




The interplay of politics, economics and culture in news framing of Middle East wars

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Abstract

A significant part of a modern war entails the struggle over news frames to influence public opinion. Studying these news frames in a comparative international context may offer insights into the factors behind frame construction. The 2006 Lebanon–Israel war offers a well-defined case for such comparative study. This study examined how mainstream Arab, Israeli and US television networks framed the conflict. It found strong regional framing trends explained as an outcome of the interplay of political, economic and cultural factors that confined each network’s journalistic practices. The trends revealed a strong correlation between Israeli and US news framing, with some exceptions, and a division between two Arab media camps, both of which generally offered framing supportive of Hezbollah.

Keywords

Arab media, Hezbollah, Lebanon, Middle East news, news framing

Introduction

In July 2006, war raged between the Lebanese Hezbollah party and the Israeli army, killing over 1100 Lebanese and 159 Israelis, wounding thousands, displacing almost a million Lebanese and half-a-million Israelis, and destroying tens of thousands of homes, factories, and bridges, in addition to billions of dollars in economic loss and immense environmental damage (BBC News, 2006). The 34-day war dominated international news (Kalb and Saivetz, 2007) and presented a well-defined case of asymmetrical

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warfare, where a guerilla group effectively resisted the onslaught of a stronger more advanced army, and where media coverage and propaganda efforts significantly affected the outcome (Lyons, 2008; Pahlavi, 2007). The war was an important juncture in the Arab–Israeli conflict. Not only did Hezbollah claim victory over its nemesis – even citing an official Israeli investigation that concluded Israel ‘failed to win’ (*The Independent*, 2008) – but it also touted a new deterrence arrangement. Even today, the 2006 war continues to influence regional policy and make news, as manifested in recurring Israeli military trainings and political statements that anticipate the next war, followed by counter Hezbollah threats and announcements boasting the new post-2006 status quo.

During the conflict, mainstream news played a significant role in shaping perceptions towards the fighting sides (Rill and Davis, 2008), which consequently affected diplomatic efforts and outcomes. While some went as far as claiming the media in this war became ‘a weapon of modern warfare’ (Kalb and Saivetz, 2007: 43), others leveled accusations of biased reporting, as is the case in every Arab–Israeli conflict (Gaber et al., 2009). Analysts claimed the news varied considerably from one region to another, that different audiences were watching different wars (Goodman and Gonzalez, 2006).

However, only few studies have analyzed this war’s news coverage, particularly in a transnational comparative fashion, not to mention that even these few studies have been subject to accusations of bias (Lamb, 2007). Therefore, this study attempts to fill a gap in the literature through a comparative content analysis of 11 TV networks (six Arab, one Israeli, and four American) that covered the war. It examines regional framing trends, particularly differences between US, Arab, and Israeli framing, and discusses the political, economic, and cultural factors that contributed to such framing.

This comparative approach has significant theoretical implications on questions of state and political influences on news framing. Herman and Chomsky’s (2002) propaganda model suggests that US news coverage will overall favor Israel, but does this preclude any divergences, or do US media always give a ‘pass’ to Israel (Novak, 2006), even if Israeli media themselves ask critical questions? Similarly, does the indexing hypothesis – which argues that national news framing tends to correlate with and is limited to the range of debate among the political elite (Bennett, 1990; Bennett and Manheim, 1993) – apply to news systems outside the US? Or do other variables, such as ‘national interest, national journalistic culture and editorial policy of each news organization’ and the broader political and social context better explain the factors that influence news framing (Archetti, 2008: 17), particularly in Arab countries. Moreover, can we speak of an ‘Arab media’ the same way we speak of a ‘US media’ when it comes to news frames pertaining to the historical Arab–Israeli conflict? Or do distinct Arab countries offer significant differences in their news output? Scholars have often lumped Arab media together assuming they ‘operate in collusion with a reigning regional power to maintain the ... illusion of solidarity among Arab states ... they fuel calumny toward the perpetrators of their common “victimization,” ... Israel and the United States’ (USIP, 2005: 3). This perception often ignores innate disputes between and within Arab states and how these disputes produce competing news discourses that reflect the clashing political and economic interests, as well as the diverse national journalistic cultures of this region. Finally, recent scholarship on Arab media has obsessively focused on al-Jazeera, as if it represents all Arab media (Kraidy and Khalil, 2009). Using news framing analysis, this

study compares the news framing of US, Arab and Israeli media, questions the assumed homogeneity of Arab media output, and examines the news framing of several prominent Arab news networks (including al-Jazeera), which attract significant audiences in Lebanon and the Arab region.

News framing analysis offers an appropriate theoretical framework for comparing news coverage across and within countries. Goffman (1974: 10) defined frames as 'principles of organization which govern events ... and our subjective involvement in them'. While Goffman's conception explains framing as unconscious adoptions of meaning, most contemporary scholars view framing as intentional constructions of reality, or at least constructions influenced by dominant structures and processes (D'Angelo, 2002). According to Entman (1993), framing entails the selection, highlighting, and communicating of certain aspects of a perceived reality, which offers a certain interpretation of an event, attaches to it a particular moral logic, and suggests a specific solution – a definition this study adopts. This is particularly relevant in mainstream news production, where newsroom processes, professional norms, and wider social and political factors influence the construction of news reports, and therefore the framing of reality to vast audiences.

Gamson and Modigliani (1989: 3) explained a frame is 'a central organizing idea ... for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue'. This central organizing idea becomes most critical for contested and muddled events, such as international conflicts, particularly for distant audiences, since a significant part of any conflict entails the struggle over framing the issues to influence public policy and opinion (Norris et al., 2003). Paramount is the issue of frame selection, since framing is essentially a method 'of organizing otherwise fragmentary pieces of information in a thematic way that facilitates news gathering, news production, and ... audience comprehension' (Whitney et al., 2004: 405).

In international affairs, framing sets the news agenda by highlighting specific events as international problems and ignoring others. It primes the arguments by identifying the culprit, and assesses the situation by recommending particular solutions (Norris et al., 2003). What's more, 'frames are rarely neutral or value free, not chosen by chance. They open the way to manipulation of news by interested parties.' This has strong implications for public opinion and the outcome of a conflict.

Most studies that examined the news coverage of the 2006 war focused exclusively on Israeli, US, or British media. Only a few compared the reporting. In fact, the war stimulated the interest of many Israeli scholars who, unlike their Arab counterparts, produced a wealth of publications that critiqued many aspects of Israeli media's performance. These studies consistently found Israeli media to be fervently supportive of the war effort, in addition to using news frames that concealed the war's ugly realities, its victims, and its cost, and that precluded moral questions from surfacing, thereby justifying Israel's war project.

Analyzing thousands of items from Israeli newscasts and newspapers, Dor et al. (2007) found the coverage completely supportive and uncritical of Israel. The study found Israeli media ignored covering flaws and inconsistencies in Israel's claimed objectives and justifications for going to war, presented a fictitiously strong image of Israeli leaders, disregarded the differences in their opinions, and overlooked failures to protect Israeli civilians. It 'almost entirely separated' Israeli military actions from the vast

destruction in Lebanon and extensive killing and suffering of its civilian population. The rare criticism that appeared, 'with almost no exceptions, resulted from the declared and unequivocal media support for the war'. In fact, the criticism called for 'harsher' and 'more massive damage to Lebanon' (p. 69). Consistently, Neiger et al. (2010) found Israeli media contained little journalistic criticism. Throughout the war, less than 12 per cent of the news was critical, and even less than a quarter of this criticism was 'challenging criticism', while the rest was 'reaffirming criticism', or criticism 'that was supportive of the war efforts, sometimes even encouraging belligerent actions' (p. 391).

Gavriely-Nuri and Balas (2010) focused on the framing of the Israeli military and civilian casualties. They found Israeli television used 'annihilating framing' when covering wounded soldiers, which represented war and injuries as positive experiences, while blurring their harsher features, excluding the suffering, and instead focusing on successful rescue stories. In contrast, the coverage of wounded civilians complied with the 'victim code' frame, where the injured innocent person faced a sudden, harsh, and externally imposed reality. Accordingly, this framing served to preserve the image of the undefeatable Israeli male figure, while emphasizing the victimization of Israeli citizens, thereby legitimizing the use of military force. Similarly, Gavriely-Nuri (2008) found that Israeli media employed metaphorical annihilation and four dominant war-normalizing metaphors. The 'war is women's work' metaphor transformed the war from the public to the private into an extension of housework tasks that are free of aggression. The 'war is a medicine' metaphor depicted Hezbollah as a disease that must be purified and stressed the military's physician-like qualities. The 'war is sport' metaphor trivialized the loss and destruction, and the 'war is business' metaphor turned the war into a rational economic transaction. This concealed the dire consequences of the war and normalized it as a commonplace act.

Studies examining US news found it to be generally favorable to Israel, particularly local news, but some studies found the coverage was balanced with a tilt against Israel. For example, Cavari and Gabay (2010), who compared US local and network news, found that local newscasts were more supportive of Israel and more often portrayed Hezbollah as an aggressor terrorist organization. In contrast, the networks offered some criticism of Israel, were generally balanced, and referred to Hezbollah as a militia. Moreover, local news more consistently echoed US government positions, which predominantly supported Israel.

Bahador (2008) investigated if a 'CNN effect' occurred in the aftermath of the 'Qana massacre', in which an Israeli airstrike killed many Lebanese civilians. Analyzing US networks and government press releases, the study found that negative and positive frames of Israel were relatively balanced immediately before and after the Qana attack, but damaging frames significantly increased the day of the attack. A spike in coverage on that day followed by an increase in government releases and a short-term change in tone toward Israel provided some evidence for the CNN effect.

Examining photos in news magazines, Mascagni (2008) found US photojournalistic accounts of the war evoked Muslim stereotypes and a western narrative of victimization that calls for US interference as rescuers in the region. The photos promoted US foreign policy's support for Israel and portrayed Hezbollah as a terrorist group. Images of victims were predominantly of women, which resonates with the 'narrative that women from the Middle East need saving from their masculine Muslim counterparts' (p. 8). The

images also implied proportional victimization on both sides, which the death-toll figures contradicted. Finally, the captions labeled Hezbollah as extremists and aggressors, Israelis as defenders, and Americans as peacemakers.

Studies centering on British media examined the objectivity of the coverage and concluded that it was largely balanced with a slight tilt in Israel's favor. Gaber et al. (2009) investigated the validity of pro-Israel lobbyists' accusations that the BBC was biased against Israel. Comparing 228 reports from the BBC and ITV, the study found that both broadcasters offered relatively impartial reporting, and 'if there was any bias it was towards, rather than against, Israel' (p. 239). In reference to casualties, 'there was in fact a pro-Israeli bias in coverage by both the BBC and ITV' (p. 246). In addition, both broadcasters offered more time to pro-Israeli voices than to pro-Lebanese/Hezbollah voices. Nevertheless, BBC achieved near-equality between Israel and Lebanon/Hezbollah in regard to the point-of-views of its news reports, whereas ITV offered a bias against Israel. Drawing similar conclusions, Parry (2010) compared press photography framing in *The Times* and *The Guardian*. Through a visual framing analysis of 211 photos, the study found both newspapers' images were primarily of civilians and emphasized human loss and injury, particularly those of Lebanese civilians. Still, both newspapers generally portrayed Hezbollah as mysterious extremist guerillas, and military images were predominantly those of Israeli personnel and hardware. Images from *The Guardian* were more graphic, showed more empathy toward Lebanese civilians, and utilized an Israeli culpability for death and destruction frame more often. Conversely, *The Times* balanced images of civilian casualties supportive of Israel with those supportive of Lebanon, but had a greater share of 'heroism/empathy of Israeli soldiers' and 'Hezbollah aggression' images (p. 80). The study noted that despite *The Times*' seemingly balanced display of civilian images of Israelis and Lebanese, the equal number of depictions of civilian casualties for both sides belies the newspaper's own numbers of disproportionate death and destruction that were significantly higher on the Lebanese side.

At the multinational level, studies that compared international media coverage reached inconsistent conclusions. Some found a global media bias against Israel, while others found significant differences between western and non-western media. Kalb and Saivetz (2007) found the coverage differed substantially from one region to another. Whereas Arab media favored Hezbollah, the BBC and US media tried to be balanced, but overall tipped against Israel. The study found both Arab and western media repeatedly asserted Israel's disproportionate response to Hezbollah's provocation, portrayed Israel as the aggressor, and evoked the 'traditional Arab feelings of "victimization"' (p. 51). The study based some of its conclusions on Schatz and Kolmer (2006), which examined four news programs on two public German television stations and found their coverage biased. Most started their stories in Lebanon and presented Israel as the perpetrator of disproportionate violence and Lebanese civilians as the victims. In addition, Hezbollah's fighters and attacks, and Israeli victims rarely appeared, and the programs offered limited justifications for Israel's actions, which were portrayed negatively. In addition, Yaghoobi (2009) compared the discourse of *Newsweek* and the Iranian Kayhan International (KI). The study found that the publications constructed two opposing systems of beliefs that reflected each country's foreign policies. KI portrayed 'Zionists' as the violent perpetrators and Hezbollah as the victim, whereas *Newsweek* vilified

Hezbollah and defended Israel. Both publications used passivization and nominalization in their reports, thereby concealing both the perpetrator and the victim of violence.

In sum, although a significant number of studies examined the news framing of the 2006 war, overall they offered few, if any, consistent conclusions, and many lacked scope. Studies examining Israeli media framing consistently concluded that their reporting was uncritically supportive of the Israeli government and its war project. In addition, the studies revealed Israeli news framing helped justify the war project by concealing its ugly realities and precluding moral questions from surfacing. Studies examining British media found the coverage to be mainly balanced with a slight tilt in Israel's favor, although these studies seemed too defensive and apparently aimed to justify some British media's news coverage during that period. More problematic, objectivity and bias in news coverage were benchmarked against other British media, instead of international media. The same was true for some studies that analyzed US news, where for example local and national network news were compared. Given that each of the US and British media belong to a specific media system, it is likely that the factors that influence one news institution also influence the others, and therefore all these news institutions may fall on one side of the spectrum and only differ marginally. A more plausible comparison would be at the multinational level, including comparison to the coverage of two assumed extremes: Israeli media, which predictably should offer the most biased pro-Israel framing, and Hezbollah's media, which should present the most biased pro-Hezbollah framing. Then the rest of the compared news outlets would be located within this two-dimensional spectrum. However, even the few studies that did examine international news drew disparate conclusions, a matter this study aims to resolve by offering a multinational analysis and including both Israeli and Hezbollah's media, in addition to analyzing a host of Arab and Lebanese media, which were largely ignored in most of the literature.

Therefore, this study explores the following research questions that examine the meta-frames present in the coverage, the dominant tone toward each side, who was blamed for initiating war, and who was framed as the victor. These questions focus on critical aspects of the coverage that may benefit one side or the other in the conflict, and therefore help us better understand in which direction each news network tended to lean.

RQ1: How did Arab, US, and Israeli mainstream TV networks compare in framing the 2006 war, and what political, economic and cultural factors may explain their framing?

RQ1a: What meta-frames dominated the TV networks coverage?

RQ1b: What were the dominant tones toward Israel and Hezbollah?

RQ1c: From which side did the main sources come and what were their tones toward Israel and Hezbollah.

RQ1d: Which side was mainly blamed for the causing the war?

RQ1e: Which side was mainly designated as the winner and loser?

Methodology

The study used quantitative content analysis. It analyzed 963 TV newscast reports randomly sampled from the primetime newscasts of 11 TV networks. These included two

pan-Arab networks: al-Jazeera ($n = 74$) and al-Arabiya ($n = 65$); five US networks: ABC ($n = 92$), NBC ($n = 100$), CBS ($n = 85$), and CNN ($n = 113$); four domestic Lebanese stations: al-Jadeed ($n = 88$), Future ($n = 78$), LBC ($n = 93$), and Hezbollah's al-Manar ($n = 60$); and Israel's Channel 2 ($n = 115$).

The study defined a unit of analysis as a complete news story that began with the anchor's introduction and ended with the reporter's (or anchor's) sign-off. All available news reports broadcast between 12 July and 15 August 2006 that addressed the war were collected and then randomly sampled to include at least one and up to three stories per day from each newscast. The sampling frames of US and Israeli newscasts were the most comprehensive and complete. They included all newscasts broadcast during that period (US newscasts were accessed through Vanderbilt University's online news archives, while Israeli newscasts were accessed through the station's online database). With the exception of Hezbollah's al-Manar, Arab and Lebanese media's sampling frames were also relatively comprehensive, as they were acquired from IPSOS Stat, a market research company that monitors and archives Arab televisions. Because al-Manar was frequently targeted during the war, some of its newscasts were missing.

The codebook consisted of 32 variables that measured several aspects of the coverage. Only 13 variables directly related to the research questions above were used in this article (see Appendix). These variables measured the dominant meta-frames in the news stories (RQ1a), the dominant tone of each news story toward Israel and Hezbollah (RQ1b), the sources used in sound bites and their tones toward Israel and Hezbollah (RQ1c), the assignment of blame for causing the war (RQ1d), and the portrayal of the winner and loser (RQ1e). These variables were based on studies that analyzed similar news events, such as Pippa et al. (2003) and Wilhelm (2005). They were measured at the nominal or ordinal levels and followed established content analysis conventions (Riff, 2005).

Coders were fluent in Arabic, English, and/or Hebrew and conducted the coding over a 12-month period. To ensure inter-coder reliability, coders were rigorously trained until a 0.80 coder reliability coefficient was achieved. Later, a random sample of 10 percent of the news reports was double-coded and assessed using Krippendorff's Alpha (K-alpha), which resulted in an overall average consistency coefficient of 0.83 (0.71–0.98). All variables exceeded the minimum acceptable rate of 0.67, and most exceeded the recommended 0.80 (Krippendorff, 2004). Using SPSS, variables relevant to the research questions were analyzed through frequency tables, cross tabulations, and a chi square inferential statistic ($p \leq 0.05$).

The study exhibited two main weaknesses. Access to all the newscasts, particularly local Lebanese and Israeli stations, was difficult. In addition, the need to include a large number of coders – needed to analyze news material in three languages – is usually discouraged in content analysis.

Results

Dominant meta-frames

RQ1a measured the news reports' dominant meta-frames. It asked which side's perspective is most prominent. The four meta-frames tracked were Lebanon-centered, Israel-centered, internationally-centered, and other-country-centered (K-alpha = 0.82).

Table 1. Dominant meta-frames.

Newscast	Lebanon		Israel		International		Other	
	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)
ABC	27	29	38	41	7	8	20	22
NBC	33	33	37	37	8	8	22	22
CBS	22	26	33	39	9	11	21	25
CNN	35	31	58	51	10	9	10	9
CH2	15	13	97	84	2	2	1	1
Al-Manar	50	83	10	17	0	0	0	0
Al-Jadeed	76	86	6	7	6	7	0	0
LBC	53	57	13	14	22	24	5	5
Future	56	72	7	9	11	14	4	5
Al-Arabiya	39	60	11	17	7	11	8	12
Al-Jazeera	43	58	20	27	3	4	8	11

$p = 0.0$.

The results presented strong regional trends (Table 1). Israel's CH2 offered the least Lebanon-centered meta-frames, followed closely by all US newscasts, while Arab stations, especially Hezbollah's al-Manar, offered the most. In contrast, CH2 offered the most Israel-centered meta-frames, followed closely by US newscasts, and Arab newscasts offered the least. In sum, US networks largely corresponded with Israel's CH2, and Arab networks correlated with Hezbollah's al-Manar.

Tone toward Israel and Hezbollah

RQ1b measured the explicit and predominant tone of the news coverage toward Israel ($K\text{-alpha} = 0.72$) and Hezbollah ($K\text{-alpha} = 0.71$). Strong regional trends emerged again (Table 2). CH2 offered the most sympathetic coverage toward Israel, while al-Manar (and al-Jadeed) offered none. US newscasts had significantly more stories sympathetic to Israel than Arab newscasts, which had very few. In contrast, al-Manar offered the most critical coverage of Israel, while CH2 offered the least. With the exception of al-Arabiya, Arab newscasts offered significantly more critical coverage of Israel than did US newscasts.

Similar regional trends appeared when comparing the tone toward Hezbollah (Table 3). Al-Manar and al-Jadeed offered the most sympathetic coverage toward Hezbollah, while all other stations, with the exception of al-Jazeera, had very few stories sympathetic to Hezbollah. While on average US newscasts had fewer sympathetic stories than Arab newscasts, two interesting trends emerged. First, Arab newscasts differed significantly, with al-Arabiya, Future, and LBC offering significantly fewer sympathetic stories than al-Jazeera and al-Jadeed. Second, US newscasts offered equal or even fewer reports sympathetic to Hezbollah than did CH2. In contrast, al-Manar had no stories critical of Hezbollah, while CH2 had the most. In addition, US newscasts offered relatively the same level of critical coverage as CH2. Also, Arab newscasts

Table 2. Tone toward Israel.

Newscast	Sympathetic		Neither/nor		Critical	
	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)
ABC	24	28	36	42	26	30
NBC	21	23	41	46	28	31
CBS	14	17	42	52	25	31
CNN	27	24	65	59	19	17
CH2	65	60	32	30	11	10
Al-Manar	0	0	6	10	52	90
Al-Jadeed	0	0	14	17	68	83
LBC	6	8	32	42	39	51
Future	2	3	19	28	48	70
Al-Arabiya	5	9	31	53	22	38
Al-Jazeera	2	3	27	41	37	56

$p = 0.0$.

offered significantly fewer critical stories, although LBC, Future, and al-Arabiya offered significantly more critical stories than al-Jazeera and al-Jadeed.

Sources and tones of sound bites

RQ1c tracked Israeli, Lebanese, and Hezbollah sources in the first three sound bites of each news report ($K\text{-alpha} = 0.94$). It also examined their tones toward Israel ($K\text{-alpha} = 0.86$) and Hezbollah ($K\text{-alpha} = 0.85$). The newscasts comparison revealed strong regional trends (Table 4). The vast majority of CH2's sound bites came from Israeli sources. US newscasts used Israeli sources significantly more than Arab newscasts. In contrast, Arab newscasts used Lebanese sources significantly more than US newscasts. Israel's CH2 offered the least percentage of Lebanese and Hezbollah sources, while al-Manar offered the most Hezbollah sources. Arab newscasts were divided in using Hezbollah sources. Al-Jadeed and al-Jazeera used Hezbollah sources significantly more than Future, al-Arabiya, and LBC, which used them at the same level as US newscasts.

As for the tone of these sound bites (Table 5), CH2's sound bites were the most sympathetic and the least critical of Israel, while al-Manar's were the most critical and the least sympathetic. US newscasts had significantly more sound bites sympathetic to Israel than Arab newscast, while Arab newscasts had significantly more sound bites critical of Israel than US newscasts.

Similar regional trends emerged when comparing sound bites sympathetic but not those critical of Hezbollah (Table 6). Al-Manar had the most sympathetic and least critical sound bites. CH2 had the most critical and very few sympathetic sound bites. Similarly, US networks had the same level of critical and sympathetic sound bites as CH2, although ABC and CNN had even fewer sympathetic sound bites than CH2. Arab networks differed significantly. While collectively they offered more sympathetic sound bites than Israeli and US networks, al-Jadeed and al-Jazeera had significantly more

Table 3. Tone toward Hezbollah.

Newscast	Sympathetic		Neither/nor		Critical	
	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>N</i>	(%)
ABC	0	0	37	49	39	51
NBC	6	7	32	40	43	53
CBS	4	5	35	47	35	47
CNN	1	1	76	72	29	27
CH2	4	5	36	40	49	55
Al-Manar	32	64	18	36	0	0
Al-Jadeed	40	69	16	28	2	3
LBC	8	15	35	65	11	20
Future	5	13	29	74	5	13
Al-Arabiya	3	8	32	82	4	10
Al-Jazeera	13	25	35	67	4	8

$p = 0.0$.

Table 4. Source of the first three sound bites.

Newscast	Israel		Lebanon*		Hezbollah	
	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)
ABC	66	56	49	42	3	3
NBC	65	46	68	48	8	6
CBS	36	42	41	48	9	11
CNN	62	57	36	33	11	10
CH2	184	87	23	11	5	2
Al-Manar	3	10	19	66	7	24
Al-Jadeed	6	21	16	57	6	21
LBC	12	29	26	62	4	10
Future	1	2	55	95	2	3
Al-Arabiya	3	9	27	84	2	6
Al-Jazeera	11	33	16	49	6	18

$p = 0.0$.

*Excluding Hezbollah.

sympathetic sound bites than al-Arabia, Future, and LBC. However, when it came to sound bites critical of Hezbollah, Future and al-Arabiya had significantly fewer critical sound bites than LBC, al-Jazeera, and al-Jadeed, each of which had more critical sound bites than even any US newscast.

Assigning blame

RQ1d assessed who was explicitly blamed for causing the war (K -alpha = 0.74). The same regional trends appeared (Table 7). First, al-Manar and al-Jadeed had no stories

Table 5. Tone of the first three sound bites toward Israel.

Newscast	Sympathetic		Neither/nor		Critical	
	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)
ABC	42	29	63	43	42	29
NBC	50	31	66	41	45	28
CBS	30	26	59	51	27	23
CNN	40	29	60	43	40	29
CH2	86	46	65	35	35	19
Al-Manar	0	0	2	11	16	89
Al-Jadeed	4	17	0	0	20	83
LBC	9	19	13	28	25	53
Future	1	4	6	21	21	75
Al-Arabiya	4	17	9	39	10	44
Al-Jazeera	6	27	2	9	14	64

$p = 0.0$.

Table 6. Tone of the first three sound bites toward Hezbollah.

Newscast	Sympathetic		Neither/nor		Critical	
	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)
ABC	8	7	65	53	49	40
NBC	17	14	60	48	48	38
CBS	13	12	60	56	34	32
CNN	15	11	73	55	45	34
CH2	17	12	65	46	59	42
Al-Manar	17	90	1	5	1	5
Al-Jadeed	14	54	2	8	10	39
LBC	5	17	12	41	12	41
Future	3	23	8	62	2	15
Al-Arabiya	4	29	7	50	3	21
Al-Jazeera	8	47	2	12	7	41

$p = 0.0$.

blaming Hezbollah, and al-Jazeera had very few. US newscasts had an overwhelming majority of stories blaming Hezbollah, even more so than Israel's CH2. As for Arab stations, the coverage varied, with three stations, LBC, al-Arabiya, and Future, offering significantly more stories blaming Hezbollah than the rest. On the other hand, all stories from al-Manar and al-Jadeed and almost all from al-Jazeera blamed Israel for causing the war, while the other three Arab stations somewhat differed but nevertheless assigned substantial blame to Israel. Most interestingly, not one story from all US newscasts assigned blame to Israel, although a quarter of Israel's CH2 itself did so.

Table 7. Side blamed for causing the war.

Newscast	Hezbollah		Both		Israel	
	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)
ABC	13	81	3	19	0	0
NBC	17	100	0	0	0	0
CBS	12	71	5	29	0	0
CNN	15	75	5	25	0	0
CH2	24	69	2	6	9	26
Al-Manar	0	0	0	0	6	100
Al-Jadeed	0	0	0	0	8	100
LBC	6	50	1	8	5	42
Future	4	29	1	7	9	64
Al-Arabiya	3	43	0	0	4	57
Al-Jazeera	1	8	0	0	12	92

$p = 0.0$.

Table 8. Side portrayed as winner/loser.

Station	Hezbollah winner		Israel winner		Both losers		Both winners	
	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)
ABC	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	100
NBC	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
CBS	4	50	1	13	1	13	2	25
CNN	1	14	3	43	2	29	1	14
CH2	8	25	12	38	11	34	1	3
Al-Manar	39	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Al-Jadeed	30	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
LBC	5	63	3	38	0	0	0	0
Future	4	67	1	17	1	17	0	0
Al-Arabiya	3	50	1	17	2	33	0	0
Al-Jazeera	9	82	1	9	1	9	0	0

$p = 0.0$.

Designating winner/loser

RQ1e assessed whether each news report explicitly portrayed Israel or Hezbollah as the winner or loser ($K\text{-alpha} = 0.78$). Only few regional trends emerged here (Table 8). First, all of the stories from al-Manar and al-Jadeed, and the vast majority from al-Jazeera, presented Hezbollah as the winner. Also a majority of stories from Future, LBC, and al-Arabia also portrayed Hezbollah as the winner, but these were significantly fewer than what al-Manar, al-Jadeed, and Jazeera. US newscasts varied. A majority of stories from

NBC and CBS portrayed Hezbollah as the winner, while only a minority from CH2 and CNN and none from ABC did so. On the other hand, al-Manar, al-Jadeed, and ABC had no stories presenting Israel as the winner, while CNN, CH2, and LBC had the most. The rest of the newscasts offered only one story each portraying Israel as winner.

Discussion

The content analysis of 963 TV news reports from 11 networks from the US, Israel, and the Arab world revealed significant differences and strong regional trends. The framing of Israeli's CH2 was firmly in line with Israel's interests. CH2 offered overwhelmingly more Israeli-centered meta-frames, news reports and sound bites predominantly sympathetic to Israel and critical of Hezbollah, and sound bites mostly from Israeli sources. It largely blamed Hezbollah for causing the war and predominantly portrayed Israel as the winner. The exact opposite could be said about Hezbollah's al-Manar, whose coverage was firmly aligned with Hezbollah's interests.

The framing of the four US networks correlated almost perfectly with Israel's CH2, sometimes even exceeding CH2 in its positive framing of Israel. Manifest was the allocation of blame; whereas CH2 offered at least some stories that blamed Israel for causing the war, not one story from US networks did so. In fact, they all had more coverage blaming Hezbollah for causing the war than did CH2. In addition, US networks offered fewer stories and sound bites sympathetic to Hezbollah than CH2. The only inconsistent area was the depiction of the winner. Whereas NBC and CBS offered more framing than CH2 that portrayed Hezbollah as the winner, ABC and CNN offered less.

The Arab networks broke into two camps. Al-Jadeed's and al-Jazeera's framing highly correlated with al-Manar's, with one exception: they both offered a high proportion of sound bites critical of Hezbollah. Otherwise, both networks were strictly aligned with al-Manar's coverage. Al-Jadeed sometimes even exceeded al-Manar in, for example, offering news reports sympathetic to Hezbollah. Conversely, Future, al-Arabiya, and LBC diverged from their Arab peers. Although they differed overall from Israeli and US networks and were closer to al-Manar, al-Jadeed, and al-Jazeera, they nevertheless were less supportive of Hezbollah, occasionally even offering framing mildly supportive of Israel. For example, they offered fewer sources from Hezbollah and more reports portraying Israel as the winner than did even some US networks. In comparison to their Arab peers, they offered significantly fewer reports and sound bites sympathetic to Hezbollah, more reports blaming Hezbollah for causing the war, and less framing that portrayed Hezbollah as the winner.

These findings are consistent with studies of Israeli media, which found their coverage to be staunchly and uncritically supportive of Israel (Dor et al., 2007; Gavriely-Nuri, 2008; Gavriely-Nuri and Balas, 2010; Neiger et al., 2010). The results are also somewhat consistent with studies of US media, especially Mascagni (2008), who found the coverage promoted US foreign policy's support of Israel and was highly negative towards Hezbollah, compared to the more modest conclusions of Cavari and Gabay (2010) and Bahador (2008), who found the coverage relatively balanced with a tilt in Israel's favor. However, this study largely contradicts Kalb and Saivetz (2007: 50), who concluded that 'CNN tried to be balanced, and ... ABC, CBS, and NBC were more critical of Israel than

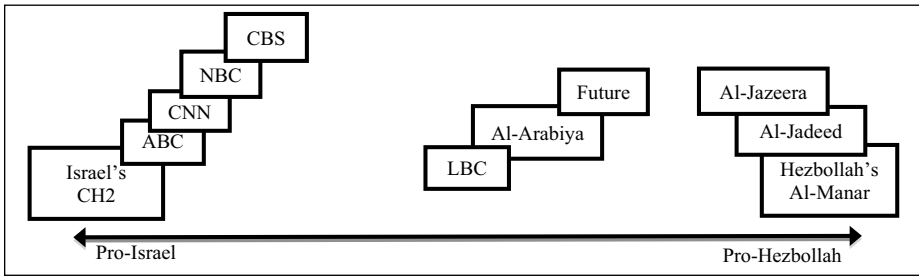


Figure 1. Framing distribution along a pro-Israel/pro-Hezbollah continuum.

of Hezbollah.’ However, the findings somewhat agree with Kalb and Saivetz’s conclusion that Arab media favored Hezbollah, although, as noted earlier, this study found strong differences between Arab media.

If we imagine Israel’s CH2 on one extreme of the spectrum staunchly supporting Israel, and Hezbollah’s al-Manar on the other extreme firmly supporting Hezbollah (see Figure 1), we can easily see how US networks fall squarely on CH2’s side with little difference between them, sometimes even exceeding CH2 in supporting Israel’s interests. Whereas Arab channels, although generally falling on al-Manar’s side of the spectrum, were divided into two camps, al-Arabiya, LBC, and Future were less consistent in supporting Hezbollah and sometimes drew close to US and Israeli news framing. On the other hand, al-Jadeed’s and al-Jazeera’s framing was squarely in step with Hezbollah’s al-Manar.

The consistency between Israeli and US media framing is expected. Research has long established a correlation between foreign policy and news framing, particularly in the US (Lawrence, 2010). Nevertheless, it is interesting to see US networks sometimes exceeding Israeli media in supporting Israel, particularly when it came to allocating blame for causing the war, a matter that ties into justifying Israel’s actions, which US foreign policy and US media have consistently supported for decades, and may additionally be connected to the powerful pro-Israel lobby in the US (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007).

Also interesting is the division between Arab networks, which reflects their geopolitical alignments, economics, and sectarian affiliations. Qatar, owner of al-Jazeera, supported Hezbollah in that war and later donated generously to rebuild Lebanon. Its network has been a critic of Israeli policies in Palestine since its inception. In contrast, Saudi Arabia, the owner of al-Arabiya, was in a political conflict with Qatar. More importantly, Saudi supported the ‘March 14’ Lebanese political coalition that is opposed to Hezbollah and its ‘March 8’ coalition, which is backed by Syria and Iran and opposes Saudi and US influence in the region. As for the Lebanese networks, the Saudi-backed Hariri family, the owner of Future TV, led the most powerful Sunni political group in Lebanon (Future Movement) and was the most prominent member of the ‘March 14’ coalition and in contentious competition with the Shiite Hezbollah since 2005. LBC was historically controlled by a right-wing Christian group (Lebanese Forces), but after 1992 it severed ties with the then-banned party and shifted alliances multiple times to ensure survival. Controlled since then by the former Lebanese Forces member turned

businessman Pierre el-Daher, LBC enjoyed temporary protection by Saudi investors, most importantly Saudi prince and media tycoon al-Waleed bin Talal. The station since 2005 supported the ‘March 14’ coalition. Finally, al-Jadeed TV, established by the communist party, later sold to the businessman Tahseen Khayat and which continues to be staffed by many leftists and former communists has always been a steadfast critic of Israel, but has not shied away from occasionally criticizing Hezbollah. It tries to balance its cautious alignment with the ‘March 8’ coalition and its ties to Qatar, one of its major funders. Moreover, each of these stations follow distinct editorial policies and reflect divergent national journalistic cultures (Melki, 2008), which offers support to Archetti’s (2008) argument that the indexing hypothesis does not neatly fit news systems outside the US. This interplay between political, economic, and cultural factors and the news framing of these networks reconfirms the major differences between Arab media. Their divergent framing, particularly over the so-called unifying enemy (Israel), underlines the different ‘expressions and outcomes of power’ and distinct ‘web[s] of culture’ (Reese, 2010: 18–19) that vary from one Arab state to another, and even within some pluralistic Arab states, such as Lebanon.

In contrast to Arab media’s divergent political economies, US media have largely been dominated by convergent structures, or in Herman and Chomsky’s (2002: 2) terms, a propaganda system characterized by a set of news filters that ensures ‘money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public’. This conception is most stark in the news framing of foreign policy matters, which rarely face any division or dissent among the political elite (Lawrence, 2010), particularly the issue of supporting Israel. Studies have established a strong correlation between news framing and elite framing in foreign affairs, ‘particularly in high-stakes contexts of war and international conflict’ (p. 267). Nevertheless, coverage of war entails multiple news frames and angles, such as justification of the war, portrayal of who won, prioritizing news sources, etc. As this study has established, news framing of blame, justification, and defining the culprit entail the greatest contrast, particularly for US media that unequivocally justified Israel’s actions and pretext by only blaming Hezbollah for causing the war, despite Israeli media themselves somewhat wavering on this issue. On the other hand, US media framing significantly diverged from government framing in defining who won the war. Israel’s unexpected loss confounded US policy makers and briefly opened the door for journalists to independently frame the news.

As a result of this framing, audiences of the studied media networks watched largely different versions of this war. US audiences mainly watched a war between a justified and legitimate Israeli ‘ally’ and an illegitimate Hezbollah that received the brunt of the network’s negative coverage but nevertheless in the end was able to win – or at least not lose.

Israeli audiences, as judged by Channel 2’s coverage, received a similar but invariably more in-depth and nuanced picture. However, unlike US audiences, Israeli audiences at least received some questioning of the rationality behind this war, questioning that increased towards the end of the war (Neiger et al., 2010).

Arab – including Lebanese – audiences received the opposite story: a justified Hezbollah resistance movement that has continued to resist Israeli oppression since it invaded Lebanon in 1982, in addition to a ‘divine and historic’ victory for the Arab

Hezbollah over the Zionist state that had humiliated full-fledged Arab armies in one battle after another for over half a century. The rift between Arab media did not likely challenge this narrative during the war, mainly because the more staunchly supportive Manar, al-Jadeed, and al-Jazeera had overwhelmingly more audiences than the less supportive LBC, Future TV, and al-Arabiya (Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, 2006). But one cannot ignore the coverage of the latter group and their dedicated audiences, especially inside Lebanon, and especially around the end of the war. For example, during the last few days of the war (around 15 August), Hezbollah tried hard to advance a narrative that celebrated the historic victory and focused on the enormous rebuilding effort, while its local opponents, for instance Future TV, kept the camera lens focused on the vast destruction, loss of life, and economic devastation.

Finally, these findings encourage further investigation into the various areas of war framing, particularly the 'unexpected events' that can potentially balance the playing field in favor of independent journalism (Lawrence, 2010: 275). One example is the 30 July Israeli airstrike on Qana that killed many civilians and temporarily turned US media coverage against Israel (Bahador, 2008). Another example is Hezbollah's 6 August rocket attack on the Israeli town Kfar Giladi, which killed 12 Israeli soldiers and was described as Israel's 'bloodiest day' (McCarthy, 2006). Further analysis of how these events affected international news could better inform us about the implications and characteristics of news framing of unexpected events. Moreover, further research that more closely replicates Archetti's (2008) design could shed more light on the merits of the indexing hypothesis outside the US.

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Author biography

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Appendix

Codebook (includes only variables relevant to this article)

1. The date the story aired.
2. The name of news network:
 - a. ABC
 - b. NBC
 - c. CBS
 - d. CNN
 - e. Channel 2 (Israel)
 - f. Jazeera
 - g. Arabia
 - h. Manar
 - i. Jadeed
 - j. Future TV
 - k. LBC
3. Placement of the story in the newscast: (English coders, see rundown for answer. Arabic coders, see grid for answer)
 - a. 1st story
 - b. 2nd story
 - c. 3rd story
 - d. 4th story
 - e. 5th story
 - f. 6th story
 - g. 7th story
 - h. 8th story
 - i. 9th story
 - j. 10th to last
4. Length of the story (start timing when the Anchor starts talking until the reporter or the anchor ends the story):
 - a. Less than 30 seconds
 - b. 0:30 – 0:59 seconds
 - c. 1:00 – 1:30 minutes
 - d. 1:31 – 2:00 minutes
 - e. 2:01 – 2:30 minutes
 - f. 2:31 – 3:00 minutes
 - g. More than 3:00 minutes

The following sections deal with frames used throughout the story.

5. Which Meta-Frame dominates the story? (We are not analyzing bias here. Look for the dominant meta-frame. Meta-Frames ask: from whose POINT-OF-VIEW is the story told? Who is the subject in the story? From whose perspective is the story-teller telling the story? Examples:
- International: Global demonstrations broke out over the war between Israel and Hezbollah...
 - Lebanon: The Lebanese president called Israel's attack on Beirut Airport a crime of war.
 - Israel: Israel pounds Lebanon with missiles and vows to continue attacking until Hezbollah is disarmed.
 - US: American citizens stranded in Lebanon ... President Bush calls on the fighting parties to continue fighting ...
 - a. Internationally centered meta-frame.
 - b. Israel centered meta-frame.
 - c. Lebanon centered meta-frame.
 - d. US centered meta-frame.
 - e. Other (specify):

This section deals with the framing or portrayal of the main sides of this war: Israel, Lebanon and Hezbollah. It also includes some questions about the framing of Iran, Syria and the US, which were frequently mentioned as the players behind the fighting parties.

6. The dominant tone of the story was explicitly Sympathetic/Critical of Israel (Focus on the dominant tone and give priority to the reporter's lead if there was more than one tone. Ignore sound bites in this question. If it was not clear, choose 'neither/nor')
- a. Sympathetic to Israel
 - b. Neither/Nor (Neutral/Balanced)
 - c. Critical of Israel
 - d. Not applicable, Israel was not mentioned.
7. The dominant tone of the story was explicitly Sympathetic/Critical of Hezbollah (ignore sound bites in this question. Focus on the dominant tone and give priority to the reporter's lead if there was more than one tone. If it was not clear, choose 'Neither/Nor').
- a. Sympathetic to Hezbollah
 - b. Neither/Nor (Neutral/Balanced)
 - c. Critical of Hezbollah
 - d. Not applicable, Hezbollah was not mentioned.
8. Who was mainly and explicitly blamed for starting or causing the war? (Look for sentences that explicitly say that one side started the war)

- a. Hezbollah
 - b. Israel
 - c. Both sides were equally blamed
 - d. Not applicable, nothing about blame was mentioned or neither side was blamed
9. Who was explicitly portrayed as winning the war (or the winner of the war) and who was explicitly portrayed as losing the war (or the loser of the war)? (Ignore sound bites in this question. Look for sentences that explicitly say that one side won and/or lost.)
- a. Hezbollah was the loser, Israel the winner
 - b. Both were the losers
 - c. Both were the winners
 - d. Israel was the loser, Hezbollah the winner
 - e. Not applicable, no mention of losing or winning
-

This section deals with sound bites and interviews the reporter used in the story, whether it was from a politician, expert, soldier, civilian or other.

10. How many sound bites were used in the whole story? (Translations of sound bites count as sound bites).
- a. Zero
 - b. 1–to–4
 - c. 5–to–10
 - d. 11–to–15
 - e. 16 or more
11. Was each of the first three sound bites explicitly sympathetic, neutral or critical of Israel? (If too close to call, choose neutral.)
- a. First sound bite:
 - i. No sound bite or no mention of Israel
 - ii. Sympathetic
 - iii. Neutral
 - iv. Critical
 - b. Second sound bite:
 - i. No sound bite or no mention of Israel
 - ii. Sympathetic
 - iii. Neutral
 - iv. Critical
 - c. Third sound bite:
 - i. No sound bite or no mention of Israel
 - ii. Sympathetic

- iii. Neutral
- iv. Critical

12. What are the countries of the people speaking in each of the first three sound bites?
- a. Israel
 - b. Lebanon (but not a Hezbollah source)
 - c. Hezbollah
 - d. No sound bite
 - e. Unknown
 - f. Other (specify)
13. Was each of the first three sound bites explicitly sympathetic, neutral or critical of Hezbollah? (If too close to call, choose neutral.)
- a. First sound bite:
 - i. No sound bite or no mention of Hezbollah
 - ii. Sympathetic
 - iii. Neutral
 - iv. Critical
 - b. Second sound bite:
 - i. No sound bite or no mention of Hezbollah
 - ii. Sympathetic
 - iii. Neutral
 - iv. Critical
 - c. Third sound bite:
 - i. No sound bite or no mention of Hezbollah
 - ii. Sympathetic
 - iii. Neutral
 - iv. Critical

Note: The original codebook included 32 variables. Only 13 variables relevant to the study were included here, and some more detailed instructions were removed.