War Journalism and the Israel/Palestine Zero-Index Shift Hypothesis

Sidin Ahmad Ishak
Yakubu Ozohu-Suleiman

Abstract

This article examines how war journalism has shaped knowledge production on media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and how its discontent underscores the need for a shift to peace correspondence in the conflict. The article essentially relies on existing empirical literature on media coverage of the conflict, dating from early 1960s. Evidences from other conflict environments where index hypotheses produced better model than the zero-sum hypotheses for explaining media's role in conflicts were spotlighted in supporting the thesis of this article that a shift to peace correspondence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is possible with continued efforts on awareness creation among professional journalists. Tracking the shift will however require that the awareness efforts be accompanied by time-series research on the indicators of war and peace journalism using Galtung's classification and other acceptable criteria.

Key words: Peace Journalism, War, Media, Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is undoubtedly the most bitter, protracted and intractable cultural conflict of modern times (Shinar, 2003; Shlaim, 2005), whose metamorphosing recurrence and growing chains of link to global terrorism has intensified security surveillance and restrictions on civil liberty all over the world. While the current uprising in the Middle East and North Africa, and the wasteful spending on killings are potentially linked to this conflict, an important aspect of the conflict that has remained elusive to conscious negotiation is media's own war against peace in the region. The backcloth interests that influence media coverage of the conflict notwithstanding, this review aims at demonstrating how war journalism has shaped knowledge production on war and peace journalism in the conflict, and how the discontents of war journalism calls attention to the need, and connects to the possibility of a shift to peace correspondence in the conflict. The review, sub-headed into early and recent reports, focuses on existing empirical and theoretical literature on media coverage of the conflict dating from early 1960s.

Early Reports

Until less than a decade ago, transnational western media had been the only major news sources on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for the most of global audiences. For this reason, most of available studies focused mainly on how western media – especially the US media covers the conflict, with barrage of conflicting findings accusing the media of partisanship in reporting the conflict. Kressel (1987) reviewed over forty of such studies dating from early 1960s to mid-1980s, which established that western media coverage was characterized by zero-sum frames, inaccuracy and disproportionate favorability towards the Israelis and Palestinian Arabs. The conflicting claims to media bias by pro-Arab critics (e.g. Suleiman, 1961, 1970, 1974; Adams, 1971; Baha el-Din, 1971; Asi, 1981b; Said, 1981) and pro-Israeli critics (e.g. Feith, 1980; Isaac, 1980; Peretz, 1982b; Alexander, 1982; Podhoretz, 1982), according to Kressel, underscores a desire by these early researchers to demonstrate their own biases for or against Israel and Arabs. A highlight of findings that emerged from early pro-Arab critics of media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict includes:

- American mass media consistently presents unbalanced coverage by way of disproportionate number of unfavorable references to the Arab state, their leaders and their actions.
- American media frequently cite false images, which include (1) Jewish settlement making the desert bloom while Palestinian Arabs leave the land untended; (2) Zionism is a liberal philosophy; (3) Israel is the underdog in the Middle East; (4) Palestinians are terrorists; (5) Jews did not force Palestinian Arabs to leave their homes in 1948 but instead urged them to stay; (6) the Arab-Israeli conflict, at bottom, stems from Arab anti-Judaism.
- American media present too much coverage of Israel and too little of the Arabs; this leads to greater familiarity and, hence, partiality toward Israel.
- Conspiracy, editorial bans, and other barriers have made it impossible or extremely difficult for pro-Arab views to appear in print in the United States.
- Cultural insensitivity, stereotyping, and racist imagery predominate in American media coverage of the conflict.

- The American mass media use double standards when judging actions of Israel and the Arab States. For example, Palestinian attacks against Israelis generally are labeled "terrorist" while Israeli bombings of Arab villages are called "retaliatory" (Kressel, 1987).

Similarly, early pro-Israel critics accused the American media of dropping their support for Israel notably after the 1967 war. Kressel observed that Israel had little about which to object in mass media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict prior to 1973. Key findings by early pro-Israel critics of media coverage of the conflict include:

- The American mass media have moved away from their formerly objective treatment of the conflict to making disproportionately unfavorable references to Israel and disproportionately favorable references to Arabs.
- Many journalists have distorted the truth and painted a badly flawed and inaccurate picture of the Arab-Israeli dispute by 1) overplaying Arab moderation, e.g. saying Sadat attacked Israel in 1973 in order to lay the groundwork for peace; 2) portraying Arab institutions in terms more palatable to American readers, e.g. calling the Saudi political system a "desert democracy"; 3) whitewashing the PLO and downplaying its terrorism; 4) portraying Israel as more militaristic and less committed to peace than the Arabs; 5) devoting disproportionate attention to Israel's activities on the West Bank; 6) getting many facts wrong in coverage of the Lebanon War.
- Western reporters operate under fear of terrorist reprisals.
- The mass media are to some extent engaged in 1) invidious stereotypes about Jewish control of the media and government; 2) vulgar anti-Jewish imagery, particularly in political cartoons; 3) declaration of Jewish group interests as illegitimate; 4) collusion of anti-Israel partisans with traditional anti-Jewish activists.
- Inability of broadcast media to deal with historical backgrounds has caused unfavorable coverage of Israel in the conflict.

Although these studies essentially relied on content analysis, it is difficult using this method to justify the claim by pro-Israeli researchers that western reporters operated under fear of terrorist reprisals, and the claim by pro-Arab researchers that conspiracy, editorial bans, and other barriers made it impossible or extremely difficult for pro-Arab views to appear in print in the United States. Obviously, at least, it is impossible to measure conspiracy by any of the known media research methods. This limitation notwithstanding, Kressel (1987) established structural similarities that tended to validate the claims by both pro-Arab and pro-Israel critics. These similarities include the citation by both camps of (1) unbalanced and disproportionately unfavorable coverage, (2) distorted and untrue media portrayals of the conflict, (3) prejudice and stereotyping, (4) employment of double standards, and (5) various unfair political and organizational barriers to an objective coverage" (p.216). While the similarities suggest that western media were biased in reporting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the beginning, they hardly suggest the strength of the variations in the bias for or against Arabs and Israelis.

Recent Reports

Turning to recent literature, there are far more testimonial criticisms than empirical studies on media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the predominant view, also supported in most of available studies, is that western media have been supportive of Israel at times even more than local Israeli media. For example, Viser (2003) did a quantitative analysis of the indicators of bias in the portrayal of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by *New York Times* and Israel's *Haaretz* newspaper, and found that *New York Times* demonstrated pro-Israeli bias more than *Haaretz* newspaper. New York Times' framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, drawing on Viser's study, not only indicate unnecessary taste for war journalism but also reflect the underlying US role in the conflict, which some scholars see as the most powerful driving force behind the conflict (see Smith, 2004; Beinin, 1998; Bapat, 2011).

A study of the Associated Press (AP) news in 2004 by ifamericansknew.org similarly found significant correlation between the likelihood of a death receiving coverage and the nationality of the person killed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Drawing upon results from content analysis, this study specifically reported that the AP – the world's oldest and largest news agency – was underreporting Palestinians death in a way that shows more Israelis than Palestinians were dying in the conflict. This finding was corroborated in an official release by the "Israeli Information Center for Human Rights", in the Occupied Territories, which confirmed that between September 2000 (when the second Palestinian intifada started) and June 2008, 4862 Palestinians compared to 1057 Israelis were killed in the conflict (see Kandil, 2009, p. 31).

Also in 2004, the Glasgow Media Group published a study of British media coverage of the second Palestinian intifada and its impact on public understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The study

represents the first empirical attempt to examine the interface between media coverage and viewers' perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict using survey and content analysis data. In a section titled "Bad News from Israel", the Group reported that there was a preponderance of official Israeli perspectives on BBC1, and that United States politicians who support Israel were very strongly featured. The study revealed that BBC1 and ITN News reported almost nothing about the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Viewers' understanding of the conflict, according to this study, was distorted to such extent that "most did not know that Palestinians had been forced from their homes and land when Israel was established in 1948 . . . so they thought that the Palestinians were the occupiers" (Philo & Berry, 2004). Other findings that emerged from this seminal study include:

- Israeli actions were often shown as merely "responding" to what had been done to them by Palestinians. This apparently influenced many viewers who then tended to blame Palestinians for the conflict.
- There was a strong emphasis on Israeli casualties on the news, relative to Palestinians (even though Palestinians had around 2-3 times the number of deaths as Israelis).
- There were also differences in the language used by journalists for Israelis and Palestinians: terms including 'atrocity', 'brutal murder', 'mass murder', 'savage cold blooded killing', 'lynching' and 'slaughter' were used in relation to Israeli deaths but not to the deaths of Palestinians. Journalists used the word 'terrorist to describe Palestinians but when an Israeli group was reported as trying to bomb a Palestinian school, they were referred to as 'extremists' or 'vigilantes'. Viewers were encouraged to believe that most deaths had been those of Israelis (Philo & Berry, 2004).

On the core issues of the conflict, the study indicated that television coverage encouraged some viewers to believe that the conflict was merely a border dispute between Israel and Palestine. Israeli Settlements in the occupied territories were portrayed as vulnerable communities rather than as having a role in imposing Israeli occupation (Philo & Berry, Ibid.).

Another important study in this area was conducted on BBC News by an independent review panel commissioned by the BBC itself, with researchers drawn from Loughborough University Centre for Communication Research. The study, which also relied predominantly on content analysis methods, examined the impartiality of the BBC coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and found that the BBC coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was "incomplete" and "misleading" (BBC, 2006). Some notable findings that emerged from the study include the fact that the BBC:

- Rarely covered the hardships of Palestinians living under occupation
- Notably ignored Israeli annexation of land in and around East Jerusalem
- Seldom use the term "occupation" (mentioned "military occupation" only once within the study period).
- Misused the term "terrorism" and only applied it to Palestinians
- Consistently portrayed Hamas as formally committed to Israel's destruction; ignored Hamas' acceptance of the Arab peace proposal and its willingness to recognize Israel in return for an end to the occupation
- Failed to cite international law and UN resolutions; their call for an end to Israel's occupation; and the fact that Israel ignores international rulings contrary to its interests
- Stations none of its correspondents in occupied Palestine; has them all inside Israel; results in a huge disparity in reports favoring Israel while disparaging Palestinians;
- Portrayed Israelis as peace-seeking and Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims as aggressors;
- Stressed Israeli victimhood, the importance of Israeli deaths and injuries, and relative unimportance of a disproportionate number of Palestinian ones.

Analysis of news coverage in other western networks such as ABC, CBS and NBC between September 2000 and March 2002 found the networks to portray Palestinians as attackers and Israelis as retaliators (Fair.org, 2002). According to this study, ABC made 42 references within the study period, 64% of which described Israelis as retaliating Palestinian attacks and only 21% of which described Palestinians as retaliating Israeli attacks. The remaining 14% made ambiguous references. CBS was reported to have made 67 references within the study period, 79% of which described Israelis as retaliating Palestinian attacks and only 7% of which described Palestinians as retaliating Israeli attacks. The remaining 13% was ambiguous. As for NBC, the study found 41 references, 93% of which described Israelis as retaliating Palestinian attacks and 0% of which described Palestinians as retaliating Israeli attacks. The remaining 7% was ambiguous. Other criticisms leveled against western media include dearth of reporting, lack of analysis, absence of images and lack of voices describing the experience of the Palestinians under the occupation (Ratzkoff & Jally, 2004 cited in Kandil, 2009: 38). Words referring to the illegality of Israeli presence in the West Bank and Gaza such as "occupation", "occupied territories" and "settlements" are consistently avoided in western media (see Kandil, Ibid.).

There seems to be reasonable agreement between the findings emerging from media-watch and research organizations such as fair.org, ifamericansknew.org, Glasgow Media Group and individual researchers regarding

media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in that all categories demonstrates that western media underreports Palestinian casualty and distorts the conflict in favor of Israel.

Studies have also been conducted on how non-western media such as Aljazeera Arabic and English TV responds to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While a few are survey-based studies of the networks' coverage (Fahmy & Johnson, 2007; El-Nawawy & Powers, 2008), most are textual and content analysis-based comparative studies of non-western and western media in terms of newsworthiness, bias, use of language, and influence of political landscape. Kandil (2009) for example, conducted a comparative corpus-based critical discourse analysis and found that Aljazeera Arabic's corpus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict contains more than twice the number of words as BBC and more than five times that of CNN.

What this means, as the study clearly established, is that Aljazeera Arabic devoted a significantly larger amount of space to reporting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than did the BBC and even more than CNN (p. 47). While this finding appears straightforward, the implication, according to Kandil, is that followers of CNN will usually get significantly less information about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict compare to followers of the BBC and Aljazeera Arabic. Also of interest in Kandil's study, are his findings regarding media description of the agents of violence, method of violence and outcome/victims of violence in the conflict.

The notable agents of violence according to Aljazeera Arabic are the Israelis, while according to the BBC they are Palestinians, Islam and Hamas. According to CNN, the agents of violence are terrorists. On the methods of violence, Aljazeera Arabic noted "firing" and "operation", while the BBC noted "suicide", "rockets" and "intifada". The CNN also noted "suicide", "rockets" and "blasts" among others. On the outcomes/victims of violence, Aljazeera Arabic says, "was/were martyred"; BBC says they were "killed" and CNN says they were "killed" or "wounded" (see Kandil, 2009, p. 56).

Kandil's analysis of the pattern of usage of key words that describes media coverage of the military aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict clearly indicates that western media and non-western (Arab) media are still dividedly attached to Israelis and Palestinians respectively in reporting the conflict.

In a similar study that compared how ties between government and the media influence framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Aljazeera English, CNN and Haaretz Newspaper, Raz (2008) found that CNN was US-policy-oriented in reporting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: "Although CNN was extremely fact-based and neutral, it had an underlying Israeli focus and latent American bias. The coverage seemed to have an American agenda in framing the Middle East conflict" (Raz, 2008, pp. 8 – 9). Ordinarily, CNN's liberal democratic background and heightened journalistic autonomy should mean a more critical and independent coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict according to Raz's hypothesis, but as the study reveals, CNN's journalistic autonomy is inconsistent with its editorial attachment to the US policy.

Raz did not find much of Qatar's political influence on Aljazeera English, which she assumed was likely to produce censored and less critical coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because of limited journalistic autonomy arising from "influences from authoritarian Qatar regime". However, "Aljazeera's titles often used sensationalized or critical diction...and delivers a rather clear anti-Israeli agenda with one-sided advocacy" (Raz, 2008, pp. 9 – 10). Sensationalized coverage includes the use of graphic images in reporting sufferings and death in a conflict. Western media ethics discourages the use of war images that depicts suffering and death. A warning message is considered sufficient to prepare viewers for such images in contemporary Arab media ethics.

In a web-based survey that examined how Arab viewers of Aljazeera Arabic TV perceive the network's graphic images of suffering and death in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Iraq war, Fahmy & Johnson (2007) found that there was an overwhelming support for Aljazeera's broadcast of graphic images. A significant proportion of viewers, according to Fahmy & Johnson, believed that Aljazeera was providing a true and better coverage of the conflict by broadcasting images of death and sufferings.

In another content analysis that compared citations of Israeli and Palestinian sources in Aljazeera English and the BBC, and the prevalence with which each side was portrayed as instigating or responding to violence, Arab Media Watch found that both networks devoted more words to Israeli sources, and that both networks portrayed Israeli violence as a response to Palestinian violence:

82% of BBC articles containing sources from both sides devoted more words to Israeli sources; 69% of Aljazeera [English] article containing sources from both sides devoted more words to Israeli sources; ...both broadcasters used words that unequivocally portrayed Israeli violence as a direct response to Palestinian violence (Karim, 2009).

Compared to other global news media, Press TV's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has received less research attention perhaps because the Iranian state-funded network is perceived of as representing the propaganda interest of Iran's pro-Palestinian regime in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A content analysis report suggests that Press TV produced the highest amount of content that supports war journalism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2011 – compared to BBC World, Al-Jazeera English and CNN International. The study, which juxtaposed war oriented and peace oriented journalism exponents in order to compare zero-sum and index

hypotheses between western and non-western media networks, found that Press TV focused on reactive (moments of violence), elite-oriented and partisan war journalism framing, and ranked lowest in the amount of content that supports peace journalism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Ozohu-Suleiman & MD Sidin, 2012).

News coverage of conflict, including the reporting about war, is grounded in the notion of conflict as a news value (Lee & Maslog, 2005). Given this background, not much is expected of peace journalism in media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly as the war-to-peace correspondence campaign only became serious in the last few years. This way, the media consciously or unconsciously since the early 1960s set a lasting war journalism agenda, which saw to the predominance of zero-sum hypothesis in explaining coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for over 30 years. Media partisanship in a conflict or "journalism of attachment", as Ruigrok (2008) calls it, regards the reporters as participants in the conflict they report, and is capable of exacerbating such conflict and making it difficult to resolve. In this realization, scholars and professionals are exploring the feasibility of Galtung's proposal in what Tehranian (2002) describes as an "alternative media system that will promote peace journalism for international and intercultural understanding".

Johan Galtung, a Norwegian scholar, proposed peace journalism in the 1970s as a systemic shift from conventional war-glamorizing journalism in which the media often focus on manifest violence, sensationalism and simple description rather than analysis of complex conflict origins, causes and contexts to a fairer and more responsible approach that promotes conflict resolution (see Galtung, 1998; Shinar, 2007). According to Galtung (1998), by taking an advocacy-interpretative approach, the peace journalist concentrates on stories that highlights peace initiatives; tone down ethnic and religious differences, prevent further conflict, focus on the structure of society; and promotes conflict resolution, reconstruction and reconciliation.

The peace journalism perspective grew out of the discontents of war journalism, and is strongly rooted in an understanding of its promises of professional improvement and a more responsible and conscientious media representation of conflict (Shinar, 2007). Although peace journalism is not a sufficient condition for there to be peace between Israelis and Palestinians because of the many cause-effect variables in the conflict that are outside the explanatory realms of zero-sum and index hypotheses of media coverage, adopting it might help in making the media a truly public interest-oriented participant in seeking solutions to the conflict. However, getting the professional journalists to accept peace journalism has remained largely difficult for many reasons. Chief among these reasons are that peace, unlike conflict, often does not serve the political interest of the influential actors around the media, and does not sell media contents as conflict does.

The media will often prefer the opportunities offered by conflicts, or even set the climate for such opportunities for political and commercial reasons, among others. To overcome this, Hamelink (2008) recommends an International Media Alert System (IMAS) that will provide early warning where and when media set the climate for conflict. Proactive as it sounds, an alert system is unlikely to encourage the media to adopt the peace journalism correspondence or even discourage them from setting the climate for conflicts.

An essential forerunner to a sustainable movement from war to peace agenda is the willing interest of the media in the resolution of conflicts when they report. A few attempts have been made to examine this interest in media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Levin (2009), for example, compared index and zero-sum hypotheses on Israeli newspaper coverage of the Oslo peace process and found that the zero-sum hypothesis was a more accurate model to describe the coverage. What this finding implies is that the Israeli newspapers rallied around the Israeli flag to treat Palestinians as a national "others". Zero-sum hypothesis essentially creates discriminatory we/them; good/bad; right/wrong; win/lose categories, in examining media coverage of an issue, while the index hypothesis will assume a pro-peace approach in which the media exercises balance in reporting both sides of a story.

Wolfsfeld (2004) similarly reported that the media played a destructive role in the Oslo peace process, while they played constructive roles in the Northern Ireland and the Israeli-Jordanian peace process. With this finding, Wolfsfeld concluded that the media's attitude towards peace varies according to the media and political environment. Wolfsfeld finding is a critical pointer to media's willing interest in the resolution of conflict as the starting point in the movement from war to peace journalism agenda. Although the media are usually not independent of other influential participants – political, commercial and policy actors – in framing a conflict, they ultimately control the decision on whether contents will be geared towards supporting causes that lead to peace or causes that promote conflict, as evident in their selective roles in the Oslo, Northern Ireland and Israeli-Jordanian peace processes. In fact, such selective roles lead to the assumption that if the media are able to find reasons and have the wherewithal to support peace in Northern Ireland, and between Israelis and Jordanians, they should also be able to "find" reasons to support peace between Israel and Palestine.

In another study, Maoz (2006) experimentally examined the effect of news coverage on the evaluation of concessions offered in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiation. The study found that Israelis responded more positively to Israel's peace concession when such concession was framed in the news media as having been rejected by Palestinians than when same concession was framed as having been accepted by Palestinians. This finding also implies that the media has had an impact in making Israelis unresolved about what will constitute peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Manusov & Milstein (2005) examined media representation of the

Israel-Palestinian peace process in the coverage of the 1993 Rabin-Arafat handshake in the Israeli and Palestinian press. The press, they found, shifted from an initial positive portrayal to a predominantly negative interpretation of the handshake, describing it variously as "a betrayal", and "blood-stained". The press employed various attribution styles in framing the objection to the handshake as public opinion. (Manusov & Milstein, 2005).

Although the zero-sum hypothesis exercised predominance in the foregoing cases, there have been a few cases where the index hypothesis superseded the zero-sum hypothesis in media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Wu, Sylvester & Hamilton (2002) for example studied the attention of *Philadelphia Enquirer* on the Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives, and found that the newspaper provided its readers with "ample information about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" and was "continuously reporting major developments in the peace process and providing rich background on US role". The US-orientation of the Philadelphia Enquirer notwithstanding, its approach to the conflict suggests the possibility of a shift from war to peace agenda in media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Warshel (2007) similarly reported that Disney's television program for Israeli-Palestinian children – *Rechov SumSum/Shara'a SimSim* has had significant effect in fostering cross-cultural understanding between Israeli and Palestinian children.

Outside Israel/Palestine, there have been cases where the index hypothesis offered a better model for explaining media coverage of conflicts. For example, the Studio-Ijambo project was found to have had positive impact on inter-ethnic relations, social and political mobilization, political elite negotiations, public institutions, and mass or elite conflict behavior in post conflict peace building in Rwanda (Hagos, 2001). Paluck (2007) similarly reported that radio had positive impact in communicating social norms and influencing behaviors that contributed to intergroup tolerance and reconciliation in post-conflict Rwanda. Lopata (2009) also found high public appreciation of the quality indicators of peace journalism such as diversity of sources and viewpoints that characterized local media's role in post-conflict Liberia. Again, these are an indication that a shift to peace agenda in media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is possible.

However, it is important to know that the conditions allowing the media to play roles that support the index hypotheses, drawing on the studies cited above, are narrow when considered in the context of the many constraints the journalists face. Programs like "Rechov SumSum/Shara'a SimSim" and "Studio-Ijambo" are transient, and cannot compete if the regular news media are to keep a zero-sum approach to conflict reporting. Therefore, what is more important is to see the index hypothesis superseding the zero-sum hypothesis in regular news coverage of conflict issues. For this to happen, and in order to facilitate a shift towards the peace agenda, there is a need to deal with the increasing absence of structural pluralism, which poses editorial constraints and limits the journalists' perspectives. Unfortunately, such reform, as Shinar (2011) observes, can hardly be expected in the present reality of media ownership concentration and centralization. The competition introduced by new digital non-broadcast media (citizens/web-based channels) should enhance structural pluralism, but also represents a potential threat as a means for mobilizing conflict based on recent experiences in the Middle East and North Africa.

Another approach to facilitate a shift to the peace journalism agenda is to adopt peace journalism as an ethical code of conduct in conflict reporting. Although this seems difficult because the violation of ethical standards is prevalent without penalties, providing sanctions on ethics through an institutional framework should be considered (cf. Shinar, 2011). In the current convention "conflict" is the central value that defines coverage and judgment of news about conflicts, but news about conflicts is often not conflict-sensitive. For this reason, it is difficult at present for the average journalist to see peace as being more news worthy in a conflict or war than events of the conflict or war. Raising awareness among professional journalists, of the need to see conflicts through the lens of peace, is therefore critical to a sustainable shift from war to peace journalism. Interestingly, some Palestinians and Israelis are making efforts in this direction through the *Fair Media Center* at the Netanya Academic College, in Israel.

Galtung's *Transcend International* is another major institution involved in raising awareness of the conditions that affect the journalist's performance and perspective in the production of news about conflict. While these efforts and many others like them deserve commendation, realizing the objectives requires an enabling political environment and, as the Director of Netanya Center – Dov Shinar argues, effective combination of policymaking and financial support for journalistic research and publication of findings. Dealing with other constraints such as time and material resources, limited numbers of personnel, editorial procedures and hierarchies, access to the scene and information and availability of sources, can also help the shift towards a positive representation of a peace agenda in the media (Hanitzsch, 2007).

Discussion

With "conflict" overarching "peace" as the value that guides news coverage of conflicts, the media easily found support from the political environment for their "staging" of a war journalism agenda on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Because of this, since the second half of the 20th century, researchers were unavoidably

drafted into categorizing, describing and valuating war journalism patterns and variables in media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Of course, war journalism as defined across existing literature is located in identifiable inconsistencies between the stated principle of objectivity or neutrality and the actual practice of the media participating and promoting conflict in disregard of the public interest.

The quality and quantity of the inconsistencies between media's stated principle of objectivity or neutrality and their actual involvement in the politics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has dominated research on media coverage of the conflict notably from early 1960s. Hypothetically, this is how war journalism influenced a huge body of knowledge, where the zero-sum model superseded the index model for explaining media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for over thirty years.

Frames of war journalism are polyvalent in that the meanings and interpretations vary across audiences and media cultures. However, discontent with war journalism is significant in the view of scholars who believe that peace journalism offers a more responsible approach to covering conflicts (see McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000; Young, 1991; Baumann & Siebert, 1993; Held, 1997; Botes, 1998; Galtung, 1998; Hagos, 2001; Tehranian, 2002; Howard, 2003; Kempf, 2003; Gilboa, 2006; Bajraktari & Parajon, 2007; Bonde, 2007; Paluck, 2007; Peleg, 2007; Hamelink, 2008; Wolfsfeld, Alimi & Kailani, 2008; Bhaduri, 2009; Bratic, 2009). Peace journalism is about purposefully avoiding news frames that are violence-oriented, elite-oriented, propaganda and victory-oriented (See McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000). The peace journalist will also avoid the use of victimizing terms such as "destitute", "devastated", "defenceless", "pathetic", "tragedy", and demonizing labels such as "vicious", "cruel", "brutal", "barbaric" "terrorist", "extremist", "fanatic", "fundamentalist", and emotive terms such as massacre", "decimated", "genocide", "assassinate". Drawing on Galtung's proposal, these prescriptions can also be considered as important steps the media can take in shifting from war to peace journalism agenda.

Puddephatt (2006) fears that favoring peace might jeopardize objective reporting, but for Roach (1993), objectivity has ambiguously served as one of the major professional justifications for the mass media's contribution to war. Iggers (1998) views objectivity as a pipe dream and product of a flawed epistemology in that it has remained one of the greatest obstacles to the journalist playing a more responsible and constructive role in public life. Glasser (1984) had earlier described objectivity as no more than a ritual to achieve the image of impartiality before the public, while Entman (1989) sees it as a camouflage technique with which to transmit biased information. Peace journalism is not a guarantee of objective reporting but neither is war journalism, because the dominance of a war journalism pattern in any conflict coverage indicates the media bias in favor of war (see McGoldrick, 2006). The question then is: which of the two forms of bias do we prefer in conflict situations, and what are the implications of our choice?

Conclusion

Objective journalism – reporting events as they are, even when they conflict with our individual or corporate interests, seems a difficult undertaking in the media. This is because journalists have not been able to practice it, especially in conflict reporting. Of course, interest always guides media coverage of conflict, in that the media interacts with other influential participants in framing a conflict. Such interest, if properly compassed, is the very starting point and the principal index of media bias.

Our intention in this review was to explain how the war journalism agenda has shaped knowledge production on media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and how the discontents of war journalism underscores the need, and connects to the possibility of a shift to the peace journalism agenda. Analysis of the available literature suggests that the weakness of the index hypothesis in explaining media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is associated with the war journalism agenda that defined the coverage since the start of the conflict. To borrow from McGoldrick (2006), the weakness of the index hypothesis has not been due to lack of objectivity, but because of overindulgent war journalism.

We also suggest that the disconcerting effects of war journalism – in Rwanda and Bosnia for example – prompted direct experimental intervention, which produced results indicating that the media are able to participate in the shaping of peace by applying coverage to the structure of peace in conflict environments (Paluck, 2007; Hagos, 2001; Bratic, 2009). Drawing on the results of these experiments, and the constructive roles played by the media in the Liberian conflict (Lopata, 2009); the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Wu, Sylvester & Hamilton, 2002); the Israeli-Jordanian and Ireland peace process (Wolfsfeld, 2004), we argue that there can be a shift from the war journalism agenda to a peace journalism agenda in media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Tracking this shift will require that current awareness efforts be accompanied by time-series research on the indicators of war and peace journalism using Galtung's classification among other acceptable criteria.

_____
Sidin Ahmad Ishak is a Professor of Media Studies in the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

_____
Yakubu Ozohu-Suleiman is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Media Studies at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. He is also a former Daily Trust Senior Reporter and a Lecturer in Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria

References

Adams, M. (1971). European Media and the Arabs. In A. Jabara and J. Terry (Eds.), *The Arab World from Nationalism to Revolution*. Wilmette: The Medina University Press International.

Alexander, E. (1982). Israel: Scapegoat of the World Media. *Congress Monthly*, 49, May, 4 – 5.

Asi, M. O. (1981b). Arabs Israelis and TV News: A time-series Content Analysis. In W. Adams (Ed.), *Television Coverage of the Middle East.* Norwood, N.J: Ablex Publishing.

Baha el-Din, A. (1971). World Media and the Arabs: an Arab Perspective. In A. Jabara and J. Terry (Eds.), *The Arab World from Nationalism to Revolution.* Wilmette: The Medina University Press International.

Bajraktari, Y. & Parajon, C. (2007). The Role of the Media in Conflict. Retrieved on June 24, 2010 from United States Institute of Peace Website: http://www.usip.org/resources/role-media-conflict \

Bapat, N.A. (2011). Transnational Terrorism, US Military Aid and the Incentive to Misrepresent. *Journal of Peace Research 48(3)*, 303 – 318.

Baumann, M. & Siebert, H. (1993). *The Media as Mediator*. Retreived March 31, 2010 from http://www.beyondintractability.org/articlesummary/10038/

British Broadcasting Corporation. (2006). *Report of the Independent Panel for the BBC Governors on the Impartiality of BBC Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* Retrieved on July 26, 2011 from http://folders.nottingham.edu.cn/staff/zlizrb/2009_IC_NMW/BBC_israelpalestine_panel_report_final_may06.pdf

Beinin, J. (1998). Palestine and Israel: Perils of a Neoliberal, Repressive 'Pax Americana'. *Social Justice 25(4)* 20 – 39.

Bhaduri, A. (2009). *To give Peace a Chance, Make Peace the Story*. Retrieved on May 12, 2011 from http://infochangeindia.org/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7589&pop=1&page=0&Itemid=68

Bonde, B. N. (2007). Introduction to Media in Conflict Prevention and Peace building. In S. Loewenberg and B.N. Bonde (Eds.). *Media in Conflict Prevention and Peace Building Strategies* Bonn: D-W Media services

Botes, J. (1998). *Dialogue of the Deaf: Reframing the Debate over Media and Conflict.* Retrieved on March 31, 2010 from http://ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za/archive/two/7_4/p04_dialogue_ofdeaf.html

Bratic, V. (2009). *Examining Peace Oriented Media in Areas of Violent Conflict.* Retrieved on March 31, 2010 from http://www.sfcg.org/Documents/DME/bratic_peace_oriented_media.df

El-Nawawy, M. & Powers S. (2008). *Mediating Conflict: Al-Jazeera English and the Possibility of a Conciliatory Media.* Los Angeles: FIGUEROA Press.

Entman, R. (1989). *Democracy without Citizens, Media and the Decay or American Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Fahmy, S. & Johnson, T. J. (2007). Show the Truth and Let the Audience Decide: A Web-Based Survey showing Support among Viewers of Aljazeera for the Use of Graphic Imagery. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 51(2),* 245 – 264.

Fair.org (2002). *In U.S. Media, Palestinians Attack, Israel Retaliates.* Retrieved on January 23, 2012 from http://www.fair.org/activism/networkretaliation.html

Feith, D. J. (1980). Israel, the Post, and the shaft. *Middle East Review*, 7(4), 62 – 66.

Galtung, J. (1998). *Peace journalism: What, why, who, how, when, where*. A Paper Presented on September 3–6 at the TRANSCEND workshop – "What are journalists for?" Taplow Court: UK.

Gilboa, E. (2006). *Media and International Conflict: Methodological Issues.* Retrieved on May 03, 2010 from http://www.csclm.org/SympAbstracts.shtml

Glasser, T.L. (1984, February). Objectivity Precludes Responsibility. *The Quill,* p.14.

Hagos, A. (2001). *Media Intervention in Peace Building in Burundi – The Studio Ijambo Experience and Impact.* Washington, DC: MSI-USAID

Hamelink, C. (2008). Media between Warmongers and Peacemakers. *Media, War & Conflict. 1(1),* 77 – 83.

Hanitzsch, T. (2007). Situating Peace Journalism in Journalism Studies: A Critical Appraisal. *Conflict & Communication Online* 6(2).   http://www.cco.regener online.de/2007_2/pdf/hanitzsch.pdf

Held, V. (1997). Media and Political Violence. *The Journal of Ethics 1(2),* 187 – 202.

Howard, R. (2003). *Conflict Sensitive Journalism.* Denmark: IMS and IMPACS

Iggers, J. (1998). *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest* Boulder: Westview

Institute for Economic and Peace & Media Tenor (2011). New Dimensions of Peace – Society, Economy and the Media. *Global Peace Index 2011 Discussion Paper.*

Isaac, R. J. (1980, October 18). Time against Israel. *The New Republic*, 18 –23.

Kandil, M.A. (2009). *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in American, Arab and British Media: Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis.* PhD Dissertations paper 12, Atlanta: Georgia State University.

Karim, M. (2009). *BBC and Aljazeera Coverage of Israeli-Palestinian Violence.* Retrieved on July 23, 2011 from http://www.english.globalarabnetwork.com/200907011472/Media/study-bbc-a-al-jazeera-coverage-of-israeli-palestinian-violence.html

Kempf, W. (2003). Constructive Conflict Coverage – A Social-psychological Research and Development Program. *Conflict & Communication Online, 2(2),* http://deposit.ddb.de/ep/netpub/04/91/97/974979104/_data_dync/2003_2/pdf_20___03_2/kempf_engl.pdf

Kressel N. J. (1987). Biased Judgment of Media Bias: A Case Study of the Arab-Israeli Dispute. *Political Psychology, 8(2),* 212 – 213.

Lee, S. T. & Maslog, C. C. (2005). War or Peace Journalism? Asian Newspaper Coverage of Conflicts *Journal of Communication* 311 – 329.

Levin, D. (2003). Structure of News Coverage of a Peace Process: A Test of the Indexing and Zero-sum Hypotheses *Harvard International Journal of   Press/Politics, 8(4),* 27 – 53.

Lopata, S. (2009). The media's Role in Post-conflict Liberia. Retrieved on March 31, 2010 from http://www.oeaw.ac.at/cmc/wmps/pdf/lopata.pdf

Lynch, J. (2007). Peace Journalism and its Discontents. *Conflict & Communication Online 6(2)*. http://www.cco.regener-online.de/2007_2/pdf/lynch.pdf

Manusov, V. & Milstein, T. (2005). Interpreting Non-Verbal Behaviour: Representation and Transformation Frames in Israeli and Palestinian Media Coverage of the 1993 Rabin-Arafat Handshake. *Western Journal of Communication 69(3)* 183 – 201.

Maoz, I. (2006). The Effects of News Coverage Concerning the Opponent's Reaction to a Concession on its Evaluation in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, 11(4),* 70 – 88.

McGoldrick, A. (2006). War Journalism and Objectivity. *Conflict & Communication Online, 5(2)*, http://www.cco.regener-online.de/2006_2/pdf/mcgoldrick.pdf

McGoldrick, A., & Lynch, J. (2000). *Peace journalism—How to do it.* Retrieved on March 13, 2003 from http://www.transcend.org/pjmanual.htm

Ozohu-Suleiman, Y. & Md. Sidin, A.I. (2012). Constructing Peace with Media: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in Global News Trends. *Malaysian Journal of Media Studies 14(1)*, 47 – 65.

Paluck, E. L. (2007). *Reducing Intergroup Prejudice and Conflict with the Mass Media: A Field Experiment in Rwanda.* A PhD Dissertation. Connecticut: Yale University.

Peleg, S. (2006). Peace Journalism through the Lens of Conflict Theory: Analysis and Practice *Conflict & Communication Online* 5(2), http://www.cco.regener online.de/2006_2/pdf/peleg.pdf

Peleg, S. (2007). In Defense of Peace Journalism: A Rejoinder *Conflict & Communication Online* 6(2), http://www.cco.regener-online.de/2007_2/pdf/peleg.pdf

Peretz, M. (1982b). Lebanon eyewitness. *The New Republic* 187(5), 15 – 23.

Philo, G. & Berry, M. (2004). *Bad News from Israel* London: Pluto Press

Podhoretz, N. (1982). J'accuse. *Commentary* 74(3), 21 – 31.

Puddephatt, A. (2006). Voices of War: Conflict and the Role of the Media *Report of International Media Support* (April 2006). http://www.i-m s.dk/files/publications/Voices%20of%20war.pdf

Raz, H. (2008). Comparative Media System: Haaretz, Aljazeera and CNN Coverage of Israel-Palestinian Conflict. Retrieved on January 12, 2011 from http://islammediaandthewest.blogspot.com/2008/12/comparative-media-   systems-memedia.html

Roach, C. (1993). *Communication and Culture in War and Peace*. Newbury Park: SAGE.

Ruigrok, N. (2008). Journalism of Attachment and Objectivity: Dutch Journalists and the Bosnian War. *Media, War and Conflict* 1(3), 293 – 313.

Said, E. W. (1981). *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World.* New York: Pantheon.

Shinar, D. (2003). The Peace Process in Cultural Conflict: The Role of Media. *Conflict & Communication Online,* 2(1), http://cco.regener online.de/2003_1/pdf_2003_1/shinar.pdf

Shinar, D. (2007). Epilogue: Peace Journalism – The State of the Art. *Conflict & Communication Online,* 6(1), http://www.cco.regener-online.de/2007_1/pdf/shinar_2007.pdf

Shinar, D. (2011). The Media in War and Peace: An Agenda for Thought, Reflection and Action. Retrieved on July 16, 2012 from http://www.sgiquarterly.org/feature2011Apr-8.html

Shlaim, A. (2005). The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process. In L. Fawcett (Ed.), *International Relations of the Middle East.* Oxford: Oxford University Press 241 – 261.

Smith, R. O. (2004). Between Restoration and Liberation: Theopolitical Contributions and Responses to U.S. Foreign Policy in Israel/Palestine *Journal of Church and State 46 (4),* 833 – 860.

Suleiman, M. W. (1968). Mass media and the June conflict. *Arab World* 16(10/11), 59-65.

Suleiman, M. W. (1970). American Mass Media and the June Conflict. In I. Abu-Lughod (Ed.), *The Arab-Israeli confrontation of June 1967: An Arab Perspective.* Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Suleiman, M. W. (1974). National Stereotypes as Weapons in the Arab-Israeli conflict *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3, 114 – 117.

Tehranian, M. (2002). Peace Journalism: Negotiating Global Media Ethics. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 7(2), 58 – 83.

Viser, M. (2003). Attempted Objectivity: An Analysis of the New York Times and Ha'aretz and their Portrayals of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, 8(4),* 114 – 120.

Warshel, Y. (2007). "As Though There is Peace": Opinions of Jewish-Israeli Children about Watching *Rechov Sumsum/Shara'a Simsim* Amidst Armed Political Conflict. *The Communication Initiative Network June 22, 2007.* Retrieved on August 30, 2010 from http://www.comminit.com/en/print/72338

Wolfsfeld, G. (2004). *Media and the Path of Peace.* Cambridge: University Press.

Wolfsfeld, G., Alimi, E. I. & Kailani, W. (2008). News Media and Peace Building in Asymmetrical Conflicts: The Flow of News between Jordan and Israel. *Political Studies.* 56 (2), 374 – 398.

Wu, H. D., Sylvester, J. & Hamilton, J. M. (2002). Newspaper Provides Balance in Palestinian/Israeli Reports. *Newspaper Research Journal,* P.6.

Young, C. (1991). *The Role of Media in International Conflict.* Canadian Institute for Peace and Security, Working Papers No. 38