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The Influence of The Abraham Accords on the Visual Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in Arab Media: A Comparative Analysis

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Mona Raafat Alsaba, declare that this thesis titled, "The Influence of The Abraham Accords on the Visual Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in Arab Media: A Comparative Analysis" and the work presented in it are my own. I confirm that:

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of the official signing of the Abraham Accords on the Arab media visual coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This study operationalized visual frames in terms of the human-interest vs technical frame and peace vs war frame, and explored the use of graphic portrayal as a framing device, in order to compare between the Arab media visual framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before and after the official signing of the Abraham Accords to examine the impact of foreign policy on the coverage among news outlets of different Arab countries. A comparative analysis was conducted relying on the collection of visuals from the digital websites of three Arab television stations: Saudi Arabia-government owned Al Arabiya (reflecting a conservative stand towards the normalization), the Qatar-government owned Al Jazeera (reflecting an opposing stand towards the normalization) and Sky News Arabia, co-owned by Abu Dhabi Media Investment Corp, owned by a member of the Abu Dhabi Emirate ruling family, and British Sky Broadcasting (reflecting a supportive stand towards the normalization). The study examined a total of 3,298 visuals from two Gaza wars: the 2014 Gaza war that took place before the signing of the Abraham Accords and the recent Gaza war in 2021 which came after. The results show significant differences between the visual coverage of both wars as well as between the three news websites. This study contributes to the current understanding of how conflicts are framed on multi-levels, where peace vs war frames act as an outline framework reflecting the actual events, followed by more specific frames related to the attributes of war.

Keywords: *Visual Framing, Images of War, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Abraham Accords, Arab Media, Comparative Analysis*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"The images of the war were not indiscriminate explosions of visuality but rather carefully and precisely targeted tools" (Mirzoeff, 2005, p. 73).

On September 15, 2020, UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani, then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and then-US President Donald Trump signed the Abraham Accords, which normalized relations between the two Gulf Arab countries and Israel. By the end of the year, Morocco and Sudan joined the agreement (Al Jazeera, 2020; Al Otaiba et al., 2021), which marked the first public normalization of relations between Arab countries and Israel since those of Egypt and Jordan in 1979 and 1994, respectively (BBC News, 2020).

The Arab–Israeli conflict dates back to 1917, when the British government announced its support for establishing a national home in Palestine for Jews (BBC News, 2021b; Khalidi, 2020). In 1948, the establishment of the State of Israel triggered off the First Arab–Israeli War, ending in 1949, with Israel gaining control of a large portion of the territory (Murphy & Taylor, 2021; Pressman, 2005). In 1967, Israel waged another war on Egypt, Jordan and Syria and managed to occupy the West Bank and East Jerusalem, a major part of the Syrian Golan Heights, Gaza, and the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt (BBC News, 2021b; Council on Foreign Relations, 2021; Khalidi, 2006). The Egyptian and Syrian forces mounted a coordinated surprise attack on Israel in 1973, allowing Egypt to reclaim its lost territory (Murphy & Taylor, 2021; Shakir, 2022). After a series of ceasefires, Egypt signed a peace agreement with Israel in 1979, followed by Jordan in 1994 (Murphy & Taylor, 2021; Khalidi, 2020; Shakir, 2022). Until now, tensions between Israelis and Palestinians in East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank have been high (Al Jazeera, 2015).

The response of the Arab media to these current normalization deals was not as negative as the prior accords with Egypt and Jordan (Allam, 2020). The normalization of relations with Israel included promises about helping bring peace to the Middle East and open the door for economic development and collaborations on tourism, trade, and technology sharing (Karam & Alrawi, 2020). However, this raises the question of whether this joint agreement will come at the expense of historical issues. It was not long before the political position of the joined countries has been called into question due to the recent events in Gaza on May 2021. Accordingly, their response to the Israeli–Palestinian tension is critical not only for their own relations with Israel but also for the future path of Arab–Israeli normalization.

The 2014 events were triggered when Israel announced the abduction and killing of three Israeli teenagers, blaming Hamas for this incident, which led to a crackdown on the group in the West Bank (White, 2014). On July 2, tensions escalated following the "brutal revenge killing" of a Palestinian teenager in Jerusalem (Barakat, 2021; White, 2014). Violence rose in Gaza, with the continuous escalation in the exchange of air strikes (White, 2014). On 08 July, Israel launched Operation Protective Edge, a military operation said to aim to stop rocket attacks and destroy Hamas' capabilities (BBC, 2014c; Sherwood & Balousha, 2014). The 2014 war lasted for days until both sides agreed on an open-ended ceasefire brokered by Egypt (Sherwood & Balousha, 2014). This 50-day conflict resulted in the killing of more than 1,400 Palestinian civilians (551 were children) and the injuring of 11,231 Palestinians, of which 3,436 were children (UN report, 2015). On the Israeli side, 6 civilians were killed and at least 1,600 civilians were injured (UN report, 2015).

The events of May 2021 were fueled before the Supreme Court of Israel was scheduled to rule on the eviction of 19 Palestinian families on May 6 from Sheikh Jarrah, a small neighborhood

about 500 meters from the Old City of Jerusalem (Mahase, 2021; Takriti. 2021). The situation then aggravated the next day when the Israeli Police stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam, leaving hundreds of Palestinian worshippers injured (BBC News, 2021a). Then, stun grenades and rubber-tipped bullets were fired across the compound of Al-Aqsa Mosque (Kingsley, 2021; Melhem, 2021). All of this caused the sudden resumption of war between Israel and Hamas, as the rocket fire from Gaza began after the Israeli government missed a deadline to withdraw its troops from the compound (Anadolu Agency, 2021). The war lasted for 11 days, leading to a massive destruction in the Gaza Strip and the death of at least 260 Palestinians (BBC News, 2021a). On May 21, both Hamas and Israel claimed victory after reaching a ceasefire agreement.

Several news websites compared the recent events of May 2021 to those of the 2014 Gaza War, citing them as the most intense fighting between Hamas and Israel since then (Al Jazeera, 2021; BBC News, 2021; Haley, 2021; Murphy & Taylor, 2021; Umlauf et al., 2021; Trew, 2022). According to a BBC report by Gardner (2021), the Arab state media coverage of the 2021 Gaza War was not quite as one-sided as it used to be in previous Arab–Israeli clashes. This study aims to compare the Arab media's visual framing of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict before and after the official signing of the Abraham Accords.

"The Arab States remain sovereign and 'liberalizations' remain constrained, to use a euphemism" (Guaaybess, 2019, p. 63). In the Arab region, media outlets are predominantly owned by the government (Majzoub, 2021). According to the four theories of the press, the Arab media generally fit into the authoritarian media system model (Duffy, 2014). However, to better describe the government–media relationship in most of the Arab region, Rugh (2014) introduced a "loyalist" notion, where major media sectors are controlled by close or extended family members of the regime.

"Images are the key weapons in contemporary warfare" (Michalski and Gow, 2007, as cited in Parry, 2010). According to Messaris and Abraham (2001), images can frame particular issues in the news influencing the viewer's perception of news events; thus, they not only act as a documentation tool but also recreate reality. From a theoretical perspective, this study relied on the visual framing theory to investigate the Arab media's visual coverage of both wars. Visual framing is examined in order to analyze how conflict is represented in the news and whether there is a bias toward one of the conflict parties involved (Jungblut, 2021). Images add authenticity, credibility, and actuality to the news and convey to the audience the impression that they are witnessing the covered event with their own eyes (Brosius, Donsbach, Birk, 1996, p. 181, as cited in Klijn, 2003). Although visuals cannot directly change reality, in the usual sense, they can alter the truth by omission (Knightley, 2003), leading to the possibility of a one-sided representation when other aspects are not considered. Images published during a war could influence public perceptions and attitudes, which may strengthen or weaken public support of war policy (Griffin, 2010). Hence, governments impose restrictions on image production and circulation to ensure that the content and the meaning of used images reflect their set agenda (Griffin, 2010).

In this sense, this study is primarily concerned with the influence of the Arab political stances on Israel after the official signing of the Abraham Accords on the news coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. In the current study, three major Arab news websites were compared, Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and Sky News Arabia. Al Jazeera is owned by Qatar and Al Arabiya is owned by Saudi Arabia, while Sky News Arabia is a copartnership between the British Sky Group and Abu Dhabi Media Investment Corporation, which belongs to Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, one of the Emirate ruling family. Given the UAE–Israel normalization agreements, the convergence of strategic views between Saudi Arabia and Israel (Turak, 2017; Black, 2019;

Ferziger & Bahgat, 2020), and Qatar's strong ties with Hamas on one hand and its attempts to reposition itself as a regional mediator on the other (Middle East Monitor, 2017; Fathollah-Nejad & Bianco, 2021; Fuchs, 2020), this study draws an additional comparison to examine differences among the three media outlets before and after the Abraham Accords.

Chapter 2

Background

Israeli–Palestinian Crisis

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is deemed one of the longest-running and most controversial conflicts (Beauchamp, 2018). Palestine was ruled by the Ottoman Empire until Britain took control after World War I. From the spring of 1917 to early 1918, battles raged between British and Ottoman forces (Khalidi, 2020). Back then, Palestine was inhabited by a Jewish minority (roughly 6%) and an Arab majority (around 94%) (Beauchamp, 2018; Khalidi, 2020).

It all began after the Balfour Declaration was made, which charged Britain with establishing a "national home" for Jews in Palestine because Jews consider it their ancestral home (BBC News, 2021b; Khalidi, 2020). Before this declaration, many Palestinians had begun to view the Zionist movement as a threat (which started in the late 19th century and aimed to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine). However, the declaration "introduced a new and fearsome element" (Khalidi, 2020, p. 21). Between the 1920s and 1940s, the Jews migrating there increased, and the Jewish population had increased to more than 30% by 1939 (Khalidi, 2020). Many were fleeing, seeking a homeland after Hitler's rise to power and the Holocaust of World War II (Beauchamp, 2018; Khalidi, 2006).

In 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states (Khalidi, 2006). Moreover, by mid-1948, the British Army departed from Palestine and Israel declared its independence and the creation of the State of Israel (Khalidi, 2006; Pressman, 2005). A war ensued, causing thousands of Palestinians to run away or be forced out of their homes in what is called "Al Nakba", or the "Catastrophe", and Israel managed to control

most of the territory (BBC News, 2021b; Pressman, 2005). Egypt occupied Gaza and Jordan took control of the West Bank. The East of Jerusalem was controlled by Jordanian forces and the West was controlled by Israeli forces (BBC News, 2021b; Pressman, 2005). In 1967, Israel succeeded in occupying most of the Golan Heights in Syria, Gaza, and the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt, as well as East Jerusalem and the West Bank (BBC News, 2021b; Council on Foreign Relations, 2021; Khalidi, 2006). However, because of the Camp David Accords, Israel withdrew its forces from the Sinai Peninsula in 1978 (Khalidi, 2020; Shakir, 2022). In 1981, Israel unilaterally annexed the Golan Heights, which remains an "occupied territory" under international law (Shakir, 2022).

Today, more than 6 million Israelis and more than 6 million Palestinians live in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) that consists of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (considered by Israel as part of its territory, despite the fact that it remains occupied territory under international law), and the Gaza Strip (Shakir, 2022). In these territories, Palestinians, compared to Israeli settlers, are treated unequally by Israeli authorities, who enforce segregation (Shakir, 2022). Additionally, heightened tensions often arise between Israelis and Palestinians who live in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem (BBC News, 2021b; Shakir, 2022). Gaza has been ruled by the Palestinian militant group Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) since 2007, when they won the Palestinian parliamentary elections, and they are usually in clashes with Israel (BBC News, 2021b; Jeffery, 2006). Palestinians are suffering because of Israeli actions toward them and the restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities, which Israel justifies by claiming that such actions are necessary to protect Israel from Palestinian violence (BBC News, 2021b).

The Abraham Accords

On August 13, 2020, a joint official announcement was issued by the United States, Israel, a long-standing enemy of the Arabs (Bateman, 2020), and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a key

player in the Middle East and North Africa and one of the wealthiest Arab countries (ECFR, 2019; Vaimal, 2020), stating that the UAE agreed to create diplomatic and trade ties with Israel, sponsored by the United States (Guzansky & Marshall, 2020). A month later, on September 11, Bahrain announced its agreement to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel (Guzansky & Marshall, 2020).

On September 15, 2020, the Abraham Accords of 2020 were signed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Emirati Foreign Minister "Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan", and Bahraini Foreign Minister "Abdullatif Al Zayani" at a ceremony hosted by then-US President Donald Trump (Al Jazeera, 2020). Later that year, in October and December, Morocco and Sudan joined the agreement (BBC News, 2020). These deals of normalization recorded a new path in the history of Arab–Israeli relations through the official recognition of the State of Israel. They are considered one of the most remarkable shifts in the Arab–Israeli conflict since the 1990s (Ephron, 2020).

After years of tense relations that dominated the Middle East region, this historic agreement is considered to be a significant step forward in the future of the Arab–Israeli conflict and strategic relationships in the broader region since all parties agreed on full normalization of diplomatic relations and shared commitment to promote stability through diplomatic engagement, increased economic integration, and closer security coordination (Goldstein, 2022; Ketbi, 2020). The accords appear to be a "joint product" between President Trump's need for a foreign policy achievement to help his re-election campaign, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's need for a reason to postpone the annexation of some territories from the West Bank due to domestic and international objections, and the UAE's desire to pursue its strategic interests Without it being a pitiful betrayal of the Palestinians. (The Abraham Accords: Israel–Gulf Arab Normalisation,

2020).

This agreement is the third Israel-Arab peace deal since the establishment of the state of Israel. In 1979, Israel signed a peace treaty with Egypt in exchange for the Sinai Peninsula. In 1994, Israel concluded a peace treaty with Jordan (BBC News, 2020; Benstead, 2021). The accords are described as a "win-win" for both parties. Nevertheless, unlike Egypt and Jordan, neither the UAE nor Bahrain had ever been at war with Israel. Both, however, officially endorsed the Arab Peace Initiative (API) in 2002, which conditioned normalizing relations with Israel on the establishment of a Palestinian state with Israeli full withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied since June 1967 (Arab Peace Initiative-LAS Summit-Letter From Lebanon (Excerpts), 2019; The Abraham Accords: Israel–Gulf Arab Normalisation, 2020).

Peace treaties between Israel and other Arab countries were referred to as "Cold Peace" (Benstead, 2021), contray to the Abraham Accords, which were described as "Warm Peace" (Embassy of the United Arab Emirates Washington, DC, 2022). The agreement underlines the importance of establishing cordial, cooperative relations between the involved parties and their peoples and conducting mutual interfaith and intercultural dialogue to erase radicalization and settle any regional disputes (U.S. Department of State, 2020). Moreover, it discusses the spheres that the parties should work on to maintain a normalized relationship by opening their doors to economic development and collaboration on tourism, trade, security, healthcare, and technology sharing (Benstead 2021; U.S. Department of State, 2020). The Abraham Accords aimed to put an end to the still-unresolved Arab–Israeli conflict. While the accords are introduced as an intercultural project to ensure peace in the Middle East (Karatas & Uslu, 2022), these agreements seem to be an economic/military cooperation pact in which all parties appear to be using each other for their own ends, with mutual security concerns over Iran (Benstead 2021; Guzansky & Marshall,

2020; The Abraham Accords: Israel–Gulf Arab Normalisation, 2020).

The Palestinian Authority condemned these agreements, describing them as a "stab in the back" and a deviation from the API (PSR, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2021a). The Arab League, an alliance of 22 Arab countries, was criticized for not condemning the new Arab–Israeli normalization deals (Al Jazeera, 2021a; The Abraham Accords: Israel–Gulf Arab Normalisation, 2020). There are numerous discrepancies between the stances of Arab countries regarding the Abraham Accords and previous agreements with Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994). At the time of previous treaties, Camp David agreements were unacceptable to the Arab world (Mahmood,1985). In addition, Egypt was subjected to extremely negative reactions and its membership in the Arab League was suspended (Mahmood,1985). Furthermore, when the Israel–Jordan peace treaty was signed in 1994, this agreement was also criticized by the Arab League (Allam, 2020).

According to polls by Arab Barometer, the Abraham Accords is widely opposed by the majority of the Arab nations (Robbins, 2022). On the other hand, the response of the Arab media to these current normalization deals was not as negative as the prior accords with Egypt and Jordan (Allam, 2020). Allam (2020) analyzed the stances of Arab media coverage of the recent normalization agreements and categorized them as supportive, conservative, and opposing. The Emirati and Bahraini media platforms were fully supportive, describing the Abraham Accords as an "achievement." On the other hand, the media platforms in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Oman were considered conservative as they covered the agreements as a story without any interpretations and neither criticized nor praised the agreements (Allam, 2020).

On the contrary, Kuwait, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Sudan opposed these agreements, describing the official signings as a "betrayal" of the Palestinian cause (Allam, 2020). However, despite their expressed resentment, Morocco and Sudan signed the normalization agreements at a

later date. For the Qatari media, the narratives differed according to the target audience. On one hand, Al Jazeera Arabic took a very aggressive stand in response to the agreements (Allam, 2020), while Al Jazeera English did not criticize the agreements on the other hand, but instead, its coverage focused more on the impacts of the agreements on the region and the possible Arab states that might also join (Allam, 2020). In this sense, this study aims to compare the Arab media's coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict before and after the official signing of the Abraham Accords.

The 2014 Israel–Palestine War

The 2014 Gaza War, also known as "Operation Protective Edge," was the third major offensive in a series of conflicts between Israel and Hamas in Gaza (Malinsky, 2015). From July to late August 2014, Israel and Gaza's militants engaged in a 50-day conflict (UNRWA, 2014). Tensions erupted a month earlier when three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped and later killed on June 12, 2014 (OCHA, 2014). The Israeli government accused Hamas of direct responsibility, which Hamas denied, prompting the launch of a security crackdown across the West Bank to find the teenagers, including search and arrest operations and broad movement and access restrictions (BBC, 2014b; OCHA, 2014). This crackdown was characterized by a campaign of mass arrests that targeted thousands of Palestinians (White, 2014). On June 30, the bodies of the three teenagers were discovered, but intense search operations continued to apprehend the suspected perpetrators (OCHA, 2014; White, 2014). Around 770 Palestinians were detained and approximately 1,400 houses were raided (OCHA, 2014). Later, it was announced that the abduction and killing were the work of Hamas members, but they were acting on their own initiative without the organization's sanction or foreknowledge (BBC, 2014c; White, 2014).

Tensions rapidly escalated after a revenge attack in which three Israelis kidnapped and

murdered a Palestinian teenager in Jerusalem on July 2 (BBC, 2014c; White, 2014). They beat him to death and set his body on fire (Barakat, 2021; White, 2014). Protests immediately erupted and spread from East Jerusalem to Palestinian cities inside Israel and continued to grow (Barakat, 2021; White, 2014). During the first week of July, hostile exchanges on the border with Gaza continued, with approximately 200 rockets fired (White, 2014). After a surge in rocket fire between Hamas and Israel, Israel launched Operation Protective Edge on July 8, an offensive against Hamas in Gaza aimed at halting rocket attacks and destroying Hamas' capabilities (Barakat, 2021; BBC, 2014c; White, 2014). It expanded its operations with a ground offensive on July 18, when Israeli troops, backed up by tanks and intelligence units, entered the Gaza Strip, claiming that it was required to demolish militant tunnels used to infiltrate Israel (BBC, 2014a; White, 2014).

Until the war ended, thousands of air strikes were launched and thousands of rockets were fired (BBC, 2014c; Sherwood & Balousha, 2014). The war ended on August 26, after Israel and Palestinians agreed to an open-ended ceasefire proposed by Egypt (Sherwood & Balousha, 2014). According to the United Nations Human Rights Council, more than 2,230 people were killed in this war. It left at least 2,251 Palestinians dead, including more than 1,400 civilians. On the Israeli side, 67 soldiers were killed along with six civilians (OHCHR, 2015).

The 2021 Israel–Palestine War

This 11-day war was compared to the 50-day war in 2014. According to several news websites, the clashes of May 2021 are considered to be the most intense flare-up since 2014 (Al Jazeera, 2021b; BBC News, 2021a; Haley, 2021; Murphy & Taylor, 2021; Umlauf et al., 2021), marking 2021 the bloodiest year on record since 2014, according to an Israeli rights group (Trew, 2022). The threat to evict some Palestinian families in East Jerusalem fueled anger, resulting in the outbreak of violence on May 2021 that killed dozens, mostly Palestinians. It has been described

as "the worst violence in years" between Israel and the Palestinian territory of the Gaza Strip (BBC News, 2021a).

This conflict was triggered months earlier by a series of events: the Israeli high court decisions in February and March to authorize the evacuation of six Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem (Mahase, 2021; Takriti. 2021); Israeli police harassment of Palestinian worshippers in their way to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to participate in the Orthodox Easter celebrations (Middle East Monitor, 2021; Takriti. 2021); and armed Israeli police officers storming Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and firing on Palestinian worshippers, during the holiest nights of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan (Barakat, 2021; Kingsley, 2021; Takriti. 2021).

The most recent round of protests in Jerusalem were triggered as a result of shutting down public spaces outside the wall of the Old City, by placing barriers along the famous stairs leading to Damascus Gate, preventing Palestinians from gathering there after prayers (Barakat, 2021; BBC News, 2021a; Kingsley, 2021). Palestinian protestors also demanded an end to the forced displacement of families from their homes (Middle East Monitor, 2021). On numerous occasions, Israeli forces stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque, armed with tear gas, stun grenades, and rubber-tipped bullets, and shot and harassed Palestinian worshippers as they prayed the nightly Ramadan prayers (Anadolu Agency, 2021; BBC News, 2021a; Kingsley, 2021; Melhem, 2021).

On May 10, Israeli forces stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque, injuring 350 Palestinians (Anadolu Agency, 2021). Later that day, Hamas issued a warning, demanding Israel to withdraw its troops from Al-Aqsa Mosque and Sheikh Jarrah (Anadolu Agency, 2021; BBC News, 2021a; Haley, 2021; Kingsley, 2021). However, the ultimatum expired without a response, and Hamas started firing rockets into Israel for the first time in years, which prompted the Israeli military to launch a

campaign of airstrikes against Gaza (BBC, 2021a). A constant barrage of rockets and air attacks swiftly developed into the deadliest fighting between the two sides since the 2014 Gaza War (BBC News, 2021a; UN, 2021). The war lasted for 11 days, resulting in widespread destruction in the Gaza Strip and the killing of at least 260 Palestinians, including 129 civilians, and more than 2,200 Palestinians were injured (OCHA, 2021). On the Israeli side, 7 were killed, including 6 civilians, and 21 were injured (OCHA, 2022). On May 21, both sides agreed upon a ceasefire and both claimed victory (BBC News, 2021c; Federman & Akram, 2021).

Arab Media Systems

From a political perspective, media is highly valued by governments and politicians for its perceived vital political function (Rugh, 2004). According to "the four theories of press" framework by Siebert et al. (1984), the Arab countries' media systems generally fit into the authoritarian model (Rugh, 2004; Duffy, 2014). These systems are established with a government license, are controlled by the elite, and follow rules that comprehensively regulate the actions of journalists, resulting in top-down communication in which the media tends to support state policies. The defining characteristic of almost all Arab political regimes is their continuous effort to manipulate the media to suit their political agendas (Rugh, 2004). Thus, government ownership of media outlets is a dominant ownership structure in the Arab region, in which "liberalizations" continue to be limited, ensuring that media content adheres to governmental interests (Guaaybess, 2019; Majzoub, 2021). However, as phrased by Rugh, "Arab government-media relations are quite complex" (2004, p. 250).

"Press always takes on the form and coloration of the political and social structures within which it operates" (Siebert et al., 1963). The actual performance of media in Arab countries cannot only be evaluated on the basis of legal laws and regulations (Richter & Kozman, 2021; Rugh,

2004). Constitutions protect the freedom of expression and media in general and legal documents; however, this freedom is almost always limited by concepts such as "national security" and "public morals" (Richter & Kozman, 2021). Hence, when we look into the Arab media systems, it is crucial to consider "the government's general approach to the media," taking into account factors such as the presence of real and open opposition to the government, the legitimacy and actual power of the ruling class, the stability of the political system, the media ownership, and the surrounding political systems (Richter & Kozman, 2021, p. 324; Rugh, 2004).

In their book, Richter and Kozman (2021) compared the Arab media systems and proposed a spectrum with two extreme opposite approaches: "laissez-faire" and strong government control of media. Due to a weakened state structure resulting from unstable political systems, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine are placed on the extreme laissez-faire approach. Moreover, Tunisia is a special case since it has passed laws to guarantee a more independent media system, balancing between protection and regulation and avoiding instrumentalization of the media. On the opposite end of the spectrum, both Egypt and Bahrain impose strict regulations and exert strong control over the media to preserve national security. Furthermore, all the Gulf countries, except for Bahrain, and the kingdoms of Morocco and Jordan lie in the middle of the spectrum, where media control is legitimized, not always directly but rather through self-censorship, with a small room for foreign investors to gain profit.

When analyzing media ownership in the Arab region, Rugh (2004) introduced the concept of "loyalist" media in his book, indicating that media privatization does not have to result in independent or regime-challenging media. The main characteristic of "loyalist" media systems is being loyal to and supportive of the ruling elites, despite being private media conglomerates. In addition, Rugh identified the media systems in all Gulf countries, with the exception of Kuwait,

as loyalist media. In this regard, Richter and Kozman (2021) deduced a common feature among the Arab countries; that is, close or extended family members of the systems control the major media sectors. In Egypt, Sudan, and Algeria, the ownership of "privatized" media lies in the hands of security and military agencies. However, in Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Bahrain, and Oman, businessmen with strong ties to the ruling families have major control over the private media. In Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, a different pattern of media ownership was identified as "pan-Arab outsourcing", where the main investments of the royal families and their allies go into "pan-Arab consortia", such as Al Jazeera and MBC, which do provide professional journalism while being completely "loyal to the political ideologies of their sponsors" (Richter & Kozman, 2021 p. 329). Nonetheless, media ownership in Libya, Syria, and Yemen is not regulated and is considered "confrontational", that is, owned by conflicting parties with financial capabilities. The media ownership in Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, and Tunisia is characterized by being unregulated since it is owned by a diverse set of "political and/or confessional actors", creating a somewhat pluralistic media landscape. However, unlike Iraq and Palestine, Lebanon and Tunisia have a healthy and stable external media pluralism (Richter & Kozman, 2021).

Chapter 3

Literature Review

The Power of Visuals in News

Powerful images could be one of the most convenient ways to capture the audience's attention as they serve as an effective communication tool (Klijn, 2003). They play an essential role in transmitting information to audiences, as they have an "attention grabbing capacity" (Ewbank et al., 2009: 127). Images add "authenticity," "credibility," and "actuality" to the news and convey to the audience the impression that they are witnessing the covered event with their own eyes (Brosius, Donsbach, & Birk, 1996, p. 181).

Audiences engage more with visuals because they elicit a stronger emotional response than text and may thus be more convincing (Iyer & Oldmeadow, 2006). The use of visuals in news stories increases their credibility and helps provide a truthful depiction of the world (Tirohl, 2000). According to Tshuma (2021), the communication power of using visuals in the news could sometimes outweigh that of the verbal codes, as images "enable people to see what they could not see" (Tshuma 2021, p. 110).

In the age of digital media, images that are often graphic depictions of tragedy and grief flow quickly and repeatedly from the news media (Dahmen et al., 2019). When news of a mass shooting or a terrorist attack breaks, media platforms are bombarded with photos of victims, body bags, and other shocking scenes, and the conflict-related issues of gun violence and terrorism are clearly depicted in these photos (Dahmen et al., 2019). Such images exert a visual agenda-setting effect, which can influence the public agenda (Miller and Roberts, 2010), frame the news (Dahmen, 2009), and affect how audiences perceive news stories (Coleman & Banning, 2006). Their power rests in their potential to evoke a strong emotional response in the viewer, leaving a

lasting memory (Ewbank et al., 2009).

When discussing the role of visual communication and news photos, it is important to distinguish between photojournalism and other types of photography. Thus, it is necessary to identify the restrictions and guidelines followed by media practitioners, as well as the interests of the recipients (Parry, 2010). The competitive nature of news organizations requires an understanding of the audience's preferences; hence, the visual coverage of any news event reflects the interpretation of the news organization and its followed policy, taking into consideration the fact that "although the media is required to reflect all sides of a story, retaining values and beliefs of the target audience is not only expected, it is also indispensable" (Fahmy, 2005a: 150).

According to Griffin (2004), in his analysis of photographic war coverage in US news magazines, news photos primed and reinforced existing news narratives rather than providing independent or unique visual information. Therefore, the highly selective use of visuals may increase their ability to convey strong and compelling messages about distant conflicts (Parry, 2010). Although visuals cannot directly lie, in the usual sense, they can alter the truth by omission, which opens the door to a one-sided representation when other aspects are not considered (Knightley, 2003; Parry, 2010).

Images of War

Visuals have always been a key component of communicating news due to their influence in forming meanings (Schill, 2012). Images require visual syntax to represent specific relationships among objects or concepts; therefore, putting images side by side can create an overall perception indicating correlations, causal connections, contrasts, comparisons, and generalizations (Schill, 2012; Messaris, 1997). Visuals provide "a sense of presence" (Cho et al., 2003. p. 312). According to Zelizer (2004), visuals of war are "among the most powerful visuals known to humankind"

(p.115). Sontag (2003) noted the limited function of photos to offer an explanation or understanding but recognized their "vital function": "The image says: This is what human beings are capable of doing – may volunteer to do, enthusiastically, self-righteously" (p. 102).

While many media outlets strive to be objective, many opt to support their country's official viewpoints in conflict reporting, even in democratic societies (Gasim 2018; Novais 2007). Griffin (2010) concluded that the nature of war reporting and used images demonstrate the extent of the political impact on media representations, as it reveals the relationship between the government and the press, the role of political orientations in setting media agendas, and filtering and fixing specific images as historical evidence. Accordingly, this study examines the role of governmental political orientations in influencing the use of war images. With that goal, this thesis seeks to demonstrate how the official signing of the Abraham Accords influenced the Arab media coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by comparing images from the 2021 Israel–Palestine War and those from the 2014 Israel–Palestine War.

Most visual content research focused on the coverage of wars, massacres, disasters, conflicts, or terrorist attacks (Fahmy et al., 2014). Because visuals allow viewers to draw conclusions, they are used to make sense of ambiguous parts of news narratives (Doremus, 1992). During the second Iraq War, photos of Iraqis cheering the removal of a statue of Saddam Hussein by American troops led to the conclusion that the US won the war, and that the Iraqi citizens supported the US efforts (Fahmy, 2007).

According to Moeller (2009) and Fahmy (2010b), images of war are politically powerful because they tell a more compelling story than words, which explains why they have been contested and regulated by governments throughout history, either by withholding them or by imposing tight restrictions on their use. Images published during the war could have an effect on

public perceptions and attitudes, which may enhance or undermine popular support for war policy. Published images often serve as cues for official government versions of events, and they rarely provide independent, new, or unique visual data (Griffin, 2004). Therefore, governments impose restrictions on image production and circulation so that the content and meaning of used images reflect their imposed agenda (Griffin, 2010).

Political Orientations in Visual News Coverage

Generally, governments attempt to employ their preferred media frames to reach the public and win their support (Yüksel, 2013). The visual coverage of wars and extreme humanitarian crises is a cultural product, influenced by governmental control, media ownership and political leanings (Griffin, 2010). Regarding the influence of political orientations, while some studies showed no relationship between the impact of the political orientation of media outlets and their visual content, other research found correlations between political leaning and visual portrayals of news events. For instance, in her study, Fahmy (2007) didn't find any effects of the political orientation of newspapers on their visual coverage of the demolition of the statue of Saddam Hussein. On the other hand, Wanta and Chang (2001) demonstrated that the political orientation of media outlets predicts photographic tone. They examined the impact of a newspaper's political philosophy on its visual framing and found differences between the right wing and left wing. Newspapers adopting right-wing philosophies visually portrayed the President in a positive way, whereas left-wing newspapers negatively portrayed the President in their photos.

A substantial body of research examined the correlation between government policies and the news coverage of conflicting events. In 1991, Entman conducted a study comparing two air accidents: the Korean Air Lines Flight that was shot down by the Soviet Union and the Iran Air Flight that was shot down by the US. Although both incidents are similar, they were portrayed

differently in the US press. The Korean flight incident was depicted as a "moral outrage" whereas the Iranian plane accident was described as a "technical problem". Similarly, in their content analysis of media coverage of the Tiananmen movement in China, Lee and Yang (1995) found out that while the Japanese news agency, was reluctant to challenge the Chinese authority, the Associated Press coverage aligned with the US foreign policy, as it tended to highlight the movement as a challenge to the communist system and that the Chinese protesters were calling for democracy and freedom.

In this line, Fahmy (2010a) also found differences in news framing between English- and Arabic-language transnational newspapers in their visual reporting on the events of 9/11 and the War in Afghanistan. "The International Herald Tribune", an English-language newspaper, conveyed visual messages that humanized the 9/11 victims, while in the Afghan War, the visual messages focused less on the victims and more on aid, patriotism, arsenals, and weaponry. Conversely, the visual images presented by "Al-Hayat", an Arabic-language newspaper, focused more on the victims of the War in Afghanistan and less on the victims of the 9/11 attack, displaying more images of material destruction.

Media Coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

During conflicts, news coverage becomes more intense and each media outlet could have a different perspective and interest in the part of the world where the news event is taking place (Damanhoury & Saleh, 2017); therefore, "one person's truth becomes, to another, biased reporting or propaganda" (Hachten & Scotton, 2015, p.7). Thus, reporting on the same conflict could always differ across different news organizations. Conflicts are usually covered by media in a twofold using the following frames: "we" and "they"; "moral" and "criminals"; "civilized" and "barbaric" (Bratic, 2008, p. 489).

Regarding the coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in the news, different versions of the truth are provided (Neureiter, 2016). Numerous scholars have studied news coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and the issue of media objectivity in this conflict has been extensively researched (e.g., Barkho, 2007; Kalb & Saivetz, 2007; Barkho, 2011; Fahmy & Neumann, 2012; McTigue, 2011; Roy, 2012; Fahmy & Eakin, 2014; Ozohu-Suleiman, 2014; Damanhoury & Saleh, 2017; Al-Sarraj & Lubbad, 2018). Since 1970, a substantial body of research has been conducted to analyze the media's portrayal of the conflict and the parties involved. Most studies focused on the western coverage of the conflict (Bazzi, 2009; Elmasry et al., 2013; Neureiter, 2016); however, the findings are often conflicting. Generally, US media is considered pro-Israel, whereas Arab media is seen as pro-Palestine, and British media is considered somewhere in-between (Kandil, 2009). This difference can be attributed to ideological, religious, or cultural affiliations and strategic political or commercial interests in the Middle East (Bazzi, 2009).

Arab news media is more concerned with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict than other issues (Ayish, 2002) and is biased against Israel in favor of the Palestinians (Elmasry et al., 2013). According to Ayish (2002), the pan-Arab satellite stations provided a considerable amount of coverage to the Palestinian issue and emphasized the suffering of Palestinian, showing a strong support for the Palestinian cause. On the other hand, Ackerman (2001) highlighted that the US media is biased in favor of Israel. In their analysis, they found that during the coverage of the well-known incident of the shooting of the Palestinian kid Muhammad al-Durrah, despite Israel's clear responsibility, several well-known US media outlets, described the shooting by using variation of "caught in the crossfire" (Ackerman, 2001, p. 65). The study also noted that CNN reporters did not use words such as "occupied" or "occupation" in most of their reports.

Barkho (2007) investigated the discursive strategies of Al Jazeera, CNN, and BBC in their

coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The findings showed that BBC online news stories included comments justifying the Israeli actions in Gaza in a way that made the official Israeli discourse more acceptable and rational to the public. The results also revealed that CNN legitimized Israeli actions while blaming Palestinians without providing an explanation for the violence on the Palestinian side, as CNN articles often presented Palestinian casualties as militants, sometimes without using inverted commas. In contrast, Al Jazeera describes Palestinian casualties as fighters, armed Palestinians, or civilians and uses paraphrases, direct citations, and context to underline its preference for Palestinian sources. In line with Barkho (2007), Damanhoury and Saleh (2017) found a significant difference between Al Jazeera America and CNN in the number of articles differentiating between civilians and militants in Palestinian deaths. Furthermore, in 2008, Barkho analyzed the linguistic practices of BBC Arabic and English and found that both represented Israelis and Palestinians, unequally. Barkho (2008) noticed that, in news stories about Palestinian casualties, Israeli perpetrators were not presented at the beginning of the headline, as usual, and that they are even omitted entirely. On the contrary, in case Israeli casualties were involved, the Palestinian perpetrators got highlighted. Baden and Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2018) showed that the British media, compared to the US, provides a broader perspective and more accurate reporting on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Barkho (2011) compared the coverage of the Gaza War (2008-2009) of Al Jazeera English to that of the BBC and found that both provided "two different versions of truth" (Barkho 2011, p. 25). Through their analysis, they highlighted that the BBC used scare quotes only when reporting Palestinian casualties, implying that journalists are skeptical Barkho (2011). The rhetorical construction of Al Jazeera English was far from the Israeli political and military discourse, while for the BBC, the distance between the broadcaster's speech and the source is blurred. Additionally,

Barkho (2011) observed that Al Jazeera English favored the Palestinian discourse.

This is consistent with the findings of Elmasry et al. (2013), who analyzed Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya's coverage of the 2008/2009 Gaza War and found that Al Jazeera Arabic as well as Al Arabiya viewed Palestinians as victims while portraying Israelis as the aggressors. Moreover, they also concluded that Al Jazeera's narrative favored Hamas against Israel, Egypt, the US, and the United Nations, whereas Al Arabiya's coverage was the opposite. Generally speaking, Al Jazeera is perceived as more anti-American and anti-Israel, whereas Al Arabiya is observed as harboring pro-Western sentiments (Zeng and Tahat, 2010; Elmasry et al., 2013). In line with this finding, Majzoub (2021) compared Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya's coverage of the 2021 Gaza War by analyzing the tweets posted by their official Twitter breaking news accounts and found that Al Arabiya leaned toward the Israeli narrative, whereas Al Jazeera leaned toward the Palestinian one.

Chapter 4

Theoretical Framework

Framing Theory

A large body of literature suggests that media content has the ability to construct, shape, and reinforce perceptions in news events, resulting in what is known as a media frame. Goffman (1974) introduced the concept of framing, referring to it as the context and the organization of conveyed messages that affect the audiences' perception of the delivered content. Gitlin (1980) defined media frames as devices used by journalists to organize and package the received information effectively for the audiences. Entman (1993) viewed media frames as explanatory packages in which some aspects of a given reality are selected to be more salient than others. Also, he suggested the use of four framing functions: defining a problem; identifying a cause; presenting a moral evaluation; suggesting a solution.

According to Gamson and Modigliani (1989), media frames are "a central organizing idea" that conveys interpretations by emphasizing features and angles of news stories that shape the essence of the issue (p. 143). Public opinion may be influenced when audiences actively participate in the formation of meaning, based on personal experience, social networking, and media interpretations (Neuman et al., 1992). Frames affect the way the audiences interpret and process the delivered information (Newhagen & Reeves, 1992). According to Entman (1991), "news frames are embodied in the keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images emphasized in a news narrative" (p. 7).

As potent stimulators, visuals are considered an important mode of strategic communication since we live in culture dominated by images (Page, 2014). Audiences consume the visuals to make sense of the unclear parts of news narratives (Doremus, 1992). Compared to

text, visuals have the ability to trigger emotional aspects, resulting in a more substantial and convincing impact (Iyer & Oldmeadow, 2006). The manner in which images are taken and framed can influence how their content is perceived (Schill, 2012). For example, in an experiment by Mandell and Shaw (1973), participants viewed the subjects photographed from a low angle to be more active and powerful than those photographed at an eye level. Furthermore, the picture composition, including selection, lighting, proximity, and setting, has the ability to affect the interpretation of the image (Graber, 2001; Messaris, 1997).

Visual Framing of News Events

Several studies revealed differences in the way visuals and verbal narratives communicate the media messages to the audience (Fahmy, 2010; Fahmy & Kim, 2008; Messaris, 1997). Visual framing is often analyzed to see how conflict is represented in the news and whether there is a bias toward one of the conflict parties involved (Jungblut, 2021). Coleman (2010) defined framing in visual communication as "the selection of one view, scene or angle when making the image, cropping, editing or selecting it" (p. 237). Thus, the concept of visual framing can be defined as "the selection and emphasis of some aspects of the perceived reality by visual stimuli" (Brantner et al., 2011, p. 251).

Unlike framing of text and speech, visual framing is considered to be an effective tool for framing and expressing ideological messages (Mandell & Shaw, 1973; Messaris and Abraham, 2001; Ramírez, 2011) due to the special features of visual elements, such as "their iconicity, their indexicality, and especially their syntactic implicitness" (Messaris & Abraham, 2001 p. 220). These three qualities make visual frames less prominent than verbal ones, and thus, "visual framing may convey meanings that would be more controversial or might meet with greater audience resistance if they were conveyed through words" (Messaris & Abraham, 2001, p. 215).

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In addition to being attention-grabbing, images can frame particular issues in the news influencing the viewer's perception of news events, and thus, they can not only act as a documentation tool but also recreate reality (Messaris & Abraham, 2001). Hence, visual images used in news coverage are not neutral; Entman (1993) indicated that the inclusion and exclusion of images in a news story could influence how the story is interpreted and define how it is framed. The spatial organization of images and their structural properties convey particular connotations, deepening the audience's comprehension of visual media (Monaco, 2000). Moreover, structural features, like the camera angle, the subject's distance, and focus, have a critical role in framing the visuals (Grabe, 1996). The manipulation of such structural features has an influence on the audience's perception of the subject of the photo; consequently, images cannot be neutral as they eventually represent a reconstruction of the world (Bissell, 2000; Coleman, 2010).

The comparative study by Fahmy (2010a) concluded that visuals in an English-language newspaper, emphasized the human suffering of 9/11 and diminished the civilian casualties and moral guilt of implementing military force in Afghanistan. Conversely, in an Arabic-language newspaper, the visuals covering 9/11 focused less on the victims and more on the material destruction, and for the Afghan War, the visual frames humanized the victims.

While the use of visual elements in the news may adhere to objective reporting, a dominant frame of news will be conveyed to the audience (Entman, 1993). To a great extent, scholars suggest that wars and conflicts are portrayed differently according to different cultural and political perspectives and that the selection and presentation of photographs reflect different editorial perspectives of a publication (Entman, 1991, 1993; Fahmy, 2010a). For instance, Entman (1991) drew a comparison between the news coverage of the US downing of an Iranian plane and the Soviets shooting a Korean jet in the 1980s. He concluded that while the US media visually

highlighted the guilt factor in the Soviet downing by displaying visual messages that humanized the victims, they displayed visual messages that focused less on the victims to understated the shooting of the Iranian plane. Besides, when Greenwood and Jenkins (2015) analyzed the visual news coverage of the Syrian civil war in US media, they found out that the dominant visual frame in the news magazines was the active fighting and the destroyed civilian buildings. In contrast, the visuals in the public affairs magazines depicted a peace frame, showing non-violent demonstrations and the daily lives of civilians. Furthermore, their study also revealed that publications which are viewed to be more liberal published a higher number of photos focusing on conflict than those focusing on more peaceful efforts to bring about change in Syria, whereas publications perceived to be more conservative published the opposite.

Similarly, Fahmy (2007) reported that in the visual coverage of the removal of the statue of Saddam Hussein, most US newspapers opted not to run images that negatively depicted the event as an instance of invasion or occupation, but rather they only ran favorable images showing a victory/liberation frame, indicating that Iraqis viewed the Americans as liberators rather than occupiers. On the contrary, French newspapers used the invasion/occupation frame to visually portray the toppling event.

The Significance of Visual Framing

Media frames acquire their power through the use common meanings, accepted within a culture, that resonate with its members. Images are less intrusive than words and require less cognitive load and thus are considered to be powerful framing tools (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). According to Wischmann (1987, p. 70), "photographs are capable of not only obscuring issues but of overwhelming facts". In addition, in their research, Gamson and Stuart (1992) argued that visual elements offer the audience "a number of different condensing symbols that suggest the

core frame of any issue portrayed" (p. 60). Visuals help translate a great deal of information into practical frameworks relevant to people's perspectives of the world. Thus, visuals have the ability to direct the attention of the audience to particular aspects, thereby facilitating the grounds on which some interpretations can be promoted while others get obstructed.

According to Holly (1996), the conceptual structure of an image creates a relational effect with the audience, as elements of an image are constructed to create a viewing position that communicates how the image elements relate to one another. It creates a sense of distance/proximity or balance/imbalance; however, when considering an image's impact, the positioning of the viewer is more important. The shot size and the camera angle can implicitly influence meanings conveyed by images. For instance, the low angle could imply empowerment, while the long shot depicts the context (Coleman, 2010).

Visuals are perceived to be a documentation of reality due to their realistic nature (Rodriguez and Dimitrova, 2011). Therefore, people tend to accept them as being closer to the truth than other forms of communication (Messaris & Abraham, 2001; Perlmutter, 2005). Visuals are used to report on global and international news events (Zelizer, 2002) because of their ability to exert a powerful influence on the public and create collective public memories (Hellmueller & Zhang, 2019). Using iconic photos of human vulnerability in the news coverage of global issues enriches the public's engagement (Chouliaraki, 2015). In addition, visuals do not require much mental effort to be processed, as they elicit a spontaneous emotional response (Schwalbe & Dougherty, 2015) and their content is considered more familiar, if compared to words; accordingly, visuals are more influential to the audience (Gefter, 2006).

In their study about the framing effect of visual and textual content, Geise and Baden (2015) noted that visuals exert a magnifying effect and are decoded easily due to their analogical

quality. However, if the visuals were not clear, different interpretations could be made based on the viewers' prior knowledge and the composition of the visual itself. When messages are communicated through visual and textual formats combined, the quality of learning and memory function is enhanced (Paivio, 1991). Congruence has a positive effect on the learning of the media message. Yet, in the case of incongruence, images act effectively as an attention-grabber that could dominate the information presented in the textual content (Gibson & Zillmann, 2000). Therefore, visuals have a significant ability to emphasize and draw attention to the salience of a media message and call back any relevant textual content (Zillmann et al., 2001). Compared to textual frames, visual frames focus more on civilian suffering (Jungblut & Zakareviciute, 2019).

Previous studies indicated that photojournalists do not follow the guidelines during times of conflict and political tensions and tend to promote the perception of their countries (Fahmy, 2005b). Photojournalists establish the dominant frames of their visuals to convey their intended perceptions to their audiences (Entman, 1993; Messaris & Abraham, 2001). Therefore, different backgrounds of journalists could impact the perspective of the presented news story.

The Use of Frames in News Coverage

Media framing operates on a multi-level structure (Scheufele, 2000), and the presence of visual frames is positively related to the use of visual themes in a news story. Framing devices form the first level of analysis, including the issue selection and salience as well as the use of graphic visuals. According to Entman (1993), media frames communicate constant interpretations by reinforcing particular attributes to a news story through the use of visual messages that allude to some aspects rather than others, thereby raising the salience of some issues and increasing their chances of being remembered more than others.

Graphic visuals. Additionally, visual frames are easier to be employed in developing a

corresponding interpretation of news events when the used visuals are more graphic (Fahmy, 2010a). Several studies underlined the significance of using graphic visuals as framing devices as they can grab the audience's attention due to their shocking content and convey the feeling that they are closer to the action (e.g., Fahmy et al., 2006; Potter & Smith, 2000; Scharrer & Blackburn, 2015; Zelizer, 2005). In a study investigating Al Jazeera viewers' support for graphic and war-related visuals, Fahmy and Johnson (2007) concluded that viewers see graphic visuals as important in communicating war's ugliness, allowing those who are far from a conflict to learn about the degree of brutality or force imposed.

Several studies showed that visual graphicness could influence audiences' emotions and attitudes regarding the depicted subject or event. For instance, Sontag (2003) examined the ability of images of war and conflict to provoke different reactions in viewers and argued that images of war my elicit opposing responses. According to Graber (1987; 1990), images of war depicting suffering and horror can have a very different effect than those that show destroyed buildings and streets, as the emotions of the audience become more intense with the increased intensity of graphic material in the photographs. In this sense, McEntee (2015) found that graphic images of war, unlike non-graphic ones, increase the audience's emotions of empathy toward the subjects of the images.

In their experiment, Pfau et al. (2006) found that news photos could influence readers' attitudes in relation to the desirability of war. They reported that participants who viewed photos with graphic content depicting enemy deaths and sanitized images of US soldiers' coffins accompanied by captions showed a slight increase in negative attitudes toward support for the US troops presence in Iraq compared to those who were exposed to the text-only news pieces and the images accompanied with full text article. In addition, subjects who were viewed images of sanitized US casualty developed lower levels of support for US military action and less pride than

those who were exposed to graphic images depicting enemy casualties. Moreover, Gartner (2011) also demonstrated that brief exposure to easily understood images of military loss, diminished support for war, implying that only specific, unambiguous images depicting death, such as those of coffins, may influence support for war. Furthermore, Pfau et al. (2008) noticed that subjects who viewed graphic visuals of conflict had more negative attitudes toward the war and reported feeling less proud of US involvement in the Iraq War when compared to those who were exposed to the same stories reported without visuals.

McKinley and Fahmy (2011) studied the impact of graphic visuals portraying casualties on attitudes toward the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by exposing a group of college students to three different sets of images portraying of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict categorized according to their graphicness rating as low, moderate, or high. The study did not note that graphicness influenced beliefs about the severity of the conflict, but it did note that exposure to graphic visuals has an impact on reducing the effect of established negative attitudes toward Middle Easterners on perceptions of the conflict there. In this line, Scharrer and Blackburn (2015) carried out an experiment to investigate the significance and the influence of graphic images in war news footage, revealing that the use of graphic visuals to depict drone strikes reflected greater concern about the use of drones in military strikes, but they had no impact on the support for policy.

Human-interest vs technical frames. In the second level of analysis lies the visual frames employed. Previous studies have examined the human-interest vs technical frame by analyzing the media coverage of tragic events to see how the victims were represented and how their representation influenced the audience (see Ayish, 2001; Schwalbe, 2006; Schwalbe & Dougherty, 2015; Winkler et al., 2018). Since images are viewed to be completely real (Lippmann, 1922), showing extreme conditions of human suffering has a significant impact on the audience and can

create collective public memories (Hellmueller & Zhang, 2019).

Ayish (2001) concluded that the Arab media presented graphic images depicting human suffering to support oppressed Arab nations, such as Palestine during the Second Intifada and Iraq, which was subjected to a 10-year economic sanction after the Gulf Wars. On the other hand, in the coverage of the Gulf War, the US media relied less on images of US soldiers' casualties or deaths to minimize depictions of human suffering and focused more on images of weaponry to portray an image of a clean war (Griffin and Lee, 1995; Herman, 1993). The US news coverage focused more on the overall material destruction caused by the war (Prince, 1993).

Fahmy and Kim (2008) found differences in the Iraq War coverage between the New York Times and the Guardian. The New York Times placed more emphasis on images representing the US military and government officials, whereas the Guardian focused more on images depicting human suffering and material loss in Iraq. Fahmy (2010a) argued that the difference between using graphic images portraying human suffering and dead bodies and images of material destruction demonstrated how the visual aspect of reporting news events could create a human-interest frame vs a technical frame of coverage, particularly in conflict reporting.

Taking into consideration, that the framing of suffering could distinguish between undeserving victims who are portrayed as enemies and deserving victims who suffer (Hermann and Chomsky, 1988), Fahmy (2010a) argued that considering the contrast between images depicting material destruction and images reflecting human suffering "could most likely numb the moral revulsion that leads societies to see war as a last resort" (p. 700). For instance, in their depiction of the Yemeni Civil War, journalists affiliated with Saudi news organizations prioritized a more technical frame, de-emphasizing the human sufferings, and by extension, the humanitarian cost of the conflict (Fahmy et al., 2022).

War vs peace frames. Recently, peace journalism has become an area of interest for communication scholars (Gouse et al., 2018). Conflict reporting has long been the main method of framing wars and conflicts worldwide. However, in 1965, Galtung and Ruge introduced the idea of peace journalism, but it was not until the 1970s that the term was coined and entered the conversation to promote a culture of peace and reconciliation. In conflict reporting, war and peace journalism frames compete with each other (Galtung, 1986). On one hand, a peace journalism frame encourages a focus on peace initiatives and reduces differences by promoting conflict resolution. It avoids a one-sided war reporting, since, it aims to provide a more balanced coverage representing all the parties involved in the ongoing conflict (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). On the other hand, a war journalism frame focuses on violence and war, reinforces differences between competing groups, and advocates action orientation urging violence as a means to a resolution violence (Lynch & Galtung 2010; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). Furthermore, whereas war journalism tends to be "reactive" in a way that violent acts must first take place before they are reported, peace journalism is more of a "proactive" approach in such a way that reporting takes place before and after a particular conflict, framing stories in a way that focuses on peace, minimizes differences, and encourages conflict resolution (Lee and Maslog 2005).

The concept of peace journalism is supported by framing theory (Lee and Maslog, 2005). According to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007, p.12), framing, on a macro level, refers to "modes of presentation that journalists and other communicators use to present information in a way that resonates with existing underlying schemas among their audience", and conflict reporting dominates these modes (Fahmy et al., 2014). However, on a micro level, framing is about the way people form impressions when they consume the communicated information and its attributes about different events (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007), implying that media frames interact with

pre-existing cognitive and interpretive schemas (Fahmy et al., 2014). According to Lee and Maslog (2005), how news representations are selected is associated with the framing theory. In their study, they analyzed news stories about four Asian regional conflicts in international newspapers and reported that frames that emphasize conflict are more common than the peace journalism frames suggested by Galtung. They have also concluded that the war frame is most often communicated by focusing on current events and political or military leaders rather than focusing on soldiers and civilian casualties.

Previous studies about how conflicts are portrayed showed a pattern, with visuals frequently illustrating the military gear, troops, and leaders involved in the conflict, as well as the presence of a human-interest emphasis on civilians and how the conflict affects them (Greenwood & Jenkins, 2015; Parry, 2010; Schwalbe et al., 2008; Griffin, 2004). According to Schwalbe et al. (2008, p. 460), when civilians are depicted, the visuals overall support a "master war narrative," implying that the role of the visual's subject may be more relevant to a peace or conflict frame than their connection to the military (Greenwood & Jenkins, 2015).

Since the emergence of the peace journalism frame as opposed to the war frame, research studies focused mainly on written news content (e.g., Abdul-Nabi, 2015; Lee, 2010; Lee & Maslog, 2005; Lee et al., 2006; Siraj, 2008; Shinar, 2009) with little attention to the visual coverage of conflicts (e.g., Greenwood and Jenkins, 2015; Fahmy and Neumann, 2012; Neumann and Fahmy, 2012). According to Fahmy and Neumann (2012), one of the first visual communication scholars to analyze photographs in terms of peace and war frames in conflict portrayal, the difference between employing graphic images depicting human sufferings and dead civilians and using images of peace negotiations representing elite leaders does highlight how the visual reporting of conflicts creates a war journalism frame versus a peace journalism frame.

Furthermore, they concluded that the visual coverage of the 2008-2009 conflict in Gaza in elite newswires reflected more visuals of the war frame (images showing suffering victims) than the peace journalism frame (images showing antiwar protests).

In this sense, this study relies on the discussed visual frames: visual graphicness; human-interest versus technical frames; and peace versus war journalism frames, to analyze the images of the 2021 Israel–Palestine war in comparison to the 2014 Israel–Palestine war, in order to explore and analyze differences in how the official signing of the Abraham accords influenced the war coverage in Arab media.

Comparative Framing of News Events

"Comparative analysis is valuable in social investigation, in the first place, because it sensitizes us to variation and to similarity" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004. p. 2). Comparative framing analysis is concerned with the variation in the used news frames communicating different perspectives about the same issue (Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007; Fahmy, 2010a). News coverage of important issues could vary based on the political leaning, ownership, and targeted audiences of news outlets, including those using the same language (Ramasubramanian & Miles, 2018). Previous research on comparative framing analysis of crises and political conflicts has shown significant variations in news representation according to the language of news outlets, differing missions or editorial perspectives of a publication, and the individuals represented in the news visual (Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007; Fahmy, 2010a; Fahmy & Al Emad, 2011; Greenwood and Jenkins, 2015; Ramasubramanian & Miles, 2018; Bruce, 2020).

Dobernig et al. (2010) analyzed the coverage of the 2009 Gaza crisis in four print news sources and found that the visuals used for the Palestinian side were dominated by images of individual civilians, increasing a sense of empathy. On the contrary, images of political or

governmental officials dominated the visual representation of the Israeli side, emphasizing statesmanship. Jungblut and Zakareviciute (2019) examined the differences between the visual and textual framing of the US media coverage of the 2014 Gaza war. They found that textual framing was more aligned with the ongoing events than the visual framing. When the level of the ongoing violence decreases, the textual framing shifts from conflict to negotiations, whereas, the visual depictions is not affected and focuses on displaying violence throughout the entire coverage.

Fahmy (2010a) compared between the visual frames used by the English-language newspaper, International Herald Tribune, and the Arabic-language newspaper, Al-Hayat to depict the September 11 attacks and the Afghan War. She found that while the English-language newspaper, emphasized visual frames depicting the victims in its coverage of the September 11 attacks, it deemphasized the civilian casualties in Afghanistan and focused more on using technical frames. On the other hand, in its visual coverage of the September 11 attacks, the Arabic-language newspaper, focused more on depicting the material destruction and less on representing human sufferings. However, it emphasized the human sufferings in Afghanistan.

The representation of the Iraq War in the New York Times and the Guardian focused on the reconstruction of Iraq, whereas Al Jazeera Arabic and Al Ahram newspaper relied more on war frames portraying violent events (Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007). Moreover, Fahmy and Kim (2008) found that while the Guardian focused more on representing the tragedy of the war, the New York Times was more concerned with depicting coalition forces and armory.

In their comparative analysis of the framing of the Syrian refugee crisis, Ramasubramanian and Miles (2018) found that while the Arabic articles used the emotional and humanitarian framework, the English ones framed the refugees as victims, passive individuals who are in need of saving. Differences were also observed within the same news outlet but in different languages.

For instance, Fahmy and Al Emad (2011), found that, compared to Al Jazeera Arabic, Al Jazeera English displayed more news stories about the American-led military campaign against Al-Qaeda as lead stories.

Chapter 5

Research Questions

Recent studies acknowledged the influence of news images on the interpretation of wars and conflicts (e.g., Butler, 2005; Zelizer, 2005). In addition to its ability to depict conflicts in terms of human suffering and material destruction (e.g., Fahmy, 2010a; Schwalbe & Dougherty, 2015), news images provide political interpretations of the ongoing events in wars and conflicts (Parry, 2010). This study is primarily interested in the influence of the Arab political stands from Israel on the news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020, is a one of the most remarkable shifts in the Arab-Israeli conflict, a comparative analysis is conducted between the visual framing of the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 war. This comparison is conducted among three major Arab news websites, Al Jazeera (Owned by Qatar), Al Arabiya (operated by the media conglomerate MBC, 60% shares are owned by the Saudi government and the rest of shares are owned by the Saudi Arabian media mogul "Walid Al-Ibrahim" who has strong ties with the Saudi government), and Sky News Arabia (a partnership between UK-based Sky Group and Abu Dhabi Media Investment Corporation, owned by Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a member of the Abu Dhabi Emirate ruling family).

Following Ojala et al. (2017), there are two interrelated aspects of visual framing used to assess the political influence of visual framing: "the identification and representation of actors" and "the reproduction of broader political narratives of the conflict". To this end, the following research questions are addressed:

RQ1: Do significant differences exist between the visual framing of the 2014 Gaza war vs the 2021 Gaza war?

RQ1 a: Do significant differences exist in the frequency of using graphic images

depicting the 2014 Gaza war vs the 2021 Gaza war?

RQ1 b: Do significant differences exist in the use of human-interest vs technical frame while depicting the 2014 Gaza war vs the 2021 Gaza war?

RQ1 c: Do significant differences exist in the use of peace vs war journalism frames while depicting the 2014 Gaza war vs the 2021 Gaza war?

This study also examines the differences among the coverage of each of the 3 news websites under study, and whether there are any specific trends in the framing of the conflict per media. Accordingly, a second research question was raised:

RQ2: Do significant differences exist among the three media outlets in terms of visual framing of the 2014 Gaza war vs the 2021 Gaza war?

RQ2 a: Do significant differences exist among the three media outlets in the frequency of using graphic images depicting the 2014 Gaza war vs the 2021 Gaza war?

RQ2 b: Do significant differences exist among the three media outlets in the use of human-interest vs technical frame while depicting the 2014 Gaza war vs the 2021 Gaza war?

RQ2 c: Do significant differences exist among the three media outlets in the use of peace vs war journalism frames the 2014 Gaza war vs the 2021 Gaza war?

Chapter 6

Methodology

Method of Analysis

This study aims to compare between the Arab media visual framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before and after the official signing of the Abraham Accords. In order to achieve this goal, a content analysis was conducted on news images depicting the 2014 and 2021 Gaza wars.

Source

In this study, three Arab media outlets were selected: Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and Sky News Arabia. Al Jazeera is a state-funded broadcaster in Qatar, and Al Arabiya is owned by the Saudi Corporation Middle East Broadcasting Center, whereas Sky News Arabia is a joint venture between Sky Group and Abu Dhabi Media Investment Corporation, owned by Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a member of the Abu Dhabi Emirate ruling family. The three media outlets are competing with each other, with an estimated audience of 23 million viewers for Al Jazeera, 21 million for Al Arabiya, and 17 million for Sky News Arabia (Similarweb, 2022). According to Arab News (2017), Sky News Arabia has the highest UAE viewership rating of all news stations broadcasting from the country. Furthermore, Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera are ranked as the top two regional news channels on Twitter and YouTube, based on the number of followers and subscribers (Arab News, 2022) and Sky News Arabia is among the top six (Arab News, 2022). It is worth mentioning that the website of Al Jazeera, is blocked in some Arab countries, which could affect the viewership readings.

As we examine the media systems in the respective countries of these outlets, all of the Gulf states legitimize control of the media as a means of fostering national stability (Richter &

Kozman, 2021). According to Kraidy (2021), the media in Saudi Arabia closely follows the editorial stance taken by the palace. Under King Salman and his son Crown Prince Mohammed, political authoritarianism "has hardened, and the country's media have become little more than platforms for Saudi domestic and foreign policy" (Kraidy, 2021, p. 99). In the United Arab Emirates, Ayish (2021) stated that generally speaking the "UAE media regulations seek to ensure media practices' alignment with the country's political, social, cultural, and economic strategies and agenda" (p. 113). Ayish (2021) described Emeriti media organizations supported by the government, such as the Abu Dhabi Media Company, Dubai Media Incorporated, and Sharjah Media Corporation, as "local government-subsidized operations" (p. 117). The media in Qatar is owned either by the government or by businessmen maintaining close connections with the ruling family (Galal, 2021). With reference to Al Jazeera, Galal (2021) argued that Qatar "had endorsed a policy that carefully navigated a balance between transformation and status quo or, in other words, between liberalization and control" (p. 133).

In this context, it is also important to consider the political stances of these Arab governments toward the recent normalization agreements and ties with Israel in general. Before the signing of the Abraham Accords, no formal relations existed between Israel and these three countries (Deutsche Welle, 2020; Ferziger & Bahgat, 2020). They officially adhere to the policy of the Arab League towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which calls for a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and a fair solution to the Palestinian refugees, in order to recognize the Israeli state (Zaga, 2018; Black, 2019). However, unofficial relations often took place, across several sectors (Black, 2019; Deutsche Welle, 2020; Ferziger & Bahgat, 2020). For Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, a shared perception of Iran as an enemy is considered one of the main factors that brings then together with Israel (Deutsche Welle, 2020;

Ferziger & Bahgat, 2020).

Prior to the normalization agreements, ties between Israel and the UAE were considered the most extensive, compared to any of the Gulf countries (Black, 2019; Zaga, 2018). Both states have been cooperating in a number of different areas, including the military, business, and technology (Black, 2019). Following the establishment of full diplomatic ties between the UAE and Israel, a rapid development of bilateral ties took place through, trade, investment and technology partnerships, as well as the growth of cultural connections (Suri, 2022).

Although Saudi Arabia does not recognize Israel, there are ongoing secretive talks between both states and informal ties are progressing in political, military, security and economic spheres (Turak, 2017; Black, 2019; Bassist, 2022; Said et al., 2020; Nissenbaum, 2022). The Saudi government did not oppose the Emirati decision to normalize relations with Israel (France24, 2022). Moreover, compared to King Salman, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman seems to be more open to improving relations with Israel (Ferziger & Bahgat, 2020). The Crown Prince, Mohammad Bin Salman, told the Atlantic magazine that Saudi Arabia does not view Israel as an enemy but rather as a potential ally with a wide range of shared interests (Nissenbaum, 2022).

A larger preceptive should be considered when looking at Qatar's ties with Hamas and Israel. Qatar has a wider policy of establishing relations with extremely opposed factions, in order to strengthen its position as a mediator and boost its influence in the region (Fromherz, 2012). Qatar has an established image for being a supporter of Hamas (Middle East Monitor, 2017; Lee, 2017). At the same time, Qatar has played a bridging role between Israel and Hamas (Lee, 2017; Cafiero & Fuchs, 2020). In coordination with Israel, Qatar has donated millions of dollars on rebuilding the Gaza strip and providing humanitarian aids (Yaari, 2020). Following the 2014 war in Gaza, Qatar formed the Qatari Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza (Black, 2019). Since

then, its chairman Mohammed al-Emadi has made frequent visits to Israel and developed friendly relationships with Yoav Mordechai, head of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (Black, 2019). Qatar's foreign minister, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, did not criticize the recent normalization agreements, but rejected the implication that the regions' political leaders don't care about Palestinian rights (Tharoor, 2020).

Data Set

Officially, the 2014 Gaza war lasted for 50 days, from July 08 to August 26, 2014. While the 2021 Gaza war lasted for 11 days, from May 10 to May 21, 2021. The images were collected from the websites of the three media outlets: www.alarabiya.net, www.aljazeera.net, and www.skynewsarabia.com, over the two war periods: the 2014 Gaza war (08/07/2014 - 26/08/2014) and the 2021 Gaza war (10/05/2021 - 21/05/2021). Arabic keywords were used as search terms for the news articles: Israel (إسرائيل/اسرائيل), Palestine (فلسطين), Gaza (غزة), Hamas (حماس), and Jerusalem (القدس). Both websites of Al Arabiya and Sky News Arabia provided a search engine with an Advanced search method where the exact date or period can be specified. However, this was not the case in Al Jazeera. Thus, in order to search for the news articles published by Al Jazeera within both periods, Google search engine was used with these search terms: ("aljazeera.net/news/" + "DATE" + "KeyWord") and ("aljazeera.net/videos/" + "DATE" + "KeyWord"). In addition, Al Jazeera website is blocked in Egypt and thus a VPN was used to access the news articles.

In any given news page, only the lead image was collected and if the displayed lead visual is a video, its thumbnail only was collected, because it acted as the preview image for the video. Additionally, articles that were published in Culture, Arts, Varieties, Economics, Business, Sports and Tourism categories, were excluded. A total of 3,298 images were collected, 2,497 images

depicting the 2014 Gaza war (Al Arabiya: 372 images, Al Jazeera: 1523 images, and Sky News Arabia: 602 images) and 801 depicting the 2021 Gaza war (Al Arabiya: 221 images, Al Jazeera: 345 images, and Sky News Arabia: 235 images). The entire collected images were included and analyzed, without sampling.

Coding Procedures

A total of 3,298 images were analyzed; the unit of analysis was a single news image. A codebook was created using the variables related to the graphic device, human-interest vs technical frame and peace vs war frames adapted from Fahmy (2010a) and Fahmy and Neumann (2012) as follows:

A. The graphic device

Graphic portrayal was measured in terms of the apparent harm to subjects depicted, using Fahmy and Neumann (2012) categories, and the rating of the visual graphicness, using Fahmy (2010a) categories:

1. Physical harm: Visuals were coded according to the depicted harm of individuals as <u>not severe</u> (no apparent physical damage, but the context is violent), <u>severe</u> (abrasions, bleeding, or loss of limbs), <u>most severe</u> (loss of life), or <u>none</u> (if the visual doesn't depict any individuals, or individuals are barely visible). For the physical harm category, each visual was coded to record the nature of the harm: civilian life, military life, civilian casualty, military casualty.

2. Graphicness rating: Visuals were coded to identify their graphicness as <u>not graphic</u>, <u>slightly graphic</u> (shots of material destruction), <u>graphic</u> (portraying a realistic depiction of suffering) or <u>very graphic</u> (portraying a highly realistic depiction of severe suffering).

B. The human-interest vs the technical frame

This variable, adapted from Fahmy (2010a), examined how the violent events were

depicted in terms of human-interest vs the technical frames. Visuals were coded to record the main depicted tragedy whether it reflects a huma-interest frame: <u>humanitarian suffering</u> (depicting physical damage to the subjects), <u>psychological pain</u> (depicting emotional pain), or a technical frame: <u>material destruction</u>, or <u>none</u>. Each visual was coded to record the nature of the material destruction: personal (houses, offices, etc..), stock market and oil, industries (Airlines, tourism…etc..), public (cars, street, religious buildings).

The peace vs the war frame

The peace frame vs the war frame was measured in terms of the main role of the depicted subjects, and the major underlying theme that the visual promotes, using Fahmy and Neumann (2012) categories:

1. Primary role of people depicted: This category identified eight options: <u>war victims</u> (civilians suffering), <u>war aggressors</u> (military/police/individuals provoking & disturbing peace), <u>war hero</u> (politicians who are leading/encouraging war), <u>peace negotiator/mediator</u> (individuals who contribute to reach peaceful solutions like peace talks), <u>peace demonstrators</u> (individuals who participate in anti-war protests calling for peace and war ending), <u>neutral observer</u> (journalists or civilians that aren't contributing in the conflict), <u>neutral military/police observer</u> (soldiers/officers who are securing or not doing any action related to their role), or <u>no function</u> (if the visual doesn't depict any individual, or the individual are barely visible).

2. Implication for War vs. Peace Journalism: Each visual was coded according to the major underlying theme, as follows:

<u>Peace</u>: (achievement and progress)
- Individual rehabilitation/recovery
- Reconstructing buildings

- Approaching each other (mainly via 3rd party negotiators)

- Demonstrating mutual understanding

- Peace/anti-war demonstration

War: (backlash and deterioration)

- Focus on ongoing war

- No direct change visible

- Lack of prospects

Neutral:

- Behaviors that neither contribute to peace/facilitate the situation nor substantially affect the outcome of the conflict

- Maintenance of status quo; neither progress nor relapse

- Very provocative slogans/actions during anti-war demonstration

- Burning flags/effigies.

In addition to these variables, each visual was coded to record the following:

A. Identifying information: Setting, location, media outlet, original source, publication period and format of visual.

B. Technical analysis:

1. Shot size: Each visual was coded to record according to the type of its shot size: close-up shot (close views), medium shot (medium distance from the subject), long shot (far views), and not applicable (for illustration or graphics, etc.).

2. Camera angle: Each visual was coded to record according to the camera angle: low-angle, eye-level, high angle, and not applicable (for illustration or graphics, etc.).

C. Denotative analysis of the subjects:

1. Number of people present: Each visual was coded to identify the number of actors present:

single individual, dyad, Small Group (3-5), Group/Multiple (more than 5), or not applicable (no people depicted/people are barely visible).

2. Age: The general age range of the main subjects of the photograph was coded as either children, young adolescents, adults, elderly or not applicable (no people depicted/people are barely visible). This category analyzed the age group that was present and dominant in the visual frame. In cases where both age groups were shown in one picture, we determined the group that dominated the action in the visual frame.

3. Gender: Visuals were coded to record whether they depicted men, women or both, or not applicable (no people depicted/people are barely visible).

4. Portrayed subjects: Visuals were coded to record whether they depicted the main subjects as politicians, civilians or forces, in addition to their nationality.

5. Group Orientation I: Each visual was coded to record whether the depicted individuals were pro-Gaza (Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims, or individuals overtly supporting Palestine), pro-Israel (Israelis, or individuals overtly supporting Palestine), or third party (International politicians acting as a mediator in the conflict) or not applicable (no people depicted/people are barely visible).

6. Group Orientation II: Each visual was coded to record whether the depicted individuals were people-oriented (civilians only), elite-oriented (national, political party, or organizational leaders), force-oriented (military/police), rescue-oriented (emergency teams, medics, aids, or firefighters), media-oriented (journalists/reporters/TV presenters), symbolic (burning flags).

7. Type of activity depicted: Options for the main activity depicted in the photograph were adapted from Greenwood and Jenkins (2015) and included fighting, medical treatment, burial/escorting the deceased/praying, negotiations/speeches, daily routine, demonstrations, people's reaction, bombing/fire/smoke (when no people are present), securing (army/police), rescuing (individuals

carrying injured people/firefighting), still picture/portrait (for people) or other activities.

Chapter 7

Results

A total of 3,298 visual images from the websites of the three news outlets (Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, and Sky News Arabia) covering the 2014 and 2021 Gaza Wars were collected for this study.

RQ1 inquired whether there are differences between the visual framing of the 2014 Gaza and 2021 Wars. Three main variables were measured in the following sub-questions to answer this question.

RQ1a compared the visual portrayal of both wars in terms of the use of graphic visuals as framing devices. A chi-square analysis suggested significant differences between the graphic visuals used to depict the two wars ($\chi^2 (1) = 22.091$, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 1). For the 2014 War, the graphic images used accounted for 10.3% of the visuals, whereas for the 2021 war, they accounted for 4.9%. Also, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA analysis was carried out to measure the severity of the physical harm depicted in the images, suggesting significant differences between the two wars ($F (1,3296) = 11.250$, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 2). The 2014 images depicting severe/most severe harm accounted for 11.8% of the visuals, while those of 2021 accounted for 4.7%. Accordingly, both analyses show a significant decline in the use of graphic images when depicting the 2021 Gaza War compared to the 2014 one, as shown in Figure 1.
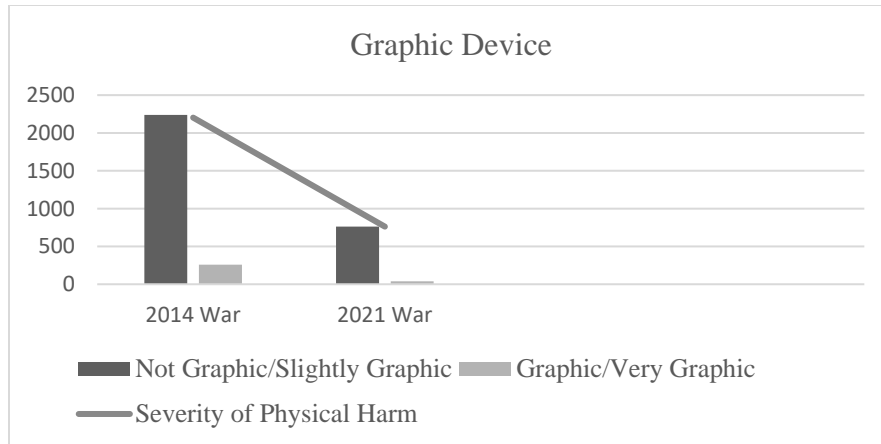
Figure 1. A chart showing the differences in the frequency of using graphic images between Gaza war 2014 and Gaza war 2021 (N = 3298).

Table 1. Frequency and Percentages of Images Showing Graphic Content Depicting the 2014 Gaza and the 2021 Gaza wars

		2014 War		2021 War		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Categories	Not graphic/ Slightly graphic	2239	89.7%	762	95.1%	3001	91.0%
	Graphic/ Very graphic	258	10.3%	39	4.9%	297	9.0%
Total		2497	100.0%	801	100.0%	3298	100.0%

Chi-square = 22.091, $p < 0.001$.

Note: For this analysis, the 'not graphic' and 'slightly graphic' categories were collapsed into one category and the 'very graphic' and 'graphic' categories were collapsed into one category.

Table 2. ANOVA Analysis of the Severity of Physical Harm Depicted in the 2014 Gaza and 2021 Gaza wars (N = 3298)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
2014 War	2497	1.3136	.82951	.01660	1.2810	1.3461	1.00	4.00
2021 War	801	1.2072	.60374	.02133	1.1654	1.2491	1.00	4.00
Total	3298	1.2878	.78195	.01362	1.2611	1.3144	1.00	4.00

$F_{(1,3296)} = 11.250$, $p < 0.001$

RQ1b inquired if the visual portrayal of the 2021 War differs from the 2014 War in terms of the use of human interest versus technical frames. In the 2021 Gaza War, the frames focused less on the victims and more on material destruction. A chi-square analysis suggested that, by contrast to the 2014 War, a significant decrease in the use of the human-interest frame was seen in visually depicting the 2021 Gaza War, while the use of the technical frame significantly increased ($\chi^2(1) = 44.303$, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Frequency and Percentages of Images Showing the Main Tragic Theme Depicting the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (Human-interest Frame vs. Technical Frame) (N = 1149)

		2014 War		2021 War		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Categories	Human-interest frame	423	51.5%	98	29.9%	521	45.3%
	Technical frame	398	48.5%	230	70.1%	628	54.7%
Total		821	100.0%	328	100.0%	1149	100.0%

Chi-square = 44.303, *p* = 0.00.
Notes: Still visuals that did not fit in these two categories were coded as missing.

RQ1c explored the existing differences in the visual portrayal between the 2021 and the 2014 wars in terms of the use of peace versus war frames. A chi-square analysis indicated that, compared to the 2014 War, a considerable decrease in the use of the peace journalism frame and a substantial increase in the use of the war journalism frame were observed in visually depicting the 2021 Gaza War ($\chi^2(2) = 26.622$, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 4). Another chi-square analysis showed that, in the visual coverage of the 2021 War, there is a huge increase in the images depicting victims and aggressors with a significant decrease in the portrayal of war heroes and peaceful demonstrators in comparison to the 2014 War ($\chi^2(4) = 23.969$, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 5).

Table 4. Frequency and Percentages Showing the Use of Peace Frames and the War Frames in the Visual Coverage of the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (N = 3298)

		2014 War		2021 War		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Categories	Peace	818	32.8%	227	28.3%	1045	31.7%
	War	1307	52.3%	497	62.0%	1804	54.7%
	Neutral	372	14.9%	77	9.6%	449	13.6%
Total		2497	100.0%	801	100.0%	3298	100.0%

Chi-square = 26.622, $p < 0.001$.

Table 5. Frequency and Percentages Showing the Role of the Depicted Subject in the Visual Coverage of the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (N = 2079)

		2014 War		2021 War		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Categories	War: Victim	455	28.1%	153	33.1%	608	29.2%
	War: Aggressor	210	13.0%	77	16.7%	287	13.8%
	War: Hero	161	10.0%	22	4.8%	183	8.8%
	Peace: Negotiator	568	35.1%	168	36.4%	736	35.4%
	Peace: Demonstrators	223	13.8%	42	9.1%	265	12.7%
Total		1617	100.0%	462	100.0%	2079	100.0%

Chi-square = 23.969, $p < 0.001$.

Notes: Still visuals that did not fit in these five categories were coded as missing.

The second research question investigated the differences between the three media outlets (Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, and Sky News Arabia) in depicting the wars. Like the first research question, the same three main variables were measured in the following sub-questions.

RQ2a examined the frequency of using graphic content among the three media outlets while covering both wars. A chi-square analysis concluded that there are significant differences between the graphic visuals depicted by the three media outlets, with Al Jazeera using graphic images the most and Sky News Arabia using the least ($\chi^2 (2) = 50.202$, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 6).

Table 6. Frequency and Percentages of 3 Media Outlets Showing Graphic Content While Depicting the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (N = 3298)

		Al Arabiya		Al Jazeera		Sky News Arabia			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Categories	Not graphic/ Slightly graphic	553a	93.3%	1644b	88.0%	804a	96.1%	3001	91.0%
	Graphic/ Very graphic	40a	6.7%	224b	12.0%	33a	3.9%	297	9.0%
Total		593	100.0%	1868	100.0%	837	100.0%	3298	100.0%

Chi-square = 50.202, $p < 0.001$

Notes: For this analysis, the 'not graphic' and 'slightly graphic' categories were collapsed into one category and the 'very graphic' and 'graphic' categories were collapsed into one category.

A further chi-square analysis revealed that compared to the graphic content used in the 2014 War, the graphic images used by Al Arabiya (χ^2 (1) 5.471, $p < 0.019$) and Al Jazeera (χ^2 (1) 10.164, $p = 0.001$) dramatically decreased when depicting the 2021 War. On the other hand, no significant differences were noted between the graphic images depicting both wars used by Sky News Arabia (χ^2 (1) 0.802, $p = 0.371$) (see Table 7).

Table 7. Frequency and Percentages of 3 Media Outlets Depicting the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war Showing Graphic Content (N = 3298)

		2014 War		2021 War		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Al Arabiya	Nots graphic/Slightly graphic	340a	91.4%	213b	96.4%	553	93.3%
	Graphic/Very graphic	32a	8.6%	8b	3.6%	40	6.7%
Total		372	100.0%	221	100.0%	593	100.0%
Al Jazeera	Nots graphic/Slightly graphic	1323a	86.9%	321b	93.0%	1644	88.0%
	Graphic/Very graphic	200a	13.1%	24b	7.0%	224	12.0%
Total		1523	100.0%	345	100.0%	1868	100.0%
Sky News Arabia	Nots graphic/Slightly graphic	576a	95.7%	228a	97.0%	804	96.1%
	Graphic/Very graphic	26a	4.3%	7a	3.0%	33	3.9%
Total		602	100.0%	235	100.0%	837	100.0%
Total	Not graphic/Slightly graphic	2239a	89.7%	762b	95.1%	3001	91.0%
	Graphic/Very graphic	258a	10.3%	39b	4.9%	297	9.0%
Total		2497	100.0%	801	100.0%	3298	100.0%

Al Arabiya: Chi-square = 5.471, $p < 0.019$, Al Jazeera: Chi-square = 5.471, $p = 0.001$, Sky News Arabia: Chi-square = 0.802, $p = 0.371$

Notes: For this analysis, the 'not graphic' and 'slightly graphic' categories were collapsed into one category and the 'very graphic' and 'graphic' categories were collapsed into one category.

Furthermore, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA analysis was performed to measure the severity of the physical harm depicted in the images used by the three media outlets. The results showed marked differences between them ($F_{(2,3295)} = 32.968$, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 8). More specifically, 8.1%, 13.4%, and 3.9% of the images of Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, and Sky News Arabia, respectively, showed severe/most severe harm in depicting both wars. In addition, a Tukey post-hoc test noted that Al Jazeera showed visuals depicting physical harm the most compared to the other two outlets, whereas Sky News Arabia showed the least (see Table 9).

Table 8. ANOVA Analysis for The Severity of Physical Harm Depicted by the 3 Media Outlets in the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (N = 3298)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Al Arabiya	593	1.2715	.74581	.03063	1.2114	1.3317	1.00	4.00
Al Jazeera	1868	1.3721	.88746	.02053	1.3318	1.4123	1.00	4.00
Sky News Arabia	837	1.1111	.45970	.01589	1.0799	1.1423	1.00	4.00
Total	3298	1.2878	.78195	.01362	1.2611	1.3144	1.00	4.00

$F_{(2,3295)} = 32.968$, $p < 0.001$

Table 9. A Tukey Post Hoc Test Show Differences Between the Three Media Outlets in Depicting the Physical Harm in the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (N = 3298)

(I) 3. News Website	(J) 3. News Website	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Al Arabiya	Al Jazeera	-.10055*	.03650	.016	-.1861	-.0150
	Sky News Arabia	.16039*	.04157	<.001	.0629	.2579
Al Jazeera	Al Arabiya	.10055*	.03650	.016	.0150	.1861
	Sky News Arabia	.26094*	.03221	<.001	.1854	.3365
Sky News Arabia	Al Arabiya	-.16039*	.04157	<.001	-.2579	-.0629
	Al Jazeera	-.26094*	.03221	<.001	-.3365	-.1854

In addition, a chi-square test was conducted after collapsing "None" and "Not severe" into one category and "severe" and "most severe" into another category, suggesting a significant decrease in the physical harm depicted by Al Arabiya ($\chi2$ (1) 9.481, p < 0.002) and Al Jazeera ($\chi2$ (1) 13.942, p < 0.001) in the coverage of the 2021 War compared to that of the 2014 War. On the other hand, there were no significant differences between the frequency and percentages of the visuals depicting harm used by Sky News Arabia in both wars ($\chi2$ (1) 2.842, p = 0.092) (see Table 10).

Table 10. Frequency and Percentages of 3 Media Outlets Depicting Physical harm in the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (N = 3298)

		2014 War		2021 War			
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Al Arabiya	None/Not Severe	332$_a$	89.2%	213$_b$	96.4%	545	91.9%
	Severe/Most Severe	40$_a$	10.8%	8$_b$	3.6%	48	8.1%
	Total	372	100.0%	221	100.0%	593	100.0%
Al Jazeera	None/Not Severe	1297$_a$	85.2%	320$_b$	92.8%	1617	86.6%
	Severe/Most Severe	226$_a$	14.8%	25$_b$	7.2%	251	13.4%
	Total	1523	100.0%	345	100.0%	1868	100.0%
Sky News Arabia	None/Not Severe	574$_a$	95.3%	230$_a$	97.9%	804	96.1%
	Severe/Most Severe	28$_a$	4.7%	5$_a$	2.1%	33	3.9%
	Total	602	100.0%	235	100.0%	837	100.0%
Total	None/Not Severe	2203$_a$	88.2%	763$_b$	95.3%	2966	89.9%
	Severe/Most Severe	294$_a$	11.8%	38$_b$	4.7%	332	10.1%
	Total	2497	100.0%	801	100.0%	3298	100.0%

Al Arabiya: Chi-square = 9.481, $p < 0.002$, Al Jazeera: Chi-square = 13.942, $p < 0.001$, Sky News Arabia: Chi-square = 2.842, $p = 0.371$, Total: Chi-square = 22.091, $p = 0.092$

Notes: For this analysis, the 'not graphic' and 'slightly graphic' categories were collapsed into one category and the 'very graphic' and 'graphic' categories were collapsed into one category.

RQ2b inquired if there are variations among the three news outlets in the visual coverage of both wars in terms of the use of human interest versus technical frames. A chi-square analysis revealed that there are significant differences in the use of these frames among the three outlets (χ^2 (2) 25.393, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 11). The analysis shows that Al Arabiya and Sky News Arabia used the technical frame significantly more in their visual coverage, whereas Al Jazeera relied heavily on the human-interest frame.

Table 11. Frequency and Percentages of the three Media Outlets Showing the Main Tragic Theme (Human-interest Frame vs Technical Frame) Used in Depicting the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (N = 1149)

	Al Arabiya		Al Jazeera		Sky News Arabia			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Human-interest frame	84$_a$	37.7%	359$_b$	51.2%	78$_a$	34.7%	521	45.3%
Technical frame	139$_a$	62.3%	342$_b$	48.8%	147$_a$	65.3%	628	54.7%
Total	223	100.0%	701	100.0%	225	100.0%	1149	100.0%

Chi-square = 25.393, $p < 0.001$
Notes: Still visuals that did not fit in these two categories were coded as missing.

An additional, Chi-square analysis was conducted to measure the differences in the visual coverage of the three news outlets between the 2014 and 2021 wars in terms of the main tragic theme used. The analysis revealed that, when compared to the depiction of the 2014 Gaza War, there was a marked decrease in the use of the human-interest frame and a significant increase in the use of the technical frame in the depiction of the 2021 Gaza War by each of the three outlets (see Table 12).

Table 12. Frequency and Percentages of the three Media Outlets Showing the Main Tragic Theme (Human-interest Frame vs Technical Frame) Used in Depicting the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (N = 1149)

		2014 War		2021 War		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Al Arabiya	Human-interest frame	61$_a$	46.6%	23$_b$	25.0%	84	37.7%
	Technical frame	70$_a$	53.4%	69$_b$	75.0%	139	62.3%
	Total	131	100.0%	92	100.0%	223	100.0%
Al Jazeera	Human-interest frame	304$_a$	55.3%	55$_b$	36.4%	359	51.2%
	Technical frame	246$_a$	44.7%	96$_b$	63.6%	342	48.8%
	Total	550	100.0%	151	100.0%	701	100.0%
Sky News Arabia	Human-interest frame	58$_a$	41.4%	20$_b$	23.5%	78	34.7%
	Technical frame	82$_a$	58.6%	65$_b$	76.5%	147	65.3%
	Total	140	100.0%	85	100.0%	225	100.0%
Total	Human-interest frame	423$_a$	51.5%	98$_b$	29.9%	521	45.3%
	Technical frame	398$_a$	48.5%	230$_b$	70.1%	628	54.7%
	Total	821	100.0%	328	100.0%	1149	100.0%

Al Arabiya: Chi-square = 10.704, $p = 0.001$, Al Jazeera: Chi-square = 16.864, $p < 0.001$, Sky News Arabia: Chi-square = 7.481, $p < 0.006$

Notes: Still visuals that did not fit in these two categories were coded as missing.

RQ2c inquired whether there are discrepancies between the three media outlets in the use of peace versus war journalism frames in depicting the 2014 and 2021 Gaza wars. A chi-square analysis revealed significant differences between the three media outlets, with Sky News Arabia using the peace journalism frame the most and the war journalism frame the least ($\chi^2(4) = 36.253$, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 13). Another chi-square analysis showed a significant increase in the use of the peace journalism frame by Al Arabiya in the visual coverage of the 2021 war, compared to that of the 2014 one ($\chi^2(2) = 7.005$, $p = 0.030$). On the other hand, compared to the 2014 War coverage, the use of the war journalism frame considerably increased in Al Jazeera's ($\chi^2(2) = 21.024$, $p < 0.001$) and Sky News Arabia's visual coverage of the 2021 Gaza War ($\chi^2(2) = 32.439$, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 14).

Table 13. Frequency and Percentages Showing the Use of Peace Frames by the 3 media outlets in Depicting the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (N = 3298)

	Al Arabiya		Al Jazeera		Sky News Arabia		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Peace	173a	29.2%	544a	29.1%	328b	39.2%	1045	31.7%
War	342a	57.7%	1036a, b	55.5%	426b	50.9%	1804	54.7%
Neutral	78a, b	13.2%	288b	15.4%	83a	9.9%	449	13.6%
Total	593	100.0%	1868	100.0%	837	100.0%	3298	100.0%

Chi-square = 36.253, $p < 0.001$

Table 14. Frequency and Percentages of 3 Media Outlets Showing the Use of Peace vs War Frames Main in Depicting the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (N = 3298)

			2014 War		2021 War		Total	
			N	%	N	%	N	%
Al Arabiya		Peace	97a	26.1%	76b	34.4%	173	29.2%
		War	218a	58.6%	124a	56.1%	342	57.7%
		Neutral	57a	15.3%	21b	9.5%	78	13.2%
	Total		372	100.0%	221	100.0%	593	100.0%
Al Jazeera		Peace	449a	29.5%	95a	27.5%	544	29.1%
		War	814a	53.4%	222b	64.3%	1036	55.5%
		Neutral	260a	17.1%	28b	8.1%	288	15.4%
	Total		War	100.0%	345	100.0%	1868	100.0%
Sky News Arabia		Peace	272a	45.2%	56b	23.8%	328	39.2%
		War	275a	45.7%	151b	64.3%	426	50.9%
		Neutral	55a	9.1%	28a	11.9%	83	9.9%
	Total		602	100.0%	235	100.0%	837	100.0%
Total		Peace	818a	32.8%	227b	28.3%	1045	31.7%
		War	1307a	52.3%	497b	62.0%	1804	54.7%
		Neutral	372a	14.9%	77b	9.6%	449	13.6%
	Total		2497	100.0%	801	100.0%	3298	100.0%

Al Arabiya: Chi-square = 7.005, $p = 0.030$, Al Jazeera: Chi-square = 21.024, $p < 0.001$, Sky News Arabia: Chi-square = 32.439, $p < 0.001$

Furthermore, a chi-square analysis showed that Sky News Arabia's coverage depicted victims the least, whereas it depicted subjects as war heroes and peace negotiators the most. Additionally, Al Jazeera's coverage depicted subjects as peaceful demonstrators the most and as peace negotiators the least (χ^2 (8) = 229.045, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 15).

Table 15. Frequency and Percentages Showing the Role of the Depicted Subjects by the 3 Media Outlets in the Visual Coverage of the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (N = 2079)

	Al Arabiya		Al Jazeera		Sky News Arabia		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
War: Victim	131a	34.9%	388a	32.4%	89b	17.6%	608	29.2%
War: Aggressor	45a, b	12.0%	190b	15.9%	52a	10.3%	287	13.8%
War: Hero	23a	6.1%	85a	7.1%	75b	14.8%	183	8.8%
Peace: Negotiator	158a	42.1%	310b	25.9%	268c	53.0%	736	35.4%
Peace: Demonstrators	18a	4.8%	225b	18.8%	22a	4.3%	265	12.7%
Total	375	100.0%	1198	100.0%	506	100.0%	2079	100.0%

Chi-square = 229.045, $p < 0.001$
Notes: Still visuals that did not fit in these five categories were coded as missing.

An additional chi-square analysis (see Table 16), comparing the nationalities of the subjects portrayed in war roles by the three media outlets while covering the 2014 and 2021 Gaza Wars, revealed that Al Arabiya and Sky News Arabia did not depict Hamas leaders (Palestinian war heroes) at all during their coverage of the 2021 War. In the 2014 Gaza War coverage, Palestinians made up 31.6% and 47.6% of the depicted war heroes by Al Arabiya's and Sky News Arabia's coverage, respectively, suggesting a considerable decline in Sky News Arabia's depiction of Hamas leaders. Furthermore, the depiction of Israeli victims in Sky News Arabia coverage of the 2021 War greatly increased to 15%, up from 2% in 2014. On the contrary, the depiction of Palestinian victims has significantly decreased from 98% in 2014 to 85% in 2021. More than one cell in this analysis has an expected count of less than 5. Therefore, a Fisher's Exact Test (FET) was carried out, showing significant differences in Sky News Arabia's depiction of Palestinians

and Israeli victims and heroes (Victim (p = 0.042, Fisher's Exact Test, FET), Hero (p = 0.002, Fisher's Exact Test, FET).

Table 16. Frequency and Percentages of the Orientation of the War Roles Depicted by the 3 Media Outlets in the Visual Coverage of the 2014 Gaza war and the 2021 Gaza war (N = 1070)

				2014 War	2021 War	Total
Al Arabiya	Victim	Palestinian	Count	80_a	44_a	124
			% Within Nationality	64.5%	35.5%	100.0%
			% Within War	93.0%	97.8%	94.7%
		Israeli	Count	6_a	1_a	7
			% Within Nationality	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
			% Within War	7.0%	2.2%	5.3%
		Total	Count	86	45	131
			% Within Nationality	65.6%	34.4%	100.0%
			% Within War	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Aggressor	Palestinian	Count	12_a	2_a	14
			% Within Nationality	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
			% Within War	41.4%	14.3%	32.6%
		Israeli	Count	17_a	12_a	29
			% Within Nationality	58.6%	41.4%	100.0%
			% Within War	58.6%	85.7%	67.4%
		Total	Count	29	14	43
			% Within Nationality	67.4%	32.6%	100.0%
			% Within War	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Hero	Palestinian	Count	6_a	0_a	6
			% Within Nationality	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
			% Within War	31.6%	0.0%	26.1%
		Israeli	Count	13_a	4_a	17
			% Within Nationality	76.5%	23.5%	100.0%
			% Within War	68.4%	100.0%	73.9%
		Total	Count	19	4	23
			% Within Nationality	82.6%	17.4%	100.0%
			% Within War	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
			% Within War	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Al Jazeera	Victim	Palestinian	Count	306_a	63_a	369
			% Within Nationality	82.9%	17.1%	100.0%

			% Within War	96.2%	92.6%	95.6%
		Israeli	Count	12a	5a	17
			% Within Nationality	70.6%	29.4%	100.0%
			% Within War	3.8%	7.4%	4.4%
		Total	Count	318	68	386
			% Within Nationality	82.4%	17.6%	100.0%
			% Within War	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Aggressor	Palestinian	Count	55a	23a	78
			% Within Nationality	70.5%	29.5%	100.0%
			% Within War	39.0%	48.9%	41.5%
		Israeli	Count	86a	24a	110
			% Within Nationality	78.2%	21.8%	100.0%
			% Within War	61.0%	51.1%	58.5%
		Total	Count	141	47	188
			% Within Nationality	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
			% Within War	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Hero	Palestinian	Count	37a	3a	40
			% Within Nationality	92.5%	7.5%	100.0%
			% Within War	47.4%	42.9%	47.1%
		Israeli	Count	41a	4a	45
			% Within Nationality	91.1%	8.9%	100.0%
			% Within War	52.6%	57.1%	52.9%
		Total	Count	78	7	85
			% Within Nationality	91.8%	8.2%	100.0%
			% Within War	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
			% Within Nationality	81.5%	18.5%	100.0%
			% Within War	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Sky News Arabia	Victim	Palestinian	Count	48a	34b	82
			% Within Nationality	58.5%	41.5%	100.0%
			% Within War	98.0%	85.0%	92.1%
		Israeli	Count	1a	6b	7
			% Within Nationality	14.3%	85.7%	100.0%
			% Within War	2.0%	15.0%	7.9%
		Total	Count	49	40	89
			% Within Nationality	55.1%	44.9%	100.0%
			% Within War	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Aggressor	Palestinian	Count	9a	1a	10
			% Within Nationality	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%

		% Within War	23.7%	7.7%	19.6%
	Israeli	Count	29a	12a	41
		% Within Nationality	70.7%	29.3%	100.0%
		% Within War	76.3%	92.3%	80.4%
	Total	Count	38	13	51
		% Within Nationality	74.5%	25.5%	100.0%
		% Within War	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Hero	Palestinian	Count	30a	0b	30
		% Within Nationality	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% Within War	47.6%	0.0%	40.5%
	Israeli	Count	33a	11b	44
		% Within Nationality	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
		% Within War	52.4%	100.0%	59.5%
	Total	Count	63	11	74
		% Within Nationality	85.1%	14.9%	100.0%
		% Within War	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% Within Nationality	70.1%	29.9%	100.0%
		% Within War	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

More than one cell has expected count less than 5.

Sky News Arabia: Victim ($p = 0.042$, Fisher's Exact Test, FET), Hero ($p = 0.002$, Fisher's Exact Test, FET)

Notes: Still visuals that did not fit in these two nationality-categories were coded as missing. Also, still visuals that did not fit in these three categories of the role of the main subject were coded as missing.

Chapter 8

Discussion and Conclusion

The Abraham Accords represent one of the most remarkable shifts in the Arab–Israeli conflict. This study aimed to investigate the impact of the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020 on the visual coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in three media outlets. A comparative analysis was carried out to examine the differences between the Arab media's visual framing of the 2014 and 2021 Gaza Wars since the latter broke out less than a year after the Abraham Accords were signed, through operationalizing visual frames in terms of the human interest versus technical frame and peace versus war frame and exploring the use of graphic portrayal as a framing device. This comparison was conducted on the visual content of three major Arab news websites, Al Jazeera (owned by Qatar), Al Arabiya (owned by Saudi Arabia), and Sky News Arabia (a partnership between Sky Group and Abu Dhabi Media Investment Corporation, owned by Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a member of the Abu Dhabi Emirate ruling family).

Another comparison was drawn between these three media outlets to identify discrepancies in their visual framing of the 2014 and 2021 Gaza Wars, considering the foreign policies of their respective countries and their stances toward the normalization agreements. Long before Abraham Accords was signed, there had been covert political and economic collaboration between Israel and the UAE, often taking place under international sponsorship (Zaga, 2018). Furthermore, cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Israel has become a well-known secret, since, compared to King Salman, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman appears more open to improving relations with Israel (Turak, 2017; Ferziger & Bahgat, 2020). The Saudi media coverage of the recent normalization was conservative; it neither criticized nor praised the agreements (Allam, 2020). On the other side, Qatari media took an opposing stand in response to the agreements

(Allam, 2020). Qatar is known to be a supporter of Hamas (Middle East Monitor, 2017; Lee, 2017); however, Qatar has recently rebranded itself as a regional mediator rather than an Islamist supporter, after Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt ended their three-and-a-half-year blockade of Qatar (Fathollah-Nejad & Bianco, 2021; Fuchs, 2020; Majzoub, 2021).

Generally speaking, the findings of this study support those of previous studies on patterns of visual framing. In war coverage, images communicate a frame of violence rather than depicting scenes promoting the peace frame proposed by Galtung (1986). In addition, the findings show significant dissimilarities in the Arab media coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict before and after the recent normalization agreements, suggesting the influence of political leanings, media ownership, and events on the ground on the Arab news coverage, which is in line with prior studies (e.g., Azran, 2013; Baghernia & Mahmoodinejad, 2018; Elmasry at al., 2013; Entman, 2001; Griffin, 2010l; Majzoub, 2021).

The first research question, comparing between the coverage of the 2014 and the 2021 Gaza Wars, revealed a considerable decrease in the use of graphic devices to depict the 2021 War compared to the 2014 War. In the coverage of both wars, the visual graphic content was not dominant. During the 2014 War, visuals depicting graphic content accounted for approximately 10% of the used content, and those depicting subjects with severe and most severe physical harm were about 12%. In contrast, during the 2021 War, the graphic content depicting the severity of the physical harm decreased to about 5% of the used visuals.

The use of human-interest and technical frames was almost balanced in coverage of the 2014 Gaza War, with a 3% difference in favor of the human-interest frame. Nevertheless,

visualizing the 2021 War dramatically varied since the use of the technical frame was dominant in its visual coverage compared to that of the human-interest frame. In other words, 70% of the visuals portrayed combat, weapons, explosions, and destruction, whereas nearly 30% of the images depicted humanitarian sufferings—psychological and physical.

Framing occurs when certain aspects of the media content and disseminated messages are emphasized or obscured (Entman, 1993), hence, the possibility for a one-sided depiction arises (Knightley, 2003; Parry, 2010). Images of war showing destruction in buildings and streets, those portraying misery and human suffering encourage the audience to relate to the depicted subjects, and get emotionally involved (Graber, 1987; 1990; McEntee, 2015). Therefore, the decrease in the use of visual frames depicting graphic content of suffering in the coverage of the 2021 Gaza War compared to the 2014 war indicates that the former was less humanized which decrease the potentiality to evoke more sympathy. Furthermore, considering that in the Arab countries, media outlets are predominately owned by their respective governments (Guaaybess, 2019; Majzoub, 2021), who generally, attempt to impose restrictions on images of war in order to reflect their set agenda and win the public support (Yüksel, 2013), this considerable decline could be an indication to the changing stances of the Arab region toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, after the signing of the Abraham Accords.

In terms of the use of peace and war frames, the results indicated that the coverage focused more on communicating a frame of violence rather than scenes that could promote the peace frame in both wars. More specifically, the war frame was used in 52.3% and 62% of the visuals in the coverage of the 2014 and 2021 Wars, respectively. Moreover, in comparison to the 2014 War, the coverage of the 2021 War relied more on using the war frame, with a significant increase in depicting the role of the main subjects as war victims and aggressors and a significant decrease in

representing them as peaceful demonstrators. This increase in the use of war frames, despite the decrease in the use of graphic devices and human-interest frames, could be attributed to the difference in the duration of both wars. While the 2021 Gaza War lasted for 11 days, the 2014 War lasted for 50 days, with a seven-day truce (05/08 - 08/08, 15/08 - 19/08). Hence, the clashes of the 11-day war cannot be as intense as those of the 50-day war.

The findings of the first research question demonstrate significant differences in the visual coverage of the Gaza Wars in 2014 and 2021, implying that the official signing of the Abraham Accords may have influenced the intensity of the coverage. The visual framing of the 2021 War was less graphic and less humanizing than that of the 2014 War. On the other hand, the war frame was more dominant in the 2021 War than in the 2014 conflict. This implies that in communicating peace and war frames, what happens on the ground, including the duration of an ongoing conflict, could have the upper hand in the visual coverage.

The second research question examined the discrepancies in the coverage of the three media outlets. In general, compared to Al Arabiya and Sky News Arabia websites, Al Jazeera had the most graphic content in its coverage of both wars and depicted severe physical harm and used the human interest frames the most. On the contrary, Sky News Arabia had the lowest graphic content and the lowest depiction of physical harm. The comparison of the coverage of the 2021 and 2014 Gaza wars revealed that both Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera relied less on using the graphic device, as their graphic content and the physical harm depictions decreased significantly. For Sky News Arabia, there were no differences in the intensity of its coverage of both wars in terms of graphicness. Moreover, the use of human-interest frames in the visual coverage of the 2021 War was dramatically decreased by around 20% in the three media outlets, compared to that in the coverage of the 2014 Gaza War. In the 2014 War, the human-interest frame was depicted in 46.6%,

55.3%, and 41.4% of the visuals of Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, and Sky News Arabia, respectively. However, for the 2021 Gaza War, the human-interest frame was only visualized in 25%, 36.4%, and 23.5% of the visuals of Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, and Sky News Arabia, respectively.

These findings indicate a reflection to the changes in the political orientation of the governments of the three media outlets. On the one hand, Sky News Arabia had the least graphic visuals in its depiction of both wars, suggesting that the Emirati political stance toward Israel, did not experience many changes, since ties already existed before the official agreements. On the other hand, the depictions of Al Arabiya appear to parallel the changes in the foreign policies of Saudi Arabia which lean toward improving ties with Israel. Al Jazeera, was the highest to rely on the depiction of human sufferings in both wars, but at the same time this depiction witnessed a considerable decrease in its coverage of the 2021 Gaza war compared to the 2014 war. This could be explained by Qatar's foreign policy, which tend to develop "relations with different countries and non-governmental organizations in the Middle East even when they are opposed to one another" (Hitman & Kertcher, 2018. p. 63). While Qatar cannot align itself with the Abraham Accords, since it is allied with Turkey and Iran (Dazi-Héni, 2020), it is not openly anti-Israel (Hitman & Kertcher, 2018; Dazi-Héni, 2020). It is also important to note that, while the signing of the Abraham accords and the regional political changes might have an impact on the news coverage of the 2021 war, there are also other factors, such as the nature of the war itself, including the occurrence mass destruction, massacre and mortality.

In terms of peace and war frames, while the three websites did not rely heavily on the peace frame, Sky News Arabia used the peace journalism frame the most in its visual coverage of both wars. That is, around 29% of Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera images communicated a peace frame, while 39% of Sky News Arabia images communicated a peace frame. Moreover, the use of peace

journalism frames increased significantly in Al Arabiya's visuals of the 2021 War; in 2014, only 26% of the visuals used peace frames, whereas, in 2021, peace frames were used in approximately 34% of the visuals. No considerable alteration was observed in Al Jazeera's use of peace frames through both wars; however, the use of war frames increased significantly from 53.4% in its coverage of the 2014 Gaza War to 64.3% in that of the 2021 Gaza War. Surprisingly, while the use of peace versus war frames was almost balanced in the Sky News Arabia coverage of the 2014 Gaza War, there was a significant decrease in the use of peace frames with a substantial increase in depicting war frames. This suggests that, regardless of political leanings, visuals tend to communicate what is happening on the ground in terms of war versus peace frames.

Another interesting finding was recorded regarding the representation of Hamas leaders. Neither Al Arabiya nor Sky News Arabia depicted Hamas leaders in their coverage of the 2021 War. Whereas this was not a significant change in Al Arabiya's coverage, it was for Sky News Arabia. During the 2014 Gaza War, Hamas leaders were portrayed in almost 48% of the images depicting war heroes in Sky News Arabia. Furthermore, the representation of Israeli victims in Sky News Arabia's coverage of the 2021 war increased significantly to 15%, up from 2% in 2014. On the contrary, portraying victims from Palestine has significantly decreased from 98% in 2014 to 85% in 2021. These changes in the visual coverage align with the changing stances of the UAE toward Israel. As clarified, exposure to graphic visuals has a possible influence on reducing the effect of preexisting unfavorable views toward the portrayed subjects (McKinley & Fahmy, 2011).

These findings are in line with previous studies focusing on the orientation of Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya (Zeng and Tahat, 2010; Elmasry et al., 2013; Majzoub, 2021), where Al Jazeera is considered to be more conservative than Al Arabiya. The results indicate that the Arab media systems are not independent of their governments, as highlighted by Richter and Kozman (2021)

and Rugh (2004). While Arab news media systems were previously thought to be biased against Israel in favor of Palestine (Elmasry et al., 2013), the recent shifts in the regional political scene might suggest differences in the representation of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The results of this study demonstrate that the political landscape has tilted toward more normalized relations with Israel since the signing of the Abraham Accords. The intensity of the visual coverage of the 2021 Gaza War declined compared to that of the 2014 War, as shown in the coverage of the three media outlets whose governments have deepened security and commercial ties with Israel (Black, 2019). While this could be a factor, the nature of the war itself and its duration could also have an impact.

Taking a holistic approach, the findings demonstrate that the peace and war frames are not dictated specifically by governments' political leanings, as much as they are influenced by events taking place on the ground. In the case here, the 2021 Gaza War was covered in a more technical frame with less graphic content than the framing of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in the 2014 Gaza War prior to the 2020 normalization agreements. In contrast to the portrayal of the 2014 Gaza War, the 2021 War was portrayed from a perspective that placed greater emphasis on the violent scenes of the war. Here, the results imply that the visual framing of conflicts is multi-leveled, with the peace versus war frame being the overarching umbrella, which offers a comprehensive frame of the ongoing conflict, followed by more specific lower-level frames. These lower-level frames communicate other attributes of the conflict that are influenced by governments' stances toward a conflict, including the representation of the human interest versus technical frames and the use of the graphic framing device.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study is limited to analyzing still images, a combined analysis of visuals and their accompanied captions might produce different interpretations. Also, future studies could analyze

videos since they could be more informative. In addition, this study does not specifically look at stock images vs not. Furthermore, in terms of the media outlets, only three Arab news outlets were analyzed which cannot be considered representative of all Arab media. Future research may look at other Arab media outlets and consider comparing between Arabic and English versions of the same outlet. Moreover, further studies could look into the social media platforms of Arab media, where the potential for greater variation in visual framing might increase. This study also, only focused on two conflicts. Hence, comparing between other conflicts, could reveal more framing narratives. It is also recommended to look into the conflicts in terms of a timeline to see how conflict has changed over time. In terms of the employed method, this study relied on a quantitative content analysis. A mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative should be considered in order to get more latent interpretations, providing more insightful answers.

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Appendix

Code Book

The Influence of The Abraham Accords on the Visual Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in Arab Media: A Comparative Analysis

1. **Visual No.**

2. **Format of the visual**

    1. Image

    2. Video

3. **News Website**

    1. Al Arabiya

    2. Al Jazeera

    3. Sky News Arabia

4. **Events Related To**

    1. 2014 War

    2. 2021 War

5. **Historical Photographs/genre**

    1. Current

    2. Archives

6. **Shot Size**

    1. Close-up Shot

    2. Medium Shot

    3. Long Shot

    4. Not Applicable

7. **Camera Angle**

    1. Low-angle

    2. Eye-level

    3. High-angle

    4. Not Applicable

8. **Location**

   1. Israel (NOT Jerusalem)

   2. Palestine (NOT Jerusalem)

   3. Egypt

   4. UAE

   5. Qatar

   6. Saudi Arabia

   7. Other Arab & Muslim world

   8. Al-Aqsa Mosque (Jerusalem)

   9. Other

9. **Setting**

   1. Public building: school, kindergarten

   2. Public building: hospital, ambulance

   3. Public building: governmental building

   4. Private homes (individual property), refugee camps

   5. Public - Street/Car (also used for long-shots, i.e., smoke rising over cities)

   6. Religious Edifice (Mosque, Synagogue, Church, Temple, etc.)

   7. Battlefield/Military Area

   8. Cemetery

   9. TV program/on TV

   10. Other

10. **Number of people shown (Count all, if possible.)**

    1. Single Individual

    2. Dyad

    3. Small Group (3-5)

    4. Group/Multiple (more than 5)

    5. None

11. Role of age

1. Children (babies, toddlers, school children)

2. Young adolescents

3. Adults

4. Elderly

5. NA

12. Role of Gender

1. Male

2. Female

3. Both

4. NA

13. Type of activity depicted

1. Fighting

2. Medical treatment

3. Burial/escorting the deceased/praying

4. Negotiations/talking

5. Daily routine

6. Demonstrations

7. People's reaction

8. Bombing/Fire/smoke (when no people depicted)

9. Force (army/police) Securing

10. Rescuing - (e.g. carrying injured not in a hospital/firefighting)

11. Still picture/portrait (for people)

12. Other

14. Portrayed Subjects

1. Palestinian Political Actors

2. Israeli Political Actors

3. Saudi Political Actors

4. Emirati Political Actors

5. Other Arab/Middle Eastern Political Actors

6. International Political Actors

7. Political Actors (Mixed Nationalities)

8. Palestinian Civilians

9. Israeli Civilians

10. Other Arab/Middle Eastern Civilians

11. International Civilians

12. Civilians (Mixed Nationalities)

13. Palestinian Force

14. Israeli Force

15. Other Arab/Middle Eastern Force

16. Other

17. None

15. Group Orientation I (major ethnic group is depicted)

1. Pro-Gaza

2. Pro-Israel

3. Any 3rd Party (acting fairly neutral / as a mediator in the conflict)

4. None

16. Group Orientation II

1. ONLY people-oriented (i.e., civilians)

2. Elite-oriented (e.g., national, political, party, organizational leaders)

3. Force-oriented (e.g., official governmental troops, soldiers, tanks, police forces, etc.)

4. Rescue-oriented (e.g., emergency teams, medics, aids, firefighters, etc.)

5. Media-oriented (e.g., journalists, not part of the conflict itself)

6. Symbolic (e.g., burning flags-people often depicted as well but focus is on symbolic act)

7. No people are shown/people are barely visible (e.g., long-shots)

17. Specification: Primary Role/Function

(The <u>central message</u> conveyed)

1. War: Victim (people suffering)

2. War: Aggressor/Perpetrator (an individual provoking & disturbing peace, including current and former aggressors)

3. War: War Hero (an individual who is glorified and hero worshipped by many of their followers but not likely to be seen as substantially contributing to peace)

4. Peace: Negotiator/Mediator (an individual who is glorified for their peaceful contribution to the conflict, such as peace talks and other symbolic acts; can be an international personality)

5. Peace: (Peace/Anti-war) Demonstrators (demonstrations and protests that call for peace and war ending)

6. Neutral: Non-military Observer (e.g., journalist, civilian)

7. Neutral: Military Observer (surveillance activity - no aggression depicted)

8. No Function (only used when no people are shown or barely visible)

18. Graphicness Rating

1. Not graphic

2. Slightly graphic

3. Graphic

4. Very graphic

19. Physical harm

1. Not severe *(cases where no clear physical damage was apparent (for example, people demonstrating against the war).*

2. Severe *(cases where people were being wounded or were being severely injured)*

3. Most severe *(images showing dead people or bodies being carried in body bag)*

4. None

20. Main Tragic Theme

1. Humanitarian Suffering

2. Psychological Pain

3. Material Destruction/Loss

4. None

21. Nature of Destruction/Material Loss

1. Personal (e.g., houses, offices, personal cars)

2. Stock Market and oil

3. Industries (e.g., airlines, tourism.)

4. Public (cars/street/religious buildings)

5. None

22. Humanitarian Damage

1. Civilian Life

2. Military Life

3. Civilian Casualty

4. Military Casualty

5. None

23. Type of (Dominant) Emotion shown

Negative emotions

1. Anger, Frustration

2. Desperation, Sadness, being pathetic, Demoralization & Mourning

3. Pain or Fear

Positive emotions

4. Hope, Optimism, Confidence

5. Redemption, Happiness, Delight, Pleasure

6. Empathy

7. Contemplating

8. Other

9. NA

24. Implication for War vs Peace Journalism

1. Peace: **Achievement & Progress**

    - Individual recovery

    - Reconstructing buildings

    - Approaching each other (mainly via 3rd party negotiator)

    - Demonstrating mutual understanding

    - Peace/anti-war demonstration

2. War: **Backlash & Deterioration**

    - Focus on ongoing war

    - No direct change visible

    - Lack of prospects

3. Neutral: **Status Quo**

    - Behaviors that neither contribute to peace/facilitate the situation nor substantially affect the outcome of the conflict