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MEDIA MONITORING

READING
BETWEEN
THE LINES

An Israeli-Palestinian Guide
to Critical Media Consumption

2009

MEDIA MONITORING

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Research and Writing:
Shiri Iram and Ofer Vlodavsky (Keshev)
Ruham Nimri (Miftah)

The Israeli-Palestinian "media monitoring" project, carried out since 2004 as a partnership between the Israeli organization KESHEV and the Palestinian organization MIFTAH, is a unique project in the field of media and conflict. The project's uniqueness is evident in the cooperation that it involves between two organizations from different sides of a bloody conflict, at the height of a violent confrontation, and their shared use of an innovative methodology that they developed to change problematic patterns of media coverage of the conflict on both sides. This joint effort aims to help the media uphold moderation and fairness and to reduce the incidence of bias, incitement, dehumanization and de-legitimization of the other side.

During the time of this project, Israel waged two major military campaigns, in Lebanon and in the Gaza Strip, in which thousands of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians were killed. In the same period attacks by Palestinians killed dozens of Israelis. During this period Israel kept Palestinian president Yasser Arafat under siege in his compound in Ramallah until his death, Israel unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza Strip, and it came under control of Hamas. In spite of the tremendous damage and suffering, despite the fact that the peace process was dealt severe and recurring blows, and though the level of trust between our nations reached an all-time low, our organizations sustained this joint project the whole time.

Without a doubt, there is no symmetry between the sides and there are fundamental differences between the Israeli and Palestinian media. Israeli media outlets are strong and claim to be professional and independent. Israelis are avid media consumers, by any international scale, and Israeli print and broadcast media outlets have very high circulation and high ratings.

The Palestinian media is weaker and poorer, and its circulation among the Palestinian public is limited, compared with the Israeli media. Most Palestinian media consumers are actually influenced more by the international Arab media, large pan-Arab networks like Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya. There is also no overstating the influence of the continuing Israeli occupation, which restricts the freedoms of Palestinian journalists and represses Palestinian civil society in countless ways.

In view of the ongoing crisis between Palestinians and Israelis and in light of the differences and lack of symmetry between the state of Israel and Palestine and between the media on the two sides, we are pleased to have succeeded in creating an agreed upon methodological guidebook for teaching critical consumption of news material. This project would not have been possible without a high level of trust between the organizations, which has been built through years of cooperation under conditions of an ongoing bloody conflict, while confronting deep-seated psychological and social barriers on both sides. We regard this joint guide as a significant achievement in the struggle for a more moderate discourse and in efforts to create a more supportive environment for peace-building in our region.

Yizhar Be'er, Executive Director
Keshev – The Center for the Protection
of Democracy in Israel

Dr. Lily Feidy, Secretary-General
Miftah – The Palestinian Initiative for the
Promotion of Dialogue and Democracy

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Introduction

Nations embroiled in nationalist conflicts tend to adopt narratives that support the righteousness of their struggle and which accentuate the negative traits and intentions of the other side, as well as its responsibility for the ongoing suffering and for the absence of a solution. This is how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is covered by media outlets on both sides, often in mirror images, with each side presenting an opposite story. For example, the Palestinian media narrative emphasizes the occupation—whose victims are the Palestinians—and paints the government of Israel as aggressive, opposed to peace and responsible for violent events in the region. On the other side, Israeli media outlets emphasize the violent and terrorist foundations of the Palestinians' conduct and their unwillingness or inability to reach a solution. The Israelis, in this telling, are the victims of a conflict in which they are not to blame. Beyond these different perceptions and interpretations of reality, essentially similar patterns of coverage can be found on both sides, which de-legitimize and dehumanize the other. These patterns of coverage heighten mutual suspicions in both nations, fan the flames of the conflict and make it harder to find a solution.

Recognition of the media's profound influence on the conflict has led the Israeli organization KESHEV and the Palestinian organization MIFTAH to work together from both sides of the conflict in order to try to change how the conflict is depicted in the media discourse in both nations. This is done in the hope that such cooperation may lead to more balanced, fair and comprehensive coverage and, perhaps, as a result, a better reality.

This practical guide to teaching critical reading of news materials arises from a unique cooperative project that has been carried out continuously since 2004. In this joint project KESHEV and MIFTAH each analyze news coverage in the major media outlets on their "own side" and attempt to influence journalists and editors to change patterns of coverage that are problematic and biased.

Two parallel goals have guided the creation of this guide. First, it is designed to instill skills for critical reading, in general. A second goal is to promote critical media consumption in the specific context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As mentioned above, over the years media on both sides have played a complicated and not always positive role in the conflict's development. The media has had a central role in defining the conflict and its significance for the Israeli and Palestinian public. Critically reading the messages contained in news coverage can neutralize to some extent the media's ability to shape consumers' perspectives according to short-term media interests and can also neutralize the influence of those elements that exert pressure on the media. It is our hope that this guide will enable media professionals to develop new means of self-criticism that will allow them, in time, to create news coverage that does not perpetuate the conflict, but which might actually contribute to its resolution.

The methodology[1] that underlies this guide makes it possible to clearly present the systematic failings in news coverage on both sides. It is based on a distinction between two principal stages in the news-making process – writing and editing.

At the first stage reporters and columnists compose their texts and send them to their news editors. The editors receive other texts as well, from press agencies, public relations firms, and so on.

At the second stage, the editors produce the final product: They determine which texts will appear in the newspaper or broadcast. The editors determine the placement of the text (on the front page or on page 17, at the beginning of the broadcast or after a commercial break); they select the photographs that go with each item; they design the layout of the pages and determine the sequence of items in the broadcast; and they compose headlines (including sub-headlines and photo captions in newspapers, the headlines of television news broadcasts and the words spoken by the anchor).

In the view of most news producers and news consumers the second stage, the editing stage, is mainly technical. According to popular perceptions, the truly important work is done in gathering and writing news material. Editors merely "prepare" this material for print or broadcast. This perception is wrong, for two complementary reasons: First, editorial work determines news messages no less than the work of the reporters, and in some ways even more so. Second, in reading the news media consumers rely on material produced by editors much more than on material produced by reporters. The fact that an article appears on the front page and not on page 17; the specific phrasing of a particular headline; the appearance of a photo beside an article; the words spoken by a news anchor before an item is broadcast – all of these factors have a decisive influence on consumers' understanding of the news. Furthermore, many studies show that media consumers often limit themselves to reading headlines (or viewing the headlines of a news broadcast) and in many cases they do not even get to the texts of the news items (or the rest of the broadcast edition). In such cases, the perception of the news is determined almost exclusively by the work of the editors.

This fact has far-reaching significance, since a meticulous review of news material at both stages of the process, writing and editing, reveals that the materials produced at each stage are not parallel. The headlines of newspapers and news broadcasts are not merely short neutral summaries of the news. In most cases, the headlines tell a very different story than that which is told by the reporters. Along with the placement of an item, its graphic saliency, the accompanying visuals, and so on, the headlines tell a story of their own and this significantly influences news consumers.

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1. The methods of reading and viewing are based on the research methodology developed by Dr. Daniel Dor. See:
Dor, Daniel, (2001) *Newspapers under the Influence*. Babel (in Hebrew).
Dor, Daniel (2004). *Intifada Hits the Headlines*. Indiana University Press.
Dor, Daniel (2005). *The Suppression of Guilt*. Pluto Press.

To be clear – the problem is not limited to the fact that once in a while the results of editorial work do not reflect the contents of the articles themselves. The point is that the discrepancies between headlines and texts are **systematic**. A meticulous review of newspapers and television news broadcasts reveals that certain components of reality, which appear in the articles themselves, are systematically marginalized by editors, while others are systematically highlighted.

The techniques that appear in this guide reveal these systematic discrepancies through attention to a series of key criteria.

Further in this guide each criterion will be explained through the use of examples culled from actual media coverage in Israel and in the Palestinian Authority. It is important to note that becoming familiar with these criteria is just a first step toward learning to read media items more critically. The research method employed here is based on attention to a combination of criteria in ways that reveal recurring editing patterns that bias the coverage.

This guide aims to help users identify the tell-tale signs of these patterns, to understand their significance and to learn from them how to read the news in a more profound way; in other words, how to "read between the lines".

Media Landscape

The Palestinian Media Landscape

The Palestinian media comprises print and audiovisual outlets and an official news agency, WAFA.

Print Media

The press includes three daily newspapers: *Al-Quds* was established in 1951, *Al-Ayyam* and *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* were both founded in 1995. *Al-Quds* and *Al-Ayyam* are independent and private newspapers while *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* is partially subsidized by the Palestinian Authority. All of these journals have websites, and provide electronic access to their archives for free.

The estimated combined circulation of these newspapers is 50,000 copies per day, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau for Statistics (PCBS) and other polling and research centers. However, real circulation figures may vary, according to unofficial information disclosed by newspaper owners. Polls and PCBS research indicate that *Al-Quds* is the most widely-distributed newspaper and *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* is the least. *Al-Quds* contains the most ads. Published in the unilaterally annexed eastern part of Jerusalem, *Al-Quds* is subject to Israeli military censorship.

The number of pages in the newspapers varies, not according to differences in the news coverage, but according to the number and size of advertisements. *Al-Ayyam* has many weekly and bi-weekly supplements such as the "Voice of Women", "Al-Tareeq" and others. These are considered independent publications that benefit from *Al-Ayyam's* printing and distribution system.

News and translated materials from international, Arabic and Hebrew language journals comprise, on average, 55 percent of the editorial copy, *i.e.* of the newspapers' content minus advertisements.

There are also semi-monthly and irregularly appearing journals such as *Al-Awda* which is funded by the Palestinian Authority and *Al-Risala*, which is affiliated with Hamas and appears mainly in Gaza. The press landscape also includes other smaller weeklies and monthlies. It is worth mentioning here that some Palestinian political factions use the mosques as their main media outlets.

The Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC)

The Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) was established in 1994, when the Palestinian Radio (Voice of Palestine) started broadcasting from its studios in Jericho on the long wave frequency of 675 kHz. The transmitting station during that period was

in Ramallah and Israeli technicians were in charge of transmitting, with a fiber optic line connecting the Jericho studios with the transmitter in Ramallah. After the first Israeli redeployment in 1995, the Voice of Palestine moved to its main studios in Ramallah which were established with assistance from the European Union. Palestinian TV spread to Gaza in 1994, but it took until 1998 to establish a complete network of towers and microwave links to cover all of Gaza and the West Bank. The need for creating more than 10 towers stems from the fact that Palestinian TV has to use several UHF channels with limited transmitting power, according to signed agreements with Israel on how to use the spectrum while avoiding interference with existing Israeli and Arab channels.

Al-Aqsa satellite channel

The Palestinian media landscape changed at the beginning of 2006, when Hamas launched the experimental broadcasts of Al-Aqsa satellite channel on January 7, 2006, giving it the same name as the movement's radio station in Gaza. This satellite channel constitutes part of the activities of the Ribat Media and Artistic Production Company. Its Chairman of the Board is Fathi Hammad, one of the senior leaders of Hamas and a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC).

The Ribat media company began operating several years ago with the publication of the weekly *Al-Risala* (The Message) and in December 2003 it launched Sawt al-Aqsa (The Voice of Al-Aqsa) radio station.

According to the Palestinian News Agency WAFA, Al-Aqsa started its experimental broadcasts from the third floor of Bashir Mosque in Tal-al-Zaatar Street in Jabalya Camp, north of the Gaza Strip. The first broadcast of Al-Aqsa included recitation of verses from the Holy Koran for half an hour. Its formal broadcasts began at the height of the election campaign for the Palestinian Legislative Council, which took place on January 25, 2006.

In a radio interview with Radio al-Aqsa that aired on January 10, 2006, Khalid Mash'al, head of the politboro of the Hamas movement, described Al-Aqsa as "the blessed infant that came from the womb of Radio al-Aqsa," which, as he put it, "aims to give an untarnished media, that supports the resistance and shares with it the road of Jihad." Al-Aqsa spearheaded the Hamas media campaign against the security services that were defeated by Hamas on June 14, 2006.

Al-Aqsa adopted an editorial policy closer to wartime media, with party anthems, patriotic songs and military communiqués of the sort usually heard on satellite channels of countries engaged in wars with other countries. It uses verses from the Koran politically with references to those it describes as hypocrites, apostates and opportunists, in addition to patriotic and Islamic songs and anthems, both in the struggle with other Palestinian factions and in appealing to the masses to confront the occupation.

The Israeli Media Landscape

Print Media[2]

In Israel there are four main national daily newspapers, all privately owned. The most prevalent is *Yediot Aharonot*, which has a daily exposure rate of more than 35 percent among Hebrew speaking Israelis. The paper with the second highest rate of exposure is *Israel Hayom*, a free newspaper that is disseminated in major population centers, which has a daily exposure rate of about 20 percent among Hebrew speakers. The third and fourth most prevalent newspapers are *Ma'ariv* and *Ha'aretz*, with daily exposure rates of about 15 percent and 7 percent, respectively, among Hebrew speaking Israelis.

All of the major newspapers operate web sites and apart from *Israel Hayom*, they also publish local newspapers. *Yediot Aharonot* and *Ha'aretz* also publish their own financial newspapers (*Calcalist* and *The Marker*, respectively).

Israel Hayom is explicit about its rightward-leaning editorial positions on Israeli politics, while *Ha'aretz* is explicit about its leftward-leaning editorial line on Israeli politics. *Yediot Aharonot* and *Ma'ariv* have no declared overall editorial position on political issues.

Besides the national newspapers published in Hebrew, there are a number of sectoral newspapers as well:

Four daily and weekly newspapers target Palestinian citizens of Israel, who number more than a million and a half people. The oldest of these papers is the communist party daily *Al-Ittihad*. Since the 1980's private Arabic newspapers have also been published including *Kul Al-Arab*, a weekly published in Nazareth, *A-Sinara*, published twice a week in Nazareth, and *Panorama*, a weekly published in the north-central region of Israel known as the "triangle".

Russian-language newspapers are also published in Israel, serving a population of more than a million immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The main Russian newspapers are *Vesty* and *Novesty*. In addition, many local newspapers and magazine are published in Russian as well.

The national daily *Makor Rishon* defines itself as an "Israeli national newspaper" and primarily addresses the religious-nationalist readership in Israel.

The ultra-orthodox press in Israel is mainly party-based. The major ultra-orthodox newspapers are *Hamodia*, *Yated Ne'eman* and *Hamevaser*. In addition, weekly newspapers include *Yom L'yom* and *Mishpacha*, the latter of which has no party affiliation.

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2. Figures are from TGI surveys of media exposure in Israel, 2008.

There are two English-language daily newspapers, *The Jerusalem Post* and *Ha'aretz English Edition*, which is published together with an abridged edition of *The International Herald Tribune*. A bi-weekly newsmagazine, *The Jerusalem Report*, is published by the owners of *The Jerusalem Post*.

Television Broadcasting[3]

In Israel there are three main national television channels. Channel One is a public television channel operated by the Israel Broadcasting Authority. Channel Two and Channel 10 are privately owned commercial channels that broadcast under the oversight of the Second Authority for Television and Radio. The Channel Two news edition is the most popular, achieving a 20 percent viewer rating. The news editions on Channel 1 and Channel 10 receive viewer ratings between 7 and 12 percent, with the two channels alternating for second-place in the ratings.

The Israel Broadcasting Authority also operates Channel 33, which primarily serves Palestinian citizens of Israel, and Educational Television, which is also broadcast on Channel Two.

In addition, two companies, Hot and Yes, provide television broadcasting, by cable and by satellite, respectively. These companies broadcast Channel Nine ("Israel Plus"), an Israel channel that broadcasts in Russian, and IETV, a channel that broadcasts mainly in Amharic for the Ethiopian community in Israel.

Radio Broadcasting[4]

"The Voice of Israel" is Israel's public broadcasting authority, which operates eight national radio stations including "Reshet Bet", which focuses on news and current events; "Reshet Gimel", which broadcasts Israeli music; "Voice of Israel", Arabic-language service; "Reshet REKA", which mainly serves new immigrants; and four other channels. The exposure rate to "Voice of Israel" radio is more than 40 percent.

"Galei Zahal" is a national radio station that belongs to the Israel Defense Forces and is financed by the Ministry of Defense and by public service announcements. Most of the radio station's programming is civilian in content. "Galei Zahal" also operates the "Galgalatz" radio station which broadcasts popular music. The exposure rate to "Galei Zahal" is also more than 40 percent.

The Second Authority for Television and Radio, which oversees commercial television broadcasting in Israel, also has authority over a number of regional radio stations that are operated by a number of private concessionaires. The Second Authority also operates

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3. See footnote 2
4. See footnote 2

"Radio A-Shams", which serves Palestinian citizens of Israel and "Radio Kol Hai" which mainly serves the religious Jewish population. The exposure rate to regional radio stations is about 35 percent.

In addition, dozens of pirate radio stations also operate in Israel. Many of them have an ideological bent, often religious and right-wing.

Internet News Media

About four million Israelis have consistent access to the Internet. 74 percent of Internet users use the Internet to obtain news.[5] 58 percent consume news on the Internet one or more times daily. According to comparative research conducted at the University of Southern California, this rate places Israel in first place in terms of news consumption on the Internet.[6]

The most popular Internet web sites in Israel are *Ynet*, which is owned by *Yediot Aharonot*, *NRG*, which is owned by *Ma'ariv* and the web site of *Ha'aretz*, as well as *Mako* a web site owned by the Channel Two news company and its concessionaire Keshet, *Nana 10*, which operates in conjunction with Channel Ten and *Walla*.[7]

In addition, most of the aforementioned media outlets operate independent web sites.

5. The Chaim Herzog Institute for Media Politics and Society (2005). *Index of Public Confidence in the News Media, Report no. 4: Internet News Consumption*. http://www.tau.ac.il/institutes/herzog/report4.pdf (accessed September 10, 2009).

6. University of Southern California, USC Annenberg School (2009). *World internet project: international report 2009.*

7. TNS Teleseker, March 2009, http://www.ad-web.co.il/files/articles/TIM.html, (accessed September 10, 2009).

Editing Parameters and Tools for Critical Media Consumption

A. Placement

When we read a news article or view an item on the television news the first question that we should ask ourselves is: Where is the item placed in the newspaper edition or the broadcast? Is it on the front page, the opening of the broadcast, the back news pages, the end of the broadcast, in the newspaper's daily supplement, or perhaps in the weekend supplement?

This is important because placement suggests importance. Most newspaper readers regard material that appears on the front page and in the front news pages as important or "hard" news, based on "facts". This is where we read about what happened yesterday. The material that appears in the rear sections of the newspaper – the back news pages, the daily supplements and the weekend supplements – is perceived as "soft" news that is less "important" or "newsworthy". This distinction is also valid with respect to television news broadcasts. What appears in the broadcast headlines or immediately afterwards is deemed more "important" than what appears toward the end of the broadcast. It should be understood that the placement of an item in a newspaper or a news broadcast is entirely the result of an editorial decision. The exact same item, if placed somewhere else, could be interpreted as having altogether different importance.

The prominence of an item is another criterion that complements the one regarding placement, and it, too, is a product of editorial decision-making. The relevant question one should ask is how prominent is the item within the page (or the broadcast) where it appears? Where is it positioned on the page (top, bottom)? What is its size in comparison with other items on the same page? How large is its headline? Does the anchor in the studio set-up the item with a long introduction? And so on. Prominence, like placement, suggests importance, factualness, and significance.

The following example from the Israeli media provides a useful illustration:

During the Second Lebanon War, on July 20, 2006, *Ma'ariv* reported on different points of view in the Israeli security establishment regarding the actions of the air force and their results. One report told of a successful air force operation, which dropped powerful bombs on the bunker of senior Hezbollah leaders. Another report in the same edition told of sharp criticism by air force officers, about the "trigger-happy fingers" that had caused the deaths of many civilians who were not involved in the fighting. By critically examining the editorial choices made in this edition, we can understand how the placement and prominence of different reports influence how readers interpret reality.

The *Ma'ariv* main headline festively reported the Israeli air force operation: IDF HOPES: HARD BLOW TO HEZBOLLAH TOP BRASS; 23 TONS OF BOMBS ON HEZBOLLAH COMMAND BUNKER. The sub-headline explained that in an attempt to hit the top echelons of Hezbollah, fighter planes dropped powerful bombs on a neighborhood in central Beirut where the organization also maintained a hideout. Killings of civilians caused by this action were not mentioned on this page.

The report on internal criticism, from within the Israeli military, of air force actions that killed dozens of civilians was presented in a tiny item that was published far from the main headlines, on page 11 of the same edition.

The difference in the placement of the items plays a crucial role here: The main headline on the front page indicates an item of tremendous importance. The item on page 11 is perceived as much less important. The difference in prominence—the size of the reports and their placement within the news pages—conveys the same message: The main headline conflicts with the criticism contained in the tiny item on page 11, however, the information in the headline is perceived as much more significant.

Two items that convey contradictory messages were published in the same newspaper edition. One item was given prominence on the front page. The other was buried and placed in a marginal spot, deep within the edition. The message conveyed to consumers is that the prominent item is much more important.

Ma'ariv, July 20, 2006

The main headline of the edition announced a tremendous strike in the heart of Beirut: 23 TONS OF BOMBS ON HEZBOLLAH COMMAND BUNKER. The headline did not mention the civilians that were killed in this attack.

Only in a small article, on page 11, did it become apparent that sources in the IDF were criticizing the massive strikes against Lebanese civilians. Even the headline of this article did not convey that information

UNDER FIRE

CRITICISM WITHIN IDF ON FIGHTING IN NORTH

Beneath the surface, junior staff officers have begun to express a trickle of criticism with regard to the IDF's conduct during the fighting in Lebanon.

Officers in the intermediate ranks are criticizing the trigger-happy fingers, as they put it, of the IAF pilots who cause the deaths of dozens of Lebanese civilians, who are not involved in the fighting.

Another example, this time from the Palestinian press, can show how placement and prominence affect the level of importance that items convey to news consumers. On December 28, 2008, the first day of the Israeli military action in Gaza, many Palestinians, including civilians, were killed as a result of bombing by the Israeli military, and an Israeli woman was killed by a Qassam rocket. Two Palestinian newspapers reported this information in very different ways. The headline in *Al-Ayyam* read: THE MASSACRE: 230 MARTYRS KILLED AND 700 INJURED IN GAZA. Further in the coverage, but deep within the edition – on page 17 – a tiny item appeared under the sub-headline ISRAELI WOMAN KILLED AND FOUR INJURED IN NETIVOT. The text of the article reported that "according to Israeli emergency services one Israeli woman was killed in the city of Netivot in southern Israel by a rocket launched from the Gaza Strip."

The editor of *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* chose to publish the same report, but he placed it on the front page under a separate headline: ISRAELI WOMAN KILLED BY ROCKET IN NETIVOT.

Two newspapers published the same report: In one it was placed on the front page beneath the main headline; in the other it was relegated to page 17. The first choice suggests that this was an important incident; the second suggests that the incident lacked significance.

المجزرة ٢٣٠ شهيداً و٧٠٠ جريح في غزة

The main headline of *Al-Ayyam*, December 28, 2008:
THE MASSACRE (in red),
230 MARTYRS KILLED AND 700 INJURED IN GAZA.

And on page 17:
ISRAELI WOMAN KILLED AND FOUR INJURED IN NETIVOT

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, December 28, 2008. The same report was placed on the front page of the edition: ISRAELI WOMAN KILLED BY ROCKET IN NETIVOT

For news consumers the difference between these editorial choices is significant: The *Al-Ayyam* editor's decision to place the report on the Israeli casualty deep inside the edition conveys the message that this was not a significant event. On the other hand, the choice by the editor of *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* to place the item on the front page suggests that it was a very important incident.

The first technique in critical media consumption, then, concerns the ability to neutralize how the placement and prominence of items influence our interpretation of the news. It is important to note that attention to these criteria need not be directed at a specific article in particular; but rather, that awareness of this issue can help us identify problematic patterns as part of a systematic review of all the criteria.

B. Headline-Text Factual Correspondence

The question here is simple but critical: To what extent does the headline reflect what is said in the article?

News producers and news consumers traditionally regard headlines as short summaries of articles: What is said in hundreds of words in an article is shortened to a few words in a headline. But, in fact, this is not the case. In most instances, headlines refer to select information within an article and highlight that information over others. Editors thus signal to readers and viewers what is more important and what is less important. In most cases this sort of signaling has a crucial influence on how consumers interpret the news. A meticulous investigation of news material reveals that the aspects that editors choose to highlight in headlines are not necessarily obvious choices. Other information could just as easily be promoted to the headlines, in which case the news would be perceived quite differently. In many cases headlines actually distort what is said in an article. In more than a few cases the connection between a headline and an article can seem almost incidental. The fact that most news consumers "scan the headlines" and do not read every word in an article underscores the significance of this criterion.

In the following headline from the Palestinian media, the prominence given to one component in the article gives an imprecise picture of what is written in the article itself. A headline in *Al-Quds* on October 4, 2004, told of demands by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan: ANNAN CALLS FOR END TO ISRAELI INCURSION IN GAZA. Deep in the text of the item it was revealed that this was not the full picture. Annan made demands on the Israelis, but also on the Palestinians.

> Annan also demands that the PA prevent the Palestinian [militant] groups from firing missiles at Israeli targets. He reminds the two parties that civilians on both sides have the right to protection.

The editor's decision to compose a headline that emphasized only the demands on the Israeli side created a biased picture of reality. The UN Secretary-General had actually demanded that both sides cease their violence and harm to civilians. The headline did not convey this.

Al-Quds, October 4, 2004. The headline emphasized the UN Secretary-General's demands on Israel: ANNAN CALLS FOR END TO ISRAELI INCURSION IN GAZA. By contrast, in the text it emerged that his demands were directed at the Palestinian side too. "Annan also demands that the PA prevent the Palestinian [militant] groups from firing missiles at Israeli targets."

عنان يطالب بوقف العدوان
الاسرائيلي على قطاع غزة

نيويورك (الامم المتحدة) - (اف ب)- طالب امين عام الامم المتحدة كوفي عنان امس اسرائيل بانهاء عملياتها العسكرية في قطاع غزة والتي ودت منذ الثلاثاء الماضي الى استشهاد ٦٦ فلسطينيا. وقال فريد ايكارد للتحدث باسم عنان في بيان ان «الامين العام يطالب الحكومة الاسرائيلية بوقف توغلاتها العسكرية في قطاع غزة التي ادت الى مقتل العديد من الفلسطينيين بينهم الكثير من المدنيين ومنهم اطفال».

واضاف ايكارد ان «الامين العام يطالب ايضا السلطة الفلسطينية بالتحرك لمنع الناشطين الفلسطينيين من ارسال صواريخ ضد اهداف اسرائيلية ويذكر طرفي النزاع بان من واجبهما حماية جميع المدنيين».

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, October 1, 2004. The headline emphasized the British Foreign Minister's demands on Israel: STRAW CALLS ON ISRAEL TO STOP ASSASSINATION OPERATIONS AND TO STOP CONSTRUCTION OF SETTLEMENTS AND THE WALL. Deep in the text it was revealed that his demands were also directed at the Palestinian side: Straw called on the Palestinian Authority to work seriously to stop the "activities of terrorist groups which continue to be committed against Israeli innocent families".

Another example of similar editorial bias can be seen in *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*'s coverage of a speech by the British Foreign Secretary at the annual conference of the Labour Party, on October 1, 2004. The headline reported on Foreign Secretary Jack Straw's demands of Israel: STRAW CALLS ON ISRAEL TO STOP ASSASSINATION OPERATIONS AND TO STOP CONSTRUCTION OF SETTLEMENTS AND THE WALL. Here, too, deep in the text additional information is brought to light, which changes the picture presented in the headline. It turns out that later in his speech Straw called on the Palestinian Authority to work seriously to stop the "activities of terrorist groups which continue to be committed against Israeli innocent families". This information was buried deep in the text, beneath a headline that stressed only the demands on the Israeli side.

Ma'ariv, August 11, 2006, page 7. The last paragraph in the article told a very different story than the one the editor chose for the headline.

Headline: LISTENING TO NASRALLAH; 100 HAIFA ARABS WANT TO LEAVE TO JORDAN.

Haifa Mayor Yona Yahav clarified yesterday that he is not familiar with any mass migration of residents to Jordan. 'There are some [Arabs] who are leaving, but it's exactly like the Jews. The Arab residents of the city are politically and economically involved in it and no Hassan Nasrallah is going to make them leave'.

A similar example from the Israeli media illustrates how giving prominence to one component in a report can create bias. The headline of an article in the August 11, 2006 edition of *Ma'ariv* proclaimed: LISTENING TO NASRALLAH; 100 HAIFA ARABS WANT TO LEAVE TO JORDAN. While such views were indeed expressed in the article, a closer reading of the article uncovers completely different information as well. The last paragraph of the article read: "Haifa Mayor Yona Yahav clarified yesterday that he is not familiar with any mass migration of residents to Jordan. 'There are some [Arabs] who are leaving, but it's exactly like the Jews. The Arab residents of the city are politically and economically involved in it and no Hassan Nasrallah is going to make them leave'." This paragraph told a very different story than the one that the editor chose to relate in the headline.

In the following example there is a clear contradiction between the headlines and the factual components of the article to which they refer. The banner headline on the front page of *Yediot Aharonot*, on April 13, 2005, asserted: PM: ABU MAZEN WILL NOT SURVIVE ATOP PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP. The sub-headline of the article to which this headline referred, on page 4 of the edition, was less adamant. It maintained: [Israeli Prime Minister] SHARON ALSO ESTIMATED THAT ABU MAZEN IS IN A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL. Within the article itself, however, it was written:

> Sharon also referred to the Palestinian arena and said that the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, Abu Mazen, is at the height of a struggle for survival. "We will soon be able to estimate Abu Mazen's chances of survival atop the Palestinian leadership". At the same time Sharon was careful not to take an adamant position on the issue.

The article, then, tells that the Prime Minister was careful not to take a clear-cut position on the question of Abu Mazen's future. But the headlines told a different story altogether. In the vast majority of cases, the ordinary reader, who is not trained in media criticism, will not recognize the contradiction and will naturally reach the conclusion that the Prime Minister determined that Abu Mazen will not survive atop the Palestinian leadership. The text of this article was sent in by a reporter who actually interviewed the Prime Minister. It is all the more remarkable, then, that the factual information it contains, which provided the basis for its headline, was ultimately obscured from most readers.

Yediot Aharonot, April 13, 2005. An example of a pattern of editing that assigns a negative image to the Palestinian side, without any factual corroboration in the article. The headline of the article has the Prime Minister making an adamant assertion about the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority. The article told a different story altogether. The text of this article was sent in by a reporter who actually interviewed the Prime Minister. It is all the more remarkable, then, that the factual information it contains, which provided the basis for its headline, was ultimately obscured from most readers.

The banner headline of the edition asserted: PM: ABU MAZEN WILL NOT SURVIVE ATOP PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP.

ידיעות אחרונות

רה״מ: אבו־מאזן לא ישרוד בהנהגה הפלשתינית

The sub-headline on page 4 was less adamant: SHARON ALSO ESTIMATED THAT ABU MAZEN IS IN A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL.

שרון גם העריך כי אבו־מאזן נמצא במאבק הישרדות

In the article itself, however, it was written:

"Sharon also referred to the Palestinian arena and said that the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, Abu Mazen, is at the height of a struggle for survival... At the same time Sharon was careful not to take an adamant position on the issue".

C. Headline Rhetoric and Lexical Selection

Headlines can differ from articles not only in the facts they convey but also in various rhetorical aspects. Sometimes the words chosen in a headline illuminate what is described in the article in ways that do not comport with the text. The use of certain grammatical devices can influence how the reader interprets the information. Quite often, editors add certain words, images or metaphors that help create an emotional effect. It is important to know how to identify these factors and to understand that such headlines color news stories in certain ways that stem from an editorial decision, not from reality.

An example from the Palestinian media that demonstrates how the choice of words can influence how readers interpret reality concerns the terms used to describe Palestinian suicide attacks against Israeli civilians. The way the media treats these events varies and often depends on the political conditions of the period. For example, during periods of intensified conflict, when there are no negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, reports on such actions are often framed in heroic terms, referring to the attacker as a martyr. During periods when different political conditions prevail, the reporting sometimes changes and attacks are referred to as "acts of terror" and are framed in disapproving terms. Here are two examples:

On August 28, 2005, a suicide attack was carried out in Be'er Sheva. Dozens of Israeli civilians were injured in the attack. The Chairman of the Palestinian Authority denounced the attack using the words "terrorist operation". The next day, the newspaper *Al-Quds* reported this condemnation on its front page. The editor chose to use the term a "terrorist operation," quoting the President of the Palestinian Authority:

> THE PRESIDENT [Abu Mazen]: WE DENOUNCE THE TERRORIST OPERATION IN BE'ER SHEVA AND CALL ON ISRAEL TO REAFFIRM ITS COMMITMENT TO THE CALM AND TRUCE.

On January 29, 2007, a suicide attack was carried out in Eilat, killing three Israeli civilians. This time, Palestinian editors chose different terms to describe the event. The editor of *Al-Quds* composed a headline that called the attack an "explosion operation": THREE PEOPLE KILLED IN AN EXPLOSION OPERATION IN EILAT. In reports referring to the perpetrator of the attack, he was termed the "executor of the operation". Use of these terms conveyed a neutral attitude toward the event that transpired – neither positive nor negative. *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* reported the attack with a neutral headline: THREE ISRAELIS KILLED IN AN OPERATION IN EILAT CARRIED OUT BY YOUTH FROM BEIT LAHIYA ADOPTED BY THE AL-QUDS AND AL-AQSA BRIGADES, but the article was accompanied by a photograph of one of the attackers with a caption that read "martyr". The use of this term conveyed a message supporting the attack.

An example from the Palestinian media that demonstrates how the choice of words can influence how readers interpret reality concerns the terms used to describe Palestinian suicide attacks against Israeli civilians.

On August 28, 2005, a suicide attack was carried out in Be'er Sheva. The attack injured dozens of Israeli civilians. In the headline the editor chose to use the term "terrorist operation", and quoted the PA chairman's denouncement of the attack.

Al Quds, August 29, 2005, front page. Article headline: THE PRESIDENT [Abu Mazen]: WE DENOUNCE THE TERRORIST OPERATION IN BE'ER SHEVA AND CALL ON ISRAEL TO REAFFIRM ITS COMMITMENT TO THE CALM AND TRUCE.

الرئيس : ندين العملية الارهابية في بئر السبع
وندعو اسرائيل الى تأكيد التزامها التهدئة والهدنة

رام الله- (اف ب) - ادان رئيس السلطة الفلسطينية محمود عباس الهجوم الذي وقع امس في بئر السبع جنوب اسرائيل معتبرا اياه «عملية ارهابية».

وقال عباس في تصريح مقتضب للصحافيين في مكتبه في رام الله «هذه عملية ارهابية ندينها ونستنكرها».

-البقية ص ٣٣

On January 29, 2007, a suicide attack was carried out in Eilat. Three Israeli civilians were killed in the attack. In contrast with the example shown above, Palestinian editors chose to use different terms in their coverage of this event.

Al-Quds, January 30, 2007. In the headline of the article the editor chose to describe the event in neutral terms: THREE PEOPLE KILLED IN AN EXPLOSION OPERATION IN EILAT. In the text of the article the perpetrator was referred to as "the executor of the operation".

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, January 30, 2007. Article headline: THREE ISRAELIS KILLED IN AN OPERATION IN EILAT CARRIED OUT BY YOUTH FROM BEIT LAHIYA ADOPTED BY THE AL-QUDS AND AL-AQSA BRIGADES

The article was accompanied by a photograph of one of the attackers with a caption that read "martyr". The use of this term conveyed a message supporting the attack.
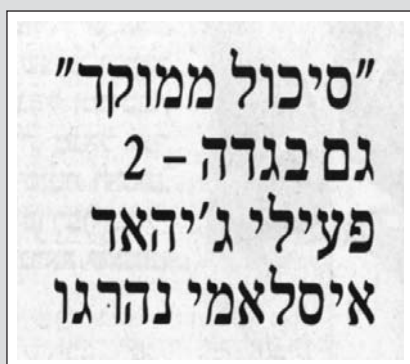
The next example, from the Israeli media, also illustrates the significance of lexical selection: On August 9, 2006, the Israeli air force bombed targets in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The next day the *Ha'aretz* newspaper reported on these events in an article under the headline: "TARGETED ASSASSINATION" IN THE WEST BANK, TOO – TWO ISLAMIC JIHAD ACTIVISTS KILLED. The term "targeted assassination" suggests a precise military operation, in other words, a "surgical" strike on military targets, meaning the Islamic Jihad activists. Closer examination of the text of the article, however, reveals that there were Palestinian civilian casualties in the strike, including a three year-old girl and a 17 year-old youth:

> In the Sajaiya neighborhood of Gaza, a Popular Resistance Committees training camp was bombed yesterday. Three Palestinians were killed: An activist of the organization, a 17 year-old boy and a three year-old girl, Rajaa Abu Shaaban.

The decision to use the term "targeted assassination" in the headline conveyed a misleading message to readers, since the results of this military action were not "targeted", even by the Israeli army's definition.

This type of problematic word selection, which conveys in the headlines the impression of a precise Israeli strike on a military target, is a common pattern that KESHEV has identified in its studies of Israeli media coverage of the conflict in recent years. KESHEV's

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Ha'aretz, August 10, 2006. The decision to use the term "targeted assassination" in the headline conveyed a misleading message to readers, since the results of this military action were not "targeted", even by the Israeli army's definition.

"סיכול ממוקד"
גם בגדה – 2
פעילי ג'יהאד
איסלאמי נהרגו

Headline:
"TARGETED ASSASSINATION" IN THE
WEST BANK, TOO – TWO ISLAMIC JIHAD
ACTIVISTS KILLED

"In the Sajaiya neighborhood of Gaza, a Popular Resistance Committees training camp was bombed yesterday. Three Palestinians were killed: An activist of the organization, a 17 year-old boy and a three year-old girl, Rajaa Abu Shaaban."

Examination of the text of the article reveals that there were Palestinian civilian casualties in the strike, including a three-year old girl and a 17 year-old youth

report "Liquidation Sale – Coverage of Killings of Palestinians by Israeli Security Forces," which was published in March 2006, found that critical discussion of these terms is entirely absent from the Israeli media discourse, despite their widespread use.

The same kind of editorial decisions appeared in coverage of the first day of Operation "Cast Lead" in Gaza. On December 28, 2008, a headline on page 3 of *Ma'ariv* declared: DIRECT HIT – PLANES ACHIEVE 98 PERCENT PRECISION. The decision to use the term "direct hit" gives the impression of a precise Israeli strike on a military target. However, a close examination of the text of another article found on the same broadsheet revealed that according to Palestinian sources about 60 percent of those killed in the attacks on the first day were civilians.

Another example of problematic word selection in headlines can be seen in repeated use of the term "gestures" in the Israeli media. This term conveys generosity and its use by the Israeli media in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict depicts the Israeli side as doing everything it can to promote rapprochement between the sides. For example, before the convening of the Annapolis conference, a main headline in the November 14, 2007, edition of *Ha'aretz* proclaimed: AHEAD OF THE ANNAPOLIS CONFERENCE: ISRAELI GESTURE TO COMPENSATE FOR REFUSAL TO DISCUSS "CORE ISSUES"; ISRAEL WILL FREEZE SETTLEMENT CONSTRUCTION. A close examination of the text reveals that the Israeli "gesture" was actually a commitment from years ago that Israel had not honored. This time, as well, the alleged "gestures" referred only to declarations not backed by any commitment to take concrete measures on the ground:

> According to political sources in Jerusalem, Israel was asked to present its preference either for a commitment to evacuate outposts or declaring a freeze on settlement construction. "Among the two, freezing settlements is easier than evacuating outposts, since it only involves a declaration and no confrontation with settlers on the ground", said a senior political source. Israel has promised the

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Ma'ariv, December 28, 2008, coverage of the first day of Operation "Cast Lead" in Gaza The editor choose to use the expression "direct hit" in the headline. This expression gives the impression of a precise Israeli strike on a military target. The text of the article tells a different story

פגיעה בול
98 אחוזי דיוק למטוסים

Headline on page 3:
DIRECT HIT – PLANES ACHIEVE 98 PERCENT PRECISION.

"On the other hand, Mu'awiya Haskhanin, director of emergency services in Gaza, announced yesterday that only 40 percent of those killed were Palestinian policemen and that the rest were uninvolved civilians".

A close examination of the text of another article found on the same broadsheet reveals that according to Palestinian sources about 60 percent of those killed in the attacks on the first day were civilians

United States many times before that it would evacuate outposts, but has not kept its promise.

This pattern has been identified in many research reports by KESHEV over the years, including "When thy Enemy Falls" (January 2005), "Quiet, We're Disengaging," (August 2005), "Israeli Gestures" (February 2005), and "Confused – This is How We Fumbled Annapolis" (August 2008).

Quite frequently, headlines leave out certain components of the story entirely and instead convey emotion. Sometimes headlines are more dramatic, more sentimental or more inflammatory than the article texts, and here too, the influence on news consumers can be far-reaching.

This pattern could be seen in Israeli media coverage of the Israeli military operation in March 2006, when a large Israeli force swept into the Palestinian security compound in Jericho to capture men that Israel claimed were involved in the murder of Rechavam Ze'evi, a government minister. During the operation, IDF forces destroyed part of the compound and arrested its inhabitants. Coverage of the event in the Israeli media was characterized by uniform justification of the Israeli conduct. The coverage conveyed a sense of pride and unity and included use of emotional phrases in headlines such as GOT THEM, ACCOUNT CLOSED and JUDGEMENT DAY.

An important part of the ability to read the news critically involves being able to identify this kind of emotional rhetoric and to understand that it, too, is the product of an editorial decision. Critical news consumption demands that we learn to neutralize the emotional contribution of the headlines.

In the main headline of the newspaper the editor chose to use the term "gesture". This term conveys a sense of generosity. A close examination of the text reveals that the Israeli "gesture" was actually a commitment from years ago that Israel had not honored. This time, as well, the alleged "gestures" referred only to declarations not backed by any commitment to take concrete measures on the ground;

לקראת ועידת אנאפוליס: מחווה ישראלית כפיצוי על הסירוב לדון ב"סוגיות הליבה"

ישראל תקפיא את הבנייה בהתנחלויות

Article Headline:
AHEAD OF THE ANNAPOLIS CONFERENCE: ISRAELI GESTURE TO COMPENSATE FOR REFUSAL TO DISCUSS "CORE ISSUES"; ISRAEL WILL FREEZE SETTLEMENT CONSTRUCTION

From the text ▶

According to political sources in Jerusalem, Israel was asked to present its preference either for a commitment to evacuate outposts or declaring a freeze on settlement construction. "Among the two, freezing settlements is easier than evacuating outposts, since it only involves a declaration and no confrontation with settlers on the ground", said a senior political source. Israel has promised the United States many times before that it would evacuate outposts, but has not kept its promise

Sometimes headlines do not say anything specific about a story. They merely project emotion. When the headlines are more dramatic, more sentimental or more inflammatory than the article texts, the influence on news consumers can be far-reaching.

in March 2006, when a large Israeli force swept into the Palestinian security compound in Jericho to capture men that Israel claimed were involved in the murder of Rechavam Ze'evi, a government minister. During the operation the Israeli army demolished parts of the compound and arrested its inhabitants. Israeli media coverage was characterized by displays of national pride and justification of the operation through use of emotional terms.

Ma'ariv, March 15, 2006, pages 2-3, headline: IDF PRESENTS: JUDGEMENT DAY

Ma'ariv, March 15, 2006, front page, main headline: GOT THEM

Ma'ariv, March 15, 2006, page 3, headline: FAST AND ELEGANT

Yediot Aharonot, March 15, 2006, front page, main headline: ACCOUNT CLOSED

Yediot Aharonot, March 15, 2006, page 3, headline: ACCOUNT CLOSED

D. Formulation of Responsibility

Media coverage does not only include description of facts, it also makes determinations about responsibility for events: Who caused something to happen as it did? Sometimes, the composition of headlines assigns responsibility by various means, for instance, by using an active or passive voice. In other cases, when responsibility is disputed (when the dispute is evident in the materials sent in by reporters), editors may devote a headline to the question of responsibility. Though materials sent in by reporters may express various points of view with respect to who is responsible, the headlines often tell an unequivocal story.

This criterion can be illustrated effectively by examining how the media on both sides, Israeli and Palestinian, covered preparations for the Annapolis conference in November 2007. In the days before the conference the media conveyed pessimism and emphasized the expected failure of the conference.

The Israeli media assigned responsibility for the expected failure to the Palestinian side by promoting to the headlines information about Palestinian actions that would allegedly stymie the conference. Thus, for example:

> POLITICAL SOURCES POINT TO EXTREMISM IN POSITIONS OF AIDES TO PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATING STAFF; INSTEAD OF COMPROMISE, THEY SPEAK OF JUSTICE (*Ha'aretz*, November 11, 2007, page 3).

> PALESTINIAN ATTEMPT TO BEND ISRAEL AHEAD OF TOMORROW'S TRILATERAL TALKS AT ANNAPOLIS CONFERENCE; PALESTINIANS FLEX THEIR MUSCLE (*Ma'ariv*, November 26, 2007, page 2).

> YESTERDAY: TERRORISM BEFORE ANNAPOLIS (*Ma'ariv*, November 20, 2007, main headline)

> SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT PREPARES FOR WAVE OF TERRORISM BEFORE ANNAPOLIS CONFERENCE; ON THE WAY TO THE CONFERENCE: A NIGHT OF TERRORISM (*Ma'ariv*, November 20, 2007, article headline, page 5).

These headlines tell a clear and unequivocal story: Once again the Palestinians are doing all they can to create obstacles to negotiations: They are assuming more extreme positions, flexing their muscles and carrying out terrorist attacks ahead of the conference.

In a similar fashion, headlines in the Palestinian media placed responsibility for the expected failure on the Israeli side. For example:

ABBAS INFORMS SAUDI KING OF HIS PESSIMISM TOWARDS THE
CHANCES OF SUCCESS IN ANNAPOLIS BECAUSE OF ISRAELI POSITIONS
(*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, November 17, 2007, front page).

FAILURE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE JOINT DOCUMENT; THE
PRESIDENT: ISRAEL WANTED TO MAXIMIZE ITS GAINS AND WE REFUSED
(*Al-Quds*, November 24, 2007, front page).

In KESHEV's research over the years, a clear pattern has been identified whereby the
Israeli media, using different means of editing, systematically highlights Palestinian
responsibility for the failure of political contacts between the parties. This is the case
despite the fact that Israeli reporters routinely gather material from diverse sources
who assign responsibility to various parties, the Palestinians, the Israelis, the American
administration, or all of them together.

Media coverage does not only include description of facts, it also makes determinations about responsibility for events. Thought materials sent in by reporters may express various points of view with respect to who is responsible, the headlines often tell an unequivocal story.

The media on both sides, Israeli and Palestinian, covered preparations for the Annapolis conference in November 2007. In the days before the conference the media conveyed pessimism and emphasized the expected failure of the conference. Media in both sides assigned responsibility for the expected failure to the other side

The Israeli media assigned responsibility for the expected failure to the Palestinian side by by promoting to the headlines information about Palestinian actions that would allegedly stymie the conference:
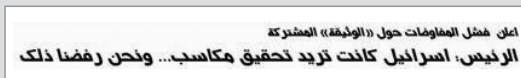

Ma'ariv, November 20, 2007, front page headline and referral to article on page 5: YESTERDAY: TERRORISM BEFORE ANNAPOLIS

Headline of article on page 5: SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT PREPARES FOR WAVE OF TERRORISM BEFORE ANNAPOLIS CONFERENCE

In a similar manner the Palestinian media assigned responsibility for the expected failure to the Israeli side:

Al-Quds, November 24, 2007, front page: FAILURE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE JOINT DOCUMENT; THE PRESIDENT: ISRAEL WANTED TO MAXIMIZE ITS GAINS AND WE REFUSED

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, November 17, 2007, front page: ABBAS INFORMS SAUDI KING OF HIS PESSIMISM TOWARDS THE CHANCES OF SUCCESS IN ANNAPOLIS BECAUSE OF ISRAELI POSITIONS

E. Epistemic Framing

Rarely, if ever, do news media outlets report facts that are accepted unequivocally by all sides. In most cases, information is presented as a claim, a forecast, an assumption, a hypothesis, and so on. Therefore, there is great importance in how editors frame the epistemic standing of the material: Is it presented as a fact, a hypothesis, a lie, disinformation, a claim, etc.? Framing is important because it helps readers and viewers determine whether they should believe certain information or regard it with suspicion.

An interesting example that illustrates this criterion involves coverage of an incident in which eight members of the Ghalia family were killed on a Gaza beach on June 9, 2006. A major part of the coverage in the Israel media concerned the question of responsibility for the incident. The Israeli army did not accept responsibility for the explosion that caused the deaths, though other parties lay the blame at the feet of the army. The Israeli media gave prominence in headlines to points of view that absolved the army of responsibility for the explosion, framing the exculpatory evidence as undisputed fact. Two illustrative headlines appear below:

> INVESTIGATION REPORT: IDF NOT TO BLAME FOR KILLING OF FAMILY ON GAZA BEACH (*Ma'ariv*, June 14, 2006, page 3 headline).

> "IDF NOT TO BLAME FOR EXPLOSION ON GAZA BEACH – AND THAT IS CERTAIN"(*Yediot Aharonot*, June 14, 2006, page 2 headline)

Sometimes, under headlines that absolved the Israeli military of responsibility or even laid the blame at the feet of the Palestinian side, information appeared in the text of articles that undercut the credibility of the "facts" presented in the headlines. The following headline, for example, appeared in *Ma'ariv*:

> MOST EVIDENCE GATHERED BY SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT SHOWS: IDF DID NOT CAUSE GAZA TRAGEDY; ASSESSMENT GROWS: HAMAS RESPONSIBLE FOR KILLING OF FAMILY (*Ma'ariv*, June 12, 2006, headline on page 4)

In the text of this article, however, it was revealed that: "In the security establishment opinion is still divided, with some convinced that in spite of everything 'most chances are that the tragedy was caused by an IDF shell'".

Another example of this pattern of coverage can be seen in an article on page 9 of the June 13, 2006 edition of *Yediot Aharonot*. The article's headline determined: THE TRAGEDY IN GAZA: FINDINGS IN THE FIELD CLEAR ISRAEL OF RESPONSIBILITY; IDF INVESTIGATION: NO EVIDENCE THAT WE HIT PALESTINIANS ON THE BEACH. Nevertheless, in the text of the article was written: "However, senior military sources yesterday remarked that the findings reached by the investigating committee can not rule out completely the possibility that an IDF shell struck the Palestinian family."

To better understand the significance of epistemic framing, it is worth examining how the Israeli media framed points of view that deviated from the position taken by the Israeli military. The following headline from the June 18, 2006 edition of *Ma'ariv* reported on such perspectives:

> GAZA BEACH DIARY; THE PALESTINIAN CLAIMS GAINED SUPPORT THIS WEEK IN LONDON; THREE BRITISH NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED ARTICLES THAT CAST DOUBT ON THE FINDINGS OF THE IDF INVESTIGATION, WHICH PROVED UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT ISRAEL IS NOT TO BLAME FOR THE DEATHS OF THE SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE GHALIA FAMILY; FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE: "FOREIGN JOURNALISTS HAVE A TENDENCY TO BELIEVE THE PALESTINIANS IN ADVANCE"

Throughout the coverage of the episode, the Israeli army's positions were framed by the headlines as certain and incontrovertible facts. The headline above emphasized that the IDF investigation "proved unequivocally that Israel is not to blame". If the editor of a newspaper bestows such credibility on the Israeli army's position, it is almost certain that the Palestinian positions mentioned in the same headline, will be framed disparagingly as "claims" that cannot be taken seriously. Again, remember that it is the editor who composed this headline and thereby determined the degree of factualness that readers ascribe to the positions of each side.

A comparison of coverage of the same event in the Israeli and Palestinian media shows how information that is an assumption or hypothesis can be framed as an undisputed fact.

On February 4, 2008, a suicide attack was carried out in a commercial center in Dimona. One woman was killed and dozens were injured. One of the assailants was killed in the explosion and another survived. Israeli security forces spotted the explosive belt on the body of the wounded assailant and when he moved his hand they fatally shot him. The Israeli media and the Palestinian media depicted very different versions of the event. According to the Israeli media, the assailant moved his hand in order to detonate the explosive belt, and was therefore shot. According to the Palestinian media, the assailant moved his hand to ask for help, and was shot for no reason. On each side, one version was presented as a definitive incontrovertible fact.

This is how the event was presented in an item broadcast on Israeli Channel 10:

> Correspondent: These are the first moments after the explosion. The man lying here is the second terrorist who has not yet blown up. On his body, under his clothes, is a powerful live bomb, but everyone is convinced that he is one of the injured in the attack. The terrorist shows signs of life and people ask the paramedic to treat him. The paramedics, and even the police, have no idea that they are an arm's length away from another terrorist. The people tending to him are essentially treating a live bomb. Now it turns out that across the street there are dozens of people – all in mortal danger – if the wounded terrorist succeeds in

pressing the switch. The people do not agree to move back, and then, while the paramedics are treating the wounded terrorist, they discover the explosive belt on his body. Within seconds, everyone moves away from the terrorist, but they aren't out of danger. Even from a distance, the security forces can tell that the terrorist is reaching for the switch and trying to detonate his bomb. For several minutes the terrorist moves his hands and tries to detonate the bomb, but the police are not able to keep people at a distance and they are not even trying to neutralize the terrorist. Until police officer Kobi Mor arrives on the scene. He and the police sapper shoot at the terrorist and pray that they won't hit the bomb.

The sapper and the police officer wait a few more minutes, hoping that the terrorist has lost consciousness so they won't have to risk firing at him again. But then, even though he was wounded in the explosion and has been shot at least twice, the terrorist uses his left hand to try again to press the switch that will detonate the bomb […]

In this attack in the heart of Dimona 47 people were injured, one critically and the rest lightly. But these figures could have been much worse were it not for five gunshots that were sounded at the last moment, and with them one great sigh of relief.

This is what Kobi Mor, the police officer who shot the assailant, told Israel's Channel 1 news edition:

Kobi Mor: He lowered his hand, but his hand shook all the time – I was sure he was convulsing or something. Two minutes later he lifted his hand again, right to the [explosive] belt, and the motion was clearly to detonate, movement right in the direction of the belt, to the top part of the belt. I knelt down and shot five bullets into his head.

Reporter: You became a hero today; you saved a lot of people.

Kobi Mor: I don't think about it in those terms, we just do our job.

The Palestinian media depicted the event very differently. A headline in *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* read: ISRAELI TELEVISION BROADCAST FOOTAGE OF ISRAELI GUARD IN DIMONA EXECUTING A WOUNDED PERSON CRYING FOR HELP. The entire report was credited to the Ma'an news agency and was published without modifying the headline. This headline presented the killing of the assailant as an execution, referring to the man who was shot as one of the wounded crying for help, without mentioning that he was one of the assailants in the attack.

The headline in the Palestinian newspaper told a clear story – one that contrasts sharply with the story told in the Israeli media. Though the headline was phrased as an incontrovertible fact, an examination of the text of the article—which provided the basis for this headline—uncovers many ambiguities that raise questions about the facts

presented in the headline. Among other information, the article referred to the Israeli version of the event:

> Israeli Channel 2 broadcast footage of an Israeli dressed in civilian clothes shooting his pistol at a wounded person crying for help for fifteen minutes and raising his hands requesting help from paramedics. Channel 10, however, claimed that "the Palestinian continued trying to detonate his explosive belt, which necessitated his killing".

The headline told of a "wounded man crying for help" and the text beneath stated that he had raised his hand. Here is where a first question arises: Did the main cry out for help or was he trying to detonate his explosive belt when he was shot? The identity of the shooter is also unclear from the report. While the headline told of an "Israeli guard", the text of the article presented various bits of information that did not provide a clear answer. At first, it was stated that the shooter wore civilian clothes (meaning he was not a security guard whose job was to protect his workplace). Later in the article, it was stated that an Israeli guard named Kobi shot the wounded man and left him bleeding. After that, it was stated that an Israeli policeman kept passersby at a distance, and at the end of the article it is mentioned that other policemen shot the wounded man. So who fired the fatal shots? Was it an Israeli civilian? An Israeli guard named Kobi? Or were the shooters other policemen?

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida chose not to investigate the contradictions and ambiguities in the Ma'an report – and published it verbatim. Despite the lack of clarity in the report the newspaper nevertheless presented its headline as a clear fact: An Israeli guard had executed a wounded Palestinian who cried for help.

The comparison above shows that even in cases where the facts are in dispute, editors often compose headlines that leave no doubt, which present a certain version of events as undisputed fact. In such case, news consumers do not receive information about the dispute.

Rarely, if ever, do news media outlets report facts that are accepted unequivocally by all sides Therefore, there is great importance in how editors frame the epistemic standing of the material.

ght members of the Ghalia family were killed on a Gaza beach on June 9, 2006. A major part of the coverage in the Israel media concerned the question of responsibility for the incident. The Israeli army did not accept responsibility for the explosion that caused the deaths, though other parties lay the blame at the feet of the army. The Israeli media gave prominence in headlines to points of view that absolved the army of responsibility for the explosion, framing the exculpatory evidence as undisputed fact. (see opposite)

Ma'ariv, June 14, 2006, page 3 headline: INVESTIGATION REPORT: IDF NOT TO BLAME FOR KILLING OF FAMILY ON GAZA BEACH.

Yediot Aharonot, June 14, 2006, page 2 headline: "IDF NOT TO BLAME FOR EXPLOSION ON GAZA BEACH – AND THAT IS FOR CERTAIN"

Sometimes, under headlines that absolved the IDF of responsibility or even laid the blame at the feet of the Palestinian side, information appeared in the text of articles that undercut the credibility of the "facts" presented in the headlines.

Ma'ariv, June 12, 2006, headline on page 4: MOST EVIDENCE GATHERED BY SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT SHOWS: IDF DID NOT CAUSE GAZA TRAGEDY; ASSESSMENT GROWS: HAMAS RESPONSIBLE FOR KILLING OF FAMILY

From the text of the article:

"In the security establishment opinion is still divided, with some convinced that in spite of everything 'most chances are that the tragedy was caused by an IDF shell'"

Ma'ariv, June 18, 2006, page 3, article headline: GAZA BEACH DIARY; THE PALESTINIAN CLAIMS GAINED SUPPORT THIS WEEK IN LONDON; THREE BRITISH NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED ARTICLES THAT CAST DOUBT ON THE FINDINGS OF THE IDF INVESTIGATION, WHICH PROVED UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT ISRAEL IS NOT TO BLAME FOR THE DEATHS OF THE SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE GHALIA FAMILY; FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE: "FOREIGN JOURNALISTS HAVE A TENDENCY TO BELIEVE THE PALESTINIANS IN ADVANCE"

If the editor of a newspaper bestows such credibility on the Israeli army's position – IDF INVESTIGATION, WHICH PROVED UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT ISRAEL IS NOT TO BLAME – it is almost certain that the Palestinian positions mentioned in the same headline, will be framed disparagingly as "claims".

F. Visual Semiotics

Editing does not only deal with verbal components. Editing also involves choosing pictures, colors and graphic design, factors that have a decisive influence on readers and which need to be better understood.

An example that illustrates the importance of visual components in framing the message conveyed by the news can be seen in coverage of the first two days of the Israeli military operation in Gaza (Operation "Cast Lead"), at the end of December 2008. In these days hundreds of Palestinians were killed, among them many civilians, as a result of bombing by the Israeli air force.

In coverage by the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonot,* on December 28, 2008, the editor chose to attach photographs to the news article that showed the results of the bombing in ways that obscured the killings and the degree of harm inflicted on civilians. A large picture across the broadsheet on pages 10-11 showed the destruction after the bombing. The picture, a wide shot from a distance, did not show the harm to Palestinian civilians. The headline, HAMAS FELL ASLEEP – AND TOOK A HIT, in giant letters over the photo, glorified the power of the Israelis. The overall page design conveyed a message of pride in a successful and just action.

In the Palestinian media, editors chose to attach to the articles photographs of a different kind, which focused on another aspect of the same event. The photos showed the scale of damage that the Israeli attacks had sown in the Palestinian civilian population. For example, on page eight of the Palestinian newspaper *Al-Quds* there appeared a photo of the same scene that was depicted in *Yediot Aharonot*, but the focus of the photo and the accompanying headline was the large number of civilians that were killed.

On the next day as well, December 29, 2008, the photos chosen by the editor at *Yediot Aharonot* ignored the harm caused to Palestinian civilians. The photos, taken from a distance, did not show people killed or injured. Placing such sterile photos beside headlines like THE TUNNELS WERE DESTROYED or GAZA CRATER conveyed a sense of pride in a successful and just action. By contrast, the front page of *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* on the same day described a completely different reality. The pictures that the editor chose to publish on the front page again focused on the harm to Palestinian civilians.

This comparison demonstrates that visual components have a real influence on how readers perceive the reality that is described. Here too, the crucial decision belongs to the editor who chooses to give prominence to certain aspects of reality over others.

December 28, 2008, coverage of the first day of the fighting in Gaza. Israeli and Palestinian newspaper editors chose visual components that focused on different aspects of the same reality.

Yediot Aharonot, pages 10-11, the headline HAMAS FELL ASLEEP – AND TOOK A HIT accompanied a large picture that showed the results of the bombing by the Israeli air force. The picture, a wide shot from a distance, did not show the harm to Palestinian civilians.

Al-Quds, page 8, the headline, HARSH PICTURES FROM THE MASSACRE IN THE GAZA STRIP accompanied photos showing the scale of the harm to Palestinian civilians caused by the Israeli air force bombing.

December 29, 2008. Once again, the visual components chosen by Palestinian and Israeli newspaper editors described different aspects of the same reality.

The editor of the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* chose photos taken from a distance that did not show any persons killed or injured. Placing such sterile photos beside headlines like THE TUNNELS WERE DESTROYED or GAZA CRATER conveyed a sense of pride in a successful and just action.

The editor of the Palestinian newspaper *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* chose to publish photos on the front page that focused on harm to Palestinian civilians. The headline said: THE MASSACRE CONTINUES: MORE THAN 300 MARTYRS AND 1000 WOUNDED

Conclusion

These are the main criteria that should be considered in order to read the news critically. Critical news consumption focuses on discrepancies between the work of reporters and the work of editors. Getting to know these criteria is a first step toward becoming a more critical consumer of news media.

Critical reading involves more than just identifying individual instances where editorial work does not reflect the material sent in by the reporters. Ultimately, this is the fundamental question that critical readers should ask: *Are the biases that exist in the editing systematic and are they carried out according to a general pattern?*

For example, when reporters send in material that indicates differences of opinion on a question of responsibility (Criterion D), do the headlines nonetheless systematically confer responsibility to one side? When reporters send in material that indicates differences of opinion about the facts (Criterion E), do the headlines systematically give preference to one version of events and present it as fact, at the expense of other versions that are depicted as falsehoods?

Meticulous examinations of patterns of editing in Israeli and Palestinian media outlets, which have been carried out in research by KESHEV and MIFTAH, and by Daniel Dor, reveal that such systematic patterns indeed exist. They play a key role in influencing Palestinian and Israeli public opinion regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Getting to know the criteria that underlie these patterns can help readers uncover such patterns and neutralize their influence.

About KESHEV

KESHEV – The Center for Protection of Democracy in Israel was established by a group of concerned citizens following the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in order to defend and promote democratic values in Israel. Since the beginning of 2005 Keshev has been carrying out a long-term media monitoring project in partnership with the Palestinian organization MIFTAH. The project aims to change patterns of discourse and media coverage in Israel and in the Palestinian Authority.

KESHEV is not affiliated with any political party and its activities are supported by contributions alone.

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About MIFTAH

MIFTAH – The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, seeks to promote the principles of democracy and good governance within various components of Palestinian society; it further seeks to engage local and international public opinion and official circles on the Palestinian cause. To that end, MIFTAH adopts the mechanisms of an active and in depth dialogue, the free flow of information and ideas, as well as local and international networking.

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