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Rune Ottosen


Zum Autor:
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The purpose of this paper is to investigate, through content analyses of articles in *The New York Times* and the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten*, how these papers have reported on the legal aspects of drone strikes in international conflicts. Drones have been deployed in US military operations at least since the October 2001 air strikes in Afghanistan. Using critical discourse analysis and framing theory, selected texts were examined in which the two newspapers reported on the topic of drone strikes. Drawing on a report of an April 2010 hearing in the US House of Representatives, this paper discusses the legality of deploying drones in international conflicts. The author concludes that in their reportage on US drone strikes the newspapers failed as watchdogs for the relevant legal issues.

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Underreporting the legal aspects of drone strikes in international conflicts: A case study of how Aftenposten and The New York Times cover drone strike

Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to investigate, through content analyses of articles in The New York Times and the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten, how these papers have reported on the legal aspects of drone strikes in international conflicts. Drones have been deployed in US military operations at least since the October 2001 air strikes in Afghanistan. Using critical discourse analysis and framing theory, selected texts were examined in which the two newspapers reported on the topic of drone strikes. Drawing on a report of an April 2010 hearing in the US House of Representatives, this paper discusses the legality of deploying drones in international conflicts. The author concludes that in their reportage on US drone strikes the newspapers failed as watchdogs for the relevant legal issues.

1. Introduction

Drones are unmanned aircraft used for surveillance and military air strikes, operated by remote control from bases around the globe. The main objective of this paper is to investigate how the use of drones was reported on in a sample of articles from the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten and The New York Times (NYT). Why were Aftenposten and The New York Times chosen for this investigation? They are both regarded as leading mainstream newspapers in their respective countries. Since news reportage in the mainstream media tends to reflect the security policy of their country, the coverage in the two newspapers can also be seen in relation to the historically close cooperation between Norway and the USA as NATO allies (van Dijk 1988). Both Aftenposten and the NYT are important participants in the public debate on serious political and legal issues in their respective countries.

Based on findings from earlier research, the hypotheses for this study are that the framing of the use of drones in Aftenposten’s coverage was influenced by how The New York Times covered the issue, and that the legal issues are underreported in daily news coverage. Since it joined NATO in 1949, Norway has been a reliable partner of the US in the global arena. Despite some disagreements, such as on US policy in Central America during the 1980s, several different Norwegian governments have sided with the US on most important issues in international relations (Ottosen 2004). Since the fall of communism in the Soviet bloc, Norway has taken part in the NATO missions of the IFOR- and SFOR-forces in Bosnia, the KFOR-forces in Kosovo, and provided military support during the bombing of Serbia in 1999. Norway also participated in the US Enduring Freedom operation, with Norwegian special forces engaged in fighting against the Taliban and in the hunt for al-Qaeda terrorists. Norway also took an active part in the US Coalition side more than did media in the nonaligned countries. Media in Germany and Norway were also more likely to repeat the concrete content of US propaganda (such as framing Saddam Hussein as the “new Hitler”) than were media in

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Journalism in the New World Order

In this study of newspaper reportage, I draw upon findings of the project “Journalism in the New World Order” (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2001), an international project involving comparative research on the media reporting of the 1990-91 Gulf War. In the project, 4,098 news items from television broadcasts and newspapers in six countries were analyzed for the period from August 1991 to January 1993. The European part of the sample included two NATO member countries, Germany and Norway, and two nonaligned countries, Finland and Sweden. Media in the NATO member countries used sources on the US Coalition side more than did media in the nonaligned countries. Media in Germany and Norway were also more likely to repeat the concrete content of US propaganda (such as framing Saddam Hussein as the “new Hitler”) than were media in

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented to The International Peace Research Association (IPRA), Mie University, Japan from 24 to 28 November 2012.
Finland and Sweden. The same pattern is evident when it comes to reportage on the UN's role—in NATO countries, media do not give this as much attention and are not as positive as the media in nonaligned countries. Similar patterns can also be found in the coverage of the Iraq war and the “Global War on Terror” (GWT) (Nohrstedt 2001; Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2004, 2012). Earlier research has also concluded that mainstream media coverage of security policy issues seems to reflect the orientation of foreign and security policy in a given country (van Dijk 1988).

2.2 McCombs' theory of agenda setting

I also draw upon Maxwell McCombs' theory of agenda setting by underlining the influence of elite news sources and the role of journalists' perceptions of news values in shaping the media agenda (McCombs 2004). The idea that institutional values and beliefs and legal issues contribute to news framing is vital for understanding how the news is handled in everyday newsroom routines. Previous studies have also underlined how legal issues are blurred in the coverage of international conflicts, because an objective analysis of whether or not a given military intervention is legal may conflict with the short-term interests of national politicians (Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2012). This is of particular interest in a Norwegian context, since traditionally Norwegian politicians have been eager to operate within the framework of the UN and international law. In a comprehensive study, Norwegian Law Professor Ståle Eskeland concluded that Norway violated international law by taking part in NATO operations without a UN mandate during the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 and by providing military support for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Eskeland further judges that this violated Norway's policy principle to take part only in UN-mandated international military operations (Eskeland 2011). Despite these serious reservations, Norwegian media have been reluctant to cover such legal issues (see also Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2014, forthcoming). A recent study suggests that the legal aspects of Norwegian military operations in Afghanistan are underreported in the mainstream media (Eide & Ottosen 2013). In academic journals, leading international law scholars have questioned several decisions by the Norwegian government with relevance for Norway's participation in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan (Ulfstein 2003, Eskeland 2001), and yet these issues are rarely addressed by Norwegian news media (Eide & Ottosen 2013: 14-15). Since Norway is allied with the USA in the Global War on Terror (GWT) in Afghanistan, the use of drones also has political and legal relevance for Norway.

2.3 Johan Galtung's theory of peace journalism

Relevant for this investigation is also Johan Galtung's model of war and peace journalism (Ottosen 2010). The theory of peace journalism builds on the dichotomy between what Galtung calls the approaches of "war journalism" and "peace journalism." His model includes four main points of contrast between the two approaches. 1. War journalism is violence-oriented, propaganda-oriented, elite-oriented and victory-oriented. It is often combined with a dualistic approach to conflict, seen as a zero-sum game where the winner takes all (as in sports journalism). A potential consequence is that war journalism contributes to escalating conflicts by reproducing propaganda and thereby encouraging continued violence (Galtung, 2002). 2. The peace journalism part of the model takes a moral and ethical point of departure, acknowledging the fact that media themselves play a role in the propaganda war. It involves a conscious choice to support peace: to identify alternative options for readers/viewers by offering a solution-oriented, people-oriented and truth-oriented approach. This, in turn, implies a focus on possible proposals for peace that the parties to the conflict (if they want to) could fight in. Peace journalism is people-oriented in the sense that it gives a voice to the voiceless. It is also truth-oriented, in the sense that it uncovers and exposes dishonest claims on all sides and investigates the role of propaganda as a means of perpetuating war (ibid.: 261-270). In the context of this study, a focus on short-term success in violent attacks on suspected al-Qaeda militants, without taking into consideration the negative consequences for the affected civilian population and the legal issues involved, appears to fall under the "war journalism" approach.

3. Drone strikes – some background details

Since 2001, the United States has been arming Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), or drones, with missiles. They were first employed in combat early in October 2001. One of the first known controversial uses of drones was in Yemen in 2002, when specifically named individuals were killed. It was later revealed that for legal reasons the US Air Force (which was deploying drones at the time) had declined to conduct that mission; the CIA took over the operation and was willing to see it through (US Congress 2010:50). This appears to have paved the way for later drone deployment, in which the CIA organized and directed US drone strikes in Iraq and since 2004 against targets in Pakistan, Yemen, Afghanistan and Somalia. The number of drone strikes in Pakistan surged dramatically in 2008 and continued to climb in 2009; the numbers doubled between 2009 and 2010, and they became a key weapon in the warfare against al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Drone strikes have thus been a cornerstone of the Obama administration's military strategy. According to the report "Living Under Drones," 3,000 terrorists have been killed by drones, while as many as 800 civilians have also lost their lives as "collateral
damage." According to Jeremy Scahill's documentary film "Dirty Wars," 3,180 people were killed in Pakistan between 2004 and 2013 (Borgen 2013). In January 2012, President Obama made a rare acknowledgement of the use of drones during a video talk on Google+ . He claimed that the drone strikes, carried out by the CIA rather than the military, were a "focused effort targeted at people who are on a list of active terrorists" (quoted from Amnesty International 2011). In another speech in May 2013, the President seemed to take cognizance of criticisms leveled against the use of drones and promised to restrict unmanned air strikes, shifting their operation from the CIA to the US military (NYT 22 May 2013). The report "Living Under Drones: Death, Injury, and Trauma to Civilians From US Drone Practice in Pakistan" describes the negative effects on civilians of drone strikes. It was published by the Stanford Law School International Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic and the New York University School of Law Global Justice Clinic. In several points, the report underlines the serious consequences of drone attacks for the civilian population in the areas most heavily affected. While the press regularly reports on al-Qaeda suspects killed by drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen or Somalia, it is the civilian population that suffers the most from the attacks:

"... US drone strike policies cause considerable and under-accounted-for harm to the daily lives of ordinary civilians, beyond death and physical injury. Drones hover twenty-four hours a day over communities in north-west Pakistan, striking homes, vehicles, and public spaces without warning. Their presence terrorizes men, women, and children, giving rise to anxiety and psychological trauma among civilian communities." (Living Under Drones 2012: vii)

4. **Legal context: legal issues and the "Global War on Terror" (GWT).**

The use of drones must, in my opinion, ultimately be seen in the context of the so-called "Global War on Terror" (GWT), where legal issues have also been underreported (Cole 2003). In his book *Enemy Aliens*, David Cole focuses on the treatment of suspected foreign nationals in the war on terror by so-called military tribunals (which operate outside the US judicial system). According to Cole, the lack of legal protection for suspected terrorists, who are subject to abuse and torture during interrogation, reflects an attitude of the US government that foreign nationals are not entitled to the same legal protections as American citizens (Cole 2003: 211). One consequence of this belief is a high level of torture and physical abuse of detainees by US forces and their allies during the "war on terror." Larry Siems examined over 140,000 government documents to prove that the level and amount of force used outside a legal framework is dramatically higher than has been acknowledged by US officials and the mainstream media (Siems 2011: 14-17). In my opinion, the systematic use of drones to kill suspected terrorists can be regarded in the same context. A complicating legal issue is related to the fact that four US citizens have already been killed in drone attacks. In an official statement, US Attorney General Eric Holder also defended the killing of two US citizens by drone attacks in 2011, when Anwar al-Awlaki and Samir Khan were killed as al-Qaeda suspects in northern Yemen (Klassekampen, 7 March 2012). The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) protested against Holder's statements and expressed concern about the future of human rights in America (ibid.). When US officials defend the use of drones, they chiefly invoke the right of self-defense in the GWT. On 5 February 2013, NBC published a government white paper justifying the position that under certain circumstances US citizens could actually be killed by their own government outside the United States. Stipulated was that the targeted individual must be "a senior, operational leader of al-Qaeda or an associated force of al-Qaeda." The targeted person could be attacked, "without violating the Constitution or the federal statutes discussed in this white paper under the following conditions: (1) an informed, high-level official of the US government has determined that the targeted individual poses an imminent threat of violent attack against United States..." (Department of Justice 2013).

4.1 **Legal controversy over use of drones**

Speaking publicly in May 2013, President Obama gave a rare legal defense of drone strikes when he declared that the US was still at war with terrorist groups like al-Qaeda. "We are at war with an organization that right now would kill as many Americans as they could if we did not stop them first. So this is a just war – a war waged proportionally, as a last resort, and in self-defense," Obama declared at the National Defense University in Washington, DC (Frumin 2013). This "self-defense" argument is the main legal justification used by US officials for targeting both foreign nationals and US citizens (US Congress 2010). The president summarized the legal guidelines for the use of armed drones as follows, "I don't believe it would be constitutional for the government to target and kill any US citizen... Nor should any president deploy armed drones over US soil. But when a US citizen goes abroad to wage war against America and is actively plotting to kill US citizens... his citizenship should no more serve as a shield than a sniper shooting down an innocent crowd should be protected from a swat team" (quoted from Frumin 2013).

There are many legal aspects involved in the issue of drone use. While they cannot all be addressed in this paper, one fundamental question will be central to the discussion: Is it legal for one country to make drone strikes in another country, if the two countries are not officially at war? Some US politicians have condemned drone strikes, including former Representative Dennis Kucinich (Democrat from Ohio). He argued that when used against countries that are not at war with the
US, drones violate international law (De Beer 2011). An important legal issue often mentioned in the debate on the use of drones is that the drone strikes were conducted by the CIA in close cooperation with US President Obama. This means that the US Congress was not involved in the decision-making process, as is the case when conventional military operations involving US personnel take place in another country.

According to De Beer, another key legal issue is that according to international law the use of force must be necessary and must also comply with the principle of proportionality. This means that commanders must weigh the expected military benefits against the harm to civilians as a side-effect of a military attack, as reflected in Article 57 of the Geneva Convention on warfare. The Nuremberg Tribunal established the principle that an individual who violates the laws of war can be held accountable for his actions. Consider a case in which the mechanisms in a drone malfunctions, causing harm for which specific persons would normally be held accountable. What about the person who targets a drone from a base in Nevada? Can he or she be legally included in the conventional definition of a battlefield combatant? (De Beer 2011: 23). De Beer's observation is that there are no cases where those operating drones on a daily basis have had to answer for their actions to a legal body. (De Beer 2011: 27).

4.2 US Congress and the legality of the use of drones

In a report of an 28 April 2010 hearing held by the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, several of the principal issues mentioned above were discussed. The hearing was chaired by Representative John F. Tierney (Democrat from Massachusetts). In the summary of the minutes, the legal issues are presented as follows: "Although there were disagreements on several issues, most of the legal experts seemed to agree that there was no legal basis for the CIA to operate the drones. No, under the international law of armed conflict, the CIA does not have the right to carry out battlefield killings."

All the invited expert witnesses, Professor Mary Ellen O'Connell, David Glazier and Professor Kenneth Anderson, agreed that the international law applicable to warfare does not give combatants the right to kill – without warning and without facing prosecution – persons who are not members of the regular armed forces of a country, who are not subject to military discipline in a chain of command, and who are not instructed in the law of armed conflict. When Professor O'Connell was questioned about this, she went even further: "We are already facing 17 of our CIA agents under indictment in Italy for attempting to kidnap someone off the streets of Milan, an alleged person with ties to al-Qaeda. If that is what the rest of the world thinks is the right result with regard to kidnapping, you can imagine how the rest of the world views killing persons by the CIA. It is just a clear violation of international law" (all quotes from US Congress 2010).

In the subcommittee debate, Representative John Duncan (Republican from Tennessee) also raised the issue of double standards towards other countries that might be concerned about the use of drones. Would the US accept the right of other countries to use drones against criminals operating within the borders of the USA? Duncan expressed his view as follows: "And I would just use an analogy. Think about the way the United States would feel. We have a lot of lawlessness on our border with Mexico. Mexico is justifiably unhappy that we are not able to restrain narcoterrorists from getting across the border, bringing weapons in, bringing persons back and forth. And they have made complaints to us and they have told us to stop these criminals from getting across the border. Should we allow their police or their military to use combat drones to strike at hotels or places in Arizona where the Mexican military thinks that some of these people are hiding? Absolutely not." (US Congress 2010)

5. Method

5.1 Empirical data

The sample for this study was collected by a systematic reading of articles in Aftenposten (print edition) and The New York Times (online edition) for the period 1 January 2012 - 30 June 2012. In addition, I used the search word "drone" in the searchable archives of The New York Times and Aftenposten (Retriever) for the same period. The period of investigation covered an early phase of the public debate on drone use and is not necessarily representative of the entire coverage of drone strikes in the two newspapers. I still find it important to know if the two newspapers addressed the question of whether or not the use of drones had a legal basis during this period, in an effort to help stimulate public debate on the topic.

5.2 Research questions

The research questions were:

1. (How) did The New York Times and Aftenposten address legal issues in their day-to-day news reporting on the use of drones?
2. (How) did The New York Times and Aftenposten address the legal aspects of the use of drones in editorials and commentaries?

3. (How) were the legal aspects of the use of drones discussed in letters to the editor?

The chosen method was a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

5.3 Framing analysis

To identify the most relevant articles for investigating the research questions, all the articles identified by searching for the word "drone" in the databases were categorized according to pre-defined frames, and the stories about drones published in Aftenposten were compared to coverage in the NYT during the same time period.

This part of the research was inspired by the work of Robert Entman (1993), according to whom framing means to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make 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 for the item described" (Entman 1993: 51).

In order to see how the major legal issues were dealt with in the overall coverage, the material was categorized according to the following frames:

1. War on terror news frame
   In this frame, the major point is to highlight that al-Qaeda suspects were killed in a drone attack.

2. Military technology frame
   In this frame, drone technology occupies the center of attention.

3. Legal issues frame
   In this frame, international law is central. Included here are also stories asserting that the use of drones violates the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

4. Diplomatic controversy frame
   In this frame, disagreements between governments on the drone issue are at the center of attention.

5. Civilian casualties frame
   Here the consequences of drone warfare for the civilian population are the main focus.

6. Civilian use/technology frame/entertainment
   This frame has little relevance to the research question, and the articles concentrate on the economic and technological aspects of drone warfare.

7. Norwegian frame
   This frame is mainly preoccupied with Norwegian national politics.

8. Other

5.4 Genre

The material was also categorized according to genres. The following genres were used in the analysis:

1. News
2. Feature/reportage
3. Editorial
4. Letters to the editor
5. Blog/comment
6. Other

According to current journalistic practice, an editorial or a prominent commentary by a political editor reflects a newspaper's official position. A position on the use of drones expressed in an editorial will ordinarily carry more weight than a reference to a drone attack in a news report (Østbye 1989). Letters to the editor are also a means to contribute to the public debate. In deciding on whether to publish a letter on drones, an editor is choosing whether or not to make a position in the debate available to the reading public. Of course, if an editor defends a certain position, this will normally have more weight than a letter from a reader. This does, however, also depend on the authorship of a given letter to the editor. If the author is a former US president, his letter will usually be more influential than a letter from an ordinary reader.
5.5 Critical discourse analysis

As a second step, all the articles addressing the legal aspects were analyzed using Norman Fairclough's principles of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995, 2001). Norman Fairclough, strongly influenced by Foucault, emphasizes how the language used in a certain political or social setting constitutes the power to define which relevant discourses are placed at the front of the stage and which are kept in the background:

"This conception of power suggests that discourse and language are of central importance in the social process of modern society: the practices and techniques that Foucault places so much weight upon – interview counselling and so forth are to a substantial degree discursive practices. Thus analysing institutions and organisations in terms of power entails understanding and analysing their discursive practices." (Fairclough 2001: 50)

Based on the research questions, my hypothesis is that at least to a limited extent Aftenposten and The New York Times will approach legal issues starting from a principal point of departure. According to Fairclough’s line of reasoning, not paying attention to the issue of legality in using drones is in itself taking a partisan position. By ignoring the legal debate, or placing legal issues in the background, an author takes a discursive position.

5.6 The sample

The entire sample of material for the analyses consisted of 49 articles in The New York Times and 29 articles in Aftenposten. All the articles were analyzed and categorized. This yielded the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>News Reportage</th>
<th>Editorial</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Comm.</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WOT</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>Legal</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Civilian cas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1 1 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
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Table 1: New York Times framing and genre 1.1.2012 to 1.7.2012

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<th>News Reportage</th>
<th>Editorial</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Comm.</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Mil.Tech</td>
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<td>Legal</td>
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<td>Dipl.Contr.</td>
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<td>Civil. cas.</td>
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<td>Tech.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1 1 2 3 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
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Table 2: Aftenposten framing and genre 1.1.2012 to 1.7.2012

A general observation based on these findings is that the news category is most significant for the further analysis. It should also be noted that although both of the newspapers published editorials on the drone issue, the NYT printed more letters to the editor than Aftenposten. One conclusion from this could be that the NYT is more willing than Aftenposten to encourage public discussion of the issue. A factor of uncertainty here is of course that we do not know how many letters each of the newspapers received on the topic.

1. A full overview of the coding is available in Ottosen 2012.
6. Results

To follow up on the research questions, I made a qualitative analysis of all the articles in frame category 3 (Legal issues frame), and also checked whether the legal issues come up in any of the other articles. Many articles on the civilian and commercial use of drones and on purely technological issues were not relevant to the research questions, and they will not be referred to below (see tables for full overview).

6.1 New York Times coverage of the legal issues

The largest category in the coverage of both the NYT and Aftenposten consists of articles in the "War on terror" frame. One such article was published by the NYT on 10 January under the heading "Three Killed as Drone Strikes Resume in Pakistan." The article is critical in the sense that it reveals problems, including the diplomatic tensions between Pakistan and the US. However, nowhere in the article is there any suggestion that these attacks might be illegal. I refer to this in such detail, because it is typical of how often news reports mention drone strikes as though they were "everyday occurrences" without contextualizing the legal issues involved.

President Obama is quoted in a rare pronouncement on the use of drones in a 30 January commentary article by Mark Lander, confirming that drones are actually used in the GWT: "Mr. Obama, in an unusually candid public discussion of the Central Intelligence Agency’s covert program, said the drone strikes had not inflicted huge civilian casualties. We are very careful in terms of how it’s been applied," he insisted. "It is important for everybody to understand that this thing is kept on a very tight leash." This rare admission of the use of drones did not cause immediate reactions in the columns of the NYT. However, a week later (on 5 February), in a small news item, Obama’s assurance on civilian casualties was contradicted by a reference to a report by the London-based Bureau of Investigative Journalism, stating that rescuers hurrying to the scene of a drone strike to help victims often also become casualties ("collateral damage") in "a second follow-up strike." The report identified at least 50 civilians killed in such follow-up strikes.

In a 19 February news article entitled "Drones are playing a growing role in Afghanistan," the topic of legality is not mentioned, but the author compares the Situation in Afghanistan with drone strikes in Pakistan and labels the use of drones "controversial." Then the author indirectly brings the legal issue into the picture: "The use of drones has expanded quickly and virtually unnoticed in Afghanistan. The Air Force now flies at least 20 Predator drones – twice as many as a year ago – over vast tranches of hostile Afghan territory each day. They are mostly used for surveillance, but have also carried out more than 200 missile and bomb strikes in the past in Pakistan, where the drones have gotten far more attention and proved more controversial for their use in a country where the United States does not have combat forces. There they are run by the CIA as opposed to the military, and the civilian casualties that they have caused as they have struck at leaders of al-Qaeda and the Taliban, amid Pakistani sensitivities over sovereignty, have stoked anger and anti-Americanism."

Since so many critical questions were asked about the use of drones, John O. Brennan, President Obama’s top counter-terrorism adviser, responded in a speech referred to in the NYT on 20 April, under the title "Top US Official Says ‘Rigorous Standards’ Are Used for Drone Strikes." He offered what the NYT described as the "first extensive explanation of how American officials decide when to use drones to kill suspected terrorists." Defending drone strikes as "legal, ethical and wise," Mr. Brennan asserted that the president had directed officials to be more open about how they "carefully, deliberately and responsibly" decide to kill terrorist suspects – including what he described as "the rigorous standards and process of review to which we hold ourselves today when considering and authorizing strikes against a specific member of al-Qaeda outside the ‘hot’ battlefield of Afghanistan."

Brennan’s legal position is presented in the form of a statement rather than an argument. He claimed that US drone deployment was "in full accordance with the law," but also admitted that civilian casualties are an issue: "We only authorize a strike if we have a high degree of confidence that innocent civilians will not be injured or killed, except in the rarest of circumstances." However, he also had to admit that, "despite the extraordinary precautions we take civilians have been accidentally injured, or worse, killed in these strikes."

6.2 New York Times opinion pages

In the opinion pages of the NYT, we find the most comprehensive framing of the legal issues. The editor of the NYT editorial page, Andrew Rosenthal, commented on the speech given by Brennan on 8 May in an editorial headed "Are Targeted Killings Legal?" The same issue was the topic of the only editorial in my sample of NYT articles published on 20 May. The title is "Too Much Power for a President." The editorial refers to a news article that appeared the day before that “revealed who was actually making the final decision on the biggest killings and drone strikes. President Obama himself. And that is very troubling." Even though the NYT’s editors were mostly concerned about the legal issues involving US citizens, contributors to the op-ed pages also touched upon other matters.
A 21 January opinion piece by political analyst Peter Singer discusses the legal issues under the heading "Do Drones Undermine Democracy?" The article asks concerned questions, stopping just short of challenging the legality of the operations: "For the first 200 years of American democracy, engaging in combat and bearing risk – both personal and political – went hand in hand. In the age of drones, that is no longer the case." Later in the article the lack of a democratic foundation for the use of drones is touched upon: "Yet this operation has never been debated in Congress; more than seven years after it began, there has not been a single vote for or against it." Singer ends the article with a warning about the potential violation of the US Constitution: "America’s founding fathers may not have been able to imagine robotic drones, but they did provide an answer. The Constitution did not leave war, no matter how it was waged, to the executive branch alone. In a democracy, it is an issue for all of us."

On 24 June, former President Jimmy Carter joined in the debate. In a strongly-worded comment headed "A cruel and unusual record," he wrote: "The United States is abandoning its role as the global champion of human rights. Revelations that top officials are targeting people to be assassinated abroad, including American citizens, are only the most recent, disturbing proof of how far our nation’s violation of human rights has extended. This development began after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 and has been sanctioned and escalated by bipartisan executive and legislative actions, without dissent from the general public. As a result, our country can no longer speak with moral authority on these critical issues." Using arguments compatible with Galtung’s concept of peace journalism, Carter also referred to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and maintained that it represented "a bold and clear commitment that power would no longer serve as a cover to oppress or injure people, and it established equal rights of all people to life, liberty, security of person, equal protection of the law and freedom from torture, arbitrary detention or forced exile" (Carter 2012).

Carter judged that instead of strengthening these principles, the use of drones by the US government violated at least 10 of the Declaration’s 30 articles, including the injunction against "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." He pointed to the ongoing use of drones in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen and then expressed concern about civilian suffering: "These policies clearly affect American foreign policy. Top intelligence and military officials, as well as rights defenders in targeted areas, affirm that the great escalation in drone attacks has turned aggrieved families toward terrorist organizations, aroused civilian populations against us and permitted repressive governments to cite such actions to justify their own despotic behavior."

6.3 Coverage of drones in Aftenposten

An overview of the framing in Aftenposten articles shows that this newspaper featured a larger share of the "War on terror" news frame than did the NYT. Twelve of the 29 articles in Aftenposten fell in this category. The most dramatic difference between the two newspapers was that the "letters to the editor" category was quite large in the NYT (8 out of 49), but almost non-existent in Aftenposten (2 out of 29). Since the majority of critically-oriented articles about the legal issues appeared in the "letters to the editor" section of the NYT, I expected a less critical framing of legal issues in the overall Aftenposten sample compared to the NYT.

6.4 News category in Aftenposten

On 31 January, Aftenposten printed a short news article entitled "Eleven Killed in Drone Attack in Yemen." The story is based on a news item from the Norwegian News Agency (NTB). The short news brief is typical of other news stories with a primary focus on al-Qaeda as a target, rather than on legal matters: "Eleven militants, among them several alleged al-Qaeda leaders, were killed in a drone attack in Yemen the night before Tuesday, local inhabitants inform... it is not known who is behind the attacks, but the US is known to have used drones in earlier attacks."

On 9 February Aftenposten printed another similar news brief from Pakistan: "Four Killed in Drone Attack in Pakistan." The lead states: "In two days 14 people have now been killed in the north-western part of Pakistan." The main story is that two rockets had hit a house used by the Taliban. A related incident is mentioned – one in which ten people were killed in Miranshah in North Wazistan. No legal issue is raised, but at the end it is made clear that the US had halted its drone program in November 2011, when 24 Pakistani soldiers were accidentally killed.

Another news article using the "success in the war on al-Qaeda frame" was printed on 12 May with the title "This Is How Al Qaeda Was Tricked." This was an article about the CIA’s success in preventing an attack on a passenger airplane on its way to the US. Here, the use of drones is indirectly mentioned as a weapon in the war on terror.

A news article published on 14 May under the title "Bin Laden’s Documents Released" refers to a statement by Bin Laden in one of the documents, where he blames American drones for causing "catastrophe after catastrophe."

In another news article published on May 26 under the heading "US Conducted New Drone Attack in Pakistan," the president of the Pakistani National Assembly was quoted as warning against the long-term consequences of drone warfare: "The
president said that Pakistan wishes to find a permanent solution to the drone issue, since they not only violate our sovereignty, but cause hatred in the population as a result of innocent civilians being killed,” a spokesman said after the meeting.

The "civilian population" frame, with some tendencies to a peace journalism approach, was dominant in another news article by *Aftenposten* correspondent in the USA, Alf Ole Ask, published on June 4 and headed: “Obama – the Great Drone Warrior.” Here, the report from the New American Foundation claimed that between 1,440 and 2,063 civilians were killed in Pakistan alone. This was followed up on the next day (June 5) by a mixed framing. The title, “Al-Qaeda’s Second-in-Command Killed by Drones in Pakistan. Drones as a part of NATO Strategy,” points to a victory-oriented “war on terror” frame. However, this is modified by a minor element of legal framing when a spokesman for the Pakistani Foreign Affairs Department is quoted as calling the attack “a violation of Pakistani sovereignty.” On the next day (June 6), another story confirms that it was al-Qaeda’s second-in-command, Abu Yahya al-Libi, who was targeted and killed in the attack.

### 6.5 Critical commentaries and editorials in *Aftenposten*

On June 7, *Aftenposten* journalist Kjell Dragnes published a critical commentary following up on stories from previous days about the killing of Abu Yahya al-Libi. The title of the article was “War by remote control.” This article contextualized the recent events with background information, reflecting some of the principal issues connected with “distant warfare.”

Dragnes also touched upon the legal aspects, raising the question: “Is the drone a significant change in international law, a lower threshold for the use of weapons with unknown consequences?” He answers the question by quoting Peter W. Singer from the Brookings Institution, adding his own conclusion: “It’s doubtful whether the civilian operators (from the CIA) can be called soldiers according to international law.” He ends the article with a challenge to politicians: “Unmanned aircraft are not innocent computer games. They are war machines. The most important issue is whether the politicians who use the technology know what they are doing, before, if and when they are used.” Dragnes also made another critical commentary during this period. On May 12 he published an article with the title “The dark side.” He starts with a critical review of the use of torture in the GWT during the administration of George W. Bush. Even though President Bush’s policy to employ harsh interrogation techniques was changed by Obama, Dragnes asks the rhetorical question: Is there a moral distinction between the methods of Bush and the ones Obama has continued (including the deployment of drones)? Instead of answering his question, Dragnes refers to former CIA-agent Jose Rodriguez, who had recently published a book with the title: *Hard Measures: How Aggressive CIA Actions Saved American Lives.* Rodriguez accuses Obama of applying a double standard, since he approves of the use of drones, even though he has discontinued the controversial interrogation methods. From a discourse-analytical viewpoint, Dragnes uses this debate to distance himself from the positions of both Obama and Bush with the following statement: “...the drone war against alleged al-Qaeda leaders continues: – We are the dark side, says Rodriguez. There are many dark aspects with the war on terror.” The articles don’t, however, give a clear answer on the legal issues, but at least they raise critical questions about them. On the whole, Dragnes contributes significantly to the public discussion by presenting critical perspectives on the drone issue.

*Aftenposten*’s US correspondent, Alf Ole Ask, followed up on criticism by UN Special Rapporteur Christof Heynes (South Africa) in a commentary on June 22 with the title “US Criticized by UN for drone warfare.” The report in question was presented to the UN Human Rights Council, which has 47 members, including Norway. Ask refers to Heynes’ position that US deployment of drones violates several points of international law.

The legal issues are also brought into the picture by a statement of Pakistan’s Ambassador Zamir Akram, who called drone attacks a violation of Pakistani sovereignty. Ask also obtained a comment from Norway’s foreign minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, who in a rare statement affirmed that the use of drones raises “a number of demanding issues,” such as international humanitarian law and international human rights. The minister underlined the assertion that according to humanitarian law the challenge is to ensure that attacks will be aimed solely at military targets. Støre also pointed out that drone strikes disproportionately affect any civilians who chance to be nearby when they occur. Stopping short of openly condemning US policy, Støre affirmed: “From the Norwegian side we have underlined expectations that states using such weapons would respect international law.” Overall, the articles by *Aftenposten*’s US correspondent made a noteworthy contribution to the public debate on the drone strike issue.

The only editorial to appear in *Aftenposten* during the sampling period was published on 24 June under the title “Problematic Warfare with Drones.” Interestingly enough, this was the very same day the *MYT* published Jimmy Carter’s harsh condemnation of the use of drones, summarized above. The editorial refers to the above-mentioned criticism by Christof Heynes and does not take a clear stand on the legal aspects of the use of drones, but concludes that something has to be done in what are called “grey zones” of international law, dealing with drones in relation to “basic principles such as state sovereignty and the legal protection of individuals.”
6.6 Letters to the editor in *Aftenposten*

In a discourse analytical context, it is of interest to know what views on the drone issue are made available in the public debate. There are only two “letters to the editor” in *Aftenposten* during this period. The first has the title “The War on Terror in the election campaign” and was written by Hilde E. Restad, who is a Research Fellow at the Norwegian Institute for Foreign Affairs. The drone issue receives only modest attention in this article. The author mentions the "use of drones and extra-judicial executions of US citizens abroad who are suspected of terrorist activities" as an example of Obama's taking one step further on the controversial legal issue. However, the author does not take a clear stand on the drone debate, as we saw with former President Jimmy Carter. This article confirms the same tendency we found in the *NYT* material, for the most critical articles to be published in the "letters to the editor" section. The second letter was published on June 28 by Mads Harlem, head of the Department of International Law in the Norwegian section of the Red Cross. Under the title "The rules must be adapted," he refers to the editorial mentioned earlier and makes the point that all parties are obligated to comply with humanitarian law, even if drones are explicitly mentioned. He makes his legal position clear: Instead of developing new rules for the use of drones, states should also seek to clarify how the current rules can be applied to drone deployment. If the Geneva Conventions still command universal assent, we must be able to adapt these legal prescriptions to high-tech developments. It is important that the debate over drone warfare should not undermine existing international law, but rather shore up its legal principles. The fact that we found only two letters to the editor in the *Aftenposten* sample might give the impression that *Aftenposten* focused on legal principles to a lesser degree than did the *NYT*. On the other hand, each of these letters indirectly takes a stand against the use of drones on legal grounds. The commentaries by the Aftenposten journalists Ask and Dragnes contributed to the critical discourse on drones and contain elements of peace journalism. But all in all, the readers of the *NYT* were better informed in detail about the controversial legal issues involved in using drones than were *Aftenposten* readers.

7. Conclusions

Findings from earlier comparative studies suggest that Norwegian media depend on US perspectives and are loyal to the security-policy orientation of NATO cooperation (Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2001). An interesting finding of this study is that the comments and editorials in *Aftenposten* had some critical perspectives for dealing with the use of drones, as well as treating legal issues. Could it be that this was inspired by letters to the editor in the *NYT*? Perhaps only when influential voices in the American public debate challenged the use of drones could *Aftenposten* summon up the courage to raise critical questions. A follow-up study, including interviews with the participating journalists is needed to answer these questions.

The first research question dealt with the problematic of whether the legal issues were being adequately dealt with in daily news reportage. Here we see clear parallels between the news coverage in the *NYT* and in *Aftenposten*. The main framing in the day-to-day news reportage on drone use rarely made a point of discussing the legality issue. Sometimes legality is mentioned briefly in the text, but never in titles and leads. In the news articles, legal issues were usually brought up indirectly through references to state sovereignty in comments by politicians. But in headlines or as a main point in the news story, the issue is never addressed of whether the use of drones is illegal in a context in which the US is not engaged in a declared war with the country where it makes a drone strike.

The second research question was whether the legal aspects of the use of drones were mentioned in editorials and commentaries. *Aftenposten* and the *NYT* each published one such editorial. The editorial in the *NYT* indirectly touched on the legal aspects in a discussion about whether it was right to grant so much power to the president that he could decide at his own discretion when to use drones. The editorial did not, however, raise the question of the legal status of deploying drones in attacks as such, nor did it go into the core legal issues discussed in the hearing in the US Congress. In *Aftenposten* the editorial covered legal aspects, but did not take a clear stand on the legality of drones, instead framing the issue as located in a legal grey zone. In two commentaries, *Aftenposten* journalists discuss the legality and challenge politicians to devote more serious attention to the principal issues raised by drone strikes. Even the Norwegian foreign minister is questioned on the legal issues, and somewhat vaguely admits that serious legal questions are involved – but without directly criticizing the US.

The third research question asked whether legal concerns are presented in letters to the editor. In the *NYT*, several articles directly discuss the legal issues and express concern of the long-term consequences of using drones without a legal justification and causing large numbers of civilian casualties might backfire on the US. The two letters to the editor in *Aftenposten* also clearly challenged the lack of a legal basis for the use of drones. The main difference between the *NYT* and *Aftenposten* is that there were many more contributions by readers in the *NYT*. Common to the two newspapers was that this clear message from readers (who included a former US president) was not reflected in the day-to-day reporting in short news stories on incidents where drones were used and suspected al-Qaeda fighters killed. Combs' argument that framing in day-to-day reportage is often influenced by elite sources could be part of the explanation. Since the legal aspects of the
use of drones were not part of the public discourse among politicians at the time, the mainstream media might be reluctant to bring up such provocative issues in ordinary news reporting. The lack of attention to the civilian population and the "win"-oriented style used in short reports on suspected al-Qaeda fighters killed is consistent with Johan Galtung's concept of war journalism. Since the concern expressed so clearly by readers was not reflected in news coverage, the conclusion is that during the period under investigation the NYTand Aftenposten did not live up to expectations that newspapers would challenge politicians by exercising their "watchdog function" on the issue of the legal aspects of drone strikes. When well-known persons such as former President Jimmy Carter so vigorously criticize US government policies, one might perhaps expect that this would in itself be relevant as a news story for the front pages of the NYT.

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Appendix

Quoted articles from New York Times:

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Drones Are Playing a Growing Role in Afghanistan. 19.02.2012
US Said to Target Rescuers at Drone Sites. 05.03.2012
Are Targeted Killings Legal? 08.05.2012
A Cruel and Unusual Record. 24.06.2012

Quoted articles from Aftenposten (author responsible for translation):

Eleven Killed in Drone Attack in Yemen. 31.01.2012
Four Killed in Drone Attack in Pakistan. 9.02.2012
The War on Terror in the Election Campaign. 21.03.2012
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Reporting on terror: Why are the voices of peace unheard?

This study combines critical textual analysis with field observations to investigate how Pakistani media have covered the ongoing conflict with the Taliban in the North-West of the country. Using framing theory as its theoretical basis, the study found that the Pakistani Taliban are portrayed as chiefly responsible for the ongoing violence in the country, by placing them within the frame of an enemy image. The victims in the conflict were found to be dismissive of the media's tendency to show greater interest in 'bleeding faces', to quote a tribesman, rather than in portraying the unfolding of a major humanitarian crisis. The peace journalism model is limited by the prevailing media emphasis on the security aspect of this conflict and their tendency to ignore popular perspectives.

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Reporting on terror: Why are the voices of peace unheard?

Abstract: This study combines critical textual analysis with field observations to investigate how Pakistani media have covered the ongoing conflict with the Taliban in the North-West of the country. Using framing theory as its theoretical base, the study found that the Pakistani Taliban are portrayed as chiefly responsible for the ongoing violence in the country, by placing them within the frame of an enemy image. The victims in the conflict were found to be dismissive of the media's tendency to show greater interest in 'bleeding faces', to quote a tribesman, rather than in portraying the unfolding of a major humanitarian crisis. The peace journalism model is limited by the prevailing media emphasis on the security aspect of this conflict and their tendency to ignore popular perspectives.

1. Introduction

From time immemorial, conquerors and invaders have used the available media to propagate their viewpoints. Communication researchers have studied in depth how demagogic leaders, from Alexander the Great, Darius, Julius Caesar and Napoleon, to Hitler, Stalin, Mao and scores of others, have harnessed the media to win support for militaristic policies (Knightly, 2003; Ottosen, 2008). Reportage on violent events that can exacerbate conflicts is considered more newsworthy by mainstream journalists than reportage that promotes peaceful conflict resolution. This is due to established standards of journalistic news values (Galtung & Lynch, 2010; Fawcett, 2002; Wolsfeld, 2004), which escalate conflicts through incitement, stereotyping and fomenting disillusionment with the peace process (Bratic, 2006).

According to the media theorists Severin and Tankard (1992), conflicting parties resort to propaganda to legitimize their pro-war stances and to win public support. Critical studies on war reporting have found that media often become parties to conflicts and do not remain a simple 'mirror' of events and a detached, objective commentator (Lynch, 2008; Lynch & McGoldrick; 2005; Kempf, 2007). They significantly change the impact and process by which conflict unfolds (Galtung, 2002; Kempf, 2003). Memories were still fresh when the media in Rwanda and Burundi were actually involved in conflict, becoming tools of war through incitement and propaganda, leading to the worst pogroms in recent history (Bratic, 2006).

Other examples are the various cases of mass violence in Eastern Europe during the world wars, and the American-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, where thousands of innocent people were killed, a situation that might have been averted if peace had been given a chance (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005; Ottosen, 2008; Bratic, 2006).

Although there is a great range of possibilities for using the media to promote peace, these tend to be under-studied and are often simply ignored (Blasi, 2004). According to peace researcher Syed Abdul Siraj (2006), the media's obsession with war has been a major concern for the conflicting parties, peace researchers and media practitioners. If media have an ethical responsibility to society, it is essential to report on conflicts contextually and call attention to the underlying causes (Galtung, 2002; Kovarik, 2007).

This study aims to textually analyze the reporting of the conflict with the Taliban in Pakistan's two prestigious English-language newspapers; the daily Dawn and the daily News, over a period of three months. Additionally, this researcher visited the war-torn Khyber Agency (the Khyber Pass is the most northerly and important mountain pass between Pakistan and Afghanistan; the Pakistani government controls the pass with the Khyber Agency), and talked to internally displaced persons in Peshawar to get a fair idea of (a) how local people see the conflict, (b) why they are ignored in media discourse, and (c) to seek solutions from them. The study was conducted in a difficult period when, on the one hand, there were efforts to achieve rapprochement and, on the other hand, there was a growing demand by the media for violent use of force against the Taliban.

1.1 Background of the Taliban conflict

The Taliban uprising in Pakistan started after the 9/11 attacks on the US, when the country joined the global alliance against the Taliban in Afghanistan, who were claimed to have provided safe havens to Al Qaeda terrorists. Pakistan was pressured to aid the global alliance, as explained by then Pakistani ruler General Pervez Musharraf (2007), who claimed that the US
had threatened to 'return Pakistan to the Stone Age if it did not deliver on US demands'. But this assistance to the world community came at a huge price for Pakistan itself; the decision to station soldiers in the border areas near Afghanistan offended the local tribesmen and the sympathizers of the Taliban regime, who took up arms against the Pakistani forces. Thus far, according to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, as many as 50,000 soldiers and innocent civilians have been killed, many more wounded, and the economic loss has passed the 1 trillion dollar mark (Geo TV report, June 2013).

To get a fair understanding of this conflict, it is essential to present a brief history of the events that led up to it. Though there are different narrations, I try to remain neutral in summarizing the key events that led to this war between Pakistan's army and Taliban fighters. Ahmed Rashid (2001), a well-known security expert, agrees that this conflict must be discussed starting with the aftermath of the Cold War between America and Russia. The USSR's misadventure in Afghanistan in 1979 provided an opportunity for the US to avenge the Vietnam defeat. The US, along with its Western allies, persuaded Pakistan to recruit the Mujahiddin (now Al Qaeda terrorists) in the tribal areas of Pakistan. They were drawn in from all over the world, trained and equipped and sent to Afghanistan to fight against the 'communist infidels'. That war continued for over a decade, with unimaginable human costs, misery and tribulations that will haunt the Afghans and Pakistani tribesmen for generations to come (Clinton, 2010). With the demise of the USSR, the Western powers lost interest in the area and left without taking any responsibility for the war-ravaged populace. The next five or six years saw Afghans fighting for power, which culminated in Taliban supremacy. The same account basically holds true for the Pakistani tribal areas, which were left by the authorities to fend for themselves once global interests receded in the region. These areas were mired in lawlessness and became an epicenter for smuggling and the spread of lethal weaponry; bereft of all the benefits and advantages of the modern world (Khan, 2013).

The Pakistani tribal areas hit the global radar screen after the 9/11 attacks, when the US and allied forces drove the Taliban from power in Afghanistan in an intensive three-month military operation. Pakistan was tasked to check the Taliban inflow to Afghanistan and in return received financial support. In July 2002, Pakistani troops entered the two tribal districts of South and North Waziristan bordering Afghanistan. This was the first time that Pakistani troops entered the autonomous tribal areas, in total defiance of the pledge by the founder of the nation, who had promised non-interference in the tribal areas (Siraj & Shabbir, 2011).

The stationing of hundreds of thousands of Pakistani troops in the tribal areas to counter the Taliban influx in those times has now degenerated into a full-scale war between security forces and local Taliban fighters. At present, Pakistani forces are patrolling all seven tribal areas and the adjacent areas and engaging in pitched battles with Taliban fighters. The latter have more local support than the former and hence are thriving on local illiteracy and poverty. More than 12 years down the road, force has become the dominant strategy preferred by the two sides. Off and on, there were attempts to resolve this conflict amicably, but these efforts never materialized, due to the ambivalence of the Pakistani army, US pressure and sheer criticism by the so-called liberals in Pakistani society of giving in to 'barbarians' (Shabbir, 2012).

Pakistan's army has so far signed three peace agreements with the Taliban, apart from a few local deals that were reached between the two sides. The first deal was signed in 2004, but before anything positive could come of it, the Taliban leader was killed. The killers could not be identified, but tribal affairs experts say this was the work of groups 'who opposed peace agreements'. The second deal was reached in 2005, but again the reconciling Taliban leader, Abdullah Mehsud, was killed in a US drone attack. The US had opposed peace deals with the Pakistani Taliban for various reasons. The third peace agreement was signed in 2008 between Pakistan's government and the Taliban in the Swat area. Like the first two deals, before it could materialize, Pakistani forces launched a major military operation in the area. Although the Taliban were defeated and the use of military means was successful, the Taliban retaliated with suicide attacks (which continue even today), killing hundreds of people, including police and military personnel.

Now, the government of Pakistan, newly elected in May 2013, is planning to reconcile with the Taliban for the sake of peace. This is the toughest decision, as Pakistani elites and centralized media houses oppose peace agreements with the Taliban. Surprisingly, though the differences between Pakistani mainstream society and the Taliban are discussed at length, the similarities are never mentioned. As is often pointed out by Imran Khan, the head of Pakistan's second largest party, Tehreek-e-Insaf, the interests of the two sides are not completely incompatible. Pakistan's Taliban demand the cessation of support for the US in the global alliance against terror and the imposition of Islamic law in the tribal areas. Pakistan will not lose much if these demands are met. In fact, as pointed out by Mr. Khan, this war on terror has been a major foreign policy failure on the part of Pakistan, and the sooner it ends, the better. On their account, the Taliban need to eschew violence and reach an agreement with the state for an enduring solution to this conflict.

1.2 Peace Journalism

According to Johan Galtung (2000), conflicts arise due to incompatible goals, which are often the result of a denial of basic human needs, including cultural and national identity, liberty and access to opportunities. Scholars (Galtung 2002; Kempf,
2003; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005) believe the media are important cultural forces that have a strong influence on how conflicts are escalated and resolved. Peace media researcher Majid Tehranian (2002) adds that while media can be agents of violence, as many experts have concluded, they can also serve peaceful ends, if the right strategies are adopted.

Johan Galtung and Wilhelm Kempf must be credited with introducing the concept of 'Peace Journalism' in the 1990s by critically analyzing media roles in conflicts. Galtung (2000) defined peace as non-violence and creativity in conflict resolution. He advocated creativity in conflict resolution, where media can play an important role, suggesting ways and means of finding win-win solutions. Galtung discussed media roles as either intensifying conflicts, which he called war journalism, or resolving conflicts, which he called peace journalism. Earlier, Wilhelm Kempf introduced the concepts of escalation and de-escalation frames to describe media roles in conflicts. The former report on conflict as an uncompromising battle and focus on a party that wins, and they assess losses quantitatively (how many killed, wounded, and the loss of property). Chances for peace are ridiculed, and evidence of brutality and atrocities is provided to sensationalize media discourse. On the other hand, peace journalism tries to present the real causes of conflicts, gives equal coverage to all parties and interests, and prioritizes peace over violence (Galtung, 2000). Two of Galtung's students, the renowned journalists and peace scholars Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch (2005), developed the concept further and characterized it as an approach that offers a better account of events by taking cues from peace studies and conflict resolution techniques. They explain that peace journalism provides an opportunity for reporters and editors to decide "what to report and how to report" it, thus enhancing the chances for peace by choosing more creative, reconciliatory approaches.

The dichotomy of war and peace journalism has been widely used by researchers to investigate the role of media in conflicts. On the other hand, there is no dearth of experts who criticize peace journalism for its advocacy role (this is presumably not the job of reporters) and impracticality. Jake Lynch, the most influential scholar of peace journalism, in a recent book (A global standard for conflict reporting) has discussed these issues in exhaustive detail. Drawing on the works of European social theorists, he locates peace journalism as a critical realist theory, which is cognizant of the need for objectivity but still emphasizes that taking a critical stance is one of the key aspects of responsible journalism. Jake Lynch has critically analyzed specific incidents of conflict in different parts of the world and concludes that the concept has the potential to rectify many weaknesses and defects in traditional journalism. Like Lynch (2013), German peace psychology researcher Wilhelm Kempf (2012) considers it a worthwhile concept to reform news media content, especially during times of intense conflict. Many experts (including Lynch, 2005; Siraj, 2006; Lee & Maslog; Spencer, 2006) have empirically investigated war media content and found a preponderance of war journalism, which indicates that existing media practices are predominantly slanted towards war journalism.

1.3 Effects of media: synergies for peace

While peace journalists share a serious concern that war-oriented media tend to escalate conflicts, those with expertise in traditional media research see these observations as naive and not supported by empirical investigations (Hanitzsch, 2007). In fact, media effects have been a perennial topic of debate in media studies since the start of the twentieth century. Before discussing the effects of pro-war or pro-peace media on the state of conflicts, which according to Bratic (2006) can be helpful to develop strategies for peace media, it is essential to discuss briefly the five paradigms in communication effects studies identified by theorists Stanley Baran and Dennis Davis (2006). The first era of media theory concentrated on the powerful effects of mass media. It was thought that media were able to initiate social disruption and bring about unwanted changes in society. Media were considered to be very convenient tools for supporting war, although there was a recognition that they could be used for peaceful purposes (Lasswell, 1927; Lipmann, 1922). The second era saw efforts to empirically demonstrate the actual effects of mass media, as experts rejected the unwarranted claims of the powerful effects paradigm. New scientific approaches were adopted to study the influence of mass media on people's attitudes and behavior (Lazarfeld, 1944). Media effects proved to be minimal when empirically tested, and that led to the third era of media theory, which saw the rise of the limited effects paradigm. Study after study conducted after the Second World War supported the limited effects paradigm, barring a few minor studies that seemed to confirm the mass society theory (Baran & Davis, 2006; Lowery & Defleur, 1994). During the 1970s and 1980s, a European cultural perspective was introduced in America that often clashed with the American empirical approach to the social sciences, and thereby a new cultural perspective on communication emerged. This is characteristic of the fourth era of mass media studies. Neo-Marxist and British Cultural Studies perspectives were adopted by many communication experts to study the effects of mass media, like the Frankfurt School, the political economy of the media, and the social construction of everyday life. Media were being seen as an important element of culture that promoted the interests of powerful elites in maintaining the status quo. Findings from these studies, combined with developments in communication technology, heralded the current 5th era of media theory, characterized by the moderate-effects perspective (framing theories, globalization of communication, media literacy movements).

Media effects can be described as a causal linkage between media content and desired behavioral change (Baran & Davis, 2006). Attempts have been made to integrate more than a dozen theories into a single approach to mass media effects,
but with little success. The same problem persists in all social sciences where no single theory can completely explain a social phenomenon. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the field of mass communication has not been investigated. In fact, we know a fair amount about the process of mass communication (Severin & Tankard, 1992), and the phrase 'it depends' tells us little. Media effects can be identified, if other social variables can be found and their linkages specified. Communication experts (Baran & Davis, 2006; Severin & Tankard, 1992) and other scholars have attempted to synergize their efforts to precisely explain communication phenomena. In this regard, to reduce the confusion, two perspectives have emerged in mass communication theory. The first is the communication science that combines all the empirical research and theories, and the second is the social semiotic theory that combines all the cultural and critical theories. Further efforts are being made to integrate these two perspectives along with new trends like the new forms of communication technology, globalization of communication and new scientific discoveries intended to unravel the mysteries of human attitudes and behavior. Research in the past nine decades shows us that media contents influence audiences, and it can be said with a fair amount of confidence that war media or peace media can exacerbate conflict or help to resolve conflict, 'depending on different variables'. Neither can supposed magical media effects be accepted in toto, nor does the negligible effects model offer a completely accurate description (Severin & Tankard; 1992).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Framing theory

The theoretical framework of this study is determined by framing theory, which according to scholars (for instance Lee, 2010; Siraj, 2008) supports peace journalism. Frames are mental structures that organize our thoughts and ideas to make the social order comprehensible for us. According to Entman (1993), although often applied unconsciously, frames are the most powerful tools available with which to know and interpret reality. Frames imply inferences, with each frame pointing to different approaches. So, he suggests that framing theory refers to the selection of a portion of reality, prioritizing it over others and associating these with lexicons to portend a specific reality. Utilizing this theory will help us to identify certain dimensions and approaches that are usually adopted by media practitioners when covering conflicts. These include ideological, professional and endogenous factors. This study will reveal the dominant perspectives used by Pakistani media to grasp the Taliban conflict. It will discuss how war-supporting and peaceful messages are framed and interpreted and what needs to be done to achieve constructive conflict coverage.

2.2 Research questions:

The following three questions are posed in the study to discuss the media reporting of the Taliban conflict.

R.Q.1: How do Pakistani media frame the Taliban conflict?
This question will address the framing strategies with which the conflict is covered, who gets the most attention, and who gets the least.

R.Q.2: How do the victims in the conflict perceive media reporting?
This question will address how the perspectives of ordinary people living in tribal areas (who are the hardest-hit victims) are represented. Further, I will explore how these severely affected people see media coverage and seek suggestions from them for more constructive conflict coverage.

R.Q.3: What are the issues that obstruct successful peace journalism when reporting on this conflict?
This query will identify the hindrances to peace journalism and also help us devise a corrective strategy.

3. Research methodology

This study offers a qualitative analysis of Taliban conflict reporting in Pakistan’s two prestige English-language newspapers; the daily News and Dawn. As these two newspapers are published in different editions, I selected the Islamabad/Rawalpindi editions for two reasons. First, because these editions are published in the national capital, they have more impact, and secondly, the geographical contiguity of this area to the conflict-ridden tribal areas of Pakistan. The two newspapers were analyzed from May 2013 to July 2013, which yielded a total of 80 news stories. In the first stage, all these stories were analyzed and the major themes and slants identified. In the second stage, for a more intensive analysis, I excluded all the one-column reports and stories published on the inside pages, which reduced the total number of news reports to 38. I used a textual analysis technique (discourse analysis) to analyze the media content. Though many scholars have used the discourse analysis technique to study media texts (Ottosen, 2010; Ross, 2006), this methodology draws on the work of Van Dijk. Van Dijk (1998) does not exclusively focus on linguistics (unlike Fairclough and Wodak) but rather connects it with the macro-aspects of social and political contexts, to decipher the underlying notions of ideology and power (1998) in media.
texts. Being myself a native of the tribal areas and aware of the whole range of issues that determine the behaviors of stakeholders and the events occurring in this conflict, I believe the Van Dijk approach is the most appropriate for this project. Moreover, the Van Dijk (1998) approach is media-centric, due to its emphasis on news headlines and intros which characterize the whole perspective. Moreover, the analysis was conducted while keeping in view Galtung’s war and peace journalism model and the constructive and destructive coverage models developed by Wilhelm Kempf. It must be remembered that the researcher only applied the first strand of discourse, which is related to the third strand of social analysis (like other proponents of Critical Discourse Analysis, Van Dijk also calls for a three-tiered analysis, consisting of discourse, socio-cognition, and social analysis).

Additionally, to gain a thorough understanding of the conflict, the researcher visited the Khyber Agency (a tribal area severely impacted by this conflict) and talked to local people. Being myself a native of the restive province of Khyber Pakhtoonhwa, it was somewhat less risky for me to visit these areas. People from other parts of Pakistan usually hesitate to visit these areas, due to prevailing lawlessness and insurgency. Even so, many distrusted my motives in enquiring into the details of the conflict. I was cognizant of this and coordinated the trip well in advance, hoping thereby to avoid dangerous incidents.

4. Research findings

After a somewhat generic analysis of 80 news stories and a further intensive analysis of 38 leading news stories (the texts were read four times) on the Taliban conflict, a valuable data set became available which can be presented in addressing the three research questions.

4.1 R.Q.1: How do Pakistani media frame the Taliban conflict?

Judging from the war and peace journalism perspectives, the media discourse was highly permeated by war journalism considerations. The two newspapers applied almost the same discursive techniques to report on the conflict. The three major frames that were identified by the researcher after intensive reading of the texts are (1) Taliban as the enemy (2) Pakistani army as the rescuer and (3) force as the means to find a solution. The following discussion presents citations of a few news stories (which are dramatic and provocative), and the rest of the articles are summarized to support the main argument. Following the Van Dijk approach, the cited news articles contained the key themes in the headlines and intros, which are the most important parts of any news story.

4.1.1 Taliban as the enemy

The two newspapers were categorical in framing the Taliban as the enemy. Within this category of ‘enemy’, further discursive techniques used by the media are: firstly, they were reported as the ‘anti-state elements who harbor devilish designs of creating anarchy and disruption in the country’ (Dawn, July 30, 2013). They are framed as ‘agents of chaos and the ones who thrive on crisis’ (The News, June 1, 2013). The same articles accuse the Taliban of colluding with the country’s enemies to commit atrocities against ordinary civilians. This enemy image has led many reporters and editors to regard the Taliban as a single, monolithic entity, which is a misperception of the reality. The country’s prime minister has reiterated many times that the Taliban are not a single group, for many hostile factions are using this label for their activities. Any constructive debate on the media has to delve into the details of this issue and uncover the facts of this murky scenario.

Other stories declared them to be against peace, because it does not matter to them. Citing examples, the media claimed that making peace with the Taliban would be dangerous for Pakistan and criticized those who distinguished between ‘Pakistanis’ and ‘us’. In fact, a new term, ‘pro-Taliban’, has been used by those who call for peace agreements. They are hated for taking such a stance and criticized for allowing a terrorist group to be mainstreamed and become part of a ‘national narrative’. The Taliban way of doing things is the antithesis of peace and stability, the reports asserted (assumed), as though there were no tensions and conflicts in the region before the Taliban movement. In fact, the areas of Pakistan afflicted by the present struggle have never known peace in any ordinary sense of the word (Rashid, 2001). The tribal areas of Pakistan (North-West Frontier Province) were always a neglected region and ruled by a long-time colonial regime, the FCR (Frontier Crimes Regulations). This inhumane and inequitable environment is the root cause of Talibanization and many other anti-statist movements, which is conveniently ignored by the media.

The second technique applied in the same category is that of treating the Taliban as ‘responsible for the killings of innocent people’. Though the human toll in the conflict is horrific and beyond imagination, other forces, including the Pakistani army, black marketers, smugglers, sectarian groups, the Blackwater PMC, the intelligence agencies of regional states and the drone attacks have contributed to the bloodbaths (Khan, 2013). Strangely, the media do not delve deeply into these issues and solely criticize the Taliban for the killings, assigning them all the responsibility. ‘Peace is not possible with killers’, the
News (June 14, 2013), reported the former Pakistani interior minister Rehman Malik, who also warned of the 'unbearable consequences of a peace deal with these terrorists'. The report asserts that the Taliban cannot be trusted and hence military operations are the only solution. The same line is toed by Dawn (May 19, 2013), which reported a retired Pakistani military official as saying it is tantamount to accepting defeat from the people who have killed thousands of Pakistanis and military personnel. Though the media, when reporting on government officials, always refer to the 'ordinary people killed in the conflict', they never discuss what happens to the local population when military jets bomb the area and fire missiles. Similarly, the killings that occur in the drone attacks are never presented before the camera, and journalists pay little attention to the victims. Over the course of many months, Pakistani media have had to retract their reports on many occasions when they blamed the Taliban for particular bombing incidents that would later turn out to be the work of other groups.

Thirdly, Taliban fighters are framed as enemy insurgents who pose a major threat to national security and the country's territorial integrity. They allegedly have 'territorial ambitions' and want to expand their activities over the length and breadth of the country (Dawn, May 22, 2013). The News (July 31, 2013) warned that if they were not stopped, they would soon 'be controlling the heartland', as once happened when they captured Swat teams and advanced to just 70 kilometers from Islamabad. Other accounts described the same situation using different discursive patterns to mobilize support against the 'grave dangers' that Talibanzization posed to the country. The media reported officials as saying that the only way out was 'force'. Readers were warned that if the Taliban were not stopped at this moment, other anti-state groups would be emboldened that are operating in different regions and can do irreparable harm to the country.

Finally, they are framed as agents of repression, retrogression, medievalism and backwardness (The News, August 7, & Dawn, July 30), with the aim to impose their rigid worldviews on 'moderate Pakistanis'. Their rise to power would mean that Pakistan could not remain a democracy and would be reduced to a theocracy where just one religious sect dominates and others are forbidden to practice their faith. In other stories both newspapers criticized the Taliban way of life as based on barbaric traditions, where intolerance and schism rule supreme, where men are forced to grow beards and women to wear traditional costumes, much to the chagrin of the broader population. Not a single story appeared in the Pakistan media to discuss the local culture, which would definitely suggest that the attire and traditions of the Taliban are not different, and in fact the same garb has been worn in the region for centuries. The customs and traditions of tribal peoples living on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan have always been different from those of the mainstream culture, and they are consequently often ridiculed and stereotyped in social discourse.

4.2.2 Pakistani army as the rescuer

While Pakistani media usually disdain the army for its political role, they are all appreciative of this institution for playing a 'crucial role to weaken and even defeat the Taliban' (News, May 6, 2013) and rescue the country from their nefarious clutch-es (Dawn, May 23, 2013). These and other examples openly side with the Pakistani military and eulogize their sacrifices. They are often framed as Jawan (strong men) who are honored for their commitment to and love of this country and revered if they embrace martyrdom. All the stories analyzed in this category share the same frames when reporting on the Pakistani army. In all accounts, the military is 'acclaimed' for its services and the Taliban 'disclaimed' for their malevolent designs. Different opinion surveys conducted in Pakistan have revealed that though the Taliban have no solid majority of supporters when it comes to fighting against the Pakistani army, they are still considered Pakistanis, and peace is preferred to force as the right way to deal with this issue.

As most journalists have no access to these areas, they usually rely on the press releases issued by the Pakistani military. These are published without any changes in the stated facts and vocabulary. The two newspapers haven't published a single story where the army's role could be challenged. In Pakistani society, however, the army's role is being questioned: 'Why are the Taliban winning, how do the Taliban orchestrate attacks, why are the drone attacks being made on us, why are those killed in tribal areas not shown in the media', and so on. The media turned against the peace deal with the Taliban when a military official was killed, questioning why 'we need to talk to people who are killing our Jawans'. When army personnel are killed in attacks, the media sympathize with the bereaved families, showcasing their lives, services and sacrifices to generate maximum support for the cause of fighting against the Taliban.

4.2.3. Force as the solution

The third discourse technique used by the media while covering this conflict is to stress 'force as the solution to this conflict'. 'It is foolhardy to expect religious fanatics to eschew violence' (News, June 8, 2013), or 'Does it make sense to deal with ragtag militias who have killed more than forty thousand Pakistanis?' (Dawn, June, 13 2013). By selecting half-truths from the Swat example, the newspapers stress military operations as the only effective option. Though at present Pakistani media are against the drone attacks on the country's soil, earlier they were reported to be successful in killing terrorists (who often turned out to be ordinary civilians). In other news stories, the media reported extensively on past peace agreements and blamed the Taliban for violations. They were criticized for having a much more extensive agenda, (The News, August
23, 2013) to promote Talibanization and increase their influence in the settled areas of Khyber Pakhtoonhwa (the war-ravaged province of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan) and in the Pakistani heartland. The Dawn (May 27, 2013) reported that the Pakistani Taliban have an identical agenda with the Afghan Taliban, to spread their ideology and seize power over this country by hook or by crook. Referring to past examples when peace agreements were signed between the two sides, the newspaper concludes that these peace overtures have emboldened the Taliban and given them much needed space and time to regroup and reorganize. The newspapers do not check their facts against other sources to provide alternative viewpoints. As the common people in this conflict have no voice in the media, these elitist and securitized versions have a monopoly in mainstream media discourse. This is in line with the findings of many other studies (Ross, 2008; Ersoy, 2006) investigating the nature of the media in wars, where they lose any sense of proportion, siding with one group or another, inciting more violence and advocating ‘force as the solution’.

4.3 R.Q.2: How do the victims of the conflict perceive media reporting?

Though the Pakistani media take pride in informing people about all the important issues, while covering this conflict they conveniently ignore issues that are of paramount importance and would help people form educated opinions. On my trip to one of the affected areas, I listened to people who were totally dismissive of what was being claimed by the media and the ‘absurd questions’ that media representatives asked (I was snubbed by a tribesman when I tried to ask the traditional question of ‘who is winning’). Almost all the people I interviewed decried media reporting for not highlighting their concerns, their lives in refugee camps, their nostalgia for their lost homes, the rigors of refugee life, the bombardments by the army, the retaliations by Taliban fighters, the destruction of their houses and properties, and sorrow over the dear ones killed in the conflict, the trauma and psychological stress and the travails of survivors. Leaving homes and taking refuge in camps is considered unmanly in tribal tradition, but they are told that they have to do it for the sake of their women and children. They were worried about their cattle and local businesses destroyed in this war. They accused the media of neglecting them and hiding the truth by not revealing “who was doing all this in their areas.” They accused the media of portraying their women and children as beggars, fighting over food and complained that they captured them on camera unawares. They said that they were the victims of the conflict, but the media were depicting them as fleeing in search of free food. Mohammad Bilal, a literate tribesman in the Khyber Agency, expressed his reaction like this: "Each time I read a newspaper or listen to a radio or television show, we are told that so many people are killed, and there are conflicting statements by the government and the Taliban. Where are we? It is as if the whole conflict is being fought for our land and not for us.” Another tribesman, Zarkhan Khan, said, “I have never seen a reporter here. I don’t know where are they are getting their news.” The same views were expressed by teachers in a school, who said that the media never discussed the causes of the conflict and solutions for it. "They like our bleeding faces and bodies," said one teacher, when asked why they were being ignored in the media debate. A merchant who regularly watches TV and reads newspapers said, “I simply laugh at the baseless arguments of reporters appearing on TV and claiming expertise on issues which they know little about.”

Research studies (Knightsly, 2003; Ross, 2008) have shown that the media usually highlight the policymakers, military officers and other elites in the conflict, because professionally they are said to be accurate, objective and more newsworthy. Ordinary people are ignored, as they provide less interesting news. However, the protagonists of the peace media (Galtung, 2000; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005; Kompf, 2007) propose that by including the human interest stories of affected people and eye-witness accounts, peace stories can be made as newsworthy as militant ones, and will ultimately encourage a peaceful conflict settlement.

4.4 What are the issues that obstruct peace journalism when reporting on this conflict?

One key factor that slants media discourse towards war journalism is the dominant belief in media circles that ‘the Taliban want to break Pakistan’, which promotes an enemy image. They are criticized for what they do and even condemned for what they don’t do. The past ten years have sown seeds of hatred and bellicosity, which are hard to forget. But force is not the solution. The government has confirmed that more than 50,000 people have lost their lives in this conflict. Military operations could quadruple this figure, alongside the enormous damage to the whole body politic of Pakistan. The army has told the government that the chances for winning this war are not more than 10 percent. In this scenario, peace diplomacy needs to be initiated, and the onus lies on the media. However, the Pakistani media offer only a one-sided perspective on this conflict, which further aggravates the situation. Now, after ten years of this conflict in which thousands of military personnel, Taliban fighters and ordinary people have been killed, media discourse still does not favor the idea of peace. As peace scholar Gadi Woiwold (2004) observes, complicated conflicts need patience and perseverance and a commitment to peace, which the news media can’t provide, due to inherent professional and organizational constraints. Now, the government has agreed to a peace settlement with the Taliban, who are being criticized for giving in to them. The Pakistani media do not discuss the conspiracies and interests of different stakeholders, who are hell-bent on making these peace agreements fall.
Secondly, journalists have virtually no access to the conflict regions and are solely dependent on the army for whatever information they get on them. Some journalists claim to have sources in the Taliban, but these claims are refuted by independent scholars. If the military, aided by the world’s best intelligence from the CIA, cannot find the Taliban, how it is possible for ordinary journalists to have contacts in the Taliban fold?

The most horrific aspect of war journalism is the ignorance of ‘people’s accounts’ in media discourse. It seems that news editors don’t consider it newsworthy to discuss the plight of ordinary tribemen. For them, the statements of the top Pakistani policymakers and the Taliban leaders (although no one can confirm the authenticity of the purported media talks with the Taliban) and alleged atrocities are more important, as they engage people emotionally and psychologically more than the concerns of ordinary people, which are considered mere repetition and hence as having no news value (Ottosen, 2008). Media personnel will have to be convinced of the importance of publishing the personal accounts of the affected people. Such an approach will be in line with peace journalism and also provide significant information on how to approach the conflict from a more constructive perspective (Kempf, 2007).

One main problem with the current journalistic practices is the framing by the Pakistani media of all Taliban as constituting just a single collective entity. This is simply not true, as shown by many independent scholars and analysts. The provincial government has stated many times that there are about 40 different groups within the Taliban fold. By now, it has become almost a joke in Pakistan that if an explosion occurs anywhere in the country, the Taliban are blamed. Many times a gas explosion, electrical power failure or any other infrastructure breakdown is first blamed on the Taliban, on red tickertape, and then the tickertape turns blue, showing it was caused by human error or a technical breakdown. Media need to sensitise the Pakistani people and policymakers to why eight million people (the total population of the tribal areas) despise government policy, e.g., for the alliance with the USA. Why are young people committing suicide and killing innocent countrymen? Democracies are expected to comply with the will of the people, and policies should be changed if the people desire this. At this moment, however, Pakistani media are lapdogs of the Western-leaning media houses (USAID is the major supporter of the Pakistani media) trying to agitate for this war, in which ordinary tribesmen are the hardest hit victims.

5. Conclusion

This study was made during a period of widespread political and social upheaval. Twelve years after the 9/11 attacks, America and its allies have realized the futility of force and are pursuing peace talks with the Taliban in Afghanistan, whose government came under strong pressure for ‘providing safe havens to Al Qaeda’. The Afghan Taliban have opened an office in Doha, and talks are underway to include them in a political dispensation in Afghanistan when the US withdraws its forces from the region sometime next year. Interestingly, the same mechanism is being used by Pakistan to arrive at some form of peace agreement with the Pakistani Taliban, but unlike Afghanistan, there is resistance to signing peace agreements within and outside of Pakistan. This study was designed to address the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of this problem, and primarily investigated the content of Pakistani media, along with seeking the viewpoints of affected people in this conflict. It must be kept in mind that alongside the peace model of the USA in Afghanistan, the desire to peacefully resolve the Taliban conflict in Pakistan was strongly advocated by the Pakistani Tehreek-e-Insaf Party, headed by the popular Pakistan sports celebrity Imran Khan. He contested the 2013 elections in Pakistan by pledging to resolve this issue peacefully and won a landslide majority in the province of Khyber Pakhtoonhwa, the epicenter of conflict. Though he is otherwise considered a ‘darling of Pakistani media’, the peace proposals made by Imran Khan are not welcomed by the Pakistani media, the Western-backed civil society and the elite intelligentsia.

This study posed three important questions to help understand the media framing of the conflict: the representation of the Taliban, the viewpoint of the affected people and the possibilities for peace journalism to help ameliorate the situation. Regarding the first question, the Pakistani media discursive strategies blamed the Taliban for the violence against ‘our army’, having territorial ambitions, advocating a narrow strand of Islam that opposes modernity and would leave us backward and uncultured. The media completely decontextualized the conflict, never mentioned the role played by the Pakistani and Western powers in bringing about this situation, which according to peace scholarship is propagandistic and elitist (Galtung, 2000; Lynch 2005). Such media framing is dangerous to peace (Kempf, 2003) and would obfuscate the conflict and complicate its resolution (Bläsi, 2004). This negative framing of the Taliban corresponds with the media anxiety for peace (Wolsfeld, 2004). Ironically, the media treat all the Taliban as just one group, in order to oversimplify the situation (which fits the journalistic cliché ‘Keep it simple, stupid’) and conveniently ignores the exhortations by politicians like Imran Khan that the Taliban is not a monolithic entity. Peace agreements with them will reveal the true intentions of those who are not signing the deals. Moreover, the peacemakers believe that if the Taliban set up their office in Islamabad, it will be easy to question them and hold them responsible if any terrorist outrage occurs. Unfortunately, Pakistani media deride these arguments, presenting unconvincing reasons to justify their position. One reason for such slanted media coverage may be the editorial guidelines that they receive from Islamabad-based editors and managers, who have no direct exposure to this conflict and entertain elitist notions which, according to Bläsi (2004), make it a major hurdle for the media to promote peace.
The second question addressed why the media ignored the victims of this conflict by not reporting on their concerns and perspectives. Judging by the standards of traditional journalism, the media neglect the common people because elitist views are more newsworthy and have greater impacts. Official statements meet the professional standards of journalism and hence get the biggest headlines. Additionally, sometimes discussing the plight of the common people may go against the national consensus (criticism of the army for excessive use of force). This researcher was told by victims in the Khyber Agency that the media were misreporting them and highlighting issues that were of secondary importance. In the words of an affected person, the media "take pleasure in watching our bleeding faces."

Finally, on the question of discussing the scope of peace journalism to help resolve this conflict, the obstacles identified ranged from elitist perspectives, lack of basic knowledge about this conflict, fears of seeming unpatriotic, the simplification of issues, the dangers of fundamentalism, the inaccessibility of the areas where this war is being fought and a lack of knowledge about the benefits of peace media. The scope of peace journalism lies in highlighting the suffering of ordinary people, which can be both newsworthy (due to human interest) and a guide for peace. No one can deny that the agony and tribulations of the victims and their proposals should carry more weight. Additionally, peace journalism can rightly spotlight the wrongs in policies that were implemented by Pakistani leaders a decade ago in siding with the USA against their national interests. The Taliban's demands for withdrawing from the US war effort fits perfectly with our own national interests (always stressed by the provincial government of the region where this war is being waged). Media need to analyze these demands from a Pakistani perspective and encourage other stakeholders to work for enduring peace in the region.

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URL: http://www.transcend.org/tms/2011/04/

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Die Verwendung offensiver Public Relations während eines Konflikts: Bemühungen der Hamas um die Beschädigung von Israels Ansehen während des Flottenzwischenfalls von 2010


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The use of offensive public relations during a conflict: Hamas’s efforts to damage Israel’s image during the 2010 flotilla

Crisis communication models contain strategies to rehabilitate an organization’s image, but do not deal with strategies used to damage the image of another player or competitor. Using qualitative content analysis of 178 items published by Palestinian Information Center (PIC, the Hamas’s leading website), the purpose of this manuscript is to examine Hamas’s efforts to run offensive PR and to harm Israel’s image restoration efforts at the time of the flotilla crisis in May 2010. We discover that Hamas deployed a strategy that consisted of five elements: evidence of existence of the crisis event, damages, victims, performance history and undermining the competitor’s response.

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The use of offensive public relations during a conflict: Hamas's efforts to damage Israel's image during the 2010 flotilla


Abstract: Crisis communication models contain strategies to rehabilitate an organization's image, but do not deal with strategies used to damage the image of another player or competitor. Using qualitative content analysis of 178 items published by Palestinian Information Center (PIC, the Hamas’s leading website), the purpose of this manuscript is to examine Hamas’s efforts to run offensive PR and to harm Israel's image restoration efforts at the time of the flotilla crisis in May 2010. We discover that Hamas deployed a strategy that consisted of five elements: evidence of existence of the crisis event, damages, victims, performance history and undermining the competitor's response.

Introduction

In the field of crisis management, most crisis communications models offer organizations and companies strategies to restore their image after a crisis (Coombs, 1999; Beniot, 1997; 1995; Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Stocker, 1997; Coombs & Holladay, 2010). These models contain strategies and tactics to rehabilitate an organization's image, but do not deal with strategies used to damage the image of another player or competitor. This is surprising given the perception that one player's image crisis is actually a second player's opportunity; if a player's image is damaged, its competitors can often increase their popularity. Moreover, the lack of models dealing with methods that organizations use to damage the image of a competitor is surprising given the increase in non-mediated access to the target audience offered by the Internet. The Internet offers easier ways to attack opponents and to damage their image using means such as websites and social media. Using qualitative content analysis of items published by the Palestinian Information Center (PIC), the purpose of this manuscript is to examine Hamas's efforts to run offensive PR and to harm Israel's image restoration efforts at the time of the flotilla crisis in May 2010.

1. Theoretical background

A crisis is bound to happen; this is a known fact. Just as an organization needs to be prepared to handle a physical crisis, it also needs to be prepared to deal with the communication/image crisis that will surely follow (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993; Coombs, 1999; Coombs & Holladay, 2010). When an organization is facing a crisis, its opponents and competitors can use the situation to damage the organization's image. In other words, one organization's crisis is another organization's opportunity. In recent years the role of crisis communication management has expanded, as practitioners and scholars noticed that a company can suffer from the communicative consequences of a crisis long after the physical crisis has ended.

The basic paradigm of crisis communication management divides a crisis into three time frames: pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis (Coombs, 1999; Avraham & Ketter, 2008). In the pre-crisis stage the organization needs to prepare for the crisis (Coombs, 1999); it has to actively work on narrowing the perceptual gap between the stakeholders' expectations and the perceived company behavior, as well as plan its activities once the crisis erupts. Every organization has numerous stakeholders that hold different views of its behavior, and there are always conceptual gaps between the different stakeholders' expectations and how they interpret the company's behavior. An organization needs to work constantly to keep those gaps as narrow as possible (Hallahon, 1999). Although such gaps are bound to widen during a crisis, the narrower the gap in the pre-crisis stage, the easier it will be to handle the crisis and recover from it afterwards (Avraham & Ketter, 2008).

In the crisis coping stage, an organization needs to try to control the news by feeding the media with relevant information. It is not that the organization can camouflage the crisis in bright colors of success, but if the company uses a comprehensive and coherent communication strategy, the communication crisis can be more manageable (Coombs & Holladay, 2006). After the physical crisis has ended, the post-crisis stage begins. In this stage, an organization ought to direct most of its resources towards investigation and rehabilitation, along with communication efforts to remove the crisis from the news cycle (Coombs, 1999). This stage is also called "recovery marketing" when the organization tries to restore its image or the
image of its product. In addition to any concrete steps taken to solve the crisis, strategic actions of learning and debriefing should be undertaken to implement the lessons gained from the recent events. The emergency response and action plan should be revised and updated, in readiness for a future crisis (Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Gonzalez-Herrero & Pratt, 1996). In addition, initiatives need to be taken by the organization at this stage in order to regain the trust of stakeholders, employees and the public.

The Internet has become a great tool for managing public relations; some may say that the Internet is the first direct public relations tool since it enables organizations to reach their stakeholders without the need to go through the media gatekeepers (White & Raman, 1999). Therefore, it is no wonder that the Internet is used during the three stages of crisis (Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008). However, this unmediated connection between organizations and the public enables any Internet users to spread their views, perceptions and positions regarding the organization, whether it is right or wrong, good or bad. The Internet is the sanctuary of anonymity; not only can any blogger post an item dealing with any organization, it can be done without the need to reveal identity or sources. This is truly a new era for public relations professionals and researchers.

The ability of Internet users to anonymously broadcast information about a certain organization makes it relatively easy to create an image crisis for one’s competitors by posting negative information and views. This option of offensive public relations has yet to be researched as a coherent subject. We suggest using this term to describe the actions taken by an organization that is competing with another organization. This is a real threat at all times that becomes greatly intensified in times of crisis.

1.1 Image restoration

The field of image restoration is composed of several existing models that provide suggestions on how firms and organizations can restore their image post-crisis. For example, Stocker (1997) states that the basic response strategy includes three or four steps: expression of regret that the situation has happened; action to resolve the situation; ensuring the situation will not occur again; and if necessary the offer of restitution to the injured parties. A more elaborate model is offered by Beniot (1995, 1997), who lists five communication strategies that can be used in response to a crisis: denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of events, corrective action, and mortification. Similarly, Coombs (1999) identifies seven communication strategies: attacking the accuser, denial, excuse, justification, ingratiation, corrective action, and full apology. Avraham & Ketter (2008) proposed a model that was exclusively designed and created for assisting localities to alter negative destination images. The choice in such cases can be among three groups of media strategies with the focus on the source of the message, on the message itself, or on the target audience. Source strategies focus on affecting, influencing or replacing the sources of the negative message or the accuser (mainly the mass media but can also be an NGO, the UN or other international organizations). Message strategies focus on the message itself, handling the problematic image components directly. An example of this would be blaming a certain country for human rights violations or discrimination against minorities. Lastly, audience strategies focus on reconciliations between the targeted country and foreign audiences regarding shared values and cultures, common enemies and past cooperation. The campaign sponsored by Saudi Arabia in order to restore its image in the US after the 9/11 crisis by means of emphasizing Saudi Arabia’s ties to America over the years (Avraham, 2013) is an example of this strategy. Avraham used this model to analyze both Israel’s efforts to restore its image (2009) and also the image of Middle Eastern countries (2013).

1.2 Media and terror

Hamas is a terror organization (USDS, 2011) that uses a wide assortment of media tactics and strategies, as do many other modern terror organizations (Weimann, 2011). Terror has always been the chosen tactic of the oppressed and the weak, as its perceived ability to influence decision makers and public opinion relatively inexpensively has drawn those who seek to create fundamental changes (Kimhi & Even, 2004). In recent years terror organizations have not only used acts of terror to promote their agendas but also public campaigns. This has become even easier and more widespread in recent years over the Internet. When approaching their target audiences over the Internet, terror organizations use marketing tools and techniques similar to any other organization (Mozes & Weimann, 2010). Although traditionally terror organizations’ public communication efforts were researched within the framework of propaganda, using commercial marketing frameworks to research the acts of terror organizations over the Internet has been proven to be much more beneficial and productive (Archetti, 2010; Mozes & Weimann, 2010; Weimann, 2008). Like any public organization, terror groups have multiple stakeholders. Stakeholders are defined as all the people and organizations that are affected by or can affect the organization in question (Freeman & Reed, 1983). Most terror groups have the same categories of stakeholders: the international public and decision makers, the local and international media, their enemy’s public and decision makers, and the society in which they are based.
Each one of these stakeholders has different opinions about the terror organization and the organization has varied goals in regarding their many stakeholders. For example, in the context of terror events, using the international media would not serve the need of the organization to address its own society. The need to address different stakeholders is one way to explain the establishment of many independent media outlets by terror groups, including newspapers, magazines, TV stations, and radio stations. In the framework of media channel development, many terrorist groups use the Internet to reach stakeholders by building websites in various languages and with different content (Mozes & Weimann, 2010). In 2010 there were more than 7,600 websites serving terrorists and their supporters (Weimann, 2011). There are many ways to interpret the huge number of websites owned and used by terror organizations. The ability to bypass the traditional media outlets (Weimann, 2006) is the focus of the current discussion.

1.3 The case study

The Palestinian territories consist of two geographically separated areas: the West Bank, ruled by Fatach, and the Gaza Strip, under the control of Hamas (Matthew, 2006). Since January 2009, the Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli naval blockade in an effort to stop the arrival of military equipment. One of the consequences of this blockade is that every ship on its way to the area is stopped by the Israeli navy to have its crew, passengers and cargo inspected (Turkel et al., 2010). At the end of May 2010, a flotilla comprised of several ships sailed towards the Gaza Strip in order to break the blockade.

On the night of May 30, the flotilla was addressed by Israeli gunships, who requested that they stop in order to undergo routine inspection. While five of the ships replied willingly to the call, the captain of the Mavi Marmara declared his refusal to stop on the grounds that it was on a humanitarian mission. When the flotilla got closer to the Gaza shores, at around 4:30 a.m., Israeli Special Forces began to physically intercept the ships of the flotilla. The troops that attempted to board the Mavi Marmara encountered physical resistance. In the end, after several hours of clashes, the Israeli troops took control of the flotilla. During the incident, nine Turkish passengers were killed along with twenty more who were wounded; ten Israeli soldiers were wounded as well (Turkel et al., 2010). The event received heavy international media coverage, damaged the diplomatic relations between Israel and Turkey, and resulted in a world-wide image crisis for Israel, which was accused of employing unnecessary force to stop the boats. An intense debate continued long after the event about the legitimacy of the flotilla, its cargo and its goals.

1.4 Methodology

At the basis of this research lay the assumption that Hamas used offensive public relations to damage Israel's image during its struggle with the flotilla crisis. To do so, Hamas used the crisis communication model in an offensive way before, during and after the crisis. The study postulates that during the pre-crisis stage, Hamas made efforts to widen the conceptual gap between the perceived Israeli behavior and its stakeholders' expectations. It is further assumed that during the crisis Hamas deployed a communication strategy that consisted of the five elements that have been shown to be important in any communication crisis, such as evidence of the existence of the crisis event, damages, victims, performance history and undermining the competitor response (Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Coombs, 1999). At the post-crisis stage, the working assumption was that Hamas would try to keep the crisis in the news cycle, so Israel would not be able to rehabilitate from the crisis (Coombs, 1999; Coombs and Holiday, 2010).

In order to analyze Hamas's communication strategy relating the events of the flotilla, we used the items that appeared on the Palestine Information Center (PIC) website in English (palestine-info.co.uk). It is widely acknowledged that the PIC site is Hamas's leading news website (Bunt, 2002; Khatib, 2003; Mozes & Weimann, 2010). The PIC website first appeared in 1998 and began regular operations in 1999. It provides both basic information on Hamas and current news, and is primarily oriented towards Hamas's ideology and viewpoint on current events. The site publishes Hamas's news releases; posts official announcements and interviews with high-ranking members of the movement; and carries attacks aimed at Israel, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and other countries. It also encourages acts of terrorism against Israeli targets and praises the terrorists who commit them. In addition, it conducts surveys and provides information including videos, music, posters and pictures supporting Hamas's point of view. The site is offered in eight languages including Arabic, English, French, Farsi (Iran), Urdu (Pakistan), Russian and Malaysian (Mozes & Weimann, 2010).

After a pre-test of 40 items published about the flotilla, the authors found that the appropriate keyword for searching the news archive should be the phrase "Freedom Flotilla," which was the name that the organizers of the flotilla used in order to describe the event. The time frame of the items to be included in the study was May 1 to June 23, 2010. The search resulted in 178 items: 49 items from May 1 to May 30 (the pre-crisis period), 15 items from May 31 (the crisis period), and 115 items from June 1 to June 23 (the post-crisis period). These items were then examined using quality content analysis.

As seen above, Hamas issued numerous items about the flotilla. In order to analyze these items and extrapolate Hamas's
media strategy, a content analysis was used. Krippendorff (2004), defined content analysis as "... a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use" (2004, p.18). In the first step of the content analysis process, a structured analysis matrix was formed (Elo & Kyngas, 2008) using the model of crisis communication management (Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Coombs, 1999). As mentioned above, the model divides the crisis communication into three stages: the pre-crisis, the crisis itself and the post-crisis. The model also emphasizes various aspects in each of the three stages, which were used to form the analysis matrix (see Table 1).

Each item published on the PIC website was divided into two or more paragraphs. All of the paragraphs of the 178 articles that were included in this study were collected. The paragraphs were used as the basic content units to be analyzed using the analysis matrix. To further deepen the understanding of Hamas's offensive public relations methods, each paragraph was given headlines that described the categories shown in it. These were the inductive sub-categories (as shown in Table 1) that demonstrate how each category of the model was addressed by Hamas. As we can see from Table 1, the two right-hand columns were drafted using the crisis communication management model (Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Coombs, 1999); the left-hand column was drafted using inductive sub-categories discovered in our analysis of the PIC items.

<table>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>E Undermining the preferred corporate response strategy</td>
<td>1 Israeli responsibility</td>
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<td>Post-Crisis</td>
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Table 1: The research analysis matrix

Validity and reliability (Guttman, 1945) of the data were achieved through the use of two judges, and the agreement rate between them with regard to the various variables included in the coding page was 90 percent. We ran an inter-coder reliability test, based on the model presented by Light (1971).

2. Findings

The findings section will present Hamas's offensive public relations methods. The findings are divided by the three stages of the crisis, deductive categories and their inductive subcategories (see Table 1).

2.1 Pre-crisis

The items posted on the PIC website during the pre-crisis stage revolved around two main topics: shaping the stakeholders' expectations and creating a negative image of the corporate behavior, Israel in our case.

2.1.1 Shaping the stakeholders' expectations

The findings show that the stakeholders' expectations were addressed using three topics: the flotilla cargo, the participants and the legitimacy of the flotilla. We believe that Hamas used these three sub-categories in order to portray the flotilla as a humanitarian act that posed no threat to Israel, which should let it pass.
2.1.1.1 The cargo

While reporting on the boats' cargo, the PIC items emphasized the types and amounts of cargo. While some of the PIC reports regarding the cargo were general and used the terms "humanitarian aid" or "relief convoy", in most cases there were demonstrative details of the cargo:

"The convoy ships will be carrying more than 10,000 tons of humanitarian aid including medical supplies, building materials..." (May 29, 2010, 15:51).

The items about the cargo were not consistent in their content. Various items reported different cargo, including electronic wheelchairs, school supplies, sports equipment, electricity generators and desalination units, for example:

"(The ships) will carry on board tons of building materials, electric generators, medical appliances, medicines and food aid" (May 19, 2010, 16:26).

It is true that these inconsistencies can be explained by low professional reporting standards of evidence checking, but it seems that despite the inconsistencies a consistent image of the cargo emerged from the news items. The reports emphasized that the cargo included basic supplies and necessities that posed no threat to Israel.

2.1.1.2 The participants

Another sub-category that emerged from the items relates to the reports about the flotilla participants. This sub-category is very important because of the debate between Israeli spokespersons and the flotilla organizers over the framing of the events. Hamas joined these "framing efforts" and emphasized the peaceful characteristics of the participants in items such as the following:

"... 750 activists who came from 40 countries to channel purely medical and humanitarian assistance to 1.7 million besieged Palestinians in the Strip" (May 29, 2010, 15:33).

The reports placed an emphasis on two characters of the participants. The first was on the number of different nationalities; and the second was the repeated mention that these multi-national activists brought "purely medical and humanitarian assistance" to the siege area inhabitants. In addition, we also discovered an emphasis on the members of parliament from different European countries that were on board:

"Two German Members of Parliament joined the participants along with two Swedish Members of Parliament bringing the total number of official and parliamentary figures to more than 50 and the overall participants to 750 persons from 60 nationalities" (May 25, 2010, 15:31).

Along with these emphases, general remarks about the participants were also found, for example:

"The activists from 40 countries including Members of Parliament, notables, and officials came to Gaza with nothing in mind except the humanitarian aspect of the trip and to end the siege and oppression against Gaza" (May 30, 2010, 16:50).

The reports concentrated on presenting the passengers as solidarity activists while claiming that their only goal for participating in this flotilla was to ensure the arrival of basic supplies to Gaza. Thus, in the PIC the reports the flotilla's participants were characterized as multi-national, mostly from Western countries and accompanied, if not even supervised, by parliament members of EU countries. In addition, these participants were presented as being dedicated to high humanitarian and peaceful causes.

2.1.1.3 Legitimacy of the flotilla

The third category emphasized in the PIC reports during the pre-crisis period was the legitimacy of the flotilla. While Israel claimed that the flotilla had no legitimacy, the organizers claimed that their goal was to break the siege on Gaza. As expected, the PIC reports promoted these claims:

"The Freedom Flotilla is acting in line with universal principals of human rights and justice in defying a blockade identified as illegal by the UN and other humanitarian organizations" (May 15, 2010, 15:22).

Among those reports one can discover many explanations regarding the international laws of marine travel, the illegality of the blockade and emphasis of different actions the flotilla's organizers took in accordance with laws of the different countries:

"The first ship had left Ireland after concluding all legal and official procedures, noting that the ship was insured at international insurance companies" (May 18, 2010, 16:38).

Looking at the items issued by Hamas before the crisis, it is clear that some of their reports were aimed at shaping the stakeholders' views of the flotilla. This was accomplished by emphasizing the humanitarian properties of the cargo, the peaceful manner of the participants and the legal issues that were fully addressed by the flotilla organizers; this way Israel's stakeholders were bound to expect a safe arrival of the flotilla to Gaza.
2.1.2 Creating a negative image of the corporate behavior

Before a crisis occurs, there is great importance to minimizing the conceptual gap between the stakeholders' expectations and the perceived firm's behavior. This is because the smaller the gap, the more credit the stakeholders give the company when the crisis erupts (Coombs & Holladay, 2006). The perceived company's behavior is important in the management of this conceptual gap because it reflects on the company's actions, once a crisis erupts. Our analysis show that the PCI reports regarding the Israeli actions focused on three topics: descriptions of Israeli acts against the flotilla, the legal issues of Israel's planned attack, and reports about the Israeli-imposed siege on Gaza and its consequences. These three topics helped Hamas to depict Israel's behavior as brutal and deliberately offensive.

2.1.2.1 Descriptions of Israeli acts

The items about Israeli acts range from general notions about the preparations to stop the flotilla to reports about the characteristics of the planned Israeli actions to stop the flotilla; for example:

"Palestinian sources said that the IDF (Israel Defiance Force) navy forces were using live ammunition in those [practice] maneuvers that could pose great dangers on the Freedom Flotilla" (May 30, 2010, 08:99).

Israel's possible responses to the flotilla were portrayed in the PIC items as forceful, aiming to cause damage to flotilla participants, with the hope that each Israeli act would be framed as brutal to begin with and most likely illegitimate.

2.1.2.2 The illegitimacy of the attack

With the reports about the planned actions by Israel there were some reports that dealt with the illegality of those actions. In several reports the planned actions were referred to as being acts of piracy and state terrorism, as in the following example:

"The head of the popular committee against the siege also said that blocking the ships would be in violation of the international law and would be viewed as 'piracy'" (May 18, 2010, 16:38).

Again we can see in the PIC reports Israel being described as an international law breaker and a country that would adopt naval piracy.

2.1.2.3 The siege on Gaza

The PIC reports about the siege concentrated on the suffering of the Gaza population and the shortage of basic supplies. Without these basic necessities, it is difficult to live a regular life, and this lack creates casualties:

"Jamal Al-Khudari underlined that 500 Palestinians had died during more than one thousand days of siege, which is the biggest proof of the shortage of medical equipment and necessary medication and which in turn refutes the Israeli claim that supplies to Gaza never ceased" (May 20, 2010, 16:27).

This report is trying to turn the general allegations against Israel into something more concrete and to emphasize the number of casualties as the result of Israel's behavior, contradicting the Israeli claim that the medical boycott never happened.

In summary, from the PIC reports, it seems that Israel was planning to stop the aid to Gaza at all cost, regardless of the illegitimacy of its actions and the suffering of the Gazan population under siege. The analysis of PIC's pre-crisis items shows that Hamas had made efforts to widen the conceptual gap between the stakeholders' expectations and the perceived Israeli behavior. It did so by polarizing the reports about the Israeli actions. By creating, on the one hand, an innocent image of the flotilla and, on the other hand, painting the Israeli plans as illegitimate and aggressive, Hamas was widening the conceptual gap of the stakeholders, as was postulated by the hypothesis.

2.2 Crisis coping

The analysis of the items in the second stage of the crisis partially supports the research assumptions. It was assumed, according to the crisis communication model (Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Coombs, 1999), that Hamas would try to counter any Israeli attempts to deal with the crisis by focusing on the five elements that are stressed in the model: evidence of existence, damages, victims, performance history and response strategy.

2.2.1 Evidence of existence

The analysis revealed that there was minimal reference to evidence of the existence of the event. We found only two references in the PIC items to evidence of existence, both in the same item:
"Israeli troops' hijacking of the ships and their use of live bullets and tear gas grenades are acts of piracy and aggression against hundreds of non-violent people who wanted to deliver humanitarian aid to the impoverished Gaza people... According to different news reports, 16 people were killed and dozens injured when Israeli troops stormed..." (May 31, 2010, 08:19)

This minimal reference to evidence can be explained when looking back at Coombs' model (1999). The need to deal with evidences is the first issue the model emphasizes since the existence of a physical crisis does not necessarily mean that a communication crisis exists, and vice-versa. In the current event there is no doubt that a crisis happened, so there is no need for Hamas to emphasize the existence of the crisis. We believe that this may be the reason for the minimal reference to the first aspect in the model.

2.2.2 References to damages

In contrast to what was assumed by the model, there were no references in the items to the damages to the ships, supplies or any other materials. This absence can be explained by comparison to the severe injuries and casualties of the flotilla participants. Since the human victims are much more newsworthy, it is rational that the damages to the ships and their cargo, assuming there were any, would not be mentioned.

2.2.3 References to victims

Many PIC items dealt with the victims of the event. When analyzing this data two patterns of references to victims emerged: the numbers of casualties and the origin of the key participants.

2.2.3.1 The number of casualties

While in reality nine passengers were killed and 20 injured, the PIC reports painted a false picture. In the beginning, the reports claimed that the number of casualties was low relative to the real number; on the other hand, we found hints to "massacre"; for example:

"Turkish media outlets had said earlier that two persons were killed in the start of the IDF attack while many others were wounded some of them in serious conditions, charging Israel with committing a 'massacre'" (May 31, 2010, 06:04).

Later, the PIC reports claimed that the number of casualties, as result from the Israeli act, was much higher:

"Dozens of people were either killed or injured when special Israeli naval units stormed and opened fire on a Turkish ship" (May 31, 2010, 22:47).

The lack of accurate information most probably results from the fact that the PIC did not have reporters on the boats, so the website relied on various sources and media outlets. Other references to the victims in later items present a more precise number although these numbers were still exaggerated. By doing so, Hamas undermined any Israeli effort to say the event is act of defiance, that is under control and that only necessary force was employed.

2.2.3.2 Key participants

The second style of references to the victims was the reports about key participants injured or killed during the Israeli action. Along this pattern we found reports about an injury of one of the captains, and references to injured media members:

"The Greek captain of the ship 8000 sustained critical injuries after the Israeli troops, who stormed the ship, opened fire at him" (May 31, 2010, 11:51)

It seems that the main story that leads this pattern of dealing with key participants was the story of the killing of Sheikh Ra'ad Salah, an Israeli Arab religious leader. The reports about Sheikh Salah's wellbeing were published during the hours of the crisis:

"Sheikh Ra'ad Salah, the leader of the Islamic movement in the 1948 occupied Palestinian lands, was seriously injured in the Israeli occupation forces' (IOF) assault on the Freedom Flotilla" (May 31, 2010, 07:53).

"Israeli sources said that Sheikh Salah was wounded with IDF bullets during the storming of the Freedom Flotilla, describing his wounds as serious" (May 31, 2010, 15:44).

The model of crisis communication urges the communication managers to deal with the victims of the event, to keep the stakeholders informed of the exact numbers of victims and their condition (Coombs, 1999). When looking at our findings, it seems very clear that Hamas, by exaggerating the number of victims and reporting about victimized key participants, was emphasizing the severe consequences of the Israeli actions.

Although it is clear that Hamas's reports about the victims are in accordance with the model, the inaccuracies in the numbers and the false reporting about the killing of Sheikh Ra'ad Salah can be a product of misinformation caused by the
mayhem that is typical in this kind of events, as mentioned. And still, even if this is the cause, the decision to emphasize the victims in all of the items that were posted during the crisis is, by itself, strong enough evidence of fit to the model.

2.2.4 Performance history

As was assumed by the model, in the midst of the events, there were references to past Israeli actions, intended to emphasize that Israel's current behavior is in line with its "brutal and offensive" history. For example:

"Israel's aggressive attack on Freedom Flotilla aid convoy reflected its usual devilish face and unprecedented piracy against all international laws and norms" (May 31, 2010, 15:05).

"What happened to the Freedom Flotilla at the hands of 'Zionist gangs' was a miniature replica to what happened in the Gaza Strip at the hands of the Zionist military arsenal that bears a 'brutal grudge against humanity' and that targets the innocent and the unarmed" (May 31, 2010, 15:23).

"In the final analysis, violence, coercion and cruelty are the natural trademarks of Zionism. This is the way they think they can feel virile and manly... by starving and killing children..." (May 31, 2010, 21:36).

As we can see, these references contain no exact examples, but rather general remarks about patterns of Israeli violence against Palestinians over the years.

2.2.5 Undermining the preferred Israeli response strategy

There is a variety of possible response strategies when facing a crisis and those strategies differ by the degree of perceived responsibility that the organization has over the crisis (Beniot, 1997; Coombs and Holladay, 2010). It is clear that Israel preferred its definition of the events as malevolence, which is defined as the result of an outside actor or opponent that employs extreme tactics to express anger toward the organization, such as terrorism (Coombs, 1999). Following the model, Israel will have to emphasize the flotilla participants' responsibility to the event and its consequences. Hamas, on the other hand, should try to define the crisis as organizational misdeeds. Presumably, Hamas will do so by emphasizing that Israeli leaders has knowingly orchestrated a military operation to harm the flotilla participants (Coombs, 1999). Our findings show that Hamas did just as was assumed.

2.2.5.1 Israeli responsibility

One way to emphasize Israel's full responsibility for the crisis and its consequences was to report quotations of Arab and Muslim leader saying that Israel is responsible for the events; for example:

"Sheikh Kamal Al-Khatib, the deputy leader of the Islamic movement, held the Israeli occupation authority (IOA) fully responsible for the life of Sheikh Salah" (May 31, 2010, 15:44).

This pattern was found in the numerous reports that quoted Hamas and other Muslim leaders who spoke about the Israeli responsibility for the events and especially for the life of Sheikh Salach, when rumors claimed that he was hurt. Alongside the quoted accusations, there were third-person references to newspapers who participated in the flotilla itself that held Israel fully responsible; for example:

"The media outlets that sent their reporters and crews to cover the journey of Freedom Flotilla held Israel fully responsible for their safety, especially since all communications were lost with them" (May 31, 2010, 11:14).

By putting the responsibility on Israel in the midst of the event, Hamas is laying the groundwork to blame Israel for unnecessary use of force and an attack against peaceful participants of a relief convoy.

2.2.5.2 Innocence of participants

If the preferred Israeli response strategy is to define the crisis as malevolence, Israel needs to show that the flotilla passengers were actually lawbreakers who came with a clear purpose to hurt the Israeli troops and acted violently. This is why the PIC has published several items emphasizing that the passengers were unarmed, non-violent activists:

"The IDF used live bullets and teargas bombs in the attack on the ships carrying hundreds of solidarity activists and thousands of tons of medical aid and other relief material to the besieged people of Gaza" (May 31, 2010, 07:53).

"The Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla that left tens of martyrs and wounded in lines of the foreign solidarity activists on board" (May 31, 2010, 09:14).

The reports emphasize the characteristics of the flotilla passengers, while using adjectives that commemorate the fact that these passengers were human rights and solidarity activists.
2.2.5.3 Adjectives

The third way Hamas undermines the preferred Israeli response strategy is by using very harsh adjectives to describe the Israeli acts; for example:

"One of the convoy organizers said the Israeli troops' hijacking of the ships and their use of live bullets and tear gas grenades are acts of piracy and aggression against hundreds of non-violent people who wanted to deliver humanitarian aid to the impoverished Gaza people" (May 31, 2010, 08:19).

"The Yemeni government told the Quds Press that the attack was sheer piracy, and exposed the terrorist, ugly image of Israel" (May 31, 2010, 10:36).

"Hamas also condemned the attack on ships as an act of piracy committed in full view of the whole world" (May 31, 2010, 10:39).

Hamas made repeated use of three concepts "piracy," "hijacking" and "massacre". All of those terms are usually used to describe illegal and amoral acts, just as the model predicted.

In conclusion, it seems that Hamas acted strongly to undermine any Israeli attempt to put forward its logically preferred response strategy. Hamas did so by emphasizing the Israeli responsibility to the crisis and its consequences in three degrees of reference: direct, indirect and implicit.

2.3 Post-crisis

One of the main goals of an organization after dealing with and handling the physical crisis is to end the negative media coverage. Naturally an organization would do its best to take the crisis off the news cycle by minimizing the news worthiness of the events (Coombs, 1999). When using the model to predict an offensive crisis communication strategy, it is reasonable to assume that Hamas would make efforts to keep the events of the flotilla in the news cycle. This assumption has been found to be true, because Hamas kept the public interest in the flotilla events by referring to it in one of three growing circles of reference: direct references to the events, the side effects and the wide context of the events.

3.3.1 Direct references

The items of the direct reference circle dealt with the aftermath of the flotilla crisis. In these items Hamas emphasized the continuity of the crisis, long after the Israeli troops had gained full control of the flotilla ships and participants. For example:

"Basim Mansour, who visited on Tuesday a number of Freedom Flotilla detainees, said that two women told him that the Israeli soldiers tied two of the passengers and threw them into the sea to die by drowning (June 2, 2010, 09:09).

"Assad also said that Israel's action undermined human life and international law" (June 1, 2010, 11:25).

"The Turkish media reported that the Israeli troops who attacked Mavi Marmara, one of the Freedom Flotilla ships, possessed a 'hit list' containing the names of activists who should be killed and eliminated" (June 1, 2010, 14:45).

As we can see, the direct references came in one of three possible ways: testimonies of participants, items that presented new information about the events, and quotes from various figures condemning Israel and its acts. Items that brought new information about the events dealt mainly with the Israeli attack, while some of those items also reported about "hit lists" of people needed to be killed that were prepared in advance by Israeli troops. The direct references to the events in the post-crisis stage were first quotes of condemnation of Israel and secondly references to legal issues that derive from the Israeli acts. For example:

"The archbishop added that the Israeli attack on the flotilla exposed the Israeli racism and fascism pointing out that the aim of the activists was to break the siege on Gaza and to expose the Zionist entity for what it really is" (June 4, 2010, 13:21).

All of the direct references to the events were used to maintain the allure that the crisis is not over yet and that there is a great deal to be said about the event and Israel's actions. Thus, although the physical crisis had ended and Israel had gained control over the flotilla, the crisis communication can go on. In other words, Hamas was trying to gain the maximum benefits and support from the crisis and to expand the damage to Israel's image.

2.3.2 Side effects

Most of the items published during the third stage were items regarding the various side effects of the events. In this sub-category the emphasis in the items was not on the crisis event itself but rather on the consequences on Israel and other actors. For example:

"In a related incident, the Israeli government decided to prevent its soldiers from traveling to Turkey either for military or private reasons for fear their lives may be exposed to danger in the wake of the attack on Freedom Flotilla, that led to the murder of nine Turks" (June 7, 2010, 17:36).
"The European street is witnessing a series of protest rallies against the Israeli bloody attack on the Freedom Flotilla that left many of the activists on board its ships either killed or wounded" (June 2, 2010, 09:46).

As seen above, and in other items posted after the crisis was contained, the wide range of side effects reported by Hamas included items about worldwide rallies and demonstrations, diplomatic consequences and international condemnations. As our analysis shows, Hamas made distinct efforts to keep the communication crisis alive after the physical crisis had already been contained. It is reasonable to assume that Hamas was using references from the second circle since those references have a greater news worthiness value due to their evolving nature and thus attract media and other readers of the website.

3. Discussion and summary

Our analysis has shown that Hamas, using its leading website, PIC, has been engaged in fulfilling a communication strategy that concentrates on causing damage to Israel’s image during the "May 2010 flotilla" crisis. In the pre-crisis stage, Hamas employed a dual effort to widen the conceptual gap between the perceived behavior of Israel and the expectations of its stakeholders. On one hand, the Hamas website framed Israel as criminally violent in its planned operations to stop the ships. On the other hand, it framed the flotilla as a peaceful humanitarian effort carried out by “peace activists,” shaping the stakeholders’ expectations for the flotilla to reach its destination. Due to these offensive public relations tactics, the conceptual gap between Israel’s stakeholders’ expectations and the perceived Israeli behavior was very wide, thus forcing the Israeli crisis communication efforts to deal with hostile stakeholders views.

The items published on the PIC website during the crisis dealt with issues that are emphasized in the crisis communication management models (Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Coombs, 1999). Our findings show that during the crisis the Hamas website focused on the evidence of the existence of the crisis, with references to the damages, victims and the performance history of Israel. All of those references, along with direct accusations of full Israeli responsibility, criminal adjectives to describe the Israel actions and an emphasis on the non-violent nature of the participants of the flotilla, accumulated into a coherent communication strategy of full accusation of Israel for the crisis and its consequences. In the post-crisis stage, it was found that the Hamas website tried to keep the flotilla crisis in the news cycle by bringing new stories about the crisis and references to Israeli actions by leaders around the world. These post-crisis items focused mainly on the diplomatic side effects that Israel was suffering from as a result of the crisis.

While other studies in the field of crisis communication have focused on the preferred communication strategies chosen by organizations to restore their image after a crisis, they neglected the offensive communication strategies that concentrate on the damage to competitors. While our case study concentrates on a political crisis, we believe there is a need for further research that will analyze offensive public relations in commercial circumstances.

Our conclusions also contribute to the study of terrorists’ use of the Internet. Terror organizations use different means to fight their battles (Weimann, 2006). Our research has shown for the first time that a terror organization also engaged in offensive public relations. This is an important factor that must be taken into account by the Western efforts to fight terrorist groups. Other research has shown that terror organizations use their websites as psychological warfare vehicles to spread publicity and propaganda, attack the core values and psychological strength of their enemy, and recruit international public opinion to attack the enemies’ activities against the organization (Weimann, 2004). The finding here show that terror organizations use their websites to coordinate an offensive communication strategy to undermine their enemies' efforts to overcome a communication or image crisis.

The findings are another example of the benefits of using models that were built and tested in the business arena in the study of terror. As Mozes & Weimann (2010) has shown, when using a conceptual framework in the study of terror it is possible to conduct an analysis of the terror organization’s strategies. In our research the use of the crisis communication model was helpful to emphasize the different strategic efforts that Hamas made before, during and after the crisis. Due to the use of a well-structured model, it was possible to test the research questions. Another benefit of using the model is the ability to test the communication strategy of different terror organizations in different events. For example, this model can be used for investigating whether al Qaeda employed a crisis communication strategy when the United States army was dealing with the Abu Ghrab communication crisis in 2004.

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Visualisierungen neu überdacht: Zur diskursiven Reformulierung von Abbildungen im Friedensjournalismus


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Re-thinking visuals: Understanding discursive reformulation of visuals to inform Peace Journalism

Current definitions of ‘peace journalism’ are inadequate to take on the full implication of the ‘open’ nature of visual content because normative discussions are restricted to explicit content of visuals while not underlining the importance of their implicit meaning. Analyzing a photo feature showing empowered Afghan women called ‘Liberated in the Hindukush’ published in the Foreign Policy magazine as a case study, the article identifies how the particular media product in question fits existing descriptions of (if only, ‘accidental’) peace journalism but its contextual re-deployment of meaning is contrary to its content. The article argues that the norms of peace journalism need to be revised to account for the subtlety of discursive re-appropriation and re-assimilation of media content, especially visuals.

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Re-thinking visuals: Understanding discursive reformulation of visuals to inform peace journalism

Kurzfassung: Geläufige Definitionen des Friedensjournalismus sind unzureichend, um die Implikationen der 'offenen' Natur visueller Inhalte in ihrer vollständigen Wirkung zu erfassen. Die normativen Diskussionen beschränken sich auf den expliziten Gehalt der Abbildungen und vernachlässigen die Wichtigkeit ihrer impliziten Bedeutung. Der Aufsatz analysiert eine Fotoserie, die unter dem Titel Liberated in the Hindukush im Foreign Policy Magazin erschienen ist und identifiziert anhand dieser Fallstudie, wie ein gegebenes Medienprodukt zwar (und sei es auch nur unbeabsichtigt) den Beschreibungen für Friedensjournalismus entsprechen kann, seine kontextuelle Bedeutungszuschreibung jedoch diesem Inhalt entgegengesetzt ist. Der Aufsatz argumentiert dafür, dass die Normen des Friedensjournalismus überarbeiten werden müssen, um der Subtilität der diskursiven Assimilation von – insbesondere visuellen – Medieninhalten gerecht zu werden.

Abstract: Current definitions of peace journalism are inadequate to take on the full implication of the 'open' nature of visual content because normative discussions are restricted to explicit content of visuals while not underlining the importance of their implicit meaning. Analyzing a photo feature showing empowered Afghan women called Liberated in the Hindukush published in the Foreign Policy magazine as a case study, the article identifies how the particular media product in question fits existing descriptions of (if only, 'accidental') peace journalism but its contextual re-deployment of meaning is contrary to its content. The article argues that the norms of peace journalism need to be revised to account for the subtlety of discursive re-appropriation and re-assimilation of media content, especially visuals.

1. Visual discourse as 'open'

Building on the discussion by Judith Butler (2009) about lives lost or harmed in conflict being differentiated according to their constructed (by official discourses) 'grievability' and her alternative formulation of the concept of 'shared precariousness' of lives to rethink responsibility of the individual, this article brings together analysis of existing critical discourse analyses of the representation of suffering in media to further the debate about the semiotic nature of peace journalism (Fourie, 2012) and the ramifications that this understanding has for peace journalism as a project.

Viewing 'journalism' as one of the 'fields' (Hackett, 2006: 9) within the larger scope of media in society and as a sub set of the representational processes shaping and more importantly, being shaped by the 'ideology' (Van Dijk, 1995) of societies, I critically look at the possible use of visuals for purposes of peace journalism by arguing that discursive appropriations of visuals may result in content overtly in line with definitions of peace journalism to be re-constituted for other purposes. This problem stems as much from a) the very nature of visual representation and b) uncritical normative paradigms discussing only the content of visual representation for the purposes of peace journalism.

The understanding of openness of visual representation I derive following Butler's (ibid.) argument that norms or frames of understanding of visuals are subsumed within and by their own iterative structure because their circulation depends on their ability to be constantly reproduced in different contexts with the content remaining more or less the same. This constitution of meaning outside the visual text – the de-centred decoding of the text (Hall, 1997: 8) – means that while it "functions normatively...it can, depending on the specific mode of circulation, call certain field of normativity into question" (Butler, 2009: 24). This is the site where "politically consequential breaks" are made from the original norm to shift "modes of recognition" and so the "limits and contingency" of the original norms are exposed (ibid.).

I argue that peace journalism misses a "critical dimension of the project" (Butler, 2009: 11) of providing alternative frames of understanding for its audience because it is not only a matter of finding suitable content but also of working with "received renditions of reality": the movement of an image or text from its own original ontological reality (Butler, 2009: 11). In the end, I make a case for a more nuanced, semiotic understanding (Fourie, 2012) of the nature of journalism and by extension peace journalism which by understanding its own structural limitations makes itself proof against hijacking by regimes of representations which are opposed to its stated purposes and instead emphasizes the more fundamental "shared precariousness of lives" (Butler, 2009: 28) to appeal to audiences to rethink their responsibility.

2. Discussions of discourse in peace journalism so far

Using understanding of discursive structures to inform peace journalism is not new, indeed as Lynch & McGoldrick (2012: 5) point out, the two are "natural partners" in understanding the nature of media texts and then deploying this understand-

1. Author's note: I am deeply indebted to Dr. Julia Hoffmann of United Nations University for Peace for her critical input and invaluable encouragement in the development of this article. I also thank other members of the faculty, staff and students at UPeace who helped shape my thinking during my time there.
ing for peaceful responses from audiences to news reportage on socially distant subjects and/or conflicts.

As such, this article builds on the call by Stig Nohrstedt and Rune Ottosen to use critical discourse analysis to inform peace journalism perspectives to "offer a more comprehensive analyses" to see "the complex discursive constructions and structures that contribute to conflict escalations and wars" (2008: 14; 2010: 3).

Discursive appropriation works best when an 'other' [societies or people represented in the news coverage as such] is "an empty signifier: a vessel into which a range of meanings...can be...safely decanted" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2012: 5).

They conclude that the "the contextual and re-contextualising perspective that emphasizes the inter-discursive relation[s]...is notoriously absent in conventional news reporting" (ibid.: 7) because of the professional "epistemological horizon" of professional journalism which regards reality to be un-problematically represented "through observation and interview techniques" (ibid.). In this article, I explore how the empty signifiers of visuals are left empty by this epistemological limitation of news journalism.

I follow Fourie (2012: 2) in viewing journalism itself as a semiotic act and in emphasizing the role of "signification, the phenomenological nature of representation and the rhetorical and dialogical nature of contemporary mediated communication".

By shifting the debate in peace journalism from its criticism of journalism as a practice, its structures and the efficacy of "the manipulative techniques of peace journalism" (Fourie, 2012: 1) to the processes of meaning-making inherent in journalism, I argue that the normative ideas about particular news content in peace journalism are rendered problematic when approached from the analytical perspective of the study of discourses in media.

Some of such normative ideas in peace journalism are what is described as 'people-oriented' content, 'context' of the conflict or showing the 'true face' (Ottosen, 2007: 13) of war. Following Shinar (2007: 200), Lynch and McGoldrick (2012: 4) have further defined the role of the peace journalist as "exposing lies, cover up attempts and culprits on all sides and revealing excesses committed by and suffering inflicted on peoples of all parties."

Fourie (2012: 12) argues that by acknowledging journalism as a semiotic act, we are able also to acknowledge that news media cannot tell the 'full story' or 'truth' because journalism as a symbolic form of expression and representation makes it "phenomenologically impossible" for it to "tell the full story" (ibid.). Seeing journalism as a form of narrative with "internal structures of signs and codes" telling a "story" – nothing less, nothing more – peace journalism is identifiable as only a variant of this narrative, a "genre" (ibid.) of this story hence not in itself existing in a discourse vacuum where certain ways, practices, formulations of news 'stories' lead automatically to 'discourses of peace' (Kempf, 2003) gaining prominence.

As such, 'contextualization' i.e. providing the background to conflicts, 'exposing lies' or showing 'victims' of war etc. is only one genre of journalistic story-telling using certain manipulative rhetorical devices. The objective truth implied in 'exposing lies' is simplistic as a stated goal as it does include how rhetorical devices can or may be used by journalists to expose lies. Furthermore, the same rhetorical devices used in the content that Lynch and McGoldrick (2012) show us to causally lead to "empathy and hope" (2012: 1-16) in audiences are open to being re-formulated in and by other contexts. That the narrative of a peace journalist may be appropriated by violent/war discourses to serve their purposes – a process that Lynch (2010: 78) describes and warns against, is especially true of visual representations.

Journalism seen as a semiotic act also means understanding its dialogic nature. Difference in coverage of the same event, news or people creates a cross-referential environment where by inclusion or exclusion of certain viewpoints, a dialogic relationship is opened up within media, between different media as well as between media and the users of media (Fourie, 2012).

When appropriated for different discursive purposes, the dialogue generated by these texts shifts to the prevailing ideology – the already uttered belief-system – of the propaganda discourse that appropriates it. Here I use the word 'ideology' as "frameworks of social cognition" (Van Dijk, 1995: 17) and discourse as "institutionalized use of language and as a social practice" (Fairclough, 1995: 7).

Given this understanding, I present a case study of visual representation later in this article to show how a discursive shift in the context formation may lead to the meaning of content to be re-constituted outside the content of the visuals. But first I draw lessons from existing studies which have investigated the construction of context and its importance for peace journalism to build my case.
3. The context of the content

Mandelzis (2003) in her study of the news coverage of the peace talks between Israel and Palestine in 1993 in the newspapers Yedioth Aharonot and Ha'aretz, operationalizes the "contextual representational system" that worked behind the coverage to analyze their "negative socio-political consequences" (Mandelzis, 2003: 4).

In her analysis of news-texts, she found that the newspapers built up an unrealistic expectation of 'peace' to come out of the Oslo accords between the two parties in the coverage and then returned to a prevailing war discourse once these expectations had not (and could not) be met.

Importantly for the discussion in this article, she found that the "deceptive discourse of harmony" built by the media discourse followed the official government discourse (as one of her respondents, Ron Pundak says, "the government created these euphoric hopes and expectations"; in Mandelzis, 2003: 7) This example shows how when viewed from the lens of discourse analysis, media texts can be understood as potentially reconciling disjunctures between their overt narrative and discursive meaning. So without a nuanced understanding of the contextual discourses in media-texts, the discussion of peace journalism is left incomplete. In the way Mandelzis (2003) shows how the elite propaganda discourses of the two parties involved in the talks were carried over to the media-texts, the discursive process of appropriation of media discourses by official discourses is seen as important to be addressed by peace journalism.

In the discussion of the needs of peace journalism to develop strategies to address the emerging global discursive order in Højér et al. (2002), the authors identify several methods used by both governments and the military to put their view across, inferring that the modern propaganda strategies are about fighting a battle not only for the mind but also for control of the language. This discussion of the relationship between the national presses and the global discursive order of compassion (or indifference) situates the debate in peace journalism within the interplay of media, propaganda and compassion in the context of the Kosovo war.

I share the same goal but employing i) micro-analysis of texts to understand the discourse formation and ii) using visual texts to see the particularity of that medium in its relationship to propaganda discourses, I attempt to narrow down the discussion on discursive meaning-making to the textual level. As I focus on micro-analysis of media (visual) 'texts' rather than macro-analysis of media 'coverage' I view discourse analysis as "ideology analysis" of texts (Van Dijk, 1995) and apply it in this case to visuals. By focusing on a single photo feature and the textual discourse formation around it, I attempt to find lessons for the peace journalists about how ideological hijacking of visual content may happen in texts.

4. Existing studies of visuals from a peace journalism perspective

Whether news visuals produced during a certain conflict reinforce peace or war frames have been studied by looking at the visual framing of the coverage. Fahmy and Neumann (2012a; 2012b) have brought visuals and their critical analysis into the peace journalism debate with their study of newswire visuals from Gaza and Sri Lanka.

In bringing visual framing analysis to understand peace/war frames, these studies have paved the way for more nuanced understanding of the role visuals can or cannot play for the purposes of peace journalism. However, I would like to critically discuss the operationalization in these two studies of how a 'peace' or 'war' frame is decided and how these formulations, while handy, can be misleading in their categorization because by defining large samples as having the same 'meaning' they do not discuss what meanings they might be given in their eventual discursive contexts. This is done almost admittedly, when Fahmy and Neumann say that future studies following their method of operationalization should "include captions" (2012a: 197) of the photos. Indeed, this would be one way of including the contextualization of the visuals. However, I try to show in the following brief points that the omission of how the photos are eventually used to support or negate news discourses in media renders studies of 'peace' and 'war' frames of visuals of a conflict limited.

a) The studies mentioned operationalize photos of the leaders of the warring factions as war frames which serve to polarize audiences (2012a: 7-8; 2012b: 182-183) while photos of international figures who are mediators/negotiators in the peace process (e.g. UN secretary general Ban Ki Moon) are taken as peace frames. However, if one critically applies Ottosen's (1995) idea of use of the rhetorical device of personification of a group or country or party in a conflict by representing them by one key figure, then one can argue that representations of UN mediators and the leaders of the warring parties in the conflicts are both examples of decontextualizing the conflict or peace process by focusing only on the photo of one person. In contexts and countries where the war itself is considered 'legitimate' or 'needed' or 'just' in official and public discourses, (and thus affecting the 'weak' field of media discourse) the photos of the international mediators may also be made to serve the purpose of polarizing the audience by labeling these mediators as outsiders who meddle because of vested interests rather than friends who seek peace for the sake of peace. The open nature of visual representation means figures representing the peace process or the conflict are both examples of 'empty signifiers' Lynch & McGoldrick (ibid.) mention that can be re-contextualized in different ways. Thus giving a 'peaceful' or 'warlike' label to the one or the other
of the actual images is a limited approach. The analytical purpose is better served by looking at the contextualization of the photos by the ultimate journalistic usage of these visuals.

b) As these two studies focus on newswire photographs, they do not take into account the context in which these photographs were then re-used by media. Fahmy and Neumann emphasize the role of gatekeepers in the visual narration of a conflict and how "news selection from the pool of available photographs [from newswires] is key in how audiences visually experience a conflict" (2012a: 20). But it is not only the selection of photographs by editors and journalists which dictate audience reaction – the discursive structure of the context in which they use the photos as evidence or illustration, also do. To say that it is only the content of a photo that dictates audience experience is to turn a blind eye to the openness of visual signifiers. Leaving texts open for 'negotiated reading' as Lynch and Galtung (2010: 195) describe is not limited as a process affecting only the audience – journalists can also negotiate their own readings into these open visuals – and use these images for narrational purposes of their own. One example of such narrational purpose is that visuals might be used to serve as 'evidence' of the reportage by journalists. This understanding follows the idea that journalists are also audiences to the extent that they are the "first source of influence" on how "incoming information" is framed and that their framing is also based on "ideology, attitudes and professional norms" (Scheufele, 1999: 115).

c) Following this understanding, categorization of visuals as simple 'peace' or 'war' frames which does not take into account the semiotic openness of visual texts which are numerously reproducible and thus may come to mean entirely differently in different contexts because of their journalistic (re)usage, is problematic. It runs the risk of taking the photos almost at their face value by not looking at the meaning making role assigned to them by re-contextualization. We will see an example of this reassignment of meaning to visual texts and thus their discursive appropriation, in the case study presented later in this article.

Fahmy and Neumann have exhorted further studies to explore the relationship between frames in media's depiction of conflicts and audience's frames of understanding conflicts (2012a: 13). In this article, I argue that before that can be done, we must first analyze the media discourse which re-deploy the visuals to see the discursive meaning within which the visual narration is framed because it is that narrative frame which comes to mediate the visual image to the audience. My attempt is to understand the rhetorical devices of representation of visuals to inform peace journalism from other scholarly work done on representation in media. Below, specifically, I take the example of the representation of 'other' women as a way into discussing some nuances peace journalism may be missing in its representational normative.

5. Representation of women: lessons for peace journalism

The option assumed to be available to the peace journalist to subvert elite-oriented journalism is to shift focus from "able-bodied elite males" in their reports to a people-oriented focus with emphasis on "suffering all over: on women, aged and children" (taken from the table showing differentiation between Peace/Conflict Journalism and War/Violent Journalism as appendix in Ottosen, 2010: 19).

Taking this idea of suffering, especially – as delineated above – of women as a category to focus on I undertake secondary analysis from a peace journalism perspective of existing academic analyses of media representations of women and then apply similar methods to a photo feature on Afghan women published in March, 2013 in the Foreign Policy magazine. In doing so, I argue that mere circulation of more and alternative visuals depicting suffering of victims of acts of war (Ottosen, 2007: 14) may not help in building peace-oriented frames in media texts. Looking at the politics behind and specific to the "frenzy of photography" (Butler, 2009: 86) in visual representation I argue that such uncritical normative ideas are problematic because it misses the aspect of these very visuals being co-opted by what critical discourse analysts would call official "regimes of representation" (Hall, 2001: 225).

Visuels on the surface may relate to the existing delineations of the normative paradigms of peace journalism but at the level of discourse, these delineations do not hold any more.

As such, it is more important to, at the level of discourse, explore "the conditions [that] are set for astonishment, outrage, revulsion, admiration and discovery, depending on how the [news/media] content is framed by shifting time and place" (Butler, 2009:11).

In a study of three photographs of Afghan women widely circulated in international media, Mackie (2012) takes the example of the picture of a young Afghan woman without her veil surrounded by other veiled women in front of a bakery in Kabul. Looking at the same photograph from the lens of peace journalism, it may be seen that it is a depiction of a woman going about her daily life rather than a man carrying weapons or in an antagonistic mood. It is shot in a de-militarized setting showing the human side of a conflict zone.

But once the argument opens up to how the meaning is reconstituted in the accompanying texts or captions with the photograph – as Mackie (2012) goes on to show – this visual of a young Afghan woman is rendered deeply problematic in its
explicit orientalist ‘desire to unveil’ the mysteries of the east and implicit discursive construction of the idea of a masculine first world vs. feminine third world where the latter is in need of liberation from its own shackles. The argument of the Afghan war as a just war to free the women of Afghanistan were used first in official discourses (Laura Bush’s radio address on November 17th, 2001 cited in Mackie, 2012: 117) and the visuals of ‘newly unveiled’ women in ‘liberated’ Afghanistan in the news media followed this idea of liberation of women as a justification for the war on Afghanistan, a topic explored by Fahmy (2004) in her study of international newswire photographs from Afghanistan during that period.

In the discussion of another photograph of a woman called Bibi Aisha who had been disfigured by male members of her community for running away from an abusive marriage, Mackie notes that the photographer Jodi Bieber’s argument for taking the photograph was capturing her beauty in spite of her disfigurement and thus restoring her dignity as a woman (Bieber, 2010 cited in Mackie, 2012: 124). Yet again, it can be seen as a commendable project of empowering women that could fall within the paradigm of peace journalism. But discourse analysis of the editorials accompanying the photo leads Mackie to conclude that the feelings of horror and indignation invoked by the photo was reconstituted around the discourse that this sort of male terror will increase if and when the US troops leave Afghanistan making Aisha’s face a cogent argument for the war on and in Afghanistan.

In both cases, the visuals themselves may qualify for what is called peace journalism and in the case of the second even the original intention of the photographer, yet the appropriation of these photos by official discourses of propaganda meant that the visuals had been re-employed in the justification of war.

To further the understanding of the semiotic constructs at work in such (re)employment of visuals, I would link an existing critique delineating categories used in news to mediate suffering to an understanding of the narrative devices used in mainstream media that lead to such category formation. I meld together two different, yet what I would argue, not disparate approaches to representational issues in media. While the first provides the narrative categories with which to understand media representation of suffering, the other gives insight into the narrative process by which these issues of suffering are iterated for the audience.

I begin from understanding the different tropes of news described by Lille Chouliaraki in her journal article, The mediation of suffering and the vision of a cosmopolitan public (2008) and link her categorization of news to the process of ‘simplified complex representations’ in media argued for by Evelyn Alsultany in her book Arabs and Muslims in the Media Race and Representation after 9/11 (2012).

5.1 The narrative categories

Chouliaraki (2006, 2008, 2010), through her inclusive use of language and image to understand the mediation of suffering in television, analyzes the implications that a narrative composed by the interplay of these two have on ‘cosmopolitan connectivity’ (Chouliaraki, 2008: 372). I follow her arguments here to focus on the “conditions of possibility” of “mediation to shape a cosmopolitan sensibility” (Chouliaraki, 2008: 374) for the purposes of a more nuanced understanding of how visual news can be understood for the purposes of peace journalism.

In her analysis, Chouliaraki (2008: 371-91) describes two dimensions of spectator-sufferer relationships:

1. How close or far away does the news story place the spectator vis a vis the sufferer and
2. How is the spectator invited by the news story to react vis a vis the sufferer’s misfortune: to look at it, feel it or act on it?

Through her operationalization of ‘situated ethics’, Chouliaraki (2008: 378) also brings normative paradigms into the practice of media just as peace journalism avowedly wants to do. As such, Chouliaraki identifies three kinds of TV coverage of suffering which produce differential affect in its audience:

a) Adventure news: a class of news that presents suffering as presentation of curiosities by emphasizing ‘facts’ and singular space-times within the narration resulting in blocking audience engagement with distant sufferers.

b) Emergency news: a class of news that produces a demand for action on the suffering viewed through mediation by enacting a moral engagement (see footnote 2) by demanding emergency action needed to alleviate the suffering portrayed.

c) Ecstatic news: an extra-ordinary class of news that manages to bring the global audience together in the act of simultaneous watching, engaging and even suffering and/or feeling sympathy, e.g. the visual of planes crashing into the World Trade Centre on September, 2001 or the Asian Tsunami in December, 2006 where the genre of news ‘broadcast’ moves

1. Chouliaraki calls this “blocking... pity...” (ibid: 378). However I use Alsultany’s (2012) differentiation between pity and empathy as negative and positive emotions, hence I have chosen to call this simply ‘engagement’ so as to avoid obfuscation of concepts.
away from itself to 'live footage' giving a sense of historical rupture and shared suffering at the same time (Chouliaraki, 2008: 379).

Chouliaraki (ibid: 381) shows how these ways of reporting news creates a "hierarchy of suffering" whereby the audience is called upon a) to watch, b) to feel and c) to act. To engage audiences in the suffering portrayed, Chouliaraki calls for a move away from abstract space-time in news reportage to "chronotopes" which place suffering in the context of "lived experience" by giving suffering historical depth and a future perspective and making victims sovereign agents who are thoroughly "humanized and historical beings" who can feel, reflect and act on their own fate (ibid.: 380ff.).

Chouliaraki (ibid: 391) concludes by saying that it is the class of emergency news which has the greatest potential for promoting social solidarity and thus cosmopolitan engagement with suffering.

This nuanced understanding of news reportage can go a long way in addressing some of the concerns that peace journalism has been grappling with. The goals of cosmopolitan engagement with distant suffering lie within the purview of peace journalism. This can lead to active engagement of audiences with the news texts, and thus a discourse of viewing wars as the biggest contributors of global human suffering may have a higher acceptance than the polarizing discourses of 'us' and 'them' and the notion of 'just' wars.

At the level of practical application and academic analysis, peace journalism has a lot to learn from the understanding of media aesthetics and how it is deployed in news texts. If peace journalists have to become self-reflexive in their use of images as exhorted by Ottosen (2007), then the consideration that the nature of news texts "as mechanism of representation that by definition involves taking of sides" (Chouliaraki, 2006: 262) is imperative. This defining characteristic is even more ingrained in the very semiotic nature of visual representation. Such an understanding of news visuals and texts is necessary because then ethical criticism from peace journalism perspectives stand to become more nuanced than an "explicit naming of the good and the bad," and rather it can engage, "with the distribution of spectator's own orientation towards action upon suffering" (Chouliaraki, 2006: 262) in the texts it produces by taking into account and using semiotic aestheticization implicit in news for its own explicit purposes.

This semiotic understanding can be seen as key to peace journalism because Chouliaraki (2006) in her analysis of the footage of the bombing of Baghdad in the Iraq war has shown how even mentioning the sufferers or victims and even an overt appeal to sympathize with them can be ethically and morally challenged because of the semiotic sub-ordination of that act of inviting empathy to the visual appeal of the tableau vivant of war.

In the same way, the quality of the appeal for peace and understanding, that a peace journalist might put out to his or her audience, can be morally and ethically challenged if it does not critically engage with the quality of that message and be aware of any semiotic sub-ordination of peace discourses by war discourses within the texts and visuals.

Then there is the quality of the affect that this message is supposed to produce which has to be taken into consideration by a peace journalist as well. Chouliaraki (2010: 107-126) sees the trend in humanitarian communication moving towards styles of appealing to audiences that are ambivalent in their outcome. The humanitarian appeal in them is geared towards personal guilt rather than collective action leading to call for immediate acts rather than to engage in the domain of politics. As such, they rarely go beyond the everyday and the individual. What implication this emerging style of communication has had for journalism in general is yet to be seen and evaluated but the implications of these for peace journalism is writ large. By shifting attention to the context of a conflict, peace journalism wants to call for a more nuanced, longer term, politicized engagement from its audiences but the nature of the message being used to do this might instead be producing affect which calls for short-term, immediate actions.

How then are these tableau vivant of war, which make appeals for short term actions (e.g. donating money; signing a facebook petition) rather than long term understanding and engagement, given semiotic preference in visual media? Chouliaraki's semiotic categorization gives us the direction in which to think but not an easily applicable tool with which to understand this process to evaluate news products. Thus, I argue that for a furthering of Chouliaraki's critiques, Alsultany's narrative analysis of media products (American television shows) is necessary to understand news trope formation.

5.2 The narrative process

A way of evaluating the semiotic quality of the message is through the understanding of the narrative device of 'simplified complex representations' (Alsultany, 2012) in media and how overt acts of including social 'others' in mainstream media with the stated agenda of destroying the boundary between 'us' and 'them' may also lead to essentialization of the 'other' and thus recreate the binarial differentiation that it set out to address and correct. At a broader, more conceptual level, this process might be seen as stemming from using the same process of identity formation that presupposes 'difference' as its building block that Butler (2009: 28) describes and decry as resulting in the (re)use of 'domestic' progressive values to create further polarization and justifying war in the foreign arena.
Alsultany (2012) in her analysis of the apparently sympathetic representation of Arab and Muslim women in US television shows that depictions of these sections of societies while 'complicating' the narrative for its audience by challenging simplistic 'Muslims equals fundamentalists' perceptions still 'simplifies' it enough so as to serve the end of encouraging pity and outrage at the 'other' and distant (Islamic) societies. The example she gives us is of 'male terrorism' – discursively hinted through the structure of the media product – to be purportedly part of these 'other' societies and directed against the vulnerable women in them. These women then are used as metonymic devices to stand in as evidence of the oppression inherent in these societies.

The metonymic device used in this case is reminiscent of the discussion of the use of personification to 'build the enemy image' in news media by Rune Ottosen (1995). And indeed, the effect is the same, justifying war against these societies to put an end to the broader category of 'oppression' – be it state sponsored or fuelled by male domination.

Alsultany describes such "simplified complex representations" in the case of depiction of Muslim women in US television as having three iterations:

1. A disclaimer which says that the representation of the Islamic women in the media text to follow should not be taken as representation of all Islam;
2. Liberated Muslim women speaking of their former, oppressed lives iterate the 'barbaric nature of Islam' nullifying the previous disclaimer;
3. The exercise is geared towards producing an excess of affect and then channelized through its discursive formation against the oppressive, male-dominated, 'other' societies.

Following Alsultany’s analysis of the discourse behind "media’s eager cultivation of pity and outrage" (Alsultany, 2012: 99) which uses women victims of male terrorism in Muslim societies for purposes beyond only of showing and giving voice to victims, we can conclude that giving coverage to the weaker sections of societies at war can be just as polarizing as simple propaganda saying they are hiding weapons of mass destruction (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2008). And that it largely depends on the semiotic construct of the media-product in question.

5.3 Synthesizing categories and processes

In a study operationalizing ideology analysis, Vaughan (1995) in her study of newspaper editorials about the 1982 Lebanon Crisis, shows us how the ideologies expressed in the opinion leading articles in the media reconcile within itself obviously oppositional stances: while war and wanton destruction of property for a political goal is justified, the massacring of civilians is considered wrong though both are caused by the violent pursuit of political goals. I would like to draw attention to the kind of news product that Vaughan analyzed – the longer format media products e.g. editorials.

I argue that this ability to reconcile causally related events by media to the extent of justifying one while condemning the other is inherent in the rhetorical structures of longer format media products through its use of the tropes of 'adventure' news in the guise of 'emergency' news (Chouliaraki, ibid.). I would like to extend Alsultany's (2012) theoretical understanding of the 'simplified complex representation' in entertainment media products to include this form of ideological reconciliation of oppositional ideas within longer format news products, for example the editorials that Vaughan studies, because they share the same logic of the three iterations of simplified complex representations. "We must consider television and print news alongside TV dramas because the former...produce their own version of simplified complex representations", says Alsultany (2012: 74).

Pursuing this idea of linking entertainment media narrative devices with news media's, I argue the parallel to be as below:

1. Disclaimer: through their self-reflexive positioning as a more engaged form of media product implicit in the audience expectation from longer format journalism.
2. Nullifying the disclaimer: through their use of compressed space-time and disguising the causality of events in building arguments for their own case.
3. Producing an excess of affect through and because of their perceived 'more engaged' longer format.

Thus in light of Alsultany's arguments, I would like to point out here that the episodic presentation of 'facts' and singular 'space-times' identified as adventure news by Chouliaraki happens within the content of longer format news products while their form proclaim themselves (and thus shape audience expectation) to be emergency news. By longer format news products I mean the following:

1. Editorials shaping opinion
2. Journalistic blogs giving foregrounded subjective look at news events
3. Photo-features offering a longer, lingering look at a place or people.

I argue that in these formats, more than other news products, rhetorical arguments to formulate opinions among its audi-
ence: an iteration of "situated ethics" (Chouliaraki, 2008: 375) i.e. normative paradigms brought within the practices of media, can be used as an enactment of 'moral engagement' with the issue at hand. In short, reading Chouliaraki's categories through the process described by Alsultany, we can become aware of the fact that adventure news can disguise itself as emergency news.

At the same time, the dynamics of narrativization described by Alsultany for television shows can be better understood (and thus applied to news visuals and texts) through Chouliaraki's categories – by claiming to provide context and a broader understanding of an issue, the 'more complex' forms of journalism listed above posit themselves in a self-reflexive way inviting more audience attention and engagement as well as a call to action (i.e. emergency news). At the same time they show the qualities of adventure news within them that serve to block empathy from its audiences.

Thus, providing alternative pictures to visuals which serve to polarize parties on TV shows or visual news coverage cannot merely be providing pictures of peaceful life, victims or non-aggressive sections of society. Understanding the semiotic construct in which these kind of visuals stand to be re-organised and then using that semiotic understanding to be able to provide the conditions for de-escalating conflict situations has to be the guiding force for critical examination (and thus the new normative for peace journalism).

Synthesizing the categories of news described by Chouliaraki (2008) and the narrative dynamic of simplified complex representations discussed by Alsultany (2012), I propose we can form an understanding of disguised discourse formation and as a result the re-constitution of meaning within (content) and without (form) a longer format media text to study how the 'grievability' of the victims depicted is differentially recreated (Butler, 2009) in such media products and what it means for the purposes of peace journalism. As I would be concentrating on visual texts in this article, I use a photo feature – as an example of longer format photojournalism – for critical analysis.

6. Show and "Don't tell"

Case Study: FP photo feature Liberated in the Hindukush

I follow Van Dijk (1997: 17) in using critical discourse analysis as ideology analysis where ideologies are "frameworks of social cognition" and thus both socially constructed as well as cognitive functions as "typically, though not exclusively expressed and reproduced in discourse and communication...such as pictures, photographs and movies." Acting as an 'interface' between cognitive representations and processes and the societal positions and interests of groups, this definition of 'ideology' as opposed to its classical definition as a system of ideas lends itself to both micro and macro analysis of discourse in texts which are socially circulated i.e. media texts.

Applying this to a multi-modal (caption/text and visuals) ideology analysis of a photo feature called 'Liberated in the Hindukush: Don't tell these women nothing's changed in Afghanistan' published on 20/03/13 in Foreign Policy magazine (FP, 2013), I show how the visuals lend themselves to space-time compression by discursive reformulation and how the discursive context implicitly hinted in the narrative structure using metonymic symbols of active women justifies past violence though the content itself may conform to standards of peace journalism.

6.1 FP photo-feature as accidental peace journalism

Jacobson (2010: 106) in pointing out the obvious overlaps of feminism and peace journalism says that the major bias that media is guilty of is that they "tend to focus on women's vulnerability in wars and conflicts, but that they rarely report on strong women working to promote peace and human rights. We found that women in particular, and civil society as a whole, are clearly marginalized in conflict reporting."

The photo feature published in Foreign Policy magazine does indeed report on strong women – women politicians and protesters as well as women in varied professional roles like women-tailors, policewomen, women journalists etc – and not only as victims of war.

It also goes a long way in providing a broad view of the civil society in Afghanistan. Looking only at the content, we see that of the 19 photos in the feature, six show women or female children participating in leisure activities outside of their homes. Another three show women politicians casting ballots or campaigning. One of the photographs show a procession of young Afghan women who are members of "Afghan Young Women for Change protest[ing] violence against women in Kabul in April 2012" (FP, 2013). Another eight photographs show women in professional roles and one shows young female children studying in a school.

The feature does shift focus from 'able-bodied elite males' (Ottosen, 2010: 19) of Afghanistan. Indeed, in all of the photographs, if there are any males included at all, they are relegated to the background or out of focus (for example, "Afghan fashion designer Shahr Banu Zeerak directs models before a fashion show in Kabul in February 2013") (FP, 2013).
Going against the grain of mainstream depictions of Afghanistan "as a monumental mountainous setting, with wild and fierce looking men" (Becker, 2004: 301) the photo feature can also be said to be exposing 'lies' in mainstream depictions of Afghanistan. Further, the call in the sub-headline of the photo feature to not tell these women nothing's changed in Afghanistan (FP, 2013) tells the audience that Afghanistan is more than just a hopeless conflict zone full of only male aggressors and other retrogressive elements of society. This same call is also a self-reflexive comment for the audience about not telling women what to think or know. Instead, the audience is asked to engage with the fact that things have indeed changed in Afghanistan. As such it is a message of hope for Afghanistan. But the photo feature includes another message too.

By asking the audience to look at these empowered women and calling attention to the fact their social position can radically change if the Taliban come to share power in Afghanistan after the international troops leave, a message of empathy for these women is the second message apparent in the photo feature.

With its dual message of hope and empathy for Afghanistan and especially Afghan women, on the surface at least the photo feature qualifies for the standards of accidental peace journalism as it shows "news patterns that resemble those of peace journalism". (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2011: 11) The majority of the photos included in the feature also qualify as having 'peace focus' according to the parameters of coding used by Fahmy and Neumann (See both 2012a; 2012b). Three of the photographs show policewomen or women Afghan army personnel with weapons (FP, 2013). One could argue that the message of empowerment of these women is dominant over any perceived violent role in these photographs but following the codes used by Fahmy and Neumann (2012a, 2012b) these have to be read as violent frames.

However, the meaning of these photographs within the feature is also mediated for the audience by the discourse of the context that is provided for them by the photo feature in the introductory text and captions.

6.2 Discursive justification of violence

The sub-headline of the photo feature tells its audience what not to tell the women portrayed in the pictures, that "nothing's changed" in Afghanistan (FP, 2013). This is a very overt direction to audiences of how 'not to think' about Afghanistan-- it is not a place where women are subservient in society any longer i.e. after the foreign interventions of the past years. This is the iteration of the disclaimer that Alsaltany describes in her analysis: as an opinion forming longer format feature using photographic evidence of women in active roles, Liberated in the Hindukush, (FP, 2013) sets out by claiming that the picture of Afghanistan in this photo feature is more complex because it challenges stereotypes of Afghan women, e.g. none of the primary women subjects in these photos appear in burqa.

It then goes on to nullify that disclaimer – the expectation of promised complexity – by compressing the 'spaces' and 'times' of the lives of these women to create simple tableaux vivant of Afghan women in various poses affirming the narrative of their liberation. Following Choulilaraki (2008), we can see this process in how the Afghan women are posited vis-à-vis the audience and how the audience is asked to react to the photos.

6.2.1 Space-compression

The places and spaces in the photographs have their meaning constituted outside of them by the context provided by the photo feature. The actual places in Afghanistan represented in the photographs are the following: Bamiyan (1 photo), Herat (3 photos), Mazar-i-Sharif (1 photo) and overwhelmingly, Kabul (14 photos). The progression of photos (see footnote later) as presented to the audience does not follow any logical pattern of moving from one place to the next, rather appearing at random one after the other.

Without defined cartographic places being represented in the narrative logic of the photo feature, the place of the photo feature is defined for the audience as "across post-Taliban Afghanistan" (FP, 2013) – the specificity of places (and the over-abundance of photos from Kabul in the feature) is masked. The Afghan women are placed far away from the audience in a space called Afghanistan in its definitions (e.g. it can be described as "in the Hindukush" too) without any other specifics being deemed necessary (FP, 2013).

There is a further cuing of the audience to understand the space(s) represented in this photo feature. Though only three of the photos show women in visually identifiable outdoor spaces while the rest depict them in indoor settings, the audience's attention is shifted to the non-domestic nature of these spaces shown in the feature. 'Public' life enjoyed by liberated Afghan women might happen in indoor settings (within the world represented by the photo feature, I am not making larger claims about the status of women in Afghanistan unlike the photo feature). But the photo feature defines the space differently by saying in the introduction that the photos are from "across" Afghanistan and also by including a quote from an

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1. For more discussion on the kind of mainstream depiction of Afghanistan that I refer to here see Fahmy (2004), Griffin (2004) and Fowler (2007).
Afghan woman, Zakiya Mohammadi who says that "[o]nce the Americans go we'll have to sit at home again, bored" (FP, 2013) the cue for the audience is to think of the Afghan women as taking part in the life outside home in the grand stage of "post-Taliban Afghanistan" (FP, 2013) instead of the individual schools, hospitals, homes, shops or offices which the photograph show. These spaces together are re-assigned meaning as signifiers of 'public' spaces.

The conflation and thus de-contextualization of the individual spaces of each photograph and the violence on meaning perpetrated through it, that I refer to here, are best understood by using the example of the photo "Afghan girls attend[ing] class at a camp for the displaced in Kabul in October 2011" (FP, 2013). The lived experience of being 'displaced' or the situated-ness of the photographic space at a camp for the displaced, disappears when the audience attention about the place of the photograph is diverted solely to it being a 'class' – a liberating 'public' space conferring education. That the public space represented may be itself situated within a marginalized space outside the broader public arena of Afghanistan is masked.

The individual captions for the photos do provide more detail in some case and allow for the kind of reflection that I have just presented in the example above but mostly leave out specifics of these places with the overall effect of making room for the more generally defined space of all-of-Afghanistan.

In giving (journalistic) space to depiction of Afghan women in active roles as part of the civil society in what is still a conflict-ridden country, the photo feature also takes the reader away from the (actual) spaces from which the photos of these Afghan women come. Present definitions of suitable visual content in peace journalism allow us to acknowledge the first but not the second.

6.2.2 Time compression

The time represented in the feature also serves to place the audience far away from the 'here and now' of space discursively represented in the photo feature. There are 19 photographs in total included in the photo feature. The date lines in these 19, range between years 2005 and 2013. They do not follow any chronological pattern and appear in random sequence. There are no photographs from years 2006, 2007 and 2008 among the 19 photos.

Without any chronological sequence, these portraits of liberated Afghan women are also 'liberated' from real life space-time situated-ness. These detached icons of liberation exist in a vacuum of time which is then redefined by the introduction at the bottom of the first photograph. Lacking any time-pattern that the audience can discern for themselves in the presented progression\(^1\) of the photographs, the audience is asked in the introduction to the photo feature to look at the time represented in the feature as limited by two events: "since the fall of the Taliban in 2001" in the past to the "end of 2014" when the "international troops are due to withdraw from Afghanistan" in the future. Particularities of events of the years during the presence of the foreign troops are relegated as meaningless. The decade and a half becomes one long evidently benevolent 'occupation' and the time-float in the socio-historic parade of Afghanistan on which the tableaux of liberated Afghan women is displayed.

The dual compression of space and time of where and when the photos appear from is done through the editorial criteria of evidence – the choice to seek out proof of liberation of Afghan women. For the audience, these evidences, in themselves, serve a time and space-less role by being re-defined by the broader time and space frames of the photo feature significantly re-shaping the meaning of the photos. The logic of the individual photographs is subsumed by the larger narrative logic of the photo feature.

This is again best understood by the example of the photograph of the women protesters protesting against violence against women that I mentioned before. Because they are taking part in the public role of protesting on the streets, the actual violence against women that they are protesting is relegated in importance. Being able to protest is selectively presented to the audience as evidence enough that Afghanistan is a better place for women after the foreign intervention, masking the original narrative intention of depicting a protestation of that very 'fact' by the photograph.

In other words, the photo feature is adventure news posing as emergency news by discursively de-constructing the space-time portrayals or chronotopes of the explicit content of each photograph through its narrative structure and then re-infusing it with a larger message of empathy for the Afghan women facing the threat of Taliban repression yet again.

The intention of the photographers\(^2\) who took the individual photos as well as the actual content of each individual photographs, can no longer be 'read' by the audience outside the discourse provided by the photo feature. Meaning has been made without to make sense of that which is within.

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1. As a web-based photo feature, the audience follows a certain progression starting from women doing Taekwondo in Herat in 2013 to women medical staff in Mazar-i-Sharif in 2012. If followed, the progression of time in years in the photo feature would go like this: 2013-09-11-10-12-05-10-11-13-12-12-10-12-11-05-11-09-12.
6.3 Context beyond the photographs

Thus, at the level of discourse, the photo feature produces an excess of affect in asking for empathy for these liberated Afghan women after the Taliban come back. This empathy from the audience however is predicated on the justification of the Afghan war as to have been needed for the liberation of women in Afghanistan as ‘proved’ by their grievable fate that they stand to become oppressed again, once the international troops leave. Thus an excess of affect for women in Afghanistan serves to justify past (and possibly future) violence against the male oppressors here represented as the Taliban.

The double negative: “don’t tell...nothing’s changed in Afghanistan” (FP, 2013) and thus the idea: some things have changed in Afghanistan for women, is established through the discursive construct of the ‘context’ given for its audience in which it to see the photographs. The preponderance as we see is on pictures of ‘active’ and ‘participating’ Afghan women and girl-children. In conveying this message, the photo feature uses selective portrayals of some women as metonymic symbols to point to a larger assumption about Afghan society – i.e. in the Talibans Afghanistan, women are now ‘free’ to engage in public activities. They can now take part in sports (e.g. photographs showing female boxers, gymnasts, Taekwondo athletes), take up jobs (e.g. photographs showing female student-midwife, a tailor, a fashion designer, a radio journalist and three of Afghan women soldiers and policewomen carrying weapons), study (e.g. photograph showing female children in a class in a camp) as well as participate in politics (e.g. photographs showing women politicians casting ballots and campaigning). This is the explicit message of the feature as iterated in its introduction: “Afghan women have gained the rights to vote, work, and pursue an education. They’re running for president, they’ve claimed seats in parliament, and they’ve even competed in the Olympics.” (FP, 2013) The photographs serve as ‘evidence’ of liberated women which are gathered from a detached and de-historicized swathe of space and time in Afghanistan but the device of producing these evidence is disguised in the photo feature. The effect of a longer, lingering look is emphasized without calling attention to its limitedness of scope. The context serves to bring the 19 disparate photos together to represent the idea of a (longer) ‘decade-and-a-half-long’ portrayal of status of women in Afghanistan to substantiate the original directive for the audience – don’t say nothing’s changed in Afghanistan. But implied in this directive, is more than just a statement about change in Afghan society.

In taking individual frames of empowered Afghan women and placing them in the abstract space-time of all of Afghanistan, Liberated in the Hindukush also claims knowledge of the threat posed for these women by a return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan and uses it as the ‘cogent argument’ (Mackie, 2012) for empathy for these women. The introduction to the photo feature also dialogically references itself to a journalistic piece written for Foreign Policy by Reuters journalist Amie Ferris-Rotman. It is another ‘more engaged’ format of news-writing – a dispatch – and using quotations from it, the photo feature builds its own credence as an engaged visual format showing a truer picture of Afghan women’s lives. The credence of the context subsumes the evidential credibility of the individual photographs.

The liberation and its sustenance are predicated through the introductory framing of the narrative on the presence of the international troops in Afghanistan who have made progress for Afghan women possible. And more importantly, the threat of regression to earlier oppression looms large over these active and participating women. The introduction makes it clear: “But international troops are due to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, and the Taliban threaten to step into the vacuum they’ll leave behind.” “Already,” the FP dispatch from Kabul by Rotman is quoted, “many of the women who’ve come so far – journalists, politicians, and rights workers, among others -- have begun to retreat from public life out of fear for their safety” (FP, 2013). The individual agency of these women in Afghanistan is thus subsumed by the larger and beneficent agency of the international troops and the just war waged against the Taliban in their name.

6.4 In summation

This photo feature in its simplified complex representation (Alsultany, 2012) of using adventure news (Chouliaraki, 2008) in the format of emergency news (Chouliaraki, 2008) collapses the progressive agenda of empowering women with waging war in Afghanistan and thus forms a disguised discourse which re-constitutes the meaning within (content) from without (form). The ‘grievability’ of the women depicted is differentially recreated (Butler, 2009) in this case because they face the impending return to former oppression once the international troops leave and the Talibans return. The ultimate meaning

2. Indeed some of the photographers (of which five are Afghan and six from various other countries) whose photos are included in this photo feature may be more self-reflexive and sensitive about the work they do. Brazilian photographer Mauricio Lima (1 photo included in the photo feature in question) said about his work in Afghanistan: “I am there to witness that moment, so that the world will be aware of what is happening. That, in a way, is part of my context, but even the pain of someone who I do not know, touches me’” (Tita, 2012; my translation from Portuguese, S. M.). Afghan photographer Massoud Hosseini (3 photos in Liberated in Hindukush) has been quoted as describing how he took the photograph that brought him the Pulitzer prize: “somehow I decided to just start recording, it was a kind of reaction. Okay, should I help or take pictures? I was crying... What should I do? Why didn’t I help anybody? This has changed my life” (Murray, 2012).
thus constructed for the audience is that not only was a just war fought for these worthy women, but that there is indeed even a case for continuing the war for the sake of them. Indeed the prospect of continuing presence in Afghanistan to protect women is not at all explored by the photo feature. The just war was in the past, the future is uncertain, is the only message. And ironically, with its (re)assigning meaning to the photos of these empowered women as grievable because they might soon lose their 'freedoms', the photo feature goes against its own statement of change for women – things have then really not changed in Afghanistan for women. But this is beside the point.

There is a hierarchy of meaning-making as seen in this analysis. The individual image is subservient to the discursive meaning given to it through its context and the way it is used within a larger narrative structure – thus calling for certain kind of subjects in visual content is incomplete as a critical project on mainstream visual news, rather it is the form in which the content is used and reused that has to be addressed. The lesson for peace journalism from this analysis would be in formulating its definitions in a way which addresses meanings formed both inside and outside content and for them to come “into critical contact” (Butler, 2009: 28) rather than simply neglect the discursive form while calling for or analyzing the content.

7. Discussion

This article looked at the discursive depth of an example of visual representation in media that fit all norms of peace journalism on surface. The photo feature Liberated in the Hindukush shows women in active and empowered roles but we see that the meaning of the sets of visuals as constructed and re-constructed outside their own frames, reifies propaganda discourses of justification of past violence and possibly of continued armed presence.

The example takes the images of women from an ‘other’ society and shows how these are made to serve the purpose of propaganda narratives, even if, on surface, it is providing alternative viewpoints, giving space to news about women and their lives.

In the case study, the photo feature analyzed was fit to be called peace journalism even if ‘accidental’ (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2012) as defined in current literature as well as fitting the normative of gender balancing in news content argued for by Jacobson (2010). But this explicit quality is problematized when the same sample is analyzed for its discursive (re)formation of individual photographs within the narrative logic of a photo feature by using theoretical tools developed by Chouliaraki (2006, 2008, 2010) and Alsultany (2012). Peace Journalism as a sub-set of journalism which is

1. a form of representation and
2. hence an abstraction of reality and
3. thus only a space-time structured portrayal of reality or an aspect thereof (Fourie, 2012)

may not only be unable to visually portray the ‘true’ face of war as Fourie warns but may also serve to reify the same official regime of representation that peace journalism avowedly wants to deconstruct for more balanced representations.

Following Butler's broad framework, Chouliaraki's methods and Alsultany's theoretical tool as well as their respective arguments, I have critically engaged with the simultaneous de and re-contextualization of images of women to show how the "indefinite circulability" (Butler, 2009: 86) inherent in visuals may lead to simplified, polarized discourses while giving the appearance of a complex (or balanced) narrative (Alsultany, 2012). The definitions given by the scholars of peace journalism are not able to identify 'simplified complex representations' in news products stressing a certain kind of content over the form in which they are expressed. I offer that the project of peace journalism has some basic structural limitations which it needs to address.

1. Peace journalism has to bring within its discussion the process of how complex, contextualized, balanced visual portrayals – e.g. "giving voice to the voiceless" – when it is visual in nature, can also come to be re-deployed for purposes of justification for violence.

2. Use of visuals in and to understand peace journalism – for academic analyses or journalistic use – needs to be more nuanced because otherwise the politics of 'pity' i.e. garnering sympathy rather than engagement and empathy stands to be collapsed into each other within a discourse of compassion while missing the negative and positive impacts of these emotions.

The present definitions of peace and war frames (Fahmy & Neumann, 2012a; 2012b) when applied to visuals which stand to be reused and their meaning reconstructed are inadequate to take on the full implication of the open nature of visual texts.
8. The new normative for peace journalism

Lynch, (2010: 78) says that "violence requires propaganda narratives to justify its use... and moreover, is promiscuous in its opportunistic appropriation and assimilation of images and concepts connoting purposes and meanings" – following in this light, I ask if some of the normative paradigms of peace journalism when applied to visuals in news have to become sensitive to the subtlety of this appropriation and assimilation which become apparent with critical discourse analyses of visual representations in media.

Also, following Fourie’s call to peace journalism practitioners to develop a semiotic understanding of their craft and thus be conscious of the discursive openness of their texts and as seen in this article, especially visuals, I argue that the way forward for peace journalism is to recognize that norms prescribed by it are "subject to an iterable structure". I argue that for peace journalism, the challenge is to actively and critically engage with the knowledge of how the "received renditions of reality" re-construct discourses by "breaking out" of the original frame of reference (Butler, 2009: 11). Visuals "circulate by virtue of their reproducibility" and "that very reproducibility introduces a structural risk" for the norm within which they were produced (ibid.: 24).

The structural risk in our case is how visual content conforming to peace journalism standards are reiterated in contexts which are in opposition to the norms of peace journalism. The effort in peace journalism should be to identify and address these structural risks posed by and within its own normative standards and its dyadic categorizations of what peace journalism is and is not.

Perhaps an operational and practical tool in using visuals for journalists could be to appeal to the "shared precariousness" of lives in this world through and in their texts as espoused by Butler (2009) as a way to reduce structural risks of being appropriated by polarizing discourses.

This approach could mean turning the tables on propaganda discourses by identifying those points where the official propaganda discourse can be made to break out of "the quotidian acceptance of war" to be replaced by "more generalized horror and outrage that will support and impel calls for justice and an end to violence" which Judith Butler points out as a discursive possibility as exemplified in the case of the circulation of the photos of torture of and poetry written by inmates of the Abu Ghraib prison (2009: 11).

Allowing peace journalists liberation from the notion of any truth that they might expose and instead advocating for the journalistic practice to be based on an appeal to the notion that because we share a dependence on social relations as human beings, doing violence to each other goes against our shared precariousness as human beings in this world, might be a much more useful basis for the peace journalism project.

References


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The escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in summer 2014 proved once again: This long-lasting cultural conflict is marked by the deep-rooted hostility of the conflict parties towards each other and escalating human rights violations that cannot be stopped merely by signing a peace agreement (Shinar, 2014: 65). Yet, in times of conflict escalation and widespread outbreaks of violence, especially against civilian populations, even a minor peace initiative is extremely welcome. In such times, journalists face the problem of maintaining an objective, critical stance toward the behavior of all conflict parties and avoiding biased or one-sided reporting. The reporters of the Middle East conflict are additionally challenged by the problem that even justified criticism of Israeli military actions can fan the flames of existing anti-Semitic prejudices and stereotypes, thus inciting or reinforcing hostility and/or violence towards Jewish people in other parts of the world (Kempf and Shinar, 2014: 15). On the other side, latent as well as manifest anti-Semitic attitudes can also be reinforced if the media take an uncritical position towards Israeli military actions against the Palestinians (Mauer and Kempf, 2014: 187). In light of these issues, the editors and chapter authors of this volume decided to take a retrospective look at Israeli-Palestinian war coverage and peace journalism, analyze the conflict reporting in selected media sources in Israel, the USA, Canada and Germany, as well as test the impact of manipulated media constructs on different audiences’ perceptions of the conflict. Organized in five sections, this volume includes fifteen essays, research articles and experimental studies.

The first section of the volume provides a solid theoretical foundation on media war and peace discourses, with a focus on the role of media in escalating conflicts. Starting with reflections on media war coverage, Dov Shinar (chapter 1) offers a wide range of examples that support his argument that the preference for conflict is a central aspect in the media’s institutional DNA. Constrained by professional, economic and political environments that exist in both totalitarian regimes and open, democratic societies, journalists face a number of dissonant dimensions and dilemmas with far-reaching implications for conflict coverage and its further development. There were numerous cover-ups of how hired PR agencies disseminated inaccurate news reports to persuade Americans to favor military operations in Iraq. This is a vivid illustration of how media coverage can become a driving force for conflict escalation. To deconstruct war discourses and construct peace discourses, Shinar urges a paradigm shift away from explosion-like coverage towards a cumulative process-oriented reportage. In chapter 2, Wilhelm Kempf presents a discourse on peace journalism with a focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. A pioneer in peace journalism studies, Kempf deals with the questions of how to redefine peace journalism, why the media should give peace journalism a chance, and how to practice peace journalism. Drawing on empirical findings, Kempf explains why and how the German public and media frame this conflict as they do, as well as how the German public comes to terms with these media frames. Finally, Shinar (chapter 3) examines the constraints on media peace discourses during various conflicts and focuses on certain paradigmatic frameworks found by media research that explain the different styles and contents of peace journalism.

The second section of the book contains four articles on the coverage of selected aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Israeli media. Dov Shinar (chapter 4) explains the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a cultural conflict and analyzes the role of media during the failed 2000 reconciliation process. He argues that Israeli media used the reporting practices of polarization and contrast of conflict events, while they also tried to raise hopes of conflict reconciliation. Consequently, they could not explain the violence that accompanied the “now defunct Oslo agreement” and put it in the context of the deep cultural aspects of the conflict. The media should have adopted and promoted the model of conflict transformation, which is more appropriate for managing cultural conflicts. Because it is less attractive for media producers and consumers than the model of conflict reconciliation, they failed to encourage public debate on peacemaking under constraining cultural conditions. In chapter 5, Lea Mandelzis explores the changing image of Yasser Arafat and the PLO from bloodthirsty terrorists and enemies who were mainly ignored in the media during the pre-Oslo period, to the representatives of the Palestinian nation and “legitimized partners for peace” during the post-Oslo period (p. 84). Based on a systematic quantitative assessment, Mandelzis explores the course of this transformation and concludes that the analyzed newspapers merely reproduced and legitimized different political attitudes during these periods without bringing about profound changes in traditional
perceptions of the Palestinians as enemies. Changes in the political, social and media environments and their impact on the coverage of Arab citizens in Israel were examined by Anat First and Eli Abraham (chapter 6) in their quantitative and qualitative analyses of 388 newspaper items on the events surrounding Land Day in March 1976 and the Al Aksa Intifada in October 2000. Analyzing the depiction of the Israeli Arab ethnic minority during two periods in two Israeli newspapers – Yedioth Ahronoth and Haaretz –, the authors describe the significant changes that have occurred in Israeli society since 1976. Along with these changes, they track a transformation of the presentation of the “others” in Israeli media, which is becoming less clear-cut over time. Although the distinction between “us” and “them” persists in Israeli media, the positive tendency found by First and Abraham is encouraging. Would this trend continue in the 21st century? How would Israeli Arabs, the “other” in Israeli society, be represented in news reports on the different types of national conflict? Would there be a difference in the coverage of Israeli Arabs in normal times, i.e., between or after conflict events? These research questions are addressed by Anat First in chapter 7. As implied by the article’s title – “Enemies, fellow victims, or the forgotten?” –, According to First, there was a decline in the visibility of Israeli Arabs in the media since 2000, and “one can find an Arab in reality shows or even in drama …. but not in the news or on commentary shows” (p. 129).

The third section of the book is dedicated to the coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in US and Canadian media. Susan Dente Ross examined the framing of the conflict in 13 months of The New York Times’ editorials (N=34) surrounding the attacks of September 11, 2001 (chapter 8). While Ross found a variety of frames that were applied to present the conflict, she concluded that the New York Times’ editorials embraced US policy positions on the conflict as a distant conflict, one that does not directly threaten the USA and is still fairly unimportant, due to the decades-old American support of Israel. Not supported by this study was the assumption that following September 11 there would be more editorial commentary on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as against terrorism. In the study by Bruno Baltonado et al. (chapter 9), the researchers examined the official discourses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in US and Canadian official and media discourses during several events in the Middle East in 2005/2006, such as presidential elections/the death of Yasser Arafat and parliamentary elections/Hamas’ rise to power. Describing the asserted fundamental cultural differences, as well as increasingly chilly relationships between the US and Canada after the terror attacks of September 11, the authors hypothesized that there would be broad national differences in their official and media discourses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Identifying a total of five media frames – Israeli benevolence, Palestinian opportunity, Palestinian failure, Palestinians as a future threat, and justification of Israeli actions – the researchers found “a strongly consistent set of discourses across three political events, in two different papers, and in the discourse of the political elites in both countries” and rejected their hypothesis (p. 159).

In the fourth section of the volume, studies by Markus Mauer and Wilhelm Kempf (chapter 10), as well as by Felix Gaisbauer (chapter 11), examine the coverage of the Second Intifada and the Gaza War in five German quality newspapers. Based on the same representative sample of 396 randomly selected news texts, the researchers tested whether the German press could be responsible for the documented tendency toward increasing anti-Semitic sentiments in the German public, which was believed to be evoked by the biased anti-Israeli reportage of the Middle East conflict in Germany.

While Mauer and Kempf content-analyzed the news texts in regard to the behavior, intentions, actions and victims of the conflict parties, Gaisbauer focused specifically on the representations of the victimization and responsibility of Israel and Palestine during these two conflicts. Although the German quality press “maintained a uniform distance from both conflict parties and attempted to make clear the pluralism of both societies,” the reportage about the Israelis was more frequent and more favorable than that about the Palestinians (Mauer and Kempf, p. 186). Comparing and contrasting the identified patterns of coverage of the Israeli and Palestinian sides during these two conflicts, Mauer and Kempf propose the following explanation: If the German press was to blame for the rising latent as well as manifest anti-Semitic sentiments that were expressed in statements negatively mentioning the press such as, respectively: “One (the German press) is not allowed to say what one really thinks about the Jews,” and “International Jewry has a firm grip on the German press and dictates how it has to report,” this could be because the unfavorable reportage situation for Israel, especially during the Gaza War, was countered by favorable coverage of Israel in the German press. Complementing the findings of Mauer and Kempf, Gaisbauer reports on how the victim and perpetrator roles shifted from one conflict party to the other during these two conflicts. Thus, while Israel was portrayed as a victim during the Second Intifada and Palestine during the Gaza War, the Palestinians were clearly represented as the aggressor during both conflicts. Finding no statistically significant connections among the identified coverage frames of different newspapers during two conflicts, the researchers suggested that the German press merely reported the events simultaneously but without specific partisan publication strategies (p. 219).

The final section of the volume presents four experimental studies that examine recipients’ reactions to manipulated news articles related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In these studies, the
researchers worked with the concept of framing, which allowed formulating specific narratives with various cognitive and emotional dimensions, and tested how readers comprehend and react to different frames. Samuel Peleg and Eitan Alimi (chapter 12) and Wilhelm Kempf (chapter 13) reported their findings on the pre-tests they conducted with Israeli and German students respectively as part of a forthcoming cross-cultural analysis of media influence on recipients’ perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Peleg and Alimi examined frames that favor or disfavor the possibility of an independent Palestinian state and confirmed that recipients exposed to structured framed texts recalled the texts better, were more assertive and had a clearer understanding during the comprehension test than readers exposed to unstructured texts without a specific frame. In regard to the influence of the differently framed texts on readers’ perceptions of the possibility of creating a Palestinian state, the researchers found some, although weak, evidence. This finding was attributed to the fact that the existence of a Palestinian state is a critical issue in the minds of many Israelis, which makes it difficult to change prior opinions with only one round of reading framed texts.

Replicating this study without modifying its design and instruments, Kempf focused on the questions of whether Palestinian territorial continuity threatens Israel and whether or not the essence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is religious. Focusing specifically on the influence of media frames on readers’ perceptions, and taking into account their mental models, Kempf found inter alia, that “participants’ a priori mental models [if they have formed any mental models of the conflict at all] prove to be more powerful predictors of how participants change their assessments than inter-subject variables such as their political orientation, personal views, relevance attribution and knowledge of the conflict.” (p. 264) “In contrast to the Israeli study by Peleg and Alimi (chapter 12), the present study failed to demonstrate any effect of text framing, however.” (p. 264) Discussing the complex and multifaceted findings of the two pre-tests, the researchers formulated a number of further hypotheses that are yet to be empirically tested.

Building on earlier studies, Wilhelm Kempf and Stephanie Thiel conducted an experimental study with German participants on “the cognitive processing of the representation, condemnation and/or justification of Israeli and Palestinian violence in the media” (p. 268). In this study, 394 participants aged from 13 to 89 years were asked to fill out questionnaires before and after reading one of six differently framed articles, as well as to write an essay summarizing their own views on the events reported in the respective articles. In chapter 14, the researchers reported their findings on the interaction of media frames and individual frames (mental models) on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and in chapter 15 on how supporters and critics of Israeli policy process escalation- and de-escalation-oriented media frames. Providing considerable empirical evidence that “neither news selection nor framing have uniform effects on public opinion,” the authors explained how recipients respond to different frames depending “on their prior knowledge of the conflict, on their positioning to the conflict, and on their sensitivity to the ambivalence of war and peace” (pp. 286-287).

Presenting state-of-the-art research on media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this book is a must-read for everyone who wants to understand how war and peace media coverage functions, what implications it has for the development of this long-lasting conflict, and how media coverage interacts with and influences the perception of the conflict by different media recipients. Presenting insightful and methodologically comprehensive contributions, this volume suggests a wealth of fascinating possibilities for future research in the field of war and peace reportage.

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