

Shifting frames in a deadlocked conflict?

“Human nature has a strong tendency to sympathize with ‘the underdog’, but what to do if everybody is victim and culprit at the same time?”

(editorial, NRC Handelsblad, 4 August 1992)

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Introduction

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians can be considered a regional conflict with a global impact. For decades both parties have been fighting each other for their claimed right on the holy land. Many fights have been fought in the 20th century between the Arab countries and Israel and from time to time the uprising of Palestinians or the military actions of Israel caused a sharp increase in the news coverage. The most recent fight was the Gaza conflict at the end of December 2008. For decades the international community, with the United States as the main mediator, is trying to find a solution for the conflict. Although many peace plans have been negotiated over the years, no peace plan is signed, let alone that peace is achieved. On the contrary, recently the Gaza conflict showed how easy the conflict could flare up, causing numerous civilian victims.

With the opinion of the international community as a potent force in this conflict the developments in the conflict receive extensive coverage in the Western press. For the big majority of the population around the globe this information is the only source they have to get informed about the events in the Middle East. Media in their turn determine the images that the public receives by selecting certain topics and excluding others, thereby creating a “window on the world” (Tuchman 1978: ix) for their audiences.

Besides the influence on the world view of the public in choosing topics, these media give the events meaning by transforming them into words and images. Especially during a sudden, dramatic event, people depend on these journalistic choices to form an opinion about the event. It is commonly understood that the presentation of events in news coverage has a considerable impact on how the audience feel about the particular event being described, and how we interpret the event and other related issues (Pan & Kosicki, 2001). Overall, studies show that major dramatic events increase the amount of media coverage to a great extent (Lawrence & Bennett, 2000; Vasterman, 2005). Besides the increased attention paid to the event, the event might also change the way in which the issue is portrayed in the media. They can be seen as “critical discourse moments” in which media can reframe the event and the related issues (Chilton, 1987; Gamson, 1992).

Currently the world is confronted with a global conflict in which parts of the Muslim population play an important role. The War on Terror, initiated by the United States after the attacks on 11 September 2001, is widely seen as a conflict between the Western countries and the Islamic countries, especially in the Middle East. The news about the events found its way into every local rag around the world. Not only was the news covered everywhere, the coverage was accompanied with highly emotional language and images. Moreover, the portrayal of the protagonists was clear, with the terrorists of Al Qaeda being the ‘bad guys’ and the Americans being the ‘good guys’ (Seib, 2004). The tone was set within the first days and continuously used after the US decided to bomb Afghanistan and declared the War on Terror against all terrorists and the ‘Rogue states’, sponsoring or protecting them. In the running up to the Iraqi war the news coverage continued within this initial frame (Aday, 2005).

The conflict between Israel and Palestinians is often considered the key conflict to solve in the Middle East in order to reach peace. With Palestinians as an Arab people and being in majority Muslim, the events of 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror also have an impact on the portrayal of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. More in detail we will focus on how major events within the conflict but also on a global level had an impact on the framing of the conflict between the Israeli and the Palestinians. We will focus on the following research question:

How is the Israeli Palestinian conflict framed in different newspapers and to what extent do major happenings change this coverage?

We choose the Israeli Palestinian conflict for several reasons. First of all, as we have seen above it is a long lasting conflict with a global impact. There is an important link between the Middle East and vital interests of strategic significance of numerous countries such as the US and the European Union. Moreover, there are numerous incidents during the conflict that provides us with the possibility to study changes over time. The global impact becomes clear when we look at the actors who try to mediate in the conflict. With the US as the leading force, also European countries are involved in the peace process. For this reason we will both focus on American, English and Dutch newspapers.

Framing news coverage

The study of framing gained an important place in the field of communication research and became the most studied concept in recent years. One of the most common definition of framing is provided by Entman (1993) who describes framing as selecting “some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” With respect to the occurrence of framing at different levels we see a distinction in studies examining media frames and research into audience frames (Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Entman 1993; Scheufele 1999). The former branch of research focuses on how issues are presented in the news (Norris 1995; Patterson 1993; Semetko and Valkenburg 2000), while the latter branch of research focuses on how individuals perceive and interpret issues presented to them (Domke, Shah, and Wackman 1998; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Price, Tewksbury, and Power 1997; Rhee 1997; Valkenburg, Semetko, and de Vreese 1999). A combination of these branches is found in few studies examining both media frames and the effects of these frames on the public (e.g. Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Iyengar 1991; Neuman, et al. 1992). This discussion results in two separate questions within the study of framing: “What are frames?” and “How are frames transferred between media and the audience?”

News Frames, Equivalency Frames, and Emphasis Frames

With respect to the question of what frames actually are, research shows a distinction between equivalency frames and emphasis frames. ‘Equivalency Frames’ present an issue in different ways with “the use of different, but logically equivalent, words or phrases” (Druckman 2001: 228), causing a major change in audience preference when the same problem is presented in different wordings, such as rescuing some versus sacrificing others (Quattrone and Tversky 1988; Tversky and Kahneman 1981). Emphasis frames, later called “issue framing” (Druckman 2004), on the other hand, highlight a particular “subset of potentially relevant considerations” (Druckman 2004: 672). In line with Entman’s definition, issue framing can be defined as a process of selecting and emphasizing certain aspects of an issue on the basis of which the audience can evaluate the issue described or the protagonists associated with the issues. Issue frames form a substantial part of the research on news frames. Cappella and Jamieson (1997: 39-40) describe news frames as “those rhetorical and stylistic choices, reliably identified in news, that alter the interpretations of the topics treated and are a consistent part of the news environment.” Examples of news frames are ‘strategic’ or ‘game’ frames, which are often found in coverage of political campaigns (Patterson 1993). Other examples of news frames are ‘conflict’ and personalization frames (Price and Tewksbury 1997) or episodic versus thematic frames as distinguished by Iyengar (1991).

The framing process

The second question mentioned above—How are frames transferred from the media to the audience?—also leads to a number of competing arguments. Some researchers consider framing as a linear transfer of salience process, straight from the sender into the audience (Eagley and Chaiken 1998; Zaller 1992; Zaller 1994). Other researchers, however, consider the framing process as an interaction between message content and the interpreter's social knowledge. This interaction process leads to a construction of a mental model as a resulting state of interpretation (Rhee 1997). Besides the creation of these mental models, the framing process can trigger a mental model or frame that already exists within the receiver’s perception. Graber (1988) describes the way people use schematic thinking to handle information. They extract only those limited amounts of information from news stories that they consider important for incorporation

into their schemata. Snow and Benford (1988) state in this respect that media frames and audience frames interact through ‘frame alignment’ and ‘frame resonance’ (see also Snow et al. 1986). The construction of mental models, schemata or frames is a central part of the cognitive approach to framing (D’Angelo, 2002). Grounded in cognitive psychology, the approach uses the associative network model of human memory (Collins and Quillian 1969), proposing that the concepts in semantic memory are represented as nodes in a complex hierarchical network. Each concept in the network is directly related to other related concepts.

Associative framing: the common denominator

As discussed above, framing study contains many perspectives and research lines. We recognize, however, a common denominator in the fact that many studies base the idea of a frame on associations, either between concepts, concepts and attributes, or on more complex networks of concepts. In this study, therefore, we will focus on what we call ‘associative framing.’

Associative frames consist of associations between concepts and other concepts, where ‘concepts’ is a general term that can denote actors, issues, and attributes. From the point of view of the cognitive perspective, these frames refer to the earlier described schemata of interpretation (Goffman 1974), and the main associations in a message can be seen as its “central organizing idea” (Gamson and Modigliani 1987). In this paper we will look at associations in articles with respect to the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

Conflicts in the news: context and representation

A news item must be meaningful for the audience before becoming news. This is also true for conflicts. Galtung and Ruge (1965) in their seminal study into news values, point out that a conflict, with their spectacle makes an event more meaningful for a country and its audiences. This applies even more so when a conflict has impact on a global level. Moreover, researchers found that proximity affects both news selection as well as the coverage and framing of news items (Entman 1991; Grundmann et al. 2000; Kaid et al. 1993). Proximity in this respect reflects both geographical as well as cultural proximity. Meyers et al. (1996) showed clearly that while the conflict in Bosnia was covered extensively in the western press, the conflict in Rwanda, which took place at the same time, got far less coverage. Gurevitch et al. (1991: 207) conclude in

this respect that to be judged newsworthy, an event has to be anchored “in a narrative framework that is already familiar to and recognizable by newsmen as well as by audiences.”

With respect to the Israeli Palestinian conflict the impact is on such a scale that the events become easily newsworthy. However, there is a difference between the coverage of Israel and Palestinians. The Israeli stand culturally speaking closer to the western countries, making the country more newsworthy than the Palestinians. Therefore we expect that news coverage about Israel is not only focusing on the conflict, while the coverage of Palestinians will be covered more extensively in relation with the conflict.

RQ1a How is news coverage divided between Israeli and Palestinians?

RQ1b If an article deals with both Israeli and Palestinians, how often are they each mentioned?

RQ2 Israeli or Palestinian covered more often with conflict issues or with non-conflict issues?

Conflict and its context

The conflict in the Middle East is characterised by numerous violent actions from both the Israeli and the Palestinian side. Israel invaded the Palestinian territories many times, while numerous attacks also have been executed towards Israel. However, researchers found different terms for Israeli or Palestinian actions. When talking about Israeli actions journalists use terms such as ‘military operations’ against ‘terrorist targets’ ‘directed attacks’ or ‘retaliations’ (Fisk, 2005, p.555, p.612; Korn, 2004, p.256; Suleiman, 1983). When Israeli action cause victims on the Palestinian side these casualties are often labelled as ‘clashes’, ‘confrontations’ or ‘incidents’ (Ackerman, 2001, p.65; Zelizer e.a., 2002, p.290; Korn, 2004, p.255).

In order to really understand a conflict it is important to have an overview of not only the protagonists but also of the background of the conflict and the context in which incidents within a long lasting conflict occur. In other words, depending on the news media for their information, the audience also depends on media for their knowledge about the context in which conflicts

occur. As research shows, news coverage of conflict is often more episodic than thematic, focussing heavily on events instead of background and context (Dimitrova 2006, Papacharissi, Fatima Oliveira 2008). Moreover, it is often very shallow and reduced to simplified, stereotyped images (Scholten et al. 2002, Ruigrok 2005, Meyers et al. 1996). The Bosnian war is a clear example where news coverage rarely focused on the complexity of the conflict and the majority of news coverage was reduced to a simple picture of evil Serbs murdering Muslims. However, the conflict was extremely complex with a number of different forces (Bosnian Serbs, Serbian Croats, Bosnian Muslims, Croatian Muslims) all fighting each other in ever changing coalitions, both at the battle field and around the negotiation table (NIOD, 2002)

Different researchers found that news coverage of the Israeli Palestinian conflict showed a one-sided story resulting in a lack of knowledge by the public. Mainly the interpretation of the facts by Israel is described in the coverage while the Palestinian point of view is disregarded. This is true for both the broader context about the origins of the conflict and in specific events. Dunsky (2001) for example found a lack of contextual information when focusing on coverage about colonies. The news focused on the violence directed against the colonists and not on the illegality of the colonies and the consequences of the spread of colonies for Palestinians. Ackerman (2001) found the same tendencies in his research into American news coverage on the Second Intifada. He found that American media focus heavily on the disturbances on the West Bank or in Gaza and disregarded the fact that these territories are occupied by the Israeli. Moreover, issues such as daily occupation, checkpoints and the extension of the colonies are not mentioned at all. He concludes in this respect that *“The word ‘occupation’ has become almost taboo for American reporters”* (Ackerman, 2001, p.62). Philo et al (2003, 2004) found similar results for television media in the United Kingdom, while studying news coverage after the Second Intifada. Lack of references to the context in which reported conflicts occur makes that the audience has little knowledge about the conflict. They conclude that mentioning terms without providing context leads to confusion among the public *‘[...] the Israeli presence is not described as a military occupation and the significance of this is not explained, it was not clear what the word ‘occupation’ actually meant’* (Philo en Berry, 2004, p.118). Researchers of the Loughborough University Communications Research Centre (2006) looked into news coverage

of the BBC-website and current affairs programs. They conclude that the events journalists write about are rarely related to historical events. Talking about colonies they do not mention the fact that since 1967 Israel is occupying these territories. Also references to wars and peace processes lack in the coverage. Based on these researchers we expect to find the same results in our research.

RQ3: How does the use of the term Occupied Territories change over time?

RQ4a: How frequent are the Israeli and Palestinian terms for the Wall used?

RQ4b: How does the use of terms for the wall/fence change over time?

RQ5a: Is the news coverage more episodic or more thematic?

RQ5b: How does the episodic/thematic framing change over time?

Framing the protagonists

Within conflict news a tendency is seen towards a simplified picture of culprits and victims. As we saw in the example of the Omarska detention camps, the distinction between good guys and bad guys was easily made and continued on in subsequent news coverage. A news event therefore has the power to define this distinction. “[T]hrough priming or framing, events might also guide the positive or negative evaluation of issues or persons” (Brosius and Eps, 1995: 408). In his research, Wieten (2002: 83) concluded that Dutch media portrayed the Bosnian war in a stereotypical way: “Media and politics seem to have aided each other in creating a rather stereotypical, simplified picture of the conflict, and, as a consequence, also of what the international community, the Netherlands in particular, could do to bring it to an end and solve it.” Especially when a conflict involves the home country, stereotyping of people increases, resulting in scapegoating. Glassner’s (2003) argues in this respect that the diagnoses of the external threat often entail scapegoating to demonstrate the immediacy and relevance of the danger. In describing the scapegoat, news media tend to use simplified images. They create a distinction between the victims and culprits, by portraying the latter as ‘others’. Enemies and villains are the most extreme form of the Other. They are frequently portrayed as evil to make them easier to

hate (Harle, 2000, pp. 11_2). “The evil Other is, actually, the enemy of God, and the war against it is a holy war” (2000, p. 12). After 9/11, this tendency is clearly seen with journalists embracing the new framework of the ‘war on terror’, in order to interpret the ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ of a state. Research into the news coverage of the Bali bombings shows the same pattern, with a portrayal of the bombers as terrorists and as a continuous threat. They were also portrayed as militants, and Muslim radicals. The tone of the stories indicated that the enemies were identified as members of Al Qaeda, 'Muslim hard liners', 'religious fanatics', and 'Muslim radicals'. Researching the news coverage about Bin Laden after the attacks, Winch (2005) concludes that the Al Qaeda leader was mainly described in news reports as a savage, uncivilized and barbarian. Zelizer et al (2002) focused on the portrayal of Palestinians after the Second intifada in American newspapers. The researchers conclude that Palestinians are described not as martyrs but as suicide bombers or terrorists. Fisks (2005:554) concluded that by international media these terms had become common. If Palestinians kill Israeli, they are called terrorists, while when Israeli kill Palestinians they are called ‘crazy Jewish Kolonists’ or ‘Under ground Jewish fighters.” Lowstedt en Madhoun (2003) focused in their research on the use of words as retaliation. They concluded that de National Public Radio as well as NBC, CBS, and ABC used these words more in relation to Israeli than to Palestinians, providing the impression that Israel is acting out of self defence towards the violent Palestinians. After the start of the second intifada the Palestinians are portrayed more often in the news as terrorists who want to destroy Israel. September 11 had a major impact in the world, and this impact is also reflected in the news coverage in the following with respect to Muslims. As we found in earlier research the portrayal of Muslims did not show a significant shift in negativity after 9/11 or after any local terrorist attack. However, 9/11 did create a strong framework of Muslims as terrorists in all investigated media (Ruigrok and Van Atteveldt, 2007: 86).

Also with respect to the casualties on both sides differences are clearly seen in the news. Rinnawi (2007) shows in her research into Israeli media and the Second intifada that Palestinian victims are minimized stressing that the Israeli are the only victims of the conflict. This tendency is not only seen in the media of parties in the conflict. Also western media emphasize the Israeli victims stronger than the Palestinian victims. Lowstedt and Madhoun (2003) for example show

that on American news radio 81% of Israeli deaths are mentioned compared to 34% of the Palestinian deaths. Philo et al. (2004) see the same pattern. According to the researchers thirteen times as many Palestinian deaths could be counted compared to Israeli victims, but in the news coverage the Israeli victims are highly over represented. In total the victims comprise one third of the total news coverage.

RQ6: What substantive frames are used in covering the conflict and how do they change over time?

Brosius and Eps (1995), for example, studied the impact of so-called “key events” on news selection in the case of violence against aliens and asylum seekers in Germany. They found (1995: 407) that key events have a prototyping quality, giving dramatic events meaning by constructing them within a simplified framework. With repeating coverage showing a simplified picture in all major media outlets, specific news coverage can easily become a news icon, a prototype (Brosius and Eps, 1995; Bennett and Lawrence, 1995). Such an icon is capable of condensing the issue at hand with all its complexities into one striking image. With respect to the news coverage a news icon provides journalists rich narrative material (Hoskins, 2006; Aday, 2005). As a consequence news icons can trigger or reinforce existing frames, such as patriotism, or military supremacy. For example, during the war in Bosnia, the pictures of the emaciated men behind barbed wire in the ‘concentration camp’ of Omarska, in which the war was directly compared with the Holocaust, formed such a news icon. Politicians, the public, and journalists alike embarked on a crusade to free the Muslims from the evil Serbs. This initial framework, accompanied with highly emotional language caused a stereotyped, one-sided news coverage in western media of the subsequent years of war (NIOD, 2002; Ruigrok, 2005).

RQ7: Which key-events lead to shifts in the different kinds of framing of newspaper articles?

Differences between newspapers

According to Goldfarb the representation of the conflict and the protagonists will differ within the European and American press. Whereas the European news coverage tends to cover both

sides of the conflict, the American media seem less eager to cover Palestinian perspectives in the coverage. According to Goldfarb (2001) this is due to the fact that the US is heavily involved in the conflict as a negotiator. Moreover, the European countries have a longer history with the conflict, having had interest in the region in the beginning of the 20th century, while the US only got involved in the conflict after the Second World war.

RQ8: To what extent can the coverage in some newspapers said to be more favourable to either of the protagonists?

Method

In our study we included three main newspapers of the US, the UK and The Netherlands. In each of these countries we analyzed a quality newspaper. For the United States this was the Washington Post, for the United Kingdom, the Guardian and for the Netherlands, NRC Handelsblad. From these newspapers we analysed all articles that contain either the word Israel/Israeli or Palestine/Palestinians. These newspapers were searched from September 1st 1997 to September 1st 2007 and selected if either of these words was mentioned. This search yielded the following number of articles.

Table 1: Total number of articles on Israeli and/or Palestinians

Abbreviation	Country	Newspaper	# Articles
US	United States	Washington Post	22,0977
UK	United Kingdom	The Guardian	17,254
NL	Netherlands	NRC Handelsblad	11,878

In order to answer our research questions we defined a number of concepts and related keywords for which we measure frequency and associations with Israel and Palestine (see the Appendix for a list of these key words). In this study, we will use the AmCAT program for measuring frequency and associative framing described in Van Atteveldt et al. (2008; chs. 5 & 10).

Visibility, Co-occurrence, and Symbolic Associations

The core notion of our framework is that a document, in our case, an article, mentions a number of concepts with a certain frequency. We convert this frequency into a *reading chance* or probability of encountering a concept in the range of zero to one using formula 1 below. The association between two concepts, A and B, is defined as the chance of reading about B given that one reads about A in a random article: the *conditional probability* of encountering B given that one has encountered A. This probability is calculated using formula 2 below. Although this measure is related to more traditional measures of association such as cosine distance, correlation, and χ^2 values, it differs substantively on two counts. First, this is a deliberately asymmetric measure since, for example, Hamas might be strongly associated with terrorism while terrorism is more strongly associated with other concepts such as Al Qaeda. Second, we are not interested in associations compared to what one would predict based on independent distribution but rather in the associations themselves. If all articles are framed in a dominant frame, say, the patriotic frame, this still means that the individual articles are framed that way. Apart from these desirable substantive features, using this asymmetric measure has the convenient methodological property that all associations of a concept can be calculated based only on the articles in which that concept occurs, while symmetric measures such as correlation would also require all articles containing the concepts with which the first concept might co-occur. Note that this measure reduces to the percentage overlap between two concepts if a binary reading chance is assumed.

Formula 1: Reading chance $p(c|m)$ of concept c in message m as a function of frequency $\text{count}(c,m)$ of that concept in that article and the parameter b (set to 4 in this study)

$$p(c|m) = 1 - \left(1 - \frac{1}{b}\right)^{\text{count}(c,m)}$$

Formula 2: Association $\text{ass}(c_b \rightarrow c_t)$ of concepts c_b and c_t as the conditional reading probability defined as a function of message weight $p(m)$ and reading chance $p(c|m)$ (formula 1)

$$ass(c_b \rightarrow c_t) = \frac{\sum_m p(m) \cdot p(c_b|m) \cdot p(c_t|m)}{\sum_m p(m) p(c|m)}$$

Please see Van Atteveldt 2008 (chapter 5) for an illustrated and more detailed explanation of this method.

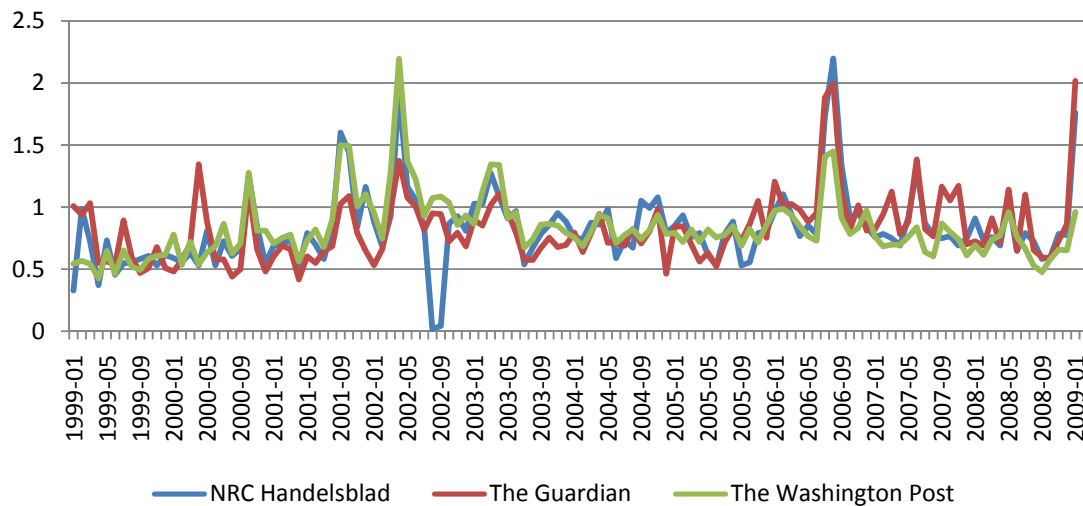
Results

In this section we will discuss the results of our study following the research questions as formulated above.

Frequency of Protagonists and Issues

First of all we will show the frequency of the articles found over time. Figure 1 shows the relative attention in the newspapers in articles over time presented as percentage of the total amount of news in a newspaper.

Figure 1. Relative frequency of articles per quarter



Clear peaks can be seen in all newspapers. The first peak in the second quarter of 2002 deals with operation Defensive Shield, a military operation of Israel into Ramallah, followed by

incursions into the six largest cities in the West Bank and their surrounding localities and the house arrest of Arafat. The second peak in the news is the war against Lebanon in the summer of 2006. Minor peaks in the news consist of 9/11 and the second intifada, in October 2002. The small peak in 2005 deals with news about Israel removing all Jewish settlements, and military equipment from the Gaza Strip.

Our first research question deals with news values and the fact that proximity, either geographical or cultural will influence the amount of news coverage about a conflict and its protagonists. We argued that Western newspapers, being more closely related to Israel, cover news about Israeli more extensively than news about the Palestinians.

Table 2 lists the relative frequencies of articles mentioning either Palestine/Palestinians or Israel/Israeli, or both. In answer to RQ1a, the table clearly shows that Israeli are more often mentioned without mentioning Palestinians than the other way around. Only in 8-11% of all articles Palestinians are mentioned without referring to Israeli, while in about half of the articles Israel or its inhabitants are mentioned without referring to Palestine or Palestinians. The differences between the newspapers show that this is especially true for the Dutch newspaper and less so for the UK.

Table 2: Relative attention to protagonists and issues in the three countries

	US	UK	NL
Palestinians	8.5%	10.8%	10.3%
Israel	51.8%	47.4%	45.4%
Both	39.8%	41.8%	44.3%
Conflict	84.7%	78.1%	67.2%
Economy	55.0%	45.1%	33.5%
Politics	48.1%	42.7%	54.8%
Cultuur	42.9%	31.1%	21.7%
N (articles)	22,097	17,254	11,878

Besides the protagonists we also looked at the different topics of the articles in which the protagonists are mentioned, in order to determine the extent to which the conflict dominates the coverage or has to share prominence with other topics. The conflict is in all newspapers the main

topic, but receives far more attention in the UK and US newspapers than in the Dutch newspapers. The conflict is mentioned in almost every article in the US (85%) and the UK (78%). The difference is also seen with respect to cultural topics, but less strongly.

Table 3: Frequency of topics per mentioned protagonist

	US			UK			NL		
	Israel	Palestine	both	Israel	Palestine	both	Israel	Palestine	both
Conflict	75%	90%	97%	65%	81%	92%	53%	62%	83%
Economy	55%	58%	55%	44%	49%	45%	35%	32%	33%
Politics	38%	50%	61%	33%	46%	56%	42%	49%	70%
Cultuur	50%	49%	32%	39%	39%	27%	26%	24%	16%
N (articles)	11439	1872	8786	8182	1856	7216	5295	1220	5263

Table 3 tabulates the attention for these four topics by the mentioned protagonists. In all newspapers conflict is the dominant theme if both protagonists are mentioned, with the US and UK mentioning conflict in more than 90% of the articles. The same pattern can be seen in all newspapers, the Palestinians are more often associated with conflict without mentioning Israel than the other way around. Interestingly, in the US and UK non-conflict issues are mentioned more often if only Palestinians are mentioned than if only Israeli are mentioned, while in the Dutch news coverage a mixed picture can be seen. Thus, the answer to RQ2 depends on the newspaper.

Word use for disputed concepts

The third and fourth research question deal with the word use for disputed concepts, in particular for the occupied or Palestinian territories and the West Bank wall or security fence.

If we consider the two terms ‘occupied territories’ and ‘Palestinian territories’, we can define the ratio of the former to the total use of the two terms as a measure of the relative frequency of the charged term ‘occupied territories’. Figure 2 shows this ratio over time for the three main sources. In the UK, the ratio remains fairly constant at around 0.7/0.8. In the US and NL, however, the ratio is in general lower than that of the UK, with the US having a ratio of around 0.4 and the NL

news coverage slightly higher, 0.5. Similar to RQ2, the answer to RQ3 is dependent on the investigated newspaper.

Figure 2: Fraction of ‘occupied territories’ of total (occupied plus Palestinian), per quarter

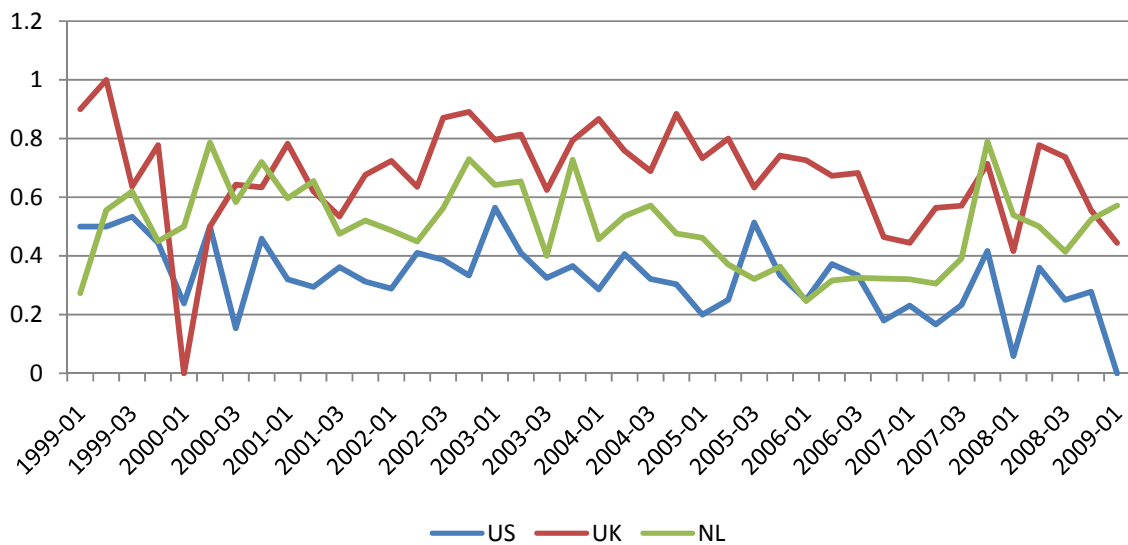


Figure 3 shows the number of articles mentioning the West Bank wall/fence in the three newspapers. In the US and UK a first peak is shown in mid-2002, after the construction of the wall/fence begins. The larger peaks are in 2003 and 2004 as the (route of the) wall/fence becomes more controversial and both UN and ICJ speak out on the issue. Attention declines again after this period.

Figure 3: Number of articles mentioning the West Bank wall or security fence per quarter

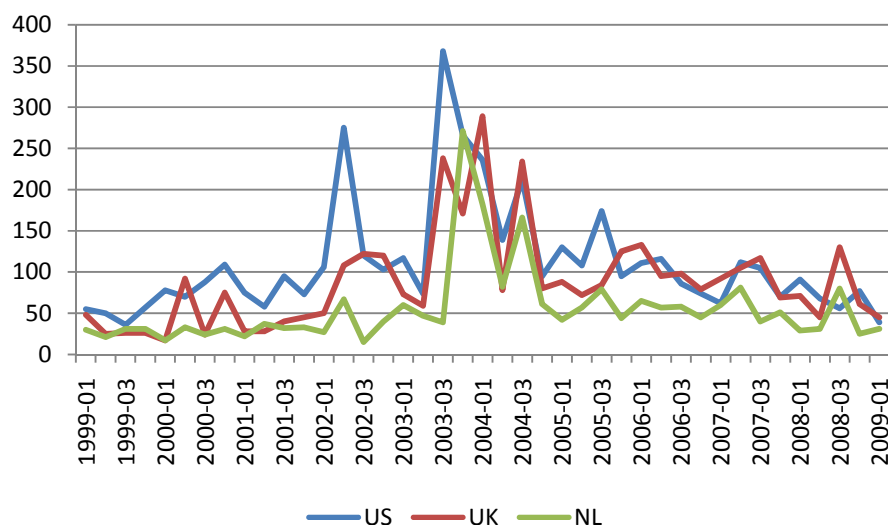


Table 4 shows the frequency of the four names that we investigate for the wall/fence. *Apartheid* includes names such as ‘apartheid wall’ and ‘racial segregation wall’ that stress the supposed negative effects of the wall. *Fence* contains words such as barrier or fence that do not invoke the connotations of the Berlin wall, but also do not stress the supposed positive effects such as security or anti-terrorism. *Security* contains words that do stress these supposed positive effects. Finally, *Wall* contains simply the word wall, which invokes the connotations of the Berlin wall. From the table it is immediately clear that, although the relatively neutral names *Wall* and *Fence* are most frequent, the positive name *Security (fence)* is much more frequent than *Apartheid (wall)*, the latter being hardly mentioned at all, answering research question 4b.

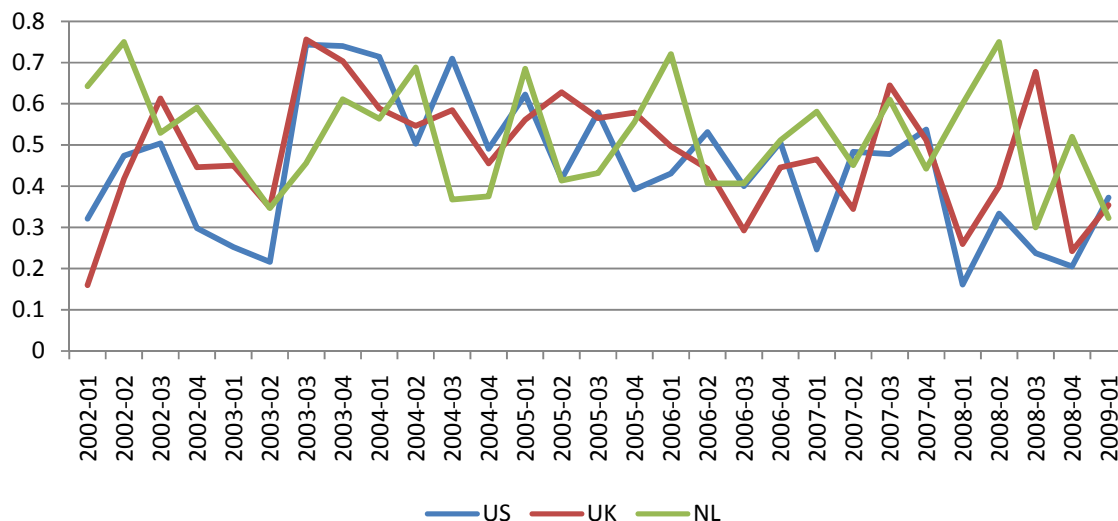
Table 4: Frequency of four terms for the West Bank wall/fence

	US		UK		NL	
Apartheid	4	0%	23	0.6%	6	0.2%
Fence	1992	41.2%	1704	42.9%	1115	46.3%
Security	230	4.8%	282	7.1%	168	7%
Wall	2610	54%	1967	49.5%	1118	46.4%

Similar to above, we can define the ratio of euphemistic terms (fence or security fence) to the

total number of mentions. Figure 4 shows this ratio over time for the three news source. In the US and UK, it can be clearly seen that as the wall/fence becomes more controversial due to the UN resolution and ICJ verdict, the framing shifts from wall to fence and gradually shifts back afterwards as attention decreases. In the NL coverage, the framing starts out with almost 0.8 for *wall* but this quickly drops to the same level as the UK and US and follows the same pattern afterwards. Overall, the answer to RQ4a is a fairly complicated pattern: journalists prefer the euphemistic terms as the wall/fence becomes controversial and shift back to the charged term as attention decreases again, although for NL it is less easy to interpret the graph.

Figure 4: Fraction of euphemistic terms (barrier/fence + security) of total, per quarter



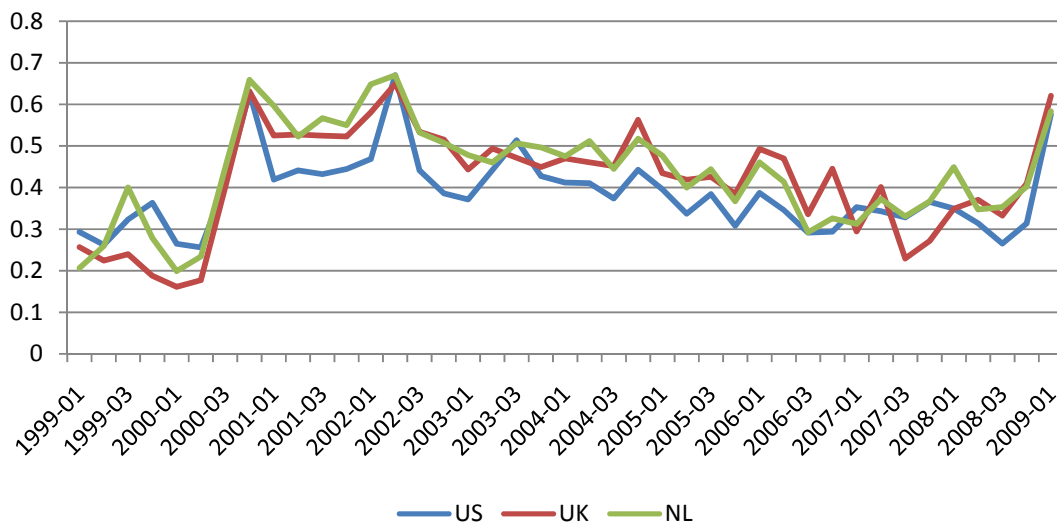
Framing the Conflict

If we define conflict articles as these articles mentioning both Israel and Palestine, we obtain the sample of articles listed in table 5. For all news sources, around 40-45% of the articles are included. As was shown earlier, the other articles primarily deal with Israel only. Figure 5 shows the included sample of articles over time. Clearly, the fraction of conflict articles increases sharply from around 0.25 to over 0.5 with the start of the Second Intifada, and declines gradually until 2008 when an increasing number of conflict articles are found in the newspapers.

Table 5: Number of articles mentioning both Israel and Palestine, absolute and as percentage of total articles

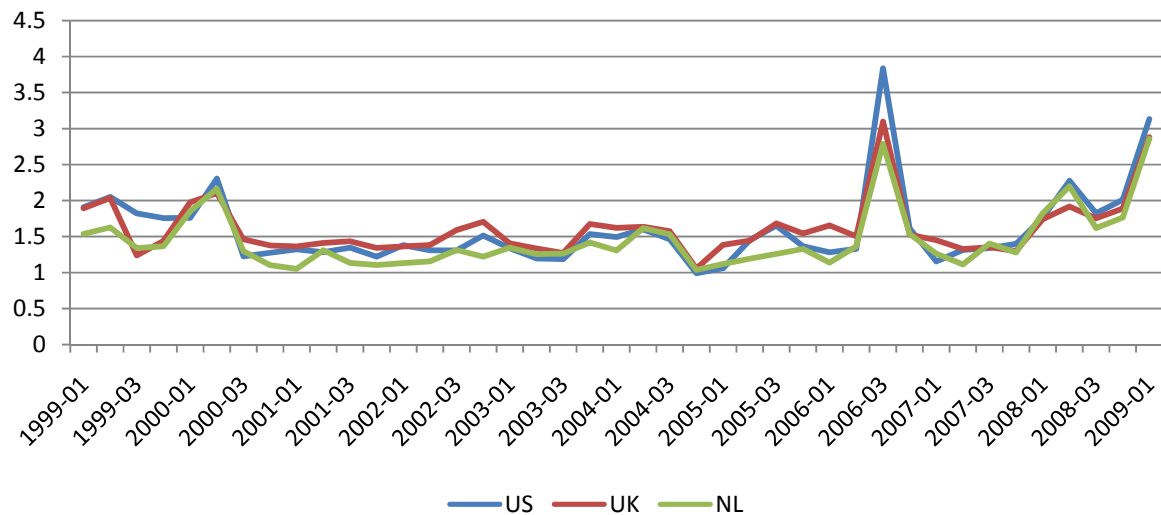
	US	UK	NL
Total	22097	17254	11878
Included	8786	7216	5263
Percentage	40%	42%	44%

Figure 5: Fraction of conflict articles of total per quarter



If we investigate the amount of mentions of Israel and Palestine within this set of articles, we get an idea of the attention for both protagonists in the articles about the conflict. Figure 6 below shows the ratio of mentions of Israel to mentions of Palestine. Overall, Israel is clearly mentioned more often as the line only touches the equality (1) line twice but stays above it almost always for all three papers, giving a clear answer to research question 1b. However, the figure also shows that the ratio drops from around two Israel mentions per Palestine mention before the start of the Second Intifada to around 1.3 afterwards. The Libanaon war shows a clear shift in which Israel is mentioned 2-4 times per Palestine mention. In 2008 and especially with the conflict in Gaza we see this tendency again. All newspapers show the same patterns.

Figure 6: Ratio of Israel:Palestine mentions in the conflict articles per quarter



Episodic versus thematic news coverage

In our study we distinguish between episodic and thematic framing based on association on paragraph level of Israel/Palestine with words indicating thematic (historical, causal, and international references) and episodic framing (time indicators, attacks). In table 6 we present the ratio of associations of the two protagonists with episodic terms and the association of the two protagonists with terms dealing with thematic words (see the Appendix for a list with key words indicating thematic and episodic news coverage).

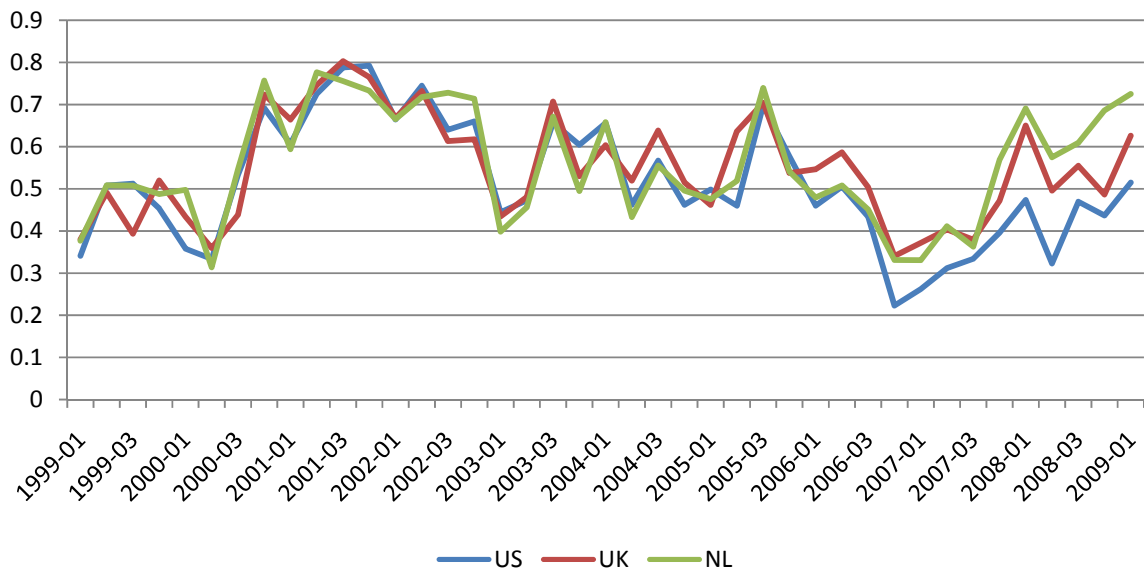
Table 6 Association of the protagonists with episodic and thematic concepts

	US	UK	NL
Episodic	0.16	0.15	0.18
Thematic	0.08	0.09	0.10

In all newspapers there is substantially more episodic than thematic framing, giving a straight answer to RQ5a. Figure 7 shows the ratio of episodic framing to the total amount of thematic plus episodic framing over time. Early 1999 until the Second Intifada episodic and thematic framing occur with roughly the same frequency. With the start of the Second Intifada episodic

framing rises to around 80%, which slowly declines again until reaching parity again around 2006. With the tensions rising in 2008 the amount of episodic news coverage increases again. Thus, the answer to RQ5b is relatively complex. It seems that with the increase of violence in the conflict, the episodic coverage increases as well. However, more detailed analyses are needed to answer this RQ more specifically.

Figure 7: Fraction of episodic framing of total (episodic plus thematic) per quarter



For answering RQ6, we investigate to what extent articles are framed using one of the substantive frames listed in table 7. In all newspapers, Fighting and Peace frames were used most often to describe the conflict. These frames are operationalized as the association between the protagonists and words such as war and fighting (*Fight*) and treaties and mediation (*Peace*) respectively. The Fight frame is most frequent in the US, followed by the UK and NL, while for the Peace frames the ranks of NL and UK are reversed. *Religion* is also most frequent in the US coverage, followed by UK and NL. Similar to Peace, *Terrorism* is most frequently used in US and NL and less so in UK coverage. *Law* and *Suffering* frames are both used less frequently.

Table 7 Substantive frames used in conflict articles

	US	UK	NL
Fight	0.18	0.15	0.11
Law	0.03	0.04	0.05
Religion	0.10	0.10	0.12
Suffering	0.03	0.03	0.03
Terrorism	0.05	0.04	0.09
Peace	0.15	0.11	0.12

Figure 8: Substantive framing per quarter (a) Fight, (b) Terrorism, (c) Peace, (d) Suffering

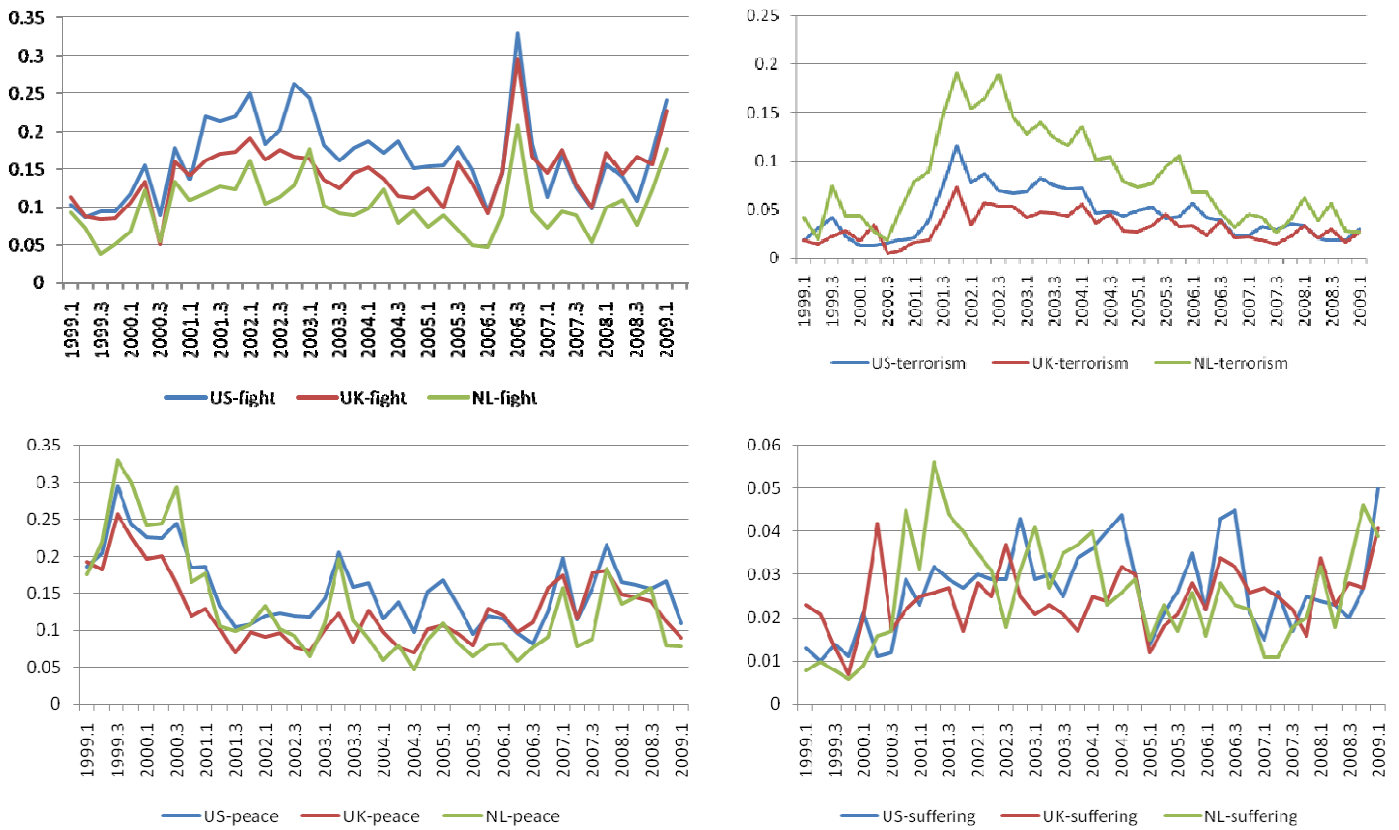


Figure 8 shows the development of four of these frames over time. In 8a, all papers show the same pattern: the fighting frame increases with the start of the Second Intifada and remains high

until after Defensive Shield, after which it declines gradually until spiking with the Lebanese war. Figure 8b shows the terrorism frame. This frame is very infrequent as the Second Intifada breaks out, but increases sharply in 2001, peaking during the 9/11 attacks. This is especially seen in the Dutch news coverage. With the conflict flaring up again in 2008 also the terrorism frame shows an increase, especially in the Dutch newspaper. Figure 8c shows the peace frame. The use of this frame is high before the Second Intifada when negotiations were providing hope for a peaceful solution to the conflict. The frame drops sharply when the Second Intifada quashes the hopes of the Oslo accords. Although it picks up again with the Powell mission to the Middle East and the Road Map to Peace, these increases are temporarily and the frame remains low. Finally, 8d shows the suffering frame. In this frame, the three papers diverge: In the UK the frame remains constant at around 0.02. In the NL the frame increases after the start of the Second Intifada, but it decreases soon to the same level as the US and UK. In the US news coverage, different peaks can be seen, for example in 2004 when attention was paid to the suffering of the population when the wall was build.

In order to answer the seventh research question, we can look at the different figures presented above. It can be seen that especially the start of the Second Intifada is an important event: the fraction of conflict articles increases, Palestinians are mentioned more often compared to Israeli, framing becomes more episodic and fighting and suffering increases while peace decreases. In all cases, the effect wears off but very slowly, taking five years or more to reach pre-intifada levels. This is especially interesting given that the start of the Second Intifada did not lead to a strong increase in coverage, so it appears that frequency shifts and frame shifts can be orthogonal. Consistent with our earlier work (Ruigrok & Van Atteveldt, 2006), 9/11 was the key event in increasing the terrorism frame, but for the other frames it did not cause a shift. This shows that different key-events can affect different aspects of framing of the same conflict. The second-most important event is Operation Defensive Shield and the house arrest of Arafat, which often showed a decrease of the shifts caused by the start of the Intifada. Finally, the Lebanon war showed a strongly different framing of the news about the conflict, as suddenly the Israeli Palestinian conflict became the side-show rather than the main event, but this effect was not lasting. Thus, it can be seen that certain key-events lead to certain frame shifts, although it is not

immediately clear why they lead to these changes. Somewhat unsurprisingly, the local conflict event of the Second Intifada leads to more conflict-oriented framing while the global terror event 9/11 leads to more terrorism-oriented framing. However, 9/11 did not cause more thematic framing, even though conceivably the Israeli Palestinian conflict could now be reported through the lens of the 'War on Terror'. Moreover, the local conflict event of Operation Defensive Shield caused a decrease rather than increase of most conflict-oriented frames, possibly because it became obvious that the conflict was more nuanced and long-winded than previously thought.

Finally, to answer RQ8 we can try to interpret the differences between the newspapers in all analyses presented above. In the NL news, the over reporting of Israel and of conflict issues in the news about Palestine is stronger than in the other papers. The UK was least inclined to switch from the charged 'occupied territories' to 'Palestinian territories', and the news on the wall/fence did not show a clear difference. NL was most inclined towards episodic framing, which might be seen as favorable towards Israel as it is generally more difficult to understand the actions and motives of the culturally more remote Palestinians than the Israeli. In the substantive framing, UK was least likely to use a terrorism framing which can be seen as negative towards the Palestinians, and NL and US were around equal. Thus, the answer to RQ8 seems to be that the UK covers the conflict more balanced than the US, but the same cannot be said for the NL coverage. Obviously, more papers should be investigated in addition to the current three to be able to generalize towards these differences between newspapers to differences between cultures or news cultures.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have conducted an automatic explorative content analysis of little over ten years of newspaper coverage (1999- January 2009) of the Israel-Palestine conflict in three newspapers in different countries. Using frequency analysis and a co-occurrence method called Associative Framing, we were able to show a number of interesting developments in this time frame regarding the occurrence and framing of different concepts.

Overall attention to the conflict shows a gradual increase to a strong peak in 2002 around the Israeli Operation Defensive Shield and surrounding events. After that, attention remains fairly

high until another peak with the Lebanon war in 2006.

Looking at the division of attention between both protagonists, there were many more articles mentioning only Israeli than only Palestinians, and articles mentioning both mentioned the former more frequently. Conflict-related issues were most common in articles mentioning both protagonists, but in the two English language newspapers (*Washington Post* and *The Guardian*) non-conflict issues such as economy and politics were more common in articles only mentioning Palestinians, while a mixed picture was seen in the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*.

We investigated which words were used to refer to disputed concepts, in particular the West Bank wall or fence and the Palestinian or Occupied Territories. In the former, Israeli terms were used much more frequently in the news than Palestinian terms, and especially when the wall/fence was most controversial the more euphemistic terms were preferred. For the territories, the British coverage consistently used the charged term Occupied Territories while the Dutch and American press drifted towards the more neutral Palestinian Territories.

Overall, we found more evidence of episodic than of thematic framing, especially after the start of the Second Intifada. After this moment, we also found an increase in the use of Conflict and Suffering frames and a decrease of Peace frames. The terrorism frame also increased but especially after 9/11 this frame really peaked. These frame shifts show that different key-events lead to different kinds of shifts, and it would be interesting to be able to explain or predict what kinds of events lead to what kinds of shifts. Interestingly, the start of the Second Intifada was the most important key-event for framing, but it did not show a sharp frequency peak, so frequency and framing appear to be orthogonal.

Finally, we interpreted the coverage of the different newspapers in terms of how favourable it is to both protagonists, and we tentatively conclude that the *Washington Post* and the Dutch *NRC Handelsblad* are more pro-Israel than *The Guardian*. This conclusion should be supported by more rigorous definitions and hypothesis tests and it would be interesting to investigate more newspapers for each country.

The automatic techniques employed in this paper have the advantage of allowing us to explore a

wide range of issues in a very large data set. This can be very important as it is not always clear which events lead to the most interesting shifts in coverage and in what time frame. By exploring the data set in this way it is possible to draw a number of interesting conclusions, and it also allows us to concentrate future more in-depth analysis on the most interesting time periods.

However, these techniques also have their limitations. First, the results from frequency and co-occurrence analysis can be difficult to interpret and it is important to supplement it with rigorous validity tests or manual analysis before drawing strong conclusions. Second, differences in languages and language use between countries can skew results, meaning that differences in word or co-occurrence frequencies between countries cannot be simply interpreted as substantive differences in news coverage or culture. Fortunately, differences over time are easier to interpret as it is fairly safe to assume that semantics (word meanings) within a country remain relatively stable within the time period of a number of years. Finally, a number of analyses that we would have liked to perform require differentiating between actors as doing something or undergoing something, for example which actors are portrayed as aggressor and which as suffering. Since both actors are generally mentioned within the same sentence or paragraph, co-occurrence analysis cannot tell the difference between them. Grammatical analysis of the sentences, which can nowadays be performed automatically as well, might be able to give answers to such questions better than co-occurrence.

Although at times it seems like the conflict in the Middle East is doomed to remain deadlocked, this paper shows how the coverage of this conflict shifts back and forth, reacting to the events as they occur in and outside the region.

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Appendix: Keywords used for frequency

Actors	Dutch	English
Israel	Israel*	Israel*
Palestine	Palest*	Palest*
Only Israel	Israel* NOT Palest*	Israel* NOT Palest*
Only Palestine	Palest* NOT Israel*	Palest* NOT Israel*
Both (conflict)	Israel* AND Palest*	Israel* AND Palest*

Issues	Dutch	English
economy	econo* export* import* handel* bedrijf* bnp bbb werkloos* werkgelegen* banen	econo* export* import* trade* trading business* gdp gnp unemploy* job*
Politics	politic* politiek* verkiezing* referend*	politic* election* referend*
Conflict	conflict* OR oorlog* OR vrede* OR onderhandel* OR bemiddel* OR aanslag* OR terror* OR terreur* OR bom* OR beschiet* OR invasie*	conflict* war* peace* negotia* mediat* attack* terror* bomb* shoot* invasion*
Culture	sport* olymp* songfest* wetensch* universi* educ*	sport* olymp* "song festival" scien* universit* cultu* educa*

Word use: Territories	Dutch	English
Occupied	"bezet* gebied*"	"occup* territ*"
Palestinian	"palest* gebied*"	"palest* territ*"

Episodic vs Thematic	Dutch	English
Episodic	slachtoffer* aanslag* aanval* bom* vandaag gister* vanmorgen beschiet* demonstr* opstand schermuts* "eerste intifada"	victim* attack* bomb* today yesterday "this morning" shoot* demonstr* upris* "first intifada"
Thematic	holocaust naqba "yom kippur" zesdaags* syri* jordan* iran irak vn "recht terugke*"~4 vluchteling* armoe* uitzichtlo*	holocaust naqba "yom kippur" "six day war" syri* jordan* iran iraq un "right return"~4 refugee* povert* hopeless*

Word use: the Wall	Dutch	English
Total	apartheidshek* apartheidsmuur apartheidsbarriere segregatiehek segregatiemuur segregatiebarriere barriere hek* vredeshek* vredesmuur vredesbarrière	wall fence barrier
Apartheid	apartheidshek* apartheidsmuur apartheidsbarriere segregatiehek segregatiemuur segregatiebarriere	"apartheid fence" "apartheid wall" "apartheid barrier" "racial segregation wall"
Fence	barriere hek* afscheiding*	barrier fence "separation wall" "separation barrier"
Security	veiligheidshek* veiligheidsmuur veiligheidsbarriere anti-terrorisめhek* anti-terrorisめmuur anti-terrorisめbarriere verdedigingshek* verdedigingsmuur verdedigingsbarriere	"security fence" "security wall" "security barrier" "anti-terrorist fence" "anti-terrorist wall" "anti-terrorist barrier" "defense fence" "defense wall" "defense barrier"
Wall	Muur	Wall

Substantive Frames	Dutch	English
Terror	terreur* terror* aanslag* bomaanslag* zelfmoordaan*	terror* "suicide attack*"
Fight	gevecht* vecht* oorlog* aanval* tank* soldat* beschiet* bombar*	fight* war* attack* tank* soldier* shoot* bombar*
Law	recht rechten mensenrecht* wet wettel* wettig* vn "internationaal gerechtshof"	law* justic* legal* un icj "international court justice"~5
Suffering	slachtoffer* ziekenhui* gewond*	suffer* victim* wound* hospital*
Religion	jood* islam* moslim* religi* christ* orthodox*	jew* islam* muslim* religi* christ* orthodox*
Peace	vrede* onderha* bemiddel* akkoor* verdrag*	peace* negotia* media* accor* treaty treaties