

Ethnocentrism in Conflict News Coverage: A Multimodal Framing Analysis of the 2018 Gaza Protests in *The Times of Israel* and *Al Jazeera*

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This study is based on a multimodal content analysis of the news coverage of the 2018 Palestinian protests at Gaza's borders with Israel. In particular, two regionally based transnational English language news websites were studied, *The Times of Israel* (TOI) and *Al Jazeera* (AJE), to examine whether ethnocentrism affects their coverage, and if so, how. A multimodal analysis was undertaken, with emphasis on news headlines and press photos as textual and visual framing devices. Results clearly demonstrated that the two transnational news media were indeed ethnocentric in their news coverage: one framed protesters as violent and responsible for casualties and attempts to dehumanize them; the other framed protesters as peaceful and Israeli soldiers as responsible for casualties, and tended to humanize protesters more in its textual and visual framing.

Keywords: ethnocentrism, Israeli–Palestinian conflict, news framing, content analysis, multimodal framing, news headlines, press photos, visual framing

News reports play an important role in society in that they tell their audiences what is occurring in an easily digestible, coherent, and meaningful way, opening up the possibility of differing perspectives and interpretations in so doing. Analyzing the publication process of news articles reveals that news articles highlight some information in a particular way while excluding other facts to present a coherent interpretation of what actually transpired. This process is generally referred to as “news framing” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Such news framing determines what and how (much) the audience can see (Pantti, 2013) and affects any overall understanding of the event (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011).

In news articles, this is typically achieved by the manipulation of two variables: text and image. In a text, specific statements, terminology used, information selected, and any interpretation of events, are all presented in a specific shape and order to suggest a particular view to the reader. Simultaneously, press photos accompanying a news article are also curated to support a particular interpretation of an event

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discussed. Textual framing has been widely researched (Fahmy & Alkazemi, 2017; Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). It is only in recent years, though, that the study of visual framing has been taken up (Dobernig & Lobinger, 2010; Fahmy, 2010; Fahmy & Kim, 2008; Greenwood & Jenkins, 2015; Johnson & Fahmy, 2010; Jungblut & Zakareviciute, 2019; Pantti, 2013; Parry, 2010). However, as Lecheler, Matthes, and Boomgaarden (2019) argue, there continues to be a need for more research on visual framing as it “has yet not received the place it deserves” (p. 699), especially given the visual turn day-to-day communication has taken over the past 20 years or so. Even if such research has been carried out, it has so far mostly focused either on news texts or on press photos (Damanhoury & Saleh, 2017; Fahmy, 2007, 2010; Ismail, 2008; Parry, 2010). Such unimodal approaches neglect the connections between the image and the text in framing the news (Powell, Boomgaarden, Swert, & Vreese, 2018), as both are equally important elements of news reporting and influence each other.

Studies in recent years have slowly begun using a multimodal framing approach when analyzing news events. Some scholars used multimodality when studying news coverage of the climate change (Wozniak, Lück, & Wessler, 2015), others analyzed news coverage of the refugee crisis in Europe (Powell et al., 2018), and only a few studies used the approach in the context of political conflict (Dobernig & Lobinger, 2010; Jungblut & Zakareviciute, 2019). Nonetheless, the multimodality approach in communication and media studies are still underused.

The rationale for the study at hand is to fill this gap in the study of news framing by examining how multimodal news analysis can allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how news framings are carried out—in our case, those of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. It examines the coverage of regionally based transnational news media of conflicts and asks whether and how ethnocentrism may be one of the variables affecting their coverage. In particular, the study analyzes differences in news framing in two news media and how their visual framing aligns with the textual one to arrive at opposing narratives.

Framing Conflicts and Ethnocentrism

Especially during conflicts and wars, the role of media becomes important in that they are tasked with providing the public with reliable, accurate, and nonpartisan news of, literally, life and death situations. Unfortunately, such aspirations of non-biased reporting often go unredeemed. Studies have shown that news media reporting on wars and political conflicts are not as objective as desired, and that ethnocentrism oftentimes negatively affects the objectivity of news coverage (Baden & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2017) when based on “a country’s geographical, political, or cultural affinity to the news outlet’s home country” (Karniel, Lavie-Dinur, & Samuel-Azran, 2017, p. 35).

News media and journalists in wars and conflicts incline to engage more in ethnocentric news coverage (Gilmore, Sheets, & Rowling, 2016), as many tend to agree with a general public national sentiment and show support of government policies (Fahmy, 2007), “reflect[ing] both a sense of patriotism and feelings of belligerence towards a country’s enemies” (Wolfsfeld, Frosh, & Awabdy, 2008, p. 402). This ethnocentric news coverage, as identified by Wolfsfeld and colleagues (2008) as “the tendency to view the world and other populations through the perspective of one’s own ethnic group” (p. 402) can be manifested by the way groups are portrayed and presented. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) describes

how intergroup behavior is based on actions of in-groups being justified while the actions of out-groups are delegitimized. For news reporting, that appears when coverage “ascribe[s] more positive traits to the in-group than to the out-group” (Reuben, 2009, p. 65). Media play an amplifying role in justifying the actions of their own country while criminalizing the actions of others and demonizing and/or dehumanizing them (cf. Marvin & Fishman, 2003, on reporting on U.S. vs. non-U.S. violence; Rivenburgh, 2000, on biased representations of one’s home country). Thus, researchers readily agree that ethnocentrism in reporting is a negative yet, unfortunately, enduring characteristic of the news value (Gans, 2004; Rivenburgh, 2000).

Media news coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has been a subject of study for numerous scholars, and the issue of media objectivity in this conflict has been researched extensively. A large body of literature discusses many such cases of ethnocentric and biased media coverage (Al-Najjar, 2011; Ismail, 2008; Kalb & Saivetz, 2007; Karniel et al., 2017; Peterson, 2014; Philo & Berry, 2004; Viser, 2003; Zelizer, Park, & Gudelunas, 2002). Studies on U.S. media news coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict often reveal a pro-Israel news framing justifying Israeli actions and providing less space to a Palestinian perspective (Elmasry, 2009). Similarly, studies on Israeli media outlets demonstrate bias against Palestinian positions, portraying them as a threat to security, as terrorists, blaming them for the collapse of the peace process and generally dehumanizing them (Handley & Ismail, 2010). On the other hand, studies on Arab media coverage of the conflict—including that from *Al Jazeera* media network—indicate many cases of bias against Israel and a strong display of pro-Palestinians views, with the Palestinian perspectives usually prioritized over Israeli ones and Palestinians presented as victims of Israeli aggression (Elmasry, El Shamy, Manning, Mills, & Auter, 2013).

Oftentimes, local and national news outlets are viewed as being prone to ethnocentric crisis reporting; one might expect a more balanced and less biased coverage from transnational ones, as they are typically targeting wider and more diverse audiences beyond national domains, a coverage that would challenge one-sided local perspectives (Baden & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2017). The study at hand examines the news coverage of two regionally based transnational news outlets (*The Times of Israel*, hereafter: TOI and *Al Jazeera English*, hereafter: AJE) in the context of a regional conflict (the events of Gaza protests in 2018). Billing themselves as transnational news outlets, one might reasonably expect them to be less ethnocentric in their coverage than local ones. However, an initial cursory reading of their narratives suggested that they do not escape ethnocentrism, either, albeit framing it within a wider set of references. We therefore predicted that a closer analysis would confirm these initial results, leading to a pro-Israel stance from the Israel-based transnational medium and a pro-Palestine one from the Arab transnational news outlet. Their interpretation of the protests can be broadly summarized under three specific categories—the representation and contextualization of violence, the assigning of responsibility for this violence, and the (de)humanization of the various actors involved. Based on these initial assumptions, we put forward the following hypotheses, which will then be tested:

H1: TOI is more likely to present Palestinian protesters as violent group, whereas AJE is more likely to present protesters as peaceful demonstrators.

H2: TOI is more likely to portray Palestinian protesters as responsible for casualties, whereas AJE is more likely to portray Israeli armed forces as responsible for casualties.

H3: TOI is more likely to attempt to dehumanize protesters, whereas AJE is more likely to attempt to humanize them.

The Case Study

The 2018 Gaza protests, or the so-called *Great March of Return* (hereafter: GMR), were mass demonstrations and activities held along the border fence between Israel and Gaza, organized by Palestinian activists and civil society organizations and backed by most of the Palestinian factions ("Q&A," 2019). They had begun on March 30, 2018, as a six-week sit-in campaign and were planned to last until May 15, 2018, but continued long after that date. The protests demanded the return of the Palestinian refugees to the land from which they had been expelled and displaced by Israel in 1948 and the end of a decade-long Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip ("Six Months On," n.d.). The protests were described as the "largest civil protest" ever in the region (Abukhater, 2019, p. 89), as tens of thousands of Palestinians regularly participated in them, especially on Fridays. According to the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on Gaza protests, between March 30 and December 31, 2018, 189 Palestinians were killed and more than 6,000 injured, while no Israelis lost their lives ("Q&A," 2019).

The sampling period of the selected news coverage of GMR was from March 30, 2018 (the day the protests officially started), to May 30, 2018. This period includes the events of May 15, 2018, that marked the *Al-Nakba* anniversary (a memorial day held annually by Palestinians commemorating the displacement that preceded the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948), when the protests reached their peak with the death of more than 68 Palestinians on that day. The two-month period chosen offered abundant and representative material for the study.

Methodology

The methodology applied in this study is comparative content analysis paired with quantitative (for the images) and qualitative approaches (for the textual parts) and semiotic analysis (for both of them together). News headlines were chosen as a unit of analysis for the textual analysis and press photos were selected as a unit of analysis for the visual one.

To ensure that the intended reach of the news outlets would be supralocal, two English language online news websites were chosen, TOI and AJE, providing easy global access to their news stories under investigation. TOI is an English news website that was launched in 2012. Cofounded by David Horovitz, journalist and editor, and Seth Klarman, an American billionaire investor, who is the chairman of the organization behind the website. TOI presents itself as an independent news website that covers Israel and the Middle East, with no partisan political affiliation ("About *The Times*," n.d.). However, the website evidences a supportive stance of Israeli government policies. Klarman states, "We are interested in fighting delegitimization of Israel, fighting media bias around Israel" (Nathan-Kazis, 2012, para. 29). Klarman is also known to have donated to CAMERA, a Washington-based media watchdog generally associated with the political right, often scrutinizing news outlets that criticize Israel (Blau, 2016). Horovitz, TOI's founding editor, has been outspoken about the struggle to defend the legitimacy of Israel in the media (Horovitz, n.d.).

AJE is an English news website that is owned by Al Jazeera Media Network. It started its original broadcasting with an Arabic language news channel in 1996 and was relaunched in 2006 with a new English-language TV channel. AJE is considered by many a main alternative to other international media that seem more western-centric (Sabbagh, 2012). AJE claims to be "an independent news organization," but is partly funded by the Qatari government ("About Us," n.d., para. 1); its chairman, Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani, is a member of the ruling family of Qatar. AJE is well known for its extensive news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and very often accused of being anti-Israel (Azran, Lavie-Dinur, & Karniel, 2012). AJE merely states that it presents the news from an Arab perspective to counter pro-Western and anti-Arab news media (Johnson & Fahmy, 2010).

The news articles for our study were sourced and collected from the two news outlets' websites. A site search on Google's search engine was used to collect data with "Gaza" as a search word (site: www.timesofisrael.com; "Gaza"; site: www.aljazeera.com; "Gaza"), and the date range was tailored to the studied time period (3/30/2018–5/30/2018). A first search elicited 486 news articles, with TOI accounting for 302 articles, and AJE for 184 articles. However, not all the articles found through this initial search were relevant, as there were many articles that contained the term "Gaza" but were not pertinent for the events of GMR (e.g., "Egypt Opens Gaza Border," "Protest in Solidarity with Gaza"). The next round manually eliminated unrelated news articles and resulted in a data set of 199 articles: 142 for TOI and 57 for AJE. Finally, headlines were extracted from these articles, along with all the press photos accompanying them. Press photos were checked by the researchers once again to make sure that pertained to the events of GMR. Any unrelated photos were deselected, including screenshots extracted from videos. Photos used repeatedly within the same website were selected only once. In the end, the total number of photos selected amounted to 344, 246 from TOI, and 98 from AJE.

It was found that TOI gave more coverage to the Gaza protests, with more news articles and, consequently, more headlines and press photos than AJE. However, this matter of a quantitative imbalance is only of secondary concern here as the focus is on analyzing representative samples of the news articles and study their news framing textually and visually and both samples were judged large enough to fulfil this purpose.

To check the validity of the hypotheses and answer the main question of this study (i.e., are TOI and AJE ethnocentric in their reporting on the Gaza Protests, and, if yes, how so?), the researchers conducted a textual and visual framing analysis of the two websites, employing the following methodologies:

Method 1

Potential textual framing was examined mostly through qualitative analysis, by using the headlines (main and subheadings) of the selected news articles as the main unit of analysis. Particular focus was put on the selective use of words, the frequency of their occurrence, and the context of their use by the two news media to pinpoint the overall dominant framing narrative of each website. The textual comparative approach adopted had already successfully been applied in a study by Entman (1991), who states that "comparing media narratives of events that could have been reported . . . helps to reveal the critical textual choices that framed the story but would otherwise remain submerged in an undifferentiated text" (p. 6).

Headlines of the articles were selected for their importance as a framing tool, since they usually summarize, contextualize, and represent the ensuing text. As Pan and Kosicki (1993) explain, the headline is “the most salient cue to activate certain semantically related concepts in readers minds; it is thus the most powerful framing device of the syntactical structure” (p. 59). Similarly, other studies have demonstrated that headlines prominently influence how readers form their perceptions about events and understanding of news apart from the full news article (Ecker, Lewandowsky, Chang, & Pillai, 2014). Hence, media scholars have been examining news headlines in framing studies for quite some time (Bleich, Nisar, & Abdelhamid, 2016; Metila, 2013; Trimble & Sampert, 2004). In the headline analysis of our study, the use of specific words and terms and the number of their occurrences is discussed and compared in relation to the given hypotheses.

Method 2

Potential visual framing was examined through a mixture of semiotic and quantitative analyses. In a first step, a coding system was established that used a semiotics-based close reading of the literal signifier of the photos and its denotative meaning, and of the symbolic or connotative meaning of the photos (Burgin, 1982), as “both, denoted and connoted meanings, are important in the study of visual framing” (Huang & Fahmy, 2011, p. 735).

Once these meanings had been agreed on by the coders, a quantitative content analysis was conducted through a process described and used in previous visual framing studies (Bowe, Gosen, & Fahmy, 2019; Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011), where the emphasis is put on denotative meanings (who or what is being depicted). After several rounds of interpretation and discussion among the coders to identify the dominant patterns that characterize the image dataset and taking into consideration the hypotheses that needed to be addressed, several variables were agreed on to code the photos. These were (1) the portrayal of protesters, to see how they were shown, as violent or as peaceful; (2) the portrayal of casualties among protesters; (3) the presence of the Israeli Army; (4) the presence of politicians, in relation to framing responsibility; and (5) the photo angle from which protesters were shown, as it has implications for the portrayal of the protesters in either a humanizing or dehumanizing context. The results were then interpreted qualitatively through a semiotic analysis by considering the connotative meanings of the images (what they represent) and their relevance to the framing narrative.

Two researchers conducted the coding and proposed the dominant framing of each photo. To ensure the reliability of the coding results, at first a random sample data consisting of 10% (35 photos) of images from TOI and AJE (similar to, but not a part of, the studied dataset) were selected to test the intercoder reliability on the main categories. The percent agreement between the two coders was over 94.3% in all coded variables. Intercoder reliability that accounts for chance agreement was determined via Krippendorff’s alpha (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). Reliabilities were: portrayal of protesters: violent ($\alpha = 0.94$) and peaceful ($\alpha = 0.94$); presence of Israeli Army, presence of politicians, and portrayal of casualties among protesters ($\alpha = 1$); the photo angle when protesters were shown: wide ($\alpha = 0.88$) and close up ($\alpha = 0.94$). The results were satisfactory for all variables. The coders then coded the actual sample data, and in the cases of coding dissimilarities, the two coders discussed their interpretations of the images until full consensus was reached. The results were arranged in tables of relevance, and the existence of significant difference between TOI and

AJE on variables were calculated by Chi-square and Fisher's exact test (when more than 20% of the cells have expected counts less than 5). Additionally, Cramer's V value was applied as a measure of effect size.

Findings

General Findings

The extracted captions of the photos from the two websites evidenced that their sources stemmed mostly from press photo agencies (e.g., AFP, AP, Reuters, EPA, Anadolu Agency), as 76.7% of the total photos on both websites were sourced from international agencies (264 of 344), on TOI: 82.9% of its photos, and on AJE: 61.2% of its photos respectively. Furthermore, we found that AJE relied more on its own photojournalists, in 36.7% of its photos, while this was not the case for TOI as only 1.2% of its photos were shot by its photojournalists; instead, TOI published photos received from other Israeli sources (e.g., the Israeli Defense Forces Spokesperson's Office and Flash90, an Israeli photo agency) in 15.9% of its photos. Important to note here is the fact that AJE did not publish any photos from Israeli sources and TOI did not publish any from Palestinian ones (see Table 1).

Table 1. The Sources of Press Photos in TOI & AJE.

Photo sources	TOI ($N = 246$)	AJE ($N = 98$)
International press photo agencies	204 (82.9%)	60 (61.2%)
Its own photojournalists	3 (1.2%)	36 (36.7%)
Israeli sources	39 (15.9%)	0 (0.0%)
Palestinian sources	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.0%)

Note. Percentage value rounded to the nearest 0.1. $\chi^2(3, N = 344) = 102.8, p < .0001$. Fisher's exact test for a 2×2 table (its own photojournalists and Palestinian sources in one category and the other sources in another category), $p < .0001$. Cramer's $V = 0.547$.

Given the similar access the news websites have to agencies' press photos, one might expect to see similar or even the same photos accompanying their stories. However, we found that just one photo of 246 used on TOI was used on AJE as well (see Figure 1). This seems to suggest that the selection of photos by the two websites is not random but intentional, and that conscious decisions had been taken by both news websites to propose a specific visual narrative through the images chosen and to rely on specific individuals and venues for image acquisition. Thus, ethnocentrism and politics appear to affect not only the framing of the written news text, but also the selection process for the photos to accompany respective news articles.

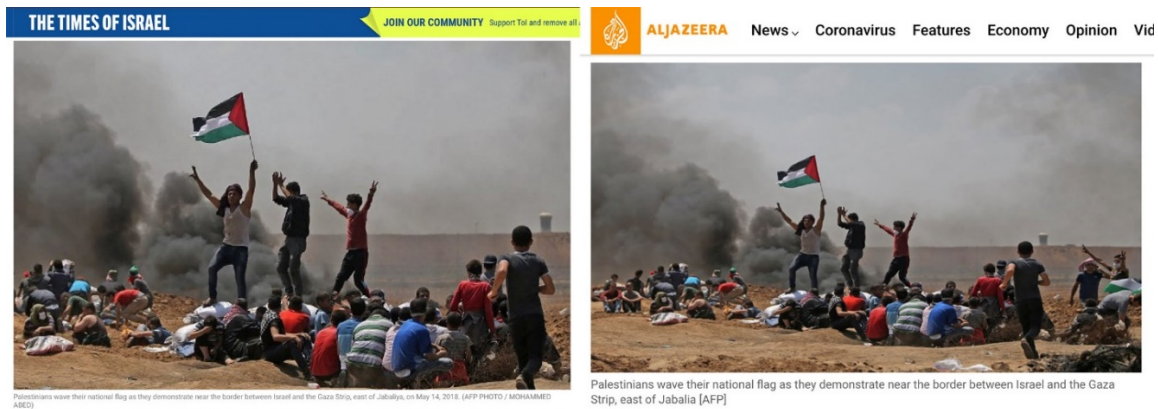


Figure 1. Screenshots from TOI & AJE: The only photo used by the two news websites in the selected period of the study (Photo: Mohammed Abed, AFP).

One might speculate that while both media outlets used the same photo, interpretation of the photograph could vary widely. As such, the common usage of the photo then does not suggest a rapprochement of the two media's common understanding of the issues at hand, but rather that the photo allows for radically different interpretations along established ethnocentric lines. Furthermore, even with the usage of the same photo, the cropping of the photograph varies, again suggesting possible divergent readings of it.

Comparison of Specific Findings With Hypotheses

Framing Protesters

H1: TOI is more likely to present Palestinian protesters as violent group, whereas AJE is more likely to present protesters as peaceful demonstrators.

The textual framing analysis indicated obvious selection of words to frame the protesters as either violent or peaceful respectively. TOI often used the word "riot" and "rioters" in its headlines to describe the Gaza protests and protesters (they appeared in 13.4% of its headlines), for instance: "Gaza Riots," "Border Riots," "Violent Rioters," "Palestinian Rioters," while those words never appeared in any of the AJE headlines. TOI also very frequently used the words "violent" or "violence" in the context of describing the protests or the protesters (they appeared in 20.4% of its headlines), such as: "Violent Protests," "Border Violence," "Gaza Violence," while AJE used that words only twice in its headlines, mainly to describe the general situation and not the actual protests or the actions of protesters themselves: "Fears of More Violence," "Calls for End to Violence in Gaza."

The words "protest" or "protesters" were used often by both websites when referring to the GMR, in AJE, 73.7% of its headlines, and in TOI in 50.7% of its headlines, but the words were not necessarily used in a neutral sense. TOI for example used it in the context of referring to protesters' violent actions, with headlines stating, for instance: "Violent Mass Protests," " Hamas-Led Protests." AJE used it in meaning of peaceful protesters, such as: "Israeli Army Killed 62 People Protesting Their Right of Return."

The word “peaceful” did appear several times in both websites’ headlines. Even then, it was used mainly as a quote or claim, and in most instances, the quotes were again selected to highlight specific views. For instance, in TOI, “*Hamas Co-Founder Admits ‘We Are Deceiving the Public’ About Peaceful Protests,*” and in AJE in a quote from spokesperson for the GMR: “*People Are Quite Determined to Come, to Organize Non-Violent Peaceful Protests.*”

Visual framing analysis in this regard is challenging, as identifying the portrayal of violence is a complex issue, especially when it appears in the context of a political conflict where images may allow for multiple readings, depending on a person’s point of view. However, in identifying images that express protesters’ violence, as a guiding principle we adopted Marvin and Fishman’s (2003) widely accepted definition of “explicit violence” (the most typical type of violence examined in the visual studies), as “the photographic representation of the direct, intentional application of physical force or its effects” (p. 34).

The visual analysis shows that TOI uses more images that frame protesters as violent (55.8% of its photos), supporting a narrative that presents protesters as violent and rioting outlaws by focusing on such protesters’ actions as throwing stones, burning tires, and launching incendiary kites. AJE on the other hand chose visuals that portray protesters as more peaceful group (89.6% of its photos) by focusing on images of them marching or gathering peacefully, involved in daily routine activities around their tents in the protesting area, milling about or running away from tear gas and shootings (see Table 2).

Table 2. The Visual Portrayal of Protesters in TOI & AJE.

	TOI (N = 199)	AJE (N = 96)
Violent portrayal*	111 (55.8%)	10 (10.4%)
Throwing stones	33 (16.6%)	5 (5.2%)
Lunching incendiary kites & its consequence (burned fields)	17 (8.5%)	1 (1.0%)
Wearing military uniform or holding guns	4 (2.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Damaging or infiltrating the border fence	18 (9.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Burning or preparing to burn tires	21 (10.6%)	2 (2.1%)
Aggressive appearance in protests (e.g., burning pictures or Israeli flags, shouting)	18 (9.0%)	2 (2.1%)
Peaceful portrayal**	88 (44.2%)	86 (89.6%)
Protesters involved in daily life activities (e.g., sitting in tents, preparing food)	6 (3.0%)	19 (19.8%)
Marching, holding flags or banners	17 (8.5%)	10 (10.4%)
Standing or watching from distance	14 (7.0%)	9 (9.4%)
Running from tear gas	9 (4.5%)	13 (13.5%)
Dead, injured, medicated, grieving	42 (21.1%)	35 (36.5%)

Note. Percentage value rounded to the nearest 0.1.

* $\chi^2(5, N = 121) = 1.9055, p = .862$. Cramer’s $V = 0.125$.

** $\chi^2(4, N = 174) = 11.0039, p = .0265$. Cramer’s $V = 0.2515$.

For the larger 2×2 table using the categories (violent and peaceful portrayal): $\chi^2(1, N = 295) = 55.08, p = 0$. Cramer’s $V = 0.4321$.

Furthermore, press photos used included images that associate protesters with widely accepted signifiers denoting them either as terrorists or as freedom fighters. For instance, TOI uses images of

protesters raising flags or flying pyro-kites with Nazi symbols on them (see Figure 2), and AJE displays images of protesters painted in blue and dressed as freedom fighters from the movie *Avatar* or wearing the Anonymous mask, well known from recent protests gatherings from all over the world (see Figure 3).



Figure 2. Screenshot from TOI: Photo shows protesters launching a pyro-kite with the Nazi emblem of a swastika on it (Photo: Mohammed Abed, AFP).



Figure 3. Screenshot from AJE: Photo shows protesters painted in blue to associate themselves with the ethnic defenders from the movie *Avatar* (Photo: Said Khatib, AFP).

The findings of the research regarding the framing of protesters thus confirmed H1, as the results overwhelmingly revealed that TOI framed protesters as violent while AJE framed them as peaceful.

Framing Responsibility

H2: TOI is more likely to portray Palestinian protesters as responsible for casualties, whereas AJE is more likely to portray Israeli armed forces as responsible for casualties.

The textual analysis of news article headlines shows a distinctive difference in assigning responsibility for the killings. TOI typically calls Hamas a "terror group" and charges it with the responsibility for the casualties as it controls Gaza and is also the organizer of the protests: "Hamas-Led 'March of Return,'" "Hamas's Violent Campaign." At times, it also employed the "Hamas" name to create doubt about the

veracity of information regarding the number of Palestinian casualties, suggesting, for example, that they originated from the " Hamas-Run Palestinian Health Ministry," a phrase repeated in six headlines alongside numbers of Palestinian casualties. Also, " Hamas" is mentioned more often by TOI (in 47.9% of its headlines), mostly with negative connotations, while AJE mentions it much less (5.3% of its headlines), with no visible attempt to frame Hamas negatively or assign it any responsibility for any casualties. On the contrary, AJE appear more suggestive in framing the Israeli army as responsible for them, as, in its reporting, it clearly indicates who killed protesters: " Israeli Forces Kill Dozens of Palestinians in Gaza," " Four Palestinian Protesters Killed and More Than 950 Wounded as Israeli Forces Again Open Fire at Gaza Border," " Israel Forces Continue to ' Shoot to Kill ' Gaza Protesters." TOI on the other hand does not mention the Israeli forces but does give its justification for the deaths incurred, for example: " 30 Gazans Have Been Reported Killed in Border Violence," " 58 Palestinians Said Killed, Including Terror Operatives, in Gaza Border Riots," " Israel Says at Least 24 of 60 Gazans Reported Killed at Border Were Terrorists." Besides, the acronym " IDF" (Israeli Defense Forces) is frequently used by TOI (in 41.5% of its headlines), highlighting the premise that the role of Israeli soldiers is to defend and keep the borders secure, while the word " IDF" is never once used in AJE headlines; instead, AJE used the words " Israeli Army," " Forces," " Troops" (in 29.8% of its headlines) to suggest that the Israeli soldiers are a military force employed to fight civilians.

The word " massacre" is mentioned once in the headlines of each website, but it is used to indicate different scenarios. In TOI, it comes in the context of a quote, " IDF Gears up for Mass Gaza Riots, Warns That Hamas Plans to ' Massacre ' Israelis," in an attempt to justify the possible outcome of that event and lives lost; in AJE it appears as a description indicating Israel's responsibility for having committed an immoral act: " Israeli Forces Kill Dozens of Palestinians in Gaza ' Massacre. "'

To identify the framing of responsibility in the visual analysis, we selected photos that show casualties as one of the main criteria. As Parry (2010) notes, press photos of casualties are an important element when it comes to framing a conflict as it shows who is responsible and to blame for death and injuries (p. 73). However, in this event the casualties were only on the side of the Palestinian protesters and no casualties on the Israeli side (" Q&A," 2019). Still, it is worth looking at the frequency of occurrences of this type of image on both websites. The coding results reveal that AJE used more photos showing dead, injured, medicated or grieving protesters (in 35.7% of its total photos), almost double of what TOI used (17.1% of its total photos), which demonstrates the efforts of AJE to frame protesters as victims and highlights the responsibility of the Israeli army for their deaths (see Table 3).

The Israeli army appeared more in TOI (14.6% of its photos) than in AJE (1% of its photos). Soldiers were shown more in non-combat position by TOI, arguably to indicate the existence of a security risk and the need for the army to protect the borders, but also indicating that the IDF had everything under control, thus reassuring its local readership.

Political leaders were not represented much by TOI (4.5% of its total photos) or AJE (1% of its total photos), which seems related to the type of event covered and the fact that the main actors on the ground were not politicians. However, results show that, in an attempt to frame Hamas leaders as responsible, TOI did present them, usually in poses of leading the protests or in angry or finger-pointing postures. Conversely, Hamas leaders appeared in just one photo in AJE. Israeli leaders were not displayed

by AJE, and they appeared in just two photos of TOI, in which they were shown in the field among the Israeli soldiers, thus contributing to the narrative of the event as a security concern rather than a political matter (see Table 3).

Table 3. The Visual Indications of Responsibility.

	TOI (N = 246)	AJE (N = 98)
Portrayal of casualties among protesters*	42 (17.1%)	35 (35.7%)
Dead	8 (19.0%)	6 (17.1%)
Injured	23 (54.8%)	16 (45.7%)
Medicated	7 (16.7%)	8 (22.9%)
Grieving	4 (9.5%)	5 (14.3%)
Presence of Israeli army**	36 (14.6%)	1 (1.0%)
Soldiers in combat	12 (33.3%)	1 (100%)
Soldiers not in combat	14 (38.9%)	0 (0.0%)
Army vehicles, drones	10 (27.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Presence of politicians***	11 (4.5%)	1 (1.0%)
Israeli leaders	2 (18.2%)	0 (0.0%)
Hamas leaders	9 (81.8%)	1 (100%)

Note. Percentage value rounded to the nearest 0.1.

* $\chi^2(3, N = 77) = 1.0926, p = .7789$. Cramer's $V = 0.0564$.

** $\chi^2(2, N = 37) = 27.4769, p < .0001$. Fisher's exact test for a 2×2 table (soldiers in combat in one category and the others in one category) $p = .3514$. Cramer's $V = 0.8618$.

*** $\chi^2(1, N = 12) = 0.2182, p = .3596$. Fisher's exact test $p = .3514$. Cramer's $V = 0.0768$.

For the larger 3×2 table: $\chi^2(2, N = 126) = 24.85, p = .0$. Cramer's $V = 0.444$.

TOI also made concerted use of images showing protesters throwing stones, burning tires, and committing other offensive actions, while AJE showed less of these kinds of images and focused more on presenting protesters injured and suffering from tear gas, clear attempts by each medium to push viewers to make certain associations and frame the other side as responsible for the spiral of violence (see Figures 4 and 5).



Figure 4. Screenshot from TOI: Photo shows protesters burning tires (Photo: Mahmud Hams, AFP).



Figure 5. Screenshot from AJE: Photo shows injured protester (Photo: Hosam Salem, Al-Jazeera).

The results of the study examining the framing of responsibility confirmed H2, as the findings revealed that the TOI framed protesters as responsible for casualties while AJE framed the Israeli forces as responsible.

Humanization Versus Dehumanization Framing

H3: TOI is more likely to attempt to dehumanize protesters, whereas AJE is more likely to attempt to humanize them.

Textual analysis of the news article headlines on the two websites show oppositional framings and a tendency to either humanize or dehumanize protesters. Thus, TOI, did not include any article that would humanize the protesters or give their side of the story, unlike AJE which gave space to background pieces on the protests and personal stories to present them in a more human-interest-story way, such as: "Gaza Love Story: When Hadeel Met MO'Ath, How Two Volunteer Medics Met and Fell in Love," "Gaza Rallies: How

Women Shape Great March of Return Movement," "Gaza's Onion Boy." At times, AJE did provide more information on people killed in an attempt to humanize them and personalize their stories, such as: "He Was My Whole World': Palestinians Mourn Killing of Loved Ones," "Yaser Murtaja, and His Dreams of Travelling," "Laila Anwar Al-Ghandour Becomes the Face of Gaza Carnage." We should notice here that the attempt of AJE to humanize the protesters creates an emotional link with the audience, gains their sympathy and gives their actions legitimacy. Contrarily, TOI often attempted to dehumanize protesters by counting deaths in numbers only, for instance: "Palestinian Killed, Dozens Wounded as 15,000 Attend Gaza Protests," "15 Gazans Said Killed, 1,100 Hurt in Clashes at Massive Border Protest," with no human-interest backstories. Connecting the deaths with the large number of protesters can be viewed as an attempt by TOI to let the raw figures speak for themselves to justify and legitimize the actions against the protesters.

In the visual analysis to identify (de)humanization aspect, we applied results from other studies focusing on photographic technique which suggested, for instance, that the distance of the subject in the photo and the angle of shooting have a direct impact on viewers (Fahmy, 2005; Parry, 2010) and that "seeing images of large groups resulted in greater implicit dehumanization compared with images depicting small groups" (Tsakiris, Azevedo, De Beukelaer, Jones, & Safra, 2019, p. 2). Here, the analyzed main elements of the photographs were the proximity of the event and the number of people it included, either shot far from the action, typically in wide-angle and including a large number of people; or a close-up of the protesters that includes usually a small number of individuals. Generally speaking, wide-angle distance shots dehumanize, while close-ups are more likely to humanize.

The coding shows that TOI used considerably more photos of protesters that were taken in wide-angle in which protesters appeared as a large group with no identifiable faces (59.1% of total photos that portrayed protesters) implying a threatening mob and a dehumanized group. To the contrary, AJE used more close-ups and of small groups of people (71.4%), in which people were more individualized and, importantly, with identifiable faces, which helped to humanize the protesters and create an emotional connection between them and their viewers (see Table 4).

Table 4. Photo Angles for Protesters Images.

	TOI (N = 193)	AJE (N = 98)
Camera angles		
Wide-angle shot	114 (59.1%)	28 (28.6%)
Close-up shot	79 (40.9%)	70 (71.4%)

Note. Percentage value rounded to the nearest 0.1. $\chi^2(1, N = 291) = 24.1928, p < .0001$. Cramer's $V = 0.8086$.

Analyzing individual images, the above interpretations are also corroborated. Presenting protesters visually as an amorphous group lacking any human attributes reduces possible moral obligations felt toward them, decreases understanding of and empathy with their suffering and pain, and finally legitimizes aggression against them (see Figure 6). On the contrary, showing faces and facial expressions humanizes the depicted person and thus brings them closer to the viewer who may more easily identify with them (see Figure 7). Moreover, psychological research clearly demonstrates that people empathize with the suffering

of others more when they are shown a photograph of a single individual rather than a large group of unidentified strangers, as it seems that “the more who suffer, the less we care” (Quist, 2019, para. 2).



Figure 6. Screenshot from TOI: Wide-shot photo shows unidentified large group of people (Photo: Jack Guez, AFP).

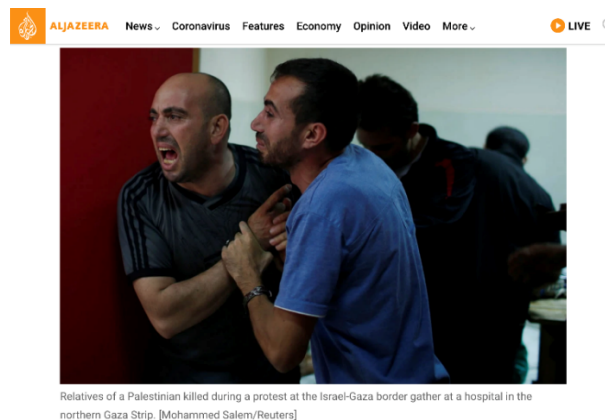


Figure 7. Screenshot from AJE: Close-up shot photo shows identified facial features of individuals (Photo: Mohammad Salem, Reuters).

The findings here confirm H3, as results indicated that TOI’s textual and visual practices attempt to dehumanize protesters, while AJE’s attempt to humanize them.

Discussion

Our research results suggest a significant difference in news framing between TOI and AJE and indicate that these differences are statistically significant. The textual and visual analyses substantiated the validity of assumptions of biased coverage and showed that the two transnational news media were clearly ethnocentric in their news reporting on both textual and visual levels. Furthermore, visual framing characteristics of each news website were found to be in line with the textual framing, with obvious attempts at framing the news and convincing audiences of a specific narrative.

The study asserts the effects of ethnocentrism on news reporting, especially in the situation of political and violent conflict. We found that this is not only the case for local or regional media outlets but also for transnational media, despite a typical self-presentation as being more objective than regional or local counterparts. This includes both text and images. What is absent in the individual news outlets is any hint of heteroglossia, largely as we had suspected. But the complete lack of what we term *heteroiconia* (i.e., diverging visual discourses) did come as a surprise. Here the implication for audiences is clear: They should be wary and critical of news content, no matter whether it originates with national or transnational media outlets. Our findings provide significant insights and data to our understanding of the media's role in framing conflicts. It suggests that news media do play an important role in possible conflict resolutions in that they might help either in laying grounds for peaceful solution or escalate the situation (Baden & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2017). Data collected also suggests that both TOI and AJE might want to reflect on and rethink their publication strategies to play a more helpful role in any peace process.

Methodologically, the study highlights the importance of using a multimodal approach when studying news framing to specifically analyze the relationship between text and image. Findings indicate that both seem to be selected intentionally and in unison to frame news events; headlines employ specific trigger words to suggest a certain reading of events, and image selection processes include the deliberate choice of press photo agency, the selection of photographers, and preferences for specific image composition.

At the outset of the study, we had anticipated, and were therefore not surprised, to find that TOI and AJE used semantics and other linguistic methods to frame the same event in contrasting way. After all, this is a time-honored approach, be it in rhetoric or news reporting. However, to see the extent to which this oppositional framing was extended to and combined with images to achieve a multimodal stratification did come as a surprise. After all, press photos are intended "to be read as a piece of objective, factual information, and in this way to set in motion the actual process of being an eyewitness of the distant war" (Konstantinidou, 2008, p. 151). As this study confirms, this is not an absolute; press photos "are not neutral" anymore, as Fahmy (2010) already stated a decade ago (p. 699). In the process of publishing, news media select photos either to emphasize or exclude aspects of an event, and published press photos deliberately and lopsidedly display "only a [predetermined] slice of reality" (Fahmy & Kim, 2008, p. 455).

Our end results align with other researchers' findings that all information given through textual and visual means ultimately feeds into the same construction process (i.e., to build a particular coherent interpretation and framing of an event; Geise & Baden, 2015). Thus, this study shed more light onto the relationship and complex interplay between textual and visual information and their role in framing news. In light of our findings, it is correct to ascertain that news organizations rely on ready-made images to support their ideology; but it is certainly also admissible to imagine a time when the unity of ideological image and ideological text becomes more strained than we have found in our data.

Limitations and Future Studies

The study analyzed the news coverage of one specific conflict situation by two regional transnational news media; thus, findings of this research might not be representative of other types of news media or other contexts, and therefore, the results should not and cannot be generalized. However, the

study does provide a data set that might prove to be a valuable benchmark for studies of comparable phenomena. In addition, it would be interesting for future studies to investigate international, nonregional media outlets to ascertain whether their practices differ from local and regional ones.

The applied textual and visual methods of analysis also have their limitations and could be more developed and extended. Future studies could focus on studying additional visual elements, such as videos, as they are increasingly taking over the functions of press photographs in online media. Lastly, in future studies, researchers might want to add methodologies from those disciplines which are historically much more multimodally oriented than communication or conflict studies, such as comics and art history studies (cf. Groensteen, 2007, for the former, Bredekamp, 2018, for the latter).

Lastly, while one possible reason for the choice of images and text might indeed be the ideological position of the news outlet, as we theorize, there might be others as well. These could include differences in perception due to socialization and information environment, an orientation toward what the audiences are expecting or are likely to buy, and similar research into these topics would help further clarify the role of these different reasons in the news framing process

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