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# Shooting War Or Peace Photographs? An Examination of Newswires' Coverage of the Conflict in Gaza (2008-2009)

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## Abstract

According to Galtung, a peace journalism frame is one that highlights peace initiatives and tones down differences by promoting conflict resolution. A war journalism frame, in his view, is one that highlights differences between opposing parties, urging violence as means to a resolution. Thus, based on the above classification of these two competing frames of war coverage, this is one of the first studies to empirically test the model via a visual quantitative analysis. Using news photographs, this study analyzes the extent to which the Gaza War (2008-2009) was represented as war versus peace journalism in the three leading Western newswires (Associated Press, Reuters, and AFP/Getty Images). Findings indicate that all three wires combined provided a variety of visual frames to communicate a comprehensive coverage of the event. This observed pattern therefore highlights the role of gatekeeping in providing a broad-based understanding of conflicts. In other words, it becomes crucial to note that photo selections in terms of war versus peace journalism ultimately has an impact in shaping public opinion and influencing perceptions of news events. Furthermore, from a theoretical standpoint, this work expands the classification of war versus peace journalism by operationalizing these frames into concrete pictorial patterns from a visual communication perspective.

## Keywords

media, journalism, framing, visuals, gatekeeping, Gaza War

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Since 1948 and the establishment of the state of Israel, media coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been a matter of extreme sensitivity and attention not just for those who have been directly involved with it but also to international news media and media academics around the globe. On December 27, 2008, after a 6-month truce between Hamas and Israel had expired, Israel launched a major military campaign against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Despite international pressure to stop the conflict, the war continued until January 18, 2009, when Israel ceased fire and announced the end of military operations. Because of Israel's technological superiority and heavy armor, by the end of the war, the Congressional Research Service reported the Israeli death count to be 13 (9 soldiers and 4 civilians) and the Palestinian death count to be 1,440 (Zanotti et al., 2009). Meanwhile, several international organizations, such as the United Nations and the Red Cross, relied on the Palestinians for their own death counts, explaining that at least half of the Palestinian fatalities were women and children (Lazaroff & Katz, 2009). According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR; 2009), 926 civilians were killed and more than 5,300 were wounded. These numbers included 313 dead and 1,606 wounded children.

Using the work of Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung (1986), who viewed war and peace journalism as two competing frames in the coverage of a conflict, this is one of the first visual communication studies to empirically test the relative prominence of these two models of coverage via a quantitative content analysis of photographs. In a nutshell, this study seeks to explain the role of newswires in framing a conflict while expanding the current scholarship on visual framing in terms of war versus peace journalism. Galtung explained that a peace journalism frame would be one that highlights peace initiatives and tones down differences by promoting conflict resolution. A war journalism frame highlights differences between opposing parties, urging violence as means to a resolution. Thus the photographs analyzed in this study examine the extent to which the Gaza War (2008-2009) was represented as war journalism or peace journalism from samples of photographs available from leading Western newswires that have a crucial role in producing and disseminating visual news worldwide. Testing Galtung's model of these visuals via a quantitative visual analysis is particularly important because frames prompt readers to focus on the prevailing frame, shaping public opinion and influencing public perceptions toward a particular conflict.

Although Galtung's concept of peace journalism has received a surplus of normative attention, it has certainly received very little empirical research consideration (e.g., Chung, Fan, & Lessman, 2007; Lee, 2010; Lee & Maslog, 2005; Maslog, Lee, & Kim, 2006; Neumann & Fahmy, 2010). Furthermore, studies that have examined war and peace journalism focused mainly on newspaper stories involving text (e.g., Lee & Maslog, 2005). Other visual studies examining coverage of wars looked at material damage, civilian casualties (Griffin & Lee, 1995) and pro-military/pro-government portrayals (Perlmutter, 1998). However, little attention has been paid to investigate the visual coverage of conflicts in terms of these two competing frames. Thus, from a theoretical perspective, this work seeks to develop the work of Galtung (1986) and other scholars investigating war and peace journalism by operationalizing these two

competing frames in concrete pictorial patterns from a visual communication standpoint. This is important because visuals are different from texts. For example, the literature suggests that visual framing is less obtrusive than the framing that occurs in written parts of print news and in written and spoken parts of broadcast news (see Messaris & Abraham, 2001). This is because of the realistic nature of visuals, their ability to convey the impression that they are actual physical imprints of visual reality, and their ability to imitate the appearance of the real world.

How visual coverage of a Middle Eastern conflict is represented in terms of war versus peace journalism remains a neglected area of scientific inquiry. This study represents an effort to remedy this deficiency. Specifically, the researchers examine the extent to which the visual reporting of the Gaza War varied over time in the three leading Western newswires (Associated Press [AP], Reuters, and AFP/Getty Images). We also explore whether images in these newswires differed in emphasizing the portrayal of suffering across different age groups in the Palestinian and Israeli regions. Finally, we examine the degree to which these images emphasized war versus peace journalism overall.

## News Framing

Framing as a concept has been broadly defined as the process of organizing a news story to convey a particular interpretation of a news event (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999). Reese (2001, 2007) tried to capture the dynamic process of negotiating meaning that occurs in the framing process while highlighting the relationships that may undergo changes over time. He wrote that frames are organizing principles that are “socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (Reese, 2001, p. 11). Former framing studies have mostly used Entman’s (1993) definition suggesting that framing consists of “select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). Few other scholars have focused their framing definitions on specific narratives or interpretations. Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991), for example, described a media frame as “the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (p. 277). Gamson (1992) suggested that a frame is a story line or an organizing idea.

Overall, communication scholars, such as Entman (1993), Iyengar (1991), and Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), explained that framing has been used to construct and define issues using salient aspects of a social reality that is already understood by particular audiences. They explain that media frames have often been used to present issues to the public in ways that are easily understood. In fact, Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) have referred to framing as “modes of presentations that journalists and communicators use in presenting relatively complex issues in a way that makes them accessible to lay audiences” (p. 12).

Theoretically, the concept of peace journalism has been linked to framing theory (see Lee & Maslog, 2005). A thorough review of the literature, however, suggests that very few scholars empirically looked at framing in terms of peace versus war journalism. Furthermore, those who did examined mainly texts of news stories (without visuals; e.g., Chung et al., 2007, Chung, Lessman, & Fan, 2008; Lee & Maslog, 2005; Maslog et al., 2006). Lee and Maslog (2005), for example, used Galtung's (1986) classification to analyze the content of news stories in 10 newspapers to examine the extent to which four Asian regional conflicts were framed as war journalism or peace journalism. Similarly, Chung and colleagues (2008) examined differences in using war journalism versus peace journalism frames in reporting North Korea's 2006 nuclear test by analyzing the text of news stories in newspapers from the United States, China, and South Korea. However, it is important to note that the literature indicates that not all framing processes in the news function similarly. For example, scholars have suggested that the framing process that occurs in visuals differs from the framing process that occurs in texts of news stories.

### Visual Framing of News Events

Messaris and Abraham (2001) explain three distinctive qualities that make visual framing less obtrusive and more effective than verbal or textual framing: their "*iconicity*, their *indexicality*, and especially their *syntactic implicitness*—makes them very effective tools for framing and articulating ideological messages" (p. 220). In other words, because of the realistic nature of visuals, the framing that occurs through visuals is less prominent and potentially more effective in communicating specific interpretation of news events than framing that occurs via print and/or in written and spoken parts of broadcast news. Griffin (2010) writes that since the early 20th century, visual images of war have been used to lend authority to conflict reporting. He explains that in the 1930s, magazine depictions of the Spanish Civil War prompted unprecedented expectations for frontline visual coverage. That media from different cultural and political perspectives create different images of war has led researchers to assert the power of photographs in the interpretation and framing of news events (e.g., Domke, Perlmutter, & Sparrt, 2002; Fahmy, Cho, Wanta, & Song, 2006) and to conduct some visual studies of conflict reporting (e.g., Ayish, 2001; Fahmy, 2010; Fahmy & Kim, 2008; Griffin & Lee, 1995; Herman, 1992; King & Lester, 2005).

Some studies, for example, examined how the mass media used the power of images to depict and frame the first Gulf War. Griffin and Lee (1995) and Herman (1992) found that the U.S. media failed to report the human suffering of Iraqis or to show images of death in the first Gulf War. Meanwhile, the Arab media showed images of suffering to gain public support for the Iraqi people (Ayish, 2001). More recently, the visual coverage of the recent war in Iraq ran very few pictures of civilian casualties from either side (see Fahmy & Kim, 2008; King & Lester, 2005). Fahmy (2010) conducted a framing analysis of photographs examining the contrasting visual narratives employed by English- and Arabic-language transnational newspapers in covering the 9/11 attack and the Afghan War. For the English-language newspaper, the *International*

*Herald Tribune*, the frames emphasized the human suffering of 9/11 and deemphasized the civilian casualties and moral guilt of implementing military force in Afghanistan by focusing more on a pro-war frame that showed the complex military high-technology operations and patriotic pictures. For the Arabic-language newspaper, *Al-Hayat*, the frames emphasized less on the victims and more on the material destruction of 9/11 and humanized the victims of the Afghan War. Furthermore, it focused on an antiwar frame by running visuals of antiwar protests and emphasizing graphic visuals of the Afghan humanitarian crisis. In sum, although news professionals seek to follow guidelines for objective reporting, they can convey a dominant peace or war frame to their audience.

### *The Rise of Peace Journalism*

In an effort to promote a culture of peace, media critics and scholars in recent years urged journalists to favor peace journalism to war journalism. Johan Galtung, one of the first to propose peace journalism as a concept for journalists covering war zones, viewed peace journalism and war journalism as two competing frames in reporting a conflict. In 1965, without specifically coining the concept per se, Galtung and Ruge first articulated the idea in regard to foreign news and conflict reporting. Since then, peace journalism evolved as an alternative and a normative response to challenge traditional war coverage, leading to this groundbreaking journalistic concept of peace journalism in the 1970s (Galtung, 1986, 1998b, 1998c).

As mentioned earlier, most of the literature on peace journalism, with a few exceptions, remains qualitative and normative (e.g., Galtung, 2004; Galtung, Jacobsen, & Brand-Jacobsen, 2002; Hanitzsch, 2004, 2007; Hanitzsch, Loeffelholz, & Mustamu, 2004; Lynch, 2007, 2008; Lynch & Galtung, 2010; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). This body of scholarship, however, provides guidelines and lists that have established the main criteria for peace journalism (see Galtung, 1986, 1998b, 1998c; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001; Lynch, 2007, 2008; Lynch & Galtung, 2010; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005).

According to Galtung (1986), peace journalism is superior to war journalism because it encourages a focus on proactive coverage and nonviolent compromises. To simplify, the peace journalism concept draws on the insights of conflict analysis and transformation by focusing on a more comprehensive and more accurate way of framing stories (Lynch, 2000). The goal is to promote the idea of peace and to provide a more balanced coverage concerning all conflict parties involved while shying away from one-dimensional war reporting (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005).

Decades later, some scholars decided to expand on Galtung's (1986) earlier categorization of war and peace journalism by proposing additional peace journalism-based practices for war coverage, including the following: a focus on solutions, reporting on long-term effects, seeking opinions from and basing reports on common people, reporting on all parties involved or affected, and the use of precise language (e.g., McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000). Lynch and Galtung (2010) further distinguished between war reporting and peace journalism by characterizing the former as a journalist following the low road by focusing on violence, war, and who wins and the latter as one emphasizing the

high road by focusing on conflict and its peaceful transformation (see also Galtung, 1998b). In sum, Lynch and Galtung (2010) started perceiving conflict as an opportunity for progress by “being imaginative, creative, transforming the conflict so that the opportunities take the upper hand” (p. 2). Examples of peace journalism would be framing stories that focus on peace initiatives, minimize cultural and religious differences, and promote conflict resolutions (see Lee & Maslog, 2005, pp. 311-312; see also Galtung, 1986, 1998b, 1998c; Lynch & Galtung, 2010). War journalism, on the other hand, focuses on the reactive coverage of conflicts and on differences between opposing parties of war, urging violence as means to a resolution and promoting further conflicts (Galtung, 1986). Lynch and Galtung (2010) also clarify that war journalism tends to be reactive in such a way that acts of violence must occur before they are reported. In peace journalism, they explain, a proactive stance is usually taken that enlarges the time frame in such a way that reporting takes place before and after a particular conflict.

### *Visual Framing: War Versus Peace Journalism*

Whereas previous scholarship primarily tested the framing theory with regard to written news content, this study focuses on examining editorial photographs provided by elite newswires. Guided by past research (see Lee & Maslog, 2005; Maslog, 1990; Maslog et al., 2006; McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000), the authors illustrate specific war and peace journalism criteria and operational definitions that are applicable to the study of visual messages. For example, consider the difference between emphasizing graphic images of human suffering and death of civilians versus pictures of peace negotiations with elite leaders that could most likely place emphasis on acts of resolution, reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction as a primary alternative or solution (see Galtung, 1998a; McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000). The difference offers a powerful demonstration of how the visual dimension of reporting news events could potentially create a *war journalism* frame (with a particular emphasis on victims and belligerents) and a *peace journalism* frame (with a particular emphasis on negotiators, peace treaties, and demonstrators). To illustrate, Figure 1 represents a typical war journalism frame categorized in this study. It depicts Palestinians carrying the body of former Interior Minister of the Palestinian National Authority and Hamas member Saeed Seyyam during a funeral in Gaza City. On the other hand, Figure 2 shows a typical peace journalism frame categorized in this study. In this image, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is shown during a joint press conference with United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in Ramallah to step up diplomatic efforts to get Israel and Hamas to adhere to a United Nations cease-fire resolution in the Gaza Strip and allow humanitarian aid into the devastated Palestinian territory.

In this study, we consider three additional aspects that help determine whether a visual can be categorized as a war journalism frame or a peace journalism frame: age of subjects and physical and emotional suffering. The extant literature that visually analyzed those factors in combination is fairly limited. For example, consider the different emotions evoked in the viewer when exposed to an image of peaceful protesters





**Figure 1.** An example of a war journalism frame. In this image, Palestinians carry the body of one of the relatives of former Interior Minister Saeed Seyyam during his funeral in Gaza City, on Friday, January 16, 2009. Copyright Oliver Laban-Mattei/AFP/Getty Images.

marching and holding signs (a typical peace journalism frame, as it is operationalized in this project) versus an image showing an angry crowd hurling stones at security forces and setting cars on fire (an example of a typical war journalism frame in this study). Although protesting groups in both pictures demonstrate opposition to the conflict, the latter group more strongly expresses emotion by using violence. Thus, anger-turned-into-violence is a clear indicator for a war journalism frame. In addition, any form of physical suffering (injury, death, etc.) that is visible clearly defines a war journalism frame, whereas the absence of physical suffering may be either a war or peace journalism frame, depending on other factors.

Although all age groups are affected by the crisis (physically and emotionally), they are not necessarily equally affected or depicted as such. In fact, previous literature suggests that children—being at particular risk in conflict situations because of their innocence, dependence, and vulnerability—are often portrayed to evoke stronger emotions in the recipient (Cartwright, 2004). Manzo (2008), for example, argues that children are often depicted as suffering so as to capture the public's attention and call for action (e.g., in the form of donations, protest, support for foreign aid programs; see also O'Dell, 2008). Thus, photographs of children and adolescents have become an essential frame of war narratives in the news, particularly when it comes to the question of legitimacy of wars (Ali & James, 2010; Wells, 2007). Those frames are also largely





**Figure 2.** An example of a peace journalism frame. In this image, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, right, gestures as he speaks during a joint press conference with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at Abbas' compound in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Friday, January 16, 2009. Copyright Associated Press Photo/Muhammed Muheisen.

determined by who releases the images. For example, Ali and James (2010) found that photographs provided by AP framed children as suffering in a refugee camp, whereas a significant amount of visuals released by UNICEF presented children as studying in classrooms, thus possibly creating a more positive, hopeful image in the viewer's mind. Wells (2007) argued that the selection of photographs of children determined the narrative in British news reports, one of liberation (*Guardian*) and one of suffering (*Daily Mirror*). This study therefore considers all three visual aspects (age, physical and emotional suffering) to determine which visual frame is provided by each newswire.

### *The Role of Newswires in the Dissemination of News Photographs*

The gatekeeping concept has long provided a solid ground for understanding how news frames are created (White, 1950). In the visual context, photojournalists winnow down hundreds of potential storytelling photos from the pool of pictures available to them to a select few that run in the media. This process, which is not entirely different from textual gatekeeping, is referred to as visual gatekeeping (i.e., the process includes images but not texts). By and large, the literature suggests that these visual journalists

tend to select images that prompt readers to focus on the prevailing frame of a news report, making this gatekeeping process key to visually framing any news report (see Griffin, 2004). These visuals are largely selected from pools of photos made available by a few Western newswires. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) emphasize the role of newswires in the production and dissemination of news. Wire services, especially the Western ones, provide extensive coverage. According to Rampal (1995), newswires provide more than 75% of nonlocal news worldwide.

The vast majority of news outlets use wire services because they do not always have their own staff at the news event—specifically when it comes to coverage of international events. AP, Reuters, and AFP/Getty Images are described as wholesale suppliers of news, and the news industry depends on them (McQuail, 2005). To accommodate the various needs of these news outlets, wire services thus provide a diverse range of visuals shot by their staff photographers and freelance stringers. For example, AP disseminates photographs among its member publications, and Reuters does the same through its client network.

Therefore, because news outlets receive most of their photographic content from a few wire services, the pools of photographs made available by these wire services are extremely important in identifying the visual frames in newspapers covering news events. Paterson (2001), for example, wrote that substantial selection decisions of photographs are made by the news agencies. In a visual study on gender stereotyping in sports journalism, Wanta and Leggett (1989) found prominent similarities between newswire images and U.S. newspaper images. In other words, they found that photographs made available by wire services are a crucial factor in creating and disseminating visual frames in the news. More recently, Fahmy (2005, 2010) examined news sources along with visual frames and visual devices used to portray 9/11 and the Afghan War in an English-language newspaper versus an Arabic-language newspaper and found that the vast majority (nearly 99%) of images that ran in the two newspapers were from the three leading Western news agencies under study: AP, AFP/Getty Images, and Reuters.

Thus, a review of the literature shows a general agreement among scholars that considerable selection decisions of photographs are made by a few news agencies (e.g., Fahmy, 2005, 2010; Paterson, 2001). Put another way, these few agencies represent a crucial factor in creating the visual frames that we see in the news.

## Research Questions

On the basis of Galtung's (1986) classification of war and peace journalism and subsequent attempts to understand this concept from a normative (e.g., Lynch & Galtung, 2010; Maslog, 1990) and empirical perspective (e.g., Lee & Maslog, 2005; Lee, Ting, Maslog, & Kim, 2006), we proposed three general research questions:

*Research Question 1:* To what extent does the visual coverage of the Gaza War vary over time?

Second, the above discussion suggested that war journalism frames are partly characterized by victimization (with a particular focus on children), physical damage, and emotional suffering. Therefore, we examined whether the three newswires differed in their emphasis on such war journalism frames when it came to depicting the two sides of the Gaza War.

*Research Question 2:* Do the photographs in the three elite newswires differ in emphasizing the portrayal of physical and emotional suffering across different age groups in the Palestinian and Israeli regions?

Finally, our last research question attempted to assess the overall proportion of war and peace journalism frames for each newswire.

*Research Question 3:* Do the photographs in the three elite newswires differ in emphasizing war versus peace journalism frames?

## Method

### Data Collection

This work investigates visual frames provided by three leading newswire services in covering the 2008-2009 Gaza War. Specifically, we collected a random sample consisting of editorial news photographs spanning approximately 5 weeks, ranging from December 20, 2008, to January 25, 2009. Historically, the military conflict lasted 3 weeks. It started on December 27, 2008, with an Israeli air strike in Gaza, and ended on January 18, 2009, with the official (unilateral) announcement of a cease-fire by then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Therefore, we decided to enlarge the time frame by 2 weeks to allow for a trend investigation of the data in visual coverage beyond the actual conflict, guided by our operationalization of peace journalism frames, which tend to emphasize the aftermath of the conflict.

Our data set consisted of photos released by the three major newswires: AP, Reuters, and AFP/Getty Images. Thus the final sample comprised three subsamples (one per newswire) that were similar in size. In selecting the visuals, we used the respective search engines provided by each news agency. We applied the search term *Gaza War* and focused on editorial news content only, thus excluding sports-, business-, travel-, and entertainment-related visuals, among others. We further selected photos that were created (i.e., shot) within the above time frame. Given the vast majority of news photos offered for the 5-week time frame, we had to make some practical decisions. Search results from all wire services taken together added up to slightly more than 26,000 news photographs, with Reuters offering the smallest amount ( $n = 5,225$ ) and AFP/Getty Images offering the largest amount ( $n = 14,283$ ). AP offered 6,689 images. The fairly large number of photos provided by AFP/Getty Images is attributable to the fact that the company, unlike Reuters and AP, is an explicit stock photo agency and has acquired other photo agencies (such as Tony Stone Images) or entered into

partnerships with already established news agencies (e.g., Agence France-Press since 2003) to better promote its editorial material. To get subsample sizes of roughly 200, we used different calculation methods for each newswire on the basis of the number of visuals available in each database. To get a representative sample, we used systematic random sampling and selected every 25th picture from the list of the Reuters search results, every 30th picture from the AP search results, and roughly every 70th picture from the AFP/Getty Images search results.

### *Coding Items*

Guided by past literature (e.g., Lee & Maslog, 2005; Maslog, 1990; Maslog et al., 2006; McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000), the researchers selected the following war and peace journalism criteria and operational definitions to analyze the visual coverage using concrete pictorial patterns in a visual context.

Overall, a total of 647 photos covering the conflict were analyzed; the unit of analysis was a single photograph.<sup>1</sup> For example, every selected photograph depicting events related to the Gaza War was subject to manual coding. This is important because many visuals provided did not depict only military actions that took place in Gaza or Israel. In fact, a substantial amount of photos stemmed from international locations. Each picture was then coded according to specific categories.

*Newswire.* This category identified the newswire from which the subsample was drawn. This included the AP, Reuters, and AFP/Getty Images.

*Regional focus.* This category identified the location in which a particular event took place. Visuals were coded as taking place in the Palestinian territory of Gaza (the Gaza Strip), in Israel (e.g., in the capital of Jerusalem), or at another location abroad (e.g., humanitarian conferences in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, or press conferences in Washington, D.C.).

*Conflict date.* With this category, we simply tracked the evolution of the conflict. As mentioned above, the entire time frame spanned 5 weeks, with the start date being December 20, 2008, and the end date being January, 25, 2009.

*Role.* This category identified four different roles that individuals shown in a picture can perform: "victim," "belligerent," "negotiator," or "demonstrator." It is important to note that what the actors are doing at the time the photograph was taken determined what group they were in or what role they took on.

Examples of victims included suffering civilians or refugees. These also included visuals depicting the theme of destruction (e.g., aerial views of destroyed towns or the devastation of whole swaths of land). Although, strictly speaking, those typically do not depict humans (performing certain actions), we considered them nonetheless relevant and worthy of analysis and classified them as images of victimization.

A belligerent engages in war actions. This role was not necessarily limited to the role of the aggressor but, rather, applied to actors who were hostile to one another. For our purposes, we defined a belligerent as an individual (or a group) who may be glorified or a war hero worshipped by partisans and ideological followers and thus not very

likely to be seen as contributing to peace by a larger public. Specific examples include masked Palestinian militants from Islamic Jihad preparing rockets, Israeli ground forces moving toward Gaza, or violent protesters hurling stones toward police forces or embassies. It is important to note that the violent nature of the actions performed by the individuals (e.g., military actions, rioting, etc.) largely determine the belligerent status, and a specific individual could be categorized as a belligerent in one context whereas in other contexts be categorized differently. Even though belligerent actions are less visible when leaders from one of the two sides are shown, they might still call for a continuation of the violence (or, at least, show a certain indifference or inability to stop it) and thus hamper the peace-building process. For example, Prime Minister of the Palestinian National Authority and leader of Hamas Ismail Haniyeh shown surrounded by other Hamas elites (or then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert shown surrounded by other party elites) conveys a similar frame: one of polarization and perhaps a deadlock situation, indicative of the long-lasting conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, particularly, Hamas (see Marcus, 2007; Scham, Salem, & Poggrund, 2005).

A peace journalism frame, however, would show the two antagonists together engaging in peace talks; undoubtedly, such an image would have a strong symbolic value (for instance, the image of the historical handshake between Rabin and Arafat in 1993). We also identified political and organizational leaders, potentially acting as mediators from countries and regions other than Israel or the Palestinian territories (i.e., nonbelligerents), as negotiators. Those who acted as mediators in the conflict included, for example, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon or then French Minister of Foreign Affairs Bernard Kouchner. Importantly, in cases where foreign leaders were shown with either one of the two conflict parties involved, we also identified them as negotiators because the attempts to negotiate (with outside help) were present (e.g., a meeting between then U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and then Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Zipi Livni).

Last, we coded for demonstrators in cases where people in worldwide locations peacefully protested against the war without doing any physical harm to bystanders or security forces. Examples included antiwar demonstrations in Madrid, Spain, or Sydney, Australia.

On the basis of these role distinctions, we thus created two indices pertaining to *war journalism* (with particular emphasis on the first two categories, victims and belligerents) and *peace journalism* (with particular emphasis on the last two categories, demonstrators and negotiators). Note that each type consisted of one elite-oriented and one people-oriented frame.

**Age.** The majority of the news photographs (91.1%) depicted humans ( $n = 588$ ), for which we tried to identify the age group that was present and dominant in the visual frame. We used a simple dichotomy to allow for age-related comparisons: “children or adolescents” and “adults.” These categories were used only in cases where people were shown (thus excluding those images that show only destroyed infrastructure or clouds of smoke over Gaza). In cases where both age groups were shown in one picture, we determined the group that dominated the action in the visual frame. For example, an

image that shows a Palestinian family with children walking over debris was coded as focusing on the younger age group (regardless of the quantities or proportions between minors and adults). We argue that in most cases, the presence of minors in the photograph attracts the viewer's attention, given children's particularly vulnerable and innocent status in a crisis situation like this. The exceptions to this, however, are images that show big crowds of adult people (such as protesters), often long-shot photographs that might include minors but without their being the center of the action.

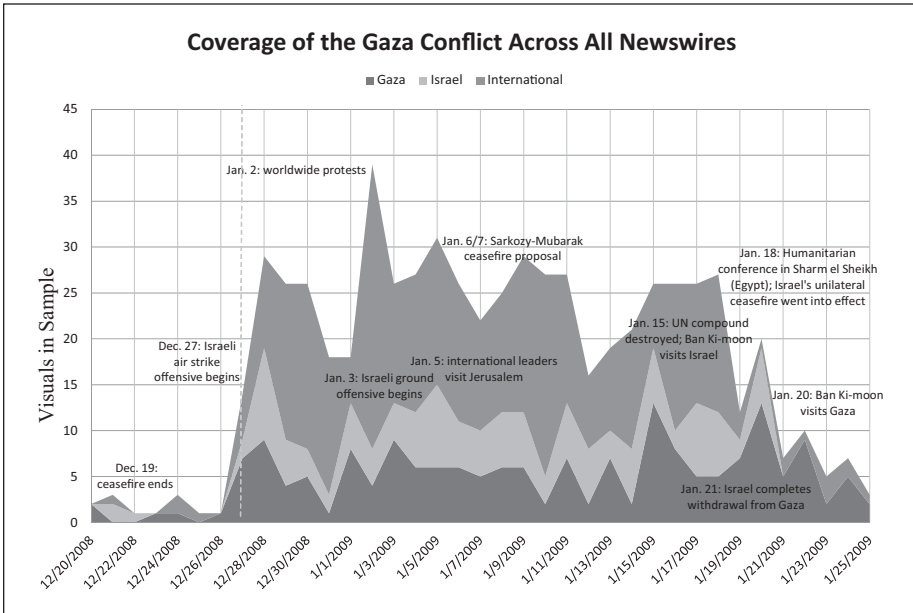
*Physical harm.* With this category, we attempted to assess the extent to which the person shown suffered from any physical harm. The three categories were "not severe," "severe," and "most severe." Visuals were coded as not severe when no clear physical damage was apparent (for example, people demonstrating against the war). Photographs were coded as severe in cases where people were being wounded or were being severely injured (e.g., people having skin abrasions, bleeding, or suffering from loss of extremities). Finally, the most-severe cases showed dead people or bodies being carried in body bags (e.g., at a funeral or in the midst of debris).

*Emotions.* Similar to the latter, we attempted to assess the extent to which the person(s) in the photograph showed any emotion. To be clear, we focused only on cases where emotions of any kind were particularly emphasized. As before, the angle (close-ups in particular) helped determine that emotion. Although we acknowledge that emotional nuances exist, they can barely be mediated in a single picture, nor is it possible to correctly interpret and capture those in a visual content analysis. Thus, instead of using an interval scale or rank-ordering emotions, we decided to dichotomize emotions into "negative" and "positive." Examples of negative emotions included anger, frustration, desperation, sadness, mourning, fear, or pain, among others. Examples of positive emotions included hope, confidence, optimism, redemption, delight, or happiness, among others.

One person completed the content analysis. As a check of reliability, a second person coded approximately 10% of the photographs. For all variables, the rate of agreement was higher than 0.86, which was 0.73 after controlling for agreement by chance (see Scott, 1955).<sup>2</sup> In detail, for role, agreement was 0.88 and 0.83 after controlling for chance. For age, agreement was 0.92 and 0.78 after controlling for chance. For physical harm, agreement was 0.97 and 0.88 after controlling for chance. For emotion, agreement was 0.86 and 0.73 after controlling for chance. For region, agreement was 0.91 and 0.85 after controlling for chance. For both newswire and date, the agreement was 1.0.

## Results

Research Question 1 explored the changes in visual coverage over time to analyze whether the Gaza War was primarily characterized by war or peace journalism frames. As outlined before, war journalism typically stops reporting when the conflict is over, whereas peace journalism stays on and reports the aftermath of the war. The timeline shown in Figure 3 illustrates that the amount of coverage of the Gaza War varied over time. It also demonstrates that the visual coverage dropped toward the end, thus suggesting



**Figure 3.** A timeline showing the visual coverage of the Gaza War across AP, AFP/Getty Images, and Reuters newswires from December 20, 2008, to January 25, 2009 (N = 647).

war journalism. In particular, the reduced number of photographs made available by the newswires toward the end of the conflict shows that the international news media, at least the elite newswires, quickly lost interest in covering the conflict.

As discussed above, the conflict officially started with the Israeli air strike offensive on December 27, 2008, which was directed at strategic targets that were known to be occupied by Hamas leaders. Before that date, visual coverage was fairly limited in scope and almost equally divided between Gaza and Israel. The cease-fire between Hamas and Israel ended on December 19, 2008, and the week following that event was marked by rockets fired into Israeli mainland by Hamas militants. After the Israeli air strike, the conflict coverage quickly gained momentum. First protests in front of Israeli embassies were formed toward the end of the year, but this was largely limited to the Arab world and the vicinity of the Holy Land. For instance, our data indicate that the first antiwar demonstrations took place in Amman (Jordan), Ankara (Turkey), or Beirut (Lebanon). Interestingly, coverage of the conflict itself fell short a few days after it started, as coverage of international locations became more prevalent. Immediately following New Year's Eve, the conflict-related visual coverage reached its maximum with a plethora of antiwar manifestations around the globe (including the Middle East, Europe, the United States, and Australia). On January 3, 2009, Israel started its ground offensive, which again gained momentum and drew closer attention to the conflict on



both sides of the Gaza-Israeli border. In general, the visual coverage of Gaza remained fairly stable over time with recurring themes, as will be discussed below. Israel received considerably more visual coverage in the week following New Year's Eve, when several international leaders visited Jerusalem to negotiate a first cease-fire agreement. For example, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who played a crucial role in negotiating between Israelis and Arabs, met with Israeli President Shimon Peres and then Leader of the Opposition Benjamin Netanyahu and, shortly after, with then Egyptian President Mubarak to develop a cease-fire proposal on January 7. Additionally, the visits of several European leaders—such as the Special Envoy of the Quartet on the Middle East Tony Blair; French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner; and the then European Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner—received the most coverage. International protests gradually lost their symbolic value, and conferences abroad took center stage, such as the humanitarian conference in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, on January 18.

After days of slowly decreasing overall coverage of the Gaza War, the news provided a new spin when Israeli rockets destroyed a UN compound in Gaza City on January 15. At the same time, Ban Ki-moon visited Jerusalem to negotiate on behalf of the UN. Not surprisingly, both Israel and Gaza received substantially more coverage than before. In fact, the event—highly controversial and therefore newsworthy—led to the highest visual news coverage of the conflict across the entire time period. Following the summit in Sharm el Sheikh on January 18, Israel officially declared a unilateral cease-fire. It went into effect the following day, and international coverage quickly became marginal: Protests stopped and no further international conference took place. Newswire coverage was almost exclusively concentrated on the region itself. For a second time, both Gaza and Israel received the most coverage, when UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Gaza City and Israelis were withdrawing their last troops from the Gaza Strip on January 20. Apparently having lost most of its newsworthiness, the amount of visual coverage was then drastically reduced so that the immediate postwar coverage (1 week after its official ending) nearly reached the prewar level (1 week prior to its official beginning), thus representing coverage guided by war journalism standards.

Research demonstrates that graphic images in general are perceived to have powerful effects on the public (Fahmy & Wanta, 2007) because they “increase levels of concerns with the issue being covered” (Fahmy & Johnson, 2007, p. 247). This particularly applies to visuals depicting physical and/or emotional suffering. Hence, our second research question asked whether there is a difference in depicting physical and emotional harm across certain age groups in either Gaza or Israel. Findings are presented in Table 1. Roughly one in three Palestinian children or adolescents was shown dead (6.1%) or (severely) injured (24.5%). This proportion is even bigger than for Palestinian adults: Approximately one out of four adults was depicted dead (11.5%) or (severely) injured (12.5%). With regard to Israel, no children or adolescents were shown as physically harmed, and only few adults were shown dead (1.0%) or (severely) injured (4.8%).

**Table 1.** Frequency and Percentages of Images Depicting the Gaza War Showing Physical Harm ( $n = 258$ ) and Emotions ( $n = 99$ ) by Region and Age Group

Physical harm/ Emotions	Children and adolescents		Adults		Overall	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Gaza Strip						
Dead	6.1	3	11.5	11	9.7	14
Injured	24.5	12	12.5	12	16.6	24
No physical harm	69.4	34	76.0	73	73.8	107
Negative emotions	96.7	29	97.7	42	97.3	71
Positive emotions	3.3	1	2.3	1	2.7	2
Israel						
Dead	—		1.0	1	0.9	1
Injured	—		4.8	5	4.4	5
No physical harm	100.0	8	94.2	99	94.7	107
Negative emotions	100.0	3	60.9	14	65.4	17
Positive emotions	—		39.1	9	34.6	9

Note: Comparing differences in depicting physical harm between Palestinians in Gaza and Israelis yielded  $\chi^2(2) = 20.05, p < .001$ . Because cell frequencies were smaller than five, a Fisher exact test was performed comparing differences in portrayal of emotions between Palestinians in Gaza and Israelis, yielding  $\Phi = -.45, p < .05$ .

The differences in depicting physical harm between the two belligerents are statistically significant,  $\chi^2(2) = 20.05, p < .001$ . This reflects the number of noncombatant war casualties reported on both sides. Among Israelis, 3 civilians were killed and 183 were wounded, according to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA, 2009). Casualty numbers for Palestinians (both combatants and noncombatants) vary, with official reports ranging from 1,166 (according to the Israeli Defense Forces, 2009) to 1,440 (according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, 2009). The PCHR (2009), which distinguishes between combatants and non-combatants in its report, referred to a total of 1,417 war casualties, including 926 dead civilians and, among them, 313 minors younger than 18. The Ministry of Health in Gaza provides slightly higher numbers: a total of 1,440 war casualties and, among them, 431 minors. Additionally, 5,380 were injured; and among them were 1,872 minors (see UNOCHA, 2009). The differences in numbers notwithstanding, the disproportionate number between Israeli and Palestinian war casualties led to different foci: Pictures of Israel mostly highlighted property damage rather than civilian loss (e.g., photographs depicting Israeli classrooms destroyed by rockets from Gaza), whereas pictures of Gaza primarily highlighted civilian losses, particularly among children, rather than property damage (with partially graphic depictions of children's bodies).

**Table 2.** Frequency and Percentages of Images Depicting the Gaza War Per Newswire: Emphasizing War Actions Versus Attempts to Call for Peace (N = 585)

Role	AP		Reuters		AFP/Getty Images		Overall	
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Victim	32.5	67	26.3	50	31.7	60	30.3	177
Belligerent	15.0	31	30.0	57	28.0	53	24.1	141
War focus	47.6	98	56.3	107	59.8	113	54.4	318
Negotiator	13.6	28	7.9	15	8.5	16	10.1	59
Demonstrator	38.8	80	35.8	68	31.7	60	35.6	208
Peace focus	52.4	108	43.7	83	40.2	76	45.6	267
Overall	100	206	100	190	100	189	100	585

Note: Differences comparing the four identified roles yielded  $\chi^2(6) = 17.7, p < .01$ . After dichotomization of roles into war and peace indices, differences comparing war and peace yielded  $\chi^2(2) = 6.4, p < .001$ .

With regard to emotions, visuals were considered for analysis only when they actually emphasized some sort of emotion. This emphasis led to an exclusion of many visuals that either showed no people (typically long shot) or showed people without highlighting their (facial) expressions (typically medium or long shot). Furthermore, we did not include all those pictures shot in countries outside Israel or Gaza. As a result, only a fairly small sample was subject to analysis ( $n = 99$ , including 73 cases pertaining to Gaza and 26 cases pertaining to Israel). Differences regarding the portrayal of emotions of Palestinians in Gaza and Israelis were found to be statistically significant,  $\Phi = -.45, p < .05$ .<sup>3</sup> As expected, emotions of Palestinians were almost exclusively negative (regardless of age), ranging from sadness and grief to anger and frustration (97.3%), and only a few instances featured signs of hope and optimism (2.7%). The emotions expressed among Israelis were different, with roughly two thirds expressing negative feelings and the remaining third expressing feelings of hope, confidence, or optimism.

Our last research question was proposed to indicate the degree to which the three newswires engaged in war or peace journalism. First, we assessed the roles the individuals performed. They were categorized as victims, belligerents, negotiators, or demonstrators, where the latter two were found to promote peace more directly and therefore contribute to peace journalism. Hence, we considered them peace journalism frames. Examples included international political leaders engaging in peace negotiations and antiwar protesters around the world expressing feelings of sympathy and commiseration. In contrast, victims and belligerents may be seen as maintaining the status quo and thus less likely to contribute to peace. Therefore, we considered these portrayals war journalism frames. Examples included dead and wounded civilians, damaged infrastructure, and visuals showing Hamas leaders or Israel’s political elites.

The findings illustrated in Table 2 uncover some differences regarding the visual coverage of the conflict by the newswires. Both Reuters (56.3%) and AFP/Getty Images (59.8%) focused more on the war than on peace-related figures and actions (43.7% and 40.2%), whereas AP demonstrated a slightly more positive stance in that it covered fewer war-related instances (47.6%) and more peace-related actions and persons (52.4%). Differences regarding the four identified roles were statistically significant,  $\chi^2(6) = 17.7, p < .01$ , and the imbalance between war and peace journalism frames across all three newswires also yielded statistical significance,  $\chi^2(2) = 6.4, p < .05$ . To conclude, the AP provided slightly more peace journalism frames by shifting the focus away from the actual conflict toward external events (e.g., peace demonstrations). A closer examination reveals that AP deemphasized the role and significance of those who have been glorified for their military actions on both sides of the conflict (15% of all AP visuals), compared to Reuters (30%) and AFP/Getty Images (28%). However, all three newswires showed largely similar proportions in depicting victimized people (approximately 30%). Further differences existed in portraying negotiators and demonstrators: AP covered more persons in the negotiator (13.6%) or the protester role (38.8%) compared to both Reuters (7.9% and 35.8%) and AFP/Getty Images (8.5% and 31.7%). As discussed above, the relatively strong emphasis on peace journalism frames came at a cost of depicting war journalism frames, particularly, those showing belligerents. In so doing, the AP may also reduce the potential of ideologically more biased coverage.<sup>4</sup>

Additional analyses revealed that AP was also highest in covering international locations (57.5%), and AFP/Getty Images was lowest in portraying international spots (42.1%) (but highest in depicting Gaza). Given that international locales often featured peace demonstrators and negotiators (the two variables, role and location, were found to be correlated; Cramer's  $V = .703$ ), it can be argued that AFP/Getty Images was more likely than others to engage in war journalism practices. Thus, it can be assumed that the three leading newswires are serving very different purposes and markets: the AP with its focus on external events, thus qualifying for peace journalism; AFP/Getty Images with its focus on the conflict itself, thus qualifying for war journalism; and Reuters as ranging in between, with elements of both but tending toward war journalism. With that said, we might state that the type of visual coverage by the newswire services has a complementary role to be able to communicate a comprehensive coverage.

## Discussion

The goal of this study was to address the extent to which the Gaza War (2008-2009) was represented as war versus peace journalism in photographs available from the three leading Western newswires services (AP, Reuters, and AFP/Getty Images). In particular, using the work of Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung (1986), who viewed war and peace journalism as two competing frames in conflict reporting, this is one of the first visual communication studies to empirically test the model via a content analysis of news photographs.

Our first research question centered on the coverage of the progression of the war. We found that across all three newswires, the visual coverage was lowest before the outbreak of the crisis and after the conflict was officially over, thus representing coverage determined by typical war journalism practices (reactive and victory oriented). Second, we also found that nearly one in three children or adolescents in the images were depicted as wounded or dead—almost exclusively in the images in Gaza. As commonly known, the Gaza War quickly became the subject of controversy because of its high death toll among children in the Gaza Strip (see PCHR, 2009).<sup>5</sup> On the Israeli side, only a few visuals exposed injured or dead adults, and none showed children who lost their lives (UNOCHA, 2009). Overall, the pool of visuals including children outnumbered the pool of photographs featuring adults. Negative emotions dominated the images and perhaps resulted in further demoralization of Palestinian citizens. In contrast, signs of hope and optimism were more common for visuals depicting Israelis and, by and large, more common toward the end of the military operations.

Similar to the textual findings by Lee and colleagues (2006), we conclude that all three foreign newswires combined provided more war journalism frames than peace journalism frames but that each served different purposes and news markets during the Gaza War: the AP with a stronger focus on external events, such as antiwar demonstrations and international summits (thus qualifying for peace journalism), and AFP/Getty Images with a stronger focus on the conflict itself and its belligerents (thus qualifying for rather conventional war journalism that is high in news value). Indeed, among the three wire services, AP was most likely to provide media outlets with photographs highlighting peace journalism frames, with a strong people-oriented focus (victims and demonstrators) but also a particular emphasis on international negotiations and summit meetings (and thus less on the two conflict parties). Thus, to some degree, we can argue that AP was more distant to the conflict. In other words, by emphasizing international negotiations, diplomatic efforts and large-scale public reactions in the form of worldwide antiwar movements, AP might contribute to peace more directly. This finding is largely consistent with previous research on other long-lasting conflicts (Lee, 2010; Neumann & Fahmy, 2010). Furthermore, according to Lee and colleagues (2006), textual war frames usually prevail in foreign wire services regarding the coverage of both local and international conflicts (as opposed to locally produced stories). This emphasis on war journalism was shown by both Reuters and AFP/Getty Images. Reuters provided a larger number of Israel-related visuals than Gaza-related visuals but also placed emphasis on international summits. AFP/Getty Images demonstrated the strongest focus on the conflict with the highest proportion of images of both Gaza and Israel (with the former outweighing the latter), but this came at a cost of covering the actions of international leaders. In contrast to AP, the other two seemed less distant to the conflict, so their images would qualify as what journalists would call traditional “war correspondence” or on-site coverage. Thus, by emphasizing human suffering and (para-)military actions, the two newswires might contribute to peace rather indirectly in that they created and increased significant (public) pressure on political elites to stop war actions and resolve the conflict.<sup>6</sup> Most importantly, for all newswires, both forms of journalism were at work but to varying degrees. The importance of news judgment in

visual framing becomes evident, which might explain the preponderance of war journalism frames. Last, we can argue that in our case, the visual coverage in terms of war versus peace journalism played a rather complementary than a competitive role. In other words, beyond just reporting, they might have pursued the same goal (to bring an end to the conflict) but by using different means (highlighting apparent war images versus antiwar images).

### *Broader Implications and Future Research*

This study presented a quantitative contribution to visual communication studies. Based on the work of Galtung (1986) and other scholars (e.g., Lee & Maslog, 2005) that investigated war versus peace journalism in texts of news stories, this study measured the framing of the conflict in Gaza by examining the two competing frames from a visual perspective. Thus, from a theoretical standpoint, this work expands the categorization of war versus peace journalism by proposing additional categories to be used in examining the visual reporting of a conflict. It expands the work of Galtung and other communication scholars who investigated war and peace journalism by operationalizing these two frames in concrete pictorial patterns.

Based on our pictorial categories, our results showed that the three leading Western newswire services (AP, Reuters, and AFP/Getty Images) combined provide a complementary role to communicate a broad-based perspective of the conflict to their member publications and client networks. This observed pattern puts greater emphasis on the role of visual gatekeepers (photo editors) in providing a better understanding of wars and conflicts to their readers. In other words, news selection from the pool of available photographs is key in how audiences visually experience a conflict. In fact, these findings further complement previous literature on news sourcing that suggests Western news agencies provide a variety of visual images to be framed differently by different media (see Fahmy, 2005, 2010).

In conclusion, it is hoped that the results of this study generate future hypotheses to examine the visual gatekeeping process and to visually investigate the effects of war versus peace journalism on public perceptions and policy making. Future studies should also expand the scope of this study to include an examination of photo captions and a larger number of news outlets and conflicts. Investigating coverage using these two competing frames from a visual perspective appears to provide an excellent opportunity for future research. More importantly, it is hoped that this work encourages wider acceptance among news professionals (including photojournalists) and more attention among visual communication scholars regarding the overall promotion of peace journalism. Finally, the authors acknowledge the case examined here does not provide a sufficient basis for determining whether the visual framing of the conflict in Gaza is common to other wars and conflicts worldwide. Indeed, more research is needed to examine other conflict regions for a more extended time period to draw more generalizable and holistic conclusions.

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## Notes

1. Although our final sample size appears to be small in view of the total amount of newswire pictures available during that time frame, it is nonetheless representative. It should be noted that particularly with regard to AFP/Getty Images, many of the pictures in the database were repetitive in that the same event was shot from different angles or the photographers used different image orientations (landscape, portrait), additional black-and-white colorations, or varying image resolutions.
2. Reliability checks for all variables yielded acceptable agreement levels according to Neuendorf (2003).
3. Note that for age comparisons for each region, some expected cell frequencies are smaller than five. For a chi-square test, at least 80% of the cells must have an expected frequency of five or greater, and no cell may have an expected frequency of smaller than one. As an appropriate way to measure statistical differences on this level, we therefore conducted a Fisher exact test of association. However, these figures should be taken with caution, given the small sample size, especially after including age as another independent variable.
4. It should be mentioned that our continuum does not range from “peace promotion” to “war promotion.” Furthermore, despite the news value conflicts may bear, we simply assume that no journalist pursues the goal of promoting war. Instead, forms of peace promotion may be found along a continuum ranging from more direct forms to rather indirect forms. Therefore, depictions of war cruelties, including military movements and civilian suffering, “promote” war but, rather, contribute to peace on a more indirect route (i.e., by publicly evoking a call for action). Thus we labeled these as war journalism frames. These may emphasize the status quo more than do peace journalism frames. However, this is not to say that these depictions did not lead to peace at the end. In fact, they might do this vicariously, that is, via public responses to a conflict and the resulting public pressure on political elites.
5. It should also be noted that Gaza has an overwhelmingly young population. More than half (50.2%) of the population of Gaza City are 14 years and younger. An additional 10.5% are between 15 and 19 years old (for the latest census data, see Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997). The death toll among minors and children, ranging between 22% and 30%—as reported, for example, by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, the Palestinian Ministry of Health, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2009—is nonetheless disturbingly high.
6. In other words, this is not to say that these depictions do not lead to peace at the end. In fact, they might have done this vicariously, for example, via public responses to a conflict and the resulting public pressure on political elites.



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