STUDY OF THE DIFFERENCE IN COVERAGE OF THE ISRAELI
OPERATION IN GAZA (DECEMBER, 2008 TO JANUARY, 2009) IN THE NEW
YORK TIMES AND BBC

By

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Analysis of the text in the NYT and BBC coverage of the Israeli operation in Gaza
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Abstract

Coverage of the Middle East by western media is often an issue of argument. The most controversial is how this media cover the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While media defend itself by claiming the balanced, objective coverage, and being equally distanced from both sides, it is criticized by both the pro Palestinian and pro Israeli audiences for being sympathetic with one side or the other, like the idea of being a part of a western unfairness to the Middle Eastern conflict (Said, 1997, Fish, 2004)

This study is a textual analysis of New York Times and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) coverage of war Israel initiated in Gaza between December 27th, 2008 and January 17th, 2009. These two western media can be seen as different organizations in their structure, relation with the governments, and editorial policies. Stories published in their electronic version www.bbc.co.uk and www.nytimes.com were analyzed by applying Merrill's (1968) model to the sources used in this coverage, and information quoted from these sources. Analysis included five categories: sources, specificity in naming these sources, and specificity in reporting casualties when reported by such sources.

The analysis found differences in the use of sources between these two western media in covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but maintaining that both NYT and BBC tend to use Israeli more than Palestinian sources, with NYT heavily relying on more Israeli sources, and BBC using closer to an equal number of sources from both sides.

Results of in inequality of number of sources used by media can also relate to the differences in which the Israel and the Palestinians have dealt with the media, and the availability of personnel and information on both sides, which can make an excuse for media to use sources of one side more than the other.

Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by Western media is often understood as a reflection of the overall Western misunderstanding or ignorance of the East, rather than as simply a random journalistic bias. Said (1997) explains why the Western nations in Europe and the United States like to define Islamic states by referring to religion, rather than by explaining the features of each individual country. He also adds that the Muslim countries are best known for their control of the Western oil supply.

However, this understanding of the complicated relations between the West and the East is debatable, but Westerners are surely enjoying the privilege of creating a tool of what Vanderbush & Klak (1996) called "cultural hegemony" over non-Western world, with the help of media. This Western consciousness is reflected in how—and why—Western countries understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel is shown in the Western media as a part of Western civilization living in the Islamic wilderness; rarely mentioned is the Jewish identity of Israel, while the association between Islam and autocracy is constantly referred to (Fish, 2004). This portrayal ensures that Western audiences see the security of this "only democracy" as essential (Said, 1997).

The International News in the Western Media

It is significant that the four main media agencies—AP, AFP, UPI and Reuters—are based in three Western countries (the United States, France, and Britain). The main concern of the (Third World) is that the flow of information from the West to the East—even information about the East itself—coupled with the low quantity and quality of

information coming from the East to the West contributes to misunderstanding and even stereotyping of the East (Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendliner, 1978).

This dominance over the flow of information by the West, with the help of media, is a tool of cultural hegemony over non-Western world (Vanderbush & Klak, 1996). As a result, it is the Western worldview that Easterners learn when inquiring about another non-Western nation and its identity via Western media. For example, Turan, Colakglu, and Colkoglu (2009) found Western-originated news reflected a more negative image of Turkey in South Korea, despite the more positive attitude toward Turkey in Korean-originated news.

Studies of the difference in coverage

News bias, according to Hackett (1984), emerges in two ways: favoring one viewpoint over another and the distortion of reality. Objectivity and bias, as opposites, are largely held to characterize the journalist's personal attitudes and the methods with which he/she produces and selects news. However, studying bias can be a time-consuming process if a researcher is to observe journalistic behavior in the newsroom, if it is even accessible in the first place. The same can be said about interviews and surveys in reporting the reality of journalistic attitudes (Hackett, 1984). Robinson (1983) (as cited in Hackett, 1984) puts it thus: "Bias that counts must be in the copy, not just in the minds of those who write it." This leads to the conclusion that if bias is in the copy, it does not matter what is in mind of the journalist, meaning that intentions are irrelevant when bias is committed. Consequently, adds Robinson, most of news bias research has focused on news content, rather than the procedures and journalists' attitudes.

Western media misinforms the public on international news; consequently, the Western audiences do not form public opinion based on realities. Such misinformation has led the public to adopt unfair views sometimes. For example, in a survey—part of a large study in the United Kingdom conducted by the Glasgow Media Group—people were found to have the wrong idea about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, they wrongly believed that Palestinians are settlers who occupy Israel's land. The same study analyzed the content of BBC World News on coverage of that conflict, finding that the audiences were getting bombarded with the Israeli official narratives. In covering the second Intifada "uprising," the Israelis spoke on the BBC screen twice as much. Palestinians were portrayed as "terrorists," while Israel's violence was presented as responding to the Palestinians' actions (Philo & Berry, 2004).

Agenda setting Theory

The importance of agenda setting theory is not limited to its effect on audiences, and how to measure and prove this effect, but also extends our knowledge of the ways media change public opinion. Agenda setting theory suggests that the coverage media provide on certain issues will be the top priority for audiences. According to this theory, people will think about, discuss, and consider these issues as important ones (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Sources of Media Agenda

Agenda setting theory suggests that people's agenda is set by media, McCombs & Shaw (1972). One might ask if media sets public's agenda, then, who sets the media's agenda. The "elite leadership effect" mentioned by McCombs (2005) assumes that

journalists usually observe the work of elite media, such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the national TV networks, and try not to be far away from their theme. He also mentions the effect of the "blogs" that journalists are usually familiar with. Assuming that journalists regularly explore these blogs on the web, he expected them to affect journalists' agendas. But the question, in return, is whether the blogs themselves can be affected by media.

A similarity was found between blogs and media agendas. Cornfield (2005) found a significant information flow from blogs to media and from media to blogs, keeping open the question of who sets the other's agenda.

The landmark study of McCombs & Shaw (1972) provided a correlation between nine news media that dominated the voters' news source for making decisions about presidential candidates. However, comparing the traditional to the internet media, McCombs (2005) suggested that internet media diversifies public opinion; the highly diverse internet content pulls the audience to multiple directions (Salween, et al, 2005), which suggests that while blogs set people's agenda, it widen this agenda, and not direct it in a particular direction.

Second level agenda setting

After decades of work and hundreds of studies, scholars are exploring beyond the original agenda setting hypothesis toward what is described as a second level of the theory. At this level, agenda setting, scholars propose, goes beyond the agenda of issues to an agenda of attributes (Lopez-Escobar et al., 1998). While the original agenda setting theory as we know it is the transfer of salience from one agenda to another, the second

level of it is the transfer of an agenda of attributes from media to audiences (Kiousis &

McCombs, 2004). In other words, the theory suggests that media will have an impact on

people in the way they think about issues. For example, they will think about presidential

candidate within certain attributes set by media. This can be seen in the significant

correlation identified between candidate attributes as president in newspaper

advertisements and public perceptions of candidates' attributes (McCombs et al., 1997).

A later study by Golan & Wanta (2001) examining the second level agenda

setting conducted during the New Hampshire presidential primaries found media agenda

of candidates issues and attributes as presented in media significantly associated with

public's evaluation both candidates.

Britain and the Conflict in the Middle East

The relationship between Israel and Britain started even before Israel was

established as a state. In fact, Britain was the main player in making the dream of the

Jewish Zionist movement come true. The "Balfour Declaration," dated November 2nd,

1917, committed Great Britain to serving that Jewish goal, and led to the Palestine

Mandate in 1922. Israel and Britain maintained a friendly relationship throughout the

1950s and the 1967 war. During that part of the twentieth century, Britain's diplomatic

and military support of Israel continued, since the relationship between the two nations

was based on British commitment to Israel's survival (Gat, 2004).

However, Britain's relationship with Israel cooled down during the 1960s, during

the rise of Arab nationalism, as a part of its policy to support and protect its allies in the

monarchies of Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq. Strong relations with Israel meant the leaders in

these countries had to face the consequences of being allies to Britain, the country that facilitated the establishing of the Jewish state in the Arab world, and that was the last thing Britain wanted to happen to its allies (Rynhold & Spyer, 2007)

The United Kingdom, a first class power in the Middle East, had started to lose control in the area with its military withdrawal from Palestine in 1948. This decline became official with its withdrawal from Suez Canal in 1971 (Rynhold & Spyer, 2007). While the United kingdom had neither lost nor been forced to surrender its Middle East possessions, the British knew in the aftermath of the Suez crisis, that it was only a matter of time before they would be forced to quit the region. This being the case, the U.K sought to effect a gradual, carefully calculated withdrawal, which would, it hoped, preserve its own as well as its Western allies' regional interests (Gat, 2004).

From a close, friendly relationship distinguished by mutual regard and sympathy, British–Israeli relations had, within a short time, degenerated into an association blighted by mutual suspicion, resentment and hostility (Gat, 2004). The change began in the aftermath of the 1967 war between Israel and its Arabic neighbors (Gat, 2004). Britain's ability to make changes in the Middle East started to decline, as mentioned before, after the withdrawal from Suez Canal in 1971, but its interests in the Middle East remained the same. A new British diplomacy in the Arab world focused on maintaining best possible relations with those in power, and with the forces likely to take power. Britain had an immediate economic relationship with the Arab world in commerce and the flow of the Arabic crude. As such, the British government adopted a pragmatic policy of avoiding confrontations with whatever power seemed to be on the rise in the Middle East (Rynhold

& Spyer, 2007). The main concern of the United Kingdom, then, was its own economic interests. The British realized that if the West was to receive an adequate supply of Arab Persian Gulf oil, it was not just the region's oil-producing countries that required a stable environment, but transit countries, such as Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, as well (Gat, 2004).

The British showed some understanding of the Arab narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, at least enough to maintain good relations with its Arabic commercial partners. The focus of their policy in the Middle East is maintaining balance among the interests of the various Arabic countries in the region. Israel is only one small country in the region allows Britain to be critical of this country's policies, even while being cautious of the consequences of adopting a serious pro-Arab position (Rynhold & Spyer, 2007).

Britain and the War on Gaza

Britain's diplomacy is interested in the efforts to make peace between Israel and its neighbors, but there was always a lack of British leadership in the peace efforts, due to lack of a clear view on how to do it. The British government's view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict tends to be less supportive of Israeli actions than the United States'. (Litfin, 2000).

In a response to the war in Gaza in December, 2008, British foreign secretary David Miliband told Parliament in April, 2009, that there were "credible reports" that vessels had fired on Gaza with 76mm guns that contain parts exported from Britain (Schneider, 2009). In July, 2009, and after an investigation on the use of British imported

weapons on Gaza, Britain withdrew five arms export licenses to Israel, after reviewing how British-provided equipment was used during Israel's three-week war against the Palestinians in Gaza Strip. Moreover, the British embassy in Tel Aviv said in a statement that the situation in the Middle East would improve by imposing an arms embargo on Israel. And while it recognized Israel's right to defend itself, this operation (Operation Cast Lead) is disproportionate (Schneider, 2009).

On the other hand, Britain shut down a legal mechanism that pro-Palestinian activists have used to issue arrest warrants for Israeli military and political officials planning to visit the country. During a visit to Israel, Britain's attorney general, Baroness Scotland, said that Israel's leaders should always be able to travel freely to the UK (Quinn, 2010).

The former head of Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip, Gen. Doron Almog, flew back to Israel in September, 2005 after he received warning that a warrant had been issued for his arrest just before disembarking from an aircraft at Heathrow Airport (Quinn, 2010).

The BBC

Radio service in Britain started as a commercially owned media in November 1922. It was run by John Reith (later Lord Reith). In response to the 1923 Sykes Committee and the 1925 Crawford Committee parliamentary special reports on broadcasting, which examined radio and TV service and made recommendations for their future, the British Broadcasting Company became the publicly-owned British Broadcasting Corporation in 1927 (Way, 2008).

The British Broadcasting Corporation provides both public services, such as BBC1, BBC online and BBC radio2, and commercial services, including magazines, videos and DVDs, advertising-funded websites, and commercial television channels, at the discretion of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Cavea, Collins, & Crowther, 2004). The BBC is regulated under the Royal Charter and a separate agreement with the DCMS. The compliance of the BBC with both the charter and the agreement is monitored by a board of governors who are appointed by the government to serve for fixed terms. Under this agreement, the BBC will not use its license fund or aid grants to subsidize any losses accrued by its activities. This regulation balanced the BBC commercial activities with fair pricing and made it a commercial success, with 7.8 billion pounds sterling (about 11.31 billion U.S dollars) revenue in 2001 (Cavea, Collins, & Crowther, 2004).

The British political and economic interests in the Middle East seem to have driven the BBC's service in the area. The BBC's Arabic language service started on January 3rd, 1938, as the first BBC foreign language transmission, followed by Persian language transmission in December, 1940. Not too long after that, the Arabic, Persian and Turkish language services were brought together in one department within the BBC external services (Vaughan, 2008). After WWII, the BBC enjoyed the supremacy of Arabic and Persian language broadcast in the Middle East. For the British Government, the BBC was a crucial part of its own propaganda machine. This propaganda was mainly led by the British Arabists (as BBC like to call them), who headed the department of the

Arabic language service and who all had long histories in the Middle East. They knew the culture, history and traditions of the area (Vaughan, 2008).

There were some ups and downs in the BBC's relationship with the British government; there were the questions of to what extent those controlling the BBC's Middle Eastern broadcasts were able to successfully meet the demands of foreign office and army propagandists? In fact, Vaughan (2008) considerers the answer to this question as a scale of independence and objectivity, and the historical evidence shows the BBC to score relatively high in both.

For example, the British government has considered the BBC as a "less than reliable supporter of government policy" after the Anglo-American takeover stripped Mohamed Mossadeq from power in Iran in August, 1953. But significant variance of interests between the British government and BBC was also the case during the Anglo-Egyptian dispute over the Suez Canal. Gordon Waterfield, the head of the Middle Eastern services set out the BBC's strategy on the Suez crisis that separated the organization's interests from what he described short-term propagandists within the army and diplomats. He insisted that BBC should continue to be the trusted media for Arabs, rather than "a mouthpiece of the government" (Vaughan, 2008).

The BBC claims its principles to be the honest reporting of the world as it finds it. The World Service has especially added immeasurably to this practice, because of the compelling need to relate to other worlds in their own terms. The World Service adopted a dedication to reporting things as they are, not as political, commercial, ideological interests would prefer them to be (Seaton, 2008).

Balance in the BBC code of ethics means that for each point of view, another point of view needs to be heard. For example, the BBC survived the political machine by balancing the Labor party with the conservative, counting the number of times they mention them, and the times given to each, and in time, applied the principle to all of its outputs. With this policy, BBC considers itself immunized against the accusation of bias (Seaton, 2008). But it had to fight for its independence from the government that was always enforcing its own agenda (Whittle, 2004).

The BBC World Service has emerged in the United States in the past few years as an alternative that is distanced from the U.S mainstream media. With its reputation for honesty and integrity, and independence from US political forces, the BBC is capable of influencing American public opinion (Douglas & Wall, 2009).

The BBC and the Middle East

In covering the conflict in the Middle East, the BBC is subject to intense criticism for its coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both sides constantly accuse it of being more favorable to the other. Paul Adams, a former BBC Middle East correspondent, has noted, "For every Jew who thinks the BBC is violently anti- Semitic, there is an Arab who fervently believes that we are pro-Israel." However, most of the accusations of bias against the BBC come from pro-Israel lobbyists (BBC, 2000).

Gaber, Seymour, and Thomas (2009) compared the coverage of the Israeli-Hezbollah war in 2006 from both the BBC and ITV and found both the BBC and ITV leaning towards the Israeli side in terms of giving the Israeli side more airtime to speak,

compared with Lebanon/Hezbollah. Coverage of casualties also favored Israel, even though Israeli casualties were ten percent of the Lebanese.

The United States and the Middle East Conflict

The rise of American power after WWII and the continuing decline of the United Kingdom announced the end of British hegemony in the near and Middle East politics, leaving the role open to the United States, which continued the Western tradition of support and protection of Israel (Hughes, 2008), in what Edward Said (1997) called it "a first line of defense against Islamic threat."

The relationship between the U.S and Israel goes back to the early days of Israel in 1948. Since then, both countries shared strategic goals in the Middle East. Israel is the biggest recipient of U.S foreign assistance since the Second World War, receiving nearly $3 billion in grants every year. Even though most of this amount is given to Israel in the form of military assistance (Sharp, 2009), each citizen in Israel gets —indirectly—an average of $500 a year of American aid (Mearshmeir & Walt, 2006).

For decades, American policy in the Middle East was about its relationship with Israel. And the combination of both U.S support for Israel and its policy of spreading democracy contributed to outrage in the Arab world and caused trouble for American security, revealing how American policy works against the country itself. Mearshmeir and Walt (2006) argue that these policies are the product of American domestic politics, especially the pro-Israel lobby that shaped America's policy in the Middle East.

U.S diplomatic support of Israel is one of the unique cases in international relations. The United States has used its power in the United Nations Security Council to

protect Israel from being condemned, deplored, denounced, demanded, called on, or even urged to obey the international law thirty-three times between 1982 and 2009 (Mearshmeir & Walt, 2006), not only delivering Israel from international sanctions, but also stopping the international attempt to enforce a peace agreement between Israel and its neighbors (Neff, 2005).

The congressional report prepared by Sharp (2009) refers to a strong lobbying in Congress to maintain a unique benefits package for Israel, including the ability to research and develop weapons on U.S soil and limited conditions on the use of arms (Sharp, 2009). Israel is also given access to intelligence that is denied to NATO allies (Mearshmeir & Walt, 2006). Due to this American aid, the Israeli army has been transformed into one of the most technologically sophisticated armies in the world, maintaining an Israeli edge over the neighboring military powers (Sharp, 2009).

According to the U.S Government Accountability Office report, the Palestinians have received $420 million in American aid through the U.S Agency for International Development (USAID). In January, 2006, the Palestinians elected a majority of Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) to Parliament. Hamas does not recognize the state of Israel, and leads an armed struggle against it. Currently, Hamas is on the U.S Department of State's list of terrorist organizations. Shortly after Hamas won the elections, USAID demanded that Palestinians return $50 million given to them in 2005, as Congress decided to stop funding the Palestinian National Authority once Hamas formed a government that did not respond to demands to recognize the state of Israel and agree to abandon violence (Gootnick, 2007).

U.S. media and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

Coverage of the conflict in the Middle East by American media is high, given that American media is known for its focus on national events and that it has seen sharp cuts in its overseas operations. This coverage is probably due to high level of interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict among Americans, which has made it the most covered topic in the international news (Garofoli, 2009).

Running a reality check in press coverage, Ackerman (2001) found that significant aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were misrepresented in the American media. He checked the facts in response to the most visible criticism of the pro-Israel activists to the American media, which is that it runs stories propagandizing for the Palestinians. Ackerman denied that criticism, and pointed out that it was hard to run such stories in an environment where the pro-Israeli lobby exerts pressure on the media not to criticize Israel.

In general, American media tend to favor Israel and adopt its narrative. Such intended bias toward the Israeli side led, surprisingly, to the blaming of Palestinian refugees for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, during which thousands of Palestinians were slaughtered in their refugee camps (Paraschos & Rutherford, 1985). A large number of studies showed that Palestinians are negatively portrayed and misreported in the American media. Their views, rights, and demands seemed to be left out of the discussion whenever the peace efforts or conflict development were being reported. The fact that Palestinians are engaged in a legitimate struggle against

occupation is systematically underreported and their rights are largely ignored in the American media (Paraschos & Rutherford, 1985).

In particular, when covering the peace process, American media introduce Israel as the party that seeks concessions for making agreements, versus the portrayal of Palestinians' tendency toward violence and the rejection of peace. For example, American media delivered a misleading impression of the reasons why Camp David negotiations in July, 2000, had failed, blaming the Palestinian leader then, Yasser Arafat, for that failure, and embracing the Israeli leader, Ehud Barak, for his generous offer, an impression that is not accurate (Piner, 2007). As Keramati (2008) found, the offer was unfair to Palestinians who had already agreed to an agreement that would strip them most of their land left after Israel's occupation of the West Bank in 1967.

American media bias toward Israel contributes significantly to the current overwhelming public view in the United States that Palestinians are responsible for the continuing violence and the stalled peace process. As a result, most Americans believe there is no reason for making a significant change in the longstanding American policy of unconditional support to Israel. This widespread American consensus is largely due to an uninformed public (Slater, 2000) and the fact that media tend to copy the politicians' agendas (Bagdikian, 1973).

The New York Times

The New York Times resides at the top of American print media today, given its large circulation and the characteristics of its audience. The *NYT* has considerable influence on public opinion in the U.S through its editorials, opinionated commentaries,

and news coverage. It is considered the most prestigious newspaper in the United States (Benoit, Stein, & Hansen, 2005).

In 1970, *NYT* has established an editorial section, which was enriched with the writings of a number of policy makers, experts and journalists, in order to give diversity and build up a debate on national and international issues. This editorial section was widely ignored, or under studied by researchers, despite the large literature on the *NYT* itself. Even the fewer than a dozen studies on the editorial focused on writers themselves, rather than the content of their writings. (Golan & Wanta, 2004).

Even though *NYT* does not directly adopt a democrat of republican views, it portrayed republican presidents more assertively than democrats in their first sixty days at the office. Comparing six American presidents' coverage of their "media honeymoon" period, Hughes (1995) found the *NYT* generally softer on republicans than democrats, and extraordinarily harsh on President Clinton.

When it comes to siding the government, The NYT's journalistic behavior lead it to unexpected misleading during the coverage of the pre-Iraq war. The series of stories on Iraqi alleged WMD's by Judith Miller were mainly taken from a series interviews with Ahmad Chalabi, head of a U.S financed Iraqi group with close ties to Pentagon. These stories were "the main source of information that shaped official intelligence in ways that supported the case for the war" (Boyd-Barrett, 2004)

Interestingly, the *NYT* sets the agenda for other media. It decides the importance of news and how it is likely to be understood through the placement of news on the pages; what is omitted or de-emphasized by *NYT* indicates its importance (Slater, 2007).

This is what McCombs (2005) called the "elite leadership effect" on media agendas. He assumes that journalists usually observe the work of elite media, such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the national TV networks, and try not to stray far from their themes.

The audience of the *NYT* is especially influential in three ways: first, readers of The New York Times tend to vote in presidential elections more often than who are not *Times* readers (Benoit, et.al, 2005). Second, the *NYT* makes its way to the desks of well-connected people, like congressmen and executives (Slater, 2007), which doubles the potential effects of what shows up on its pages. Third, the *NYT* has a large Jewish and especially pro-Israel audience in New York, many of whom are known for being well connected and well organized (Goldberg, 2009).

The New York Times and the Middle East

The New York Times coverage and opinionated columns on the Middle East often imply that there is a little connection between the violence of the Palestinian Intifada (uprising) and the Israeli occupation (Miller, 2004) by presenting Palestinian violence as unjustified. At the same time, it is hardly critical of Israel's policies. Slater (2007) found the *NYT* less critical of Israel's policies than Israeli newspapers.

Miller's study on the content of *NYT* coverage of the Middle East concluded that the *NYT* delivers to its readers the impression that Palestinian violence against Israel is pointless, and has been provoking more violence against them. For example, the *NYT* did not show the Palestinian attacks against Israeli soldiers to be part of their struggle against occupation, or the Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians as a way to maintain that

occupation. Instead, the *NYT* focused on only part of the truth (Palestinians are violent); in order to create the whole image of the conflict, and in doing so imposed its own interpretation of the conflict rather than presenting an unbiased account.

The Gaza Crisis

According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) World Fact Book, the Islamic Resistance Movement (also known as Hamas) seized power in the Gaza Strip in June, 2007, and since then, law and order functions have been performed by Hamas security organizations (CIA, 2009).

In the summer of 2005, Israel unilaterally disengaged from the Gaza Strip, evacuating settlers and military, while retaining control over most points of entry into the Gaza Strip. The election of Hamas to head the Palestinian Legislative Council froze relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (CIA, 2009). Israel then put the Gaza Strip under strict closure, reducing the entry of goods, food, medicine, and personnel, as a way to punish Hamas, who's armed wing started launching the locally made "Qassam" 12 km range missiles. These missiles reached the southern Israeli towns nearby Gaza (BBC, January 21, 2008).

A fragile six-month truce was announced between Hamas and Israel in June, 2008, but it was interrupted by the exchange of fire and missiles. Israel shelled the tunnels that Palestinians dug under the Gaza-Egypt border. While Israel claimed it was used to smuggle weapons, Palestinians insisted they used it as an alternative to the Gaza entries closed by Israel and Egypt (BBC, June, 27, 2008). By the end of the six-month truce, neither side showed a desire to renew it (*Time*, December 15th, 2008).

The War (Operation Cast Lead)

In December 25, 2008, Israel launched what was considered the largest military offense against the Palestinians since it occupied the West Bank and Gaza areas in 1967. The Israeli Air Force started the attack against the Gaza Strip, the most densely populated area in the world. For the first week, Israel relied on aircraft, but then started a ground invasion of the Strip governed by Hamas. The campaign lasted for twenty-five days, leaving huge devastation in large areas of the Gaza Strip. About 1,400 Palestinians were killed during the Israeli attack, including a large number of women and children. The mortar attack Israel carried out on a United Nations school left thirty Palestinians dead (El-Khodary & Kershner, 2009).

Pictures coming from Gaza were received with outrage in many parts of the world, even in the U.S. But the United States' official view of the conflict was unlimited support for Israel. This is the policy that has been continued by President Barack Obama, first articulated during his campaign, and later carried out in the White House at his first meeting with the Israeli prime minister.

On the fourteenth day of the war on Gaza, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a resolution that "recognizes the Israeli right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza" as noted in (CNN, 1/09/2009). After the end of the war, President Obama called on the Saudi king to help stop the smuggling of weapons into Gaza. In both cases, the White House and House of Representatives officially supported Israel and its demands for security without discussing the disputes of the conflict.

During April, 2009, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) initiated the

United Nations fact finding mission on the Gaza war. The commission was formed to

investigate the Israeli violations of international human rights law and international

humanitarian law that might have been committed during the period from December 27,

2008 and January 18, 2009. For that investigation, the UNHRC appointed Richard

Goldstone, former judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa and former

Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and

Rwanda, to head the mission.

  The Israeli government refused to cooperate with the judge's investigation—it

neither welcomed him, nor facilitated his mission. The conclusion of the report was that

Israel violated the international humanitarian law, the Fourth Geneva Convention, and

committed war crimes and possible crimes against humanity. The Israeli reaction to the

report was denial of the findings in general, along with anger and personal attacks on

Judge Goldstone himself including accusations of being anti-Israel (Nichols, 2009).

In a similar reaction, the United States government rejected the conclusions of

Goldstone's investigation that found Israel guilty for the bombardment and invasion of

Gaza. The U.S. government described the report as unbalanced, deeply flawed, one-

sided, and unacceptable (Human Rights Watch, October 2nd, 2009). In consistence with

the government's policies, American media largely ignored the report, and commentaries

did not even mention it (Nichols, 2009), which made the government's stand go

unquestioned.

Images of Violence in the BBC and the *NYT*

In their study of the images coming from Iraq, Silcock, Schwalbe, & Keith (2008) analyzed the images of the dead and injured and found that newspapers published fewer images of death than television. They expected a clash between truth telling and the journalist's desire not to upset the audience with horrifying images. This clash was just the finding of Campbell (2004) who studied the images of death in coverage of Sudan, Palestine, Sierra Leone and South Africa. He concluded that the absence of images from these areas of conflict resulted in reporting that was similar to that of a natural disaster, which helped only to perpetuate the crises.

In general, American media tends not to publish images of casualties when covering conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan (Silcock, Schwalbe, & Keith, 2008). Despite the important role of images in reporting disasters (Wright, 2004), the images of dead and injured troops made only about 5% of the war photographs in the *Chicago Tribune*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times* during the first week of the Iraq war of 2003 (King & Lester, 2005).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Despite the fact that the BBC is theoretically closer to the government than the *NYT*—because the *NYT* is an independent business while the BBC is working under the Royal Charter—studies consistently provide strong evidence for the *NYT* different editorial approach toward the U.S government's policies. While the BBC is known for confronting foreign governments (Pinkerton, 2008), and the British government itself, when these authoritarian establishments try to affect its editorial policy toward issues, the

NYT on the other hand, is accused of siding the government (Vaughan, 2008; Whittle, 2004).

Even though the BBC prioritizes the country's interests when deciding the importance of news, there is no evidence of bias in such coverage (Shi, 2006). On the other hand, the *NYT* presents news in a way that enforces its own agenda (Kohn, 2003), and brands its version of news in a historical narrative (Kitch, 2007). This study is trying to answer the question **(RQ1):** what is the difference in the ways the BBC and the NYT covered the war on Gaza, also known as Operation Cast Lead?

In an interview-based study, McQueen (2008) found that the BBC hosted more interactive programs about Iraq before and after the war, concluding that this organization adopted an objective practice by involving more audience in the discussion of such a highly controversial issue.

Responding to criticism of bias, the *NYT* defends its journalistic practice by relying on a good intention of its staff, not the facts on its pages (Orket, 2005). There is huge evidence that the *NYT* is biased, especially when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Goldberg, 2009), where the *NYT* is clearly biased toward Israel, with its staff columnists found generally more opinionated than even its guest columnists (Golan & Wanta, 2001).

When compared to other media, the BBC seems to be less opinionated, less emotional when covering issues (Marriott, 2007). Even when proven biased, the BBC responsibly reviewed its own coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and admitted that it was slightly biased toward Israel in offering the opportunity to be heard, and, in

response committed itself to unbiased coverage of the conflict (BBC, 2000, 2008). On the other hand, the *NYT*'s Public Editor Daniel Orket admits the impact of the media organization's bureau location (the *NYT* bureau is located in West Jerusalem, which is widely recognized as the Israeli part of the city) on their journalistic behavior, when the life of reporters and their families is similar to the Israelis' experience of the conflict's impact (Orket 2005). This study suggests that **(H1)**: Both *NYT* and BBC will use more Israeli than Palestinian sources, with the BBC using more equal number of news sources from both sides of the conflict, and *NYT* will rely more on Israeli sources.

Method

In a pioneer study of bias, Merrill (1965) set up a model of six categories to identify bias in *Time* magazine toward three United States presidents. These six categories were: attribution bias, adjective bias, adverbial bias, contextual bias, outright opinion, and photograph bias. Merrill's findings were important in pointing out the ways *Time* magazine was biased toward presidents. *Time* decided which incidents to play up, and which to play down or omit completely. When providing the narrative for a story, *Time* was often found not telling a complete story, and often adding an opinion to the narrative (Merrill, 1965).

Following Merrill's model of bias analysis, Grimm (2007) analyzed the *NYT* coverage of Malcolm X versus Martin Luther King Jr. In order for him to explore how Malcolm X and King were framed in the *NYT*, he looked at the following four categories in the newspaper coverage: sourcing, presence of background context, repeated phrases and themes, and dictionary of narrative statements by the writer. Grimm's study found

the two men framed in different ways, showing a respectful, understandable person in King, versus many concerns and cautions in relation to Malcolm X.

Journalists can practice bias by omission, like falsification and fabrication of information or omission of information, which in both cases is simply lying. Most of journalists consider bias by omission more acceptable as journalistic practice than by commission, and some of them find it morally less troubling to do (Lee, 2004). But when it comes to audiences, Girt (1988) found that most rational people do not like being lied to, even by being told the truth in certain way that might lead to false belief (as cited in Lee, 2004).

In a study to the coverage of SARS disease, Tian and Stewart (2005) used the category packaging (CatPac) program to compare the BBC's and CNN's online service. This computer program identifies the frequency of concepts and the semantic relationship between highly frequent concepts, which enabled the researchers to analyze the text of 740 news stories from both websites.

This study will focus on the following categories when analyzing the *NYT* coverage of the war in Gaza as a model of analysis:

This study will not consider the use of words from Merrill's model, since it is not fair to claim media bias by referring to one party using these words. Instead, it will focus on the following four categories from Merrill's model, but will consider only the information quoted from sources used for the reporting:

First: Sourcing, as Grimm (2007) used it, will show the sources of news stories. In this study, sources will reveal whether the reporter quoted from both sides of the story. In

a first step, this category will only identify the source, according to their identity, disregarding their views.

Second: specificity of sources: This will be decided by looking at how specific sources are, as well as reporting of casualties. A specific source might indicate better credibility for the source, and yet readers expect to know the name of that source. However, the name is not available for media sometimes, so the rank or position is used, in a less specificity of the source. This category will also focus on how specific these sources were in reporting the casualties on both sides. For example, when reporting an incident where people are killed and injured, accuracy means at least identifying the number of people killed, because "twenty people killed and injured" could mean one to nineteen or nineteen to one, which is not an accurate enough account of the effects of the conflict. Specific sources are also important, as it might indicate specific reporting and reach out for these sources. When media is present at the action, it is easier to recognize sources of news, and can quote them.

Third: Contextual bias of sources indicates a general attitude that contributes to framing, which is defined as: a way of giving implicit interpretation to isolated items of fact (McQuail, 2000). This study is trying to detect bias by identifying the general attitude of sources used by both media, particularly when naming the party being blamed for the current episode of violence. Since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has a rich history of actions and reactions (Orket 2005), it is the editor's choice to refer to particular provocative actions, as well as identifying the perpetrator, as background that help to

assign blame for a current act; therefore, it is assumed that blaming one side of the conflict will reveal bias in coverage.

Fourth: photograph bias. Research has maintained that the use of images can form cognitive schemas, linked to preconceptions and stereotypes, which affect perceptions (Milburn, Carney, & Ramirez, 2001). Both Merrill (1965) and Grimm (2007) have explored the photograph bias in personal coverage—the depiction of one person. Following the model of Silcock, Schwalbe, & Keith, 2008, which looked for the element of violence across images covering a number of conflicts, including the Israeli-Palestinian, this study will look for the reporting of violence. Every image of violence should show violence being done by or to one party, or both at the same time. In general, images will be treated as violent or nonviolent, with the focus being on the violent for this analysis. Non-violent images, such as portraits or places, will be considered neutral. Images of violence could also include those that show the intention to use violence, such as the depiction of armed men, soldiers, or tools of violence such as arms or tanks, or anything that is used to commit violence, like cars, when the companion text indicates so.

Sample

This study will examine a sample of the news stories published online at the *New York Times* (www.nytimes.com) and the BBC (www.bbc.co.uk) news websites. These stories cover the war that Israel initiated on the Gaza province and called Operation Cast Lead. The coverage extends for twenty-two days, from December 27th, 2008, when Israel started the first wave of airstrikes, and January 18th, 2009, when it declared a unilateral

ceasefire that ended its military operations in Gaza. Please see appendix A for a complete list of the sampled report.

A random sample of ninety two news stories during the period of war was selected from both the BBC and the *NYT* websites. Two stories were chosen from the total stories posted each day, along with the pictures that were companions to these stories. This sample dropped the editorials of the *NYT* from the list, because the BBC does not offer editorials on its webpage.

Procedures

For gathering the sample, a subscription to *The New York Times* was required in order to gain a full access to the archival material online. In contrast, the BBC was available online free of charge. Both websites were searched for key words: Gaza, "Cast Lead," Palestine, Israel, and operation. The *NYT*'s advanced search pages suggested related search terms, which helped find a greater number of titles.

On both sites, the search words appeared in the titles and texts of the news stories, which made a large number of news stories available. The population of the news stories was limited by the time frame of the military operation (December 27, 2008 to January 18, 2009).

The sample consisted of two news stories per day from each media source, making a grand total of 92 news stories from both websites. (For the complete list of these sample news stories, please see Appendix A.)

Some news reports were posted on the day after the actual reporting day. To solve this problem, this study considered the posting day as the standard for choosing the sample.

Stories were given numbers, and all were printed from the website. When choosing the sample, stories were picked as follows: on the first day, reports 1 and 2 were used; on the second day, reports 2 and 3 were used; on the third day, reports 3 and 4 were used, and so on. When there were only two reports in a day, both were considered for the sample.

The table below illustrates the sampling method in bolded numbers

Day1	**1**	**2**	3	4	5	6	7
Day 2	1	**2**	**3**				
Day 3	1	2	**3**	**4**	5	6	
Day 4	1	2	3	**4**	**5**	6	7

The focus of analysis was the sources that both the *NYT* and the BBC have used to report on the armed conflict in Gaza between the Palestinians and Israel. Each source was treated separately and in the following way: first, it was identified as an Israeli, Palestinian, or other source; then, this source was checked for specificity according to the code book; third, the source was examined for the specificity with which it reported information on casualties. Please see the detailed code book in appendix B.

All units of analysis were set in a spreadsheet table, and analysis began by numbering each source, identifying it, deciding its specificity and the specificity of its reporting of casualties (if any).

Sources

Sources were categorized as Palestinian sources, Israeli sources, and other

sources. The third category "other sources," referred to the sources of news used in the

reports that were independent from Palestinians and Israelis.

Table showing sources of published news (step 1 of the analysis)

	Israeli sources	Palestinian sources	Other sources
BBC			
NYT			

Specificity of sources was also categorized as specific and non specific for both

Israeli and Palestinian sources.

Table showing specificity of source (step 2 of the analysis)

	Specific on Israeli source	Not specific on Israeli source	Specific on Palestinian source	Not Specific on Palestinian source
BBC				
NYT				

Reporting of casualties

Specificity in the reporting of casualty numbers was also considered for this

analysis. Analysis of the specificity in reporting casualties from both sides of the conflict

was related to the sources used to provide the numbers. For example, for each source,

there was an analysis of how specifically this source introduced coverage of casualties, in

addition to how specific the presentation of the source's identity was.

Table showing specificity of casualties reported (step 3 of the analysis)

	Specific on Israeli casualties	Not specific on Israeli casualties	Specific on Palestinian casualties	Not specific on Palestinian casualties	Casualties not discussed
BBC					
NYT					

Results

 A first look at the textual analysis data reveals a large difference in the number of sources used. The BBC used a total of 359 sources, and the *NYT* used 499. (See Figure 1.) Thus, the *NYT* can be expected to outnumber the BBC in many categories; therefore, numbers are presented as percentages in order to accurately analyze this unequal distribution of sources between the two media outlets. (See Appendices C and D for the complete data sets for the *NYT* and the BBC.)

 This difference in the number of sources used is considered high for the same number of news stories. Out of the 858 sources used by both, the *NYT* used about 58% of these sources, leaving around 42% for the BBC. (See Figure 1.)

Figure (1) sources in media
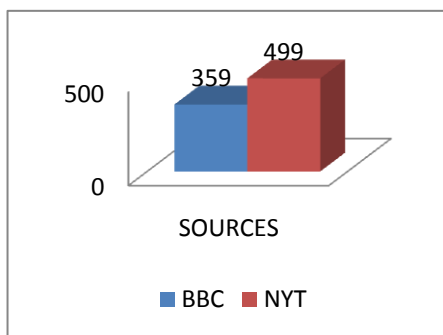
Figure 1: Number of sources used by each media outlet

When it came to the distribution of sources, "other sources" made up 189 (38%) of the *NYT* sources, and 145 (40%) of the BBC's. For the sources from the two sides of the conflict, the *NYT* used an Israeli source for its information in about 39% (196 out of 499) of the cases, and used a Palestinian source in about 23% (114 out of 499) of the cases. The BBC used Israeli sources about 32% (114 out of 359) of the time, and Palestinian sources 29% (100 out of 359) of the time. BBC have used Israeli sources in 32% of the time, and the "other sources" in 40%, while the Palestinian sources remain the least used in 28% of total sources used by BBC.

(See Figure 2.)
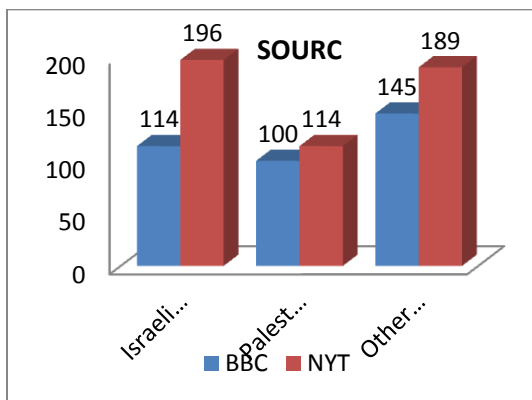
Figure 2: Distribution of sources

Specificity of sources

Both media outlets used a higher number of non-specific sources than specific ones. Out of the 310 total Israeli and Palestinian sources used (62% of 499 sources), the *NYT* specifically cited 147 (29%), while BBC specifically cited 102 out of 359, or 28% of the cases. In general, both media outlets provided more specific than non-specific sources

from both sides of the conflict. When it came to the specificity of Palestinian versus

Israeli sources, the *NYT* was specific in 85 out of 196 (43%) of the cases when citing

Israeli sources, and 62 out of 114 (54%) of the cases when citing Palestinian sources. Out

of the 114 times it used Israeli sources, the BBC was specific 48 times, or in 42% of the

cases, and 54 out of 100 (54%) of the cases when citing Palestinian sources. (See Figure

3.)
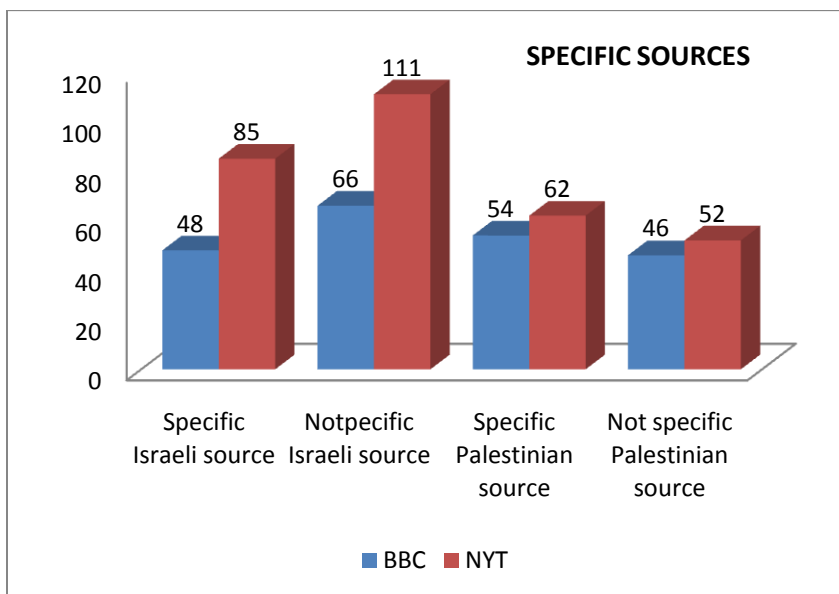
Figure 3. Specificity of sources

Specificity in Reporting Casualties

A large percentage of the sources quoted by both media outlets did not discuss

casualties. In fact, 387 out of 499 (78%) of the sources used by the *NYT* did not discuss

casualties, while 280 out of 359 (78%) of the BBC's sources did not discuss casualties.

(See Figure 4.) However, casualty numbers reported by sources were occasionally

duplicated, meaning that one source sometimes reported casualties on both sides. Consequently, that source, though counted as only one source, produced two counts of casualty reporting, and, therefore, the number of casualty reporting incidents might exceed the number of sources.

Out of the 114 times that sources used by the *NYT* reported casualties, they were specific about the numbers and names of these casualties on both sides of the conflict about 64% of the time. BBC sources reported casualties 79 times from both sides, and were specific 58% of the time. (See Figure 4.)

NYT sources reported casualties on the Israeli side eight times during the coverage, and were specific 6 times (75% of the cases), while these sources reported Palestinian casualties 106 times, and were specific in 41 cases (69% of the time). BBC sources reported Israeli casualties 13 times and were specific in 8 (62%) of them, while BBC sources reported Palestinian casualties 66 times and were specific in 38 cases (58%). (See Figure 4.)
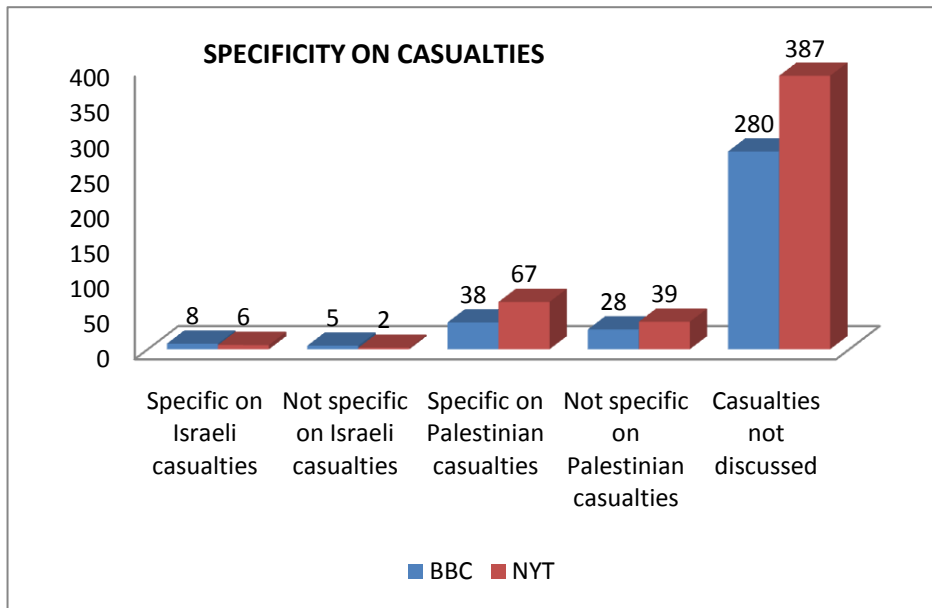
Figure 4. Specificity of casualty numbers reporting

Discussion

It is notable that both media have been very close in the percentage of specific sources they have used from the Israeli and Palestinian sides. Both media have been using specific Palestinian sources in about 54% of the time, and *NYT* was slightly more specific on Israeli sources (43%) than the BBC's 42%.

Both media outlets used more Israeli sources than Palestinian sources. The *NYT* used Israeli sources in 39% compared to 23% Palestinian, and the BBC used Israeli sources 32% of the time, more than the 28% of Palestinian sources which supports the first half of the Hypothesis **(H1),** keeping in mind the difference in the total number of sources used on both websites (359 for the BBC and 499 for the *NYT*). Perhaps the availability of sources played a role in this difference. For example, Israel had an

information center that disseminated the official Israeli view, while the fractured

Palestinians did not have any channels by which to establish and convey a united view

The difference in the number of Palestinian and Israeli sources used was also within each

media. The *NYT* used more Israeli sources (39%) than Palestinian sources (23%), and

even the "other sources" (38%), while the BBC used a more balanced percentage from

both sides (32% Israeli sources to 28% Palestinian) with 40% of its sources coming from

"other sources". Which clearly indicate a greater *NYT* reliance on Israeli sources, in

support the second part of the hypothesis **(H1)**

Availability of information and sources to media might have played a role in the

balance of sources, however, the BBC was able to locate and present a closer balance of

sources coming from both sides, which suggested that the *NYT* might not have intended

to balance its sources. For example, the BBC specifically cited its Israeli sources in 75%

of the cases, versus 54% specificity on the Palestinian side, while the *NYT* cited a specific

Israeli source in only 43% of the cases. This suggested that the BBC benefited from the

availability of the Israeli sources, but maintained a balance between them and Palestinian

sources, while the *NYT* used Israeli sources more, even when they were not specific

enough, which also indicated a preference by the *NYT* to use more Israeli sources.

Casualty reporting on the Israeli side of the conflict was more accurate in both

media outlets. This might be due to the smaller number of Israeli casualties, compared to

a large and constantly increasing number of casualties on the Palestinian side, and to the

non-specific reporting on the Palestinian side, as well as the multiple types of sources,

such as U.N. organizations, hospital staff, and officials.

Conclusion

It was found that both New York Times and BBC have used more Israeli than Palestinian sources, with New York Times relying more on the Israeli sources than BBC, which have used a close to equal number of sources from both sides. BBC came more specific on sources than NYT, which might indicate more careful use of sources in BBC than NYT.

These results line up with previous research on media bias in the coverage of the Middle East conflict that showed a general western media trend to favor Israel. However, these findings might not provide enough evidence to support the "Cultural hegemony" mentioned earlier by Vanderbush& Klak (1996), or the "Orientalism" idea of Edward Said (1997), because the results of this study show difference between two well known western media, which makes it hard to generalize such theories to western media. In fact, these results can be caused by other factors, such as the unequal availability of news sources on both sides of the conflict, and the differences in editorial and journalistic practices of these media.

Study opens the door to applying and developing Merrill's model to studies of bias in the use of sources in covering issues. However, when reading the results of this study, certain limitations should be considered: First, the fact that these are two different kinds of media; NYT is a primarily print news paper, while BBC is a large television, radio electronic media, something that put these media in two different settings. Second: while the study focused on media being American versus British, the nature of these

media is different, in the kind business they practice. BBC is a public media, while NYT is a private business, which puts them in different journalistic environments.

A future study may focus on the sources categorized above as "other sources," which theoretically do not represent either side of the dispute, but makes a good amount of sources used.

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Appendix (A): Study samples

New York Times sample:

1- Israel reopens Gaza crossings. (2008, December 27)

2- White House puts Onus on Hamas to end violence. (2008, December 27)

3- Israelis say strikes against Hamas will continue. (2008, December 28)

4- Israeli attack kills scores across Gaza. (2008, December 28)

5- Israeli troops mass along border; Arab anger rises. (2008, December 29)

6- Israel reminds foes that it has teeth. (2008, December 29)

7- Hamas credo let it end cease-fire. (2008, December 30)

8- A captured Israeli soldier figures in military assessments and political calculus. (2008, December 30)

9- Egypt offers humanitarian aid but is criticized for refusing to open Gaza border. (2008, December 31)

10- Despite strikes, Israelis vow to soldier on. (2008, December 31)

11- Israel rejects cease-fire, but offers Gaza aid. (2009, January 1)

12- In defense Gaza, civilians suffer. (2009, January 2)

13- In a broadening offensive, Israel steps up diplomacy. (2009, January 2)

14- Israel allows some foreigners to leave Gaza. (2009, January 2)

15- Egypt pressed on Gaza from without and within. (2009, January 3)

16- Escalation feared as Israel, continuing bombing, lets foreigners leave Gaza. (2009, January 3)

17- Israeli troops launch attack on Gaza. (2009, January 4)

18- The news meaning of an old battle. (2009, January 4)

19- Gaza hospitals fill up, mainly with civilians. (2009, January 5)

20- Israel strikes before an ally departs. (2009, January 5)

21- Warnings not enough for Gaza families. (2009, January 6)

22- Israel deepens Gaza incursion as toll mounts. (2009, January 6)

23- Israel puts media clamp on Gaza. (2009, January 7)

24- Israeli shells kill 40 at Gaza U.N. School. (2009, January 7)

25- Grief and rage at stricken Gaza school. (2009, January 8)

26- Israel resumes attacks after pause for aid delivery. (2009, January 8)

27- U.N. and Red Cross add to outcry on Gaza war. (2009, January 9)

28- Gaza children found with mother's corpses. (2009, January 9)

29- Call for cease-fire goes unheeded. (2009, January 10)

30- 30 confirmed dead in shelling Gaza family. (2009, January 10)

31- Gaza war full of traps and trickery. (2009, January 11)

32- Aljazeera provides an inside look at Gaza conflict. (2009, January 11)

33- Gaza imperils 2- state plan, shifting a balance. (2009, January 12)

34- As troops enter Gaza city, Israel sees an opening. (2009, January 12)

35- Israelis are united on war in Gaza as censure rises abroad. (2009, January 13)

36- U.N. warns of refugee crisis in Gaza strip. (2009, January 13)

37- Israel says Hamas is damaged, not destroyed. (2009, January 14)

38- Hamas fighters display mix of swagger and fear. (2009, January 14)

39- Egypt cites progress toward truce as Gaza toll exceeds 1,000. (2009, January 15)

40- Israel strikes U.N. complex in Gaza strip. (2009, January 15)

41- Israel shells U.N. site in Gaza, drawing fresh condemnation. (2009, January 16)

42- Mideast awaits signs of Obama's stance on Gaza. (2009, January 16)

43- U.S. pact seen as step toward Gaza cease-fire. (2009, January 17)

44- Weighing crimes and ethics in the fog of urban warfare. (2009, January 17)

45- Why the Arabs splinter over Gaza. (2009, January 18)

46- Israel declares cease-fire; Hamas say it will fight on. (2009, January 18)

BBC sample:

1- Voices: Reaction to Israeli raids. (2008, December 27)

2- Massive Israeli air raids on Gaza. (2008, December 27)

3- Israeli jets target Gaza tunnels. (2008, December 28)

4- Hamas bars injured leaving Gaza. (2008, December 28)

5- Israel strikes key Hamas offices. (2008, December 29)

6- No 10 "appalled" at Gaza violence. (2008, December 29)

7- Gaza protests: Eyewitness stories. (2008, December 30)

8- Gaza air campaign "a first stage". (2008, December 30)

9- Gaza protests continue in London. (2008, December 31)

10- Shockwaves as rockets hit Beersheba. (2008, December 31)

11- Diplomacy takes back seat. (2009, January 1)

12- Gaza violence goes into sixth day. (2009, January 1)

13- Israel braced for Hamas response. (2009, January 2)

14- Stars call for ceasefire in Gaza. (2009, January 2)

15- Protest against Gaza air strikes. (2009, January 3)

16- Cities protest over Gaza attacks. (2009, January 3)

17- Gaza conflict reactions in quotes. (2009, January 4)

18- Who are Hamas? (2009, January 4)

19- Talking lesson of peace lecture. (2009, January 5)

20- Gaza conflict: who is a civilian? (2009, January 5)

21- Gaza conflict: Mid-East reaction. (2009, January 6)

22- Israeli voices: Gaza conflict. (2009, January 6)

23- Frenetic UN diplomacy over Gaza. (2009, January 7)

24- Woman mourns 15 relatives in Gaza. (2009, January 7)

25- Gaza "human shields" criticized. (2009, January 8)

26- Gaza voices: Three-hour ceasefire. (2009, January 8)

27- Israel "shelled civilian shelter". (2009, January 9)

28- Israeli voices: When to stop. (2009, January 9)

29- Shoes hurled during Gaza protest. (2009, January 10)

30- Belfast hears of Gaza suffering. (2009, January 10)

31- Obama and Gaza crisis. (2009, January 11)

32- Israel warns Gaza of escalation. (2009, January 11)

33- Gazan families: pulling together. (2009, January 12)

34- Bowen diary: Build-up continues. (2009, January 12)

35- Israelis "push into Gaza city". (2009, January 13)

36- Israelis strike 60 Gazan targets. (2009, January 13)

37- Israeli Arabs torn by Gaza violence. (2009, January 14)

38- Israelis "shot at fleeing Gazans". (2009, January 14)

39- Eyewitness: Gaza medical crisis. (2009, January 15)

40- UN accuses Israel over phosphorus. (2009, January 15)

41- Eyewitness: BBC reporter in Rafah. (2009, January 16)

42- Urgent drive for Gaza ceasefire. (2009, January 16)

43- Survivors count losses in Rafah. (2009, January 17)

44- Excerpts: Olmert declares ceasefire. (2009, January 17)

45- Broken town shows Gaza destruction. (2009, January 18)

46- Hamas announces ceasefire in Gaza. (2009, January 18)

Appendix B: Codebook for the textual analysis of BBC and *NYT* coverage of the war in Gaza

Coding Units:

For sources: Israeli source, Palestinian source, other source, specific Israel source, non-specific Israeli source, specific Palestinian source, non-specific Palestinian source.

For casualties reported: specific on Israeli casualties, non-specific on Israeli casualties, specific on Palestinian casualties, non-specific on Palestinian casualties, casualties not discussed.

For contextual bias: blamed Israeli actions, blamed Palestinian actions, blamed both sides, no blame.

For image analysis: violent image, non-violent image, unclear, Israelis as perpetrators of violence, Palestinians as perpetrators of violence, other perpetrators, unclear perpetrators, Israelis as targets of violence, Palestinians as targets of violence, other target of violence, and unclear target of violence.

Sources:

A source was considered one when it added input to a news report—such as a person, a statement, another media outlet, an organization, or a government—whether in a direct or indirect quote. The description of somebody's view did not make that person a source, unless he/she was identified as having said so. This is an example of describing somebody's behavior (and was not considered a source), from the BBC, January 11, 2009:

"Israel and Hamas have ignored a UN security council call for an immediate ceasefire that would lead to the withdrawal of Israeli troops."

The previous example does not specify a quoted source; therefore, Israel and Hamas were not considered sources.

Sources were not duplicated, meaning that if a report used a media outlet's quote of a person, the study counted that person as a source, not the media outlet. But when another media outlet was quoted in a story or an investigation, it was considered a source.

Even though a significant number of pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian people can reside in other countries and even hold dual citizenship with their country of residence and Israel or Palestine, the definition of an Israeli or Palestinian source was limited to people who live within Israeli and Palestinian territories. If a source was identified as a Palestinian who lives in Britain, for example, she/he was considered an "other source."

A source might not have been referred to at the beginning of a paragraph; therefore, the paragraph was read completely before a decision was made. The following is an example from a January 15, 2009 *NYT* report of when a source was mentioned at the end:

"Israel's defense minister, Ehud Barak, and his generals favor a temporary ceasefire of several weeks… … Israeli officials say".

The same source, when used more than once, was not repeatedly counted as more than one source, unless it was indicated that information was given at different times, on different occasions, or at different places. Some quotes were given on two topics, and long quotes might be broken to more than one sentence, or used in more than one location in the same report. In such cases, the study added the quotes after reading the

whole news report to make one source. But in the case where sources were re-quoted from previously published texts on the same website, they were counted again. Sources were categorized in three ways:

Palestinian sources: These sources included but were not limited to Palestinian citizens, organizations, media, and government—both Hamas's government in Gaza and the officially recognized Palestinian government in West Bank—medical staff in Palestinian hospitals, and witnesses.

Israeli sources: These sources included but were not limited to the Israeli army and government, Israeli citizens, media, organizations, no matter their relationship to Palestinians or the conflict. This also included the Palestinian minority in Israel, who are represented in the Israeli Parliament, because they are quoted as Israeli citizens, and because it was difficult to make a distinction in sources according to the source's opinion, which is not the topic for this study. It is also possible that an Israeli or a Palestinian source could have varying opinions on the conflict at different times.

Other sources: These were sources that were not Israeli or Palestinian. Examples are the U.N., foreign governments, foreign media, or non-Palestinian Arabs (or Palestinian descendants who reside outside the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank) and foreign media. The designation also applied to Israelis and Palestinians who were identified as employees of other organizations, such as the U.N. or human rights groups.

Specificity of sources:

When a source's name was mentioned, it was considered specific. Sources identified by rank or job description (such as medical staff, official, spokesperson) were considered

non-specific. This example, from a January 7, 2009 BBC article, gives a position but no names, which makes it a non-specific Palestinian source:

"A spokesman for Hamas's military wing said on 5 January it would expand the range if its missiles and planned to take another Israeli soldier captive."

Speakers on the condition of anonymity were considered not specific, as in the next example from the *NYT*, January 2, 2009:

The Israeli official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment publicly on the French proposal, called it "unrealistic," hasty and bordering on "offensive."

However, a position was considered specific enough without the source's name if the source was identified by a rank that no more than one person can hold, such as the army commander-in-chief or the Israeli defense minister. However, during the analysis, this case did not occur.

"Israel," "Israelis," "Palestine," and "Palestinians," are too general expressions, and were not considered specific enough to be counted, and combined sources were counted separately, like in this example from the *NYT*, January 4, 2009:

"The latest round of rocket fire has demonstrated the extent to which Hamas has been able to upgrade its arsenal with weapons parts smuggling into Gaza, according to American and Israeli officials".

Sources identified as members of a specific family were considered specific enough, even if the source's particular name was not mentioned, like in this example from the *NYT*, January 10, 2009:

"Members of the Samouni family said that they were rounded up late last Sunday night by Israeli soldiers and ordered to gather for their safety in a single dwelling in the impoverished Zeitoun district of Gaza city …"

Specificity about the number of casualties:

The most specific reporting on casualties was expected to have numbers that included both injured and killed. But in an ongoing fight, this kind of information might not be available, or at least not all the time in an accurate manner. Consequently, if the number given was between two limits, it was considered specific, such as "between 100 and 120." If the casualties' names were mentioned, it was considered specific, even if the number was not mentioned. The case of names might be common when the outlet was reporting a particular case or small number of casualties.

"Nearly," "almost," "about," and "approximately" were considered specific, if they were followed by numbers. Also considered specific were "most of them," when "them" referred to a specific number. "More than," "less than," and "at least," were not considered specific, even if they were followed by numbers, because these expressions can be downplayed or exaggerated. "Several," "many," "a lot of," and "plenty" were also not considered specific.

Specific on casualties	Not specific on casualties
Detailed numbers and/or names of dead and injured	Use of the terms, "more than," "less than," "at least," "several," "many," "a lot of," or "plenty of"
Range given between two numbers (e.g., 10–15)	Use of "massacre" (as it refers to unknown number of casualties)
Use of the terms, "nearly," "almost," "about," "approximately," "estimated," "up to," and also "most of," when these were followed by a specific number	
A percentage of a specific number	

Table (5): BBC data set

Media		Sources			Specificity of sources				Specificity on casualties				
Source No	BBC	Israeli source	Palestinian source	Other source	Specific Israeli source	Not specific Israeli source	Specific Palestinian source	Not specific Palestinian source	Specific on Israeli casualties	Not specific on Israeli casualties	Specific on Palestinian casualties	Not specific on Palestinian casualties	Casualties not discussed
1	1		1					1					1
2	1	1			1								1
3	1		1				1						1
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	359	116	98	144	40	64	52	41	8	5	38	27	280

Table (6): NYT data set.

Media		Sources			Specificity of sources				Specificity on casualties				
Source No	NYT	Israeli source	Palestinian source	Other source	Specific Israeli source	Not specific Israeli source	Specific Palestinian source	Not specific Palestinian source	Specific on Israeli casualties	Not specific on Israeli casualties	Specific on Palestinian casualties	Not specific on Palestinian casualties	Casualties not discussed
1	1	1			1								1
2	1		1					1			1		
3	1		1					1					1
4	1			1									1
5	1			1									1
6	1	1											1
7	1			1									1
8	1	1				1							1
9	1		1					1				1	
10	1			1									1
11	1		1				1						1
12	1		1				1						1
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16	1			1									1
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18	1	1				1							1
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