




# War journalism on Israel/ Palestine: Does contra-flow really make a difference?

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## Abstract

Apart from giving voices to the voiceless, the coming of Aljazeera English and Press TV as an alternative perspective in the global news sphere was thought to herald an important departure from the war journalism that describes the attitude of the dominant media to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. To track this expectation, this study adopted the peace journalism model to examine how Aljazeera English and Press TV have responded to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in the recent past compared to BBC World and CNN International. Findings show that similar patterns of war journalism are reproduced in the alternative perspective with counter-demonizing language and disagreements on the identity of terrorists. Peace journalism contents in the alternative perspective, as in the dominant perspective, are engendered more by events of the peace process and peace propaganda than by the much ideated conciliatory media.

## Keywords

Aljazeera English, alternative media, intifada, Middle East, peace journalism, Press TV, terrorism

From the skilful use of early mass communication channels by the allies in the First World War (see Bratic, 2010) to the cruel manipulation of the media by Nazi Germany, its successful campaign for the use of arms in the Chechen conflict (Vinokurov, 2009), and its recent abuse in Rwanda (Paluck, 2007), former Yugoslavia (Kimani, 2007) and modern Russia (Glukhov, 2009), existing literature shows that the mass media has a substantial record of playing an inflammatory role in conflict history.

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Perhaps more than any other, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, earlier referred to as the Arab–Israeli dispute, provides the richest source of studies on media war against peace in modern times. There is indeed an impressive amount of literature on media coverage of this conflict, most of which is focused on western – especially US media, apparently because until recently the western media had dominated the global flow of news on the conflict. Most of these studies, dating from the early 1960s to mid-1980s, show that western media coverage of the conflict was characterized by qualitative inaccuracy and disproportionate favouritism towards Israelis or Palestinians (Kressel, 1987). Recent studies similarly show that the media produce destructive coverage (Wolfsfeld et al., 2008) that misleads public understanding of the conflict (Philo and Berry, 2004). Generally, this knowledge has been followed by increasing concern over how the mass media can play a constructive role that can help in resolving conflicts and promoting peace. This concern, however, caused an immediate confrontation in the form of an ethical challenge as to whether or not journalism, as an objective and public interest-based profession, should be attached to peace in reporting conflicts. Some scholars argue that an attachment to peace will imply that the media takes a side in the conflict they report, which conceivably is capable of undermining ethical objectivity (see Puddephatt, 2006). Others argue that objectivity has instead served as one of the major professional justifications for media's contribution to war (Roach, 1993), and has remained one of the greatest obstacles to journalists playing a more responsible and constructive role in public life (Iggers, 1998). This argument stimulated a public quest for an alternative perspective on news coverage of global issues. The hope, of course, has been that the alternative perspective will not only be giving voices to the voiceless, but will also be seen to be representing a shift from war journalism that describes the prevailing attitude of the media towards conflicts, and of particular concern here – the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

It is in this context that Aljazeera English and Press TV emerged in November 2006 from the Middle East and July 2007 from Western Asia, respectively, to challenge the global dominance of the western perspective in what many consider to be the source of news contra-flow and the Islamist world view (see Boyd-Barrett and Thussu, 1992; Sakr, 2007; Schiller, 1984; McBride, 1981; Suri, 2006; Tunstall, 1977).

Though widely received as a formidable alternative perspective, the emergence of Aljazeera English and Press TV in the context of growing resentment between Palestinians and Israelis was greeted with critical questions over their identity, mission and role in global journalism. One such question seeks to know whether Aljazeera English and Press TV, originating from an Islamic background and representing the long-awaited alternative perspective, have come under the guise of 'giving voices to the voiceless', to defend Palestinians and Muslims in retaliatory war journalism or play the role of peace/conciliatory media. In view of the growing influence of mass media information in national and international conflicts and security, this question is important. However, in the search for dialogue and peace as better alternatives to violence and war, attempts that have been made to investigate the 'alternative perspective' have been overly focused on how it is perceived by audiences and how much it represents the Palestinian voice, rather than what peace alternative it has to offer. This study is an attempt to address this knowledge gap.

## Dominant versus alternative media perspectives on Israel/Palestine

Available studies on international news coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict are mostly focused on western, especially the US, media because until recently the western media have dominated coverage of the conflict. Kressel (1987) reviewed over 40 such studies dating from the early 1960s to the mid-1980s, which established that western media coverage was characterized by zero-sum frames, inaccuracy and disproportionate favouritism towards either the Israelis or Palestinian Arabs.

Early pro-Arab critics, according to Kressel, argued that the US media:

1. Consistently presented unbalanced coverage by way of a disproportionate number of unfavourable references to the Arab state, their leaders and their actions;
2. Frequently cited false images, which included:
  - (a) Israeli settlements make the desert bloom while Palestinian Arabs leave the land untended;
  - (b) Zionism is a liberal philosophy;
  - (c) Israel is the underdog in the Middle East;
  - (d) Palestinians are terrorists;
  - (e) the Israelis did not force Palestinian Arabs to leave their homes in 1948 but instead urged them to stay;
  - (f) fundamentally, the Arab–Israeli conflict stems from Arab anti-Judaism;
3. Presented too much coverage of Israel and too little of the Arabs: this leads to greater familiarity and, hence, partiality towards Israel.
4. Conspiracy, editorial bans, and other barriers have made it impossible or extremely difficult for pro-Arab views to appear in print in the US and therefore cultural insensitivity, stereotyping, and racist imagery predominated in American media coverage of the conflict.
5. The American mass media used double standards when judging actions of Israel and the Arab states. For example, Palestinian attacks against Israelis were generally labelled ‘terrorist’ while Israeli bombings of Arab villages were called ‘retaliatory’.

In comparison, Kressel noted that early pro-Israel critics accused the US media of noticeably dropping their support for Israel after the 1967 war. He observed that Israel had little grounds for objection in the mass media coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict prior to 1973. Key findings by early pro-Israel critics included:

1. The US media had moved away from their formerly objective treatment of the conflict to making disproportionately unfavourable references to Israel and disproportionately favourable references to Arabs;
2. Many journalists had distorted the truth and painted a badly flawed and inaccurate picture of the Arab–Israeli dispute by:

- (a) overplaying Arab moderation, e.g. saying Sadat attacked Israel in 1973 in order to lay the groundwork for peace;
  - (b) portraying Arab institutions in more palatable terms to US readers, e.g. calling the Saudi political system a 'desert democracy';
  - (c) whitewashing the PLO and downplaying its terrorism;
  - (d) portraying Israel as more militaristic and less committed to peace than the Arabs;
  - (e) devoting disproportionate attention to Israel's activities on the West Bank;
  - (f) getting many facts wrong in coverage of the Lebanon War. Pro-Israeli critics also argued that western reporters operated under fear of terrorist reprisals, and that the media were to some extent engaged in: (i) invidious stereotypes about Jewish control of the media and government; (ii) vulgar anti-Jewish imagery, particularly in political cartoons; (iii) declaration of Jewish group interests as illegitimate; and (iv) collusion of anti-Israel partisans with traditional anti-Jewish activists.
3. The broadcast media were unable to deal with historical backgrounds which caused unfavourable coverage of Israel in the conflict.

Although these studies essentially relied on content analysis, in using this method it is difficult to justify the findings from pro-Israeli researchers that western reporters operated under fear of terrorist reprisals, and from pro-Arab researchers that conspiracy, editorial bans, and other barriers made it impossible or extremely difficult for pro-Arab views to appear in print in the US. Obviously, at least, it is impossible to measure conspiracy by any of the known media research methods. These limitations notwithstanding, Kressel (1987: 216) identified some similarities in the claims by both pro-Israeli and pro-Arab researchers, which confirms a predominant trend of war journalism in western media coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. These similarities include the citation by both camps of:

1. Unbalanced and disproportionately unfavourable coverage;
2. Distorted and untrue media portrayals of the conflict;
3. Prejudice and stereotyping;
4. Employment of double standards;
5. Various unfair political and organizational barriers to an objective coverage.

Locating these characteristics in the theoretical premise of peace journalism, it can be deduced from early studies that the western media were engaged in war-, propaganda- and victory-oriented coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Such a war journalism approach to a conflict is often devoid of the transformational nature of the conflict and less attentive to the opportunities that could exist for peace (see Buller, 2011). In war journalism, the media participates in a conflict to produce unbalanced and distorted 'we-and-they' coverage in which 'they' are stereotyped and dehumanized so that 'we' can gain the victory. In this case, the media reports are often cleverly loaded with propaganda of reasons and cover-up stories that aim to portray 'them' as the problem to which the 'our' victory is the solution.

Turning to recent studies, many findings similarly show that western media have been war-oriented in support of Israel – at times even more so than local Israeli media. For example, Viser (2003) carried out a quantitative analysis of the indicators of bias in the portrayal of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by the *New York Times* and Israel’s *Haaretz* newspaper, and found that the *New York Times* demonstrated pro-Israeli bias more than *Haaretz*. According to Viser, the *New York Times*’ framing of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict not only indicated an unnecessary element of war journalism but also reflected the underlying US role, which some scholars see as the most powerful driving force behind the conflict (Bapat, 2011; Beinin, 1998; Smith, 2004). A study of the Associated Press (AP) news in 2004 by Jews for Justice in the Middle East (nd) similarly found a significant correlation between the likelihood of a death receiving coverage and the nationality of the person killed in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Drawing upon results from content analysis, this study specifically reported that the AP – the US-owned world’s oldest and largest news agency – was underreporting Palestinian deaths in a way that showed more Israelis than Palestinians were dying in the conflict. This finding was corroborated in an official press release from the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, which confirmed that between September 2000 (when the second Palestinian intifada started) and June 2008, 4,862 Palestinians were killed in the conflict in comparison to 1,057 Israelis (Kandil, 2009). Also in 2004, the Glasgow Media Group published a study of UK media coverage of the second Palestinian intifada and its impact on public understanding of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. In a section titled ‘Bad news from Israel’ (Philo and Berry, 2004), the Group reported that there was a preponderance of official Israeli perspectives on BBC1, and that US politicians who support Israel were very strongly featured. The study revealed that BBC1 and ITN News reported almost nothing about the history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Viewers’ understanding of the conflict, according to this study, was distorted to such an extent that ‘most did not know that Palestinians had been forced from their homes and land when Israel was established in 1948 . . . so they thought that the Palestinians were the occupiers’ (p. 215). On the core issues of the conflict, the study indicated that UK television coverage encouraged some viewers to believe that the conflict was merely a border dispute between Israel and Palestine. Israeli settlements in the occupied territories were portrayed as vulnerable communities rather than as having a role in imposing Israeli occupation.

Another important study on the dominant perspective was conducted on BBC News by an independent review panel commissioned by the BBC itself, with researchers drawn from Loughborough University Centre for Communication Research. The study, which also relied predominantly on content analysis methods, examined the impartiality of the BBC coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and found that the BBC coverage of the conflict was ‘incomplete’ and ‘misleading’ (BBC, 2006).

Analysis of news coverage in other western networks such as ABC, CBS and NBC between September 2000 and March 2002 found that the networks portrayed Palestinians as attackers and Israelis as retaliators (fair.org, 2002). According to this study, ABC made 42 references within the study period, 64 per cent of which described Israelis as retaliating Palestinian attacks and only 21 per cent of which described Palestinians as retaliating Israeli attacks. The remaining 14 per cent made ambiguous references. CBS was reported to have made 67 references within the study period, 79 per cent of which described

Israelis as retaliating Palestinian attacks and only 7 per cent of which described Palestinians as retaliating Israeli attacks. The remaining 13 per cent were ambiguous. As for NBC, the study found 41 references, 93 per cent of which described Israelis as retaliating Palestinian attacks and none of which described Palestinians as retaliating Israeli attacks. The remaining 7 per cent were ambiguous.

Other criticisms levelled against the dominant (western) media perspective on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict include dearth of reporting, lack of analysis, absence of images and lack of voices describing the experience of the Palestinians under the occupation (Kandil, 2009). Words referring to the illegality of Israeli presence in the West Bank and Gaza such as ‘occupation’, ‘occupied territories’ and ‘settlements’ are consistently avoided in the dominant perspective (p. 49).

Available studies on the alternative perspective are mostly comparative textual and content analysis. A few are survey. Prominent among these studies is Kandil (2009), who conducted a comparative corpus-based critical discourse analysis and found that Aljazeera Arabic’s corpus on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict contains more than twice the number of words as that of the BBC and more than five times that of CNN. What this means, as the study clearly established, is that Aljazeera Arabic devoted a significantly larger amount of space to reporting the Israeli–Palestinian conflict than did the BBC, and even more than CNN.

While this finding appears straightforward, the implication, according to Kandil, is that followers of CNN will usually get significantly less information about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict compared to followers of the BBC and Aljazeera Arabic. Also of interest in Kandil’s study are his findings regarding media description of the agents of violence, method of violence and outcome/victims of violence in the conflict. The notable agents of violence according to Aljazeera Arabic are the Israelis, while according to the BBC they are Palestinians, Islam and Hamas. According to CNN, the agents of violence are terrorists. On the methods of violence, Aljazeera Arabic noted ‘firing’ and ‘operation’, while the BBC noted ‘suicide’, ‘rockets’ and ‘intifada’. The CNN also noted ‘suicide’, ‘rockets’ and ‘blasts’ among others. On the outcomes/victims of violence, Aljazeera Arabic uses the phrase ‘was/were martyred’; the BBC states they were ‘killed’ and CNN states they were ‘killed’ or ‘wounded’ (p. 56). Kandil’s analysis of the pattern of usage of key words that describe media coverage of the military aspect of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict clearly indicates that both the dominant and alternative perspectives share common frames of war journalism in reporting the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

In a similar study that compared how ties between government and the media influence framing of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in Aljazeera English, CNN and *Haaretz*, Raz (2008: 8–9) found that CNN was US-policy oriented in reporting the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. ‘Although CNN was extremely fact-based and neutral, it had an underlying Israeli focus and latent American bias. The coverage seemed to have an American agenda in the Middle East conflict.’ Ordinarily, CNN’s liberal democratic background and heightened journalistic autonomy should mean a more critical and independent coverage that supports peace in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict but, as the study reveals, CNN’s journalistic autonomy is inconsistent with its editorial attachment to US policy.

Raz did not find much of Qatar's political influence on Aljazeera English, which she assumed was likely to produce censored and less critical coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict because of limited journalistic autonomy arising from 'influences from the authoritarian Qatar regime'. However, 'Aljazeera's titles often used sensationalized or critical diction ... and deliver a rather clear anti-Israeli agenda with one-sided advocacy' (pp. 9–10). It is critically noteworthy that Raz could not provide a clear definition of her 'anti-Israeli agenda' category and how she drew out this agenda from the contents she examined. However, sensationalized diction and one-sided advocacy in conflict reporting are characteristic of war journalism, which suggests, according to Raz, that Aljazeera is unable to offer an alternative to the dominant trend of war journalism in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. While this stands, it is important to consider that peace journalism does not preclude the media from being critical in reporting a conflict. Being critical becomes even more relevant for fulfilling the media's requirements for peace journalism when it is aimed at exposing untruths and cover-up attempts or naming wrongdoing and wrongdoers (see Lynch and Galtung, 2010: 12–14).

In another content analysis that compared citations of Israeli and Palestinian sources in Aljazeera English and the BBC, and the prevalence with which each side was portrayed as instigating or responding to violence, Arab Media Watch found that both networks devoted more words to Israeli sources, and that both networks portrayed Israeli violence as a response to Palestinian violence:

82% of BBC articles containing sources from both sides devoted more words to Israeli sources; 69% of Aljazeera [English] article containing sources from both sides devoted more words to Israeli sources; ... both broadcasters used words that unequivocally portrayed Israeli violence as a direct response to Palestinian violence. (Karim, 2009)

Although giving voices to the voiceless is not the primary concern of this study, viewed from this angle, the report from Arab Media Watch suggests that Aljazeera English has not really offered the alternative perspective in that specific field to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Compared to other global news media, Press TV's coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has received less research attention. Press TV is owned and funded by the government of Iran. For this reason perhaps, the network is believed to be the international propaganda instrument of Iran's pro-Palestinian regime. The position of the Iranian government in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict notwithstanding, Press TV, like Aljazeera English, is considered to represent the alternative perspective in global news flow, which arguably means the network should not be seen to reproduce the war journalism that describes the dominant attitude of western media towards the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, but should be seen to support causes that will lead to peace as a better alternative to war. However, the extents to which Aljazeera English and Press TV offer the alternative perspective in shifting focus from a war to peace agenda in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has been missing in the empirical literature. To contribute to filling this research gap, this study adopted the peace journalism model for investigation and generated the following questions:

RQ1: *In what measures do Aljazeera English and Press TV reflect war and peace journalism in their coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and is there a significant difference in framing between the dominant and the alternative perspectives?*

RQ2: *What are the salient indicators of war and peace journalism in Aljazeera English and Press TV news coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and how do the indicators vary between the dominant and the alternative perspectives?*

RQ3: *What are the salient indicators of war and peace journalism languages in Aljazeera English and Press TV news coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and how do the indicators vary between the dominant and the alternative perspectives?*

## Method

The study is based on a content analysis of 1,200 stories overall; 600 stories ( $n = 300/\text{network}$ ) from Aljazeera English and Press TV, representing the alternative perspective on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. For the purpose of comparison, 600 stories ( $n = 300/\text{network}$ ) were also sampled from BBC World and CNN International to represent the dominant perspective. The study covered the period from 1 January to 31 December 2011, except for Aljazeera English where data were augmented with 2010 coverage because of difficulty in accessing some news transcripts within the study period. The units of analysis were article and word. The period covered in the study represented the most recent experience to existing studies that focused on the war aspect of media coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Content data were obtained from broadcast transcripts through the web archives of respective media outfits and the Lexis-Nexis database. Basically, the study juxtaposed war and peace journalism based on Galtung's classification (see Kempf, 2003) to compare the extents and approaches to framing in media coverage of the conflict. Thus, four major content categories were developed as follows: (1) 'Occurrence of war/peace journalism'; (2) 'Approach to peace journalism'; (3) 'Approach to war journalism'; and (4) 'Use of war journalism languages'. Category 1 was coded to answer RQ1. Categories 2 and 3 were coded to answer RQ2, while category 4 was coded to answer RQ3. The frames coded into the categories 2 and 3 were based on 14 indicators, 7 each of war and peace journalism as defined across the existing literature.

Coding was both manual and computer-aided. Manual coding was applied in places where the article was used as the unit of analysis. Where words were used as units of analysis, computer-based 'Concordance' was used in quantifying the words and conducting Key Word in Context (KWIC) analysis. Cases of multiple frames occurring in an article were resolved by initially recording each occurrence of a frame as 1 so that, at the end, each article (unit of analysis) is coded into the category based on the frame that had the highest occurrence in the article. Drawing on existing literature (see Lee and Maslog, 2005), this was done to avoid violating the rule of coding one unit of analysis into only one category at a time. A wide range of variables were coded in this study, but only those that are relevant in answering the research questions were utilized.

Data were analysed with SPSS16.0. Coding involved two coders, and inter-coder reliability was tested with the *ReCal2* web-based instrument. Results ranged between 80 and 93.3 per cent for agreement; .59 and .86 for Scott's pi; .59 and .86 for Cohen's kappa; .60

**Table 1.** Distribution of war and peace journalism frames (%).

Network	Peace	War	<i>n</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>S</i>
Aljazeera English	185 (61.7)	115 (38.3)	300	1.38	.487
Press TV	97 (32.3)	203 (67.7)	300	1.68	.469
BBC World News	135 (45.0)	165 (55.0)	300	1.55	.498
CNN International	140 (46.7)	160 (53.3)	300	1.53	.500
Alternative perspective	282 (47.0)	318 (53.0)	600	1.53	.500
Dominant perspective	275 (45.8)	325 (54.2)	600	1.54	.499

and .86 for Krippendorff's alpha across the major categories for all the networks. A reliability test that yielded a kappa coefficient of .21 and .40 is considered fair, while a test that yields .41 and .60 is considered moderate. A range of between .61 and .80 kappa coefficient is considered substantial (Stemler, 2001). Based on this benchmark, inter-coder reliability in this study ranged between a medium and substantial reliability scale.

## Results

### *RQ1: Occurrence of war and peace journalism frames*

Coding for occurrences of war and peace journalism frames was utilized to answer RQ1. The unit of analysis here was the article. Table 1 contains the basic descriptive statistics of the distributions of war and peace journalism across the media networks.

Results show that Aljazeera English produced a significantly higher framing of peace journalism compared to war journalism ( $\chi^2(1, n = 300) = 16.333, p < .001$ ), while Press TV produced a significantly higher framing of war journalism compared to peace journalism ( $\chi^2(1, n = 300) = 37.453, p < .001$ ), in reporting the conflict within the period investigated. Compared as alternative and dominant perspectives, no evidence of a significant difference in the framing of war and peace journalism was found between Aljazeera English/Press TV and BBC World/CNN International ( $\chi^2(1, n = 600) = 2.562, p = .109$ ) (see Table 1).

### *RQ2: Salient indicators of war journalism*

To identify the salient indicators of war journalism within the media networks, the coding for approach to war journalism (Table 2) was analysed. Distribution of approaches to war journalism was done across seven frames of journalism adopted from the peace journalism model, which include 'reactive', 'visible effects of war', 'elite-oriented', 'zero-sum-oriented', 'two party-oriented', 'differences-oriented' and 'partisan' stories (see McGoldrick and Lynch, 2000). The frames were coded deductively (see Ryabinska, 2007; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000), which means they were treated as content analytic variables based on their predefined meanings in the peace journalism model (see McGoldrick and Lynch, 2000). This is to ensure consistency of methodological approach and interpretative framework. Coding verifies the extents to which the frames occur in

**Table 2.** Distributions of approaches to peace and war journalism across media networks (%).

	Aljazeera English	BBC World News	CNN International.	Press TV	Dominant perspective	Alternative perspective
Peace journalism	Proactive	62 (33.5)	61 (43.6)	39 (40.2)	110 (40.0)	101 (35.8)
	Invisible effects of war	11 (5.9)	6 (4.3)	21 (21.6)	16 (5.8)	32 (11.3)
	People oriented	42 (22.7)	15 (11.1)	6 (6.2)	27 (9.8)	48 (17.0)
	Agreement oriented	14 (7.6)	14 (10.4)	6 (6.2)	36 (13.1)	20 (7.1)
	Win-win oriented	5 (2.7)	27 (20.0)	4 (4.1)	54 (19.6)	9 (3.2)
	Multi-party oriented	49 (26.5)	17 (12.6)	20 (20.6)	27 (9.8)	69 (24.5)
	Non-partisan	2 (1.1)	3 (2.2)	1 (1.0)	5 (1.8)	3 (1.1)
	$\sum n=185(100)$ $\bar{x}=3.24$ $S=2.026$	$\sum n=135(100)$ $\bar{x}=3.17$ $S=1.980$	$\sum n=140(100)$ $\bar{x}=2.90$ $S=1.898$	$\sum n=97(100)$ $\bar{x}=2.78$ $S=2.017$	$\sum n=275(100)$ $\bar{x}=3.03$ $S=1.940$	$\sum n=282(100)$ $\bar{x}=3.08$ $S=2.031$
War journalism	Reactive	31 (27.0)	25 (15.2)	82 (40.4)	46 (14.2)	113 (35.5)
	Visible effects of war	34 (29.6)	21 (12.7)	16 (7.9)	31 (9.5)	50 (15.7)
	Elite oriented	8 (7.0)	6 (3.6)	26 (12.8)	23 (7.1)	34 (10.7)
	Zero-sum oriented	14 (12.2)	41 (24.8)	9 (4.4)	82 (25.2)	23 (7.2)
	Two-party oriented	2 (1.7)	23 (13.9)	2 (1.0)	59 (18.2)	4 (1.3)
	Differences oriented	4 (3.5)	19 (11.5)	8 (3.9)	29 (8.9)	12 (3.8)
	Partisan	22 (19.1)	30 (18.2)	60 (29.6)	55 (16.9)	82 (25.8)
	$\sum n=115(100)$ $\bar{x}=10.19$ $S=2.224$	$\sum n=165(100)$ $\bar{x}=11.17$ $S=2.035$	$\sum n=160(100)$ $\bar{x}=11.19$ $S=1.845$	$\sum n=203(100)$ $\bar{x}=10.48$ $S=2.582$	$\sum n=325(100)$ $\bar{x}=11.18$ $S=1.941$	$\sum n=318(100)$ $\bar{x}=10.37$ $S=2.459$

the contents examined. The presentation here is based on the three most salient indicators of peace journalism in each media network.

Aljazeera English produced 115 (38.3%) war journalism stories. Out of the 115 war journalism stories, 34 (29.6%) focused on the 'visible effects of war', which turned out to be the most salient indicator of war journalism in Aljazeera English coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict within the period investigated. This was followed by 'reactive' and 'partisan' indicators, which took 31 (27.0%) and 22 (19.1%) respectively of Aljazeera's approach to war journalism.

Press TV produced 203 war journalism stories, representing 67.7 per cent of its sampled coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict within the period investigated. The most salient indicators of war journalism in Press TV were 'reactive' stories (82/40.4%), 'partisan' stories (60/29.6%) and 'elite-oriented' stories (26/12.8%).

To calculate the variation in approach to war journalism in terms of frequency between dominant and alternative perspectives, codings for Press TV and Aljazeera English were combined while codings for BBC World and CNN International were also combined and analysed. Results show that the most salient indicators of war journalism in the dominant perspective were 'zero-sum' stories (82/25.2%), 'two party-oriented' stories (59/18.2%) and 'partisan' stories (55/16.9%). In the alternative perspective, the most salient indicators of war journalism were 'reactive' stories (113/35.5%), 'visible effects of war' (50/15.7%) and 'partisan' stories (82/25.8%).

As evident, both the dominant and alternative perspectives share common partisan frames of war journalism. It is important, however, to note that the alternative perspective represents partisan journalism more than the dominant perspective, comparing the frequencies of 25.8 per cent in the alternative perspective with 16.9 per cent in the dominant perspective. The focus on zero-sum and two-party oriented stories in the dominant perspective was responded to with reactive and visible-effect-of-war stories in the alternative perspective. Obviously then, both perspectives reflect retaliatory war journalism in reporting the conflict.

## *RQ2: Salient indicators of peace journalism*

Distribution of approach to peace journalism was made across seven frames of peace journalism also adopted from the Galtung Model. The frames include 'proactive', 'invisible effects of war', 'people oriented', 'agreement oriented', 'win–win oriented', 'multi-party oriented' and 'non-partisan' stories (McGoldrick and Lynch, 2000).

Results show that Aljazeera English produced 185 peace journalism stories, representing 61.7 per cent of its sampled coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict within the period investigated. Out of the 185 peace journalism stories by Aljazeera English, 62 (33.5%) adopted the 'proactive' frame, while 49 (26.5%) adopted the 'multi-party' approach. 'People oriented' stories took 42 (22.7%) of peace journalism frames in Aljazeera English (Table 2). Thus, 'proactive', 'multi-party oriented' and 'people oriented' stories were the most salient indicators of peace journalism in Aljazeera English coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict within the period investigated in this study.

Press TV produced 97 peace journalism stories, representing 32.3 per cent of its sampled coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict within the period investigated. Out of

the 97 peace journalism stories produced by Press TV, 39 (40.2%) adopted the 'proactive' frame while 21 (21.6%) focused on the 'invisible effects of the war'. 'Multi-party oriented' stories came up as the third most salient indicator (20/20.6%) of peace journalism in Press TV coverage of the conflict within the period investigated.

Comparing the dominant and alternative perspectives, results show that proactive stories (110/40%), win-win oriented stories (54/19.6%) and agreement oriented stories (36/13.1%) were the most salient indicators of peace journalism in BBC World and CNN International, representing the dominant perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the period investigated. The alternative perspective, represented by Aljazeera English and Press TV, produced proactive stories (101/35.8%); multi-party oriented stories (69/24.5%) and people oriented stories (48/17.0%) as its most salient indicators of peace journalism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the period investigated.

With 40 per cent proactive content compared to 35.8 per cent, results show that the dominant perspective was more proactive than the alternative perspective in reflecting peace journalism on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The two perspectives differed only in terms of how to approach peace, as the dominant perspective focused on win-win and agreement oriented frames, while the alternative perspective focused on multi-party and people-oriented frames.

### *RQ3: Salient indicators of war and peace journalism languages*

Peace journalism literature prescribes avoidance of certain terms which are often found to favour war journalism. These terms are classified into 'victimizing languages', 'demonizing languages' and 'emotive languages' (see McGoldrick and Lynch, 2000). Words such as 'devastate', 'defenceless', 'pathetic', 'destitute' and 'tragedy' are classified as victimizing languages. Words such as 'vicious', 'cruel', 'brutal', 'barbaric', 'terrorist', 'extremist' and 'fanatic' are classified as demonizing languages, while words such as 'fundamentalist', 'massacre', 'decimate', 'genocide' and 'assassinate' are classified as emotive languages. These words may occur in plural or any grammatical form, and may be used in any verb tense, depending on the journalist.

'Salient indicators of war and peace journalism languages' describes the relative occurrence of these words based on their classifications in the media networks investigated. In line with the third research question of this study, the focus here is to determine the extents to which the terms were used and avoided in coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by the media networks within the period investigated.

The analysis was based on word unit. Thus, there was no fixed sample size of words as the networks varied in the extents of usage of the terms. The content sample (number of articles) examined were however the same ( $n = 300$ ) per media network, and 1,200 in all. KWIC analysis was done to ensure that each occurrence of the terms is related to the conflict. Table 3 shows the basic statistical distribution of these terms across the media networks.

Results show that the most salient indicator of war journalism languages in Aljazeera English was the demonizing terms, which took 44.2 per cent of the occurrence of war journalism languages in the network's coverage of the conflict within the period investigated. Similarly, demonizing terms constituted the most salient indicator (56%) of war

**Table 3.** Occurrences of war journalism languages across media networks (%).

	Aljazeera English	BBC World News	GNN International	Press TV	Dominant Perspective	Alternative Perspective	
Victimizing languages	Devastate	2 (40)	0 (0.0)	10 (90.9)	2 (8.0)	27 (61.4)	
	Defenceless	0 (0.0)	2 (10)	1 (9.1)	2 (8.0)	1 (2.3)	
	Pathetic	0 (0.0)	3 (15)	0 (0.0)	3 (12.0)	0 (0.0)	
	Destitute	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	
	Tragedy	16(48.5)	3 (60)	15 (75)	0 (0.0)	18 (72.0)	
		$\sum n=33(100)$ $\bar{x}=2.94$ $S=2.030$	$\sum n=5(100)$ $\bar{x}=3.40$ $S=2.191$	$\sum n=20(100)$ $\bar{x}=4.40$ $S=1.095$	$\sum n=11(100)$ $\bar{x}=1.09$ $S=.302$	$\sum n=25(100)$ $\bar{x}=4.20$ $S=1.384$	$\sum n=44(100)$ $\bar{x}=2.48$ $S=1.935$
	Demonizing languages	Vicious	1 (1.3)	0 (0.0)	4 (1.3)	4 (1.0)	1 (0.6)
		Cruel	1 (1.3)	1 (1.3)	1 (0.3)	3 (3.4)	4 (2.4)
		Brutal	18 (23.4)	6 (7.7)	8 (2.6)	4 (4.5)	14 (3.6)
		Barbaric	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.3)
Terrorist		43 (55.8)	46 (59)	276 (89.9)	59 (67)	322 (83.6)	
Extremist		13 (16.9)	23 (29.5)	15 (4.9)	22 (25)	38 (9.9)	
Fanatic		1 (1.3)	2 (2.6)	2 (0.7)	0 (0.0)	4 (1.0)	
		$\sum n=77(100)$ $\bar{x}=9.64$ $S=1.169$	$\sum n=78(100)$ $\bar{x}=10.15$ $S=.898$	$\sum n=307(100)$ $\bar{x}=9.94$ $S=.647$	$\sum n=88(100)$ $\bar{x}=10.06$ $S=.862$	$\sum n=385(100)$ $\bar{x}=9.99$ $S=.709$	$\sum n=165(100)$ $\bar{x}=9.86$ $S=1.035$
Emotive Languages		Fundamentalist	1 (1.6)	3 (7.9)	1 (5.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.8)
		Massacre	17 (26.6)	4 (10.5)	11 (57.9)	2 (3.4)	15 (26.3)
	Decimate	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	
	Genocide	7 (10.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.3)	1 (1.7)	1 (1.8)	
	Assassinate	39 (60.9)	31 (81.6)	6 (31.6)	55 (94.8)	37 (64.9)	
		$\sum n=64(100)$ $\bar{x}=16.03$ $S=1.357$	$\sum n=38(100)$ $\bar{x}=16.37$ $S=1.364$	$\sum n=19(100)$ $\bar{x}=15.00$ $S=1.491$	$\sum n=58(100)$ $\bar{x}=16.88$ $S=.564$	$\sum n=57(100)$ $\bar{x}=15.91$ $S=1.539$	$\sum n=122(100)$ $\bar{x}=16.43$ $S=1.135$

journalism language in the Press TV within the period investigated. It is of interest here to know that both BBC World and CNN International also recorded the highest indicator of war journalism language in the use of demonizing terms – 64.5 per cent and 88.7 per cent, respectively. Compared in aggregate, results show that demonizing terms also came up as the most salient indicator of war journalism language in both the dominant and the alternative perspectives. Within the demonizing languages, the most featured and contested term between the two perspectives was ‘terrorist’, which took 55.8 per cent of Aljazeera English, 67 per cent of Press TV, 59 per cent of BBC World and 89.9 per cent of CNN International use of demonizing languages in reporting the conflict.

Turning to peace, results show that victimizing terms, invariably the most salient indicator of peace journalism language, were the most avoided in Aljazeera English and Press TV (Table 3). Compared in aggregate, results similarly show that avoidance of victimizing terms was the most salient indicator of peace journalism in both the dominant and alternative perspectives (Table 3). Within the victimizing languages, the most avoided term was ‘destitute’, which was completely absent in both the dominant and alternative perspectives to the conflict. Quantitative analysis reveals a similar pattern of occurrence of journalism languages across the two perspectives under comparison. Evidence from KWIC analysis, to be discussed later, also shows that the two perspectives disagree on the meaning and were engaged in retaliatory application of these terms.

## **Discussion**

Viewed from the angles of conflict and terrorism, the alternative media paradigm seems too narrow to mean ‘giving voices to the voiceless’. While the emergence of contra-flow in global news can be seen as a partial victory for the decades-long struggle for New World Information Order, analysts seem oblivious of what the new perspective should mean to the unsatisfactory history of war journalism on Israel/Palestine. Should the alternative perspective be seen only as counter-news and counter-analyses that give voices to the voiceless on the battlefield?

In the search for dialogue and peace as better alternatives to violence and war, it seems equally important – perhaps more relevant – for an alternative perspective to constitute, as Tehranian (2002) argues, an ‘alternative media system that will promote peace journalism for international and intercultural understanding’. The emergence of Aljazeera English and Press TV into the global media sphere 6 to 7 years ago was welcomed not only as providing voices for the voiceless, but also as promising an alternative to the dominant war journalism in western news coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. However, attempts that have been made to examine the responses of the new networks to the conflict have been overly focused on counter-perspectives from Palestinians. Although by offering a non-western perspective, Aljazeera English and Press TV seem to have made a major contribution to reshaping global understanding of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, evidence of peace alternatives, which Aljazeera English in particular is perceived to represent (see El-Nawawy and Powers, 2008), is missing from the empirical literature. This study has been an attempt to answer this research gap in the general context of the campaign for a shift to a peace agenda in media coverage of conflicts.

As the results of this study show, Aljazeera English produced a significant amount of peace journalism content on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict within the period investigated. This finding supports a global survey in which El-Nawawy and Powers had found that viewers of Aljazeera English perceive the network as ‘a conciliatory media that is likely to cover contentious issues in a way that contributes to creating an environment that is more conducive to cooperation, negotiation and reconciliation’ (pp. 24–25). However, relying on the quantitative analysis that produced this result might risk a hasty conclusion. This is because pro-Palestinian partisan frames, as results here also show, stood out as one of Aljazeera English’s strongest indicators of war journalism in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Press TV ranked even higher than Aljazeera English in producing pro-Palestinian partisan war journalism frames on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Compared in aggregate on the basis of the perspective represented, no evidence of a significant difference in the occurrence of war and peace journalism frames was found between the dominant perspective, represented by a sample from BBC World and CNN International, and the alternative perspective, represented by Aljazeera English and Press TV, on Israel/Palestine. This leads us to the broad question that inspired this study: does the alternative media perspective really make any important difference in the pursuit of peace in Israel/Palestine?

It seems that peace journalism can be represented adequately even in partisan media coverage of a conflict. This was evidenced in the contested representation of proactive stories, which is the most common indicator of peace journalism among the media networks investigated here. Proactive stories in Press TV, for example, mainly took the direction of forecasting to prevent possible American or Israeli attacks on Iran – attacks that may have their root in Iran’s anti-Israeli stance: for example, ‘Iran attack will drag ME into total chaos’ (Press TV, 6 November 2011). This story was referring to French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé, who had warned the west about military actions against Iran. Of course a story like this is proactive as long as it suggests prevention or de-escalation of war, but it was skewed towards the interest of Iran.

Stories in CNN International that sounded proactive were actually manipulative ones oriented towards defending Israel’s occupation of Palestinian lands: for example, ‘Israel to speed up settlement construction in Jerusalem, West Bank’ (CNN International, 1 November 2011). This would appear to be forewarning of a wrongdoing by Israel – in other words, proactive. However, in this story, CNN failed to provide the background that pointed out the illegitimacy of Israeli settlements under international law, which could have given a clearer proactive line. Instead, it argued from its own viewpoint that ‘Palestinians claim the land Israel occupied in East Jerusalem and the West Bank after the 1967 war as part of a future Palestinian state.’ Again by failing to attribute this announcement to Netanyahu’s office ‘in retaliation’ for UNESCO’s vote to accept the Palestinian bid for statehood, CNN actually presented a zero-sum picture of the conflict in which Israel’s victory was the target. Interestingly, the next day (2 November 2011), this was followed up with another softener ‘East Jerusalem construction not a punishment – Netanyahu’. Although this story highlighted the UK Foreign Minister’s condemnation of Israeli’s settlement programme as illegal under international law, it cleverly made salient the Israeli perspective that settlement expansion was Israel’s right.

Proactive peace journalism frames in Aljazeera English were notably reflective over Israel's regrets: for example, 'Israel indicts soldier over Gaza' (Aljazeera English, 12 March 2010) and 'Israel expands Flotilla enquiry' (Aljazeera English, 4 July 2010). Stories like these coming from pro-Palestinian media are likely to be taken as a genuine report of Israel's 'regret' over its attack on Gaza and the Flotilla – certainly therefore proactive peace journalism frames, capable of forestalling violent reactions from Palestinians. What can be observed here is a political dimension to peace journalism on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which is being represented in such a way that the media are not necessarily seen as not responding to the call to peace journalism but are cleverly doing so in the context of partisanship.

Further evidences of this are observed in the use of war journalism language. Both the dominant and alternative perspectives concur that some people, sometime, somewhere are 'cruel' and 'brutal' in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and that there are 'terrorists' and 'extremists' within and around this conflict. On the part of peace, they also agree that there are no 'destitute' people in the conflict, and there are no acts that 'decimated' or intended to 'decimate' any populations. But who is cruel; who is brutal; who are the terrorists; who are the extremists? The two perspectives disagree on the answers to these questions.

BBC World and CNN International used 'brutal' to describe attacks on Israel by Al-Qaeda and 'Palestinian terrorists', while Press TV and Aljazeera English used 'brutal' to describe how Israel was dealing with Palestinian prisoners and civilians in occupied territories. BBC World used 'extremist' to describe Arab political formations like Hezbollah, Taliban and Al-Qaeda, and the right-wing Jewish supporters of Palestinians. Aljazeera believes there are extremists, but that the term also describes the Jewish nationalist movement. Press TV thinks the extremists are the 'Israeli settlers' who engage in violent activities against Palestinian people and their properties.

Who are the terrorists? Press TV says the US is the 'biggest' terrorist and the 'biggest' sponsor of terrorist groups like the Iraqi-based party for Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK); Pakistan-based Jundallah and Iran-based Mujahedin-e Khalq, whose activities are against the interests of the Iranian government at local and international levels. For CNN International, the terrorists are Palestinian groups like Hamas and individuals like Bin Laden (now deceased) who attacks Israel and the US. BBC World has the same view as CNN International, but Aljazeera English would say that Israel, the USA and the European Union are the ones who say Hamas, Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda are terrorist groups although the causes they fight are not really those of terrorists. With this counter-demonization, it is difficult to obtain reliable evidence of peace journalism in the alternative media perspectives. Instead, what is more evident, as in the dominant media perspective, is a similar pattern of war journalism and peace propaganda.

The implications of these results are first, that the 'alternative perspective' is an inappropriate paradigm for explaining the roles of emerging non-western media in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process. This is because they do not represent the peace journalism alternative to the dominant war perspective on the conflict. Second, there is a general tendency for peace propaganda to evolve into political peace journalism, in which media from both perspectives might not be seen as overtly war-inclined but seeking to reproduce peace propaganda in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict within the

framework of peace journalism. Quantitative evidence, as the results of this study show, is insufficient for reaching meaningful conclusions on the solution-oriented peace journalism envisaged by Galtung. Future studies may therefore consider paying more attention to the qualitative approach for investigating peace journalism in media coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian and other conflicts.

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