EYE ON THE MEDIA: THE ISRAEL – PALESTINE CONFLICT

Hafiza Arikat
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Department of Sociology
Abstract

of

EYE ON THE MEDIA: THE ISRAEL – PALESTINE CONFLICT

by

Hafiza Arikat

Various studies have claimed that the media coverage of the Israel – Palestine conflict is biased and unbalanced. This study investigates media coverage of the conflict as portrayed by four of the most-watched news networks across the globe: FOX News, CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera. To further understand this perceived bias, Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism was incorporated throughout this study with the intent to assess whether or not Western media has a tendency to depict the Palestinian people in a subjective and Orientalistic light. This study examines two major events of the Israel – Palestine conflict: the May 2010 raid of the Free Gaza Flotilla and the September 2011 Palestinian bid for statehood at the United Nations General Assembly. To substantiate the presented ideas, numerous broadcasts from the four mentioned networks addressing these two events were examined. The analysis focuses on certain aspects of the media coverage and the manner in which it depicted the events as well as the Palestinian people vis-à-vis Said’s theory. The results demonstrate that there is lack of conformity among the Western media networks in depicting the Israel – Palestine conflict and a far contrast between the American networks and the Al Jazeera news outlet, most notably between the latter and FOX News; depicting Said’s criticism of American media and validating previous authors’ praise for the fact-based, compelling reports of the conflict on Al Jazeera.

_____________________, Committee Chair
Kevin Wehr, PhD.

______________________
Date
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Acknowledgements                              | vi  |
| List of Tables                                | viii|
| List of Figures                               | xi  |
| Chapter                                       |     |
| 1. INTRODUCTION                               | 1   |
| 2. BACKGROUND LITERATURE                      | 8   |
| 3. DATA AND METHODS                           | 22  |
| 4. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS               | 29  |
| 5. CONCLUSION                                 | 60  |
| References                                    | 70  |
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tables</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Usage of Terms (Statehood)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Usage of Terms (Flotilla)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figures</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Figure 1 – Al Jazeera: “The Palestine Debate”</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Figure 2 – FOX News: “A Slap in the Face”</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Figure 3 – FOX News: “A Palestinian State”</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Figure 4 – FOX News: “Israel’s Response”</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Figure 5 – CNN: “Palestine Seeks UN Statehood”</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Figure 6 – IDF Flotilla Video</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Figure 7 – Turkish Flotilla Video</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Figure 8 – Al Jazeera Flotilla Video</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Israel – Palestine conflict is no stranger to the media. It is a conflict that has been ongoing for decades and has been covered by the media all over the globe as one of the most frequently discussed foreign issues. These stories have molded the global perspective of the issue. The Israel – Palestine conflict has been constant since 1948, when the war that the Palestinians call “Al Nakba” (the Disaster) and Israelis refer to as their War of Independence occurred. Despite more than 60 years of conflict and more than four billion dollars of US aid and money to Israel every year, the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict is not well-known by the vast majority of the US population. The media presents the public with certain images and news stories concerning the Israel – Palestine conflict, helping to develop the public’s opinion of the situation based upon these images and stories.

“A land without a people for a people without a land” is how Zionists described Palestine during their search for a homeland. With a population of more than 1.6 million prior to 1948, Palestine, though, was far from a “land without a people.” Preceding the beginning of the conflict, Palestine was home to Muslims, Christians, and a small Jewish population. By 1917, Palestine was a British Protectorate and Zionists pushed the British government to favor Palestine as the location for a Jewish homeland. The Balfour Declaration, as it became known, produced a rapid increase of Jewish immigrants to Palestine, and along with the increase in immigrants came further Zionist pressure for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The swift increase of immigrants to Palestine caused alarm
from Palestinians and a concern of loss of land, which eventually led to violence in the region.

In 1947, the United Nations intervened, and with the ever-present Zionist pressure, decided to divide the disputed land; recommending giving away 55 percent of Palestine in order to form a Jewish state, although only 30 percent of the entire population of Palestine at that time was Jewish. This led to the war of 1948, resulting in Israel conquering 78 percent of Palestine and causing the displacement of three-quarters of a million Palestinians, and the destruction of over 500 Palestinian villages. The massive number of Palestinian refugees that resulted from this were prohibited from returning to their homes in the new Jewish state of Israel, causing vast immigration to surrounding Arab countries. Because of this, the issue quickly became an Arab/Israeli conflict since the remainder of Palestine following the war was left to the control of the surrounding Arab countries of Jordan, Syria and Egypt.

In 1967, a subsequent war broke out in what is called the “Six Day War;” where Israel fought Jordan, Syria and Egypt and which resulted in Israel occupying the remaining 22 percent of Palestinian land which was left after 1948, as well as capturing the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank from Jordan (including East Jerusalem) and the Golan Heights from Syria (Gelvin 2007: 126). Since 1967, the Palestinian territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have been under Israeli occupation.

Israel’s history starts where Palestine’s began to disappear, yet the media tends to leave out much of this history when discussing the conflict (Akerman 2001). There have
been various studies conducted that analyze the Israel-Palestine conflict, the media coverage of the conflict, and the public’s opinion on the issue (Kressel 1987, Akerman 2001, Philo and Berry 2004). The topic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (IPC) receives much media attention yet I am led to question whether or not the attention and news regarding this conflict is presented in an unbiased and balanced manner. Journalists interviewed regarding this issue stated that they felt as though Palestine and Palestinians receive less and typically more negative press than Israel and Israelis (Ghareeb 1975). Therefore, this research analyzes the press that both sides receive while focusing on particular aspects of media coverage and its impact.

As we know, the mass media has a great effect on individuals and the type of news individuals are exposed to. Few Americans are exposed to the Israel - Palestine conflict first hand, therefore, their perceptions of the conflict are based largely upon the information they are provided with by means of the media. According to Jeffery P. Dennis (2009:180),

> Media representation has a significant causative impact on how [the public] adduce meaning about racial and ethnic identities, particularly those who have little real-life social contact with peers from the represented group.

Audiences are placing meaning to Palestinians and the IPC through media representation. It has been argued that the media tends to portray more of Palestinian attacks on Israel and its citizens without including the history of the conflict and often omitting the fact that Palestine is under Israeli occupation (Akerman 2001). Past literature has questioned whether or not the media has a tendency to disregard the fact that Palestinians are living under occupation and whether this disregard leads individuals to assume that the
Palestinians are primarily to blame for the ongoing conflict (Akerman 2001, Kressel 1987). There have been many attacks on Israel by Palestinians and the same can be said for Israeli attacks on Palestinians, however society should be asking why this is the case. Why are the Palestinians angry? Why are they violent? Why are Israeli laws written as they are? Why are we told that Israelis are living in danger? With the media giving the public a chance to understand the conditions of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, we can hope to further answer and understand these questions. Similarly, the media may be reasonably expected to show the environments that Israelis live in, in order to allow society to form an opinion on this subject with an equal amount of information pertaining to both sides.

A famous Arabic proverb states “Il tikrar biallem ihmar” [by repetition even a donkey learns]. Some argue that the repetitiveness of the negative images of Palestinians in the media has allowed the media to target this group of individuals while labeling them as terrorists and militants. I question whether or not they are being presented to the world in a negative light while comparing the coverage of the conflict among four various media outlets around the world and how much history and contextual information is presented in these stories, and how the information is then depicted across the globe.

In order to further understand this issue, the theory of orientalism has been incorporated. Edward Said (1979) described the concept of orientalism as a depiction of individuals from the East and Middle East in a non-objective manner, creating a dichotomous relationship between the East and the West with an “us versus them” standpoint. Said argues that Western literature and Western depictions of Arab cultures
have presented these cultures in an irrational, stereotypical, and non-factual manner with the presentation of them as the “enemy;” grouping together non-Western cultures as a mystical, non-understood “other.” Said argues that history is made by men and women and can therefore be unmade and rewritten in a way that creates the East not only as dissimilar and unusual to us as the West, but also as “ours” to posses and direct since “we” are civilized and rational while “they” are uncivilized and irrational. Said’s theory is incorporated into this research to examine how much background information, historical information and contextual information is included across various news outlets around the world, while also examining how the media tends to depict Palestine and Palestinians and whether or not this depiction is based upon uncritical and non-objective assumptions. This is important to understand because if Palestinians are portrayed in such a light, the construction of them as the “other” can assist in further understanding how the coverage of them and the IPC affects public opinion of the IPC and the Palestinian people in general.

Using content analysis, I analyze the depiction of the IPC in four different global mass media outlets over three different countries. I focus on FOX News, CNN, BBC, and Al-Jazeera. I investigate how these outlets have covered the IPC and the differences in their coverage, while focusing on specific aspects of news stories and analyzing the impact of these specific components within the context of Said’s Orientalism theory.

This study analyzes the manner in which the media, in particular news broadcasts, depict the IPC and how the news coverage is presented across the globe. It focuses on the variation of news coverage while questioning whether or not there may be a bias present.
This was analyzed by assessing how much or how little history is incorporated into news broadcasts while also assessing the manner in which messages are presented. This topic is of social significance because of a vast lack of knowledge regarding the history of the conflict and the details of both the Palestinian and Israeli sides, despite the frequent presence of the issue in the media. Arguably, information being distributed and repeated has in many ways caused the marginalization of a group and a disregard of history, which has lead to ignorance in our society regarding the situation as a whole. The IPC is a conflict of much significance in the international world and a lack of knowledge regarding the issue may lead to blinded support for one side, mainly the side that receives the more positive media attention. With Said’s theory of orientalism, we can question if and how policy experts “whose world experience is limited to the beltway” publish work regarding the Middle East and the peace process “without regard for thoughtfulness or reflection, or real knowledge” (Said 1979:xxi).

This research adds to previous research that has been conducted on the issue of the media and the IPC. Many studies and analyses (Ghareeb 1975, Marmura 2008, Shaheen 1985) examine the ways in which the media tends to take sides while addressing this conflict. My research differs from previous studies because I analyze media presentation within the orientalism perspective, while focusing on specific components of various television media outlets that may affect the framing and presentation of news stories. This study updates and expands work from the 1970s and 1980s. I analyze news stories regarding the conflict on FOX News, CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera with a focus on two major occurrences of the conflict in the past two years. These analyzed instances are
Chapter 2
BACKGROUND LITERATURE

According to Edward Said (1979), Orientalism was ultimately “a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the strange (the Orient, the East, ‘them’)” in which “we” in the West lived in our own world and the Orient lived in one far different that ours; a world in which Orientals are depicted as foolish and unable to run their own governments. Said argues that the political dominance of Europe in the Middle East and Asia made the creation of the Orient possible since as the dominating force, Europe was able to write literature about it, thus establishing it and defining it according to their perceptions. As the US has become increasingly involved in the Middle East with its strong political ties to Israel, American media began to differ from European media. According to Said (1981), American reporters must be aware that their country is “the only super power with interests and ways of pursuing those interests that other countries do not have,” suggesting that European journalists and European news networks have more freedom in reporting on the IPC than those American journalists and networks who report on the conflict with a “subliminal consciousness” of their country’s political interests (Said 1981:51). There is no toleration for the existence of an actual Palestinian people in American Jewish support for Israel, “except in the context of terrorism, violence, evil and fanaticism” (Said 2002:16). Said stresses that media representation of Palestinians depict a hostile “rock-throwing people of violence” with “neither history nor humanity.”

Edward Ghareeb (1975) discusses the Arab claim that the mass media tends be
more pro-Israeli and anti-Arab in a series of interviews he conducts with various American journalists. Among the journalists interviewed were Peter Jennings (ABC), Ronald Cover (Washington Post), and Marylyn Robinson (NBC). In discussing the media’s presentation of the conflict, the journalists stated that they do feel as though the press that Palestinians receive is less and typically more negative than the press Israeli’s receive.

When asked if he perceived the US media as biased in regards to the Israel-Palestine conflict, Peter Jennings remarked “traditionally, I think, more coverage has been given to the Israeli side than to that of the Arabs” (Ghareeb 1975:127), but also stated that he believed the situation was beginning to change. He addressed his perception that Americans had been ignorant when it came to the Arab world and that the bias that was/is present was an ignorant bias rather than a deliberate one. In his interview with Ghareeb, James McCartney of *Knight Newspapers* stated that a characteristic of the public’s opinion of the situation in the Middle East is that “Arabs have not really been understood very well, or reported on very well in the United States” (Ghareeb 1975:138).

Similar to Ghareeb, Jack Shaheen (1985) discusses journalists and the misperceptions by journalists regarding Arabs and how these misperceptions result in stereotypical images of Arabs being further imbedded into society. He discusses how stereotypical images that permeate the media also have an effect on foreign policy decisions and why little progress has been made politically regarding the conflict. He delves into a discussion about Palestinians in particular and speaks of how they are constantly labeled as “terrorists.” He gives examples of the manner in which stories are
reported such as one that described an Israeli attack on a Palestinian village. The report goes on to state that this village was one where “terrorists” were believed to work. He discusses the stigma that has become affiliated with Palestinians because of the attachment of the word “terrorist” to them by the media. He goes on to discuss how stories are structured in regards to the Israel - Palestine conflict and uses examples such as the Yom Kippur War and its name, stating that this war also occurred during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, not just during the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. By giving such examples, he depicts how the media is swayed towards a view that is more sensitive to Israel.

This idea is similar to that of Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern’s (2007) discussion of the framing of news stories in the media. According to Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern, media frames are an “organizing mechanism for media contact” that provide “immediate context to the recipient of the frame through the selection, emphasis, or exclusion of specific facts or ideas” that determine the tone of a news story (Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern 2007:155).

Bicket and Wall (2009) sensed that Americans were aware of this “sway” towards a pro-Israel media and describe Americans’ desire to obtain news from other news outlets. They discuss the fact that these individuals turned to the BBC (British Broadcasting Company). BBC was considered to offer “a more nuanced, less biased news product” (Bicket and Wall 2009:266). They state that more Americans have turned to BBC for news because of “rightward drift” that the US media had taken on the subject as well as their belief that BBC news was more critical and more appealing. Bicket and Wall
noticed the desire of Americans to be exposed to more critical, objective news. This research tests for a difference between American, European, and Middle Eastern outlets, examining whether or not there is a significant difference in coverage that Bicket and Wall state Americans were looking for.

While Bicket and Wall found that Americans suspected BBC to be more critical in their news coverage, Annelore Deprez and Karin Raeymaeckers (2010) focused on the depiction of the conflict in European news, specifically analyzing the Belgian newspaper, *The Flemish Daily* and their study focused on media portrayal of Israelis and Palestinians during the first and second intifadas. The authors state that while several empirical studies have been conducted examining the news coverage of the IPC, few have focused on European news. Since their study focused on two different time periods of the same conflict, the results were very revealing. They found that during the first intifada, Palestinians were mostly depicted as the underdog in the conflict and as unarmed civilians who were “trying to defend themselves with limited resources against the military powers of Israel.” (Deprez and Raeymaeckers 2010:93) These were predominately the images of Palestinians during the first intifada, however these changed drastically after the start of the second intifada. As the second intifada began, Israelis were increasingly depicted as the victims who were terrorized by Palestinians. These Palestinians were depicted as the “anti-Semitic terrorists.”

The most significant findings in this research come from the focus on words used to describe Palestinians in comparison to Israelis as well as Palestinian violence in comparison to Israeli violence. Deprez and Raeymaeckers found that words such as
“extremist” and “militant” were frequently used to describe Palestinians whereas the word “occupier” was usually the only label placed upon the Israeli actor and even this word was not used as frequently as the negative labels attached to Palestinians. While Israeli violence was described as being committed by the “occupying army,” Palestinian violence was almost always reported as being committed by “terrorists,” “radicals” and “extremists” rather than terms such as “resistance fighters” or “freedom fighters” (Deprez and Raeymaeckers 2010:100). The word “attack” was attached to Palestinians 634 more times than it was to Israelis while the word “incident” was used more frequently to describe Israeli violence.

Deprez and Raeymaeckers (2010) bring up a crucial issue regarding journalism and the IPC in stating that most international correspondents are stationed in Israel and not in the occupied territories. According to them, it is difficult for journalists who want to enter the occupied territories to do so because they are often denied access by Israel. They state that much of media bias is due to the fact that not enough journalists visit the Palestinian territories on a regular basis. An interesting point that the authors make is that a barrier to fair news collection regarding Palestinians is an impact of the strength of news corporation bureaucracies on the “manufacturing of news;” essentially stating that the news coverage we acquire is often the outcome of innate limitations in news production. The bias may also be due to the idea that Palestinians are usually less interested in pleasing international media contacts while Israelis are more aware of the significance of information dispersion and are more active in that regard (Deprez and Raeymaeckers 2010:95). Palestinian public relations are not as advanced as Israel and
Palestinians are not as accustomed to or trained to confront foreign journalists.

Journalists interviewed by the authors on why reporting changed between the two intifadas stated that this may be a consequence of a media shift after events such as September 11th. This notion is reflective of Edward Said’s argument that “history is made by men and women just as it can be unmade and rewritten” (Said 1979: xviii). In the context of Orientalism, since the Middle East and Arabs became more of threat to the rest of the world, the media, and in this case, The Flemish Daily may have succumbed to pressure of depicting Palestinians as this threat.

Niel Kressel (1987) examined the assumption that the media is biased regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. He addressed the issue of this perceived media bias in terms of both Palestinians and Israelis and the instances in which the media has been targeted for being anti-Arab and pro-Israel while others argue that it has been anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian. Kressel (1987) discusses past studies and literature that accuse both anti-Israeli and anti-Palestinian media coverage and states that these studies were “biased research on media bias” (Kressel 1987:215). In his discussion, Kressel suggests that content analytical studies are very helpful in research such as those analyzing the IPC and add to empirical knowledge. In conducting content analyses, Kressel concluded that from the birth of Israel in 1948 until the 1980’s, American mass media had favored Israel during their coverage of the conflict, but that more impartial news coverage began to appear soon after. In examining content analyses of other researchers, Kressel discovered that in the type of coverage of the conflict that is exposed, some stories end up coming off as unfair to Israel, and some as unfair to Palestine depending on the situation. He
found that there were instances in which both sides received more press than the other.

In his work, Kressel also suggests that the media’s representation of other Arabs in general might affect media bias and public opinion, meaning negative depictions of other Arabs and Arab countries may lead more people to have a negative mindset about Palestinians. Kressel states that in terms of Arabs and Palestinians in particular, “television is drawn toward imagery and away from presentation of historical background” (Kressel 1987:225). This statement is important in the research I will be conducting in an attempt to update such studies from decades ago.

Also arguing the absence of history in the media, Seth Ackerman (2001) discusses the media’s hesitation to use the word “occupation” in describing the IPC. He describes how and why news outlets seldom mention that Palestine is an occupied territory and the effect that this has on the manner in which news is presented. Ackerman describes different news stories regarding the presentation of Israelis in contrast to those regarding Palestine and Palestinians and his perception of how they assign blame in a way that increases sympathy for Israel. He goes into the minimally discussed backlash that news outlets receive if they are perceived to be too sympathetic towards Palestine and not sympathetic enough towards Israel. He analyzes numerous news reports and goes on to discuss how there is pressure from the pro-Israel public to take a more pro-Israel stance and the manner in which some sources simply ignore Palestinian issues. He presents evidence that if and when Palestinian deaths are brought up; they are usually spoken of as deaths of militants and members of Hamas which, as Ackerman mentions, America views as a terrorist organization. With use of these terms, the media is allowing the majority of
deaths, including those of innocent civilians, to be justified as deaths of “terrorists.”

Taking a different approach, Stephen Marmura (2009) discusses the internet and grassroots activism in regards to Middle Eastern politics. Marmura discusses the appearance of internet based activism of pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian websites that have emerged and sites that have the intention of spreading the need for peace in the region. Marmura goes on to discuss an organization called “If Americans Knew” which conducted an analysis of news reports regarding the IPC in the Northern California newspapers the San Francisco Chronicle and the San Jose Mercury News from 2000 to 2001. Their study found that in the San Jose Mercury News, 71.5 percent of front-page coverage of the conflict was dedicated to Israelis while 4.3 percent was dedicated to Palestinians. In the San Francisco Chronicle, deaths of Israeli children were reported 25 times more than those of Palestinian children (Marmura 2009:264). Marmura discusses that Israelis typically seemed to appear as “victims of terror” in news presentations and that the deaths of Palestinians are often depicted simply as tragic events rather than the killing of civilians in “the backdrop of an illegal and/or brutal military occupation” (Marmura 2009:267).

Similar to Marmura, Greg Philo and Mike Berry (2004) examined news reports and found that Palestinian deaths were not reported as often or as notably as Israeli deaths. A content analysis was conducted along with a questionnaire which examined television news reports concerning the conflict over a two year period. It was found that a strong emphasis was placed upon Israeli casualties compared to Palestinians, although there were more Palestinian deaths in actuality. The authors explain that very few stories
described the siege of the West Bank in 1967 and the Israeli occupation that followed. They state that stories were reported without an explanation of the conflict which ties back to Kressel’s work (1987) and the goal of this research to determine if history of the conflict tends to be disregarded in the media. Of the individuals who participated in Philo and Berry’s questionnaire, the majority were unaware of the number of Palestinian refugees around the world and how they came to be dispossessed.

In his research regarding American public opinion of the conflict, Fouad Moughrabi (1986) suggests that conclusions of a pro-Israeli media are not new. He explains the fact that the media was more favorable to Israel in the past but that this began to change in 1973 and that “the old pro-Israel/pro-Arab dichotomy” appeared to change (Moughrabi 1986:56). He describes that news coverage following 1973 painted a portrait that presented Palestinians as people who had the right to an establishment of an independent state and that the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) should be involved in negotiations. Moughrabi analyzed public opinion polls that asked certain questions concerning the conflict and individuals’ perceptions of the conflict. When asked if displaced Palestinians deserve their own independent state just as Jews did after WWII, 71 percent of the total public agreed. When asked if the PLO was a terrorist organization, 49 percent of those polled agreed with the statement (Moughrabi 1986:62). This fact will help in the analysis of the portrayal of Palestinian and Israeli political organizations in the media. The PLO is not considered a terrorist organization by the United States, but is it the media that is leading Americans to believe that it is? Moughrabi concluded that a considerable amount of the public think the US should be
neutral in terms of the conflict and that the government should not favor one particular side over another. He also addressed the issue that when people are presented with information that is factual and accurate, they tend to adopt a more pro-Palestinian stance and support a resolution that is beneficial to both sides of the conflict.

Dina Ibrahim (2009) discusses how American public opinion and media depiction of the IPC can both be analyzed by looking at the cultural gap between American culture and Arab culture. This concept ties directly to Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism in that Israel is fashioned as a Western-style democracy with Western-style culture, whereas Arab governments and Arab culture are foreign to many Americans, and many times, foreign even to journalists reporting on the IPC. Therefore, Israel is seen as similar to the United States and American culture while Arabs and Palestinians are seen and depicted as the “other” – with neither Western government nor Western culture; making them more difficult to sympathize with and easier to distrust.

In his book *Arab Voices*, James Zoghby (2010) stresses the importance of listening to Arabs and how this will help us understand them more while moving passed our current notions of the Arab world as one shrouded in myths and a “mixture of fear, arrogance, ignorance, and bias” (Zoghby 2010:13). He argues that not being exposed to the narratives of the Arab world closes us off to being able to constructively engage in the region. Zoghby’s ideas draw a parallel to Said’s in his mention that Arab politics are depicted as leaning towards violence and extremism, differentiating the politics of the East and the West and categorizing “their” violence, “their” wars, “their” governments in contrast to “our” more enlightened and civilized Western conflicts and governments.
Zoghby discusses the negative stereotypes projected by Israel with the beginning of organized media campaigns in the 1970’s. These media campaigns defined Palestinians not as real people, but rather as “objects” or “terrorists,” leading to a desensitization of the West to the suffering of the Palestinians. He stresses that Palestinians failed to grasp the nature of Israel’s media campaign and therefore never participated in a counter strategy. This has resulted in Israel having the ability to define how Westerners understand the conflict while Palestinians have not mounted such a campaign to further the understanding of their own history. Zoghby states that Arab news networks such as Al Jazeera are vital in understanding the conflict because they are not affected by Israel’s media campaign and are able to give vivid accounts of the conflict and certain occurrences of the conflict that no other network could have access to. He also goes on to discuss BBC and his notion that viewers of this network “benefit tremendously” from their news due to their extensive coverage that is occasionally ignored by the majority of US networks.

Zoghby’s discussion of Israel’s media campaign is displayed by Donald Wagner (1998) in his argument that pro-Israel lobbies began to converge with evangelical Christians in America in the 1970s for support of the Jewish state of Israel. Following then President Jimmy Carter’s statement that “Palestinians deserve a right to their homeland,” evangelical groups, with the help of pro-Israel lobbies, took out full page ads in major US newspapers such as the New York Times and Washington Post with texts stating that the time had come for evangelical Christians to “affirm their belief in biblical prophecy and Israel’s divine right to the land.” Their text included the statements: “We
affirm as evangelicals our belief in the promised land to the Jewish people...We would view with grave concern any effort to carve out of the Jewish homeland another nation or political entity,” clearly countering President Carter’s statement.

This media campaign and a rise in Christian Zionism over the years contributed to the image of the Orient in Western media, depicting Palestinians as unworthy of inhabiting the state of Israel with no regard that this was their land at the outset. Because of this, the concept of “confirmation bias” may possibly be an explanation for media partiality regarding the IPC. John Gasper (2005) defines confirmation bias as a tendency or preference to seek out or favor information that confirms an individual’s already existing beliefs concerning a certain issue. He argues that people have a tendency of seeking out information that does not challenge their beliefs in any way, but rather reaffirms their pre-existing mindsets. Because a number of individuals have been exposed to images of Palestinians or the Arab world in an Orientalistic lens, they may be more inclined to obtain news that conforms to this image. And because a majority of evangelical Christians support Zionism and believe that the protection and support of the state of Israel is a crucial aspect of their religious beliefs, they may be more inclined to tune into media reports that they know will confirm their beliefs and not challenge their pre-existing ideas and notions.

This leads into Jonathan Isacoff’s (2006) idea that the story of the Arab Israeli conflict depends on the perspective of the story-teller. According to Isacoff, the story of the IPC has recently split in two; one represented by the older Zionist history and perspective and the other by the “Israeli New Historians.” These “old” and “new”
accounts of the IPC result in two differing case studies. Isacoff questions whether or not the truth in stories regarding the IPC comes down to who is telling the story. He states that with the old Zionist perspective, Israel is the victim of constant Arab oppression and is surrounded by hostile Arab neighbors. This “old” perspective also claims that Israel actively sought peace with Palestinians and that Palestinians were unwilling to cooperate. On the other hand, the “new” history emphasizes that Israel should be held responsible for provoking the second Arab-Israeli war in 1967 because of their refusal to do anything in relieving the problem of millions of Palestinian refugees, their encouragement of settlement building in Palestinian territories, and their constant reprisal raids on Palestinians because of Hamas-related attacks which, according to the Israeli new historians, all prompted the war. In history and in the media, Israel is represented as a victim and as a vulnerable nation, being forced to exist as a “state under siege,” despite their overwhelming military victories in 1948 and 1967 and their continued occupation of Palestinian territories. History of the IPC has been constructed in a way that portrays Israel as a “weak, insecure state surrounded by enemies and continuously struggling for survival” in spite of its critical victories (Isacoff 2006:83). Isacoff states that historians have an influence on politics but their differing historical interpretations render differing political ideologies regarding the IPC and in this case, differing media representations. If in history and in the media, Israel is constantly depicted as weak and vulnerable, it is more likely that Palestine will be seen as a haven of terror and “otherness,” making support for Palestinian peace and statehood less likely.

This previous literature depicts concerns of a biased media regarding the IPC and
this study adds to this literature with an analysis of the media and their approach in covering this issue. With the empirically grounded method of content analysis, I systematically analyze certain messages from different media outlets in order to assess my hypothesis of an Orientalistic portrayal of Palestinians in media coverage of the IPC; either validating or refuting the above literature.
Chapter 3
DATA AND METHODS

Content Analysis

According to Marda Dunsky, “the American mainstream media run a remarkable information deficit on the key issues of the [Israel - Palestine] conflict.” In order to further examine this speculation and the coverage of the IPC in the media and the variation of coverage of Israelis and Palestinians, I conducted a content analysis of broadcasts between four of the most-watched news networks across the globe. A content analysis is a significant type of research that allows for an unobtrusive method of data collection and data analysis, while providing an “empirical starting point for generating new research about the nature and effect of specific communications” (Kolbe and Burnett 1991). Content analyses are beneficial in the examination of the media and characteristics of media messages since such a study assists in finding trends associated with the media’s coverage which in turn may interpret certain messages that the public are exposed to.

This purpose of this analysis is to understand the inclusion or omission of historical information as well as the types of messages being portrayed and the variation of the messages between networks regarding the same situations, the use (or lack) of terms within messages, and the manner in which these messages might affect how the news is presented.

The Sample

The four global media outlets which were analyzed were FOX News, CNN, BBC (British Broadcasting Company), and Al Jazeera. All four of these news sources are very
popular and are available to a vast audience across the globe. All four sources place a considerable amount of their focus upon international news and often publish headlines regarding international news stories. The reason these four sources were chosen is due to their popularity and their vast audience; with millions of viewers tuning into each network every day. Because of the theoretical spread over the nations and regions, these sources and regions were chosen to assess the difference in coverage between them in correlation with Said’s theory that in the west, Arabs may be depicted as the “other” and how this depiction and perception may affect the manner in which they are presented in the media, and in particular, American media.

Selection of Broadcasts

The specific broadcasts that were examined were those across the four news networks that discuss and cover current incidents regarding the IPC. All the networks cover the conflict in regards to land issues, violence, the political parties of the region, and the attempts to reach a resolution to the conflict. Since there is a broad window of issues covered in these broadcasts, the focus of this research are those broadcasts focusing on the raid of the Free Gaza Flotilla in May of 2010 and the Palestinian bid for statehood at the United Nations General Assembly in September of 2011.

Israel imposed a blockade of the Gaza Strip in 2005 and among other ramifications of it, this blockade has resulted in severe affects on the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Many humanitarian groups have sent supplies to Gaza and its residents who have been deprived of a significant amount of humanitarian aid since the blockade was imposed. In May of 2010, a six ship flotilla was organized to deliver humanitarian
aid to Gaza along with an attempt to break the Israeli blockade and left the coast of Turkey with these intentions. On 31 May 2010, Israeli naval ships intercepted the entire armada and raided the Mavi Marmara, one of the largest ships in the flotilla because of Israel’s claim that the passengers on board were showing resistance to Israeli commandos who demanded they sail no further. The confrontation occurred in international waters and resulted in the death of nine passengers on board as well as leaving 24 passengers injured and ten Israeli commandos injured. Israel claimed the raid and the repercussions of it were a result of self-defense while an angry Turkish government called for an emergency meeting at the UN Security Council to address the issue. The flotilla incident, over a year later, is still discussed and as a major occurrence of the IPC in recent years and examining the coverage of it has assisted in exploring my research question.

Prior to the formation of the state of Israel existed the country of Palestine. Since the wars of 1948 and 1967, Palestinian land has diminished into what is now considered the “Palestinian territories” consisting of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. This is considered Palestinian land, however there is an Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip and an Israeli occupation of the West Bank with a continuation of the building of Jewish settlements on this land. After decades of failed negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, Palestinian leaders argued that the most effective approach to a move towards peace would be international recognition of a sovereign Palestinian state. The Palestinian Authority and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas submitted an application for statehood in the 2011 UN General Assembly. This statehood bid is clearly a central event in the peace process and the IPC, hence my focus on it and media
coverage of it.

**Categories**

In order to investigate the question of media coverage and the media’s representation of the Israeli-Palestine conflict, the analysis of the four news sources was divided into various categories. The categories used were: History of the conflict, usage of terms, audio and visuals, headlines, and guest speakers.

1. **History of Conflict**

   In assessing the media’s representation of the conflict, this research evaluates how often the history of the IPC is mentioned. James Zoghy (2010) states that most Americans have never understood the true history of the Palestinians and that in order to grasp a full understanding of the IPC, the powerful and competing histories of both sides must be examined. Analyzing how often or how little history is mentioned can be a contributing factor to how stories are initially framed and how American public opinion may be affected.

2. **Usage of Terms**

   The words, phrases, and statements used (or not used) in the coverage of the IPC are believed to have an impact on the framing of stories. It has been argued that the media tends to leave out terms such as “occupied land” or “occupation” when describing the living situations of Palestinians as well as using the terms “militants” and “terrorists” to describe Palestinians (Akerman 2009). Certain word usage may have an effect on
viewers when the terminology is used to describe one particular side.

Words can also determine whether or not the broadcast is presenting a passive or active approach to the story. In analyzing words, phrases, and statements, we can determine how they are used to structure a news story and how this will affect the message and the manner in which it is being portrayed. The key terms and phrases that will specifically be examined are: *occupation* (*occupied land, occupied West Bank*), *settlements/settlers*, *1967 borders*, *apartheid*, *blockade/siege*, *humanitarian aid*, *Hamas*, and *Islam*. The goal was to examine how often these terms are mentioned in each broadcast and the significance that the presence of these terms may have on the story and the framing of the story.

3. **Audio and Visuals**

The images and audio that correlate with news stories will be examined in order to assess how news stories are portrayed in correlation with the audio and visuals provided to the viewer. Images are of much importance in news coverage, particularly when the coverage is regarding war or conflict overseas when these images become one of the few ways to observe the conditions of war or conflict. When an individual has no social contact with the groups being represented in the media, the images and stories that the media expose become their only way to place meaning to those individuals that they are seeing/hearing about; thus allowing them to create their own ideas and opinions (Dennis 2009).
4. **Headlines, sub-headlines, teasers**

This category entailed the analysis of headlines of news stories regarding the IPC. Headlines are what initially catch the eye of viewers and may impact whether or not the viewer will be inclined to pay attention to the story. Headlines can be very dramatic and striking, sometimes conveying a bias towards one side which may affect the attitude of the viewer before watching the actual content of the broadcast.

5. **Guest Speakers**

In order to further analyze what they are reporting, news networks usually bring on guest speakers who can add their insight and argue their own points concerning the topic of the broadcast. Edward Said (1979) and Jonathan Isacoff (2006) both stress the importance of those contributing to news stories as Said argues that many of those contributing to reports on the IPC generally do not have a deep understanding of the conflict or the region and Isacoff stresses that the manner in which stories are told depend on the story teller.

With the data obtained, I thoroughly analyze how the conflict is represented across varying media outlets and how wording, images, and background information help frame stories. Media content analyses are research techniques aimed to assess the content of certain media outlets in an objective and systematic manner. Kressel (1987) suggests that content analytical studies are very useful in research and add to empirical knowledge. They are beneficial in assessing such topics as that of the IPC and assist in the pursuit to
determine how the content of news stories are portrayed and how the messages illustrated may affect the public’s attitudes and views.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Previous studies have concluded that contextual information is often absent in the coverage of the Israel–Palestine conflict (Ackerman 2001, Dunsky 2008, Philo and Berry 2004) and that because of this, the audience’s understanding of the conflict, short of historical background and developments of the conflict, has been limited.

In a content analysis based on a sample of twenty four news broadcasts from the selected networks, variables dealing with context, usage and frequency of terms, guest speakers and audio and visuals were examined. The sample includes broadcasts dealing specifically with news of the May 2010 raid of the Free Gaza Flotilla and the September 2011 Palestinian bid for statehood at the United Nations General Assembly.

For the flotilla incident, I selected broadcasts which were aired between 31 May 2010 (the day of the incident) and 2 June 2010 in order to examine how the story was depicted immediately following the incident. For the statehood bid, I selected broadcasts which were aired between 18 September 2011 and 26 September 2011 in order to examine the nature of the broadcasts prior to the bid, after the bid, and during the United Nations General Assembly. In examining broadcasts from FOX News, CNN, BBC, and Al Jazeera, no specific shows were selected in advance.

In broadcasts regarding the Palestinian bid for statehood in the United Nations, I analyzed the usage of certain terms, the presence of contextual information, headlines and sub-headlines, as well as the choices of guest speakers on the selection of broadcasts. On broadcasts regarding the raid of the Free Gaza flotilla, I analyzed the usage and frequency
of terms as well as images and audio to answer the question of whether or not these factors contribute to an Orientalistic view of Palestinians in the media.

USAGE OF TERMS (STATEHOOD):

*Occupation/Occupied land:*

The reference to the term occupation is important in reports on the Israel-Palestine conflict (IPC) since the Palestinian territories have been occupied by Israel since 1967. Israel occupied the Gaza Strip until 2005 and now occupies the West Bank and East Jerusalem areas of historic Palestine. These areas are under Israeli military control and are systematically being incorporated into the state of Israel with Israel seizing a greater part of land for continued development of Jewish settlements. This occupation and the negative ramifications of it are violations of human rights, as acknowledged in international law, United Nations resolutions and the Geneva Conventions.

As seen in Table 1, the term occupation or the mention that the Palestinian territories are occupied by Israel was referred to on all networks apart from FOX News. On BBC, a reporter speaks of violence of Jewish settlers living on occupied Palestinian land. While being interviewed on CNN, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) member Hanan Ashrawi mentions the occupied land of Palestine since 1967. CNN’s Tim Lister describes that what is now Israel is from the land “they occupied in 1948;” mentioning the word, but not in the context that Palestine is currently occupied by Israel. While being interviewed by CNN’s Candy Crowley, the PLO Ambassador to the United States, Maen Areikat, mentions the “occupied land” of Palestine and describes Israel as the “occupier.” On Al Jazeera, guest Mustafa Barghouti discussed the “cost of
occupation.” The term and the notion of Palestine as an occupied land were mentioned by three out of the four networks, although not on a regular basis.

FOX News refrained from mentioning the term at all and this may have to do with the politics of FOX News and the interests they are protecting. Not mentioning that the Palestinian territories are under an Israeli military occupation desensitizes the audience to the suffering of the Palestinians and makes their argument for statehood seem more unreasonable and irrational. Not mentioning the occupation means there is no mention or correlation to Israel’s violation of human rights and international law. Being that Al Jazeera is the most popular Arab news outlet, its regular coverage of the IPC already depicts the occupation and the ramifications of it.

Settlements:

I chose to analyze the frequency of the mention of the term settlements or settlers, referring to Jewish settlements built by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories. There are currently more than 120 Israeli settlements that have been built on Palestinian land occupied by the Israeli military since 1967 which has led to forced displacement of Palestinians living on that land. This land includes the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and prior to 2005 included the Gaza Strip. These settlements are considered illegal under international law and have been internationally condemned. According to the Palestine Liberation Organization’s Negotiations Affairs Department, Israeli settlements are inhabited by more than 500,000 Jewish settlers with the settler population growing each year; directly defying Article 49 of the Geneva Convention which states that an occupying power shall not transfer its own population to the territory
The most frequent mention of settlements was on CNN. In Tim Lester’s explanation of the UN bid, he discusses the building of settlements over the past three decades. On *State of the Union* with Candy Crowley, PLO Ambassador to the US, Maen Areikat, discusses “illegal settlements” as Crowley refers to “continued settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.” An interesting finding in this broadcast was that following her interview with Areikat, Crowley interviewed the Israeli Ambassador to the US, Michael Oren, and while speaking with him, refers to “continued development in the West Bank and East Jerusalem,” replacing the term “settlements” which she used earlier with the word “development.” Although CNN had the most frequent mention of the term, this instance by Crowley portrays that although CNN claims to be an objective news network, they may still be subject to Said’s claim that American media differs from European media because of the political interests that America has that Europe does not necessarily have and that American media, be it FOX News or CNN, is always conscious of the political interests of this country.

On BBC, after interviewing Palestinians in the West Bank regarding the idea of statehood, Jon Donnison reports of settler violence and tensions between Palestinians and settlers living on occupied Palestinian land. He discusses settlers provoking clashes and while reporting, has to leave the premise because of violence occurring behind him.

Settlements and settlers were mentioned by guest speaker Mustafa Barghouti on Al Jazeera while reporter Mike Hanna also mentioned the Israeli Parliament’s Deputy Speaker’s statement that Israel should annex West Bank settlements in retaliation for the
Palestinian bid for statehood. This was the only mention, across all four networks, of the Deputy Foreign minister’s remarks.

FOX News made only one mention of settlements in one of their reports. The mention was indirect and came from a clip of presidential candidate Mitt Romney saying that President Barack Obama wrongfully chastised “our friend, Israel” for building settlements while remaining aloof regarding attacks on Israel by Hamas with no other mention of settlers or settlements made. FOX News refraining from using the terms settlements and settlers can relate to their lack of use of the term occupation. Just like occupation, settlements are a crucial aspect of the conflict and moving towards a peace process. Not mentioning settlements, like occupation, takes away from the argument of Palestinians and leaves audiences blind to the significance of settlement building. Their clip of Mitt Romney criticizing President Obama for wrongfully reprimanding Israel for building settlements while Hamas was not reprimanded for their attacks makes the idea of settlements seem more insignificant. How dare Israel be punished for building settlements while Hamas fires rockets on Israel? With this picture, the audience does not understand nor comprehend the severity of settlements and focus is drawn to Hamas and their violence against Israel. When unaware of the background or ramifications of settlements and settlement building, it is easy for an individual to assume that the issue does not seem nearly as dire as rockets being fired by Hamas. The significance of mentioning Hamas will be discussed in further detail later.
Table 1

Usage of Terms (Statehood)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>FOX</th>
<th>CNN</th>
<th>BBC</th>
<th>AL JAZEERA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OCCUPATION/OCCUPIED</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SETTLEMENTS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAMAS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967/67 BORDERS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APARTHEID</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CONFLICT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1967/1967 Borders:

The year of 1967 has much significance in the Israel – Palestine conflict. In June of 1967, what is referred to as the *Six Day War* occurred between Israel and surrounding Arab countries. After much tension between Israel and its neighbors since the 1948 war, the Israeli air force launched surprise air strikes against Arab forces. The outcome was Israeli victory with Israel capturing the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula which were previously under Egyptian control. They also seized the West Bank and East Jerusalem which were under Jordanian control, and the Golan Heights which were under Syrian control.

The significance of this war in the Palestinian bid for statehood in the United Nations is the Palestinian preference that the borders of a Palestinian state be those of the borders that existed on 4 June 1967, the day before the Six Day War. In a speech addressing events and issues in the Middle East and Africa in May of 2011, President Barack Obama urged that a Palestinian state be based upon 1967 borders with agreed upon land swaps. Mention of the 1967 borders is crucial in understanding the Palestinian statehood bid, thus explaining my examination of the frequency that it was brought up in the examined broadcasts.
The mention of 1967 borders was most apparent on Al Jazeera. Guest speaker Tony Blair, former British Prime Minister and current member of the Middle East Quartet, discusses the issue of a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders, saying “the big issue is obviously a Palestinian state on 1967 lines with land swaps.” Guest speakers Josh Lockman and Mustafa Barghouti referenced President Obama’s speech and stated the importance of an agreement that a future Palestinian state be based upon 1967 borders.

The issue was mentioned on CNN when Candy Crowley asked Palestinian Ambassador to the US Maen Areikat concerning specifics of the statehood bid and if the bid would designate pre-1967 borders. In his explanation of Palestinian statehood, Tim Lester discussed the 1967 war and mentioned that much of Palestine was occupied even before the 1967 war.

On BBC, mention of 1967 and 1967 borders were apparent when Sebastian Usher discussed the statehood bid in explaining the Palestinian desire for a state within 1967 borders. While interviewing Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the PLO, Ashrawi mentioned the fact that the West Bank has been occupied since 1967. On FOX News, the only mention of 1967 and 1967 borders came in the form of a clip of President Mahmoud Abbas at the UN General Assembly stating that his bid is based on the basis of the borders of June 4 1967. No further discussion of the year or significance of 1967 borders was mentioned.

We see frequent mention of 1967 and 1967 borders across all networks aside from FOX News. Just as with previous terms of occupation and settlements, the lack of mentioning this term takes away from a more in depth understanding of the conflict. On
Al Jazeera, guest speakers who mentioned 1967 borders stressed the importance of a Palestinian state in accordance with these borders. On CNN, the Six Day War is explained by Tim Lester and later with Ambassador Areikat discussing the designation of the 1967 borders for a Palestinian state. BBC’s Sebastian Usher explains why Palestinians prefer the borders of 1967 for their state while the PLO’s Ashrawi references the occupation that has been enforced since that year. All of these mentions have allowed the networks to project a further understanding of the conflict to their audiences. A further understanding of not only the statehood bid, but the IPC in general has been provided with explaining the 1967 borders and 1967 war and the role they play in the statehood bid as well as the conflict as a whole. By only showing a clip of President Mahmoud Abbas stating that his statehood bid is based upon 1967 borders leaves the audience with no further explanation of the reason for that request, the significance of it, and again, a perception of Palestinians as irrational for requesting a state based on borders that existed four decades ago.

Hamas:

In statehood reports, the mention of Hamas was only apparent in CNN and FOX News reports. On CNN, Israeli ambassador to the US, Michael Oren, mentioned Hamas in stating that President Abbas made a pact with Hamas and that Hamas is a terrorist organization that “calls for the annihilation of the Jewish people worldwide,” also referring to it as a genocidal organization.

On FOX News, Israeli Knesset speaker Danny Danon mentions Hamas as an extreme political force against Israel. The next mention is the same clip of presidential
candidate Mitt Romney discussed earlier in which Romney says President Obama should not have condemned the United States for opposing Israeli settlements while saying “nothing about Hamas launching thousands of rockets into Israel.” When asked about the details of statehood by *FOX and Friends* host Clayton Morris, Rabbi David Wolpe proclaims that Palestine is run by two governments, one in which is Hamas, which “calls for the destruction of Israel.” The significance of the various mentions of Hamas will be discussed in further detail later.

*Apartheid:*

Only one network mentioned the word apartheid. The significance of this word derives from the fact that many human rights organizations consider Israel an apartheid state. Since 1948, Arabs living in Israel have been faced with socio-economic discrimination as well as spatial discrimination, both of which constitute for an apartheid state. According to the UN General Assembly, the UN Special Rapporteur for Palestine, John Dugard, stated that the Israeli occupation of Palestine is contrary to international law in its fundamental forms of colonialism and apartheid. Israel has also built an apartheid wall which they refer to as a “separation wall.” This wall has resulted in residential and territorial discrimination, and cuts deep into the West Bank. Its expansion into the West Bank results in Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land and resources. According to a report by the International Court of Justice, 85 percent of the wall is located in the West Bank and the court deemed the construction of the wall contrary to international law. The idea of Israeli apartheid and the separation wall is crucial in understanding the depth of the conflict and the severity of Israeli occupation. It is important in the analysis
of a two state solution since a Palestinian state would have to consist of land not cut off by the wall.

CNN was the only network to mention apartheid and did so in an understated manner, with Tim Lester explaining that refugees are discriminated against in “some sort of apartheid system.” This may be explained by James Zogby’s (2010) claim that there is not enough Palestinian representation in the media and this lack of representation leads to a lack of inclusion of crucial aspects of the conflict such as apartheid. Zogby states that Israel has recognized the importance of telling their stories while the Palestinians have yet to mount such a successful and sustained campaign to explain their history. Because of this, Israel is able to define how the West understands the conflict. More Palestinian representation, which would be difficult with political interests being protected by American media, would bring more light to such issues as apartheid.

Historical Background:

Historical background of the IPC is one of the most important factors in understanding the conflict and certain aspects of the conflict as a lack of historical background may sway viewers. The reason historical background is significant in reports on the Palestinian bid for statehood in the UN is because Palestinians are bidding for statehood due to the 1948 war and the fact that in that year, the country of Palestine became the state of Israel. Furthermore, the year of 1967 lead to a confiscation of more Palestinian land and an occupation of the remaining Palestinian territories by Israel. If reported with no the mention of the 1948 and 1967 wars, a viewer may be swayed to believe that Israel is a weak state struggling for survival without regard to the millions of
displaced Palestinians or those living under harsh Israeli occupation (Isacoff 2005:83).

All networks referenced the history of the conflict in some manner, whether forthrightly or indirectly. During FOX news’ segment *Geraldo Gets Both Sides of Israel-Palestine Conflict*, a clip of President Mahmoud Abbas’s return to Palestine following his UN application for statehood was shown followed by Geraldo Rivera stating that the crowd filmed was “delirious” and had a “totally unrealistic notion that independence and the end to the 44 year occupation are near.” He mentioned the history of the Israeli occupation, stating that the occupation is more than four decades old; however, the Palestinian crowd was referred to as delirious and irrational and as Said stresses, Orients are made out to seem as irrational individuals who do not know what is best for themselves. The next mention of any sort of history of the conflict is Rabbi David Wolpe’s reference of the 1973 war when asked by *FOX and Friends* host Clayton Morris whether the timing of the UN bid was suspicious. He stated that he did in fact find the timing suspicious and assured viewers that it was not as though “Arab nations are unaware of the Jewish calendar” since in 1973, “they launched a war on Yom Kippur the holiest day of the Jewish year.” Neither Morris nor Wolpe mentioned that the speeches are taking place at the UN General Assembly which occurs at the same time every year and has for more than six decades. There was also no mention that the Israelis won the 1973 war. Neil Kressel (1987) suggests that negative images of Palestinians in the media may be due to the way television and news are drawn more toward imagery and away from the presentation of history and historical background. We see this with Rivera’s labeling of the filmed Palestinian crowd as “delirious” and “irrational” to assume they
would be successful in a statehood bid and in Wolpe’s depiction of the Palestinian authority as immoral to continue on with these talks during Jewish holidays.

On CNN, Tim Lester states that although the IPC dates back hundreds of years, the modern conflict dates back to 1917 and the signing of the Balfour Declaration which stated that part of Palestine should become a Jewish state. He also goes on to speak of the 1948 war and how Israelis refer to it as their War of Independence while Palestinians call it the Nakba (catastrophe), stating that ever since 1948, the Palestinian refugees who were dispossessed that year and those expelled in 1967, were looking for a right of return and a restoration of the land that has been confiscated by Israel. After stating that Israel has been building settlements for the past 20 to 30 years, he goes on to mention the 1973 war and the fact that the Israelis won the war. PLO Ambassador to the US, Maen Areikat mentions the Oslo Accords and the fact that the 18th anniversary of the accords had recently passed. Although FOX News mentioned the 1973 war in their report, they did not state that Israel won the war. CNN was also the only network to bring up certain historical aspects of the conflict such as the Balfour Declaration and the dispossessed refugees.

On BBC, Jon Donnison, reporting from the city of Nablus in the West Bank, mentions the second Palestinian intifada while stating that Palestinians in the region do not want a return to violence. While describing Palestinian statehood, Sebastian Usher of BBC mentions that Palestine has been occupied since 1967. On Al Jazeera, Mustafa Barghoti speaks of twenty years of negotiations while the host reiterates the idea of twenty years of negotiations and states that the two decades of talks have led to no
progress. Al Jazeera also showed a clip from the UN in 1948 as the host describes that at that time, the UN proposed the creation of a Jewish state in historical Palestine with the acceptance of Israel as a member occurring the next year. The host mentioned that six decades after Israel’s admittance into the UN, Palestinians are now seeking the same right to membership.

The mention of history in these broadcasts is important in knowing how the statehood bid and the conflict in general are being presented and how the inclusion or lack of history may frame the story. James Zoghby (2010) explains that in order for Americans to grasp a meaningful understanding of the conflict, the media must peer beneath the surface and grasp the powerful history that has made the conflict into what it is today. FOX News’ lack of mention of history and Rabbi Wolpe’s mention of the 1973 war, short of mentioning Israel’s triumph of the war along with Geraldo Rivera’s description of the Palestinian crowd brings Zoghby’s idea that Arab politics are depicted as extreme and violent to full circle. A lack of mentioning that Israelis won the war depicts Palestinians and Arabs as violent and Israel as the victim. CNN mentioning the Balfour Declaration shows the audience that Palestine was a country prior to the founding of Israel. History leads to further understanding of the conflict and a further understanding allows for the ability to constructively engage in the region.

Headlines:

Headlines are a significant aspect of news broadcasts as they can play a role in orienting the interpretation of the viewer and represent certain issues in completely different contexts; doing this by orienting the viewer's interpretation of subsequent facts
presented in the broadcast. Headlines can sway the viewer to conclude the significance of a certain issue which has been given prominence in this way. The impact of headlines on the viewer is likely to be strong since certain features of titles make them particularly memorable and effective since that impact is deliberately sought.

While analyzing the headlines from statehood reports, I noticed a vast contrast between the headlines and sub-headlines on FOX News and the other networks. While discussing the speeches made by Mahmoud Abbas and Benjamin Netanyahu at the UN General Assembly, FOX News and Al Jazeera displayed very different headlines. As seen in Figure 2, while showing clips of the speeches, Al Jazeera displayed the headline: *The Palestine Debate: Abbas and Netanyahu present their cases*; while FOX News displayed a more biased statement, with the caption: *A Slap in the Face? UN speeches come days before Jewish holidays*. FOX News makes an eye catching statement without mentioning anytime during the broadcast that the UN General Assembly is held every September. That headline later turned into one stating *A Palestinian State: Abbas Rejects Peace Talks After UN Bid*, followed almost immediately with the headline *Israel’s Response: Netanyahu Wants Peace Talks to Continue*. CNN, like Al Jazeera had more neutral headlines such as: *Palestine seeks UN statehood – US, Israel oppose the move*.
During Al Jazeera’s report, they showed footage of the General Assembly along with footage of Abbas and Netanyahu’s speeches and standing ovations by certain countries following Abbas’s speech. As seen in Figure 1, the headline *The Palestine Debate; Abbas and Netanyahu Present Their Cases* was on the screen throughout the entire broadcast.

While showing this headline in Figure 2, FOX’s Clayton Morris stated that “President Obama is asking both sides to sit down and talk peace. Is that a slap in the face with the high holidays just a few days away?” Shortly following that statement, Morris asks why Abbas chose to do this at such a time. This headline is extremely eye catching.
and the statements made by both Morris and Wolpe depict a one-sided and nonobjective, yet powerful statement.

Figure 3: FOX News “A Palestinian State”  Figure 4: FOX News “Israel’s Response”

In this broadcast, the headlines in Figures 3 and 4 followed the above. While displaying the first headline A Palestinian State; Abbas Rejects Peace Talks After UN Bid, a clip of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was played in which he stated that Israel wants peace with a Palestinian state but the Palestinians “want a state without peace” and that the UN “shouldn’t let this happen.” This headline and the clip of Netanyahu were directly followed by: Israel’s Response; Netanyahu Wants Peace Talks to Continue. The Palestinians are portrayed as rejecting peace talks while Israel is responding with a desire to continue talks.

Figure 5: CNN “Palestine seeks UN Statehood”
With the headline: *Palestine Seeks UN Statehood; US, Israel Oppose the Move*, as seen in Figure 5, CNN takes a more neutral stance, stating that the Palestinians are bidding for statehood and that the US and Israel are against this move. They are mentioning US and Israeli opposition but in a less subjective manner than FOX News did.

FOX news’ headlines along with their conversation with Rabbi Wolpe depict their protection of political interests and the political interests of their audience. Al Jazeera and CNN displayed more impartial headlines that were less eye-catching and less slanted towards one side.

Edward Said (1979) states that FOX News and CNN along with groups of “evangelical and right-wing radio hosts” all tend to recycle similar unverifiable fictions and vast generalizations in order to stir up “America” against the “foreign evil.” Said also states that the manner in which knowledge about the Orient is obtained is not innocent or objective and is a process that reflects certain interests. We see this with FOX News’ coverage, their choice of terms to include and exclude, and their biased headlines which make the Palestinians resemble the “foreign evil;” all of which support the right-wing politics of the network.

*Speakers:*

I chose to analyze the speakers who were brought to discuss the statehood bid on all networks. Speakers on flotilla reports were not examined since those reports were formatted more so as breaking news reports with a limited number of guest speakers while nearly all of the analyzed statehood reports included guest speakers. Guests on
news broadcasts are important for the reason that they appear to be experts adding in their insight to the selected topic. Edward Said (1979) states that many individuals who consider themselves experts on the Middle East or the Peace Process are usually those whose world experience is limited to the beltway with no regard for thoughtfulness or evidence. Isacoff adds that people speaking on the IPC make a difference in how the story is portrayed, stating that the stories told depend on the perspective of the story teller.

On FOX News’ *America Live* with Megyn Kelly, Deputy Knesset Speaker Danny Danon is interviewed by Kelly. According to his personal website, Danon previously served in the IDF and followed that by serving as a delegate promoting Zionism in Miami, Florida. He later worked to counter “anti-Israeli propaganda” and encouraged Jewish-American citizens to immigrate to Israel. He is a member of the Knesset caucus for the promotion of Zionist values.

On *Geraldo at Large*, Geraldo Rivera interviews both Ehud Barak and Saeb Erekat on a segment titled: *Geraldo Gets Both Sides of Israel-Palestine Conflict*. Barak is the current Israeli Minister of Defense and Deputy Prime Minister. He, like Danon, previously served in the IDF and oversaw Operation Cast Lead, which ended in 22 days of military attacks on the Gaza Strip and resulted in more than 1300 Palestinian deaths and a total of 13 Israeli deaths. Saeb Erekat is a senior Palestinian negotiator of the Palestinian Authority, formally the Chief Negotiator. He was involved in the Oslo Accords in 1995 and has been involved in peace talks for over two decades. In early 2011, Erekat resigned from his position following the “Palestine Papers” leak; the largest
news leak in the history of the IPC. According to Al Jazeera, the Palestine Papers are a collection of more than 1,600 documents concerning the last decade of negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government, exposing drastic concessions that the Palestinian Authority were placing on the negotiation table. Erekat resigned when it was made evident that these documents leaked from his office. He has been criticized since and although he resigned from his position, he still remains a senior member of the negotiating team. On FOX and Friends, Rabbi David Wolpe is interviewed by Clayton Morris in an attempt at further understanding the idea of statehood. Wolpe is a Rabbi of the Sinai Temple in Los Angeles who is a regular contributor to FOX News and taught the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York. His only association to the IPC comes in the form of solidarity missions organized by him to the region following the second Palestinian intifada and the 2006 Israel – Hezbollah war.

CNN brought both the Israeli Ambassador to the US, Michael Oren and the PLO Ambassador to the US, Maen Areikat, to discuss the statehood issue. Oren is American born and gave up his US citizenship to become Israel’s ambassador. He, like Danon and Barak served in the IDF and following the events of the flotilla raid, wrote an op-ed in the New York Times accusing the organizers of intentionally creating a provocation to place international pressure on Israel. Areikat worked for the PLO for 11 years prior to becoming ambassador. He served as Director General of the PLO’s NAD (Negotiation Affairs Department) and was responsible for overseeing the negotiations support unit.

BBC interviewed Hanan Ashrawi and Danny Danon. Ashrawi is a member of the
PLO and the daughter of the founder of the PLO. She was the first woman elected to the Palestinian National Council and founded the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, and has served as secretary general of that organization. Danon’s background is previously stated.

Al Jazeera had Tony Blair as a guest and on another broadcast had a panel that consisted of Mustafa Barghouti, Shlomo Ben Ami and Josh Lockman. Blair is the former British Prime Minister and is now the Special Envoy of the Quartet on the Middle East. Barghouti is a former presidential candidate who ran against Mahmoud Abbas. He currently serves as Secretary General of the Palestine National Initiative, which he co-founded. Barghouti is a strong critic of the PLO and the Palestinian Authority. Ben Ami is the former Israeli Minister of Internal Security as well as the former Minister on Foreign Affairs. He is currently the vice president of the Toledo International Center for Peace. Lockman is a lecturer of law at USC, teaching classes on US foreign policy and international law. He is a fellow with the Truman National Security Project and a member of the Pacific Council on International Policy.

Seemingly all the networks, aside from FOX News, attempted to present both sides equally by interviewing legitimate experts and players in the IPC. Out of FOX’s four presumably careful and selective choice of speakers, three of them could be considered pro-Israel, with two members of the Israeli government and a Jewish rabbi. Their pro-Palestinian guest speaker, Saeb Erekat, was one who, although part of the Palestinian Authority, has been criticized by Palestinians in the Palestinian territories and abroad for his work and his involvement in the Palestine Papers leak.
In his analysis of media coverage of the IPC, Edward Ghareeb (1975) states that Arabs have not been understood very well or reported on very well in American media. With their choice of speakers, FOX News is contributing to this by bringing a majority of pro-Israel speakers and representing a Zionist perspective. Not bringing more members of the Palestinian government or those directly involved in negotiations leaves the audience with a primarily Israeli perspective. A lack of Palestinian representation leads to a lack of Palestinian input in these discussions, thus leading viewers of the broadcasts to assume that Israel is the more rational, reasonable side.

FLOTILLA:

Audio and Video:

Audio and visuals from the selected broadcasts were examined in order to further assess the manner in which the news was depicted. While reporting on international incidents, audio and video visuals are of much importance since this is the way for many individuals to place meaning and connect to the groups being covered in the news whom they have no social contact with. In reports regarding the raid of the Free Gaza flotilla, all networks presented some type of audio or video from the incident. Footage from both the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) and the Turkish government were released to the public. The Turkish video was recorded by passengers of the flotilla and the IDF video was recorded by IDF cameras. FOX News opened up one of the broadcasts with the IDF footage, subsequently stating that soldiers were caught off guard and overwhelmed as they were “thrown into the sea” by demonstrators who “attacked them with steel bars and knives,” stating that the video clearly showed soldiers being beaten. This is the only
video shown in any of the analyzed broadcasts by FOX News. CNN also showed the same IDF video but later also showed the Turkish video, although they opened their broadcast with the IDF video and showed more of that video than the Turkish video. Commentator Tony Harris explains to viewers that both the humanitarian organizations on board the ship and the IDF released videos, suggesting that both of these videos represented an intense public relations battle that was brewing, subsequently reiterating my sense that images play a powerful role in shaping and swaying opinion. CNN also showed footage of an Israeli commando in an Israeli hospital and his account of being attacked by those on board. After showing this video, CNN interviewed an Arab member of the Knesset who was part of the flotilla and again showed the Turkish video.

Al Jazeera aired both the IDF video and Turkish video. They aired the same Turkish video that CNN did, but with additional footage of soldiers descending onto the ship and the chaos that followed the raid. They also showed another IDF video which showed Israeli commandos warning the vessel not to proceed. Al Jazeera was the only network to have someone reporting from the ship itself with video of one of their correspondents reporting while live ammunition is being fired behind him. Al Jazeera was also the only network to show video of injured flotilla passengers in the hospital while interviewing them.
The IDF video, as seen in Figure 6, was shown by all networks although it was the video shown at the beginning of both FOX and CNN broadcasts. The video included comments by the IDF, displaying what was occurring, according to them.

The video in Figure 7 was recorded on the flotilla and was shown by Al Jazeera, BBC and CNN. It shows Israeli troops firing at the flotilla passengers.
The Al Jazeera report by Jamal Elshayyal, shown in Figure 8, was the only report from aboard the ship. In this clip, Shayyal describes that the passengers aboard the ship, who consisted of men, women, children, elderly, and parliamentarians were caught off guard by the Israeli commandos who descended onto the ship from a helicopter while surrounding the ship with Israeli vessels. He stresses that the passengers are all civilians and that this raid occurred in international waters.

The most significant observation of the audio and visuals from the flotilla reports is that both FOX News and CNN began their broadcasts with the IDF video while BBC began their report with audio from the ship and Al Jazeera with the Turkish video. Since Said argues that reports on the Orient are nonobjective because of the interests they are protecting, we can assume that FOX News and CNN beginning their reports with the IDF video correlates with this. Although both networks mentioned the death toll of the passengers aboard the ship after showing the IDF footage, the audience has already focused on the IDF video and the image of the violence of pro-Palestinian activists towards the Israeli commandos. CNN went on to show Turkish footage, however FOX News did not, leaving their audience with the sole image of violent pro-Palestinian activists. This also supports the idea of confrontational bias in the media. FOX News’ audience is most likely pro-Israel and they are tuning in to FOX News to reaffirm their pro-Israeli stance, knowing that the network will do so; with the network assuming that the information they are presenting (or omitting) is what their audience wishes to see.
USAGE OF TERMS

*Humanitarian (aid):*

Although terms such as humanitarian aid were mentioned more frequently on some networks more than others, the context of the term differed across the networks. During flotilla reports, CNN mentioned the term in reference to the fact that aid ships were attempting to break the siege of Gaza and provide Gazans with humanitarian aid reporting “Israeli commandos storm humanitarian ships bound for Gaza” while on FOX News, seven of the eight times that the term was mentioned was in a negative or disdainful context such as a guest speaker on their “All-Star Panel” discussion of the incident stating that the use of the term “humanitarian” in reporting on the incident was a “fundamental deception.” Also stating that the flotilla was “not about humanitarian needs” with another guest speaker adding that in Gaza, they can get “plenty of humanitarian aid,” contradicting the UN Special Operations in Gaza and their affirmation that the blockade does allow limited supplies in, but not nearly enough to assist in improving the lives of Gazans. So as seen in Table 2, although FOX News’ usage of the term was more frequent than CNN and Al Jazeera, it was used in a completely different and more negative context.

**Table 2**

**USAGE OF TERMS (Flotilla)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FOX</th>
<th>CNN</th>
<th>BBC</th>
<th>AL JAZEERA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BLOCKADE/SIEGE</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMANITARIAN (AID)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>HAMAS</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISLAM</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
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Blockade/Siege:

I chose to analyze the terms blockade and siege in Flotilla reports because of the intention of the Free Gaza flotilla to attempt to break the blockade/siege of Gaza. In 2007, Israel began an intense blockade of the Gaza Strip in which Israel allows very limited humanitarian supplies from aid organizations into the Gaza Strip. Israel counters this by saying they bring some 15,000 tons of aid in total every week but although that may sound like a lot, the United Nations operations in Gaza stress that is a tiny fraction of what is needed, and is only a quarter of what was coming in before the blockade; hence the attempt of the flotilla organizers to break the blockade.

All networks mentioned the term and mentioned that the flotilla was attempting to break the blockade of Gaza while bringing in humanitarian aid. FOX News differed from the other networks in its mention of the term in a more scornful manner, and continuously justified the blockade by reiterating Hamas’s control over the Strip, shifting focus from the actual event to why Israel imposed a blockade and why the blockade is necessary.

BBC gave a more detailed account of the blockade stating that there has been tension since Israel imposed its blockade of Gaza in 2007. While interviewing Ehud Barak, Tim Frank mentions that Israel’s blockade is responsible for escalating tensions as well as the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region. Barak responded to this by blaming Hamas. Frank however did not allow him to do so by countering Barak’s statement about Hamas in telling him the issue is the blockade, not Hamas ideology. Edward Said states that the American experience in the Middle East is much less direct than that of Britain and France since Britain and France both occupied the Middle East.
He stressed that this has led to an American view of the Orient based on abstractions. These abstractions are added to Said’s claim that American media are lazy and controlled by interests that are both commercial and political with limited investigative reporting. This is what differentiates American reporting from international reporting and what differentiates FOX News and CNN reports from those of BBC and AL Jazeera. Tim Frank’s opposition to Ehud Barak’s statement is a clear indication of this. Britain’s interests in Israel are not as strong as those of the US, allowing for more investigative journalism and allowing Frank to objectively question Barak and argue his statement; contrary to FOX News’ lack of investigative journalism and CNN’s Candy Crowley refraining from using the term “settlements” while talking to Michael Oren.

Al Jazeera did not go into detail with reference to the blockade but it can be assumed that was the case since Al Jazeera had the most broadcasts regarding the incident with continuous coverage of the occurrence and may have mentioned it in more detail in other segments that were not a part of my analysis.

Islam:

The only network to mention Islam or Muslims in their broadcasts was FOX News. This is significant because there has been an orientalistic manner in which Islam is depicted in the media. Just as orientalism pits “east” versus “west”, a confrontational political situation has been created in the media, pitting the West, particularly America, against Islam (Said 1977:44). Edward Said states that the powerful concentration of mass media “can be said to constitute a communal core of interpretations providing a certain picture of Islam and, of course, reflecting powerful interests in the society served by the
media” (Said 1977:47).

The terms Islam, Islamists, and Muslims were used five times during broadcasts regarding the flotilla on FOX News. When FOX’s On the Record host Martha MacCallum asks the network’s strategic analyst, Ralph Peters, what happened regarding the flotilla raid, he answers by saying that Israel was set up by the “Islamists in power” of Turkey and that the event was orchestrated in order for Turkey to establish themselves as the leader of the “Muslim Middle East;” later adding that the flotilla raid was set up by Turkey in order to play to the Muslim masses. Peters later adds that the people of Turkey never previously cared about Palestine until the Islamists came to power. What is not mentioned by MacCallum or Peters however is the fact that Turkey is a republic and has been a secular state since 1924.

Going back to Said’s idea of the representation of Islam in American media, it can be assumed that the politics of FOX News, holding more conservative right-wing political positions, are using Islam in a negative light to reflect the networks interests as well as the interests of those more conservative, pro-Israeli audience members tuning in, using something such as Islam, which has become unattractive in the media, as a negative object confronting us in the US. Justifying the flotilla raid by convincing viewers that adopting a confrontational response to Islam, which is “against us”, is seen as a response that should not be doubted. According to Said, Islam represents a threat to the West. A threat to what is regularly referred to as “the democratic order in the Western World” (Said 1977:52).
Hamas:

In flotilla reports, besides the term “blockade or siege”, the mention of Hamas, as seen is Table 2 was more frequent than terms which would relate more to the actual incident. All the networks mentioned Hamas, but again, in different contexts. On CNN, it was mentioned that Gaza was under control of Hamas and quoted a statement by Hamas officials condemning the flotilla attack. On Al Jazeera, the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister was quoted as saying that the organizers of the flotilla were associated with Hamas. On BBC, it was reported that Hamas officials were angry and correspondents were asked about the reaction of Hamas leadership to the attacks. While being interviewing by BBC’s Tim Frank, Ehud Barak stated that “many nations understand the nature of Hamas” while he discussed the danger of having Hamas as a neighbor. Tim Frank responded by telling Barak that the flotilla issue “is not Hamas’s ideology, the issue is the tactic of the Israeli blockade” which the flotilla was trying to break. On FOX News however, Hamas in mentioned in a completely different perspective. FOX’s On the Record guest host Martha Maccallum agreed with guest speaker Dan Senor’s statement that the entire flotilla attack was about Hamas and Hamas’s desire to force confrontation with Israel including that the attack was not about “quote, unquote peace activists”. In the “All-Star Panel” report, justification of the Gaza blockade was Hamas’s control of Gaza, ending the panel with a guest speaker stating that “Israel clearly is the victim here.”

In order to further analyze the mention of Hamas in both flotilla and statehood reports through an Orientalistic lens, focus should be paid attention to Edward Said’s direct association between the media and the image of and focus on Hamas and how this
leads to the image of Palestinians as a whole in the media. Said stated that the manner in which Hamas is mentioned and associated with issues in Palestine causes the audience to derive an idea that Hamas is only interested in harming and killing Israelis, playing off the fact that the US considers Hamas a terrorist organization. Said says that focusing on Hamas and the idea that they only care for the destruction of Israel draws attention away from the fact that the occupation of the West Bank is the longest military occupation in the past century. The way Hamas is referenced in media reports may give out the impression that the main issue of the conflict is Israel’s security which is threatened by Hamas while nothing is said about the millions of Palestinians who are dispossessed and living in hardship as a direct result of what Israel has done and is doing.

This is noticeably apparent in the case of FOX News and their choice in the reports I analyzed. They tended to drift away from the subject of the flotilla attack itself and focus more on discussing Hamas. The most interesting contrast of the mention of the term comes while comparing BBC broadcasts to FOX News broadcasts. On FOX News, Hamas is constantly blamed for the necessity of a blockade, justifying the blockade and condemning anyone trying to break it. Dan Senor blamed the entire flotilla raid on Hamas while FOX hosts agreed with absolutely no questioning or opposition to his statements. On BBC however, Tim Frank argues with Ehud Barak’s attempt to do the same thing.

Said (1977) says that American media differs from European media because of the different audiences and different interests. He states that American reports must be aware that their country is a super power with certain interests (Said 1977:57). In statehood reports, it is also evident on CNN when Candy Crowley does not argue with
Ambassador Michael Oren’s mention of Hamas and it can be assumed that although they have very different audiences, both FOX News and CNN are being conscious of American political interests. There may be also be an aspect of confrontation bias in FOX and CNN’s reporting due to their knowledge of the expectations their viewers have and how these expectations, specifically in the case of FOX News, may represent a very pro-Israel stance.

The results of my analysis show that there is a difference in the coverage of the IPC across the globe. Although there were a few instances in which both FOX News and CNN seemed to sway towards focusing on the Israeli perspective of both incidents, this was something that was consistent only on FOX News. The results show that in the coverage of the Palestinian bid for statehood, all networks aside from FOX News presented evenhanded information from both sides while also interviewing key players in the IPC from both the Palestinian and Israeli sides. FOX News however placed more focus on information pertaining to the security of Israel with a lack of Palestinian representation. In reports regarding the Gaza flotilla raid, FOX news mocked the idea that the flotilla was on a humanitarian mission and delegitimized the deaths and injuries that occurred; focusing on their idea of irrationality of the activists on board with disregard to the horrible repercussions of the violence by the IDF. Said (1979) states that when represented by the West, the orient is a strange creature, incapable of complete rationality and reason. In reports on both the statehood bid and the flotilla attack, FOX News presents Palestinians as this strange creature that is relentlessly irrational and unreasonable.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Various studies regarding the media and its depiction of the Israel–Palestine conflict (IPC) suggest that this coverage is biased and is more favorable towards the Israeli side. The purpose of this study was to focus on this media coverage and whether or not it presents Palestinians and the Palestinian side of the conflict in correlation with Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism; doing so by examining two major incidents of the IPC in the past year which received a great deal of media coverage across FOX News, CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera. These incidents were the May 2010 Israeli Defense Force raid of the Gaza Aid Flotilla as well as the September 2011 Palestinian bid for statehood in the United Nations General Assembly.

Edward Said (1979) argues that history is

Made by men and women, just as it can also be unmade and rewritten, always with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated so that “our” east, “our” orient becomes ours to posses and direct.

After analyzing various news broadcasts, I can conclude that in some instances, this statement by Said is apparent with certain networks attempting to posses and direct the image of Palestinians. Said stresses that the manner in which knowledge concerning the Orient is obtained is neither innocent nor objective, and is a process that reflects certain interests.

Although Said’s argument of the West mostly encompasses America as well as Europe, he describes a difference between American Orientalism and European Orientalism. He argues that American Orientalism is extremely politicized by the
presence of Israel since America is its main ally. This explains the difference in coverage between the American networks (FOX News, CNN) and the British and Arab networks (BBC, Al Jazeera).

**FOX News:**

According to the Pew Research Center, staunch conservatives obtain their news from FOX. Their research shows that 54 percent of conservatives regularly watch FOX News, while 81 percent of them watch FOX News at least occasionally. According to a study conducted by The Foreign Policy Initiative in 2010, 69 percent of conservative voters said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who is pro-Israel, also stating that this country is a majority pro-Israel nation. The demographics of the viewers of FOX News as well as the political preferences of these viewers can explain the interests that FOX News is trying to protect. Pat Robertson, a regular contributor to FOX News, is also one of the nation’s most famous evangelical Christians who, according to his personal website, suggests that Jerusalem is a holy city that is the spiritual capital of Christianity. He states that the “continuation of Jewish sovereignty over the Holy Land is a further bulwark to us that the God of the Bible exists and that His Word is true.” The protection of this belief and mindset has contributed to FOX News’ Orientalistic depiction and dehumanization of Palestinians. The previously discussed idea of confirmation bias ties in here explaining that with their Orientalistic portrayal of Palestinians, FOX News is playing to the pre-existing mindsets of their pro-Israel evangelical Christian audience who firmly believe that it is their religious obligation to support the State of Israel. With their Orientalistic depiction of Palestinians, certain
viewers with already bias opinions of Palestinians and the IPC tune into FOX News to reassure their beliefs without any arguments.

My research demonstrates that FOX News is presenting Palestinians in an Orientalistic light with their absence of contextual information, history and background of the conflict, and significant terms and aspects of the IPC. The findings show an Orientalistic representation not only with the omission of terms, but also with the inclusion of certain terms such as Hamas and Islam in order to justify the flotilla raid or to condemn the statehood bid. This correlates directly to Said’s theory of Orientalism as a “political vision of reality” which is based upon the difference between what is familiar (the West, “us”) and what is strange (the East, “them”). This is also apparent with FOX’s choice of guest speakers. By not bringing in more representatives of Palestine, the audience is exposed to mostly pro-Israel speakers who are grouping all Palestinians under the image Hamas or radical “Islamists;” presenting Israelis as similar to us in the West, civilized like us in the West, and presenting Israel as a democracy, just like us in the West; amidst the Palestinian people being presented as violent, uncivilized and irrational.

CNN:

According to the Pew Research Center, CNN is the most popular news network amongst hard-pressed democrats and solid liberals. While 54 percent of staunch conservatives regularly watch FOX News, eight percent watch CNN. Although CNN’s reports were much less subjective than those of FOX News, Said’s argument is evident in instances such as Candy Crowley refraining from using the term “settlements” while speaking to Michael Oren, the Israeli Ambassador to the US, or with their interview with
an injured Israeli commando from the flotilla raid, and no subsequent interviews with any of the victims who were aboard the ship. CNN, similar to FOX News also began their broadcasts of the flotilla raid with footage from the Israeli Defense Force. CNN did however depict a neutral choice of speakers in statehood broadcasts and included a significant amount of historical background in their coverage of the statehood bid. So although Said draws a parallel between American Orientalism and news coverage of FOX News and CNN, I cannot conclude that CNN’s depiction of the conflict has a major Orientalistic bias. Although CNN was fair in their usage of terms and inclusion of history, they could have added more critical analysis to their broadcasts, as well as more correspondents reporting from the region and more experts from both sides.

Said (1999) has been very critical of CNN, arguing that although it presents all that one may need to know regarding the world, it does so in a way that reduces, packages, and delivers the news without contradiction or a real sense of conflict. This reduction of the news, Said argues, is a form of Orientalism in the sense that “we” are defining the world while stating its purposes and meanings according to us (as Americans).

Critical investigation of Israeli violence in flotilla reports as well as critical investigation in the US and Israel’s opposition to the statehood bid would disprove Said’s notion that CNN reflects American Orientalism; however CNN has demonstrated Said’s argument that until now, there has been no political commentator in the US who is clear and open in their resistance to Israel.
**BBC:**

The BBC is the largest broadcasting organization in the world and is one of the most prominent international news sources. Their *World News Service* channel reaches 185 million viewers a week as of 2009 and transmits to more than 100 countries (McNair 1999). James Zogby (2010) states that BBC presents extensive coverage of events in Israel, the Palestinian territories and the Arab world which he argues most of which is ignored by the US. Because of this, he believes that viewers of BBC benefit tremendously from this “world class news service.” Bicket and Wall (2009) examined the desire of Americans to watch BBC rather than American outlets because of BBC’s more critical and more appealing news that they considered more nuanced.

Said argues that European discourse differs from American discourse in the sense that American’s are divided into “black and white” and “ours and theirs” while Europe, and Britain in particular, have moved passed this and that this is due to America’s status as the world’s super power. He also argues that in Europe, there is no “lethal combination” of money and power on such a scale as there is in the United States that has the power to control elections and national and international policy, therefore Said might suggest that this is a significant difference between news reports on BBC in comparison to those of CNN and FOX News.

Europe’s differing discourse is proved in this study with BBC’s Tim Frank critically questioning Ehud Barak concerning the flotilla attacks and opposing Barak’s claim that the incident was to blame solely on Hamas, which ties back to Said’s claim that there is no American political commentator who shows resistance to Israel. Out of all
the networks in the selected broadcasts, BBC was the only to interview Palestinians in the Palestinian territories regarding the Palestinian bid for statehood in the UN. While BBC was interviewing Palestinians and their take on the statehood bid and future of Palestine, FOX News was observing Palestinians from afar and deeming them “delirious” and unreasonable.

*Al Jazeera:*

Al Jazeera is the most watched Arab news network on the globe with viewers all over the world. Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton expressed her opinion of the network in stating that

> Al Jazeera has been the leader in ... literally changing people’s minds and attitudes. You may not agree with it, but you feel like you’re getting real news around the clock instead of a million commercials, and, you know, arguments between talking heads, and the kind of stuff that we do on our news.

James Zoghby (2010) calls the difference between Western journalism and Arab television a “stark contrast.” He argues that Al Jazeera and Arab news networks differ from Western news networks because of their vivid eyewitness accounts of what is happening in the Arab world, and the entire world, on a daily basis. During incidents such as the December 2008 Israeli “Operation Cast Lead” against Gaza, Israel denied Western journalists access to the war zone, reducing Western broadcasts of the assault to mainly what was provided to them by Israeli military briefers, whereas Arab networks had much more access to the war zone while streaming images and videos of what was happening. As discussed earlier, images are extremely important in news reports and Snorre Wik, a director of photography at Al Jazeera English, stated that Al Jazeera has better visual
content than any other news networks (Marash 2011:28). Al Jazeera was the only network in my analysis that had footage from the Mavi Marmara, the boat that was attacked during the flotilla raid. They were also the only network to have a correspondent on the actual boat, reporting back to them. This is significant because not only did they show both Turkish and IDF footage of the incident, but they also had footage of the incident unfolding. They were also the only network to show footage of, and interview victims of the raid and discuss the fate of the passengers affiliated with the flotilla while going into detail about the deportation and arrests they faced from the Israeli Defense Forces. On Al Jazeera, we saw a range of speakers that consisted of British, American, Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

What separates Al Jazeera from FOX News and CNN is similar to what separates the latter networks from BBC: political discourse. Although Al Jazeera is based in the Arab country of Qatar, Al Anstey, managing director of Al Jazeera English, claims that that the network’s coverage is completely independent of the Qatari government and that their news is fact-based rather than a representation of what the government wants its people to see. Marash (2011) states that the main differences between reports on Al Jazeera and CNN are images. Marash argues that in the past, CNN showed more videos and had more reports from the field, whereas now, those minutes dedicated to video packages have decreased and Al Jazeera has surpassed them in this aspect. It can be argued that because Al Jazeera is an Arab network, there is no indication of American or European Orientalism. It can be also be argued that since Al Jazeera reports mostly on the Arab world, it is almost impossible for them to display the political interests of one
particular government or country since there are twenty-two Arab nations, all with
different governments and different political interests. Al Jazeera is not offered on US
cable systems and American journalist Jeff Jarvis stated that it is “downright un-
American” to deprive Americans of Al Jazeera.

French scholar Francois Burgat states that the less exposure that journalists have
to everyday life in the Arab world, the less credible their reports become. The average
audience member knows little about individuals who are not a part of their society,
relying on the media for their exposure to and knowledge of these groups. Not interacting
personally or directly with these groups leads to vast judgments and generalizations,
helping create the image of the “other” and thus reinforcing the Western audience’s
already held misconceptions and stereotypes.

Reports on the Orient are then simplified and contorted to fit into predetermined
discourse and certain political interests. James Zoghy (2010) states that BBC presents
extensive coverage of the IPC that is not included in US news while Arab networks,
including Al Jazeera give “vivid” accounts of incidents regarding the Arab world and the
IPC. In my research, I found that both BBC and Al Jazeera drifted away from an
Orientalistic depiction of Palestinians with BBC’s interview of Palestinians in the
Palestinian city of Nablus and Al Jazeera’s interview with flotilla passengers, putting a
face and a meaningful existence to the image of the Palestinians and the Palestinian
cause.

Audiences of BBC and Al Jazeera are given the opportunity to see and hear the
voices of Palestinians while viewers of CNN and FOX News are not. FOX News is not
only avoiding talking to the Palestinians, but they are generalizing them with terms such as “delirious” or “unrealistic” without allowing their audience to hear or see the Palestinian people and allowing them to decide for themselves whether or not they feel these characterizations are proper. Said (1979) suggests that the distinction between American and European Orientalism derives from a post-World War I society in which the center of Orientalism shifted from Europe to the US as well as the post World War II Middle East in which European colonies in the Middle East were lost, lessening European political interests in the region.

These findings call into question arguments raised by various researchers aiming to determine whether or not the media is biased concerning the IPC as these previous studies have claimed a pro-Israel bias. My hypothesis of Palestinian representation in Western media through the lens of Orientalism was unequivocally supported with the analyzed broadcasts from FOX News. My findings suggest that although not all Western media outlets present subjective coverage of the IPC, this is definitely so with FOX News and occasionally with CNN. Similar to BBC and Al Jazeera, CNN did incorporate important aspects of the IPC in their coverage while bringing on guest speakers from both sides. FOX News however clearly brings into line Said’s argument that American media recycles unverifiable information and vast generalizations and what James Zogby (2010) refers to as “cynical half-truths and outright fabrications.”

In order to move past these oversimplifications, the competing narratives need to be shared and respected and more Americans must understand and acknowledge that the disenfranchisement of the Palestinians has much to do with the role that Israel and other
Western support has played. Said believed that within the institutionalized Western knowledge of the Orient, Orientalism wields a three-way force; on the Orient, on the Orientalist, and on the Western “consumer” of Orientalism. Said suggests that it would be wrong to underestimate the strength of the three-way relationship. It is difficult imagining moving passed this relationship due to the structure of American media specifically and its coverage of the IPC because of its strong political ties to Israel and the interests that are being protected in support of this US/Israel relationship. In order to be successful in understanding the IPC, the media in all cases must grasp the significance of essential historical moments while giving the audience a chance to listen to both sides. In the words of the late Edward Said, “what isn't there to be seen or commented on either does not exist or does not matter if it does.”
REFERENCES


