

DEPICTING THE OTHER: IRANIAN AND AMERICAN MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE 2014  
GAZA WAR

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of Sociology

University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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Aida Homayoun Nikou

August 2016

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## **ABSTRACT**

In delivering news worldwide, mass media uses narrative techniques to create unique themes of interest. The frames used by mass media are vital in organizing concepts that are also in line with hegemonic political interests and utilize dichotomous logic in the construction of an ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ narrative. Drawing on frame analysis, this study analyzes the framing of the 2014 Gaza War coverage in two U.S. and Iranian newspapers. My findings suggest that two distinctive discourses emerge from the two media samples. The United States’ news media mirrors the official Israeli narrative of the events and chooses to highlight Palestinian violence as the cause of a perilous relationship between Israel and Palestine. Whereas, the major narrative themes presented within the Iranian news sample were voiced by Palestinian officials and had a strong identification with and sympathy towards Palestinians centering the source of aggression between Israel and Palestine with the Israeli government. Findings also show how the news outlets in my study support the foreign policy initiatives of both Iran and the United States. Thus this study broadens our scope of understanding on the ongoing relationship between Israel and Palestine as viewed by the United States and Iran. In regards to the United States this thesis contributes to other academic knowledge by showing a consistent media portrayal of Israel and Palestine that favors the United States’ foreign policy initiatives in the Middle East. For Iran this study provides insight into a Middle East actor that is oftentimes overlooked in other academic studies of the Israeli and Palestinian conflict.

Keywords: Media, Othering, Framing, Gaza War, Palestine, Israel, United States, Iran.

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## INTRODUCTION

The occupation of Palestine, ongoing since 1948, has emerged as an important and significant issue that has defined both domestic and foreign policies concerning the Middle East. The Palestinian cause, both as a movement and as an ideology, has been a central piece of the Islamic Republic of Iran's international political agenda. In Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary discourse of "Islamic Unity", Iran's radical support of the Palestinian cause can be read as a form of confrontation with Israel and its Western allies and serves as an integral part of Iran's political identity both on a domestic and international level. This institutionalization of an anti-imperialist position, as reflected in the Iranian constitution, is a "rejection of colonialism and foreign influence," and has contributed to the articulation of a polarized discursive structure (Masouduzzafar 1980:17). According to Iran's official narrative, Iran and the Muslim community stand on one side of the history while Israel and the U.S. are on the other side.

Iran's special treatment of the issue, coupled with the United States' commitment to supporting Israel, has contributed to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict becoming one of the most enduring and perplexing problems in international relations. Likewise, the question of the production of U.S. mainstream media content in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been frequently discussed in academia, in the public sphere, and among media watchdog groups, activists, and pundits. However, academic discussion of the framing of this conflict has remained conspicuously limited to looking at how the issue is portrayed in Western media. There has been little systematic exploration of how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is framed in the non-Western world.

Much of the existing research has focused on the Western media coverage, specifically that of the United States, and less research has been conducted on non-Western news sources, which may present an alternative perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For instance, to date, no comprehensive study of Iranian media coverage of the Israeli Palestinian conflict has been undertaken. The lack of research on non-Western media could be reflective of the long-standing dominance of the West in global academia which ultimately positions the West as the principal reference point in public discourses. Given my interest in situating the issue in a broader scope of international context, therefore, I examined primary sources from Iranian media to assess their perspective on the 2014 Israel-Palestine war and to fill a gap in our understanding of how Middle Eastern countries view such conflicts as compared to Western countries. In respect to this socio-political background, this research – a comparative analysis of the Iranian and U.S. media coverage of the 2014 Israel-Palestine war - will add to the growing body of literature on media coverage of Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Drawing on Goffman's theory of frame analysis (1974), this study empirically analyzes the framing aspects of the 2014 Gaza war. Thus I focus on the prominence, sourcing, tone, keywords, depiction and personalization of actors in both U.S. and Iranian mainstream newspapers. Moreover, given that news framing and media content, in general, takes on certain culturally significant features (Reese and Lee 2012), understanding the symbolic environment and factors that shape the media content is crucial in analyzing the frames used to discuss Israel and Palestine. Therefore, to better conceptualize the patterns of media behavior in both contexts, this research explores the broader social and cultural structures in which these framings are produced.

The newspapers I have chosen for my U.S. sample are the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, which according to Pew Research Center's annual report (2015) are the top two highest circulated print and online paywall-protected news sources across the U.S. (2015 Pew annual report on American Journalism). Likewise, I examine Iranian media coverage of the same war in two different top daily newspapers: *Keyhan* (the Globe), an ultra-conservative newspaper that is affiliated to the Supreme Leader and is directly funded by the Iranian government, and *Shargh* (East), a leading reformist newspaper in Iran. These two newspapers possess a wide circulation across the country and as such reflect the multi-voiced political language in Iran. Examining the selected language and themes, I analyze the news frames that emerge in *Keyhan* and *Shargh*, and I further illustrate the convergence and divergence between the state-generated and the private news outlets in Iran. Therefore, by comparing the overall structural framework of the two Iranian mainstream newspapers with the two American mainstream newspapers, I propose to conduct a study that will address the following questions:

Research Question 1: How do two top American newspapers frame the 2014 Israel-Gaza war?

Research Question 2: How do two top Iranian newspapers frame the 2014 Israel-Gaza war?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Overview*

In this section I first examine the U.S. news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (hereafter referred to as the IPC). I discuss the structure, characteristics, influences, and social and political relationships at work in the process of news production in the United States. Next I present a theoretical discussion on the concept of Othering and enemy formation as it pertains to



the construction of Orientalist and Occidental discourses, which in turn influences the news coverage of the IPC. Later, in order to provide a suitable theoretical framework in investigating the media coverage in both communities, I explore theories of framing and propaganda as strategies employed by media in their news coverage. These frames and propaganda strategies help to support and maintain the prevailing power structure in a given society. Finally, I examine Iranian media characteristics in order to establish a contextual background from which the investigation of the Iranian news coverage will be conducted.

### *U.S. Media Coverage Of The Conflict*

There has been a great deal of research conducted in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In general, these studies address issues concerning accuracy and objectivity in framing, the use of language and image, and the issue of representation (Ackerman, 2001; Depresz and Raeymaeckers, 2010; Dunskey, 2007; Entman and Paletz, 1981; Ibrahim, 2009; Kressel, 1987; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007; Philo and Berry, 2004; Raz, 2008; Said, 1978, 1981/2011, 1987; Vizer, 2003; Zoghbi, 2010). Some scholars underscore a tendency in the American press to empathize with Israel, and to advance Israeli voices more than media outlets elsewhere in the world. In her investigation into the coverage of IPC in mainstream American media, Marda Dunskey (2007) elucidates the outcome of U.S. foreign policy as an essential factor:

“Even though U.S. Mideast policy has for decades revolved around Israel, the mainstream media seldom examine that policy in a critical light. As a result, alternative and oppositional discourses are effectively stifled, with public challenge to that policy unable to accumulate a critical mass” (p. 378-9).

According to Dunsky (2007), the consistent U.S. foreign policy support for Israel is the primary factor in the absence of balanced coverage of the IPC, which in turn leads to the lack of development of a “critical mass” among news consumers (p. 379). This lack of public demand for change in U.S. Mideast foreign policy, which, as argued by Dunsky (2007) is the outcome of media representation of the region, results in the perpetuation of the existing policies. In this sense the conjunction of the media with hegemonic political interests contributes to the construction of public knowledge of a specific issue and consequently reifies the political status quo.

In *The Israel Lobby* (2007) Mearsheimer and Walt explore the unique diplomatic and strategic relationship between the United States and Israel. Examining a wide range of financial, institutional, and ideological factors that have been recognized as being influential in the U.S.’ persistent support for Israel, authors point to the unbalanced media representation of the IPC in the form of Israeli victimhood and Palestinian aggression:

“The American media coverage of Israel tends to be strongly biased in Israel’s favor, especially when compared with news coverage in other democracies. A key part of preserving positive public attitudes toward Israel is to ensure that the mainstream media coverage consistently favors Israel and does not call U.S. support into question in any way...” (Mearsheimer and Walt 2007: 169).

Similarly in *Covering Islam*, Edward Said (1981) addresses the issue of misrepresentation in reporting on the IPC in U.S. media. He argues the United States’ foreign policy in the Middle East, and its strong ties to Israel, are the reasons for American media outlets’ tendency to cover

the IPC with what he calls a “subliminal consciousness” of U.S. political interest, something Said defines as presses’ participation in “American power” which in turn makes its independence subordinate to implicit expressions of loyalty and patriotism (Said 1981: 51). He goes on to state that U.S. media presentation of the region is “uniformed, reductive, and monochromatic...”, likewise, the representation of Palestinians depict them as “hostile rock-throwing people of violence” with “neither history nor humanity” (Said 1981:16). Writing years later, in *American Zionism? The Real Problem* (2001), Said argues that the media misrepresentation of the Middle East region has been significantly reinforced in the aftermath of the 9/11 and subsequent to the U.S. intervention of Afghanistan.

In conjunction with U.S. foreign policy in the region, media contributes to the construction of public knowledge and the maintenance of political status quo. Media complicity with government policies is applied to domestic policy as well, but as Entman and Paletz (1981) discuss, this structure is particularly evident in representation of the American foreign policies: “foreign news reporting helps the powerful mobilize public opinion behind the basic goals of policies on which most Americans have little information” (p.233). In this role, news media is responsible for the provision of knowledge about the region to the public consumers

In 2003, Vizer conducted a comparative study of the *New York Times* and the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* that demonstrates that the *New York Times* has a more pro-Israeli tendency in its coverage of the conflict than *Haaretz*. Similar to the scholars previously mentioned, Vizer links the *New York Times*’ pro-Israeli bias to the United States’ role in the relationship between Israel and Palestine as the most powerful driving force behind the conflict. In a similar study, Hila Raz (2008) examines CNN’s coverage to show how ties between the government and the

media influence framing of the IPC. According to Raz's (2008) findings CNN has an underlying Israeli focus and latent American bias in its treatment of the Israel Palestine issue, with CNN's reporting being strikingly similar to U.S. foreign policy.

In a study of the Belgian media, Annelore Deprez and Karin Raeymaeckers (2010) analyze the portrayal of Israelis and Palestinians during the first and the second Intifada. Their findings reveal an important shift in the depiction of the conflict throughout this period. During the first Intifada, Palestinians were mostly depicted as unarmed civilians with limited resources who defend themselves against the Israeli occupation. However, with the beginning of the second Intifada, which interestingly enough is after the events of 9/11, this narrative changed drastically to Palestinians as "anti-Semitic terrorists", and Israelis as "victims of terror" (Deprez and Raeymaeckers 2010:93). This significant change in the media narrative, which aligns with U.S. foreign policy interests, as illustrated by the authors, parallels to the findings of Dunksy (2007) and other scholars. Furthermore, it illustrates how media treatment of a specific issue, as is the case for the Israeli Palestinian conflict, is framed according to specific foreign policy goals.

Another significant factor concerning balanced coverage of the IPC is the absence of the historical narrative of the occupation. Scholars refer to the historical background as a necessary factor for understanding the IPC, for the absence of the historical context isolates the events and presents an unbalanced narrative of the ongoing conflict (Ackerman, 2001; Dunsky, 2008; Philo and Berry, 2004). In an early study of the media treatment of IPC, Niel Kressel (1987) charges American media with a bias in disregarding its historical background. He argues that media's negative depiction of Arabs and the lack of historical context influences public opinion.

In a similar vein, Seth Ackerman (2001) discusses media's hesitation in using the word 'occupation' and the effect this has on the presentation of the conflict. He shows how news outlets depict the presence of Israelis in a way to vindicate them and to raise more sympathy toward Israel. Ackerman (2001) analyzes numerous news reports and presents evidence that Palestinian deaths are usually described as deaths of militants or Hamas fighters, which is considered a terrorist organization by the United States. The false depiction of civilians as terrorists or militants devalues Palestinians' lives, and lays the groundwork for legitimizing the violence against Palestinians.

By comparison, Greg Philo and Mike Berry (2004) found that Israeli deaths are given more attention and coverage in U.S. media outlets than those of Palestinians. Their findings suggest that, although the number of casualties and deaths are far greater on the Palestinian side, more emphasis is placed on the Israeli casualties. Similarly, in a comparative study of two Californian newspapers, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *San Jose Mercury* between 2000-2001, Stephan Marmura (2009) found that Israelis are typically portrayed as 'victims of terror,' and although less significant in number, the death of Israeli children is reported 25 times more than the death of Palestinian children. His findings further indicate that the news stories depicting Israelis as 'victims of terror' made front page news 71.5% of the time, compared to coverage of Palestinian deaths which only made the front-page of the same newspapers 4.3% of the time.

Max Blumenthal (2011) ties the issue of representation in news stories concerning Middle Easterners to the military and imperialistic purposes of the West. He contends that alienation of Middle Easterners leads to the elimination of the distinction between enemy combatants and civilians, which in turn justifies "the application of disproportionate force against non-

combatants who were supposedly intermingled with the ‘terrorists’ under the label of protecting the lives of soldiers and national security” (Blumenthal 2011: 1).

Building on Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism (1987), some scholars stress on the consequences of media misrepresentation of Palestinians and the construction of the ‘Other.’ They analyze how this misrepresentation reproduces an ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’ discourse in which ‘they,’ the Palestinians, are dehumanized, silenced, and stereotyped as terrorists and their lives considered less valuable. Dina Ibrahim (2009) argues that the media depiction of the IPC is the result of a cultural gap between American and Arab culture. She states that Americans commonly perceive Israelis as Western in style, and categorize them as the ‘civilized’ culture, differing from the Palestinian and Arab culture, which is depicted as ‘foreign’ and the ‘Other,’ with a leaning towards violence and terrorism.

In a similar vein James Zoghby (2010) in his book, *Arab Voices*, argues that the lack of exposure to Arab culture is the primary reason for the negative depiction of the Arab world which results in a “mixture of fear, bias, and ignorance” (Zoghby 2010:13). In parallel to Orientalism, Zoghby argues that as a result of such misconceptions, Arab politics is commonly understood as leaning toward violence and extremism, compared to the more enlightened, rational, and modern Western politics. He then goes into further detail by discussing media misrepresentation of Palestinians and the subsequent perpetuation of negative stereotypes that results in further alienation.

### *Othering*

In his foundational work *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978) examines the historical

construction of the East and the West as fundamentally different entities through which:

“European culture was able to manage -and to produce- the Orient politically, sociologically, military, ideologically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.” (p. 3)

He argues that Orientalism functions as an “imaginary geography” which maps a coherent, rational, and civilized West by re-drawing the distance and differences between what is close to or far away from it (Said 1987:57). It is in the same colonial analogy that Arab culture is deemed as backward, not democratic, threatening, and non-Western while Israeli culture is perceived as Western, modern, and democratic. For Said, accentuating these dichotomies constructs a concrete, simplified, and antagonistic world-view that results in boundary making, essentializing, homogenizing, and the marginalization of populations.

Likewise, “Occidentalism” describes the stereotypical representation of the imperialist, decadent, corrupt, and alienating West (Freund, 2001). As Nadjie Al-Ali (2000:26) explains

“Occidentalism, like Orientalism is part of a political ploy: it uses available cultural categories to gain symbolic advantages for ‘the self’ and to handicap ‘the other’. It is shaped by political contingencies in the search for power and influence.”

However, later she explains that Occidentalism and Orientalism are not to be equated, as they are two similar yet utterly distinct processes. For the most part, Occidentalism is a critique and a reaction to Orientalism and Western imperialism. Historically the West has always been at the top of the power hierarchy and has more political, social, and economic capital and therefore, has been able to construct and impose the image of the “other” and the “alien” onto Middle Eastern

societies (Al-Ali, 2000; Carrier, 1995).

Othering is consistent with the discursive practice of identity construction. From a sociological perspective, identity construction is characterized by issues concerning essentializing and categorizing individuals and social groups (Gaudelli 2001). In this context, identity is constructed through a process of boundary making, marked as an indicating factor in highlighting members as inside or outside a given group.

“Self/Other relation induces comparisons used by social actors to describe themselves or to describe others, depending on their location. In locking a given group into a substantially transformed identity, one constructs and immobilizes this relation so that it operates in favor of those to whose advantage it is” (Schulte-Tenckhoff 2001:11).

Steven Talbot (2008) argues that the discursive practice of boundary making, particularly the formation of Self and Other, plays a significant role in construction of “polarized collective identities,” which as he describes is a way of “locking a given social group into strategically informed ontological identity” (p. 8). In the sociological context, identity is a socially constructed phenomenon pertaining to recognition of a “we-ness” which involves certain qualities and characteristics associated with a certain group (Schulte-Tenckhoff 2001:6). In this respect, groups and individuals actively engage in creation, negotiation, and re-creation of identities through comparing and contrasting themselves with others.

The discursive practice of categorizing often times makes an appeal to external authorities to normalize the category before it is imposed as a life condition on people and society. Political elites form, manipulate, and de-construct the identities of nations and social



groups that consequently lead to construction of allies and enemies (Corse, 1996; Gillis, 1994; Zerubavel, 1995; Cerulo, 1997). Therefore, whether a certain discourse, category, or label is naturalized and accepted by members of society depends upon the power and the ability of the political elites. In this sense, the discursive practices of categorizing are reflections of the power struggle over legitimacy and meaning, rather than of essence (Clifford 2004).

In discussing the construction of labels, Steven Talbot (2008) argues that, although boundaries are inter-subjectively determined and are often characterized with a wide range of factors and identities, only a few subsets of labels are commonly emphasized and applied (i.e religion). For example, in its rhetorical discourse, the Islamic Republic of Iran (hereafter IRI), describes the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict as a “Holy and Sacred Defense,” and all the Palestinian victims as martyrs. This emphasizes the moral superiority of Iran in the battle of “good” vs. “evil.” The same religious sentiment could be found in President Bush’s description of the War on Terror as a “crusade” and a “divine plan” guided by God. In both these narratives, war metamorphoses into a spiritual battle signifying each side’s moral and religious superiority; which, in turn, is a means to demonize the other side. Thus, religious incentives are marked as the sole drive for the Israeli Palestinian conflict as well as the U.S. War on Terror.

Hughes (2004) argues that identity and interests are intertwined and inseparable concepts, actively reinforcing each other. In this regard, identity claims inform interests, which highlights the political nature of identification and construction of Self and Other. For example, Ayatollah Khomeini’s call for supporting the liberation of Palestine as an “Islamic duty” shared by all Muslims is a realization of both political interests and identity politics simultaneously. By transcending beyond the boundaries of the nation-state and stressing the Islamic principles of

unity and brotherhood within the Muslim community, Khomeini managed to shift the pan-Arab discourse previously lead by Arab states to a pan-Islamic one. In doing so, on the one hand he reclaimed the Muslim identity and proclaimed himself as the “ultimate leader of oppressed nations.” On the other hand, with calling for supporting the oppressed nations, he managed to mobilize support and secure influence inside Muslim community and to further expand the IRI’s political influence in the region and in the international context (Reda 2016).

Identity shifts can also occur based on changes in socio-political interests. For example, the IRI’s official discourse depicts Israel and Zionism as a colonial project designed by the U.S. to fulfill imperialist interests in the region and to exploit Muslims; therefore the defeat of Israel and the U.S. is a moral Islamic duty concerning all Muslims. However, in practice, the IRI displays a highly strategic and pragmatic approach toward Israel and the United States, with diplomatic compromises often deviating from ideological hardline confrontations (Ramazani 1986). The McFarlane scandal (as the Iran-Contra Affair is called in Iran) is an early example in which it is revealed that there were undisclosed negotiations between Iran and the U.S. for two years starting 1986; another example is the U.S. arms deal with Iran through Israel during the Iran-Iraq war: a time when the anti-west and anti-U.S. sentiments were much stronger in Iran then than they are today (Moghaddam 2007). Likewise, Iran’s nuclear negotiation is the latest example demonstrating a major shift in the IRI’s anti-U.S. political rhetoric which revolved around diplomatic boycotting of Israel and the United States. These examples show how the IRI prioritizes its survival and political interests in crucial moments, even if that meant disregarding the anti-west, anti-Israel character of the government.

## *Enemies and Others*

Studies in the sociology of the enemy discuss the process of formation and representation of the enemy within the context of identity politics. Identity boundaries and the perceived differences between ‘Self’ and ‘Other,’ are fundamental in the construction of an ‘enemy.’ Hughes (2004) states: “Identity construction contains the possibility for identity threat since the adoption and practice of one identity necessarily precludes the fulfillment of another by the same audience” (p. 24). These boundaries mark the difference between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’, as well as ‘allies’ and ‘enemies.’ In this regard, threat is expressed in terms of one identity position toward the existence and identification of the ‘Other’ (Hughes 2004). It is in this dichotomous structure that certain identities are considered as being more similar to ‘Self’ and less like ‘Other’ and thus treated more favorably. The sociology of the enemy discusses how sharing certain (usually observable) characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and religion could mark in and out group status and determine behaviors accordingly (McCall, Stephane, and Wang 2006).

Political structures and political elites are the prime actors in constructing and representing the enemy. In this sense, Orientalist and Occidentalist inspired representations of ‘enemies’ could be found in both IRI and U.S. political discourses. For example, in framing the enemy U.S. national security discourse employs a comparative system of identification that defines Americans in reference to non-Americans (and non-Westerners), specifically Muslims or Middle Easterners. Similarly, IRI employs a representation of the non-Muslim West as the ‘Other’ in order to define the Muslim identity.

In the same context, Ayatollah Khomeini viewed the U.S. as an impediment to the

implication of Islamic laws and the welfare of the Muslim community. “All our problems stem from America, all the problems of Muslims stem from America. ...America is the godfather of twin evils of Zionism and American imperialism” (cited in Ramazani 1986:154). This anti-imperialist, anti-Israeli approach had a multifaceted characteristic, it constituted a major tenet of the 1979 Iranian revolution and was later ingrained into the IRI’s official political agenda. Initiated in Pahlavi’s de facto recognition of Israel and its close ties to the United States, Khomeini’s anti-imperialist discourse served as a counter discourse rejecting foreign influence, which in turn was aimed at discrediting and delegitimizing Pahlavi’s monarchy. In this sense, the anti-monarch sentiment translated into an anti-imperialist discourse, which then resulted in restoration of an Iranian Muslim identity (Abrahamian 1999).

Exploiting the religious historical identity of Iranians, Khomeini reflected on Islamic political values, establishing them as the only possible way to change the power dynamics and to impede foreign influence (Abrahamian 1999). Therefore, to advance the anti-monarch/anti-imperialist discourse, he propagated the political aspects of Islam. In so doing, on a domestic level, he reclaimed the Islamic identity of Iranians and reached out to them as Muslims. Likewise, on the international level, in accordance to his anti-imperialistic and Islamic revolutionary discourse, he reached out to the rest of the Muslim community, which in his view, was also suffering from imperialism (Abrahamian 1999). As a result, by integrating Iranians into the Muslim community and by making reference to Muslims as a whole, on the one hand, Khomeini modified identity boundaries and prioritized religious over national identity while on the other hand he altered the dynamics of in and out-group status. By extending the boundaries of group identity Khomeini was able to integrate the Iranian community with the Arab

community thus transforming his revolutionary discourse and extending it beyond Iran's borders. In this regard, IRI's institutionalized support of Palestine is a central aspect of this transnational project (Reda 2016).

As discussed previously, the construction of enemy automatically entails the defined 'Them' being the social foe or the 'evil.' Burman and MacLure (2005) contend that enemy formation is the byproduct of a hierarchal value structure for "there is an essence of a higher principle or ideal articulated in one, and something lesser, or subordinate in the other" (p. 284). In this system, good comes before evil, positive before negative, and 'Us' before 'Them.' Consequently, the articulation of the collective moral superiority constructs and further legitimizes the annihilation of the all-threatening 'Other' or enemy (Cerulo, 1997; Berry, 2006; Hansen, 2004). We are told of the 'Axis of evil,' 'Muslims the terrorists,' 'Islamic terrorism,' 'terrorism the evil,' 'America the great Satan,' and 'capitalism the evil.' These narratives and the subsequent call for eradication of this evil promote war within the context of call for jihad in the East or the 'war on terror' in the West (Davetian 2001).

Furthermore, the use of dichotomous logic in these representations ignores the degrees of diversity and the multi-dimensional nature of identities. The homogenizing effect of these representations fails to acknowledge the existence of the vast arrays of other identities residing within each of these generalized categories, both within the Muslim community and the West. The discursive construction of 'West and the Rest' in Orientalist discourse, as well as the dichotomous construction of Muslim and the non-Muslim 'Other' in Occidentalist discourse, has the effect of dehumanizing the other camp and further silencing the dissenting voices existing within both these groups. In this sense, the Orientalist discourse reinforces Islamophobia that

serves to legitimize economic and political exploitation, implicates all Arabs and Muslims in the ‘War on Terror’ and justifies Israel’s military aggression under the pretense of national security. Similarly the Occidentalist discourse reinforces the fundamentalist approach and the call for Jihad on Western nations. The formation of these dichotomized representations, in turn, are influenced and expanded by other social actors and sources such as the media. In the case of the IPC, these narratives are evident in the media’s treatment of the issue in both Iranian and U.S. news media.

### *Media Techniques For News Coverage*

#### *Framing*

Media as an institution provides an interactive space for the daily reification of social traits and as such contributes substantially to the development of social cognition. Mass media in this sense is dependent upon and shaped by socio-political discourses and simultaneously cumulatively restructures and reinforces these discourses. Media is effectively able to structure cultural, political, and ideological realities and to influence the construction of identity boundaries (Peterson 2015). As Mirca Madianou (2005: 137) describes:

“Media and identity relationships emerge as a multifaceted process that depends on context. The media provide a common reference for some, while for others those references might be experienced as exclusive... in this sense the media are the heart of the tension between collective self-knowledge and collective self-representation that define cultural intimacy.”

This is done through the process of defining “cultural intimacy.” Media represents the discursive binary of “Us” versus “Them” to consumers, which in turns influences consumers’ cognitive knowledge of the social order. In this way media takes on an obligation to undertake coverage on behalf of the group and to provide an image of the in-groups (Marvin and Ingle 1999:145).

As such, an analysis of news media is similar to an analysis of the social structure that produces it. Similarly, an analysis of news frames is an analysis of the hegemonic political and ideological discourses in a given society (Van Dijk 1991). In order to reinforce and expand their hegemonic discourse, news stories are presented through certain patterns and sets of techniques. Operating as one of these techniques, framing is the practice of embedding narratives in news stories, which in turn conveys certain presuppositions about, and evaluations of, the events.

The concept of framing is based on the work of Goffman’s *Frame Analysis* (1974). Although there is not a single definition of framing, similar characteristics can be seen throughout various uses of it. In essence, framing refers to the process of presenting information in such a way as to influence how people will interpret the information. Framing, as Entman (1991) argues, offers a way to describe the power of text to construct basic cognitive structures that in turn shape perceptions of reality. Entman (1991) describes framing as:

“ Selecting some aspect of perceived reality and making it more salient in communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, cause, interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52).

Framing plays a major role in the deployment of political power. Barker-Plummer (1995: 309) argues that news discourses are “the authoritative version of reality” that are maintained, reinforced, and manipulated by political elites. By using a “specific interpretation of reality,” as Hilgartner and Bosk contend (1988:58), claim-makers negotiate boundaries of knowledge and a shared understanding of the situation while actively engaging in the “production and maintenance of meaning.” In this sense, the frame of a news article is an imprinted version of a power discourse, reflecting the boundaries of power and structure over an issue, which in turn directs interpretations. The choice of what facts to include and which facts to exclude sets the boundaries around a news story, determining what is newsworthy and what is not (Cohen 1997).

In the same context, a media frame may draw the audience’s attention to a certain aspects of a news story by highlighting some factors over others, such as de-emphasizing or over-emphasizing broader socio, political, historical factors. As Kahneman and Tversky (1984) argue, frames are defined by what they exclude as well as include. As a result, the omission of some aspect of reality, problems, and groups of people can be as critical as their inclusion, to its influence on the construction of perceived reality. The concept of symbolic annihilation, a term coined by Tuchman (1978), refers to this aspect of framing by which symbolic absence of the ‘Other’ in mass media contributes to the further elimination of marginalized social groups from public consciousness (Tuchman 1998). In this context, social groups conceived to be more similar to ‘Us,’ those that display in-group values, tend to be represented more favorably and frequently in media compared to the out-group, or dissimilar ‘Others.’ The frequent representation of the favorable in-groups, subsequently, reinforces viewers’ affinity toward these



groups, as opposed to the underrepresented ‘Others’ which are further ‘Otherized’ through this process.

For Pierre Bourdieu (2001: 119), symbolic annihilation is a form of symbolic violence, executed for the most part by channels of communication and cognition, through denial of legitimate public presence. Moreover, symbolic annihilation in the media sends an implied message to the audience about the social value of certain groups of people and what it means to be a member of that group whether socially valued or marginalized (Klein and Shiffman 2009). These types of representation further intensify the dichotomous structure of Othering which reduce the ‘Other’ to a few, simple, fixed, and presumably essential characteristics (Katy Steele 2014)

### *Propaganda*

Similar to framing, propaganda is described as the selection and the deliberate manipulation of information in a particular light so that it creates an impression different to that originally intended (Jowett and O’Donne 2006). Harold Lasswell (1938), one of the pioneers of Propaganda study, defines propaganda as a mechanism of influencing public opinion and consent, and thus as a tool for social control. Operating within a multilayered, self-perpetuating mechanism, propaganda is more effective when it is in line with the intended audiences’ existing beliefs and opinions. As the sociologist Jacques Ellul (1973) argues, “propaganda is the most effective when it reinforced already held opinions and beliefs.” (p.12)

Propaganda can relate to framing in the sense that they both cover issues in a certain way in order to support or promote particular viewpoints in line with power interests. Functioning on

emotional levels, propaganda is used to defame opponents or to deify a certain cause in line with power interests. The most significant feature of wartime propaganda, for example, is its role in expanding the dichotomized narrative of enemy formation. With wide dissemination of atrocities perpetrated by the perceived enemy, propaganda fuels public hatred and anger towards opponents and further justifies wars. As Jowett and O'Donne (2006:215) note, such wartime propaganda is designed to "strengthen the fighting spirit of the nation, generate fear of defeat, mobilize funds, and to prolong the war."

Propaganda and framing are different in that framing can be, and often is, unconscious, as Entman argues: "Communicators make conscious or unconscious framing judgments in deciding what to say, guided by frames that organize their belief system" (Entman, 1993, p. 53). However, propaganda operates on a more intentional and overt goal-directed level, in line with the power elite interest. The relationship between the two can better be expressed as a continuum rather than distinct points, as the two forms of communication can often times overlap depending on the desired message.

### *Media in Iran*

In this section I examine the relationship between Iran's authoritarian regime and its news media system. By analyzing the level of compliance to governmental rhetoric, as demonstrated by two Iranian newspapers, I examine the constructed flow of government-sponsored messages within their press system.

In most authoritarian governments a single operating base, a control center, centralizes all functions of the media, helping to establish and reinforce the government's message (Klein

2012). This control center is often embodied by an official government agency and appointed a euphemistic moniker like the “Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda” in Nazi Germany, the “Central Propaganda Department” in the People’s Republic of China, and the “Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance” in Iran. Operating as the factories of government information aiming at controlling the flow of information, these official agencies carry the necessary authority to commandeer all the essential functions of media outlets and news organizations. In the context of Iran, as a result of the consolidation of media outlets, the government is able to reframe and redirect public discourse away from local dissidents and toward its hegemonic ideological narratives.

Iranian media operates under the presumption of free speech. Article 4 of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Press Law, forbids all types of censorship: "No official or unofficial authority has the right to exert pressure on the press for the publication of any material or article, or to attempt to censor or control the press" (Press Law 1985). However, article 6 of that same law, forbids publishing material which "creates divisions among the different strata of society," or "harms the basis of the Islamic Republic" (Press Law 1985). It is clear that such an all-inclusive general language exposes the law to broad interpretation. Ghanbari (2009) further argues that such ambiguities open the law to the “arbitrary application in its prohibition of harmful discourses to the principles of Islam or public interest” (Ghanbari and Abu-Hassan 2009: 25). In this regard, the press law fails to provide a clear-cut framework for journalists to work within, and more importantly this ambiguity creates an environment where self-censorship becomes a norm.

According to Iranian constitutional law unlike radio and television, which are run directly

by the state, newspapers can be owned by either the state or individuals (Dehghan 2009). However, whether private or state-run, all print media is strongly dependent on government subsidies. State subsidies enable the government to influence media content. This influence is exerted through an imbalanced distribution of state subsidies between different types of print media. By cutting-off the privately owned, reformist press from state funds (completely or partially), these outlets are forced to comply with state hegemonic rhetoric and to work under the state's predefined framework (Dehghan, 2009; Khiabany, 2007; Klein 2012).

The independence of print media, however, was improved remarkably after the victory of the traditional left wing of the revolution renamed as *Islah-talaban*, or “Reformists” in the presidential elections of 1997. It was during the period of Khatami's presidency (1997-2005), when many newspapers, for the first time, took independent editorial positions and became platforms for criticizing the state. However, in 2005, with the surprise win of the conservative candidate Mahmud Ahmadinejad, the right-wing faction of the revolution, which called themselves the *Osul-garayan* or “Principlists,” took over control and turned the tide against the Reformist faction, which resulted in the permanent closure of many reformist newspapers and the arrest of a number of their journalists.

In studying the IRI political structure, it is worth mentioning that the government itself is not monolithic, but rather is composed of agencies and sets of actors who may sometimes work at cross purposes to each other. Hence, there is often no single “party line” but rather those of multiple and competing factions within and between state agencies. Based on variations in political aspiration and ideology, newspapers can be categorized into proponents of different sections of the government: the State cabinet, the *Majlis* (Parliament), and the Judiciary with

additional sub-groups within the Reformists and Principlists. Therefore, unlike Iranian television and radio, print media in Iran carries a more varied and divergent set of messages (Dehghan 2009).

The private reformist papers, typically representing a pro-democratic cross-section of Iranian society, provide alternative political and economic viewpoints. This alternative outlook is highly visible in their subtle dissent on the coverage of specific issues, such as the Israel-Palestine Conflict (Shahidi 2007). For instance, during the 2014 Gaza War, reformist papers, specifically *Shargh*, were criticized for their “lackluster” coverage of the conflict. The Principlist news website, Young Journalists Club, in a long report, compared the front page of reformist papers with the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*’ who reported extensively on the 2014 Gaza War. In their report, the Principlist outlet attacked Reformists for approaching the issue in a “weaker” and “more biased” way compared even to the U.S. media (PWYJC July22, 2014).

In another example a state TV news program, 20:30, challenged reformists’ media coverage of the 2014 Gaza war and linked it to the reformists’ alleged silence during the 2009 post-election protests, when protesters were chanting the controversial slogan, “Neither Gaza nor Lebanon, my life for Iran”(Karami 2014). In response to these accusations, Reformist’s papers denied any connection to such slogans or the protests, and the director of *Shargh*, tweeted: “Shargh knows Gaza to be a humanitarian issue and not partisan or political. If television and Principlist media are honest, it is best to not to approach the issue this way.” (Mehdi Rahmadian, July 22, 2014) These cases help illustrate the broad political parallelism of the Iranian press that is evolved from the competing factions and interests in the political environment of Iran.

In contrast to the reformist press, the directed focus of government-sponsored Principlist press follows the dichotomous ideological narrative of the IRI. The main goal of the government-sponsored media, as Klein (2012) puts it, “is to create a cynical framework that can mobilize the masses into a single defense-minded body, reliant on their government for strong national direction and guidance against ‘the Other.’” This dichotomized discourse gives the government the ability to demonize dissident voices, often by accusing the speaker of spying for the CIA, Mossad, or other Western countries, and therefore, creates a climate of fear (Klein 2012). In this regard, media in non-democratic systems typically presents the regime’s central ideology.

However, as discussed earlier, it is simplistic to regard media as a monolithic State-controlled voice. As discussed above, although the majority of news media systems in Iran are heavily in line with the government’s ideological framework, there are a few outlets representing minority political factions of society. The reformist papers, specifically, are relatively noncompliant in countering the state’s heavy control of the media. However, due to the repressive nature of the state, explicit papers are mostly short-lived and in danger of facing serious consequences from the state. Overall, the intense level of state involvement, the absence of political opponents and parties, opposing demands from the judiciary system to not cross the “red lines,” a limited advertising market, and economic dependence on the state, places great constraints on the private media and prevents it from potentially, and structurally, functioning as an effective part of the Iranian public sphere.

## METHOD SECTION

This research was conducted by gathering a sample of news stories and articles that covered the 2014 Gaza War. These articles were selected from two Iranian and two American newspapers. For each newspaper, online archives and databases were utilized in order to collect a substantial sample of data. Then, news stories were pulled collectively, centered on the timeline during which the war transpired: beginning from July 8, 2014 to September 1, 2014. I defined the unit of analysis as any article that appeared in each of these news outlets' website during the aforementioned period. For U.S. newspapers, in addition to the date range, a keyword search was employed using online archives. Words such as 'Gaza war,' 'Israel,' 'Palestine,' and ' Hamas' were used in the search engine in order to facilitate the searching process. For the Iranian press, date restrictions were first applied to the search engine, then the PDF version of each daily paper was downloaded manually from the archive, and with a close examination of each paper, specific articles were finally selected. Only news stories and foreign or international news items were collected. Those pieces related to the topic at hand, but not directly involving in the 2014 Gaza War, were excluded along with editorial, opinion pieces, letters, and commentary.

The selection of news sources is designed to show the flow of information and the type of framing in both the Iranian and U.S. press system. *Keyhan* was chosen as the state's news arm and as a representation of the ultra-conservative, hard-liner political stance, and *Shargh* was chosen for its mainstream popularity among the Reformists' faction, and its function as the existing subtle dissent against the conservative faction. For the American press sources, I selected the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, because they are the top two highest circulated print and online paywall-protected news sources across the U.S. (2015 Pew annual

report on American Journalism). Initially 60 articles per newspaper were selected to produce a sample representative of the news coverage of that outlet. After eliminating the op-ed pieces and duplicate stories, a total of 52 articles from *New York Times*, 50 articles from *Wall Street Journal*, 47 articles from *Sharq*, and 48 articles from *Kayhan* constituted my sample. Later the relevant articles were downloaded as PDF and imported into ATLAS.ti for content analysis. Then each article was subject to multiple close readings for the purpose of analyzing the themes, frames, and use of language associated with my research questions.

### *Coding Process*

In order to answer my research questions, news samples were analyzed along several dimensions:

*Actors and their presence:* In every news story, the first few paragraphs sets the stage for the story by describing the main events and establishing the principle actors of the article. In this regard, the first paragraph of each article is the most important paragraph for a news story. It establishes the main themes and gives the reader information about the basic facts and people involved in an event. In order to detect actors and the amount of space, attention, and presence given to each, first each article is analyzed to identify the main actor(s). Second, in regards to the presence of each actor, the frequency and the patterns of commentary and quoting, direct and indirect quotes were counted and analyzed. Direct quotes are the exact words of a speaker and are enclosed in quotation mark. Indirect quotes are paraphrases of a speaker's words. Both direct and indirect quotes have different functions but are often used to lead the reader to identify with the speaker (Almeida 2011). Other functions of quoting are: to describe an event, person, or place, to provide the background information such as the causes of an event and to predict the



consequences of an action or event. Generally speaking quotes imply expertise or knowledge on the part of the speaker.

For this study, I coded experts such as doctors, professors, independent researchers, analysts, and social workers as civilians; and actors associated with government, military, police, or paramilitary are coded as officials. Therefore, codes, *Israeli* and *Palestinian Civilians* refer to actors who do not serve in the government, army, or police. Conversely, codes *Israeli Officials* and *Palestinian Officials* referred to non-civilians actors. As these codes emerged, a general theme presented itself: *Hamas, Israeli Army and Israeli Government* (one code), *Palestinian Civilians, Israeli Civilians, And Peace Negotiations*. Similarly, these codes emerged in relevance to actors' presence and commentary: *Quote-Israeli Official, Quote-Israeli Civilians, Quote-Palestinian Officials, and Quote-Palestinian Civilians*.

*Tone in defining actors:* In order to analyze the tone associated with actors, each article was searched for the presence of words, phrases, and labels indicating negative or positive emotions. Codes that emerged from these themes are: *Hamas Aggression, Blaming Hamas, Empowering Hamas, Israeli Aggression, Israeli Weakness, Israel Normalizing And Justifying Actions, And Palestinians Aggression*. Consequently, the tone associated with each article was analyzed which resulted in applications of such codes: *Hamas Affirmative, Hamas Critical, Israel Affirmative, Israel Critical, And Descriptive With No Evaluation*.

Finally, in a more in-depth analysis, news articles were searched to detect other framing patterns concerning: the frequency of mentioning Palestinian death as well as Israelis,' representation and personification of Palestinian victims as well as Israeli victims, and finally

presentation of historical and regional context. Similarly, these themes resulted in the development of the following codes: *Israeli Death Count*, *Israeli Casualties*, *Palestinian Death Count*, *Palestinian Casualties*, *Personalization Of Israeli Victims*, *Personalization Of Palestinian Victims*, *Historical and Regional Context*.

## RESULTS

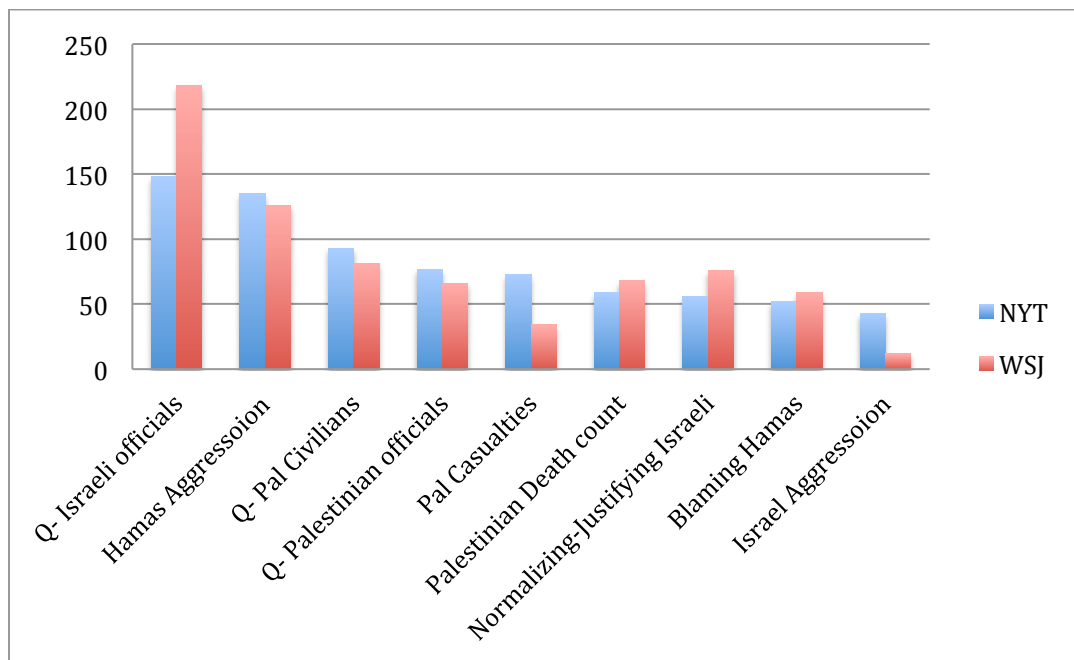
### *Overview*

Overall 43 codes were applied to 197 articles, of which 52 were from the *New York Times*, 50 were from the *Wall Street Journal*, 47 were from *Sharq*, and finally 48 were from *Kayhan*. It is notable that the *New York Times* had the largest sample size and average word count. The shortest articles in my sample were found in *Kayhan*, which were usually followed by a provocative graphic image. However, since the focus of this study is on textual news products, pictures were excluded.

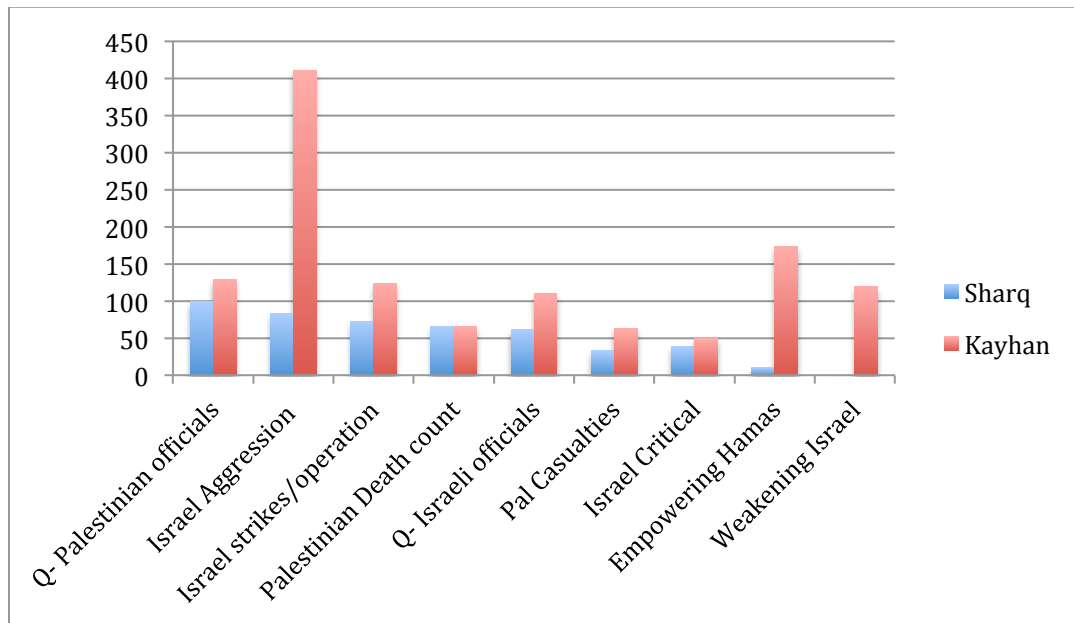
Figure 1 shows the top nine codes as they appear in the U.S. sample. This figure shows that the *Israeli Officials Quote* is the most frequent code used in U.S. newspapers. *Hamas Aggression* is the second most frequently used code for both newspapers, followed by *Palestinian Civilian Quotes*. The frequent use of *Israeli Officials Quote* in the U.S sample, compared to the use of *Palestinian Officials Quote*, indicates the prevalence of official Israeli voices in my data, which points to the United States' heavy reliance on the Israeli government and their army for information about the conflict. Furthermore, the prevalence of the *Hamas Aggression* code indicates that U.S. news media is more likely to present Hamas as the aggressor, given that this frame was used 261 times in the U.S. sample.

Figure 2 similarly indicates the top nine codes as they appeared in the Iranian sample, with the top two codes being the *Palestinian Officials* and *Israeli Aggression*. Contrary to the American press, the Palestinian officials' voice dominates the Iranian newspapers with an emphasis on Israeli violence as a key component of its news narrative. However, there is a significant difference in the prevalence of these codes within the Iranian sample. For example, although it is the second most frequent code for both newspapers, *Israeli Aggression* was used in *Kayhan* more than 400 times whereas for *Sharq* this code is only used 83 times. Moreover, codes such as *Hamas Empowerment* and *Israel Weakness*, which will be explained later, are aimed at creating a negative context for further criticizing Israel which are only used in *Kayhan*. This difference points out the diverse approaches these two newspapers have in covering the conflict.

In the following section, these codes and their implication on the news coverage of each paper will be discussed in details.



**Figure 1 Code frequency in U.S newspapers**



**Figure 2 Code frequency in Iranian newspapers**

### Coding

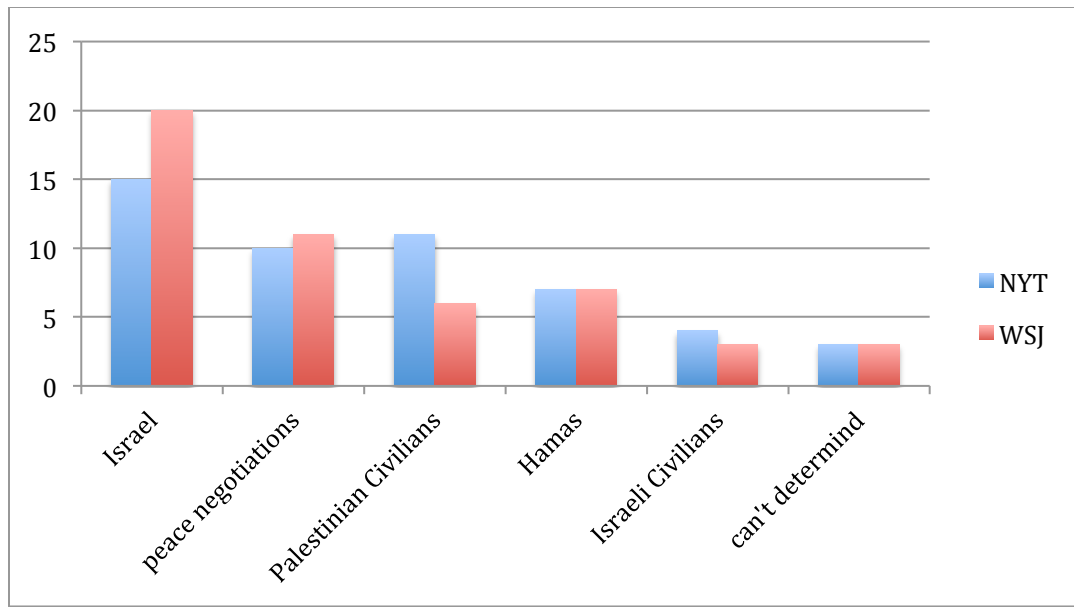
There were 7 major themes that developed in my coding: *Main Themes*, *Quotes*, *Representation Of Hamas*, *Representation of Israel*, *Historical and Regional Context*, *Death Counts and Personalization of Victims*, and *Overall Tone of Newspapers*. Each theme also had subthemes that developed from the coding process. *Main themes* are the specific themes that the news articles choose to represent the story. *Quotes* illustrate the presence and prevalence of Israeli and Palestinian voices in the news sample. *Representation of Hamas* is concerned with the depiction of Hamas in the news samples. Similarly, *Representation of Israel* is concerned with the image of Israeli actors constructed through the news sample. *Historical and Regional Context* covers the inclusion of historical and regional accounts in the sample. *Death Counts and Personalization of Victims* is concerned with the description and proportion of deaths and

casualties presented in the news sample, as well as personifications of victims on both sides.

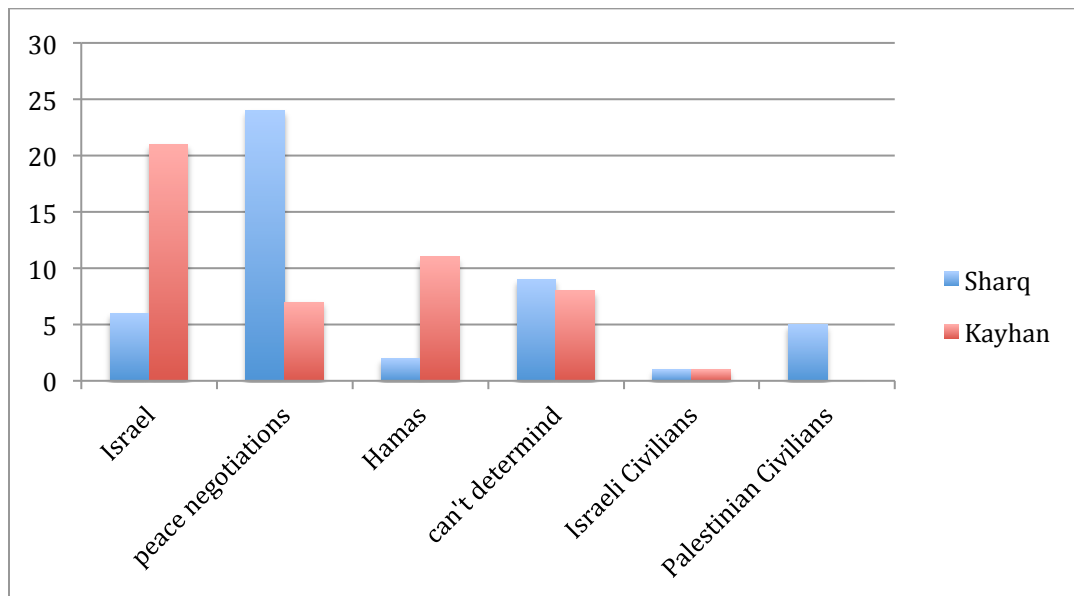
Finally *Overall Tone of Newspapers* is the general direction of each newspaper in regards to how it depicts Israeli and Palestinian actors.

### *Main theme*

This code refers to the specific theme or the topic that the news articles choose to define the story by. As indicated by figure 3, the main theme of the news coverage in U.S. sample is *Israel*, followed by *Peace Negotiations* and *Palestinian Civilians*. The prevalence of Israeli actors in this sample indicates that more information has been circulated around Israel. In the Iranian sample, there is a significant difference between the two newspapers in regards to the main themes of coverage (See Figure 4). The main theme for *Sharq* is *Peace Negotiations*, whereas for *Kayhan*, *Israel* is the most prevalent theme followed by *Hamas*. This further highlights *Sharq*'s and *Kayhan*'s different approaches toward the conflict. For *Sharq*, diplomatic efforts toward peace is the prevalent theme for nearly half of their news articles; whereas for *Kayhan*, Israeli military actions is the major theme they explore.



**Figure 3 Main Themes in the U.S. sample**



**Figure 4 Main Themes in Iranian sample**

### *Quotes*

This set of codes were applied any time a direct or indirect quote, associated with actors, was provided in the news article. Figure 5 and Figure 6 present the frequency of sources of direct

and indirect quotes for the U.S. and Iranian sample respectively. As shown in figure 5, quotes from Israeli officials are the most prevalent code in U.S. sample followed by quotes from Palestinian civilians. According to figure 5, Israeli officials were quoted more than 350 times in total, which is nearly double the number of Palestinian civilian quotes with 173 in total, and three times more than Palestinian officials' quotes, with only 140 quotes in total. Israeli official quotes often involved political commentary and astute observations by Israeli politicians and pundits. In other words, U.S. newspapers adopted the Israeli officials' talking points on the conflict and disregarded the views of Palestinian officials and Hamas. Moreover, when quoting Palestinian officials, Hamas' voice is typically muted from the coverage, and instead Fatah's point of view is given priority.

The difference between Hamas and Fatah is rooted in their objectives, governance, and their relationship with Israel. Fatah recognizes the legitimacy of the Israeli state and rejects armed struggle against them, which is in accordance with U.S. foreign policy toward Israel. Hamas, on the other hand is viewed as a terrorist organization by the United States for their continued armed struggle and oftentimes suicide attacks against Israel. Tension between the two organizations began with the death of Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasser Arafat in 2004, and escalated with the January 2006 Palestinian election. Fatah's long-term political dominance was challenged by a Hamas majority win in the election. The U.S. and Israel rejected the result and imposed sanctions against Hamas. Fatah refused to build a coalition with Hamas, and the U.S. supported Fatah with arms and military training and plotted a coup against the now Gaza-run government of Hamas. After a period of violent clashes, in 2007, the two organizations finally came into an agreement over splitting territories into Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip and

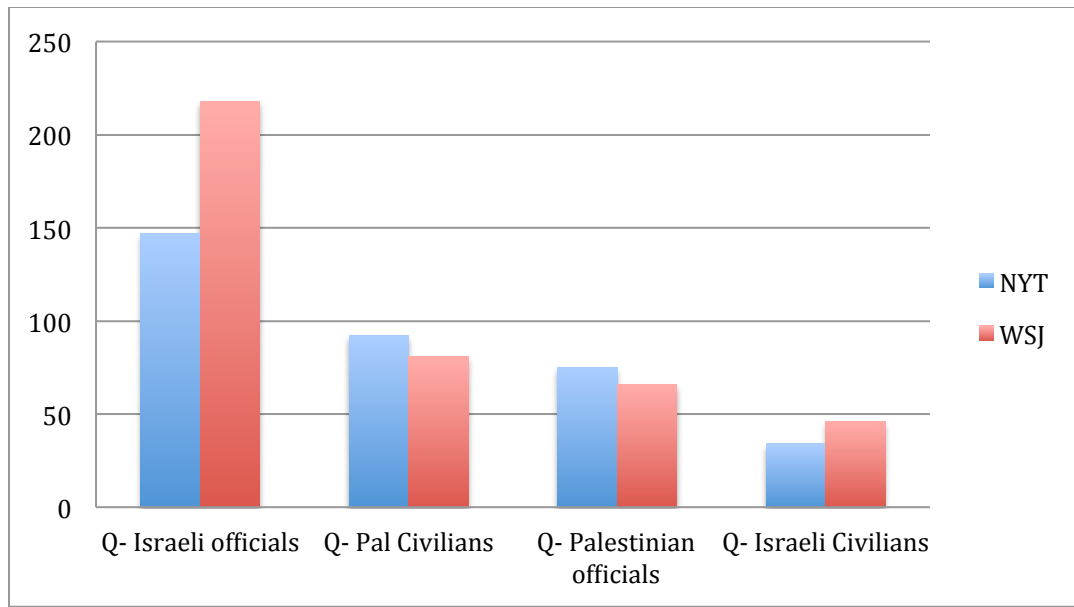
Fatah-controlled West Bank (Brown 2010).

As figure 5 indicates, the second most prevalent code in U.S sample is the *Palestinian Civilians Quote*. The high presence of Palestinian civilian voices can partially be explained by reporters' tendency to interview the victims of war and conflict (Peterson 2015). As such because the carnage and devastation takes place in Gaza, the hardships experienced by the Palestinian people are given more attention in American media outlets compared to that of Israeli civilian voices.

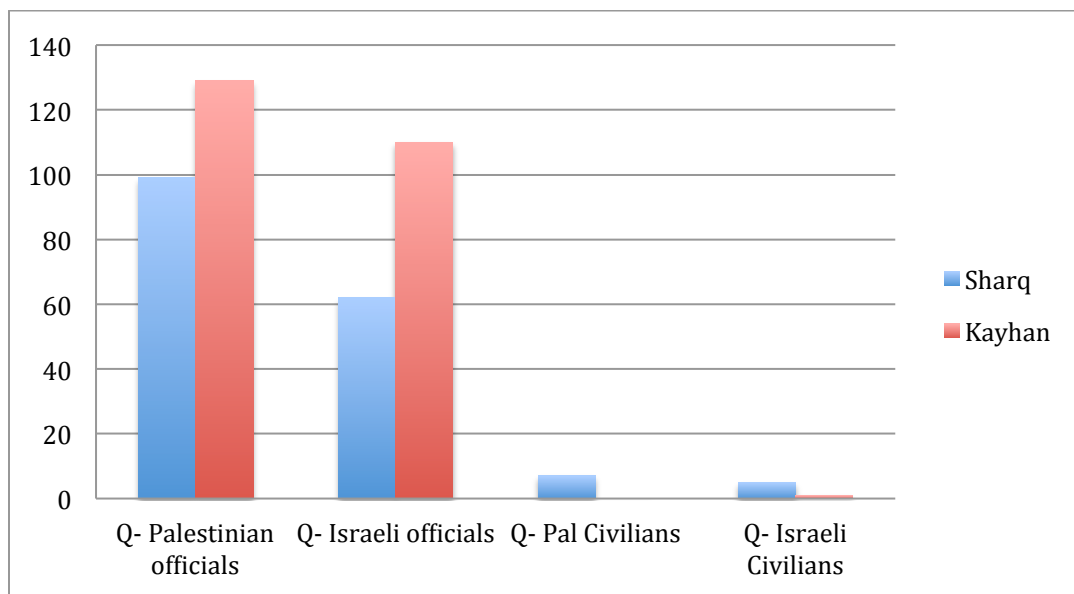
Conversely figure 6 shows that the Iranian news sample is dominated by Palestinian officials' voice. The prevalence of quotes from Palestinian officials in the coverage of Iranian newspapers indicates their pro-Palestinian tendency, which is in line with Iran official diplomatic relations. Unlike that paid to Palestinian officials, much less attention was paid to Palestinian civilians. The absence of Palestinian civilians' voices in the Iranian sample could be due to the Iranian journalists' lack of physical access to Palestine and the battleground. As a result of the Iranian and Israeli political relationship, Iranians are banned from traveling to Israel; hence, Iranian journalists were cut off from Gaza and the Palestinian civilians during the 2014 Gaza War. The lack of access to Gaza leads Iranian news media to heavily rely on outside sources (See Figure 7).

In the following section, each of these codes will be discussed in details and with examples from the sample.

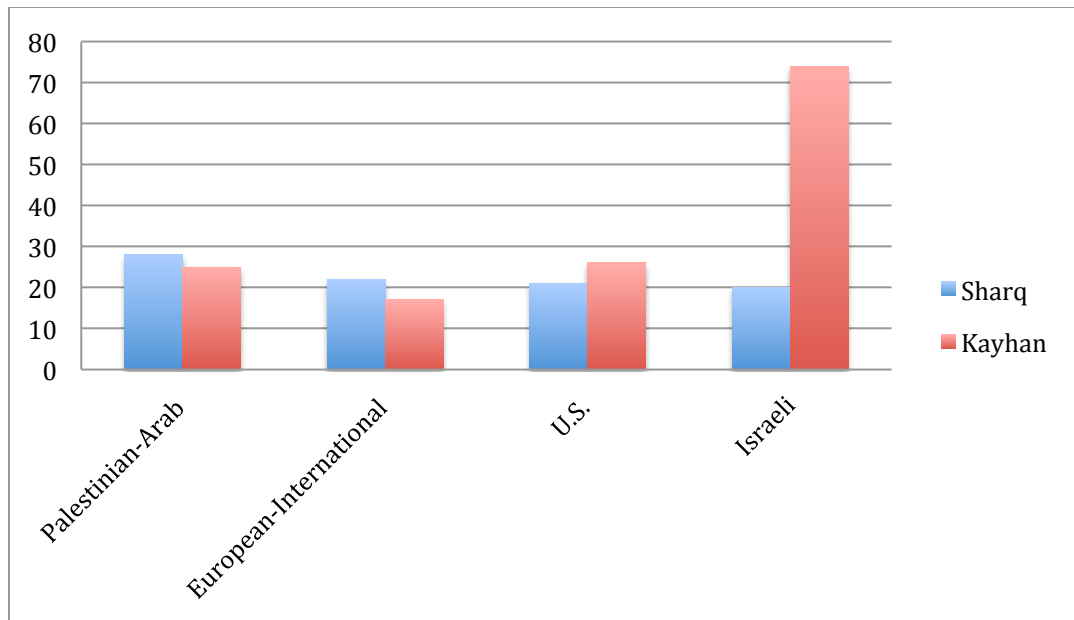




**Figure 5 Quote frequency in U.S. sample**



**Figure 6 Quote frequency in Iranian sample**



**Figure 7 Sources of news in Iranian sample**

### *Israeli Officials Quote*

This code was applied any time a direct or indirect quote was associated with Israeli officials. The most prevalent code in the U.S. news sample is the *Israeli Officials Quote*. A significant amount of space is given to Israeli commentary in both the U.S. and Iranian sample (See Figures 5 and 6). In the U.S. sample, articles containing Israeli voices often speak in favor of diplomacy, cooperation, and negotiations. An example of this perspective comes from the *New York Times* on July 29 quoting Dover Tzahal an IDF spokesperson:

“[the] IDF in no way intentionally targets civilians’ lives and has demonstrated its willingness to abort operations in favor of ceasefire and peace negotiations.”

The prevalence of Israeli official voices in the U.S. sample indicates that reporters gathered their responses on the conflict from the Israeli officials more often than Hamas. This indicates

that the U.S. media heavily relied on official Israeli channels as a source for information about the conflict. Moreover, this frame of representation presents Israeli voices as moderate and reasonable, and shapes the construction of public knowledge surrounding the conflict and the Israeli society in general.

In the Iranian sample, Israeli officials' narrative was often represented as radical ideology, with a profound lack of concern for civilians' lives. An example of this representation from *Kayhan*, quoting Alex Fishman, an Israeli military official:

“We are moving with full forces, we are using all our resources to destruct tunnels, nothing could stop us, neither collateral damage nor civilian casualties.”

In this quote *Kayhan* portrays Israel as expressing a radical ideology by highlighting the callousness of Israeli military official. The official is shown as not caring for collateral damage or civilian casualties and thus supports the idea that Israel is willing to go to extremes in order to achieve its objectives. Such quotes in both of the samples provide discursive substances to the presentation of Israelis.

### *Palestinian Officials Quotes*

This code was applied any time a direct or indirect quote was associated with Palestinian officials. As shown in figure 6, a significant amount of space in the Iranian sample is assigned to Palestinian officials' commentary. In the Iranian sample the Palestinian official narrative is often framed as rational, strong, and determined. As a result of this frame of representation the Iranian press presents Palestinian officials as legitimate and rational which in turn leads readers to find their actions morally and politically justified.

*Sharq* on July 17<sup>th</sup> quoted Ismail Haniyeh, the senior leader of Hamas:

“The permanent truce means the end of the Gaza blockade... We support Abbas and the Palestinian team of negotiators in Cairo; we are confident that despite the pressure, they will do their best to achieve the best for Palestinian people.... We are close to reaching a political agreement that is the result of Palestinian people’s long-time resistance”  
(translation is mine).

In the U.S. sample the Palestinian official voice, specifically that of Hamas, was often presented as radical, militant, and violent. Within this frame, Hamas members express their willingness to kill, to die, and to embrace violence in order to achieve their demands. An example of this perspective comes from the *Wall Street Journal* on July 10<sup>th</sup>:

"There is no cease-fire. We are in a war," said Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum. "We will not stop. If they want a cease-fire, the Israelis have to stop and pay for everything that they did."

Similarly on July 9<sup>th</sup>:

"The resistance will not raise the white flag," said Ismail Al Ashkar, a Hamas legislator in Gaza. "We will only stop when they raise the white flag and meet the demands of the resistance."

These presentations are incomplete and reductive. In most cases, such as the previous example, throughout the article there is no indication of what Hamas’ demands actually are. In truth, Hamas calls for a ten-year truce, which includes the lifting of the Israeli and Egyptian blockade. Most notably Hamas has asked for the withdrawal of Israeli tanks from the Gaza border, the release of all Palestinians arrested after the murder of three Israeli teenagers, establishing an international seaport and airport under the supervision of the United Nations, having the freedom

to pray at the Al Aqsa Mosque without excessive Israeli control, the reestablishment of an industrial zone, and improvements to further economic development in the Gaza strip (Blumenthal 2015).

### *Palestinian Civilians Quote*

This code was applied any time a direct or indirect quote was associated with Palestinian civilians. As figure 5 shows, Palestinian civilians are the second most frequently quoted actors in the U.S. sample; similarly according to 1, this frame is the third most frequently used code in the U.S. sample. Despite the high prevalence of the Palestinian voice in American newspapers the narrative itself was mostly concerned with Palestinian casualties as a result of fighting between Israel and Hamas. Thus the reporting from Gaza focused on members of the public involved in the conflict and victims or the families of victims. In this presentation, voices of the interviewed individuals become the embodiment of a national, political, or a social movement. Therefore, readers may interpret the speakers' viewpoint as the defining perspective of the entire nation.

The *New York Times* on July 5, 2014 quoted a Palestinian:

“We’re not asking for Jerusalem,” he said, expressing, like many Gazans, a viewpoint different from that of Hamas. “All we want are our humanitarian needs.”

Another example of this type comes from the *Wall Street Journal* on July 18, 2014:

“The enemies of Hamas are stupid enough to take part of the burden off Hamas,” said Omar Shaban, a Gaza-based economist and former political candidate. “I’m independent. I’m not Hamas; I’m not Fatah. Now I’m 100 percent sure it’s Abbas who is at fault.”

Use of ‘many’ in the first example represent a generalized viewpoint on the basis of narrow evidence or an unrepresentative sample size. Similarly in the second example, a single viewpoint

is promoted in line with the existing frame of placing the blame on the Palestinian authorities. These representations are in fact incomplete and reductive, emphasizing a position that is reinforced by the power structure. As such, 69.77% of the Palestinian civilians quotes were placed at the end of the article where they are less likely to be read. According to a study on online media usage, on a typical article only 24% of readers scroll down the page at all, and less than one third of those readers engage with the last two third of the article (Haile 2014). The positioning of Palestinian civilian quotes at the end of the article helps to bury the Palestinian point of view while at the same time giving the appearance of fair, equal, and balanced coverage to both sides of the issue. Despite this, Palestinian civilians are often used to vouch for the severity of the situation, the blame of which is often placed on Hamas, or sometimes equally dispersed between Hamas and Israel.

### *Representation of Hamas*

The Islamic Resistance Movement known more commonly by the acronym Hamas won the general election held in January 2006 in the West Bank and Gaza strip for the Palestinians. Since its founding in 1981, Hamas has focused its attention primarily on two activities, the first is what they refer to as ‘endorsing charity and service to the Palestinian people’ and the second is armed resistance to the Israeli occupation (Roy 2011). However, the pervasive notion reinforced by the news media is that Hamas is a racist, terrorist group with genocidal intentions toward the Israeli people (Hroub 2000). This reductive perception undermines the multifaceted nature of Hamas as a socio-political movement deeply rooted in Palestinian society, a political party, and a legislative government. As such, this narrative reduces Hamas’ history, ideology, and religiosity, into a singular notion: “a terrorist militant group” (Hroub 2000:50). In a similar vein, upon

reading the U.S. news stories, and as evident in figure 1, the prevailing frame in regards to Hamas was *Hamas aggression*. Conversely, for the Iranian news samples, the frame of representation for Hamas was *empowering Hamas*.

### *Hamas Aggression*

This code was applied in reference to any situation that affiliated Hamas with violence and aggression. This code is the second most prevalent code in the U.S. sampling data, presenting Hamas violence as the dominant frame of representation throughout various news articles. This reductive perspective depicts Hamas as a terrorist organization, with an emphasis on establishing Hamas as having an inherently violent nature. Examples of this frame abound in the U.S. news discourses. A typical report with this frame emphasizes on the destructive nature of Hamas. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported on July 28:

"Fifty-three Israeli soldiers and three civilians have been killed in the current fighting. Rockets fired by Hamas militants with the explicit aim of inflicting pain and causing disruption to Israeli communities have caused injuries, including shock, to nearly 600 civilians."

A similar report in the *New York Times*, on Aug 14 differentiates between Hamas and Fatah, and explains that Hamas' initial purpose is to reclaim Israel:

"Unlike Fatah, Hamas claims the whole of the British mandate of Palestine as land granted by Allah, which cannot be ceded. In other words, Israel is illegitimate and its occupants should "go home" The most any senior Hamas official ever offered was a "hudna," a cease-fire, which the Prophet Muhammad offered enemies to restore his strength."

Statements of this type emphasizes Hamas' focus on the destruction and delegitimization

of Israel, conforms Hamas' depiction as an irrational organization opposed to peace and non-violence. In addition, as evident in the above article quote, Hamas is placed within a religious context, criticizing Muslim beliefs and associating Islam with terrorist elements. This frame is described in another excerpt from the *New York Times* on Aug 14:

“Shlomo Avineri, an Israeli political scientist, is struck by the effectiveness of small, religiously inspired groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas, which believe in martyrdom through battle. “Arab state and military structures are not so good, but these small, highly motivated religious groups have resilience and are ready to sacrifice themselves and their own people.”

Such representation of the Islamic other with an emphasis on the radically different value systems, utilize a dichotomous logic of ideal religions (Talbot 2008), which is positioned in opposition to more ‘moderate’ Christian values.

Other descriptions that prompt this frame are assertions that Hamas is corrupt, dysfunctional, and care more for warfare and political interests than its own people's lives and welfare. The *New York Times* on August 1, 2014 reports:

“...Hamas itself has no urgent reason to end the fighting. As in the past, the huge toll in civilian lives has roused an international outcry against Israel. Hamas evidently believes that sustaining the fighting can eventually rouse enough international pressure on Israel to compel it to open Gaza and release Palestinian prisoners.”

This narrative serves to dehumanize Hamas as a heartless and cruel opportunist who easily ignores the massive toll on its own people, in favor of the political interests and international recognition gained from the Gaza War, without any inclination toward a broader vision of historical context.



The *Wall Street Journal* gives an example of this frame on July 28:

“Politically isolated after breaks with Syria, Iran and especially Egypt, and its effort at reconciling with Fatah, Hamas has all but given up on governing Gaza to focus on the battlefield. Israelis have expressed outrage that thousands of tons of concrete built a vast network of tunnels rather than schools or hospitals, but that argument has little traction in Gaza, where many see violence as the only language that works.”

Similar to the *New York Times* report, this narrative depicts a violent, cruel, and power thirsty image of Hamas, unresponsive to the social needs of those that they govern and who would rather spend money on artillery and tunnels. Furthermore this narrative depicts a similar pejorative image for Palestinians as people not open to peace, and oblivious to their own greater needs by pursuing war and supporting Hamas. Conversely, this report depicts Israeli officials as rational, speaking in favor of non-violence and diplomacy who unlike Hamas, care about the well-being of the Palestinian people.

A further point to make about this frame is the Western-centric perspective that is present in the U.S. sample, for example the *New York Times* on July 14, wrote:

“The way to understand the Hamas decision-making calculus is not by Western perspective but by their own perspective,” said Alex Mintz, dean of the school of government at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, Israel. “Hamas, the leadership does not care so much about the civilian casualties; what he looks at is the military balance. They think they can gain more. They do not feel pressure...”

A similar example from the *Wall Street Journal* on August 12, compares Hamas with Fatah and describes Fatah as: "the more moderate and Western-leaning Palestinian Authority." Another example from the *New York Times*, August 25, shows the same West-centric view on

Palestinians:

“Jawdat N. Khoudary is one of Gaza’s wealthiest men, the owner of a large construction company... His family is anything but typical Gazans. Yasmeen, his daughter said she read “Lolita,” “Kafka on the Shore” and a Pakistani comedic novel, “A Case of Exploding Mangoes,” during the recent fighting; Hamza, his son, watched “Harry Potter” movies. But they heard the bombs, too, and had nightmares.”

Such narrative reinforces the Orientalist discourse and portrays Palestinian culture as backward; in Said’s term, as foreign, non-Western, and ultimately as Other (1978).

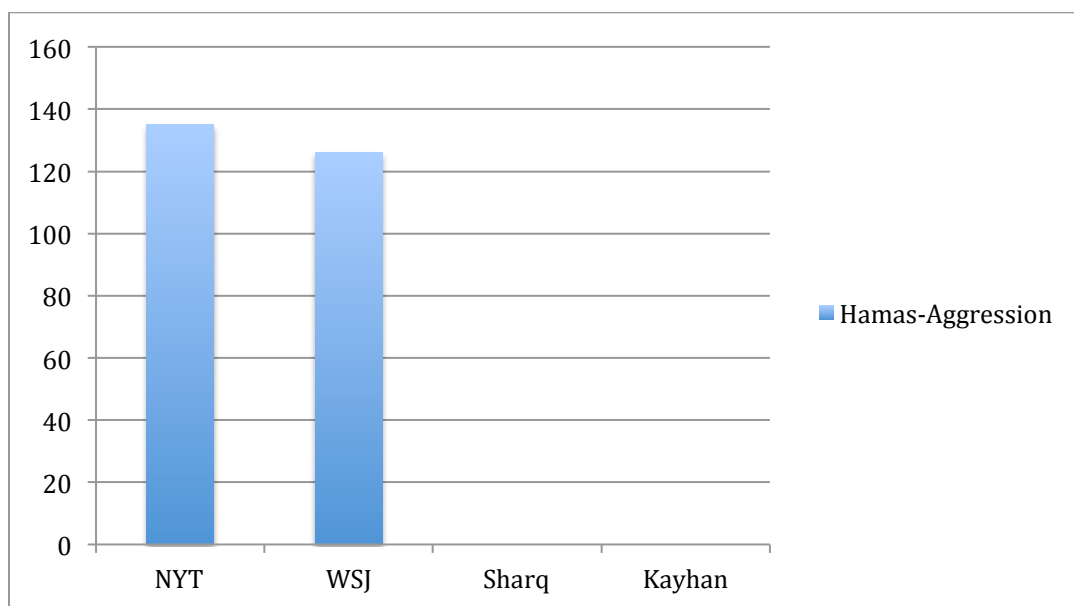
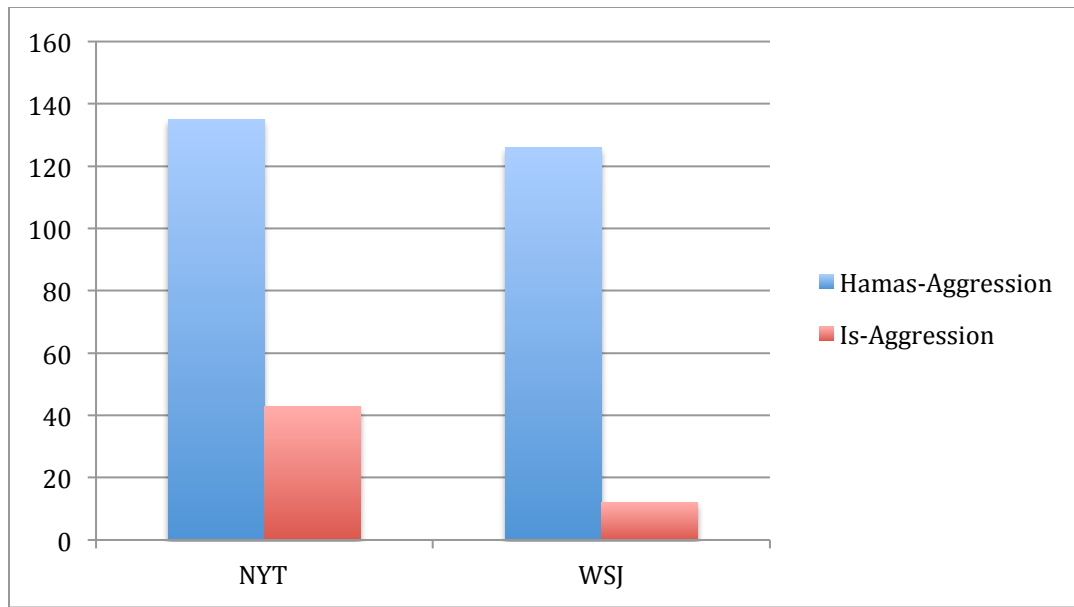


Figure 8 Hamas aggression in U.S. sample



**Figure 9 Hamas and Israel aggression in U.S. sample**

### *Naming*

In addition to the *Hamas Aggression* frame, names and labels are usually employed in order to further imply negative feelings. Upon reading the coverage of the conflict in the U.S. sample, a variety of names and labels were detected in the presentation of Hamas. Table 1 and 2 show the most frequently used descriptions for Hamas Aggression as it appeared in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. Table 1 highlights the phrases used in conjunctions with Hamas specifically and the Gaza war itself. Table 2 shows how Hamas is depicted as well as the Gaza War and the PLO. One of the most frequently used labels in describing Hamas is religion. Hamas is regularly identified with Islam and thus is always followed by the label “the Islamist group.” As such Hamas is defined as: “the Islamist group that rules Gaza,” “the Islamist movement that controls the Gaza Strip,” “the Islamic group that dominates Gaza,” “the dominant militant group in Gaza that Israel and much of the West regard as a terrorist

organization,” and “the Islamist faction that Israel deems a terrorist group, and had seized control of Gaza.” In these examples, not only is the aggressive image of Hamas reinforced, but also its political legitimacy is further discredited. By labeling Hamas as a political group who seized control over Gaza, the legitimacy of the election process, which was monitored by West, is impaired. Moreover, the principles of rights, in this case Palestinian people’s right to choose their politicians, a hallmark of Western democracies, is rejected. Other examples of naming include the *Wall Street Journal*’s depiction of Hamas as the “terror army” or “terror squad,” or “the devil in Gaza.”

<i>Hamas</i>	<i>Gaza War</i>
Gaza militant	Israeli attack on Gaza
Hamas the Islamist faction that dominate Gaza	Israeli occupation
Hamas, the Islamist faction it deems a terrorist group, seized control of Gaza	The air campaign
Palestinian militant group	Israel incursion
Hamas gunmen	Israel aerial assault
Terror Squad	Asymmetric warfare

**Table 1 New York Times Naming**

<i>Hamas</i>	<i>Gaza War</i>	<i>PLO</i>
Islamist militant group	Re-occupation of Gaza	The more moderate and Western-leaning Palestinian Authority

The Islamist movement		
The Islamist group that rules Gaza		
The Islamist movement that runs the Palestinian enclave		
Terror Army		

**Table 2 Wall Street Journal Naming**

### *Blaming Hamas*

This code was applied to any situation in which the news article attributes culpability to Palestinians or Hamas, implying fatalities are Hamas' fault. This narrative mitigates Israeli responsibilities and leads the readers to believe that if it were not for Hamas firing rockets, Israeli actions would not take place. An example of this frame comes from the *Wall Street Journal* on July 20:

“Israel warned Palestinian civilians to move out of harm's way, but there will inevitably be civilian casualties because that is part of Hamas's political-military strategy. "For your safety you have to evacuate your house as soon as possible," goes one telephoned Israeli warning. "Go to the center of the city before 8 o'clock in the morning on Wednesday." But Hamas hides its immense arsenal of ever-longer range rockets in hospitals, mosques and, as we learned Thursday, even U.N. administered schools.”

In this example Israeli bombardment and the subsequent destruction of hospitals, mosques, and civilian casualties were justified, and the blame was placed on Hamas who allegedly hid its weaponry in such places. Similarly in the *Wall Street Journal* on August 1<sup>st</sup>, Hamas is portrayed as the culpable agent in the conflict:

“Israel's offensive, its third in Gaza in six years, aims to degrade Hamas's arsenal of rockets. Almost 3,000 rockets have been fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel since the operation began, according to the Israeli military.”

Another example of this frame is represented in the *New York Times* on July 16:

“Though Israel initially set limited goals of halting the rocket assaults against it and degrading Hamas, the Islamist movement that dominates Gaza, the group’s tenacity and surprisingly deep arsenal have led to widespread calls to expand the mission. The military official said only “boots on the ground” could eradicate terrorism from Gaza and indicated that Israel was even considering a long-term reoccupation of the coastal territory.”

In some cases Palestinian civilians were deemed responsible for their own deaths. For example the *Wall Street Journal* on July 9 notes:

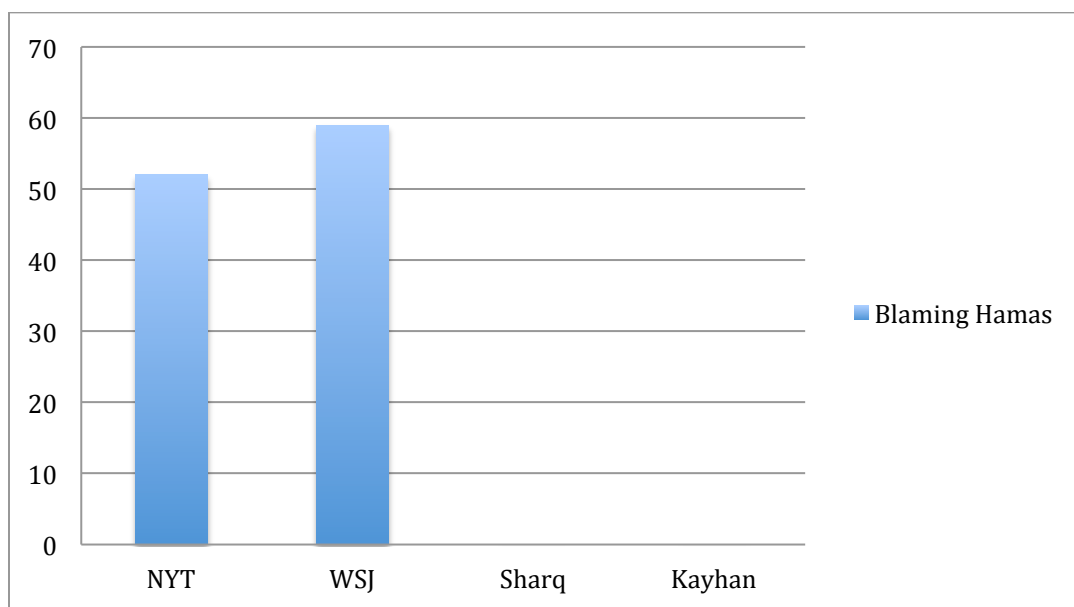
"Among the casualties in Gaza were seven Palestinians killed and two dozen injured—most of them civilians—after they ran into a house in the city of Khan Younis despite warnings by Israel's military that it was about to be bombed,"

Similarly in the *New York Times* on July 20:

“The chaos has made some outside observers ask why people did not leave earlier, before the ground offensive neared them. The Israeli military has said it has given Gazans every opportunity to avoid injury by calling on them to evacuate neighborhoods it is about to target. Leaflets were dropped in Shejaiya on Saturday, residents said, and a senior military official said warnings had begun days earlier.”

Thus we are able to see how the Palestinian people are held accountable to their fate. The blame for the civilian deaths and casualties are moved from Israeli military action and placed at the feet of the Palestinian people who did not evacuate in time, did not heed warnings from the

Israeli government, or who chose to remain in place despite the “best” efforts of the Israeli government to warn them of impending military action. Furthermore they are depicted as an existential threat, in many ways compliant with the acts of Hamas who hide their weapons among the Gazan civilians. They are depicted as an existential threat to Israel and blamed for their own deaths. This frame of analysis on the one hand minimizes Palestinian suffering while on the other hand diminishes the impact of military offences and destruction.

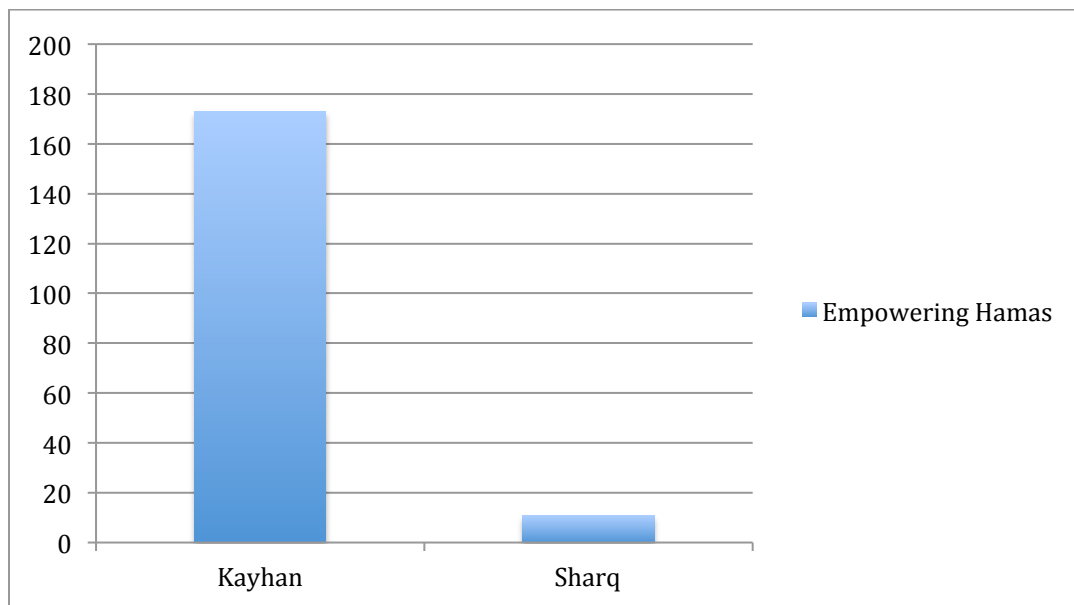


**Figure 10 Blaming Hamas**

### *Empowering Hamas*

This code was applied to any situation where Hamas' military capabilities were presented as being stronger and more efficient in controlling the conflict and setting terms of the peace negotiations. This frame of representation depicts Hamas as an exclusively resistance-oriented group, defining itself primarily in opposition to Israeli occupation, and as a political actor with

decisive influence in the regional political process. This frame maintains the illusion of Hamas victories even in the darkest of situations during the conflict. As such *Kayhan* declares Hamas as the winner of the war while completely neglecting the human cost imposed on Palestinians. Moreover, in focusing on Hamas' military capabilities this frame usually places an emphasis on Hamas' military operation and their achievements, including detailed description of their weaponry and military abilities, along with the number of Israeli victims and casualties.



**Figure 11 Empowering Hamas**

### *Representation of Israel*

A large number of articles examined in the U.S. sample, present a narrative in which Israel suffers from Hamas threats. For example the *New York Times* on August 29 reported:

“The repeated attacks through tunnels from Gaza raised the specter of underground operations on other borders. Hamas rockets reached all over Israel, and there is no protection from the mortar shells that killed two men and a 4-year- old boy in the war’s



final chapter. (On Friday, an off-duty soldier injured in a rocket attack a week before died, bringing the toll on the Israeli side to 71 — 64 of them soldiers killed in action.)”

In presenting the suffering of Israelis this frame implores the readers to sympathize with the Israeli right to self-defense and retaliation. As a result, this frame is closely connected with other codes such as *justifying Israeli actions* and lack of *historical and regional context*; each of which will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Israeli suffering is also framed in the broader international context of anti-Semitism and the threat of radical Islam:

“Restiveness among Israel’s Arab citizens and Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, along with anti-Semitism that reared in Europe and the rise of the radical Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, have only deepened Israelis’ anxiety.”

Here, the demarcation of “radical Islam” as the common enemy or “Other,” and the rhetorical pairing of Islamic separatist movements with neo-Nazi anti-Semitism, also leads to the demarcation of collective identity. This allows for the mobilization of audiences to carry out the conflict and forms an alliance between Western readers and Israel in opposition to the Palestinians, Islamic communities and other movements framed in terms of their opposition to “Jewish populations” rather than Israeli policies.

### *Israel Aggression*

This code is applied to any situation where Israel was affiliated with violence or was depicted as the aggressor. According to figure 12, the Iranian news sample is more inclined to attribute violence to Israeli actors. News articles in this sample overtly criticize Israel for

incidents of violent clashes and the expansive destruction of Gaza. The emphasized narrative here is the perpetual Israeli violence on Palestinians and its indiscriminate nature in the broader context of the Israeli occupation. In *Kayhan* case, this frame uses a heavy emotionally charged language in describing the trauma done to the Palestinians by the Israelis. As such, *Kayhan* amplifies the *Israel aggression* code with the excessive use of negative labels and names. Table 3 and 4 displays a list of labels used in the Iranian news sample to denounce Israel.

For example one of the most repeated labels is “Zionist.” Throughout the coverage of the conflict, Israeli actors, the army, and authority figures are repeatedly referred to as Zionists. While the title Zionist has a positive meaning in Israeli culture, it is highly charged with negative meaning for Iranians. Hence, when used in Iranian news articles, it is intended to insult the Israeli actors. In more extreme cases, *Kayhan* depicts a sub-human image of Israeli actors in the form of animals or evil incarnate: pythons, vipers, savages, pharaohs, fascists, criminals, or child killers. Additionally, in describing Israeli deaths negative words such as ‘cursed’ or ‘damned’ are often used. While for Palestinians killed by Israelis, *Kayhan* nearly always uses the word ‘*shahid*’ (martyr) which has a cultural and religious positive implication, rooted in Shia values of dying or being sacrificed in the cause of Allah (Hassan, 2004).

An article from *Kayhan* on July 27<sup>th</sup>, titled: “Israel is the viper who eats itself when it’s weak,” which stressed that Israel is weak and unable to confront Hamas and as a result reacts with full and overwhelming force in order to maintain control. Throughout the article, Israel is referred to as the “child killer regime”, with Israeli drone strikes, and its resulting deaths of Palestinian kids, compared to the Nazi’s crematorium.

In covering the Palestinian protest in West Bank, *Kayhan*, August 13<sup>th</sup>, frames a Palestinian protestor's suicidal assault of a city bus with an excavator as the martyrdom operation. "...while riding on an excavator, a Palestinian youth attacks a bus in east Jerusalem" (Translation mine). Moreover, framing the attacker as the "Palestinian youth" and not simply as the Palestinian protestor, or the attacker, could be a way of personifying the actor and refuting negative labels that are oftentimes associated with Palestinians.

In the case of the United States, this frame of representation is substantially muted through representation of Israeli military actions as controlled and disinclined toward violence. As such this frame in the U.S. sample does not entirely present a similar perspective as that in the Iranian sample. For instance, in U.S. news articles, condemnation of Israeli actions is often presented indirectly, in the form of quotes or opinions from experts or Palestinian civilians. For example in the *Wall Street Journal* on July 20, the Israeli aggression frame is attributed to a Palestinian news agency which interviewed Mahmoud Abbas:

"Mahmoud Abbas called the Israeli action in Shejaiya "a crime against humanity," according to Wafa, the official Palestinian news agency."

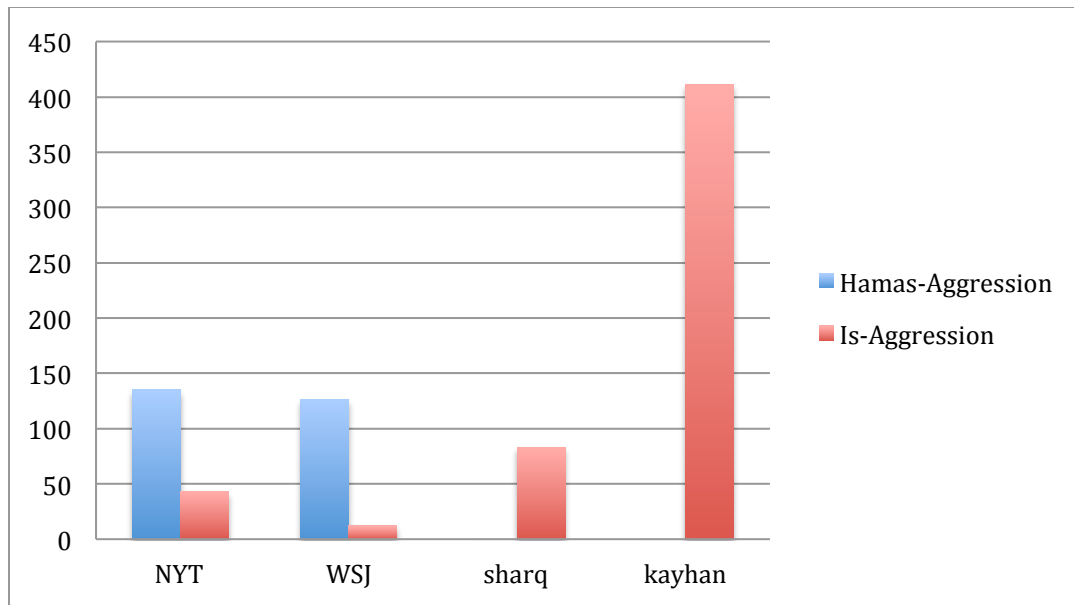
In the *New York Times* on August 14, this frame is represented through a military expert's voice:

"questions have been raised about a particularly aggressive and deadly Israeli assault on the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah on Aug. 1 as Israeli forces pursued a Hamas squad they believed had captured a soldier. Prof. Emanuel Gross, a former military judge, said in a recent interview that the firepower used in Rafah to try to return one soldier did not seem justified, morally or legally, and appeared to be "disproportionate."

In the similar example, the *New York Times*, on August 14, cited B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization:

“ [Israeli] practices violated the international legal principles of distinction and proportionality, calling into question the clear military nature of the targets and whether the military gains were significant enough to justify the deaths of civilians.”

In highlighting Israeli aggression the U.S. media mostly uses Palestinian civilian quotes as opposed to quotes from Western sources such as human rights organizations, NGOs, and academics. In contrast the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, when discussing Hamas aggression, tend to quote from official Israeli sources. By choosing to use civilian quotes over more official sources, the American media outlets are able to give the appearance of “fair and balanced” reporting while downplaying the role of Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. NGO’s, human rights organizations, and academics all speak with authority and come off as less biased when discussing an issue. By relying on civilian quotes to comment on Israeli aggression the critique can be viewed as biased and personal and thus less legitimate. This is different when compared to how Hamas is addressed as they are critiqued by official sources with the power to appear legitimate and unbiased in the public eye.



**Figure 12** Frame of Aggression

<i>Israel</i>	<i>War</i>	<i>Palestine</i>	<i>Palestinians</i>
Israel the Anti-humanity regime	Child killing	The occupied territories	the oppressed people
The brutish regime / the brutish behaviors	War crimes		The oppressed Muslim people of Palestine
The Tyrant	Israel Assaults		
The spurious regime	Israel Invasion		
The Hebrew regime			

**Table 3** Sharq Naming

<i>Israel</i>	<i>Hamas</i>	<i>War</i>	<i>Palestinians</i>	<i>Palestine</i>
The Pharaoh	The resistance fighters	The brutal assault	the people of Gaza who are fasting/ the fasting citizens	The occupied Palestine

The Zionist regime	Hamas Movement	Shujayaah: the second Sabra & Shatila	The oppressed Muslim people of Palestine	The occupied Quds
The Zionist army	The martyr Izz ad-Din-Qassam Brigades	The imposed war	The oppressed people	
The Tyrant Zionist regime		The Palestine Spring	The Arab residents of occupied Palestine	
The Criminal Zionist regime		Child killing	The defenseless Gaza's	
The enemy		Genocide		
The child killing Zionist regime		Gazans' Crematoria		
The Viper		Human Tragedy		
Fascists		Third Intifada		
The U.S. watchdog				

**Table 4 Kayhan Naming**

### *Normalizing or Justifying Israeli actions*

This code referred to any situation where Israeli actions were justified or normalized as an act of self-defense. Oftentimes, this code overlaps with the code *Blaming Hamas*, however, the significant difference between these two codes is that *Normalizing or Justifying Israeli actions* is specifically aimed at neutralizing Israeli strikes, which could then be framed as an act of self-defense, or a reaction to Hamas rocket fire. Whereas, *Blaming Hamas* is specifically aimed at Hamas strikes and that how these actions result in Israel's retaliation and the consequent destruction of Palestinian lives. Therefore *Normalizing or Justifying Israeli Actions* is meant to

paint Israel as the victim of aggression, only responding with force when necessary or when all other, more peaceful actions, have been taken while *Blaming Hamas* holds Hamas accountable to the violence it commits; the difference lies less in the substantive content of the quote and more on its narrative focus.

According to this frame, even in the midst of the conflict Israeli embraces caution and precision with their military actions. From this perspective, Israel was dragged into this conflict unwillingly and attacks Gaza out of necessity, only in self-defense. Within this frame, the Israel military's distribution of public warnings in the form of leaflets or phone calls prior to air strikes portrays Israel as acting with restraint and as cautious actors. Therefore the blame for the casualties is placed on the Palestinian victims or Hamas for preventing Palestinian evacuations of buildings. This action is described in an excerpt from the *Wall Street Journal* of July 12,

"The Israeli army said it warned residents in the northern Gaza Strip to "urgently" evacuate their homes or risk coming under attack. "It is unsafe to be near Hamas," an IDF spokesman said."

Similarly in the *New York Time*, July 20:

"The chaos has made some outside observers ask why people did not leave earlier, before the ground offensive neared them. The Israeli military has said it has given Gazans every opportunity to avoid injury by calling on them to evacuate neighborhoods it is about to target. Leaflets were dropped in Shejaiya on Saturday, residents said, and a senior military official said warnings had begun days earlier. "Staying at home when you're 100 percent sure there's going to be fighting there is much worse," the official said. "Be out for two or three days; it's better than being in the battlefield."

Likewise the mitigation of damages caused by Israel in Gaza is also expressed through by

blaming geography, regional circumstances or other situational factors. The *New York Times* on August 1th reported:

“As Israel’s forces have slowly advanced, they have pummeled neighborhoods with heavy artillery, which analysts said was militarily necessary to safeguard soldiers.” In a dense urban environment, you need to use aggressive force to save soldiers’ lives,” Mr. Harel, the military affairs analyst, said.”

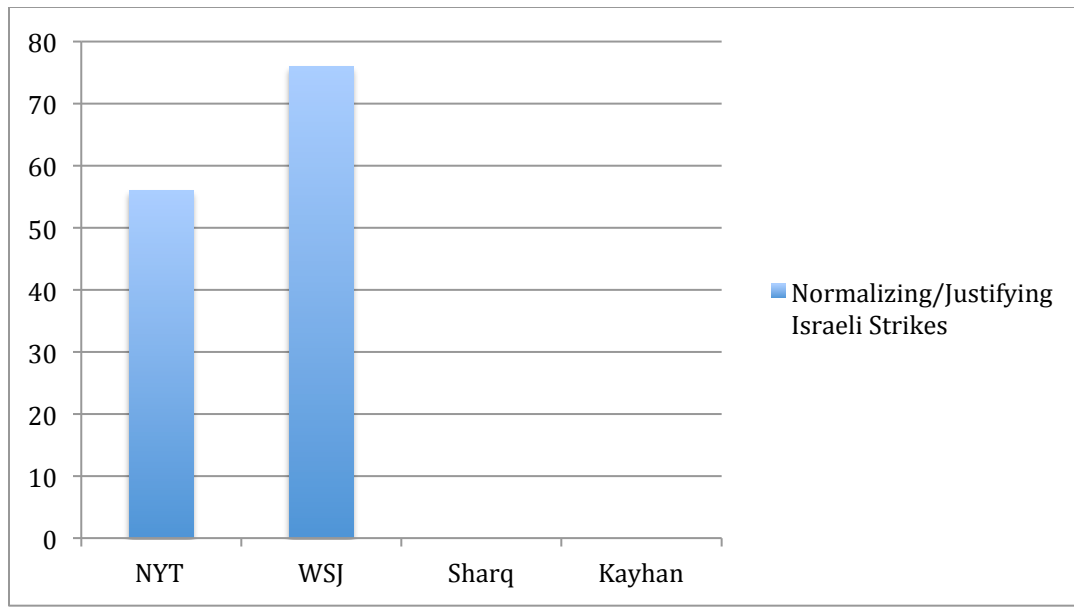
Similarly in the *Wall Street Journal* on July 12:

“The official spoke of the difficulties the Air Force faced in minimizing collateral damage in the densely populated environment of Gaza, describing the mission as “very challenging,” and showed video clips from the air that he said demonstrated the military’s care in targeting.”

Other descriptions that prompted this frame include justification of deadly strikes as military mistakes. As such, strikes that cause casualties are more easily justified. On August 3th, the *Wall Street Journal*, frames Israel’s bombardment of a UN school, which resulted in massive destruction, as a mistake.

"Shrapnel from an Israeli missile aimed at militants on a motorcycle there tore through a United Nations school crowded with displaced Palestinians”





**Figure 13 Normalizing or justifying Israel actions**

### *Israel Weakness*

This code is applied to any situation in which the Israeli army or government is described as fractious and incapable of controlling the situation on the ground in regards to Hamas. This frame only appeared in *Kayhan* with any significant frequency. As Talbot (2008) explains when covering conflicts and wars a pattern of two basic discourses emerges, aimed at representing identities: The humiliated Other and the victorious freedom fighter. As such war narratives are filled with stories of humiliation, which in turn set the basis for revenge. In the same context the *Weakening Israel* frame also references different political confrontations between Israeli authority figures on approaching Hamas and the peace negotiations. This frame emphasizes the internal contentiousness within the Israeli government over best strategies for controlling the war and the outcomes of peace negotiations. An example of this code in *Kayhan* includes the

assertion that “members of Israel's Knesset and the oppositional leaders are criticizing Netanyahu for his inefficacy in stopping Hamas.”

Other applications of this frame include the emphasis on Israel news propaganda about their military operations, death tolls, and information about Israeli soldier suicides. *Kayhan* argues that death rates and casualties among Israeli soldiers are significantly higher than the official statistics reported by Israeli government. Moreover, the “high rates of self-inflicted gunshot incidents” among Israeli soldiers are, they maintain, the result of emotional distress and fear and are excluded and censored from Israeli mainstream media. As it appears in these examples, *Israel weakness* is directly associated to *Hamas empowerment*. Figure 14 illustrates the co-occurrence of these two codes in *Kayhan* coverage of the war.

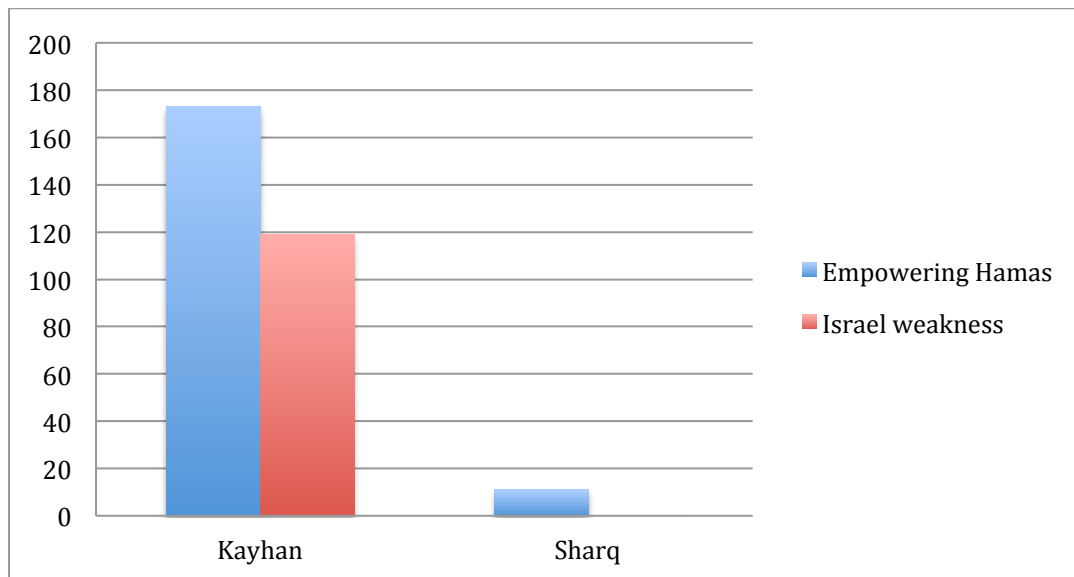


Figure 14 Israel Weakness

### *Historical and Regional Context*

This code applied to any situation where historical or regional context is provided in the

coverage of the 2014 Gaza War. Historical background informs readers about the history of the development of the conflict. The provision of reasonable historical context is crucial in the framing of the news stories and the assessment of whether or not Hamas is responsible for the war or Israel or both. The concept of historicization as Luck Peterson (2015:122) explains is the “provision of a small amount of historical context within certain news items that can be used to clarify events and identify regional and international actors in theaters of conflict.” Regional accounts are another important factor in regards to creating cognitive knowledge around the IPC. For example, in the case of 2014 Gaza War, a combination of circumstances, such as isolation (as a result of the Israel military blockade and economic sanctions), high rates of unemployment, a densely packed population, food and water scarcity, and inadequate electrical services, should be taken into consideration.

In the assessment of data the majority of news articles, regardless of the nation, lacks historical narrative in their coverage (See Figure 15). In the U.S. sample, from the 52 analyzed articles in the *New York Times*, the *Historical and Regional Context* code was only used 10 times, which is still higher than the *Wall Street Journal* with only 2 mentions. In the Iranian sample *Kayhan*, with 19 mentions offered more historical context compared to *Sharq* with only 8. Therefore Iranian newspapers tend to cover the historical regional account more often.

Within the sample, a lack of historicization often appears when only one side of the conflict, usually Hamas, is framed as being culpable for the rise of the recent round of violence. When Israel was the aggressor, historical context was more likely to be included as a means of explaining these actions or framing them as retaliatory. As appeared in the *New York Times* on July 10: “Israel bombarded targets across Gaza on Saturday and today, retaliating for Palestinian

rocket fire into Israel.” Another example from the *Wall Street Journal* on August 6 include:

"The latest major military confrontation between Israel and Hamas—the third in less than six years—erupted when the Israeli military began bombarding targets in Gaza in an attempt to stop Hamas and other armed Palestinian factions from launching rockets and mortars at Israel."

Both examples clearly define Israeli actions and the 51 day-long war as responsive in nature, with the original culpability attributed to Hamas. Therefore, lack of historicization is usually connected discursively to two other frames, *Blaming Hamas* and *Justification of Israeli actions* that often appeared together.

Other descriptions prompting the attachment of the “lack of historicization” code include narratives that presented historical detail that is either disputed or inaccurate. For example the *New York Times* on Aug 14th included assertions of Israel’s historical reluctance to retain Gaza, which does not match with the historical evidence:

“In 1978, Menachem Begin, then the Israeli prime minister, offered Gaza to Anwar el-Sadat, then the Egyptian president, at Camp David; Mr. Sadat wanted no part of Gaza and its refugees. Neither, finally, did another Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon. In 2005, judging that protecting Israelis there was too costly, he pulled them out.”

While a detailed analysis of historical accuracy is beyond the scope of this research, what is at issue is the presentation of information as the historical context for retelling events and the potential of certain presentations to exclude other potential alternative frames.

Another example which illustrates this lack of regional context appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* on July 29 under the following title:

“Israel Bombards Hamas Symbols, Power Plant in Gaza Aims to Force Islamist Group to Accept Cease-fire Demand to Disarm.” The opening paragraph of this article describes bombardment of Gaza power plant as a successful strategic action aiming at weakening Hamas. However, calling the only power plant in Gaza region, the lifeline of Gaza residence, “Hamas symbols of control,” is a simplistic, reductive perspective that further obscures the humanitarian consequences of such action. As such there is no indication of the regional condition throughout the article until the closing paragraph, where the author briefly mentions the humanitarian consequences:

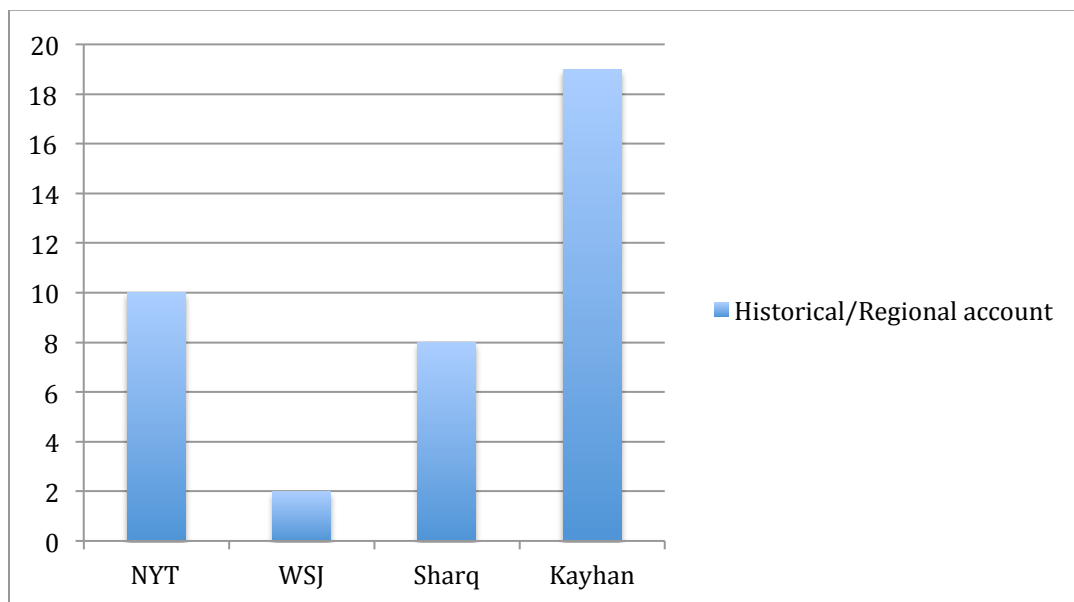
“The attack on Gaza's 50-megawatt power plant had an immediate effect on hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Without air conditioning, they sweltered in the summer heat. They lost touch with relatives as mobile phones ran low on battery power and couldn't be charged. As night fell, many homes were dark.”

It is not until August 6th, when the same reporter, in a more detailed report, describes the disastrous regional circumstances that resulted from destroying Gaza's only power plant:

"With Gaza's main power plant damaged by an Israeli airstrike, many of its water and sanitation pumps are broken or not working. There is little running water. Sewage has flooded the streets of several towns. Engineers have said it would take a year to repair the bombed power plant. This predicament is acute at Gaza City's Shifa Hospital. It has some electrical power but cuts are frequent, forcing doctors and nurses to manually pump ventilators to keep patients breathing, they say."

Relevant historical and regional context is vital for understanding the current events by giving the audience a broader scope for interpreting the news. Without knowing the impact of life under the Israeli occupation and its military blockade, an imbalanced portrait of power is depicted, with the Palestinian narrative being underrepresented. This leads the overall conflict

between Israel and Palestine being portrayed as a series of actions and reactions with an aggressive Hamas attacking Israel and the Israeli's responding in pure defense. Moreover, the Palestinian resistance will be deemed as a senseless and violent fight that in no way benefits the people of Palestine. As a result, grounding the news related to the IPC in its historical and regional context helps to reduce the possibility of unbalanced coverage in which the root of the violence is attributed to the Palestinians (namely Hamas) and the ensuing retaliation an act of defense on the part the Israelis.



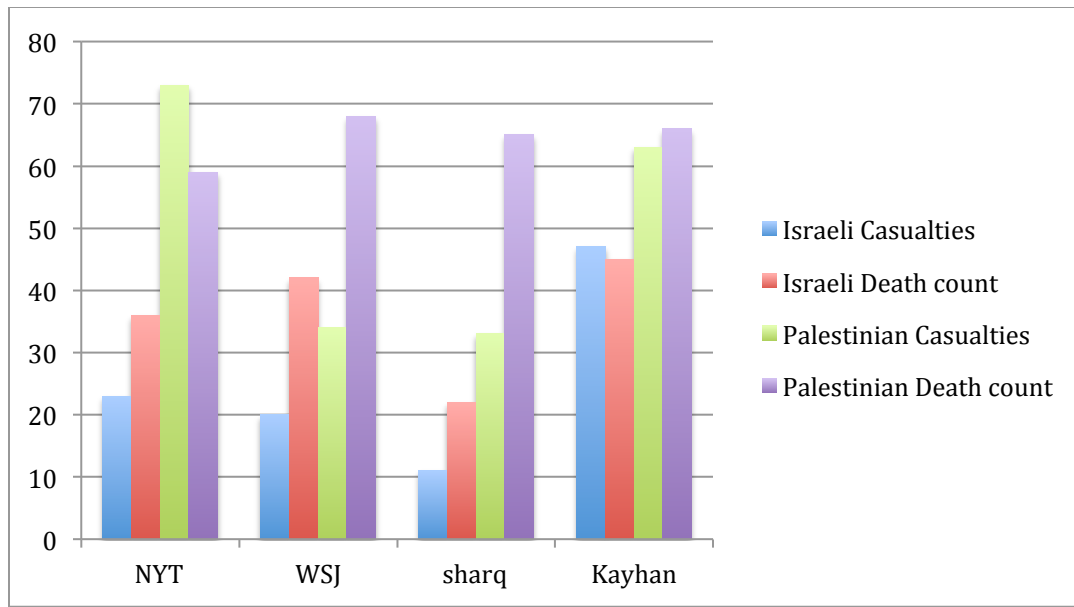
**Figure 15 Historical and regional account**

### *Death Counts, Casualties, and Personalization of Victims*

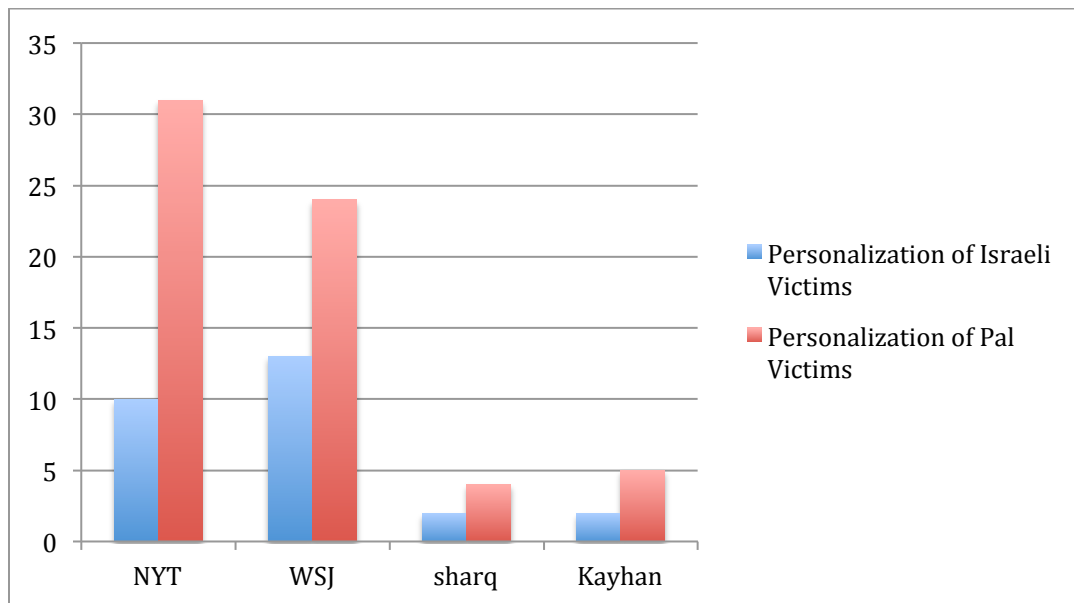
The code death count is applied anywhere the number of death resulting from the 2014 Gaza War were mentioned. As such *Palestinian Death Count* is applied anywhere Palestinian deaths, military or civilian, were mentioned and counted. Likewise, *Israeli Death Count* applied anywhere where Israeli deaths were mentioned. The code *Casualties* is applied to any description

of injuries to persons, including wounding and mutilation. As such *Palestinian Casualties* referred to any description of Palestinian injuries as a result of the Gaza war and *Israeli Casualties* referred to accounts of victims on the other side. As shown in figure 16 the presence of both *Palestinian Death Count* and *Palestinian Casualties* codes are significantly higher in both the U.S. and Iranian sample. This significance could be attributed to the disproportionate fatality rate and the larger death toll on the Palestinian side during the 2014 Gaza War. Nonetheless, this finding is important because previous studies have shown a tendency in American news media to cover Israeli losses more than Palestinians (Ackerman, 2001; Berry, 2004; Marmura, 2009).

The code *Personalization of Victims* is applied wherever casualties or the death toll are described in a humanizing way. In other words when the report is not only focused on the numerical data, but offers victims' personal details such as name, occupation, family situation, or details of the situation which resulted in their death or injury. As such personalization of victims in news reports is highly important because it gives a humanized image of the victims which may serve to ultimately de-legitimize violent actors (Elmasry 2009). Hence, upon reading the sample, *Personalization of Palestinian Victims* applied anywhere the article provides such details about Palestinian victims. Likewise, *Personalization of Israeli Victims* referred to humanizing descriptions of Israeli victims. As shown in figure 17, the *New York Times* tend to personalize Palestinian victims more frequently than the *Wall Street Journal*. In the Iranian sample however, this code does not appear as often as in the U.S. sample, which as explained before, could be partially due to the Iranian journalists lack of access to Gaza and the Palestinian victims.



**Figure 16 Casualties And Death Counts**



**Figure 17 Personalization of Victims**



### *Palestinian casualties and death counts*

As shown in figure 16 contrary to previous studies, findings indicate that a large focus of U.S. sample has been on the Palestinian casualty rate (Ackerman 2001, Berry 2004, Marmura 2009). Undoubtedly the coverage of Palestinian casualties has a significant impact on public perceptions of the regional violence during this period. However, in covering the proportion of casualties on Palestinian side, news articles often fail to reflect on the broader practical and political realities of the situation in Gaza. The narrative is usually constituted in vacuum, in a given moment, and away from the historical and regional realities.

For example, during the conflict when reporting on the mounting Palestinian death toll, news articles often fail to mention the tight blockade the Israeli government and the military placed on Gaza's borders, which block any potential outlet for escape from Israeli assaults. Likewise, there is no indication of the humanitarian impact of the blockade on a 25 miles long by 7.5 miles wide sealed zone, densely packed with over 1.8 million Palestinians (BBC News 2014), who were subjected to an extensive 51 day air campaign and the subsequent ground invasion.

In the same context, while the imbalanced casualty rate is indicative of Israeli military superiority, the narrative of the news coverage in U.S. sample often places the responsibility of the death toll on Hamas. Hamas is blamed for operating inside the residential areas, however what is missed here is the regional realities of the environment in which Palestinians are forced to live, which in turn left Hamas little choice but to wage war in deeply populated areas. As a result *Palestinian Casualties and Death Toll* can only be fully addressed within the broader historical and regional context.

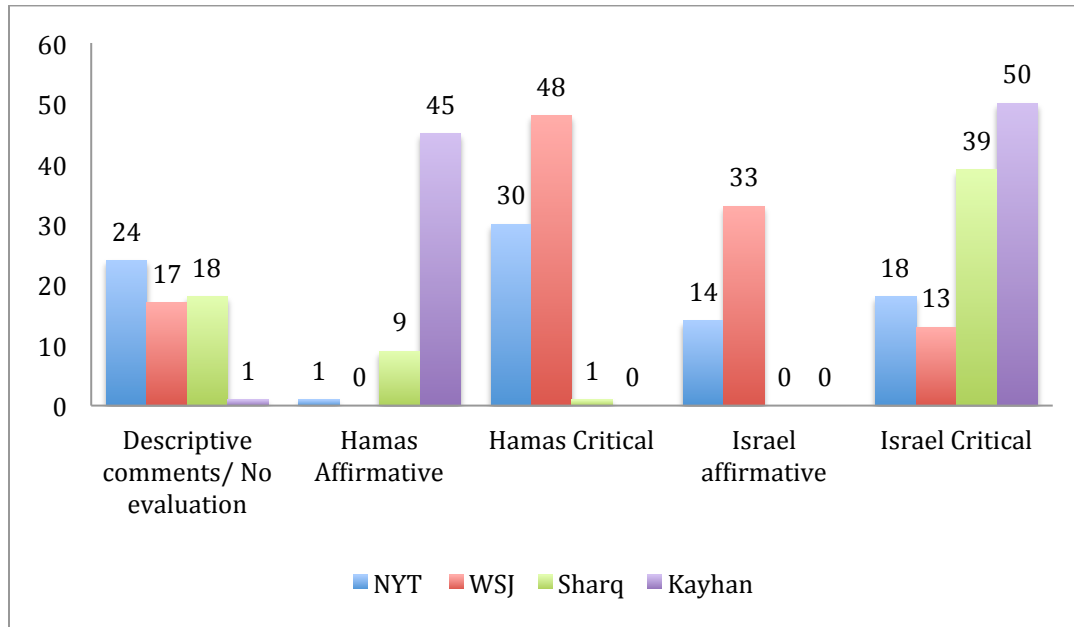
## *Overall Tone*

Finally, the overall tone of each article based on the presence and prevalence of the quality codes in regards to actors, was assessed. As such the code *Hamas Affirmative* was applied to articles where positive codes for Hamas were dominating the narrative. Similarly articles demonstrating positive and favorable codes toward Israel were coded as *Israel Affirmative*. Conversely, the code *Hamas Critical* applied to articles where negative codes for Hamas were the prevailing theme for the narrative, and *Israel Critical* was applied to articles with more negative codes for Israel dominating the narrative. Moreover, in assessing articles with no clear evaluation or stance toward any of the actors, which mainly includes descriptive narratives, the code *Descriptive/No Evaluation* was applied.

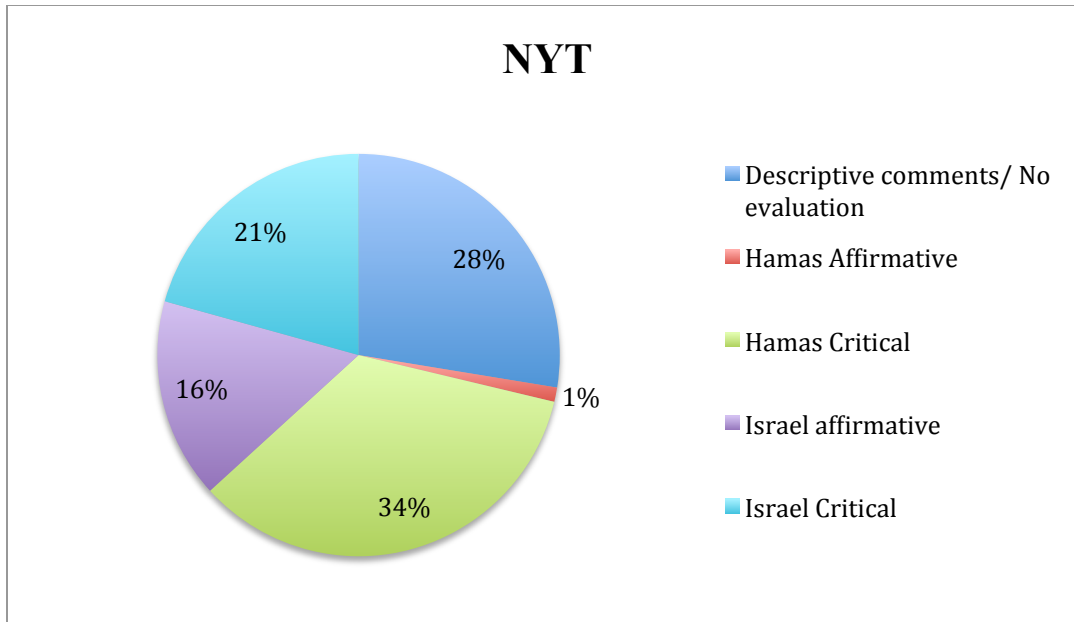
Figure 18 shows the distribution of these codes across the sample and Figures 19-22 illustrate a more detailed distribution of these codes within each newspaper. For example, Figure 19 shows that 34% of the *New York Times*' articles had a critical stance toward Hamas, compared to the 43% for the *Wall Street Journal* (See Figure 19). Similarly 16% of the *New York Times* articles were affirmative toward Israel, compared to 30% for the *Wall Street Journal*. As it appears from these figures, the majority of articles in each of the U.S. newspapers had a Hamas critical tone, however, there were differences in their attitude toward Israel. The *New York Times* is slightly less affirmative toward Israel compared to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Meanwhile in the Iranian sample, as it shown in Figure 21, a total of 58% of *Sharq*'s articles were critical toward Israel, while only 13% were directly supporting Hamas' action, with 27% of the article being descriptive with no clear evaluating tone. In *Kayhan* however, articles

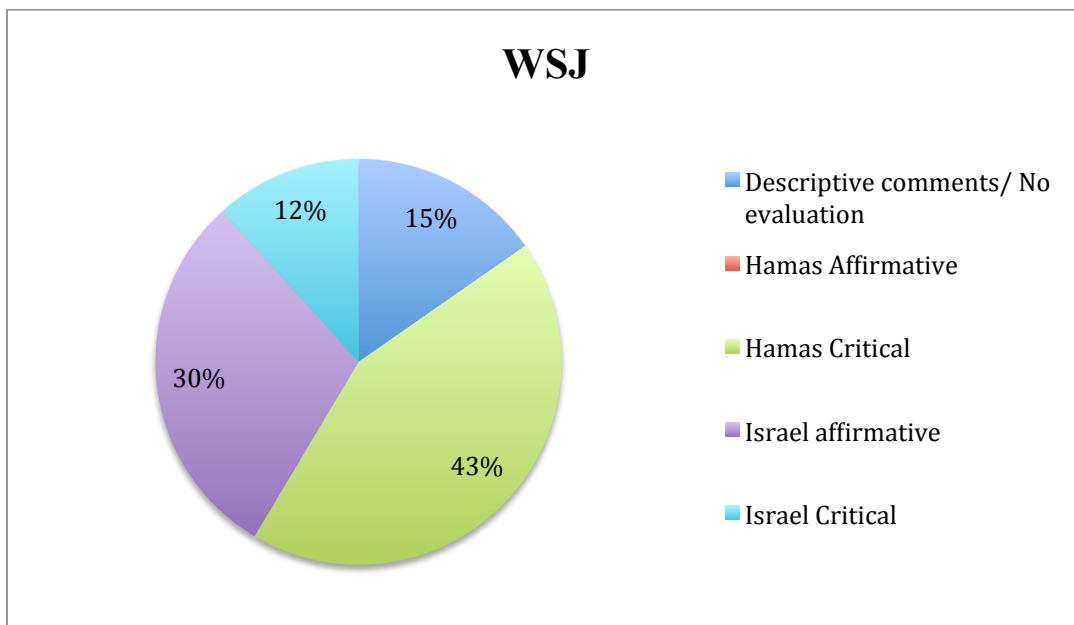
were virtually equally divided with 52% critical toward Israel and 47% affirming Hamas' actions, making *Kayhan* the least diverse newspaper in regard to the content materials (See Figure 22).



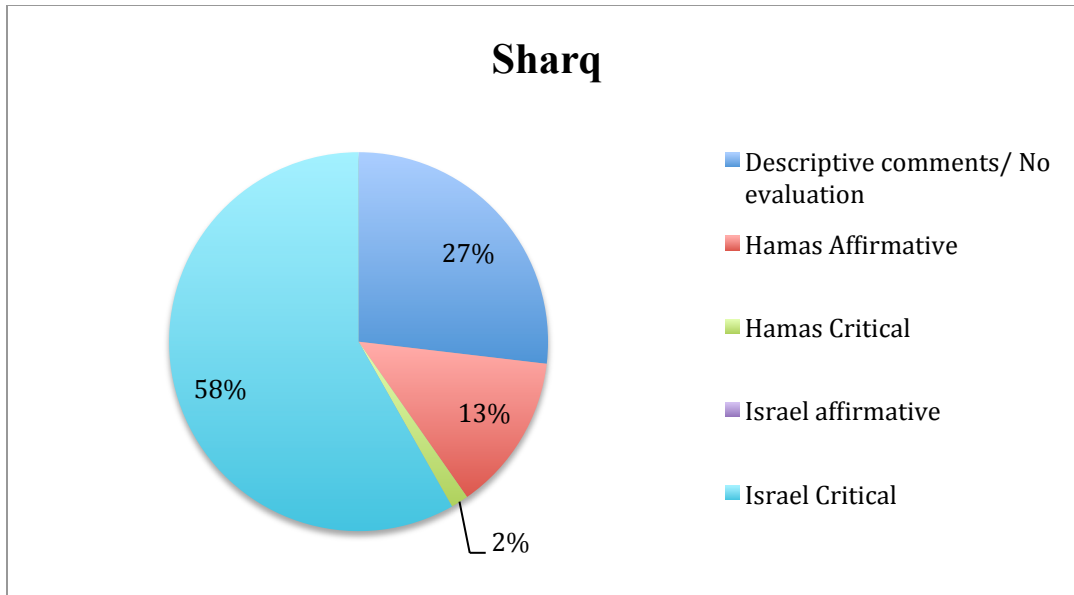
**Figure 18 Sample Overall Tone**



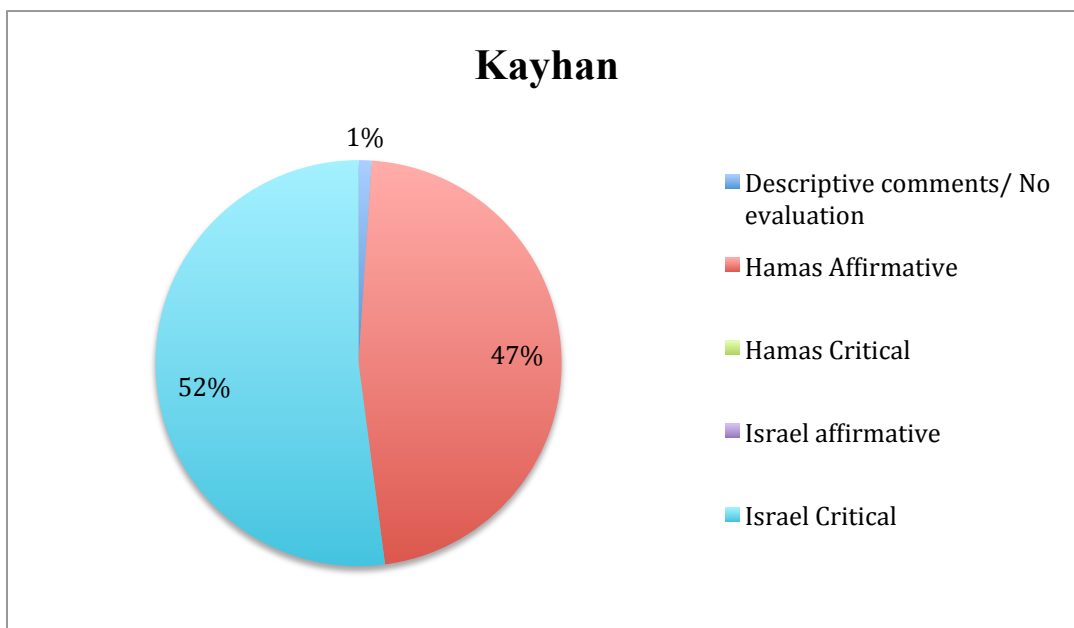
**Figure 19 New York Times Overall Tone**



**Figure 20 Wall Street Journal Overall Tone**



**Figure 21 Sharq Overall Tone**



**Figure 22 Kayhan Overall Tone**

## DISCUSSION

Two discourses dominate the print news media coverage of 2014 Gaza war in the United States and Iran. In the United States, news media stay close to the official Israeli narrative of the events. The two newspapers examined for this research suggest their reluctance to address the Israeli occupation and to hold Israel responsible for the perpetual violence in the region. Official Israeli sources were employed with greater frequency and fervor than Palestinian officials. In many cases Palestinian official voices were depicted as radical or were marginalized. Hamas, when it appeared, was depicted as an “Islamic terrorist organization,” agent of violence, and a threat to both Israel and regional peace. Such frames of representation conform to the Orientalist perception of the Islamic threat and the ideological superiority of ‘the West’ that utilizes a dichotomous structure of the religious terrorist groups and their Western-led protagonists. Palestinian civilian voices on the other hand, were given a larger space in the U.S. sample. Despite this prevalence, Palestinians were often interviewed to vouch for the severity of the situation, with the blame often being placed on Hamas.

In short, it appeared that the U.S. news sample chose Palestinian violence as a more common narrative in their description of the war, a discourse closely aligned with the official Israeli perspective. It is therefore likely that the readers of these two news sources come to understand the war from the Israeli perspective.

In a significant deviation from the pattern displayed in the U.S. sample, the major narrative themes presented within the Iranian news sample were voiced by Palestinian officials. In this case the Iranian sample adhered closely to Hamas’ perspective. In terms of assessing damage, both papers were inclined to declare Israel at fault and depict the war as Israel’s method of

further entrenching itself into the infrastructure of a military occupation in Gaza. This perspective places the Palestinian suffering within the broader context of Israeli occupation, which was virtually absent in the U.S. sample. As such the Iranian press brought a different perspective to bear to these events.

The initial examination of the Iranian sample leads to the conclusion that both newspapers had a strong identification with and sympathy towards Palestinians. As a result the average readers of these two newspapers have been provided with information from the Palestinian perspective which portrays Israel as ‘the enemy,’ a colonial state, and a threat to the Muslim communities. These presumptions conform to the IRI’s constructed view of Israel and the West. However, there was a significant difference between the two papers in the intensity to which they denounced Israel. *Kayhan*, employed an ideological and partisan position in depicting Israeli actions. Functioning on an emotional level, *Kayhan* deployed morally loaded language along with negative insinuations and labels to further brutalize Israel. *Sharq*, however, had a peace-oriented theme with more focus on Palestinian civilians. In regards to Israeli violence, *Sharq* tended to avoid verbal maneuvering and descriptions of violence in its coverage. As such, in comparison to *Kayhan*, the primary focus of *Sharq* was on supporting Palestine without engaging in the same emotionally loaded and ideologically driven denunciations of Israel.

Through these trends, two distinctive discourses emerge in the two different news media communities. As a result the two communities exposed to these respective discourse have understood the 2014 Gaza War in disparate terms. These differences are grounded in cultural and historical perceptions that align with the larger socio-political context of each community. Such

discursive disparities have significant impact on public knowledge as well as on collective identity as constructed and sustained through news media.

Despite these discursive differences, the nature of news framing in both national news communities is consonant with the broader socio-political interests. The explicit anti-Israel, anti-Western presentation in the Iranian news sample runs parallel to the implicit Orientalist, pro-Israel sentiment found in the U.S. sample. For both, the narrative strategy of covering the war, serves the purpose of further distancing ‘Us’ from ‘Them’ through the construction of a threatening ‘Other.’ Unfortunately such a process of “enemy creation” only serves to intensify fear and hate, and perpetuates a cycle of violent revenge and retaliation which is resistant to resolution in part because it is so fundamental to the national identities of involved parties.

## CONCLUSION

This study compared and analyzed the coverage of 2014 Gaza War, found within two specific news communities in Iran and the United States. In doing so this study connected elements of hegemonic cultural and political discourses to media content, and illustrated how content gets structured within a cultural, political, social, and institutional context. To put it more succinctly, this study illustrated distinctions between what a reader of *Kayhan* and *Sharq* in Iran would have seen of the 2014 Gaza War versus what a *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* reader in the United States would have seen of the exact same conflict. This is not to disregard individual agency in the acceptance, rejection, or potential reformulation of a given discourse. But it does show how powerful institutions play a role in shaping the kinds of stories offered to national readerships in the first place.



Moreover, the impact of institutional media content is critical in the construction of public knowledge and social cognition, but that is not to say that print media is the only factor in shaping society's perception. In an age of an ever-expanding internet, with independent media outlets, watchdog groups, Wikileaks, social media, and digital media, it is now possible to challenge the dominant narrative of mainstream news agencies. In most parts of the world, news consumers have the ability to explore an ever-increasing variety of news and media outlets in order to understand what is going on around the world. Existing beyond the structured constraints placed on media in both democratic and authoritarian states, alternative, and oftentimes digital, news outlets work to counteract the hegemonic presentation of information. However, the extent to which these sources effect the institutional agency of the mainstream media in the production of news, or the agency of individuals in its interpretation, is the topic of argument in media studies and still remains a crucial avenue of investigation. Study of the content of alternative media presentations of the 2014 Gaza War and other conflicts could provide additional insights into the dissemination of information about contested events, and the ways that news consumers come to make sense of them.

Due to time constraints and the nature of this study, which was focused on mainstream news media's framing of the 2014 Gaza War, opinion and editorial pieces, online commentaries, and published letters were not analyzed. However, these sections could be an interesting topic for future studies mainly because they function as spaces in which consumers can "talk-back" to news producers and thus can help show the impact of news media framing practices. Commentary boxes often provide insight into how the article is received by the readers. Therefore it is an interesting place to view how public opinion is shaped around a particular issue

in terms of proponents and opponents.

Another possible avenue for expanding this study is to extend the focus of analysis from news media to include broader arrays of cultural products such as novels, pamphlets, poems, movies, plays, posters, essays, and speeches. In studying the IPC Said (2003) implores us "to go beyond survival to the battle of culture and information." As such it is important to see how artists and intellectuals in a given society contribute to the construction and representation of meaning and how it might negate or sustain existing structures of domination in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Also, since the study of culture cannot take place outside the historical context in which it developed, it would prove insightful to place the IPC, and the Palestinian occupation, into the historical and social context of both Iranian and American consciousness to detect any possible shift in the narrative since the occupation of Palestine at the end of the Six Day War in June of 1967. In the case of Iran, it will be particularly interesting to analyze and compare this narrative before and after the 1979 revolution, and for the U.S. it would be interesting to observe this narrative within the historical context of the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-war demonstrations of the 1960's.

Finally, as a matter of academic integrity, it should be mentioned that this study examined an array of ideologically and politically situated news from only two publications in both Iran and the United States and therefore it cannot be generalized to the entire news industry. With that said the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* are two of the most widely distributed mainstream newspapers in the United States while *Kayhan* and *Sharq* represent two different major political factions in Iran. Therefore, this analysis provides insights into how the power elites in both the United States and Iran shape and structure mainstream news for general

consumption by the public. Thus this study broadens our scope of understanding on the ongoing relationship between Israel and Palestine as viewed by the United States and Iran. In regards to the United States this thesis contributes to other academic knowledge by showing a consistent media portrayal of Israel and Palestine that favors the United States foreign policy initiatives in the Middle East. For Iran this study provides insight into a Middle East actor that is oftentimes overlooked in other academic studies of the Israeli and Palestinian conflict.

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