A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER'S REACTION TO KOMPAS GRAMEDIA GROUP AND MEDIA NUSANTARA CITRA IN THE JANUARY 2024 EDITIONS REGARDING SOUTH AFRICA'S LAWSUIT AGAINST ISRAEL FOR GENOCIDE IN GAZA, PALESTINE

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Abstract: The invasion of the Palestinian Gaza region by Israel following the events of October 7, 2023, has garnered widespread international attention, particularly concerning the suffering of children and women. In response, a group of South African lawyers filed a lawsuit against Israel in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, citing the Genocide Convention. This legal action led to public statements from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which were covered extensively by major Indonesian media organizations, including Kompas Gramedia Group (KG Group) and Media Nusantara Citra (MNC Group). This study employs a qualitative descriptive analysis to examine Netanyahu's political communication in relation to the ICJ decision, focusing on his response to the South African lawsuit. News coverage from both KG Group and MNC Group in January 2024 is compared through the lens of Media Agenda Setting theory, which emphasizes the media's role in shaping public perception. Utilizing Heidegger's hermeneutical analysis method, the research identifies significant differences in how the two media outlets present the issue. KG Group emphasizes the human-interest angle, focusing on the emotional and personal dimensions of the conflict, while MNC Group adopts a more cautious stance, particularly in its reporting on the Israeli government. This comparative analysis underscores the differing editorial priorities of the two media groups and highlights their respective approaches to covering the ongoing Gaza conflict and international responses.

Keywords: Political Communication, Israel, Palestine, Media Agenda Setting, Netanyahu

INTRODUCTION

Political communication in times of conflict plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, influencing international relations, and directing policy decisions. In the context of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the rhetoric of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu following the October 7, 2023 invasion of Gaza by Hamas offers a compelling case study. Netanyahu's framing of the conflict and subsequent legal battles, particularly the lawsuit filed by South Africa in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) accusing Israel of genocide under the 1948 Genocide Convention, demonstrates how political leaders utilize language to manage crises, deflect criticism, and influence both domestic and international audiences. This study employs a hermeneutic analysis to uncover the rhetorical strategies Netanyahu uses to frame his response to the ICJ proceedings, providing insights into the broader implications of political communication in international conflict.

The ICJ lawsuit represents a significant moment in international law, with South Africa alleging that Israel's actions in Gaza have caused widespread physical and mental suffering, leading to conditions that may result in the physical destruction of Palestinians, constituting genocide. Netanyahu's denial of these accusations and his framing of Israel as compliant with international law is a pivotal example of how leaders use rhetoric to shape the narrative. Hermeneutic analysis, rooted in the interpretive traditions of philosophers like Heidegger and Gadamer, provides the tools to deconstruct Netanyahu's language, revealing how metaphors, irony, and sarcasm are used to communicate complex political messages. This method allows for a deeper understanding of how language functions not only as a means of persuasion but also as a form of propaganda in political discourse (Heidegger, 1962).

Political communication scholars have long argued that rhetoric is a key tool in the arsenal of political leaders, particularly in times of conflict or crisis. Scholars such as Dan Nimmo (2015) and Asep Saeful Muhtadi (2015) emphasize that political leaders craft their messages to influence public perception, maintain power, and navigate complex geopolitical situations. Netanyahu's speeches, laden with strategic rhetorical devices, are no exception. His communication strategies in response to the ICJ lawsuit exemplify how leaders use rhetoric to create a favorable narrative, dismiss legal challenges, and project strength both domestically and internationally (Nimmo, 2015).

This research situates itself within the broader theoretical framework of media agenda-setting theory, which posits that media organizations play a central role in determining which issues the public perceives as important. First introduced by McCombs and Shaw (1972), agenda-setting theory suggests that the media can influence public opinion by emphasizing certain topics while downplaying others (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This study compares the coverage of Netanyahu's political communication by two major Indonesian media groups, Kompas Gramedia Group (KG Group) and Media Nusantara Citra (MNC Group), throughout January 2024. The analysis reveals distinct editorial agendas between the two outlets: KG Group tends to emphasize human-interest stories, focusing on the

humanitarian impact of the conflict, while MNC Group adopts a more cautious and restrained approach, particularly in its coverage of Israel's government. This comparison not only highlights the role of media in shaping public perception but also reflects the complex interplay between media, political communication, and international relations.

The hermeneutic analysis of Netanyahu's political communication is further enriched by comparisons with other world leaders who have faced crises. For instance, Emmanuel Macron and Pedro Sanchez have both employed metaphors and other rhetorical devices in their political discourse during the COVID-19 pandemic, using language to frame the crisis in ways that resonate with their respective publics (Charteris-Black, 2011). By comparing Netanyahu's rhetoric with that of other leaders, this study sheds light on how political figures across different contexts use similar rhetorical strategies to address complex issues, manipulate public opinion, and strengthen their political positions.

This research also contributes to the growing body of literature on hermeneutic analysis in political communication. Scholars like Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) have emphasized the importance of interpretation in understanding political discourse, arguing that language is not merely a tool for communication but a means of shaping reality (Gadamer, 1975). In the context of international law, Netanyahu's rhetoric surrounding the ICJ lawsuit serves as a case study in how leaders use language to defend their actions, discredit legal challenges, and project their agendas on the global stage.

The broader geopolitical context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essential for understanding the significance of this study. The Gaza Strip and West Bank have long been contested territories, with Israel maintaining significant control over Palestinian areas since its declaration of independence in 1948 (Pappé, 2006). The events of October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched a large-scale attack on Israel from Gaza, reignited a decades-long conflict, leading to a brutal military response from Israel under Netanyahu's leadership. His government, the most right-wing and religiously conservative in Israel's history, has pursued policies of settlement expansion and judicial reforms, sparking both domestic protests and international concerns (The Associated Press, 2022). In this context, Netanyahu's political communication becomes a critical tool for maintaining public support, both at home and abroad, and for justifying his government's actions on the global stage.

The ICJ proceedings initiated by South Africa against Israel mark a pivotal moment in international law and diplomacy. Netanyahu's public framing of the case, in which he vehemently denies the genocide allegations and frames Israel's military actions as lawful and necessary, is a clear example of how political leaders use language to manage international crises (Berty, 2024). By analyzing the rhetorical devices Netanyahu employs, this study not only contributes to the understanding of political communication in conflict situations but also offers insights into the broader dynamics of how language is used to influence international relations.

In conclusion, this research offers a comprehensive exploration of Netanyahu's political communication, using hermeneutic analysis to uncover the rhetorical strategies he employs in response to the ICJ lawsuit. By comparing the coverage of his communication in Indonesian media, the study highlights the role of media in shaping public perception and influencing international relations. This research not only deepens the understanding of political communication in times of conflict but also contributes to the theoretical discourse on how language functions as a tool for power and influence in international affairs.

METHOD

The methodology employed in this study is rooted in hermeneutic analysis, which derives from the Greek words *hermeneuein* and *hermeneia*, meaning "interpretation" and "word interpretation," respectively. Hermeneutics, as a discipline, focuses on the theory and methodology of interpretation, particularly in the context of texts with historical, cultural, or philosophical significance. In classical times, *hermeneuein* had three connotations: (1) to say, (2) to explain, and (3) to translate. In modern English, hermeneutics is typically understood as "interpretation" (Hamadi, 2022). This study applies hermeneutic principles to analyze the political communication of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in response to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) proceedings, specifically focusing on his reaction to the South African lawsuit accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza.

Hermeneutics is a methodology that blends both art and science. As a philosophical approach, it involves understanding texts, especially those from different times, locations, and social contexts. According to Schleiermacher, the "father of modern hermeneutics," the process of interpretation involves two primary tasks: grammatical interpretation, which focuses on the linguistic structure of the text, and psychological interpretation, which seeks to understand the intentions and mindset of the author. Schleiermacher emphasized that hermeneutics is essential for avoiding misunderstandings and for grasping the deeper meaning of texts, taking into account both the cultural and social contexts in which they were produced (Gora, 2014; Susanto, 2016).

In this study, the hermeneutic approach was chosen for its ability to analyze not only the literal meaning of Netanyahu's speeches and media statements but also the underlying rhetorical strategies he employs, such as metaphors, irony, and sarcasm. These rhetorical tools are crucial for understanding how Netanyahu frames his communication to influence public opinion and international relations. The analysis follows Heidegger's view of hermeneutics as a philosophy of understanding, which emphasizes the importance of human existence in space and time as the foundation for interpreting texts and events (Heidegger,

1962). This is particularly relevant in the context of political communication, where leaders use language to project power, influence perception, and control narratives.

The research design is qualitative, employing a descriptive approach to analyze Netanyahu's political communication regarding the ICJ decision and the South African lawsuit. Data collection was carried out by gathering textual materials, including Netanyahu's speeches, press releases, and media coverage from two major Indonesian media outlets: Kompas Gramedia Group (KG Group) and Media Nusantara Citra Group (MNC Group). These two media groups were selected based on their widespread influence and differing editorial approaches to international issues. The study analyzes media coverage from January 2024, comparing how each outlet reported on Netanyahu's response to the South African legal action and the broader Gaza conflict.

The analysis is guided by the principles of Media Agenda Setting theory, which posits that the media plays a critical role in shaping public perception by highlighting certain issues over others. The theory, developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), suggests that media outlets influence the salience of topics in public discourse, thereby shaping how individuals perceive and prioritize issues. This theory is particularly relevant for understanding the role of media in framing Netanyahu's political communication and how different editorial approaches influence public interpretation of international events (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

To analyze the rhetorical strategies used by Netanyahu, this study employs Heidegger's hermeneutical method of *Verstehen* (understanding), which involves interpreting the text in relation to its broader socio-political context. The study also draws on Ricoeur's theory of interpretation, which emphasizes the role of symbols and metaphors in conveying meaning (Ricoeur, 1976). By deconstructing the rhetorical devices used in Netanyahu's speeches, the analysis reveals how these devices serve to justify Israel's actions, deflect criticism, and align public opinion with the government's narrative.

This research is supported by secondary data from academic literature, media reports, and legal documents related to the ICJ proceedings and the Gaza conflict. The comparative aspect of the study highlights the differences in media agenda-setting between KG Group and MNC Group. KG Group, which tends to emphasize human-interest stories, focuses on the emotional and personal impact of the conflict, while MNC Group adopts a more cautious approach, particularly in its coverage of the Israeli government's stance. By comparing these two outlets, the study demonstrates how media framing can influence public understanding of complex international issues.

This study employs a hermeneutic analysis to interpret Netanyahu's political communication within the context of the ICJ decision. The qualitative approach allows for a detailed examination of the rhetorical strategies used by Netanyahu and the role of media in shaping public perception. The comparative analysis of Indonesian media coverage further enhances our understanding of how media agenda-setting influences the framing of political communication in international conflicts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The conflict in Gaza following the October 7, 2023, invasion by Hamas, and the subsequent Israeli military response under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has become a critical point of global debate. Central to this discourse is the South African lawsuit filed with the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing Israel of genocide under the 1948 Genocide Convention. Netanyahu's response to this legal action, particularly his political communication through media outlets, has been a focal point in shaping both domestic and international perceptions of the conflict.

Israeli Government's Response and Netanyahu's Communication Strategy

The Israeli government has consistently affirmed that its military actions in Gaza are not directed at the civilian population but are solely focused on combatants, in line with international law. Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has reiterated its commitment to minimizing civilian casualties and allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza, despite the ongoing hostilities (Reuters, 2023). In response to the genocide allegations brought forward by South Africa, Netanyahu has vehemently denied any wrongdoing, framing the accusations as politically motivated and excessive. He emphasized that Israel's military operations are a legitimate form of self-defense and that the ICJ's interference in the conflict is unwarranted.

This narrative aligns with Netanyahu's broader political communication strategy, which aims to justify Israel's military actions while discrediting the legal challenges posed by international bodies like the ICJ. As discussed in the **Introduction**, Netanyahu's use of rhetoric, such as metaphors, irony, and sarcasm, reflects a deliberate attempt to manipulate public perception. By framing the ICJ ruling as an overreach and positioning Israel as a victim of international bias, Netanyahu seeks to solidify domestic support and deflect international criticism.

Media Framing: A Comparative Analysis

The media plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding of political events, and the comparative analysis of Indonesian media coverage reveals stark differences in how Netanyahu's political communication is portrayed. This study examined two major media groups: Kompas Gramedia Group (KG Group) and Media Nusantara Citra Group (MNC Group), both of which have significant influence over Indonesian public opinion. Through a hermeneutic lens, it becomes clear that the editorial framing of Netanyahu's communication varies considerably between these two outlets.
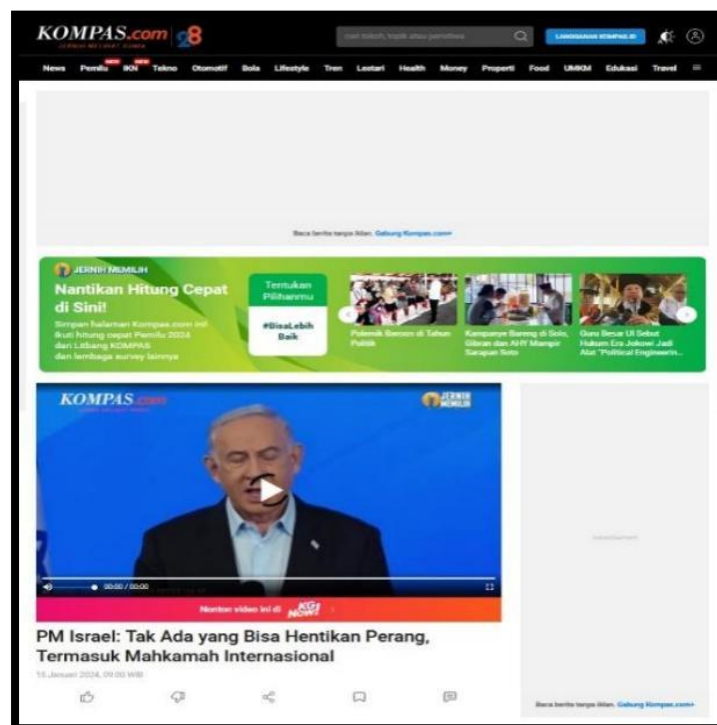

Figure 1. Israeli PM: "Nobody Can Stop the War, Including the International Court of Justice"

Source: Kompas, 2024

In *Kompas.com*, a leading outlet under KG Group, Netanyahu's political communication was presented critically, particularly in a January 15, 2024 article titled "Israeli PM: Nobody Can Stop the War, Including the International Court of Justice." This headline reflects an aggressive portrayal of Netanyahu as defiant and unyielding, emphasizing his refusal to acknowledge the ICJ's authority. By using language that portrays Netanyahu's stance as

extreme, KG Group frames Israel's actions in Gaza as a violation of humanitarian norms, aligning its editorial tone with international sympathies toward Palestinian suffering.
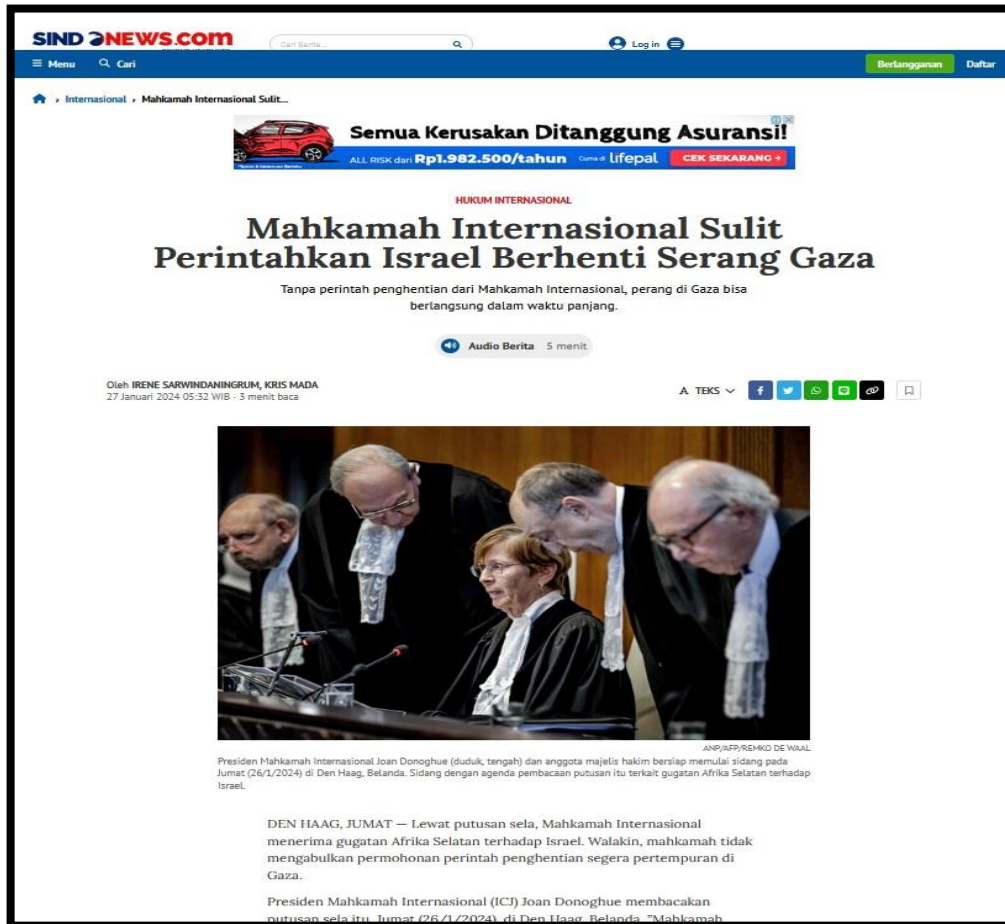

Figure 2. The International Court of Justice Faces Challenges in Ordering Israel to Halt Its Offensive on Gaza

Source: Sindonews, 2024

In contrast, *Sindonews.com*, a part of MNC Group, published a more cautious headline on January 27, 2024: "The International Court of Justice Faces Challenges in Ordering Israel to Halt Its Offensive on Gaza." This article avoided direct criticism of Netanyahu and instead focused on the complexities of enforcing international legal rulings on sovereign states. MNC Group's coverage tends to frame the conflict in a way that emphasizes legal technicalities rather than humanitarian crises, likely reflecting the close diplomatic ties between its owners and the Israeli government.

Hermeneutic Analysis of Netanyahu's Rhetoric

Netanyahu's political communication demonstrates a sophisticated use of rhetoric aimed at justifying Israel's actions and discrediting the South African lawsuit. By employing metaphors such as describing the conflict as a "battle for survival," Netanyahu taps into existential fears and frames Israel's military actions as necessary and just. This strategy resonates with his domestic audience while also attempting to sway international opinion by casting Israel as a nation under siege rather than an aggressor.

The Introduction provided a theoretical foundation for this analysis, drawing on the works of hermeneutic philosophers like Schleiermacher and Heidegger, who emphasize the importance of context in interpreting political discourse. Netanyahu's rhetoric cannot be fully understood without considering the broader geopolitical and historical context in which it is situated. His speeches, when analyzed through the hermeneutic method, reveal not only an attempt to rationalize Israel's military actions but also a deliberate strategy to influence international legal discourse by undermining the legitimacy of the ICJ.

By comparing Netanyahu's rhetoric with that of other leaders, such as Emmanuel Macron and Pedro Sanchez, who used metaphors during the COVID-19 pandemic to frame their political responses, it becomes clear that Netanyahu's communication strategy is part of a broader trend among political leaders. As highlighted by Charteris-Black (2011), the use of metaphors and other rhetorical devices allows leaders to craft narratives that resonate emotionally with their audiences, ultimately shaping public perception and policy decisions.

Figure 3. "Netanyahu's Hard-Headed Desire to Continue the War"
Source: Serambinews, 2024

In *Serambinews.com*, another outlet under KG Group, the headline "Netanyahu's Hard-Headed Desire to Continue the War, Regardless of the ICJ Ruling" appeared on January 28, 2024. This title reflects a more overtly critical stance toward Netanyahu, describing him as "hard-headed" and obstinate in his refusal to adhere to international law. The subjective language used in this article demonstrates KG Group's alignment with humanitarian perspectives, portraying Netanyahu's actions as a rejection of international consensus on human rights and genocide prevention.

Discussion of Media Influence on Public Perception

The differences in media framing between KG Group and MNC Group illustrate the significant influence that media organizations have on public perception, a point reinforced by McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory. KG Group tends to prioritize

humanitarian narratives, emphasizing the suffering of Palestinian civilians and portraying Netanyahu as a leader who defies international law. MNC Group, on the other hand, takes a more cautious approach, focusing on the complexities of international legal frameworks and avoiding direct criticism of Israel's leadership.

This divergence in media framing is significant because it reflects broader geopolitical and economic considerations. MNC Group's cautious stance likely stems from the close ties between its owners and the Israeli government, as evidenced by past diplomatic engagements. In contrast, KG Group aligns more closely with global humanitarian norms, particularly in its coverage of the Gaza conflict and the ICJ's involvement.

Political Communication, Media Framing, and International Law

The hermeneutic analysis of Benjamin Netanyahu's political communication and the comparative media framing by Kompas Gramedia Group and Media Nusantara Citra Group reveals the complex interplay between rhetoric, media influence, and international law. Netanyahu's communication strategy reflects a deliberate effort to justify Israel's military actions while discrediting legal challenges, particularly those posed by the ICJ. The contrasting media coverage highlights how different editorial priorities can shape public perception, with KG Group focusing on humanitarian issues and MNC Group adopting a more restrained and legally focused narrative.

This study contributes to the broader understanding of political communication in times of conflict, demonstrating how language, rhetoric, and media framing intersect to influence both domestic and international audiences. The findings emphasize the importance of critical media analysis in uncovering the underlying political and economic factors shaping the portrayal of global events.

CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed the political communication of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in response to the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) ruling on the South African lawsuit, which accuses Israel of committing genocide in Gaza. The findings highlight several key points about Israel's military actions and Netanyahu's strategic communication, as well as the role of the media in framing these events.

Netanyahu's government has continued military operations in Gaza, leading to significant civilian casualties, including women and children, with approximately 27,000 Palestinian

civilians affected. Despite widespread international protests condemning the invasion, Israel has sustained its military activities since October 7, 2023. The lawsuit brought forth by South African lawyers under the 1948 Genocide Convention led to an ICJ ruling, which was firmly rejected by Netanyahu, who continues to dismiss the accusations of genocide as exaggerated.

Using hermeneutic analysis to study Netanyahu's political communication, this research revealed that his approach reflects a dictatorial stance. His rejection of international rulings and his defiance of global opinion, despite demonstrations worldwide, underscore his focus on consolidating power and maintaining Israel's control over contested Palestinian territories. Netanyahu's communication strategy emphasizes framing Hamas as a terrorist group, asserting Israel's right to defend itself, and seeking to influence Western nations to support Israel's actions.

This study also applied Agenda Setting Theory, which explains how media coverage emphasizes certain issues to shape public awareness. Through a qualitative, descriptive comparison of media content, differences were found between the editorial approaches of Kompas Gramedia Group (KG Group) and Media Nusantara Citra Group (MNC Group). KG Group's reporting was more humanitarian-focused and critical of Netanyahu's policies, portraying him as defiant and authoritarian. In contrast, MNC Group adopted a more cautious tone, reflecting its close relations with the Israeli government. The study illustrates how editorial subjectivity influences news packaging, with both media groups portraying facts within distinct narrative frameworks.

The findings demonstrate that media organizations do not always maintain objectivity and balance in their reporting, as political and business interests can shape editorial decisions. Internationally, some outlets, such as CNN International and BBC World, lean toward a pro-Israel stance, while others, like Al Jazeera and Press TV, favor a pro-Palestinian perspective.

In line with Political Communication Theory, as articulated by Professor Lely Arrianie, political actors such as Netanyahu use communication to influence, maintain, and expand power. Netanyahu's political communication regarding the ICJ ruling exemplifies how leaders use rhetoric to justify military actions, secure international support, and strengthen territorial control. His objectives include: a. Influencing Western opinion by framing Hamas as a terrorist threat, b. Solidifying control over Palestinian territories, c. Expanding Israeli settlements, particularly in contested regions like Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem.

In conclusion, this study highlights the role of media in shaping public understanding of international conflicts and the complex relationship between political communication, media framing, and international law. The contrasting editorial choices of KG Group and MNC

Group, as seen in their coverage of Netanyahu's response to the ICJ ruling, underscore how political communication is interpreted and reported differently, depending on media ownership, political alliances, and editorial priorities.

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