	3	<i>the bereaved family, the Palestinian Authority and to the Palestinians</i>
United Nations	3	<i>his wife Suha and his young daughter Zahwa and to the Palestinian people</i>
Pakistan	2	<i>His Excellency Mr Ahmad Qurei, Prime Minister of the State of Palestine . . . the family of our dear brother Arafat</i>
Indonesia	2	<i>the people of Palestine and the bereaved family</i>
UK	2	<i>the family of President Arafat and to the Palestinian people</i>
China	2	<i>the Palestinian people and relatives of Chairman Arafat</i>
USA	1	<i>the Palestinian people</i>
Australia	1	<i>the Palestinian people</i>
Israel	0	—

something is said to 'be' something else. In other words, a relationship of being is set up between two separate entities. (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 213)

One type of relational clause predominates in this section: the 'intensive', which reduces to the formula ' $x$  is  $a$ '.

First, we can observe how this pattern is manifested in those messages which attribute meaning to Arafat's death.

**Example 12: USA**

*The death of Yasser Arafat* is *a significant moment in Palestinian history.*

**Example 13: Israel**

*Recent events* are likely to constitute *a turning point in Middle Eastern history.*

**Example 14: Russia**

*This death* marks *the loss of an authoritative international political figure who devoted his entire life to the just cause of the Palestinian people.*

<b>Token</b>	<b>Process:</b>	<b>Value</b>
	<b>Intensive:</b>	
	<b>Identifying</b>	

In all three, the Process is of the Intensive Identifying type. The term 'identifying' tells us more information about the equation ' $x$  is  $a$ ', i.e., that ' $a$  is the identity of  $x$ ' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 216). This distinguishes it from the other type of Intensive Process, which is termed 'Attributive' (' $a$  is the attribute of  $x$ '). In Examples (12)–(14), the terms Token and Value refer to levels of abstraction: 'Token being the lower "expression" and Value the higher "content"' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 230). It is clear that the Token in Example (13) (*Recent events*) is a less distinct entity than its corresponding Value (*The death of Yasser Arafat*). However we know from contextual factors that Sharon is referring to Arafat's death (the statement was issued to the press in response to the death of Arafat and goes on to speak of 'the new Palestinian leadership that will emerge'). For Bush, there is apparently no significance in Arafat's life: nowhere is it mentioned in his message. However, Sharon goes further, avoiding direct mention of Arafat in any way in his message (a kind of diplomatic snub). Moreover, both messages suggest that the significance of the death is gauged only in relation to a localized sphere: its value is related only to 'Palestinian' or 'Middle Eastern' history. Both authors resist transferring the accolade of *global* importance onto the deceased. In making sense of these Value elements, the reader is also forced to consider the meaning of the 'significant moment' (Bush) and 'turning point' (Sharon). Both phrases suggest the imminence of a major change – but a change for the better or worse? Given the obvious fact that neither Bush nor Sharon is pro-Arafat, we can interpret these messages as understated (yet damning) criticisms of the deceased, i.e., his death is significant because it removes an obstacle to peace in the Middle East.

By contrast, in the Russian message (Example 14), the Token is the same as that of the USA and Israel, but the Value is quite different. First, the death is described as a ‘loss’ rather than a gain, and second, it is invested with ‘international’ rather than local significance.

The majority view within the corpus is that Arafat stands as an embodiment of the whole Palestinian struggle. This view directs attention to the symbolic value of his *life*. Again, it is the Intensive Identifying pattern that recurs:

**Example 15: Indonesia**

<i>He</i>	<i>was</i>	<i>the ultimate embodiment of decades of the just struggle of a nation for its undeniable rights to self-determination.</i>
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**Example 16: India**

<i>who [President Arafat]</i>	<i>was</i>	<i>an enduring symbol of Palestinian nationhood.</i>
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**Example 17: South Africa**

<i>President Arafat</i>	<i>epitomised</i>	<i>that rare breed of leaders whose lives were defined by the unflinching sacrifices they made in the noble and just cause of the struggle of their peoples.</i>
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**Example 18: Pakistan**

<i>President Arafat</i>	<i>was</i>	<i>the symbol of the Palestinian struggle.</i>
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**Example 19: UK**

<i>President Arafat</i>	<i>came to symbolise</i>	<i>the Palestinian national movement.</i>
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**Example 20: United Nations**

<i>he</i>	<i>symbolized</i>	<i>the national aspirations of the Palestinian people.</i>
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<b>Token</b>	<b>Process:</b> <b>Intensive:</b> <b>Identifying</b>	<b>Value</b>
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Apart from the identical grammatical formula, strong similarities are evident in the Token column (all the same entity: Arafat) and, naturally, in the selection of Processes (the ‘doing’ of symbolization). The Values placed on Arafat are all positive entities on a grand scale (thus contrasting with the singular Token), with lexical items echoing across the corpus (e.g., *struggle*, three times; variations of *nation*, four times). He is symbolic of the aspirations of the people, of the struggle, of the national movement, of the notion of nationhood, and of freedom fighters in general. Mbeki’s message is interesting in the way it identifies Arafat with the rhetoric of the old anti-apartheid movement. ‘President Arafat’ could be seamlessly substituted for ‘President Mandela’ (or Mbeki himself) in Example (17).

The most interesting treatment of the symbolism theme is found in the message by Iran's Foreign Minister, Dr Kamal Kharrazi. In contrast to the corpus, there are no Intensive Identifying clauses in the message, but there are four instances of the Intensive Attributive:

#### Example 21

*the human and relieving struggles by the oppressed Palestinian nation*    *is not*    *dependent on a specific person*

#### Example 22

*this brave nation with full self-confidence and feeling of pride and honor because of their significant achievements as a result of their struggle against the occupation, (which)*    *(is)*    *confident of a bright and hopeful future*

#### Example 23

*the Palestinians*    *are*    *in need of solidarity and unity among themselves*

#### Example 24

*The victory and success of Palestinians*    *is*    *dependent on preserving their unity and continuing their resistance*

<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Process:</b>	<b>Attribute</b>
	<b>Intensive:</b>	
	<b>Attributive</b>	

As mentioned, the essential difference between the Identifying and Attributive modes is that the former ascribes general class membership to an entity, whereas the latter pinpoints an entity's specific identity. In the Iran message, this entity (the 'Carrier') is in each case the Palestinian nation, or some aspect of it, whereas in the Identifying clauses in the other messages, the entity given identity is Arafat himself. Thus the grammar of the Iranian message reflects its stated ideological stance that Palestine's troubles are not 'dependent on a specific person', thereby constituting another instance of discursive distancing from Arafat.

#### WHAT DID ARAFAT DO?

A common feature of texts dealing with the deceased (written obituaries, funeral orations and the like) is the retelling of the person's notable achievements during life. Not surprisingly, then, most texts in the corpus contain some account of what Arafat did during his time as Palestinian leader. In short, the texts fall into three groups: (i) those that praise Arafat's achievements in grand, abstract terms; (ii) those that list concrete, factual deeds; and (iii) those that do not mention any achievements at all.

It is not surprising that most of Arafat’s actions are couched in Material terms, as this is the Process type that is concerned with doing and happening. However, different patterns of Material representation can be observed between group (i) and group (ii). The following examples come from the first group, the most overtly pro-Arafat:

Examples 25–29: South Africa

25	<i>he</i>	<i>gave</i>	<i>hope</i>	<i>to millions of the downtrodden and despised</i>
26	<i>President Arafat</i>	<i>dedicated</i>	<i>his entire life and strength</i>	<i>to the finest cause in all the world – the fight for the liberation of all peoples.</i>
	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Recipient</b>
27	<i>by instilling</i>	<i>in them</i>	<i>the knowledge and consciousness that despite current difficulties, they hold the gift of freedom in their hands.</i>	
	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Circumstance: Location: Place</b>	<b>Goal</b>	
28	<i>[It is]</i>			
	<i>this legacy that</i>	<i>President Arafat</i>	<i>has bestowed</i>	<i>upon millions of Palestinians</i>
	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Recipient</b>
29	<i>[... the Palestinian National Authority will continue with]</i>			
	<i>the legacy that</i>	<i>President Arafat</i>	<i>bestowed</i>	<i>upon them</i>
	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Recipient</b>

Example 30: India

	<i>President Arafat ... selflessly</i>	<i>devoted</i>	<i>his whole life</i>	<i>for achieving the legitimate aspirations and hopes of the Palestinian people.</i>
	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Circumstance: Manner</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Goal</b>
				<b>Circumstance: Cause</b>

Example 31: Russia

	<i>[This death marks the loss of an authoritative international political figure]</i>			
	<i>who</i>	<i>devoted</i>	<i>his entire life</i>	<i>to the just cause of the Palestinian people</i>
				<i>and the struggle to realise their inviolable right to create an independent state coexisting in peace with Israel within secure and recognised borders.</i>
	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Recipient</b>
			<b>Recipient</b>	

It can be noticed that all the Process words are related to giving (*gave, dedicated, instilling, bestowed, devoted*) and that the giver (or Actor – the doer of the actions) is always Arafat. What he gives, occupies the role of Goal (the ‘done-to’), and is always an abstract thing of positive value: *hope, life, strength, knowledge, consciousness, legacy*. We can also notice a strong tendency to set up a giver–beneficiary relationship between Arafat and his people, whereby Arafat occupies the grammatically central role of Actor, and his people (or their cause, struggle, etc.) occupy the more peripheral role of Recipient (or, in a similar manner, Circumstance). Recipient is defined as ‘a participant that is benefiting from the performance of the process . . . (the) one that goods are given to’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 191). This process of giving goods is set up in the grammar, but the goods are not concrete items: they are abstract things of high value.

Abstractness is one way to gloss over complexities, such as the fact that the subject has been responsible for the deaths of many people (either directly or indirectly), including innocent civilians. In all of these examples, the only major sacrifice seems to be Arafat’s life (the ‘given’ construed as Goal). In the following example, from China, it is easy to miss the fact that the message equates ‘realizing peace’ with fighting:

**Example 32:**

*[To realize the Middle-East peace is]*

<i>an aim</i>	<i>President Arafat</i>	<i>fought</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>throughout his life,</i>
<b>Circumstance:</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process:</b>	<b>(Circumstance:</b>	<b>Circumstance:</b>
<b>Cause</b>		<b>Material</b>	<b>Cause cont.)</b>	<b>Extent</b>
(incl. ‘for’)				

**Example 33:**

<i>Mr. Arafat, tirelessly</i>	<i>struggled</i>	<i>throughout</i>	<i>for the attainment</i>	<i>and for securing</i>
<i>who</i>		<i>his life</i>	<i>of the rights of the</i>	<i>an independent</i>
			<i>Palestinian nation</i>	<i>state for them.</i>
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Circumstance:</b>	<b>Process:</b>	<b>Circumstance:</b>	<b>Circumstance:</b>
	<b>Manner</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Cause</b>
				<b>Cause</b>

In Examples (32) and (33), Arafat is again the Actor, but instead of being a giver he is construed as a fighter (*struggled, fought*), and the life sacrifice is emphasized as the Circumstance of Extent: *throughout his life*. The Circumstances of Cause echo the Recipient function noted in Examples (25)–(31), as they involve both ‘reason’ (why he fought) and ‘behalf’ (who/what he fought for) and are grand, abstract concepts. Although ‘Middle East peace’ is conventionally thought of as a ‘process’ (i.e., the ‘peace process’), here it is represented as an *outcome* (albeit an unrealized one).

The statements of Japan, the UK and the UN also pay tribute to Arafat’s achievements, but in a more concrete and specific manner: that is, they list those things Arafat did that are either factual (such as winning the Nobel Peace Prize) or constructive (such as signing a peace accord). There are



several major differences to the more overtly pro-Arafat group analyzed above: (i) Material Processes are not of the ‘giving’ type, (ii) there are very few Goals or Recipients, and (iii) there are fewer abstract entities but more concrete entities. For example:

Example 34: Japan

Mr. Arafat	signed,	on behalf of the Palestinian people,	a historical peace accord known as the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and the Agreed Minutes thereto	as his efforts towards bringing about peace in the Middle East.
Actor	Process: Material	Circumstance: Cause	Range	Circumstance: Role
For this achievement,	he	was awarded	the Nobel Peace Prize	in 1994.
Circumstance: Cause	Recipient	Process: Material	Range	Circumstance: Location: Time

Example 35: UK

He	won	the Nobel Peace Prize	in 1994	jointly with Yitzhak Rabin	in recognition of their efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East.
Actor	Process: Material	Range	Circumstance: Location: Time	Circumstance: Accompaniment	Circumstance: Cause

Example 36: United Nations

By	signing	the Oslo accords	in 1993
	Process: Material	Range	Circumstance: Location: Time
he	took	a giant step	towards the realization of this vision.
Actor	Process: Material	Range	Circumstance: Location

We can also notice that these messages highlight non-violent actions, avoiding all use of language that has connotations of war (such as ‘fight’, ‘struggle’ and ‘sacrifice’).

What, then, does Bush have to say about the achievements of Arafat? The answer is: nothing. There is no mention of Arafat’s life at all. Significantly, the messages from both Sharon and Howard are also devoid of any mention of actions undertaken by Arafat. This consistency across the three strongest pro-Israel critics of Arafat in the corpus indicates again that although the condolence writer is constrained by convention from explicit criticism of the subject, s/he can still express disapproval by choosing *not* to laud the subject in the expected way.

The US approach is replicated by its greatest enemy: Iran. Nowhere in the Iranian message is there any mention of lifetime achievements by Arafat. This is perhaps logical: if the Iranian government is of the belief that Israel ought to be destroyed, then any negotiations undertaken by a Palestinian leader that run counter to that principle cannot be deemed 'achievements'.

#### WHERE DO THE GOVERNMENTS STAND ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE?

Almost every message contains an explicit and official statement of government policy on peace in the Middle East. Naturally, these are not detailed statements about the procedure or conditions for negotiations; rather they are generalized, diplomatic restatements of ultimate aims (usually one to three sentences long). They are generally uncontroversial because (almost) everyone agrees that an independent Palestinian state is a worthwhile outcome.

A grammatical analysis reveals that two Process types predominate, the Material and the Relational (Table 4). This reflects the fact that the statements fall into two broad types: those that state what will be done to make peace/liberty come about (Material) and those that describe what peace/liberty would look like (Relational). The other two Process types – the Mental and the Verbal – indicate that the policy statements are commonly projected by either a 'Sayer' (Verbal) or a 'Senser' (Mental) in the guise of the nation-state or national leader, e.g., *we urge* (USA), *we hold* (China), *the government and people of Indonesia reaffirm* (Indonesia), *I assure* (Pakistan), *I hope* (Israel).

For policy statements in Material clauses, there are two grammatical functions that predominate: Range and Actor. In almost every case, the role of Actor is played by the nation-state: either that of the author (*the Australian government, the government and people of South Africa*), or that of Palestine (*this brave nation, the Palestinians*), or that of Palestine and Israel (*both Israelis and Palestinians, the parties, we*). Thus, the policy statements involve actions that may be by 'us' or 'them' or 'both of them'.

Are these actions construed as having an effect on anything? Goals (the 'done-to') appear very rarely in these messages (Table 5).

TABLE 4. *Process types in statements on Middle East peace*

<i>Process types</i>	<i>Number of clauses</i>
Material	16
Relational	10
Mental	5
Verbal	3

TABLE 5. *Grammatical participants in Material statements on Middle East peace*

<i>Function</i>	<i>Instances</i>
Range	10
Actor	7
Goal	2

Much more common is the associated function of Range, which is distinguished from Goal by Martin et al. (1997) in the following way:

The difference between a Range and a Goal in a material clause is very clear in the prototypical case: the Goal is (as the name suggests) the participant that is impacted by the performance of the Process by the Actor . . . In contrast, the Range elaborates or enhances the Process. (p. 118)

What this tells us is that the policy statements outline actions that have generalized domains (Ranges), rather than specific objects to be impacted on (Goals). The register of condolence does not call for concrete policy details in which the grammar of the ‘done-to’ inevitably becomes unavoidable, but rather non-controversial, generalized commitments as discursive gestures towards shared visions. Some examples are given below:

Example 37: Australia

<i>The Australian Government shares the hope of all people of goodwill that momentum towards a peace settlement in the Middle East can be regained.</i>				
Actor	Process: Range Material			

Example 38: South Africa

<i>The Government and people of South Africa will continue a hand to lend in working with the peoples and leadership of the region as well as the international community in the development of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution in the Middle East.</i>				
Actor	Process: Material	Range	Circumstance: Accompaniment	Circumstance: Purpose

Example 39: United Nations

<i>Now that he has gone, both Israelis and Palestinians, and the friends of both peoples throughout the world, must make even greater efforts</i>				
Circumstance: Location: Time	Actor	Process: Range Material		

Where policy statements are couched in Relational terms, we again find consistent patterns across the corpus. Almost all such messages are of the Intensive Attributive type – in contrast to those we saw in section 2, in which the symbolization of Arafat was, in every instance (except Iran, which did not turn Arafat into a symbol), expressed through the Intensive Identifying type. In this section we are not dealing with symbols, but rather with descriptions. The Iranian message, as we saw in section 2, includes several such clauses proclaiming the attributes of Palestinian success, such as:

Example 40

<i>The victory and success of</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>dependent on preserving their unity and continuing their resistance in a bid to achieve their just rights.</i>
<i>Palestinians</i>		

<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Process: Intensive</b>	<b>Attribute</b>
	<b>Attributive</b>	

The nominalization that constitutes the Carrier reifies the notion that it is only the Palestinians who seek success or escape from hardship (other nominalizations fulfilling this role in the Iranian text include *the human and relieving struggles by the oppressed Palestinian nation* and *this brave nation*). On the flipside, the Israeli text uses a similar structure (also an Attributive ‘depend on’ construction), but allows the Attribute to carry the full ideological load while presenting a seemingly conciliatory face in the Carrier:

Example 41

<i>progress in relations</i>	<i>depends</i>	<i>– first and foremost –</i>	<i>on the cessation of terrorism and their fighting terrorism.</i>
<i>and in the resolution of problems</i>			

<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Process:</b>	<b>Modal</b>	<b>Attribute</b>
	<b>Relational:</b>	<b>Adjunct</b>	
	<b>Circumstantial</b>		
	<b>Attributive</b>		

Just as *victory* and *success* in Example (40) mirrors *progress* and *resolution* in Example (41), so too *resistance* in Example (40) mirrors *terrorism* in Example (41); and in this way we can see how ideological stance is subtly staked out while at the same time the expectations of register are satisfied in the replication of lexico-grammatical patterns.

Conclusions

One of the central claims of this article is that elements of the texts function as signifying motifs that establish and reinforce membership of the international community. This is an illustration of Martin’s point that ‘ideologically speaking a text unfolds as rationality – a quest for “truth”; axiologically it unfolds rhetorically – an invitation to community’ (Martin, 2004: 327). The texts are nominally ‘about’ Arafat, but they also ‘enact’ the global community.

Governments signal their international legitimacy in displaying their ability to reproduce and manipulate the text type. Israel’s decision not to participate in the round of condolences can therefore be interpreted in two ways: (i) it is, on this issue at least, ‘outside’ the international community; or (ii) it considers Arafat outside the community and unworthy of a conventional response. No doubt Israel considers the latter to be the case, much in the same way that Osama bin Laden would be the subject of few governmental condolence messages were he to die today – in spite of his undeniable international significance. Thus ‘legitimacy’ is processed in two directions: the text legitimates

its author (as a voice worthy of the global stage) and legitimates its subject (as worthy of such a privileged discourse).

The corpus does not support the idea that 'new world order' discourse is primarily characterized by an 'us vs. them' dichotomy (Lazar and Lazar, 2004; Leudar et al., 2004). The Israeli–Palestinian question is more complex than that, and this is reflected in the texts. Significantly divergent positions can, unsurprisingly, be identified in the corpus. The USA, Australia and Israel are clearly muted in their 'mourning', and even manage to signal surreptitious displeasure towards the deceased. At the other extreme, South Africa, Indonesia and Pakistan eulogize the passing of a great visionary. But overall it is not possible to divide the corpus into two clear-cut camps (e.g., pro-US/Israel and anti-US/Israel). One of the most interesting illustrations of this is the fact that Iran and the USA – two bitter enemies – in fact share many of the same textual strategies: neither describes their reaction to the news of Arafat's death, neither extend condolences to his family, neither exalt him as a symbolic figure and neither mention any of his achievements. In addition, several staunch American allies do pay homage to the Palestinian leader. Blair's message extends sympathy to the Arafat family, agrees that he symbolized the whole movement and mentions several of his better deeds. Koizumi also extends condolences to the family and goes on to provide a long list of Arafat's achievements and reasons for his friendship with Japan. There is also the interesting case of Pakistan's Musharraf: although a key US ally, his message could not be more divergent from Bush's.

Events in the Middle East since the death of Arafat give little indication that the region is stabilizing: Sharon has been replaced by Ehud Olmert as Prime Minister of Israel, Arafat's Fatah party no longer leads Palestine (after a January 2006 election loss to Hamas), the US occupation of Iraq shows no signs of ending, Iran has elected a radically anti-Israel president and is engaged in brinkmanship with the west over nuclear power, Lebanon has been fractured by political assassinations. The more one hears about the need for 'diplomatic solutions', the more one suspects that there is a lot to be worried about. As ever, language plays a subtle yet critical role in global restructuring.

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