

Anti-Israel Media Bias: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

ANTI-ISRAEL MEDIA BIAS: A CASE STUDY

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This paper argues that media coverage of Israel distorts the public's understanding of Israel and its motives, creating an obstacle to a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Peace will not be successful with the continued dehumanization and delegitimization of the other side. The media has the power to help shift the narrative; to provide a balanced, truthful account; and to show the humanity of the other. To support this argument, the paper conducts a media analysis of both the articles and photographs from four different news media sources, the *Associated Press*, *The New York Times*, *Reuters*, and the *Washington Post*, using the Gaza Conflicts as case studies. The article analysis consists of a qualitative approach which identifies three consistent themes throughout all four sources during the 2014 Gaza Conflict. Then, within the article analysis, there are four main types of biases that are examined. The photograph analysis consists of a quantitative approach of all three Gaza Conflicts from the four sources, in which the content of the collective pictures is quantified to determine what type of pictures are most prevalent.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as the Israeli journalist Yemini Ben-Dror observed, has “historically attracted extraordinary, and largely disproportionate, international attention.”¹ This is not because of the ferocity of the conflict. There have been approximately 122,000 total casualties of the conflict since 1948.² In comparison, there have been over 300,000 casualties in the Sudan since 2003³ and, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s last protracted conflict between 1998 and 2003, there was an estimated death toll of five million people.⁴ Nor does the humanitarian condition of the Palestinians, while undoubtedly abysmal, uniquely warrant attention. For example, the Gaza Strip’s infant mortality rate was sixteen deaths per one thousand live births in 2018, which put it as the 96th worst in the world.⁵ In comparison, the rates in Turkey, Egypt, and Morocco are 16.9, 18.3, and 21.1, respectively.⁶ The psychological ramifications of

¹ Yemini Ben-Dror, “NGOs vs. Israel,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2011, 67.

² “Vital Statistics,” Total Casualties, Arab-Israeli Conflict, accessed November 12, 2019, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/total-casualties-arab-israeli-conflict>.

³ “U.S. Relations With Sudan - United States Department of State” (U.S. Department of State), accessed November 12, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-sudan/>.

⁴ “U.S. Relations With Democratic Republic of the Congo - United States Department of State,” U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State), accessed November 12, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-democratic-republic-of-the-congo>.

⁵ “CIA World Factbook” (Central Intelligence Agency, February 1, 2018), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>.

⁶ Ibid.

Palestinian subjugation, while well documented in academic circles, receive less attention internationally than more measurable indicators of Palestinian wellbeing such as access to education or healthcare. However, paradoxically, these latter measures do not warrant on the surface a disproportionate level of attention.⁷ As Ben Dror notes, by even more “advanced indicators, such as personal computer use or Internet access, Gazans are in a much better position than many of the world's inhabitants.”⁸ The underlying cause of the disproportionate attention thus is not immediately clear, but it has become a “major obstacle to the peaceful resolution of this century-long feud.”⁹

This paper argues that one substantial reason for the world’s disproportionate focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a persistent pattern of rhetorical bias among some of the globe’s most influential media outlets. Media coverage of Israel, I argue, distorts the public’s understanding of Israel and its motives, creating an obstacle to a

⁷ See for example: Ibrahim A. Kira et al., “Dynamics of Oppression and Coping from Traumatology Perspective: The Example of Palestinian Adolescents.,” *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 20, no. 4 (2014): pp. 385-411, <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000053>; Ian G. Barron and Ghassan Abdallah, “Intergenerational Trauma in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Effect on Children and Promotion of Healing,” *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma* 8, no. 2 (2015): pp. 103-110, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-015-0046-z>; Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, “The Political Economy of Childrens Trauma: A Case Study of House Demolition in Palestine,” *Feminism & Psychology* 19, no. 3 (2009): pp. 335-342, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353509105624>; Ahmed M. Baker, ‘Psychological Problems Experienced by Palestinian Adolescents Associated with Military Occupation’, Paper presented at *Health Hazards of Organized Violence in Children: Program Papers*, Meeting of the Advisory Group on the Health Situation of Refugees and Victims of Organized Violence, 10–12, February 1993, London.

⁸ Ben-Dror, 67.

⁹ Ibid.

peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The media has the power to influence perception and, consequently, the conflict through the narrative it presents. The way the media present conflict and violence will be a “major factor in determining the reaction: war, or peace.”¹⁰ In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, media coverage is often plagued with bias. It contains characteristics of ‘war journalism’, in which the media produces “unbalanced and distorted ‘we-and-they’ coverage in which ‘they’ are stereotyped and dehumanized.”¹¹ This type of media coverage, with its “inaccuracies, distortions, and occasionally inflammatory hate-mongering”¹² only serves to perpetuate the conflict. The persistence of stereotypes and prejudice on both sides of the conflict leads to a “distorted vision of the Other, limiting the opportunities for developing and fostering intercultural understanding.”¹³

Instead of war journalism, a shift in media coverage to a ‘peace journalism’ approach would be more conducive in the pursuit of peace. Peace journalism “humanizes

¹⁰ Johan Galtung, “Peace Journalism as an Ethical Challenge,” *Global Media Journal: Mediterranean Edition* 1, no. 2 (2006), 4.

¹¹ Yakubu Ozohu-Suleiman, “War Journalism on Israel/Palestine: Does Contra-Flow Really Make a Difference?,” *Media, War & Conflict* 7, no. 1 (2014), 87.

¹² Steven Youngblood, *Peace Journalism Principles and Practices: Responsibly Reporting Conflicts, Reconciliation, and Solutions* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 19

¹³ Mira Feuerstein and Lea Mandelzis, “Israeli College Students Challenge Media Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” *Conflict & Communications Online* 16, no. 1 (2017), 8.

the other”¹⁴ and “seeks to offer counter-narratives”¹⁵ in a way that “respects facts, distinguishes between facts and claims, and provides context.”¹⁶ This would allow the mass media to “play a constructive role that can help in resolving conflicts and promoting peace.”¹⁷ As Steven Youngblood argues in his influential book, *Peace Journalism Principles and Practices: Responsibly Reporting Conflicts, Reconciliation, and Solutions*, “failure to practice peace journalism in the Israeli, Palestinian/Arab, and international media widens the gap between the parties, incites more animosity, and helps to make peace even less likely.”¹⁸ To effectively argue this point my methodology consists of rhetorical and media analysis through a case-study comparison of the Gaza Conflicts. More specifically, I use both qualitative article analyses and quantitative photo analyses to elucidate my observations.

Drawing on open-source material, this paper looks at the articles from the *Associated Press*, *The New York Times*, *Reuters*, and the *Washington Post* from the 2014 Gaza Conflict. All of the articles examined are news reports, not editorials, columns, or opinion pieces. As the press coverage of Israel’s actions in Gaza has been especially critical and prevalent, this study focuses on Gaza. The research includes a total of 486

¹⁴ Youngblood, 5-6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷ Ozohu-Suleiman, 86.

¹⁸ Youngblood, 27

articles — 111 articles from the *Associated Press* between July 7, 2014 and September 10, 2014; 139 articles from *The New York Times* between July 8, 2014 and September 4, 2014; 109 articles from *Reuters* between July 8, 2014 and August 28, 2014; and 84 articles from the *Washington Post* between July 9, 2014 and September 10, 2014.

It also examines photographs from all four sources from the three Gaza Conflicts — December 2008 to January 2009, November 2012, and July to August 2014. There are 3,428 pictures total — 638 from the *Associated Press*, 387 from *The New York Times*, 1,103 from *Reuters*, and 1,255 from the *Washington Post*. 725 of the pictures are from the 2008-2009 conflict, 622 from the 2012 conflict, and 2,081 from the 2014 conflict.

Through this analysis, this paper seeks to show that major news media sources, as represented by the *Associated Press*, *The New York Times*, *Reuters*, and the *Washington Post*, present an unbalanced account of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict that exploits the condition of people on the ground by perpetuating the narrative of weak, vulnerable Palestinians suffering at the hands of the aggressive Israelis.

CHAPTER TWO: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GAZA STRIP

The Gaza Strip has long presented major challenges to Israel's national security. In June 2007, fighting between two Palestinian parties, Fatah and Hamas, broke out in Gaza.¹⁹ During the fight, "Hamas shot Fatah militants in the back and in the kneecaps... and threw them off the roofs of the city's tallest buildings, and paraded those it captured on the streets of Gaza to humiliate them."²⁰ As a result of the 2007 clashes, Hamas gained control of the Gaza Strip. Hamas has since been designated a terrorist group by Israel, the United States, and the European Union.²¹ Hamas, as shown in the analysis of its charter below, aims to destroy Israel. As Yasser Arafat put it in 1972, "the end of Israel is the goal of our struggle, and it allows for neither compromise nor mediation... We don't want peace. We want war, victory."²²

Hamas Charters

Hamas released two documents outlining its motivations and objectives — The Hamas Covenant of 1988 and the Updated Hamas Charter of 2017. While there are some

¹⁹ Padraig O'Malley, *Two-State Delusion: Israel and Palestine - a Tale of Two Narratives* (New York, NY: The Penguin Group, 2015), 122.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

²² Susie Linfield, *The Lion's Den: Zionism and the Left from Hannah Arendt to Noam Chomsky* (Yale University Press, 2019), 248.

similarities between the two documents, the latter document seems more focused, as if aimed as an external propaganda manifesto rather than an internal governing document.

The Hamas Covenant of 1988 has 36 articles and details various aspects of Hamas' core values, motivations, and objectives. The articles are divided into distinct sections, including 'Defining the Movement', 'Objectives', 'Strategies and Methods', 'Our Attitudes Towards', and 'The Testimony of History'.²³ The main themes of the Covenant are the religiosity of the movement, the refusal to negotiate, and violence as a strategy.

For Hamas, according to the Covenant of 1988, the struggle for Palestine is religiously motivated. They claim everything they do is in accordance with Islam. Article 1 states that "The Movement's program is Islam. From it, it draws its ideas, ways of thinking and understanding of the universe, life and man. It resorts to it for judgement in all its conduct, and it is inspired by it for guidance of its steps."²⁴

Further showing Hamas' religious motivations, rather than political ones, the 1988 Covenant is not just an anti-Israel or anti-Zionist document. It is specifically anti-Jewish. The Preamble states that "our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious."²⁵ Next, Article 7 says that

²³ "The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement," The Avalon Project : Hamas Covenant 1988, August 18, 1988, accessed July 13, 2019, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp.

²⁴ Ibid., Article 1.

²⁵ Ibid., Preamble.

the Day of Judgement will not come about until Moslems fight the Jews (killing the Jews), when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Moslems, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him. Only the Gharkad tree, would not do that because it is one of the trees of the Jews.²⁶

Then, in Article 28, it says that “Israel, Judaism and Jews challenge Islam and the Moslem people. May the cowards never sleep.”²⁷

The Covenant also makes several claims comparing Jews to Nazis. It says that “the society that confronts a vicious enemy which acts in a way similar to Nazism”²⁸; “In their Nazi treatment, the Jews made no exception for women or children”²⁹; and “the Zionist Nazi activities against our people will not last for long. For the state of injustice lasts but one day, while the state of justice lasts till Doomsday.”³⁰ Calling Jews Nazis in the Covenant makes no contribution to their cause or helps to explain how to prevail. Instead, it only serves to further dehumanize the ‘enemy’.

According to the 1988 Covenant, Hamas does not believe in negotiation, peace talks, or any agreement in which Israel is allowed to exist at all. As Hamas explains in Article 13, “Initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences,

²⁶ "The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement," 1988, Article 7.

²⁷ Ibid., Article 28.

²⁸ Ibid., Article 20.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. Article 31.

are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement.”³¹ The explanation given for the refusal to participate, also in Article 13, is that “knowing the parties constituting the conference, their past and present attitudes towards Moslem problems, the Islamic Resistance Movement does not consider these conferences capable of realizing the demands, restoring the rights or doing justice to the oppressed.”³² Moreover, it states that “there is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors. The Palestinian people know better than to consent to having their future, rights and fate toyed with.”³³

Aligned with Hamas’ conviction that Israel should not be allowed to exist, it advocates violence as a valid strategy in achieving this goal. In its preamble, it states that “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.”³⁴ It also explains, in Article 28, that “the Zionist invasion is a vicious invasion. It does not refrain from resorting to all methods, using all evil and contemptible ways to achieve its end.”³⁵

³¹ “The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement,” 1988, Article 13.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., Preamble.

³⁵ Ibid., Article 28.

The updated version of the Hamas Charter was released in 2017. It is a 42-article document that explains its general principles and objectives. The updated version is clearer than the original document, using more modern, concise language. Article 1 clearly states that “its goal is to liberate Palestine and confront the Zionist project. Its frame of reference is Islam, which determines its principles, objectives and means.”³⁶

While the document does still contain religious language, justification, and motivations, the primary focus is that the dispute is over land, not religion. It explains that “the Palestinian cause in its essence is a cause of an occupied land and a displaced people”³⁷ and that “Palestine is a land that was seized by a racist, anti-human and colonial Zionist project that was founded on a false promise (the Balfour Declaration), on recognition of a usurping entity and on imposing a fate accomplished by force.”³⁸

The document also focuses more on Zionism, rather than a conflict with the Jews. Accordingly, in Article 16, it specifically states that “Hamas affirms that its conflict is with the Zionist project not with the Jews because of their religion. Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish but wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine. Yet, it is the Zionists who constantly identify Judaism and

³⁶ "Hamas in 2017: The Document in Full." Middle East Eye. May 1, 2017. Accessed July 13, 2019. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/hamas-2017-document-full>, Article 1.

³⁷ Ibid., Article 12.

³⁸ Ibid., Preamble.

the Jews with their own colonial project and illegal entity.”³⁹ It has also taken out all references comparing Jews and Nazis.

According to the 2017 Hamas document, it no longer rejects *all* political solutions, but it is very specific that “Hamas rejects all the agreements, initiatives and settlement projects that are aimed at undermining the Palestinian cause and the rights of our Palestinian people. In this regard, any stance, initiative or political program must not in any way violate these rights and should not contravene them or contradict them.”⁴⁰ This means that all previous attempts at a political solution are deemed unacceptable. Article 18 says that “The following are considered null and void: the Balfour Declaration, the British Mandate Document, the UN Palestine Partition Resolution, and whatever resolutions and measures that derive from them or are similar to them.”⁴¹ Additionally, Article 21 explains that “Hamas affirms that the Oslo Accords and their addenda contravene the governing rules of international law in that they generate commitments that violate the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Therefore, the Movement rejects these agreements and all that flows from them, such as the obligations that are detrimental to the interests of our people, especially security coordination (collaboration).”⁴²

³⁹ “Hamas in 2017: The Document in Full,” Article 16.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Article 22.

⁴¹ Ibid., Article 18.

⁴² Ibid., Article 21.

Despite the new apparent willingness to negotiate, Hamas will still not agree to any solution in which Israel is allowed to exist, or even recognize Israel at all. Article 19 says that “there shall be no recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity. Whatever has befallen the land of Palestine in terms of occupation, settlement building, judaisation or changes to its features or falsification of facts is illegitimate. Rights never lapse.”⁴³ It also claims that

the establishment of “Israel” is entirely illegal and contravenes the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and goes against their will and the will of the Ummah; it is also in violation of human rights that are guaranteed by international conventions, foremost among them is the right to self-determination.⁴⁴

In fact, if the document must use the term ‘Israel’, it is referred to in quotation marks.

Finally, Hamas still advocates violence as a legitimate strategy in fighting for their cause. The updated document states that “resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws. At the heart of these lies armed resistance, which is regarded as the strategic choice for protecting the principles and the rights of the Palestinian people.”⁴⁵ It also expresses that

⁴³ Hamas in 2017: The Document in Full,” Article 19.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Article 18.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Article 25.

Hamas rejects any attempt to undermine the resistance and its arms. It also affirms the right of our people to develop the means and mechanisms of resistance. Managing resistance, in terms of escalation or de-escalation, or in terms of diversifying the means and methods, is an integral part of the process of managing the conflict and should not be at the expense of the principle of resistance.⁴⁶

The Hamas documents provide crucial context to the conflict, particularly in regards to its motivations, goals, and intentions. This context is largely absent from mainstream media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The media does not show this side of Hamas. Instead, it paints the organization as a possible partner for peace. Given the fact that it still advocates violence and refuses any solution that would allow for the legitimacy or existence of Israel, Hamas is not willing to find any diplomatic or political solutions to the current situation. This does not make it a legitimate option in the peace process, which should be reflected in the media coverage of the conflict.

⁴⁶ “Hamas in 2017: The Document in Full,” Article 26.

CHAPTER THREE: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GAZA CONFLICTS

After Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip, conflicts and the threat of terror intensified. It has "organized numerous suicide bomber attacks, dug tunnels to facilitate the perpetration of terrorist attacks, and launched thousands of rockets toward Israel's towns and cities."⁴⁷ There have also been three wars, two of which involved ground invasions of the Gaza Strip.⁴⁸

Operation Cast Lead, 2008-2009

The first of the Gaza Conflicts was Operation Cast Lead. It was launched on December 27, 2008 following "persistent terrorist activities and a constant missile threat from the Gaza Strip directed at Israelis."⁴⁹ The operation began as an air campaign. On the first day of the war, "230 Palestinians were killed and more than 700 injured, one of the deadliest death tolls for a single day since 1948."⁵⁰ On January 3, 2009, Israeli ground forces entered the Gaza Strip where they "fought running battles into the neighborhoods of Gaza City."⁵¹ On January 17, 2009, Ehud Olmert, the Israeli Prime

⁴⁷ Efraim Inbar, "Israel Can Only Manage, Not End, the Threat from Gaza," Middle East Forum (BESA Center Perspectives, June 30, 2016), <https://www.meforum.org/6103/hamas-no-one-shot-solution>.

⁴⁸ O'Malley, 144.

⁴⁹ "Operation Cast Lead," Idf.il, 2008-2009, accessed July 14, 2019, <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/wars-and-operations/operation-cast-lead-2008-09/>.

⁵⁰ Patrick Tyler, *Fortress Israel: The Inside Story of the Military Elite Who Run the Country - and Why They Cant Make Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 495.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Minister, declared a unilateral cease-fire because “Israel’s military objectives had been met.”⁵² Despite the ceasefire, the rocket attacks on Israel continued and two more operations occurred over the next five years.

In April 2009, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) appointed the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict to investigate alleged Israeli violations of international law on human rights.⁵³ The Mission was headed by Richard Goldstone, who produced “*The Goldstone Report*,” which found that Israel and Hamas were “responsible for serious violations of the laws of war, including war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity.”⁵⁴ The report states that “while the Israeli Government has sought to portray its operations as essentially a response to rocket attacks in the exercise of its right to self-defense, the Mission considers the plan to have been directed, at least in part, at a different target: the people of Gaza as a whole.”⁵⁵ Accordingly, it argues that the operations were “in furtherance of an overall policy aimed at punishing the Gaza population for its resilience and for its apparent support for Hamas, and possibly with the

⁵² Tyler, 495.

⁵³ Raphael S. Cohen et al., *From Cast Lead to Protective Edge: Lessons from Israel's Wars in Gaza* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017), 32.

⁵⁴ "UN: Endorse Goldstone Report," Human Rights Watch, November 3, 2009, accessed July 10, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/11/03/un-endorse-goldstone-report>.

⁵⁵ United Nations, General Assembly, *The Goldstone Report - Report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict*, September 25, 2009, accessed July 10, 2019, <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48.pdf>, 406.

intent of forcing a change in such support.”⁵⁶ The report accuses Israel of not providing “the same level of protection from rockets and mortars to affected Palestinian citizens as it has to Jewish citizens”⁵⁷ as well as “failing to protect its own citizens by refusing to acknowledge the futility of resorting to violent means and military power.”⁵⁸ The report thoroughly condemns Israel, but merely criticizes Hamas, making only one point against them —

the launching of rockets and mortars which cannot be aimed with sufficient precisions at military targets breaches the fundamental principle of distinction. Where there is no intended military target and the rockets and mortars are launched into civilian areas, they constitute a deliberate attack against the civilian population. These actions would constitute war crimes and may amount to crimes against humanity.⁵⁹

The report using harsh language towards Israel, but then conditionally critiques Hamas.

As a result of the Goldstone Report, Israel faced ever-increasing international criticism.⁶⁰ The report was considered controversial and was rejected by the government of Israel as biased and factually wrong.⁶¹ Then, in 2011, Judge Richard Goldstone, the

⁵⁶ United Nations, General Assembly, *The Goldstone Report - Report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict*, 406.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 412.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 419.

⁶⁰ Efraim Inbar and Eitan Shamir, “‘Mowing the Grass’: Israel’s Strategy for Protracted Intractable Conflict,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 1 (2014), 84.

⁶¹ Cohen et al., 33.

author of the report, confessed that it was based on false premises and allegations. He also retracted one of the report's most controversial accusations that Israel deliberately targeted Palestinian civilians.⁶² Goldstone published an article in the *Washington Post* on April 1, 2011 affirming that

we know a lot more today about what happened in the Gaza war of 2008-09 than we did when I chaired the fact-finding mission appointed by the U.N. Human Rights Council that produced what has come to be known as the Goldstone Report. If I had known then what I know now, the Goldstone Report would have been a different document.⁶³

One example he used was that of the report found evidence of “possible crimes against humanity” by both Israel and Hamas, but that “the crimes allegedly committed by Hamas were intentional goes without saying — its rockets were purposefully and indiscriminately aimed at civilian targets.”⁶⁴ Another example is that the report’s “allegations of intentionality by Israel were based on the deaths of and injuries to civilians in situations where our fact-finding mission had no evidence on which to draw any other reasonable conclusion.” Further information has been uncovered that indicates that “civilians were not intentionally targeted as a matter of policy.”⁶⁵ He then affirmed

⁶² Cohen et al., 33.

⁶³ Richard Goldstone, "Reconsidering the Goldstone Report on Israel and War Crimes," *The Washington Post*, April 01, 2011, accessed July 10, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/reconsidering-the-goldstone-report-on-israel-and-war-crimes/2011/04/01/AFg111JC_story.html?utm_term=.cfe0122bf510.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Goldstone, "Reconsidering the Goldstone Report on Israel and War Crimes," *The Washington Post*.

that the new information “probably would have influenced our findings about intentionality and war crimes.”⁶⁶ Finally, Goldstone makes a recommendation on the current situation. He said that “hundreds more rockets and mortar rounds have been directed at civilian targets in southern Israel. That comparatively few Israelis have been killed by the unlawful rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza in no way minimizes the criminality” and thus urged the UNHRC to “condemn these heinous acts in the strongest terms.”⁶⁷ Even though Richard Goldstone himself said that the Goldstone Report is inaccurate, it is still being used as an argument against Israeli conduct. This situation goes to show that false reports and misinformation are repeated as fact and have damaging effects on the possibility of peace for years to come.

Operation Pillar of Defense, 2012

The next operation in the series of Gaza Conflicts was Operation Pillar of Defense. In response to rocket attacks intensifying from the Gaza Strip once again, Prime Minister Netanyahu launched Operation Pillar of Defense in November of 2012. This operation was relatively short, lasting only from November 14th to 21st.⁶⁸ The day before the beginning of the operation, over 100 rockets were fired at Israel. In response, the IDF launched a week of air strikes. The rocket and mortar fire only continued to escalate

⁶⁶ Goldstone, "Reconsidering the Goldstone Report on Israel and War Crimes," The Washington Post.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Itamar Rabinovich and Itai Brun, *Israel Facing a New Middle East: In Searching of a National Security Strategy* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2017), 89.

throughout the operation. Until the cease-fire at the conclusion of the operation, “Palestinian rocket and mortar fire reached a hitherto unheard-of record of over 1,500 rockets and mortars in one week — the highest rate of fire ever.”⁶⁹ In response, the IDF struck more than “1,500 targets in Gaza, including rocket launchers, weapon stocks, and Hamas government infrastructure.”⁷⁰ Although Israel mobilized a total of 57,000 reservists and deployed ground forces along Gaza’s border, a ground incursion ultimately never occurred.⁷¹ The operation ended with the acceptance of an Egyptian-brokered cease-fire, which “contributed to a pattern similar to the aftermath of Operation Cast Lead in 2009, where the rocket fire slackened for some time, before increasing again.”⁷²

Operation Protective Edge, 2014

The final operation in the series of Gaza Conflicts was Operation Protective Edge in 2014. It began on July 8, 2014 and continued for 51 days.⁷³ Like the first two, this operation was launched in response to increasing terror activities. This time, there was also the added threat to the Israeli communities bordering the Gaza Strip from offensive

⁶⁹ Gerald M. Steinberg and Anne Herzberg, eds., "Filling in the Blanks: Documenting Missing Dimensions in UN and NGO Investigations of the Gaza Conflict," *A Publication of NGO Monitor and U.N. Watch*, March 15, 2016, accessed July 8, 2019, 17.

⁷⁰ Cohen et al., xii.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Steinberg and Herzberg, eds., "Filling in the Blanks: Documenting Missing Dimensions in UN and NGO Investigations of the Gaza Conflict," 17-18.

⁷³ Gerald M. Steinberg, Anne Herzberg, and Joshua Bacon, "NGOs and the Political-Legal Theater in Operation Protective Edge," *INSS Strategic Assessment* 19, no. 2 (July 2016), accessed July 7, 2019, 76.

tunnels.⁷⁴ Prior to the operation, Hamas had constructed an extensive system of offensive tunnels to allow their fighters to enter into Israel. They claimed that “without penetrating into Israel, it would be difficult to inflict the pain required for reaching ‘a significant achievement’.”⁷⁵ During the fifty-one days of the operation, Hamas fired approximately 4,600 mortars and rockets that reached most parts of Israel. Moreover, an “extensive system of underground defense and attack tunnels, the branches of dozens of which penetrated into Israel proper, was exposed.”⁷⁶

As a publication by the RAND Corporation explains, Operation Protective Edge consisted of three phases. The first, between July 8th-16th, was an air campaign that looked similar to Operation Pillar of Defense, with Israel “targeting Hamas militants and infrastructure.”⁷⁷ Then, on July 17th, thirteen Hamas militants attempted to infiltrate into Israel through a tunnel near Kibbutz Sufa.⁷⁸ This exemplified the threat the tunnels posed to the civilian areas near the border. In order to destroy Hamas’ tunnel network, which could not be accomplished through airpower alone, the IDF launched the second phase, a

⁷⁴ Cohen et al., 69.

⁷⁵ Rabinovich and Brun, 91.

⁷⁶ Harel Chorev, “The Road to Operation Protective Edge: Gaps in Strategic Perception,” trans. Yvette Shumacher, *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 8, no. 3 (2014), 9.

⁷⁷ Cohen et al., xiii-xiv.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

ground incursion which lasted from July 17th to August 4th.⁷⁹ The final phase, from August 5th-26th was marked by a “series of temporary cease-fires broken by air strikes and rocket fire.”⁸⁰ The operation ended with yet another cease-fire.⁸¹ Despite continued rocket attacks, there has not been another major operation in Gaza since then end of Operation Protective Edge in 2014.

⁷⁹ Cohen et al., xiv.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Rabinovich and Brun, 91.

CHAPTER FOUR: MEDIA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

This paper conducts a media analysis of both the articles and photographs from four different news media sources, using the Gaza Conflicts as case-studies, in order to determine that media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is biased against Israel. For both the article and photograph analyses, sources examined are the *Associated Press*, *The New York Times*, *Reuters*, and the *Washington Post*. The article analysis consists of a qualitative approach which identifies three consistent themes throughout all four sources during the 2014 Gaza Conflict. Then, within the article analysis, there are four main types of biases that are examined. The photograph analysis consists of a quantitative approach of all three Gaza Conflicts from the four sources, in which the content of the collective pictures is quantified to determine what type of pictures are most prevalent.

Article Analysis

The article analysis section of this paper focuses on three main themes and four types of bias, as shown through headlines, word choice, omission, and sources. Bias through headlines is seen when the headline of an article is misleading in regards to the actual content of the article. Bias through word choice involves the use of biased language, emotion, and subjective statements. Omission bias occurs when either context is overlooked or certain facts are left out of the discussion, both of which alters the impact of the information. Lastly, bias through sources includes using biased sources, omitting sources from a particular viewpoint, or a lack of sources altogether. All four of

these types of bias are prevalent in the media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and have a significant impact on the discourse and narrative surrounding the conflict.⁸²

The examination of the articles shows that out of 443 articles, 257 either had a focus, or major elements, of the types of bias discussed in this paper. The *Associated Press* had the largest percentage of incidences, with 77.48 percent of articles, followed by *The New York Times* with 58.27 percent. *Reuters* and the *Washington Post* each had 49.54 percent and 42.86 percent, respectively. These percentages are shown in Figure 1.

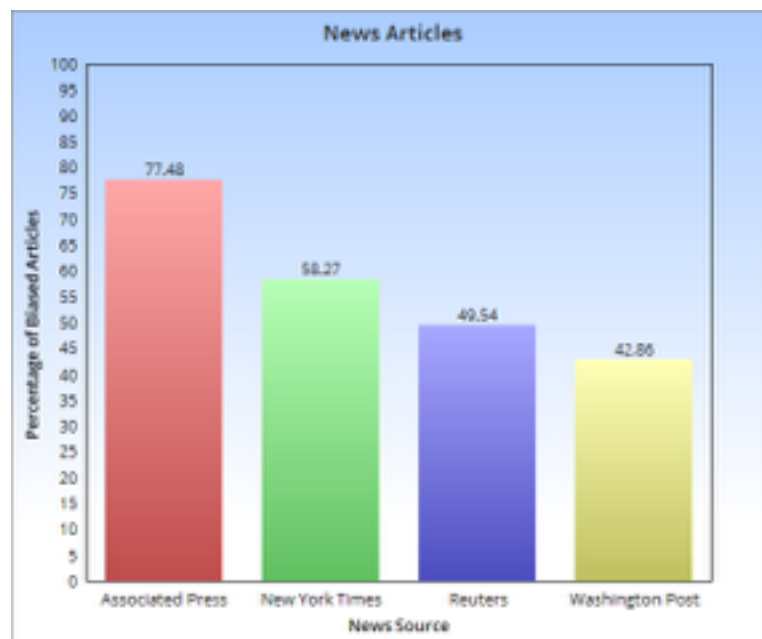


Figure 1

⁸² See for example: Raymond Williams, *Communications* (London: Vintage Digital, 2015); Tim Groseclose and Jeffrey Milyo, "A Measure of Media Bias," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120, no. 4 (November 2005): pp. 1191-1237).

Although not all the articles were biased against Israel, and not even the majority of the articles in the cases of *Reuters* and the *Washington Post*, the percentages are still quite high. The bias, whether intentional or not, has a major impact on the conflict. Having this much biased information as the focus of articles disseminates this sort of information to the readers. Therefore, the readers, perhaps unwittingly, are not getting a complete understanding of the conflict as a whole.

Photograph Analysis

Photojournalism is an important aspect of understanding how bias is transmitted in this conflict. Using photos to sway public opinion and perception is valued tool. Quantifying the incidence of various types of photo displays a pattern of misrepresentation of the conflict which, therefore, strongly influences how the public understands the situation. Yasser Arafat himself explained the concept — “This child, who is grasping the stone, facing the tank, is it not the greatest message to the world when that hero becomes a martyr? We are proud of them.”⁸³

⁸³ “Arafat: Dead Children Are the Greatest Message to the World” (Official Palestinian Authority Television, January 15, 2002), <https://palwatch.org/page/176>.

CHAPTER FIVE: NEWS ARTICLE ANALYSIS - 2014 GAZA CONFLICT

Theme: Omission of Israeli Suffering

The first major theme portrayed in the media discourse surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is the omission of Israeli suffering. Discussion about the reality Israelis face was not very common in any of the sources. It was often specifically omitted from articles in which inclusion would have allowed for a more balanced portrayal. There were two articles, one in the *Associated Press*⁸⁴ and one in *The New York Times*,⁸⁵ specifically about the trauma Palestinian children endured during the 2014 Conflict. Israeli children have also been affected by the conflict, but that was omitted from both articles. Additionally, on July 16th, *The New York Times* ran an article entitled “First Israeli Killed Near Gaza Border,”⁸⁶ but only the first two lines were about the Israelis. The rest of the article was instead about a cease-fire.

Even if discussion of Israeli suffering was included, it was often qualified or explained away. The most common way of achieving this was through mentioning both the Iron Dome and inaccuracy of the rockets fired from Gaza. Accordingly, the general argument is that the war does not affect Israelis that much because most of the rockets do

⁸⁴ Karin Laub, “In Gaza, Emotional Wounds of War Remain Unhealed,” *Associated Press*, August 18, 2014.

⁸⁵ Nick Cumming-Bruce, “U.N. Reports Dire Impact on Children in Gaza Strip,” *The New York Times*, August 6, 2014.

⁸⁶ Jodi Rudoren and Anne Barnard, “First Israeli Killed Near Gaza Border,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2014.

not end up causing any damage. The *Associated Press* mirrored this argument in two articles, saying that “but beyond some jitters and discomfort, they haven't hurt Israelis much, causing no casualties and very little damage”⁸⁷ and “thanks to Israel's ‘Iron Dome’ defense system, Israelis seem to fear less for their lives than for their lifestyles as they adjust to the anxiety of random, potentially deadly, yet generally harmless rocket attacks.”⁸⁸

The other part of the argument, the inaccuracy of the rockets, was cited in a *New York Times* article, which explained that the rockets are “inaccurate, often falling in open ground, and Israelis are well drilled in safety procedures and the cities are protected by the Iron Dome system, helping reduce the risks.”⁸⁹ The *Washington Post* also expressed how the Iron Dome helps make lives as normal as possible for Israelis: “The system is widely credited here with allowing Israel to endure more than 1,000 rocket attacks in the past week without a single fatality as of Monday night.”⁹⁰ Similarly, *The New York Times* stated that “ Hamas and allied militants have fired more than 1,000 rockets into Israel since July 8. One Israeli civilian has been killed. Most rockets have fallen in open ground

⁸⁷ Aron Heller, “Israel’s ‘Iron Dome’ Changes the Face of Battle,” *Associated Press*, July 10, 2014.

⁸⁸ Aron Heller, “Israelis in Center Adjust to Life under Rockets,” *Associated Press*, July 17, 2014.

⁸⁹ Isabel Kershner, “Air Sirens Puncture Life in Affluent Tel Aviv Suburbs,” *The New York Times*, July 10, 2014.

⁹⁰ Griff Witte and Ruth Eglash, “Israel’s ‘Dome’ Changes the Fight,” *The Washington Post*, July 15, 2014.

or have been destroyed by Israel's Iron Dome interception system."⁹¹ The argument that since the rockets do not often strike the intended targets, the war does not significantly affect Israelis is erroneous. Just because the rockets do not often cause damage does not mean that it is permissible to fire rockets or that it is not psychologically harmful.

Sub-Theme: Disproportionate Discussion of Palestinian Suffering

In contrast to the omission of Israeli suffering, the media sources examined show a disproportionate number of articles specifically detailing Palestinian suffering. This was most prevalent in *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and then followed by the *Associated Press*. The details in these articles were not qualified, explained away, downplayed, or hidden among other information. Instead, all three of these sources had multiple articles devoted to describing the horrors of life in Gaza.

The New York Times published seven different stories with no other purpose than to detail Palestinian suffering between July 13th and August 18th, including ones entitled "In Hospitals Across Gaza, Scenes of Chaos and Grief,"⁹² "In Gaza, Grief, Anger — and No Small Measure of Pride,"⁹³ and "In Torn Gaza, If Roof Stands, It's Now Home."⁹⁴

⁹¹ Anne Barnard, "Boys Drawn to Gaza Beach, and Into Center of Mideast Strife," *The New York Times*, July 17, 2014.

⁹² Anne Barnard and Fares Akram, "In Hospitals Across Gaza, Scenes of Chaos and Grief," *The New York Times*, July 20, 2014.

⁹³ Jodi Rudoren, "In Gaza, Grief, Anger — and No Small Measure of Pride," *The New York Times*, August 11, 2014.

⁹⁴ Jodi Rudoren, "In Torn Gaza, If Roof Stands, It's Now Home," *The New York Times*, August 18, 2014.

The *Washington Post* published six articles just between July 22nd and August 7th, including “In Besieged Gaza, Burying the Dead Becomes a Dangerous Task,”⁹⁵ “After Missile, a Pregnant Gazan’s Frantic Hunt for Medical Help,”⁹⁶ and “Families in Gaza Weigh the Risk of Staying Together.”⁹⁷ The *Associated Press* published five articles between July 24th and August 18th, including “In Gaza War, Violent Death Part of Daily Life,”⁹⁸ “Gaza’s Wounded: Living Reminder of the Ravages of War,”⁹⁹ and “In Gaza, Emotional Wounds of War Remain Unhealed.”¹⁰⁰

Life in Gaza during the 2014 Conflict was absolutely horrific. The people there endured terrible things and their stories should be shared with the world. However, the Israeli side needs to be shown as well. When only one side is humanized in the media, when the world only sees the suffering of one party of the conflict, the other is consequently dehumanized and delegitimized.

⁹⁵ William Booth, “In Besieged Gaza, Burying the Dead Becomes a Dangerous Task,” *The Washington Post*, July 22, 2014.

⁹⁶ Taylor Luck, “After Missile, a Pregnant Gazan’s Frantic Hunt for Medical Help,” *The Washington Post*, July 27, 2014.

⁹⁷ Sudarsan Raghavan, “Families in Gaza Weigh the Risk of Staying Together,” *The Washington Post*, July 31, 2014.

⁹⁸ Hamza Hendawi, “In Gaza War, Violent Death Part of Daily Life,” *Associated Press*, August 5, 2014.

⁹⁹ Hamza Hendawi, “Gaza’s Wounded: Living Reminder of the Ravages of War,” *Associated Press*, August 10, 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Laub, “In Gaza, Emotional Wounds of War Remain Unhealed.”

Sub-Theme: Lack of Acknowledgement of Palestinian Extremism

The second sub-theme of omission of Israeli suffering is the lack of acknowledgement of Palestinian extremism. The main way this is manifested is that the media outlets avoid using the term ‘terrorists’ to refer to Hamas. Currently there is no universally recognized definition of terrorism, but some individual countries and organizations have their own definitions or guidelines. The U.S. State Department defines terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.”¹⁰¹ The United Nations gave one definition in Resolution 1566 in 2004: “criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons.”¹⁰² By either of these definitions, many of Hamas activities could be defined as terrorism. Accordingly, Israel, the United States, and the European Union all consider Hamas to be a terrorist organization.¹⁰³

All four media sources examined in this paper use the terms ‘militant’ and ‘gunmen’. The problem is, these terms are not neutral. For example, the term ‘militant’

¹⁰¹ [USC02] 22 USC Ch. 38: DEPARTMENT OF STATE, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title22/chapter38&edition=prelim>.

¹⁰² “Counter-Terrorism Module 4 Key Issues: Defining Terrorism,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/terrorism/module-4/key-issues/defining-terrorism.html>.

¹⁰³ O’Malley, 118.

means “someone working aggressively in support of a cause.”¹⁰⁴ Therefore, using the term ‘militant’, is in itself making a judgement and presenting Hamas’ actions as “legitimate, legal, and perhaps even moral.”¹⁰⁵

One of the hallmarks of the 2014 Gaza Conflict has been an increase in Hamas using tunnels to enter Israel. There has been extensive mention of this in the news articles. On July 19th, *The New York Times* reported that “13 Hamas gunmen from Gaza emerged from the mouth of an underground tunnel about a mile away, inside Israeli territory.”¹⁰⁶ Then on July 20th, both the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times* published articles describing “Hamas fighters dressed in Israeli army uniforms”¹⁰⁷ who were “armed with automatic weapons”¹⁰⁸ emerged from a tunnel in Israel. On July 29th, *The New York Times* quoted an Israeli military spokesperson discussing what had been discovered in the tunnels that had been uncovered — “Rocket-propelled grenades and automatic rifles...a kidnapping kit of tranquilizers and plastic handcuffs ...and Israeli

¹⁰⁴ Shraga Simmons, *David & Goliath: The Explosive Inside Story of Media Bias in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (New York, NY: Emesphere Productions, 2012), 86.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Jodi Rudoren and Isabel Kershner, “Trouble Underfoot on Israeli Kibbutz Near the Border,” *The New York Times*, July 19, 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Sudarsan Raghavan, William Booth, and Ruth Eglash, “2 Israeli Soldiers Killed in Gaza Clash,” *The Washington Post*, July 20, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Jodi Rudoren and Anne Barnard, “Despite Israeli Push in Gaza, Hamas Fighters Slip Through Tunnels Near the Border,” *The New York Times*, July 20, 2014.

Army uniforms.”¹⁰⁹ On July 31st, the *Washington Post* described videos posted by both the Israeli military and Hamas which showed “masked militants armed with rocket propelled-grenades crawling out of holes in the ground.”¹¹⁰ On August 2nd, both the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times* described an incident in which a “suicide bomber”¹¹¹ emerged from a tunnel and “exploded a suicide belt.”¹¹²

Despite the violent nature of these events coupled with the irregular warfare consistent with the definitions of terrorism above, all of these Hamas members were referred to as ‘militants’ or ‘gunmen’. Hamas’ rhetoric discussed in Chapter Two shows that the group strives to destroy Israel and considers violence to be a legitimate strategy. This crucial context is missing from the media sources evaluated in this paper. Attempts to use neutral terms to refer to Hamas only dilutes the context further, thereby giving the audience an incomplete understanding of the situation.

¹⁰⁹ Jodi Rudoren, “Tunnels Lead Right to Heart of Israeli Fear,” *The New York Times*, July 29, 2014.

¹¹⁰ William Booth and Ruth Eglash, “Hamas Tunnels Stoke Anxiety, Bolstering Israelis’ Support of War; The Israeli Military Says It Has Discovered 32 Underground Passages from Gaza to Its Soil,” *The Washington Post*, July 31, 2014.

¹¹¹ William Booth, Sudarsan Raghavan, and Griff Witte, “Gaza Cease-Fire Falter within 2 Hours,” *The Washington Post*, August 2, 2014.

¹¹² Jodi Rudoren and Isabel Kershner, “Gaza Cease-Fire Collapses; Israeli Soldier Is Captured,” *The New York Times*, August 2, 2014.

Sub-Theme: Diminishing the Perception of Hamas' Capacity to Cause Harm

Part of the Palestinian narrative is the perception of being weaker than Israel, as that position garners sympathy from the international community. The media, perhaps inadvertently, helps construct this narrative by writing articles that make it appear that Hamas is not a serious danger or threat to Israel. Some of the articles outright describe this, such as the *Associated Press* article that described the rockets as “unlikely to cause major damage or harm.”¹¹³ Other articles use understated language to create the perception of harmlessness. In one example, on July 19th, the *Washington Post* stated that “even as Israel has relentlessly bombarded Gaza, Hamas militants have succeeded in firing hundreds of rockets into southern and central Israel, rattling Israelis.”¹¹⁴ The term “rattling” implies that it was not that impactful. An example from *The New York Times* claimed that “Hamas can only annoy the Israelis,”¹¹⁵ which carries the impression that Hamas is not a significant threat.

Sub-Theme: Deflecting Responsibility Through Rhetoric

Sometimes in describing a particular event in the conflict, the media will report it using the passive voice. Although this is done to avoid placing blame and to appear

¹¹³ Aron Heller, “Israeli City in Rocket Range from Both Directions,” *Associated Press*, July 9, 2014.

¹¹⁴ Sudarsan Raghavan, William Booth, and Ruth Eglash, “Israel Concentrates Incursion along Gaza Borders as Netanyahu Warns of ‘Expansion’; A New Phase of the Military Operation Began Soon after a Five-Hour Humanitarian Truce Ended,” *The Washington Post*, July 19, 2014.

¹¹⁵ Jodi Rudoren and Isabel Kershner, “New Fighting a Bid for Leverage As a Gaza Cease-Fire Expires,” *The New York Times*, August 9, 2014.

neutral, it has the inadvertent effect of diverting the culpability as well. In the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, this has the tendency to dismiss responsibility and obscures the truth surrounding the incident. Essentially, when the media uses the passive voice, it can take the fault away from Hamas, thereby delegitimizing Israel's suffering.

This often occurred in relation to broken cease-fires in the 2014 Gaza Conflict. On July 17th, the *Associated Press* stated that "there were intermittent rocket attacks during the lull as well."¹¹⁶ Although it does not explicitly say, the underlying meaning is that Hamas fired rockets during the cease-fire. Another example is that, on July 27th, *Reuters* reported that the "truce fell apart after missiles hit Israel,"¹¹⁷ which really meant that Hamas fired missiles at Israel during the cease-fire and that caused the truce to fail.

¹¹⁶ Lara Jakes and Matthew Lee, "US Says Israel Must Not Target Gaza Civilians," *Associated Press*, July 17, 2014.

¹¹⁷ Nidal al-Mughrabi and Ori Lewis, "Fighting in Gaza Abates, but Truce Hopes Look Fragile," *Reuters*, July 27, 2014.

Theme: Victimization and Villainization

The second theme that is consistent throughout all four sources is the dichotomy between victimization and villainization¹¹⁸ In many of the media accounts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict observed in this essay, it is not always apparent which group assumes which role. Instead, the dynamic is often expressed through subtle undertones. For example, *The New York Times*, on July 12, writes

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel said Friday that his forces were fighting Hamas with ‘increasing intensity’ to quell its rocket barrages from Gaza, ignoring outside criticism and calls for restraint in the increasingly deadly Israeli aerial assaults. Even as he spoke, Palestinian militants fired salvos into central and southern Israel and said their arsenal had barely been dented.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ See examples for more information on the narratives of Palestinian victimization and Israeli demonization in the media and international discourse: Bruce J. Evensen, “Reporting the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Personal View,” in *Media Bias: Finding It, Fixing It*, ed. WM. David Sloan and Jenn Burleson MacKay (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002); Gerald M Steinberg, “Abusing the Legacy of the Holocaust: The Role of NGOs in Exploiting Human Rights to Demonize Israel,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16, no. 3/4 (2004); Gerald M. Steinberg, “NGOs Make War on Israel,” *Middle East Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (2004), <https://www.meforum.org/633/ngos-make-war-on-israel>; Katy Steele, “Palestinian-Arab Media Frames and Stereotypes of Israeli-Jews,” *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications* 5, no. 1 (2014); Michael Curtis, “The International Assault against Israel,” *Israel Affairs* 18, no. 3 (July 2012); Mitchell G. Bard, *Myths and Facts: A Guide to the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (American Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 2014); Ron Schleifer, “Propoganda, PSYOPS, and Political Marketing: The Hamas Campaign as a Case in Point,” *Journal of Political Marketing* 13, no. 1-2 (2014); Shraga Simmons, *David & Goliath: The Explosive Inside Story of Media Bias in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (New York, NY: Emesphere Productions, 2012).

¹¹⁹ Isabel Kershner and Fares Akram, “Israeli Leader Calls for ‘Full Force’ in Effort to Quell Hamas Rocket Attacks,” *The New York Times*, July 12, 2014.

At first glance, this account seems fairly neutral, but in all actuality the Palestinians are being portrayed as resilient militants while the Israelis are ruthless, ignoring criticism, and attacking with increasing deadliness.

A yet vaguer portrayal of the Palestinians as victims and the Israelis as aggressors is *The New York Times* article from July 16th. In it the authors claim that “Egypt helped its ally, Israel, achieve a face-saving unilateral cease-fire — that’s what happened.”¹²⁰ Israel, in other words, is portrayed as having agreed to a cease-fire reluctantly. Despite stopping the violence unilaterally, the country appears still as the antagonist while Egypt appears as the protagonist.

Alternatively, sometimes the roles are quite pronounced. One discernible example is from the *Washington Post*, which asserted that “So far, there's no doubt that Israel has inflicted far more damage than Hamas has, but that's consistently true in this deeply asymmetrical fight.”¹²¹ Another example is from *The New York Times*. On July 27th, the article claimed that “it is Israel’s assault on Gaza that is causing the vast majority of the carnage in the conflict, including the deaths of 42 soldiers on the Israeli side.”¹²² The assertion that Israel caused the deaths of its own soldiers by participating in a war shows

¹²⁰ Jodi Rudoren, “After Brief Lull in Gaza Crisis, Airstrikes Resume,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2014.

¹²¹ William Booth and Griff Witte, “Gazans Flee after Israel Says Assault Is Imminent,” *Washington Post*, July 14, 2014.

¹²² Jodi Rudoren, “Israel Agrees to Extend Cease-Fire for 24 Hours,” *The New York Times*, July 27, 2014.

a lack of objectivity. Although Israel's military strikes on Gaza and Hamas were much more destructive in terms of loss of life and property than those of Hamas on Israel the "efficacy of military action is measured not by how much carnage and destruction it wreaks on the enemy, but by the achievement of political goals and the cost in terms of resources expended and destruction suffered in return."¹²³ Using examples of damage inflicted without providing context of how, where, and why the damage was inflicted, serves to vilify Israel rather than to present facts about the conflict.

This theme is even showed in the news media surrounding the United Nation's view of the conflict, rather than just the individual parties. This is shown in two *Associated Press* articles. The first, from July 9th says that the UN chief "accused Israel of perpetrating 'war crimes and state terrorism' against 'defenseless and unprotected' Palestinian civilians."¹²⁴ The second article, from July 10th, reported that the UN chief urges a cease-fire to "'stop the bleeding' and revive the Palestinians' 'dying hopes' for an end to the conflict and peace with freedom."¹²⁵ Both of these articles were quoting the UN chief, but putting those quotes into the author's own sentences. This shows exactly how the media helps to spread the Palestinian narrative, thus alienating Israel further.

¹²³ Eitan Shamir and Eado Hecht, "A War Examined, Gaza 2014: Israel's Attrition vs Hamas' Exhaustion," *Parameters* 44, no. 4 (2014), 81.

¹²⁴ Edith Lederer, "UN Chief Calls Mideast Leaders, Urges Restraint," *Associated Press*, July 9, 2014.

¹²⁵ Edith Lederer, "UN Chief Urges Israeli-Palestinian Cease-Fire," *Associated Press*, July 10, 2014.

Theme: Juxtaposition to Skew Meaning

The third and final main theme is juxtaposition to skew meaning. This is manifested in two different ways in the media sources — obscuring positive Israeli actions with negative ones and negating the validity of Israeli and Palestinian experiences through comparison. This is done in an attempt to frame the conflict and control the narrative.

Obscuring Positive Israeli Actions With Negative Ones

The first form of juxtaposition prevalent in the media sources is obscuring positive Israeli actions with negative ones. This is when the media takes something positive about Israel and tries to hide it among more negative things in order to lessen the focus on the positive. There are three particular articles that exemplify this concept. The first two articles are both from the *Associated Press*, but are nearly two months apart. The first, published on July 16th, stated that “The Israeli military has agreed to a U.N.-brokered five-hour ‘humanitarian’ pause starting Thursday in its strikes on the Gaza Strip to allow Palestinians to restock food, water and other necessities. An attack Wednesday by an Israeli naval vessel killed four Palestinian boys playing on the beach.”¹²⁶ The two sentences are entirely unrelated, yet were bonded together in the same paragraph. The positive impact of agreeing to the cease-fire is then lessened by the report of the attack. The second article, from the *Associated Press*, and the third article, from the *Washington*

¹²⁶ Josh Lederman, “Obama: US Using All Means to Get Israel Cease-Fire,” *Associated Press*, July 16, 2014.

Post, were both published on September 10th and are about the same subject — Israeli criminal investigations into the Gaza War. The *Associated Press* article stated that “by investigating the killing of Palestinian children on a Gaza beach and the shelling of a United Nations school, Israel looks to be trying to send a signal that it can police itself as it faces the specter of international war crimes probes.¹²⁷” Along the same lines, the *Washington Post* article expressed that Israel is conducting the investigations in order to placate the international community, but is not actually doing anything substantive.¹²⁸ Both of these articles take what could be a very positive thing — that Israelis may take the allegations seriously, want to determine the truth, and that they want improve for the future. Instead, both the *Associated Press* and the *Washington Post* assumed the worst and published it, so it will inevitably be repeated regardless of validity.

Negating the Validity of Israeli and Palestinian Experiences Through Comparison

The second way this theme is manifested is negating the validity of Israeli and Palestinian experiences through comparison. This means that Israel’s experiences of hardship through the war are juxtaposed with that of the Palestinian experience. This attempts to show that the Palestinians have had worse experiences, effectively

¹²⁷ Aron Heller, “Israeli Military Opens Its Own Probe into Gaza War,” *Associated Press*, September 10, 2014.

¹²⁸ Ruth Eglash, “Israeli Military Opens Its Own Criminal Investigations into Gaza War; One Criminal Investigation Is Examining the Killing of Four Palestinian Boys on a Beach,” *Washington Post*, September 10, 2014.

invalidating Israeli hardship. All four of the media sources have at least two articles that serve as examples.

There are four distinct *Associated Press* articles that depict this concept. The first, entitled “Gaza Dead Tops 85 as Israel Presses its Offensive”¹²⁹ from July 10th, says that

in southern Israel, the area hit hardest by the rockets, people have been ordered to stay within close range of shelter. Summer camps have been canceled, motorists have been forced to jump out of their cars, and high school students took their final exams in bomb shelters. Many people are using a smartphone application that alerts them to incoming rockets when they can't hear air-raid sirens.¹³⁰

Ostensibly, it seems as if the article is showing Israel’s suffering, but this paragraph is in an article about Palestinian casualties. This sends the message that Israelis are complaining about summer camps closing and having to run for bomb shelters while people just on the other side of the border are suffering a lot more. Regardless of the validity of the observation, the effect of the juxtaposition is a marked depreciation of the tragic reality on the ground: namely Israel’s obligation to protect its citizens from a terrorist organization if even at the expense of innocent lives on the other side.

The second *Associated Press* article was published on July 12th. It explicitly compares the situation in the Gaza Strip to that in Israel. The article says that “a ceaseless Israeli bombing campaign, with airstrikes every five minutes, has turned the frenetic hub of the Gaza Strip into a virtual ghost town, emptying streets, closing shops and keeping

¹²⁹ Khaled Kazziha and Josef Federman, “Gaza Dead Tops 85 as Israel Presses Its Offensive,” *Associated Press*, July 10, 2014.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

hundreds of thousands of people close to home where they feel safest from the bombs.”¹³¹ Then, it jumps to Israel and says “in Israel, hundreds of rockets fired by Gaza militants also send civilians running into bomb shelters and staying close to home. However, there have been no fatalities there, while the death toll in Gaza topped 120 on Saturday from the five-day offensive.”¹³² This article is expressing, in no uncertain terms, that the conflict has a far worse impact for the Palestinians than the Israelis. Notably, the article indicates that “some” in Gaza attribute their suffering to Hamas:

Abu Ali, a driver for his family business who identified himself only by his first names to avoid Hamas retribution, insisted that at least in his immediate neighborhood, the movement was widely reviled. “Everybody here hates Hamas,” he said. “But they’re too afraid to say so publicly. Our food comes from Israel but what we give them in return is rockets — rockets that don’t even make little holes in the ground.”¹³³

The information, placed at the end of the article, resonates in direct contrast to information conveyed through the title and the first three-fourths of the article. The writer evinces balance but largely as an afterthought.

The third *Associated Press* article, from July 17th, discusses the photos coming out of the conflict. It compares a “striking photo of some 20 young children lying on the floor of their Hod Hasharon kindergarten during a siren with their hands covering their

¹³¹ Khaled Kazziha, “Israeli Bombing Turns Gaza into Ghost Town,” *Associated Press*, July 12, 2014.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

heads”¹³⁴ to the “far more harrowing”¹³⁵ images from Gaza that depict “funerals of children and scenes of others huddling with their families in refuge after their homes have been destroyed.”¹³⁶

The fourth *Associated Press* article, from September 1st, is juxtaposed with information about how Israeli children get to return to school while Palestinian kids in the Gaza Strip will not because the schools are still being used as shelters.¹³⁷ It is clearly sending the message that life will go back to normal for the Israelis, but the Palestinians will suffer for years to come.

The New York Times also published four individual articles that showed this concept. The first article, from July 9th, shows the difference in the effect of the war in Israel and Gaza. It gives an account of life in Sderot, Israel compared to life in Gaza City. The article says that in Sderot, “residents in an open-air market ran with their shopping bags to find shelter behind a truck or by a wall when a rocket alert sounded, then went back to buying groceries.”¹³⁸ Conversely, in Gaza, it says:

¹³⁴ Heller, “Israelis in Center Adjust to Life under Rockets.”

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Leonard Bernstein, “Israeli Children Return to School after Gaza War,” *Associated Press*, September 1, 2014.

¹³⁸ Steven Erlanger and Isabel Kershner, “Israel and Hamas Trade Attacks as Tension Rises,” *The New York Times*, July 9, 2014.

As the day went on, the streets became more deserted and shops began to close. At a Gaza City hospital, Riad Mtair described an airstrike in a grove behind his home. ‘I looked out from the window after the smoke cleared and saw three kids lying on the ground’, he said. He brought them to the hospital and one boy died, the Health Ministry said, while the others suffered moderate injuries.¹³⁹

The reporting is vivid and compelling, but rather than simply illustrating the violent tragedy of an armed conflict, it paints a picture of disproportionate suffering and indeed injustice; a posture that can only extend hostilities in the minds of readers.

The second *New York Times* article, from July 14th, juxtaposes casualty figures. It says that an “Israeli strike overnight aimed at Gen. Tayseer al-Batsh, commander of the Hamas police in Gaza, killed an estimated 21 Palestinians leaving a mosque. The general was wounded.”¹⁴⁰ This is immediately followed with the statement that an “Israeli teenager was wounded by shrapnel from a rocket fired at the coastal city of Ashkelon, the Israeli ambulance service said.”¹⁴¹ This leaves the message that while there are multiple Palestinians casualties, Israelis are simply being lightly wounded. While the information may be accurate, the juxtaposition of injuries is suggestive of a traditional conflict waged between two nations. As such the insistence on comparable statistics appears calibrated to paint the picture of unjust imbalance; whereas the conflict, in reality, is by nature asymmetric and unorthodox.

¹³⁹ Steven Erlanger and Isabel Kershner, “Israel and Hamas Trade Attacks as Tension Rises.”

¹⁴⁰ Steven Erlanger, “Israel and Palestinian Militants Show No Sign of Pulling Back; the Army Is ‘Prepared for Any Possibility,’ Netanyahu Declares,” *The New York Times*, July 14, 2014.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The third *New York Times* article, from July 16th, stated that the “Israeli military said a Palestinian rocket caused the first Israeli fatality in the eight-day confrontation, in which Israeli bombings have killed nearly 200 Palestinians.”¹⁴² This shows a stark contrast in casualties, which is being used to demonstrate the differences between the two sides’ experiences.

The fourth *New York Times* article compares the messages disseminated in each society. It says that the “Gaza-based interior ministry advises its supporters in a YouTube video that whenever talking about the dead, “always add ‘an innocent citizen.’ ”¹⁴³ Then it says that in Israel, “the message is quite different: Those same victims are described as ‘human shields’ sacrificed by the ‘heartless’ Hamas ‘terrorists’ that rule Gaza.”¹⁴⁴ Instead of providing a factual comparison of the varying narratives each society is teaching its citizens, Rudoren refers to Palestinians in Gaza as “victims” when describing the Israeli message. Additionally, in placing these two interconnected messages together, Rudoren is

¹⁴² Jodi Rudoren, “Brief Lull in Gaza Ends as Attacks Are Resumed; Israel and Hamas Trade Airstrikes and Rocket Fire as Egypt Truce Falls Apart,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2014.

¹⁴³ Jodi Rudoren, “In Gaza, Epithets Are Fired and Euphemisms Give Shelter,” *The New York Times*, July 21, 2014.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

attempting to shift the attention to Israel's cruelty in order to minimize Hamas' manipulation of casualty figures.¹⁴⁵

Both *Reuters* and the *Washington Post* each have two articles that juxtapose Israeli reality with Palestinian reality. The first *Reuters* article, published on July 10th, simply shows life as normal in Tel Aviv in order to stress the difference in the effect the war has on civilian lives in Israel compared to Gaza.¹⁴⁶ The second *Reuters* article, from July 13th, shows a direct comparison of life for Palestinians and Israelis. It starts by talking about Israelis at "beach front cafes"¹⁴⁷ in Tel Aviv and that "at a concert by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, an announcement just before the start of the show told people to wait in their seats until the sirens ended."¹⁴⁸ It then says that "Gaza families, on the other hand, are mostly house-bound for fear of the Israeli bombs. They tune in for hours to local TV's pulse-quickenning coverage, blending the gory aftermath of Israeli air strikes with bulletins of triumphs in battle."¹⁴⁹ This contrast is aimed at showing how

¹⁴⁵ For more information see: Alexander A Weinreb and Avi Weinreb, "Has Israel Used Indiscriminate Force?," *Middle East Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (2002), <https://www.meforum.org/175/has-israel-used-indiscriminate-force>; Daniel Pipes, "Lessons of the War in Gaza," *Middle East Forum*, August 9, 2014, <https://www.meforum.org/4777/lessons-war-gaza>.

¹⁴⁶ Ruth Eglash, "In Tel Aviv, Air Raid Sirens and Lattes," *Reuters*, July 10, 2014.

¹⁴⁷ Noah Browning, " Hamas Media Campaign Taunts Israel, Fortifies Battered Gaza Public," *Reuters*, July 13, 2014.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

relatively normal life in Israel is while life in Gaza is significantly affected by the conflict.

The two *Washington Post* articles make peculiar comparisons between rocket fire from Gaza and Israeli airstrikes. The first article, from August 14th, explains that

Palestinian diplomats in Cairo said Hamas and Israel agreed Wednesday to a five-day extension of the Gaza Strip cease-fire to negotiate a more permanent truce, even as a barrage of rockets were lobbed at Israel and a deadly accident at a bomb disposal site killed a foreign journalist and five others in Gaza.¹⁵⁰

This juxtaposition is essentially equating rockets fired at Israel with an accident in Gaza.

The second *Washington Post* article, from August 21st, makes a direct comparison between the rockets fired towards Israel, referring to them as simply “taunts and threats,” and the “escalating rocket fire and airstrikes that left 22 Palestinians dead.”¹⁵¹

The concept of juxtaposition is used to manipulate the narrative and frame the conflict. This theme is quite prevalent throughout all four of the sources, which demonstrates that the media is used as a tool in attempting to control the narratives in the conflict. Specifically, in the articles shown above, it is used to highlight Palestinian suffering and diminish Israeli suffering, as well as obscure both negative information about Hamas and positive information about Israel.

¹⁵⁰ William Booth, “Israel, Hamas to Extend Cease-Fire by Five Days; Simone Camilli, an Italian, Was Filming Efforts to Defuse a Bomb When Explosions Killed Him and Four Others,” *Washington Post*, August 14, 2014.

¹⁵¹ William Booth and Mark Halperin, “Palestinians Say Israeli Airstrike Targeted, Missed Top Hamas Commander in Gaza Strip; The Wife and Child of Top Hamas Commander Mohammed Deif Were Reported Killed by an Israeli Missile,” *Washington Post*, August 21, 2014.

Bias by Headline

Bias through headlines generally refers to when the title of the article is either misleading about, or does not match, the content of the article. This type of bias was especially prevalent in both the *Associated Press* and *The New York Times*. There were four major instances in the *Associated Press* articles and five in *The New York Times*.

The first *Associated Press* article is “Scars Show as Gaza’s Children Endure Third War”¹⁵² from July 15th. It includes information about Israel’s children and how they have been impacted by the war, but that is not reflected in the headline. The second article, entitled “Israelis in Center Adjust to Life Under Rockets,”¹⁵³ is from July 17th. Judging by the title, the article is ostensibly about how Israelis are affected by the conflict. However, it is really just another article expressing that Israelis are considerably better off than the Palestinians. The next article, published July 27th, is entitled “Israel Acknowledges Mortar Shell Hit UN School.”¹⁵⁴ This title is misleading because it suggests that Israel admitted fault in the UN school shelling when the article actually explains that the mortar shell unintentionally hit the empty yard. The fourth *Associated Press* article is from August 9th and has the title “Gaza Talks on Hold, Israeli Delegation

¹⁵² Karin Laub, “Scars Show as Gaza’s Children Endure Third War,” *Associated Press*, July 15, 2014.

¹⁵³ Heller, “Israelis in Center Adjust to Life under Rockets.”

¹⁵⁴ Yousur Alhlou, “Israel Acknowledges Mortar Shell Hit UN School,” *Associated Press*, July 27, 2014.

Stays Home.”¹⁵⁵ The headline seemingly blames the fact that the talks are on hold on the Israeli delegation for not attending. However, the article explains that the talks were actually on hold because Hamas broke the cease-fire.

The first *New York Times* article is “Israel presses air barrage and Hamas strikes back; Homes among targets in Gaza, whose militants try to strike at Tel Aviv,” published on July 9th.¹⁵⁶ The title of this article implies that Israel attacked first, which is false. The next article, “As Israel Hits Mosque and Clinic, Air Campaign’s Risks Come Home,” from July 13th, explains in the article that “Israel bombed a mosque, which its aerial photos indicated was harboring a weapons cache.”¹⁵⁷ The headline ignored the fact that it was targeted for a legitimate military purpose. The third article was published on July 22nd and is entitled “Israel halts 2 infiltrations by Gaza squads; Military claims it killed 10 Palestinian militants who slipped in by tunnel.”¹⁵⁸ The headline uses the term “squads,” but the article specifically refers to them as “terror squads.”¹⁵⁹ The fourth article, “Israel signals it will wind down war on own terms; After weakening Hamas,

¹⁵⁵ Ian Deitch and Karin Laub, “Gaza Talks on Hold, Israeli Delegation Stays Home,” Associated Press, August 9, 2014.

¹⁵⁶ Isabel Kershner, “Israel Presses Air Barrage and Hamas Strikes Back; Homes among Targets in Gaza, Whose Militants Try to Strike at Tel Aviv,” *The New York Times*, July 9, 2014.

¹⁵⁷ Steven Erlanger, “As Israel Hits Mosque and Clinic, Air Campaign’s Risks Come Home,” *The New York Times*, July 13, 2014.

¹⁵⁸ Jodi Rudoren, “Israel Halts 2 Infiltrations by Gaza Squads; Military Claims It Killed 10 Palestinian Militants Who Slipped in by Tunnel,” *The New York Times*, July 22, 2014.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

officials say they are not interested in negotiating,” is from August 5th.¹⁶⁰ The title makes it seem like Israel will end the war when and how is convenient for them, but the article is actually saying that Israel is “moving toward a unilateral conclusion of its military operation that would not provide any decisive ending.” The fifth and final *New York Times* article is from August 20th. Its title, “Israel quits Gaza talks after rockets fired,”¹⁶¹ is misleading. The term “quit” implies culpability. Despite this, the article explains that Israel walked away from the talks because Hamas broke the cease-fire.

Articles that contain bias through headlines have a significant impact on public perception. Since many people only read the headlines of a news item,¹⁶² this is the understanding they gain of that item. If the headline is misleading, then many people will understand that distortion as fact. This is dangerous because it can be used to sway perception and opinion, even if it is an inaccurate misrepresentation of the truth.

Bias by Word Choice

Bias can be shown through the specific words chosen in an article. The bias may not be explicit in the specific words, but in the context or connotation of those words.

Throughout the multitude of articles from the four sources examined in this paper, the

¹⁶⁰ Steven Erlanger, “Israel Signals It Will Wind down War on Own Terms; After Weakening Hamas, Officials Say They Are Not Interested in Negotiating,” *The New York Times*, August 5, 2014.

¹⁶¹ Isabel Kershner, “Israel Quits Gaza Talks after Rockets Fired,” *The New York Times*, August 20, 2014.

¹⁶² “How to Detect Bias in the News — from Media Awareness Network,” Sacramento City College, accessed November 21, 2019, <http://scc.losrios.edu/~thomasb/ESLR 320 B - Bias.pdf>.

types of words chosen fit into three broad categories — general bias; language that differs for each side in the conflict; and descriptive, emotional words.

General Bias

The *Associated Press* and *The New York Times* each have articles in which the author made wording choices that appear to reinforce bias. On July 28th, the *Associated Press* published an article quoting the UN chief. The author intermixed the UN Chief's words with his own, resulting in the article saying that “‘Gaza is in critical condition’ after pummeling by Israeli forces that has killed helpless civilians and raised ‘serious questions about proportionality’.”¹⁶³ The words “helpless civilians” and “pummeling” are not in quotation marks, meaning that the author chose to include those loaded words. The next *Associated Press* article, on August 8th, stated that “Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed a tough reaction if Hamas renews hostilities.”¹⁶⁴ The author then quoted what Netanyahu said in an interview with Germany's ZDF Television: “They might reject an extension. If they attack us, we'll respond in kind, as any government would.”¹⁶⁵ Describing this phrase as a “tough reaction” is an exaggeration that results in portraying Israel as harsh and violent when that was not the intent of the original phrase.

The last *Associated Press* article, from August 25th, states that the “Gaza attacks triggers

¹⁶³ Edith Lederer, “UN Chief Reinforces Call for Gaza Cease-Fire,” *Associated Press*, July 28, 2014.

¹⁶⁴ Hamza Hendawi and Maggie Michael, “ Hamas Rejects Disarmament Proposal,” *Associated Press*, August 7, 2014.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

an Israeli exodus from the border.”¹⁶⁶ The term “exodus” has loaded meaning, especially for the Jews. Using the term to refer to Jews implies an existential threat. This is an important example of the power of word choice. Using one word may mean something different to a community than was intended, but readers could see it and either take offense or infer bias.

The first *New York Times* article, by Steven Erlanger and Isabel Kershner, is from July 10th. It describes two rockets “whizzing” from Gaza.¹⁶⁷ Using this term makes it sound like a game, rather than a dangerous threat. Then articles, from both July 16th and July 22nd, use the term “lopsided.” The July 16th article referred to a “lopsided battle,”¹⁶⁸ while the July 22nd article discussed the “lopsided casualty count.”¹⁶⁹ The term “lopsided” means unevenness. Although it is accurate that the casualty counts are not even, it is a misleading comparison, especially since the figures are disputed. Next, an article published on July 21, stated that “ Hamas may have misled people into a false sense of safety. It proclaimed on radio and television that the Israeli warnings were part

¹⁶⁶ Ian Deitch, “Gaza Attacks Triggers Israeli Exodus from Border,” Associated Press, August 25, 2014.

¹⁶⁷ Kershner, “Air Sirens Puncture Life in Affluent Tel Aviv Suburbs.”

¹⁶⁸ Rudoren, “After Brief Lull in Gaza Crisis, Airstrikes Resume.”

¹⁶⁹ Jodi Rudoren, “Israel Claims Destruction of 2 More Gaza Tunnels,” *The New York Times*, July 22, 2014.

of a psychological operation, and urged people to ignore them.”¹⁷⁰ By adding the qualifier “may have,” the author is avoiding placing blame on Hamas. The last example of a *New York Times* article to show general bias through word choice was published on August 1st. In a discussion of a United Nations meeting, Mr. Poser, the Israeli ambassador was described as having “mocked” UN officials and “chided” the body’s humanitarian relief coordinator, without giving details of what was said.¹⁷¹ Using this language without supportive evidence only serves to delegitimize Mr. Poser, which would, in turn, undermine his work in the UN.

Differing Language

Language that differs depending on the side of the conflict being discussed inherently shows bias. If there is a change in either tone or rhetoric, it means that the words themselves are not neutral and are being used for a specific purpose. Two examples illustrate this concept well, one from the *Washington Post* and one from *The New York Times*. Both the articles differ in the type of language used to describe the rockets from Gaza and the Israeli airstrikes. The *Washington Post* article from July 19th, says that Israel has “relentlessly bombarded Gaza” and Hamas has “succeeded in firing”

¹⁷⁰ Anne Barnard, “Havens Are Few, If Not Far, for Palestinians in Gaza Strip,” *The New York Times*, July 21, 2014.

¹⁷¹ Somini Sengupta, “Tensions Escalate Between Israel and a Second Party in Gaza: The United Nations,” *The New York Times*, August 1, 2014.

rockets.¹⁷² There is serious disparity in the underlying meanings of both these phrases. Claiming that Israel has “relentlessly bombarded Gaza” portrays Israel as the uncompromising, cruel aggressor. Contrarily, the phrase “succeeded in firing” depicts Hamas as untrained and inexperienced.

Along the same discursive lines, *The New York Times* article, written by Isabel Kershner and published on July 10th, reports that the rockets “whizzed” towards Israel while Israel pursued an “intensive air bombardment of Gaza.”¹⁷³ The word “whizzed” is playful, childish, and non-threatening while the phrase “intensive air bombardment” is serious and professional. The contrast influences the reader’s perception, as the word choice helps send the message that the Gazans are both the innocuous victims and targets of a strong military.

Descriptive, Emotional Words

The use of descriptive, imagery-filled language is used in order to provoke an emotional response from the viewer. It has no place in objective journalism. Yet, there are multiple examples of descriptive and emotional wording in both the *Associated Press* and *The New York Times* articles. On July 10th, the *Associated Press* ran an article that discussed a UN meeting at which the Israeli ambassador “suddenly played the piercing

¹⁷² Raghavan, Booth, and Eglash, “Israel Concentrates Incursion along Gaza Borders as Netanyahu Warns of ‘Expansion’; A New Phase of the Military Operation Began Soon after a Five-Hour Humanitarian Truce Ended.”

¹⁷³ Steven Erlanger and Isabel Kershner, “Hamas Extends Rockets’ Range; Dozens of Gaza Strikes by Israel,” *The New York Times*, July 10, 2014.

15-second siren that warns Israelis to run to bomb shelters to escape rocket attacks to highlight the threat his country faces.”¹⁷⁴ The author referred to this as a “moment of drama.” This label did not add anything of value to the commentary. Conversely, it took away from the intended effect — for the public to see an objective view of Israeli reality — by describing the Ambassador’s attempt in a deriding tone.

Additionally, there are two examples from the *Associated Press* and one from *The New York Times* of authors using overly descriptive imagery in order to garner sympathy. In an *Associated Press* article from July 20th, the author gives an insight into a hospital in Gaza. She describes that “amid power cuts and among the screams of the bereaved, doctors at the 600-bed facility have become masters of improvisation, forced by the seemingly unending conflict engulfing the coastal strip to care for the wounded.”¹⁷⁵ She then discusses individual patients, saying that “some of the wounded get treated in a hallway near the emergency room. A medic bandages the foot of an emergency worker writhing in pain on a mattress on the floor. A little boy with shrapnel wounds arrives and the emergency worker slides off the mattress to the hard floor for the child.” In another *Associated Press* article, dated July 24th, the authors describe a UN school: “A UN school in Gaza crowded with hundreds of Palestinians seeking refuge from fierce fighting came under fire Thursday, killing at least 15 civilians and leaving a sad tableau of blood-

¹⁷⁴ Lederer, “UN Chief Urges Israeli-Palestinian Cease-Fire.”

¹⁷⁵ Karin Laub, “Amid Bloodshed, Frenetic Gaza Hospital Improvises,” *Associated Press*, July 20, 2014.

spattered pillows, blankets and children's clothing scattered in the courtyard.”¹⁷⁶ Finally, *The New York Times*, on August 9th, depicts a scene from after an Israeli airstrike: “It killed Ibrahim, leaving a pool of blood from his skull next to a crushed SuperCola can and an abandoned flip-flop. Two other boys were wounded.”¹⁷⁷ The same type of reporting shown in these three articles is not reciprocated in describing Israeli victims of the war. The type of detail, as well as the unnecessarily gruesome imagery, especially when only used to describe victims on one side of the conflict, invariably effects public opinion and, in this case, to the detriment of Israel.

Bias by Omission

Bias by omission is a “type of media bias in which media outlets choose not to cover certain stories or omit information that would support an alternate viewpoint.”¹⁷⁸ It occurs when “important information is not reported or is reported incompletely,”¹⁷⁹ a reporter “ignores facts that tend to disprove a claim or support the other side’s claim,”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Ibrahim Barzak and Ian Deitch, “UN School in Gaza Caught in Cross-Fire; 15 Killed,” Associated Press, July 24, 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Jodi Rudoren and Fares Akram, “A Boy at Play in Gaza, a Renewal of Warfare, a Family in Mourning,” *The New York Times*, August 9, 2014.

¹⁷⁸ Julie Mastrine, “AllSides,” AllSides, accessed November 21, 2019, [https://www.allsides.com/sites/default/files/11 Types of Media Bias-AllSides.pdf](https://www.allsides.com/sites/default/files/11%20Types%20of%20Media%20Bias-AllSides.pdf), 15.

¹⁷⁹ “News Bias Explored: The Art of Reading the News,” University of Michigan, accessed November 21, 2019, <http://umich.edu/~newsbias/manifestations.html>.

¹⁸⁰ Brent Baker, “How to Identify Liberal Media Bias,” Media Research Center, 1994, <http://archive.mrc.org/books/identifybias.asp>.

or when a reporter “chooses certain key facts as a way of emphasizing one point over another.”¹⁸¹ Often the important information that is omitted is the context. Every situation and event has a historical frame of reference that helps explain the various nuances. A lack of context means “withholding a frame of reference for readers.”¹⁸² Without context, the true meaning is skewed and the reader is left without the tools to understand the underlying complexities. The media’s tendency to omit context and to tell stories in “disconnected fragments that fail to show the bigger picture,”¹⁸³ alters perception and “leaves the reader with a distorted view of reality.”¹⁸⁴

Neglecting Specific Details

When an article leaves out specific details, it makes it difficult to understand the full impact of the situation, especially to the untrained observer. *Washington Post*, *Associated Press*, and *The New York Times* all exemplify how this can be problematic. On August 13th, the *Washington Post* published an article that was, at first glance, seemingly neutral and effective. The article is entitled “Tiring of Conflict, More Gazans are Criticizing Hamas” and it explains that some Gazans are starting to be willing to speak up

¹⁸¹ Simmons, 54.

¹⁸² “Evaluating News: Bias News,” University of South Carolina, accessed November 21, 2019, https://uscupstate.libguides.com/news_aware/BiasNews.

¹⁸³ Adam Joseph Schiffer, *Evaluating Media Bias* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 40.

¹⁸⁴ “News Bias Explored: The Art of Reading the News.”

against the group.¹⁸⁵ Then, it discusses how Palestinians often do not admit things about Hamas that Israel claims to be true. What the article left out was that it is likely that they are reluctant to talk out of fear. Hamas is a violent regime. For example, in August 2014, the group publicly executed people suspected of collaborating with Israel.¹⁸⁶ Although this particular instance happened after this article was written, it was hardly the first incident of its kind. The author of this article left out the crucial information, as reported elsewhere, that Gazans are often scared to speak out against Hamas. Without this information, the implication is that Israel's claims regarding Hamas are incorrect.

On July 24th, Anne Barnard of *The New York Times* published an article from within Gaza City detailing the extent to which Hamas uses the local population as human shields. Motivated, perhaps, by the compulsion for balance, Barnard and her co-author Jodi Rudoren note that

Experts in international law say that even as Hamas is legally obligated to minimize its operations near civilians — and is committing a war crime by firing rockets indiscriminately — so, too, is Israel obligated to identify specific military targets and keep the risk to civilians proportionate to the threats the targets pose.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Sudarsan Raghavan, "Tiring of Conflict, More Gazans Are Criticizing Hamas," *The Washington Post*, August 13, 2014.

¹⁸⁶ Nidal al-Mughrabi, "Hamas Kills 18 Suspected Collaborators in Gaza," *Reuters*, August 22, 2014.

¹⁸⁷ Barnard, Anne, and Jodi Rudoren. "Civilians as Human Shields? Gaza War Intensifies Debate." *The New York Times*, July 24, 2014.

Such compulsion for balance obfuscates the fact that under international law, as soon as Hamas fires or stores weapons in a location, or uses it as a command center, it automatically becomes a legitimate military target.¹⁸⁸

On August 5th, the *Associated Press* reported that “inside the mosque, children used a ladder to reach and rip off green flags bearing the declaration of the Muslim faith — There is no god but God and Muhammad is his prophet — that hung from a rope strung across the length of the roof. They used those flags to wrap the seven bodies.”¹⁸⁹ However horrific the incident, the article elides the detail that the “green flags bearing the declaration of the Muslim faith”¹⁹⁰ are most likely Hamas flags.¹⁹¹ Since the flags were hanging in the mosque, it means that either the people support Hamas or the mosque is part of the Hamas network. The information would by no means legitimize the killing of civilians, but it is information that readers of the article do not learn.

¹⁸⁸ United Nations, “Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I),” June 8, 1977, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36b4.html>.; “Statement Attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on Weapons at UNRWA School in Gaza Secretary-General,” United Nations (United Nations, July 23, 2014), <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2014-07-23/statement-attributable-spokesman-secretary-general-weapons-unrwa>.

¹⁸⁹ Hendawi, “In Gaza War, Violent Death Part of Daily Life.”

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ “Initial Analysis of the Identities of Gazans Killed During the ‘Great Return March’ on March 30 and April 6, 2018,” *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, April 11, 2018, https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/app/uploads/2018/04/E_091_18.pdf.

On July 23rd, the *Associated Press* published an article detailing various Hamas propaganda videos. It says that Hamas published these videos in order to try and “intimidate Israelis and show its own population it is striking back against the Israeli pounding of Gaza.”¹⁹² It specifically describes the videos, detailing “armed men in full scuba gear are seen weaving through murky green waters, emerging at the water's surface and opening fire”¹⁹³ and “suspenseful musical scores.”¹⁹⁴ The article misses the crucial information that just weeks prior, on July 10, 2014, Hamas broadcast yet more disturbing videos on Hamas’ Al-Aqsa TV.¹⁹⁵ Here the video, which is in Hebrew in an attempt to intimidate Israelis, encourages Palestinians to “annihilate all the Zionists,” “carry out bombings,” “exterminate the cockroaches’ nest,” and “burn their camps and their soldiers.”¹⁹⁶ The article goes into detail about Hamas’ videos, but neglects the most virulent examples of its propaganda.

¹⁹² Tia Goldenberg, “Israel, Hamas Battle over Public Opinion Online,” *Associated Press*, July 23, 2014.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ “ Hamas TV Song in Hebrew: Annihilate All the Zionists, Exterminate the Coackroaches' Nest,” Al-Aqsa TV, July 10, 2014, <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-tv-song-hebrew-annihilate-all-zionists-exterminate-coackroaches-nest/transcript>.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Disregarding Context

The media has a responsibility to present the whole picture of a situation, which includes at least a basic understanding of the history, law, and narratives at play. When a reporter disregards context, it misleads public understanding of the conflict.¹⁹⁷ This perpetuates narratives and deepens the divide between the actors. Without the proper context, the interpretation and perception can be dramatically distorted.¹⁹⁸ However, if instead the media provides depth and context, it can “respect facts, distinguish between facts and claims, and eschews partisanship.”¹⁹⁹ The articles discussed below are examples of reporting that lack “context, analysis, and objectivity.”²⁰⁰ The result of this type of reporting is misinformation, misunderstanding, and mislead readers.

On July 10th, the *Associated Press* published an article quoting Lt. Col. Peter Lerner, the Israeli Defense Forces spokesman, talking about the precautions Israel takes to protect civilians. He explains that, when targeting a house in Gaza which Hamas is using as a military installation, the IDF takes steps to allow any civilians in the area to evacuate. Before destroying the structure, the army first calls the inhabitants and orders

¹⁹⁷ Ozohu-Suleiman, 86.

¹⁹⁸ Patrick Beeson and Jenn Burleson MacKay, “Photojournalism,” in *Media Bias: Finding It, Fixing It* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc, 2002), 187.

¹⁹⁹ Youngblood, 27.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

them to leave, and then drops a “non-explosive munition”²⁰¹ at the roof as a warning. Just after quoting the Lt. Col, Kazziha and Federman, the authors of the article, write “but he said if a militant is actively using a house to carry out attacks, it becomes a legitimate military target.”²⁰² This sentence leads the readers to think that the IDF does not adhere to the precautionary measures if it is a legitimate military target, which contradicts what the Lt. Col was explaining. Then, the authors quoted the Lt. Col again, “if you use civilian premises to perpetrate attacks, you are putting yourself and the people around you in a state of danger.” Kazziha and Federman took this statement out of context and implanted it into a part of the discussion in which it did not belong in order to discredit the actions Israel takes to protect civilians.

On July 17, *The New York Times* published two front page articles on the conflict in Gaza. The first, an article by Anne Barnard, lead with a full-page photograph of a young boy’s mangled body strewn across the sand of a beach where he, along with three others, had been killed by stray Israeli bombs. The side-column lead was an article by Jodi Rudoren, the *Times* bureau chief in Israel, titled: “Israeli Invasion of Gaza Is Likely, Official Says; Brief Cease-Fire Is Set.” Designed, perhaps to counterbalance the shocking exposé of the beach attack, Rudoren’s article focuses on Israeli attempts to limit civilian casualties. After talking about the leaflets dropped warning civilians to evacuate, the article notes that “it was also clear that any military campaign of this magnitude in such a

²⁰¹ Kazziha and Federman, “Gaza Dead Tops 85 as Israel Presses Its Offensive.”

²⁰² Ibid.

densely populated area would inevitably lead to civilian casualties.”²⁰³ While *Times* readers are well aware that Israel is backed into conducting military campaigns in densely populated areas because that is where Hamas operates, the omission illustrates the degree to which editors of the flagship paper tend to omit detail for the sake of readership at the expense of legitimizing the Israeli war effort. By omitting this vital detail, the article appears to blame Israel for civilian casualties, despite preventive measures, simply due to where the campaigns take place. It may therefore be read of further indication of bias at *The New York Times* against Israeli war efforts in Gaza.

Reuters also discusses Palestinian civilian casualties in an article published on July 16th. The article says that “Gaza health officials say most of the Palestinians killed in the worst flare-up of violence with Israel in two years have been civilians. Gaza's Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights said 259 houses had been demolished by Israeli air strikes and 1,034 damaged, along with 34 mosques and four hospitals,”²⁰⁴ but it does not give any context. It does not remind the audience that the Gaza health officials work for Hamas, which benefits from international outrage over civilian casualties because it hurts Israel’s image. Accordingly, casualty data emanating from Hamas-controlled sources is notoriously unreliable. The article also does not remind readers that the houses, mosques,

²⁰³ Jodi Rudoren, “Israeli Invasion of Gaza Is Likely, Official Says; Brief Cease-Fire Is Set,” *The New York Times*, July 21, 2014.

²⁰⁴ Nidal al-Mughrabi and Allyn Fisher-Ilan, “Shelling Kills Four Boys on Gaza Beach; Israel, Hamas Set Five-Hour Truce,” *Reuters*, July 16, 2014.

and hospitals were targeted in Israeli airstrikes because Hamas used them for military purposes, thereby turning them into legitimate military targets under international law.

Similarly, the *Washington Post* article, published on July 23rd, criticizes Israel for airstrikes on protected places. The article says that “in the past two days, Israeli airstrikes and artillery fire have struck an evacuation shelter, cemeteries, a school, mosques and al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah, where four people were killed. The border crossings to Egypt and Israel are closed to Palestinians.”²⁰⁵ Much like in both the *Associated Press* and *The New York Times* articles, there was no discussion, mention, or clarification of international law or Hamas’ culpability.

Bias by Source

Very often in journalism it is not the actual reporting that is biased, but rather the very sources the article cites. The citations are “very rarely dishonest or inaccurate,”²⁰⁶ but instead are pulled from sources only reflecting one side of the argument. Therefore, in any controversial issue, a good reporter will collect as many of these sources as is necessary to “create a complete picture, balancing the scales, so to speak.”²⁰⁷ The sources

²⁰⁵ William Booth, “Israel Has Told Gazans to Seek Safe Shelter, but Many Say There Is No Such Thing; More than 40 Percent of the Territory Is a Closed Military Zone, and Israeli Strikes Have Hit Schools and Shelters,” *The Washington Post*, July 23, 2014.

²⁰⁶ Groseclose and Milyo, 1206.

²⁰⁷ “News Bias Explored: The Art of Reading the News.”

a journalist uses, excludes, and for which specific citations are omitted can reveal patterns of media bias.²⁰⁸

Sources Used

It is important to examine the sources used in an article in order to be able to critically evaluate the information. Certain sources may be disseminating inaccurate information as a form of propaganda. If the journalist is only presenting this type of information, then the message will be incomplete at best.

An example in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict where it is especially prudent to examine source information is in regards to casualty figures. Palestinian casualties are a “major issue in the propaganda contest between the rivals, and so all numbers should be regarded critically.”²⁰⁹ For the Israelis, a “lower casualty count maintains the moral legitimacy of their operation,”²¹⁰ while for the Palestinians, “high death tolls challenge Israel’s moral authority and draw international criticism.”²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Felix Hamborg, Karsten Donnay, and Bela Gipp, “Automated Identification of Media Bias in News Articles: an Interdisciplinary Literature Review,” *International Journal on Digital Libraries*, November 16, 2018, <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s00799-018-0261-y.pdf>, 400.

²⁰⁹ Shamir and Hecht, 87.

²¹⁰ Ayelet Malinsky, “Death Is in the Eye of the Beholder: A Study of Casualty Count Framing in the 2014 Israel-Gaza Conflict,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 8, no. 3 (2015), 499.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 499.

Hamas has a history of manipulating and exploiting casualty figures as a deliberate strategy of shaping the narrative of the conflict.²¹² One method is to “inflate the number of Palestinian civilian fatalities for its own strategic advantage by hiding the identity of militants.”²¹³ They are able to do this because the militants rarely wear uniforms. Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish them from noncombatants and are “counted by the media and human rights organizations among the civilian casualties.”²¹⁴

Examining the sources includes determining how and where each source compiles or obtains that information. Where the information originates could determine validity, especially since various agencies and organizations that engage in this sort of work may be “pursuing divergent political agendas, which may be reflected in the way data are collected.”²¹⁵ For example, media sources and even the UN often cite the Gaza Health Ministry or Gaza health officials. The Gaza Health Ministry is controlled by Hamas and the Gaza health officials are employed by Hamas.²¹⁶ This makes them less than credible

²¹² “The 2014 Gaza Conflict 7 July - 26 August 2014: Factual and Legal Aspects,” *State of Israel*, May 2015, A-1.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ Bard, 113.

²¹⁵ Malinsky, 499.

²¹⁶ “The 2014 Gaza Conflict 7 July - 26 August 2014: Factual and Legal Aspects,” A-3.

sources, as Hamas has an incentive to skew statistics in order to either tarnish Israel's image or boost their own.²¹⁷

In the media sources examined, all four almost exclusively cited either Palestinian or UN sources for casualty figures. Only *The New York Times* had one citation²¹⁸ from the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, an Israeli research center. The other sources from *The New York Times* included the UN, the Gaza Health Ministry, the Palestinian Ministry of Health, al Mezan Center for Human Rights, and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights. The *Associated Press* cited the UN, UNRWA, UNICEF, the Palestinian Health Office, Gaza Health Officials, Hamas Health Officials, al Mezan Center for Human Rights, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, and B'Tselem. *Reuters'* sources were the Gaza Health Ministry, Health Officials in Gaza, Palestinian medics, Palestinian officials, Gaza officials, hospital officials, and Palestinian health officials. The *Washington Post* only cited the Gaza Health Ministry and the UN as sources. The sources cited overlap in the media sources and there is a lack of diversity from each individual media source. Not only are the sources similar in origin — Gaza or UN sources — but many of the sources were the same, but referred to using different terms, such as “Gaza Health Ministry” and “Health Officials in Gaza.” The news sources as a whole are only showing one version of the story when it comes to casualty data. By

²¹⁷ Bard, 340.

²¹⁸ Jodi Rudoren, “Civilian or Not? New Fight in Tallying the Dead From the Gaza Conflict,” *The New York Times*, August 6, 2014.

only reporting Palestinian and UN sources, and rarely discussing the possibility of bias within them, the media is leading the public to believe that the reported figures are fact.

Sources Excluded

Discerning which sources were excluded from an article can be just as important as examining those included when ascertaining bias. When the media sources almost exclusively cite Palestinian or UN sources, that means that they are specifically not utilizing Israeli information. By not providing any, except for in one case, Israeli figures of the Palestinian casualty count, the sources are not providing any balance. At the very least, they are not acknowledging that there is another perspective, or even that the one being presented in the article may be flawed. This further misleads the reader because not only is the reader unable to compare the information, readers do not even have the information that they should be questioning the figures presented.

Citations Omitted

Journalistic writing standards do not require journalists to list sources, which makes the identification of original sources difficult or even impossible.²¹⁹ Therefore, readers are often unaware of the origins of the information presented, if only one side is being reported, or if there are any possible biases within the information. In addition to articles not providing sources at all, sometimes sources are provided but are either unspecific or even mislabeled. Unspecific sources are those that reference someone

²¹⁹ Hamborg, et. al., 400.

without knowing the proper identity. For example, an article could say ‘critics say’, ‘experts believe’, or ‘most people think’, without providing a real explanation of the root of the information.²²⁰ Subsequently, unspecific and mislabeled sources can either endorse or obscure legitimacy of the cited source.

Using either unspecified or mislabeled sources can endorse legitimacy because it can imply impartiality, knowledge, or education. An example commonly used is that insinuating expertise. Regardless of their credentials, a source can be “simply referred to as 'expert' or 'analyst' or 'political scientist' or any number of titles which give the appearance that they have no financial or political stakes in the issue on which they are commenting.”²²¹ Consequently, there is a tendency to assume that the source is fair and trustworthy.

Unspecified sources were often cited in all four of the media sources. The *Associated Press* used the phrases ‘critics say’, ‘a human rights researcher said’, ‘human rights activists say’, ‘according to witnesses’, and ‘international law experts have said’. *Reuters* added those such as ‘a Hamas source in Doha’, ‘many legal experts say’, and ‘criticized by the United Nations and others’. *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* used many similar ones, but respectively added ‘some experts describe’ and

²²⁰ Baker, “How to Identify Liberal Media Bias.”

²²¹ “News Bias Explored: The Art of Reading the News.”

‘analysts say’. All of these examples ostensibly provide a source for the information, but is actually unverifiable.

Conversely, mislabeled sources can obscure legitimacy. One kind of mislabeling occurs when an article cites a particular argument or fact from one source when it has been widely claimed by others. This allows for doubt about the information. One example is from the *Associated Press* on July 11th, entitled “Over 100 Killed in Gaza as Rockets Fall on Israel.”²²² The article states that “Netanyahu blamed Hamas for causing civilian casualties by hiding in residential areas and criticized the group for targeting Israeli population centers.”²²³ This has been said, and even confirmed, by multiple sources. By saying that specifically Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said this, it leaves room to question the validity of the statement.

Another example of mislabeling occurred in *The New York Times*. On July 17th, the article, “Boys Drawn to Gaza Beach, and Into Center of Mideast Strife,”²²⁴ stated that

Alon Ben-David, a well-sourced Israeli military affairs analyst, said on Israeli television that the first beach blast targeted a structure that Israel believed was used by Hamas. He said the second blast might have been aimed at the running children, perhaps mistaken for militants. He added that given the military’s

²²² Heller, Aron. “Over 100 Killed in Gaza as Rockets Fall on Israel.” *Associated Press*, July 17, 2014.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Anne Barnard, “Boys Drawn to Gaza Beach, and Into Center of Mideast Strife,” *The New York Times*, July 14, 2014.

technologically advanced surveillance equipment, ‘it is a little hard for me to understand this, because the images show that the figures are children.’²²⁵

In reality, Alon Ben-David is an Israeli television and print journalist who specializes in defense and military issues, not a “well-sourced Israeli military affairs analyst,” as claimed in the article.²²⁶ Although the source of this quote was named, his corresponding accreditation was exaggerated. This allowed *The New York Times* to use his “expertise” to convince readers that the Israelis purposefully targeted children.

When the media transmits biased news reports, those reports present viewers with an “inaccurate, unbalanced, and/or unfair view of the world around them.”²²⁷ As a result, the media has the power to either “fuel conflicts or promote reconciliation by employing de-escalation-oriented peace frames.”²²⁸ There is a strong correlation between the ways that the media presents issues and way that the public perceives them.²²⁹ When the media contributes to the persistence of stereotypes and prejudice, it limits the “opportunities for developing and fostering intercultural understanding.”²³⁰ Therefore the media has a

²²⁵ Anne Barnard, “Boys Drawn to Gaza Beach, and Into Center of Mideast Strife.”

²²⁶ “Alon Ben David,” Israeli American Council, November 4, 2019, <https://www.israeliamerican.org/iac-national-summit/team-member/alon-ben-david>.

²²⁷ “Evaluating News: Bias News.”

²²⁸ Feuerstein and Mandelzis, 1.

²²⁹ M. Mark Miller, “Frame Mapping and Analysis of News Coverage of Contentious Issues,” *Social Science Computer Review* 15, no. 4 (1997), 367.

²³⁰ Feuerstein and Mandelzis, 8.

“major ethical responsibility while covering conflicts, as language in the media has the power to nourish either violence or peace.”²³¹ It is vital to use balanced sources, provide sources from both sides of an issue, and to accurately cite those sources. Failure to do so leaves room for bias, misinterpretation, and misinformation that could inaccurately affect the narratives and discourses surrounding the conflict.

²³¹ Aseel Baidoun, “The Gaza Conflict 2013 and Ideologies of Israeli and Palestinian Media: A Critical Discourse of Analysis” (MA Thesis, 2014), 25.

CHAPTER SIX: PHOTOJOURNALISM SOURCE ANALYSIS

Bias can be revealed in photojournalism by comparing the type and quantity of photos for each side. The quantity of pictures for each side shows which side is gaining more attention. This attention can be either positive or negative. This is determined by the central focus of the photos for each side. If there are a majority of positive pictures, then the world is being shown that side in a positive manner. The inverse is true for the negative photos as well. Moreover, the side that garners the most positive attention controls and shifts the narrative in their favor. In the photos examined through the course of this paper, a majority of photos focus on the Palestinian narrative. These photos support the victimization narrative. Conversely, the photos of the Israelis and the Israeli side of the conflict mostly depict Israel as the violent aggressor.

This paper examines the photos taken by the *Associated Press*, *The New York Times*, *Reuters*, and the *Washington Post* during each of the three Gaza Conflicts — 2008 to 2009, 2012, and 2014. The number of pictures from each source is shown in Figure 2.

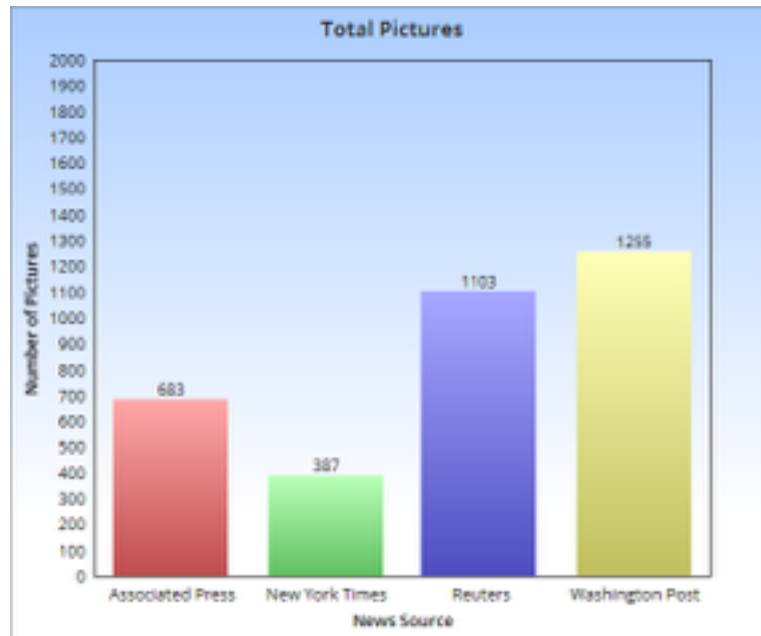


Figure 2

For the *Associated Press*, 683 photos were examined total — 229 between December 27, 2008 and January 18, 2009, 144 between November 14th and 21st 2012, and 310 between July 8, 2014 and August 27, 2014. The *Associated Press* photos were from their “APTOPIX MidEast Israeli Palestinians” photoset.²³²

In *The New York Times*, 387 photos were examined total — 125 between December 27, 2008 and January 18, 2009, 63 between November 14th and 21st 2012, and 199 between July 9, 2014 and August 27, 2014. The 2008-2009 photos were from the

²³² “Israel,” AP Images, accessed December 1, 2019, <http://www.apimages.com/Search?query=Israel&ss=10&st=kw&entitysearch=& toItem=15&orderBy=Newest&searchMediaType=allmedia>.

World Section's Image Slide Show.²³³ Both the 2012 and 2014 photos were from the "Lens: Photography, Video, and Visual Journalism"²³⁴ section's "Picture of the Day: Gaza and Elsewhere,"²³⁵ as well as individual photo slide shows that were directly related to the Gaza Conflict.

1,103 *Reuters* photos, from the "Top Photos"²³⁶ were examined total — 371 between December 27, 2008 and January 18, 2009, 172 between November 14th and 21st 2012, and 560 between July 8, 2014 and August 27, 2014.

Finally, for the *Washington Post*, 1,255 photos were examined total — 243 between November 14th and 21st 2012, and 1,012 between July 8, 2014 and August 27, 2014. The *Washington Post* did not have any photosets for the 2008-2009 conflict. The 2012 and 2014 photos were from various *Washington Post* photo galleries, including "Day in Photos," "Photos of the Day," "Images From the Around the World," and those specifically pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.²³⁷

²³³ "World" (The New York Times), accessed November 28, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/section/world/middleeast>.

²³⁴ "Lens: Photography, Video, and Visual Journalism" (The New York Times), accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/section/lens>.

²³⁵ "Picture of the Day: Gaza and Elsewhere," New York Times, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/pictures-of-the-day-gaza-and-elsewhere/>.

²³⁶ "Top Photos," Reuters, accessed November 29, 2019, <https://pictures.reuters.com/CS.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&VBID=2C0BXZSGTP0E1X&SMLS=1&RW=1046&RH=683#/SearchResult&VBID=2C0BXZSGTP0XSQ&SMLS=1&RW=1046&RH=683>).

²³⁷ "Photo Galleries," The Washington Post (WP Company), accessed November 30, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/twpgalleries/>.

The first part of the evaluation process was to identify if the focus of the photo was of a human being or of buildings, weapons, landscapes, or other inanimate objects. The main focus in 66.13 percent of pictures is of one or more human beings. Overall, from the three conflicts, the *Reuters* pictures have the largest prevalence of people, at 91.20 percent. The smallest is the *Washington Post* with only 41.11 percent. There was also a difference as to the years that had pictures with a larger focus on human beings. For both the *Associated Press* and *The New York Times*, the 2008-2009 conflict had the largest percentages of photos with human beings — 79.03 percent and 78.40 percent respectively. Both *Reuters* and the *Washington Post* had the largest percentages from 2012 — 90.69 percent and 46.09 percent. This is curious, since 2012 both the shortest conflict and the only one that did not include elements of a ground operation in the Gaza Strip.

Of the total pictures with human beings, 70.22 percent have the focus on Palestinians. Even though the *Washington Post* had the smallest percentage of people, it has the largest focus on Palestinians, with 73.64 percent of their photos. The smallest percentage was *The New York Times*, but that still was 65.09 percent of their pictures.

Despite none of the sources having the highest percentages of photos with people in 2014, three out of the four — *Associated Press* (77.77 percent), *Washington Post* (76.48 percent), and *Reuters* (68.47 percent) — had the highest percentage of photos with Palestinians in 2014. *The New York Times*' highest percentage of Palestinians, 70.40 percent, was during the 2008-2009 conflict.

The percentages of Palestinians in pictures is quite high so, accordingly, only 29.78 percent of the photos with people included Israelis. Of these, 67.70 percent are of Israeli soldiers, meaning that the Israeli civilian population is very seldom shown. The source showing the highest percent of Israeli soldiers compared to Israeli civilians is in the *Associated Press*, at 84.21 percent.

Of the photos with Israeli soldiers, 66.80 percent are of soldiers involved in the Gaza Conflicts, rather than, for example, in protests in the West Bank. This percentage is highest in 2014, with 91.23 percent of Israeli soldiers shown involved in Gaza.

Of all the photos with Palestinians, 58.84 percent were of Palestinians in Gaza. The highest percentage of this was also the *Washington Post*, at 67.44 percent. The smallest, with 50.09 percent, was *Reuters*. The same three sources that had the highest percentage of photos with Palestinians in 2014, *Associated Press*, *Washington Post*, and *Reuters*, also had the highest percentages of Palestinians in Gaza in 2014, with 74.60 percent, 70.79 percent, and 64.30 percent, respectively. *The New York Times* also still had its largest, 65.30 percent, in the 2008-2009 conflict.

How the Palestinians are being depicted in the pictures is quite telling. Of the total pictures of Palestinians in Gaza, 15.36 percent depict wounded people, 12.74 percent show deceased people, and 17.09 percent show people crying. Although these do not seem like high percentages, when they are looked as a group of pictures, it shows that 45.20 percent of photos of Palestinians in Gaza are graphic, depict victimization, and invoke emotion.

The different sources have different emphases on each part of these types of photos — wounded, deceased, or crying. For pictures showing wounded Palestinians, the *Washington Post* has the overall highest percentage, 18.67 percent, while *The New York Times* has the overall lowest, 10.85 percent. As for the pictures of deceased Palestinians, *The New York Times* was the highest, with 24.80 percent, and *Reuters* having the lowest, 7.73 percent. *Reuters* then had the highest percentage of pictures of Palestinians crying, 20.83 percent, and the *Associated Press* had the lowest, 13.88 percent. When all three categories are combined, *The New York Times*, at 51.93 percent, shows the highest percentage of pictures that focus on either wounded, deceased, or crying Palestinian people. Conversely, the *Washington Post* shows the lowest, at 42.64 percent. It is intriguing that the sources showing the highest percentage of pictures of Palestinian suffering is not consistent.

Another component of victimization photos are those that illustrate children's suffering. Of the number of pictures that show wounded Palestinians in Gaza, 48.78 percent are children. The *Washington Post* has the highest percentage with 63.07 percent. *The New York Times* is the lowest, with only 28.57 percent. The 2014 conflict had the highest average percentage, with 55.47 percent of the photos of wounded Palestinians showing wounded children. Of the pictures that show deceased Palestinians, 39.41 percent are of children, with the highest being from the *Washington Post*, 55.55 percent, and the lowest from the *Associated Press*, 30.55 percent. Out of the three subcategories — wounded, deceased, and crying — there were the smallest percentages of crying

children in relation to the overall number of crying Palestinians in Gaza: 17.10 percent. The highest percentage in this case was from *Reuters*, 22.85 percent, and the lowest from the *Associated Press*, 10.20 percent.

The level of destruction can also be an indicator of suffering. Figure 3 shows the number of pictures related to physical damage examined.

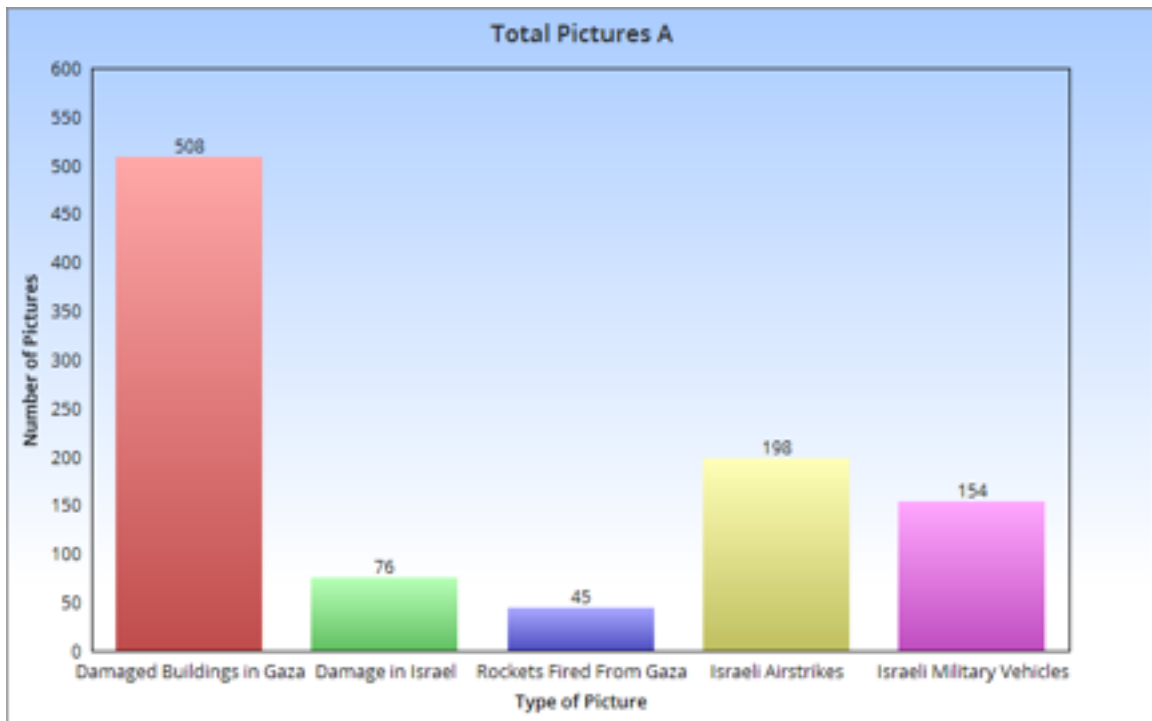


Figure 3

Out of 3,428 total photos, 508 were focused on damage to buildings in Gaza. More specifically, 14.81 percent of all the photos were published with the sole purpose of

showing debris, rubble, and destroyed buildings. To put this in perspective, there were more photos of destroyed buildings in Gaza than of damage in Israel from Palestinian rocket attacks (76 pictures), rockets fired from Gaza to Israel (45 pictures), wounded Israeli civilians (six pictures), wounded Israeli soldiers (five pictures), and Israelis taking shelter from incoming rockets (99 pictures) combined. Figure 4 shows the number of pictures of some of the categories related to people impacted by the conflict.

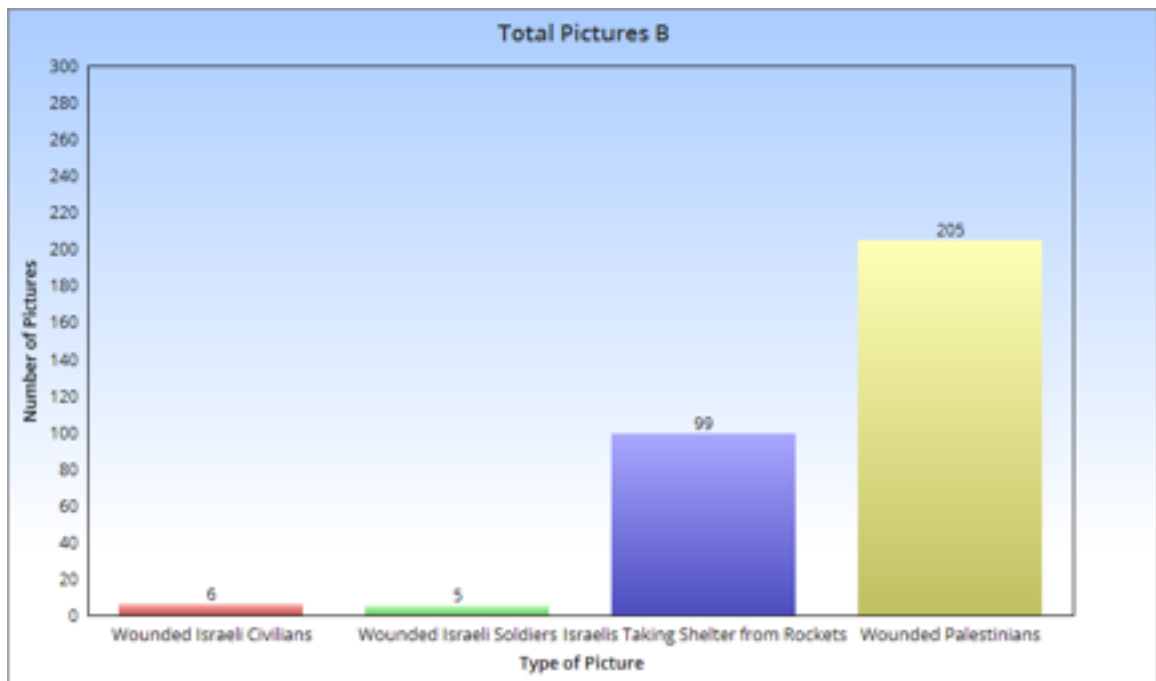


Figure 4

To compare the number of photos depicting Palestinian suffering to that of the Israelis, it is prudent to point out that there were six photos out of 3,428 that showed wounded Israeli civilians, compared to 205 pictures showing wounded Palestinians. Additionally, there were five photos that showed wounded Israeli soldiers. This means that out of 3,428 pictures, only eleven show wounded Israelis in any capacity. According to the Israeli Ministry of Health, “more than a thousand Israeli civilians sought hospital treatment for physical injuries during the 2014 Gaza Conflict.”²³⁸ Since there were more Palestinian casualties, it is legitimate that the picture count reflects this. However, there were more than 1,000 wounded Israelis and to show only 11, five of whom were soldiers, is gravely misbalanced.

Another indication of Israeli suffering is Israelis having to run to bomb shelters or take cover from Palestinian rockets. Although sirens, signaling an incoming rocket, consistently sounded throughout the 2014 conflict, for example, only 43 photos show this reality.

In addition to the differences in both the number of photos of each side in general and the number of photos showing suffering, there are disparities in showing the aggression of each side. According to the Israel Defense Forces, approximately 4,500 rockets were fired at Israel from Gaza over the course of the 2014 Gaza Conflict.²³⁹ Despite this, there were only 22 photos of the trails from the rockets in the skies from the

²³⁸ “The 2014 Gaza Conflict 7 July - 26 August 2014: Factual and Legal Aspects,” 113.

²³⁹ “July/August 2014: Operation Protective Edge,” Israel Defense Forces.

2014 conflict. There was not a single photo of a rocket in the process of being fired from Gaza. Conversely, images of Israeli aggression were highlighted. 5.77 percent of all photos (198 pictures) were just of Israeli airstrikes, not subsequent destruction, in Gaza. Another 4.78 percent (164 pictures) was dedicated to Israeli military vehicles, including helicopters, tanks, armored personnel carriers, and mobile artillery units.

In the introduction, this paper discussed the disproportionate international attention placed on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. The photo sets from both *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* during the 2012 and 2014 Gaza Conflicts exemplify this point. Both sources have photosets that included pictures from around the world. The sets are entitled “Day in Photos,” “Photos of the Day,” “Picture of the Day: Gaza and Elsewhere,” or “Images Around the World.” 891 photos total were examined. This includes 242 in *The New York Times*, broken down into 63 from 2012 and 179 from 2014, as well as 698 in the *Washington Post*, 130 from 2012 and 568 from 2014. 28.39 percent of all the photos are from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The rest of the photos are from the rest of the world combined. A very small section of land in the world takes up 253 of 891 pictures, while all of the other countries have to share the attention of 638 pictures.

Through this careful examination, the research shows that a majority of the photos were focused on Palestinians, rather than Israelis. Within this, the Palestinian photos were mostly showing either damage from Israeli airstrikes or the victimization of the Palestinians. Conversely, the photos of Israelis were focused on Israeli soldiers and military operations. This delineates the narrative in the conflict and implicitly tells the

public that the Israeli military is victimizing Palestinian civilians. The media is supporting the narrative that the Palestinians are weaker and are suffering at the hands of the evil Israelis. When the media offers this support, especially through the use of emotion invoking, graphic images, it further perpetuates the hatred and delegitimization of Israel and, therefore, the conflict as well.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is quite personal and emotional for many people. Each person is sure that their version of the story is morally correct. In defending a cause they “view as singularly righteous and just, each side has inflicted pain and misery on the other.”²⁴⁰ Moreover, the “overwhelming majority of people on both sides have come to view the other as ‘the enemy’, dehumanized and devoid of rights or legitimacy.”²⁴¹ Imagining one party to be uniformly evil and the other as helpless victims is simplistic and unhelpful. Both Israelis and Palestinians have experienced pain and neither side is blameless in the conflict. There needs to be an attempt to move on from the pain of the past and optimistically look towards the future.

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is characterized by an “ever-present state of low-level conflict punctuated by the regular eruption of war.”²⁴² The ongoing conflict is with organizations that “cling to a radical Islamist ideology denying Israel’s right to exist.”²⁴³ Hamas, Israel’s main adversary in the Gaza Strip, shows its true motives and intentions in their Charter, as described in chapter two. These are major facts that impact the conflict,

²⁴⁰ Mehran Kamrava, "The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict," in *The Modern Middle East: A Political History since the First World War*, 3rd ed. (University of California Press, 2013), 299.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 299.

²⁴² Oren Livio and Shani Cohen-Yechezkely, “Copy, Edit, Paste: Comparing News Coverage of War with Official Military Accounts,” *Journalism Studies* 20, no. 5 (2019), 697.

²⁴³ Inbar and Shamir, 69.

but neither is shown in the media coverage. The omission of crucial context, such as these two pieces of information, provides an incomplete account of the conflict. When the incomplete media accounts of the conflict are the only exposure people have, the result is a misinformed public. The stories told in the media quickly become assumed as fact, which preserves the Palestinian narrative of being victimized by the Israelis.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is “fueled largely by different understandings of history.”²⁴⁴ The legacy of war and terrorism has “engraved both sides with a sense of mutual fear and contempt”²⁴⁵ of the other. Consequently, there is a fundamental distrust of both sides. These differing narratives, meaning each one’s perception of the other, is “perhaps currently the biggest obstacle to peace.”²⁴⁶

The psychological barriers of distrust and fear make it difficult for either side to be willing and able to take the steps necessary for peace.²⁴⁷ In order for there to be peace, there needs to a shift in the discourse surrounding the conflict towards one of tolerance and coexistence, rather than hatred and invalidation. The media has the opportunity to help shift the narrative. The media could contribute to “reinforcing conflict-supporting

²⁴⁴ Paul Scham, “Competing Israeli and Palestinian Narratives,” in *The Routledge Handbook on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ed. Joel Peters and David Newman (Routledge, 2012), 35.

²⁴⁵ Steele, 2.

²⁴⁶ Scham, 43.

²⁴⁷ Galia Golan, “Peace Plans, 1993-2010,” in *The Routledge Handbook on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ed. Joel Peters and David Newman (Routledge, 2012), 105.

beliefs and the de-legitimization of the ‘other’.”²⁴⁸ Alternatively, it could contribute to “conflict resolution and reconciliatory efforts, by opening opportunities for dialogue, empathy and support for peaceful solutions.”²⁴⁹

To achieve this, the media needs to shift to a peace journalism frame from the current war journalism frame. A peace journalism frame would be one that “highlights peace initiatives and tones down differences by promoting conflict resolution”²⁵⁰ and encourages a “focus on proactive coverage and nonviolent compromises.”²⁵¹ The goal is to promote the idea of peace and to “provide a more balanced coverage concerning all conflict parties involved while shying away from one-dimensional war reporting.”²⁵²

Peace is a process. It is hard work that requires both sides to change their perception of the other. The biased coverage of Israel distorts the public’s understanding of Israel and its motives, creating an obstacle to a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Peace will not be successful with the continued dehumanization and

²⁴⁸ Keren Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Thomas Hanitzsch, and Rotem Nagar, “Beyond Peace Journalism: Reclassifying Conflict Narratives in the Israeli News Media,” *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 2 (2016), 152.

²⁴⁹ Tenenboim-Weinblatt, et. al., 152.

²⁵⁰ Shahira Fahmy and Rico Neumann, “Shooting War of Peace Photographs? An Examination of Newswires’ Coverage of the Conflict in Gaza (2008-2009),” *American Behavioral Scientist* 56, no. 2 (2012), 1.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 5.

delegitimization of the other side. The media has the power to help shift the narrative, to provide a balanced, truthful account and to show the humanity of the other.

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