

Days of awe: The praxis of news coverage during national crisis

MOTTI NEIGER and EYAL ZANDBERG¹

Abstract

The case study aims to reveal the praxis that serves the media during ethnic-violence conflicts. The article closely reads reports of the Israeli media covering the clashes between Israeli Arabs and the police, in the first days of the second Intifada (September 28–October 9, 2000). We analyze how mainstream Hebrew media (television news stations and newspapers) covered the unfolding events, and also refer to reports in Arab-language newspapers. Two prominent trends shaped the frame through which events were reported: Inclusion and exclusion. Israel's Hebrew-language media excluded the Arab citizens from the general Israeli public, while, at the same time, equating them with the residents of the Palestinian Authority. That is, the media framed the Arab Israeli citizens as Palestinians, blurring the line between the riots within Israel and the armed violence in the West Bank and Gaza. This coverage changed after the first and most intense days of riots; Israeli journalists then switched to a more civil framing after establishing an inner as well as an outer discourse (mainly in concurrence with the politicians).

Key words: minorities, conflict, news coverage, journalism practice, Israel, Intifada, Arab-Israelis

Introduction

The famous CBS anchorman, Dan Rather, expressed his concern about the fact that patriotism in American media prevents journalists from inquiring and asking the difficult questions. Covering violent conflict, when the journalist is a member of one of the parties, invokes professional dilemmas and challenges. This article closely reads the reports of the Israeli media in the first days of the second *Intifada* (September 28–

October 9, 2000), aiming to reveal the praxis that serves the media during ethnic-violent conflict.

The ten days between *Rosh Hashanah* (Jewish New Year) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) are known in Jewish tradition as the 'Days of Awe'. Observant Jews, who believe these to be days of divine judgment, spend them in prayer and moral introspection. In late September and early October of the year 2000, these days took on a special significance, as they marked the outbreak of the second Intifada in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The amazement and confusion among Israelis in general, and Israeli journalists, grew when, simultaneously, riots erupted among the Arab citizens of Israel, who constitute 18% of Israel's population.

The confusion was accompanied by fear and anxiety; this was the first time since 1948 that Arab Israelis joined 'other Arabs' in an active-violent movement against Israel. Even though it was not a collective act, it spread to many different places and was encouraged by some of the Arab leaders.

Altogether, this led the Israeli mainstream public opinion to perceive the events as an immediate threat to the very existence of Israel. The riots continued for ten days – from Friday, September 28 (Jewish New Year's eve), to Monday, October 9 (the end of the Day of Atonement). Clashes with the police left 13 Arab citizens dead and dozens of others injured, some of them gravely. Police officers were also wounded in the riots. One Jewish citizen was hit by a rock and killed. A special judicial committee, appointed subsequently by the Israeli government to examine the events, heard some deeply troubling testimonies about police behavior.

Coverage of the riots can be labeled 'what-a-story': An unexpected, very unusual event (Berkowitz, 1992). The media react to such events more intensely than usual and have standard procedures to 'reutilize the unexpected' (Tuchman, 1973).

The immediate interpretation of these riots by the media was identifying the Arab Israelis with the Palestinians (governed by the Palestinian National Authority). A few days later the interpretation changed; the riots were then considered the outcome of years of economic, social and political discrimination. Both the tone and the content of statements made by many of the Arab Israelis interviewed in the media contributed to reinforcing the connection between the Intifada and the riots inside Israel.

In regard to the coverage of the September 11 terror attacks, Michael Schudson refers to occasions when US journalists instinctively and willingly abandoned the effort to report from a neutral standpoint. In such occasions: "... there are no 'sides'. We are all in it together" (2002: 41).

This article seeks to answer the question as to how the media construct the borders of solidarity and decide who belongs to the 'We' group and who to the 'Other', the 'foe' camp. We analyzed the October 2000 events in Israel as reflected in the Hebrew-language media and followed the praxis of excluding Arab-Israeli citizens from Israeli citizenry and placing them in the camp of the 'Other'. Our focus was on the Israeli journalists' praxis of coverage as a means to reveal their self-positioning as an 'interpretive community' between the Arab citizens and state's establishment (government, police).

Theoretical background

Journalist during violent ethnic conflict

In the preamble to her book *Reporting the Arab-Israeli conflict: How hegemony works*, Tamar Liebes writes: "To say that the Israeli press represents the Arab-Israeli conflict from where 'we' stand seems redundant" (Liebes, 1997: 1). This claim is certainly true in the research climate of the last decades, which acknowledges that newsmakers operate within a certain culture. This culture dictates interpretive directions and affects the encoding and decoding of texts (Hall, 1973). Thus, for example, when reporters of different nationalities cover the same event, the stories they produce can be very different (Cohen and Roeh, 1990). Even within the same nationality, coverage of the same event can vary between different newspapers (Zelizer, Park, and Gudelunas, 2002). In addition, different groups of readers can extract diverse meanings from the same text (Liebes and Katz, 1993). It is also clear today that the media play a role in constructing, shaping and preserving the solidarity of a community over time (Carey, 1989; Rorty, 1991; Roeh, 1994).

Based on these assumptions, this study seeks to answer the following questions: Who are the 'we' reflected in the media coverage of the October 2000 events? Whose point of view did the media represent? In order to determine how the press coverage constructed the distinction between 'we' and 'them', we examine the interpretive frames imposed by the media on the October 2000 events and how it shaped the respective identities of the two sides.

Anderson (1988) suggested that the American media create a distinction between 'we' and 'them' in its coverage of Latin America; 'they' are uncivilized, violent and evil, while 'we' represent culture, order and goodness. In analyzing the television news coverage of the first Intifada (1987), Daniel Levy argues that Israeli television reduced the range of reference to the Intifada by adopting one dominant frame, that of 'law and order'. This choice of frame restricted the televised discussion of events to only the violent incidents. Within this limited range of dis-

course, terrorist activity came to be perceived as the cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict rather than as 'one of its symptoms' (Levy, 1991: 26).

One of our basic assumptions is that journalists interact with, and are influenced by, the cultural sphere to which they belong. Scholars drawing on the cultural approach to media studies place less emphasis on the direct influence of the media and instead stress its socio-cultural function in constructing and shaping the community (Carey, 1989). The cultural approach sees the communication process as a negotiation of meanings, in which journalists and their audience share a common understanding of events, which in itself is shaped by their common culture (Schudson, 1997). According to this approach, the journalists do not explore reality from an external point of view, but rather function as representatives of the society in which they operate and as delegates of the culture they share (Carey, 2000).

Ethnic minorities and the media – The case of Arab Israeli citizens

We now delve into the wider political context of majority-minority relations, and in particular into the local political context of the Arab Israeli minority and its circumstances. In recent years, a range of literature has dealt with the place of marginal and minority groups in the media. The subject has been so widely discussed that it is now almost a sub-topic of media studies (Entman, 1990; Ross, 1998; Van Dijk, 1998). The main argument of these scholarly works is that minorities are underrepresented in the media, whereas the main voice heard is that of the stronger players, who express the standpoints of the establishment (Davis, 1985; Lerman, 1983). Moreover, these studies claim that the minority voice is only ever heard in relation to the dominant voice, usually in a negative context that only reinforces the majority's norms.

Thus, for example, Husband (1982) argues that the coverage of minorities in the British media offers a 'white' perspective, causing minorities – mostly those with dark skin – to be perceived as a threat to society. The viewing public, as Husband further claims, shares this stereotypical view of minority groups, and, therefore, cannot identify with the text's implicit prejudice or object to it.

It is important to distinguish between the Arab Israelis, who live in Israel as citizens, and the Palestinians, who live under Palestinian Authority established after the 1993 Oslo treaty. We are mainly interested in the first group because of the unique challenge its collective identity constitutes for the Hebrew-language media. On the one hand, although an ethnic minority, they are Israeli citizens; on the other hand, they often see themselves as part of the Arab nation or as 'Palestinians living in Israel'. The historically violent relationships between Israelis and Arabs

complicate this 'identity conflict'. According to First (2001), examining the representation of Arab citizens as the 'Other' in the last decades reveals that they suffer from a 'double otherness': "Not only is the Arab citizen a minority in Israeli society, but his nationality and loyalty to the country are questioned" (94).

Much has been written about the status of Arab citizens in Israeli culture and society (Assad, 1997; Peled, 1993; Rabinowitz, 1993; Bishara, 1993, 1996) and about Israel's effort to maintain a kind of ethnic democracy (Smootha, 1990). Most of these works adopt a critical stance towards their subject matter.

Aburaiya, Avraham, and Wolfsfeld (1998) argue that despite the similarity of Arab Israeli citizens to other minority groups, their coverage patterns are nonetheless more complex. They offer three reasons: (1) Arab Israeli citizens are perceived as a disloyal minority; (2) the State of Israel defines itself as a Jewish state, the state of the Jewish people, and its Arab citizens are perceived as foreigners; and (3) the Arab citizens are marginal in Israeli society and culture, and the Hebrew-language media shapes and strengthens this trend. The same study also found that Arab citizens were given little coverage in Israel's Hebrew-language media, and that their protest was covered within the frame of 'security matters and subversive activity'. Over the years, the authors argue, this frame has de-legitimized the Arab citizens' demand for civil equality, although certain differences in coverage can be detected over time (Avraham, Wolfsfeld, and Aburaiya, 2000).

During conflicts, the 'complex identity' of Arab Israeli citizens becomes exacerbated. Similarly, during such periods the Israeli press has difficulties defining the Arab Israeli citizens as 'us' (Israelis) or 'them' (Arabs). Asia (2000) argues that during the first Intifada the Israeli press functioned as an educator for the Arab citizens. Its main role was to deliver messages from the establishment in order to prevent the riots from 'seeping out' from the territories into Israel. Thus, the Israeli newspapers warned the Arab Israeli population not to take part in the violent events, and encouraged them to 'play by the rules'.

Dor (2001) analyzed the coverage of the second Intifada and showed how the Israeli daily newspapers 'manufactured consensus' by spreading the government framing of the events to the Israeli public. Dor explored how, even when reporters presented the events as complicated and ambiguous, the newspapers' editors used headlines that presented a one-sided picture, putting all the blame on Palestinians (and mainly on Yasser Arafat).

This study makes a distinction between different types of framing. According to Iyengar (1990), thematic framing presents a story within its larger systemic context, connecting it to its history and touching on

its possible implications. Episodic framing, on the other hand, presents incidents out of their context; by showing only the ‘climaxes’ of the story it makes them appear as isolated ‘particular cases’. The different types of coverage have an important impact on public response. Episodic coverage tends to place the blame on the individuals involved (i.e., the Arabs are responsible for this situation and can resolve it), while thematic coverage prompts the audience to blame the system and to believe it is capable of setting things right. As this paper will show, the coverage of Arab Israelis citizens during the October 2000 events was mostly episodic, ignoring the wider context.

The context of the events – the unexpected eruption of violence involving the Arab Israeli citizens, the Palestinians and the Israel Armed Forces and police – is of great importance. As Waisbord wrote in relation to September 11: “While muted during ‘normal circumstances’ under the observance of professional rules, sheer patriotism emerges in situations in which the ‘national community’ is considered to be at risk” (Waisbord, 2002: 206). Hence this paper explores the representation of a minority in times of conflict. We examine how a group normally given the scant, stereotypical media coverage that is typically accorded to minorities, came to be portrayed, through visual and rhetorical journalistic praxis, as a menace to the state.

Research corpus and methodology

This study is based on a qualitative analysis of Israel’s mainstream printed and electronic media from September 29 to October 10, 2000. The press analysis included the coverage of the most popular daily in Israel, *Yedioth Aharonoth*, read by almost seventy percent of all Hebrew readers. Our examination focuses on the news pages and is based on a survey of reports and their accompanying headlines, sub-headlines, photographs and captions.

In order to gain a better insight into the analytic frames of mainstream Hebrew-language media, we chose to examine not only what was said, but also what was *not* said. For this purpose, we looked at certain elements of coverage in the elite newspaper *Ha’aretz*, read by high-ranking officials and in intellectual circles. During the reviewed period, the newspaper earned much criticism from the Jewish-Israeli public, which accused it of presenting an anti-Zionist picture. We also looked at two Arab-language Israeli newspapers, the daily *Al-Ittihad* and the bi-weekly *Kul al’-Arab*.

The analysis of the electronic media included all the news editions on Channel One and Channel Two – Israel’s only Hebrew-language television channels – between September 29 and October 9, 2000. We examine

such aspects as the interaction of interviewers and interviewees, who was allowed to speak and how powerfully they were permitted to express themselves, the interpretive frames in which reporters and commentators placed events, and the correlation between film footage and verbal commentary.

It is important to stress that Hebrew newspapers do not appear on weekends and Holy Days, while the electronic media provide news coverage even on those days. Because the events in question began in a long Holy Day weekend, the first print coverage of the events did not appear until Sunday, October 1, 2000. By that time, the press basically accepted the frame of coverage dictated by the electronic media two days earlier.

Findings and discussion

Our analysis reveals that the coverage of the October events was mainly characterized by two concurrent trends: Exclusion and inclusion. Arab Israeli citizens were symbolically excluded from the nation as a whole. At the same time, their struggle was included with that of the Palestinians in the territories, thereby blurring the 'Green Line' – the line on the map that separates pre-1967 Israel from the territories it occupied in the 1967 war.

Between October 1 and October 10 the newspaper ran as many as forty-four items relating to the violent events between Israeli police and Arab citizens. The clashes between the Israeli army and the Palestinians were the main issue in those editions and the number of items produced was three times as large as usual.

During the first two days (October 1–2), eighty percent of the items supported the exclusion/inclusion framing. As of October 4, there was a gradual decline in the number of items supporting this framing but it continued to exist throughout the whole period².

The praxis of exclusion of Arab citizens from the overall Israeli population

Our analysis reveals that during the October events the term 'Israeli citizens' was largely reserved for Jewish victims. When Arab citizens were hurt, they were referred to by other names, such as 'Arab Israelis' or 'Arabs from the Galilee'. In other words, Israeli journalists created two separate categories for the victims: Israeli citizens and Arab Israelis.

Prominent examples of this can be found in the *Yedioth Aharonoth* issue of October 3. The sub-headline on page 2 reads: "In the course of

the turbulent previous day, a soldier and *an Israeli citizen, 5 Arabs from the Galilee* and 8 Palestinians were killed” (our emphasis).

The newspaper divided the casualties into two categories: Jews (a soldier and a civilian) and Arabs (from the Galilee and from the Palestinian Authority). The little comma in the sub-headline creates a division between ethnic categories and epitomizes the exclusion of the Arab citizens from the overall Israeli population and their grouping together with the Palestinians. Page 11 of the same edition listed the ‘Israeli casualties’. The list included only the Jewish casualties, even though Arab citizens had also been killed that day.

Superficial coverage of the casualties among Arab Israeli citizens. The exclusion process was manifested in the television coverage of Arab citizens’ deaths. A special news bulletin on Channel One (October 1, 2000) announced, “Mohammed Jabarín was killed in Umm el-Fahm”. The report was bland and laconic; it offered no context or explanations and did not bother to ask how or why this citizen had been left dead. The next day, another Channel One newscast included the following report: “Umm el-Fahm, the locus of the riots. Two were killed there”. Once again, no questions were asked about the context: Why did these people die? Under what circumstances? Could have their deaths been prevented? Furthermore, the report did not mention any details about their identity: Their names, place of residence, familial status, etc.

The next day (October 2), Channel One anchorwoman Ya’el Sternhall reported on the 7:30 pm news bulletin: “We begin with the territories: Riots also among the Arab Israelis. Funerals for *some* of the previous days’ casualties were held in Nazareth and Sakhnin”. Here even the exact number of Arab casualties laid to rest was omitted, not to mention their names or the circumstances of their demise.

The coverage of the Arab citizens’ deaths seems even more superficial when compared to that day’s extensive reports on the death of Wichlav Zalsevsky, a Jewish man killed while attempting to get his car repaired in the Palestinian Authority. Coverage, in this case, included interviews with the dead man’s uncle, mother and father. There was, therefore, a clear bias in the coverage of deaths, depending on the national identity of the victim. When the casualty was an Arab citizen, the coverage tended to be anonymous and did not provide a context. The media gave Arab citizens the same treatment it usually accords to Palestinians killed in the territories.

As can be expected, the Arab journalistic perspective of the same events was very different. For example, *Al-Ittihad* (October 3) devoted its entire first page to the photos of the casualties and the coverage of their funerals. In other words, this material was available and could have

been obtained by the Hebrew-language media; the difference lies in the work of the journalists themselves.

The rhetorics of balance: Avoiding judgment through symmetry. In relation to the concepts of Iyengar (1990), in many cases, the coverage of the October 2000 events was found to be episodic and did not place the incidents in a wider context. An example can be found in *Yedioth Aharonoth* (October 8), in which two facing pages (12–13) purport to present ‘two sides of the same coin’. One page covered the funeral of a Jewish driver killed by a rock on the Coastal Highway, while the other reported the funerals of Arab citizens killed in Nazareth. The headlines, captions, phrasing, structure and contents of the two pages were identical. This coverage functions as an equalizer between the killing of 13 Arab Israeli citizens by the Israeli police and the killing of one Jewish-Israeli citizen by Arab rioters.

When presented this way, reported events undergo a process of personalization. Occurrences become reduced to individuals. There appears to be no point in comparing the incidents, looking for their distinctive features or trying to explain them. The very symmetry seems to answer all questions and construct the specific incidences as part of the ‘never-ending’ Arab-Israeli conflict; this is how things are, how they have always been, as though decreed by fate – victims on both sides even out the equation.

A different kind of analogy can be found in *Yedioth Aharonoth* on Tuesday (October 3). The popular newspaper presented two photos in a way that suggested they were linked. Their respective interpretations were influenced by their proximity and visual likeness. One photo showed a young Palestinian removing an Israeli flag from an Israeli army post near Netzarim, a Jewish settlement inside the Gaza Strip. The other showed young Arab-Israeli citizens burning tires. The overhead caption of the first photo was, “Flags are being torn in the territories”. The caption of the latter read, “In the heart of Israel: Blocking the road to Rosh Ha’ayin”. Placing the two photos side by side and adding similarly structured captions created an analogy and link between them and between the events they represented.

Symmetry can function as rhetoric of balance (Roeh and Cohen, 1992), allowing the media to create an impression of ‘objectivity’ and of adherence to the standards of free, professional Western journalism.

However, for all this apparent ‘balance,’ some pictures were not made available to Hebrew readers. *Kul al’Arab* (October 6) featured photos of bleeding protesters, crying mothers and stunned relatives, as well as personal stories about the victims. These pictures and stories did not appear in the television broadcasts or in the pages of the Hebrew press.

The media's feigned symmetry between Jewish and Arab citizens – “they hurt ‘us’, ‘we’ hurt ‘them’” – is violated once the players need to be called by name. Immediately after the end of Yom Kippur, a number of serious anti-Arab riots took place. These events provide an opportunity to examine what frames of coverage were used for the ‘reverse situation’, that is, when Jews acted violently against Arabs. The sub-headline in *Yedioth Aharonoth* (October 8) read: “Hundreds of Jewish residents from Nazareth Illit [a Jewish town adjacent to Nazareth] decided the day before yesterday to take the law into their hands and attacked their Arab neighbors ... The police tried to separate the two sides using tear gas and rubber bullets”. Unlike Arabs, this coverage suggested, the Jews were not ‘rioters,’ an ‘incited mob’, and so on; rather, *they* had *decided* to take the law into their own hands. In other words, theirs was a rational decision prompted by a tangible reason: The police would not provide the necessary protection, there was no law, every man had to fend for himself. In effect, rather than denouncing the Jewish use of force against Arabs, this kind of coverage legitimized it.

The headlines of the Channel Two news edition (October 9) about the riots in Nazareth said: “Rioting continues in the territories and among Arab Israelis”. Even though the rioters were in fact Jewish, and the Arab citizens their victims, the riots were once again attributed to the latter.

The same edition included comments from police reporter Moshe Nussbaum in Nazareth: “Two Arab *rioters* were killed in the riots by live bullets fired at them. A police forensic team will investigate whether the shooting was done by police officers, or, as it is now strongly suspected, whether the shots were fired by Jewish *demonstrators* at Arab *demonstrators*” (our emphases).

Calling the casualties ‘rioters’ diminishes the responsibility of those who killed them. Because the victims were ‘rioting’, it is implicitly suggested that even the media is exempt from investigating what happened to them. In the second sentence, after the Jewish citizens of Nazareth have been called ‘demonstrators’, the Arab ‘rioters’ also gain the title of ‘demonstrators’. The context apparently makes it impossible to maintain their previous status of ‘rioters’.

Later in that same Channel Two news edition (October 9), anchorman Yigal Ravid interviewed Azmi Bishara, an Arab member of the Knesset (Israel’s parliament). In this dialogue – where interviewer and interviewee seemed to be speaking totally different languages – Ravid asked: “Did you not anticipate that after the severe rioting of the Arab Israelis, including the torching of sites holy to the Jews and a great deal of damage, the spontaneous popular response was to be expected?”

Channel Two’s different perception of the respective status of Jews and Arabs is clearly reflected in the choice of words. The actions of Arab

citizens are referred to as 'riots', whereas Jews engage in 'spontaneous responses'. This kind of phrasing clearly diminishes the responsibility of the Jewish leadership and assigns blame to the Arab leadership. Inserting the torched holy sites and the great damage to property into the question renders it quite impossible to answer.

The praxis of inclusion: Grouping the Israeli Arab citizens with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Using identical terms to describe events in Israel and in the Palestinian Authority. The second process, the mirror image of the exclusion of Arab citizens from the Israeli nation, was that of inclusion – grouping the Arab citizens' struggle together with the Palestinian fight for independence in the West Bank and Gaza. This process consisted of blurring differences and emphasizing similarities between the two communities and between events on the two sides of the Green Line. In many cases, the linkage between the protests of Arab citizens and the Palestinian struggle created a feeling that the very existence of Israel was at peril. The perceived menace seemed even more intense, because, supposedly, it was both external and internal.

Another way of identically framing events inside and outside the Green Line was the use of a single overhead logo above several stories, constructing their meaning even before the reader had reached the actual text. In *Yedioth Aharonoth* of October 2, pages 4 and 5 bore the overhead logo: "Intifada in the Galilee and Jaffa". To the Jewish Israeli audience, the word 'Intifada' connotes the territories and the kind of fighting that took place there in the late 1980s. The newspaper thus brought the 'Intifada', with all of the word's connotations, into the State of Israel, once again creating an analogy between the anti-occupation fight in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the struggle of Arab Israeli citizens. A Channel Two news edition (September 30) included the following account by military correspondent Roni Daniel: "There is concern about the Arab Israelis. One of those killed on Temple Mount was an Arab Israeli. A strike is supposed to be held tomorrow. The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] have tanks, may use helicopters, and will not allow the situation to deteriorate". The reporter thus tied together the 'Arabs of the territories' and the 'Arab Israelis'; his words offered reassurance to Jewish viewers and cautioned the Arab citizens. In effect, Daniel's comments placed the media on the same side of the Jewish citizens and against the Arab citizens.

Due to this process of inclusion, the coverage of events, especially in *Yedioth Aharonoth*, was thoroughly permeated by terminology connoting the pre-state days, the 1948 War of Independence, the struggle to establish the State of Israel and the fight for its initial survival. Thus, for

example, on October 2, *Yedioth Aharonoth* appeared as a dramatically designed broadsheet edition (normally issued only on Fridays and holy days). The main front-page headline was: “The conflagration has spread to Arab Israelis”. Sub-headline: “Jafet Street closed due to rock-throwing. Riots in Arab settlements in the Galilee ... access severed to the northern part of the country”. In claiming that “the conflagration has spread,” the paper was linking the riots in the territories to those that occurred within the Israeli State. The main Channel Two news edition (October 1) also reported, “The Arab Israelis are *joining in*” (our emphasis).

By grouping the Arab citizens with the Palestinians, Israeli journalists positioned themselves on the same side as Israeli police, against the Arab citizens. An example of this self-positioning is seen in the October 2 issue of *Ha'aretz*. While the headline on page 3 reads: “In Acre and Nazareth Arab demonstrators shot at the police”. The report starts with the words: “Five Arab Israelis were killed in the Galilee”. It seems as if the editors considered the shooting at the police as more severe than the killing of five Arab citizens.

Three days earlier, in the news edition of Channel Two (September 29) the police reporter, Moshe Nussbaum, stated that the hands of the police were tied. He asked the minister of Homeland Security: “Would you loosen the hands of the police?” The reporter was criticizing the minister for not taking all the measures he could. A few days later journalists would pose questions in the opposite direction and criticize the use of police snipers against civilians.

In the same manner, a headline on page 6 in *Yedioth Aharonoth* (October 6) read: “The Israel Journalists Association to the police: Protect us from the rioters”. Such a demand made it very difficult for the journalists to produce a critical examination of the excessive force used by the police against Arab civilians.

Allusions to the War of Independence in the coverage of Arab-Israeli citizens. A sub-headline on the front page of *Yedioth Aharonoth* (October 2) read: “Yesterday, for the first time since 1948, the Galilee was cut off from central Israel, after thousands of Arab demonstrators blocked most of the [connecting] roads. The severe riots also spread to the Negev and Jaffa ...” The story itself mentioned that protesters had blocked ‘strategic roads’. But the rest of the paragraph made this ominous phrase seem somewhat ludicrous, as it became apparent that the ‘blocking of strategic roads’ had had the following consequences: “Thousands of motorists making their way south after the Rosh Hashanah holiday have been stuck for long hours in huge traffic jams created by the road blocks”.

The dramatic, alarming headline was obviously incompatible with the text describing its implications.

In the Channel One news edition (October 2) Amnon Abramovich, one of Israel's most respected publicists, expressed the same view, saying: "One has to understand that no country – either Arab or Western – can let a violent mob take control over main traffic junctions. I don't even want to think what means Israel would have to take in order to suppress this phenomenon".

The same happened on the Channel Two news (October 3), when Is-pahan Bahaloul reported from Nazareth: "Downtown Nazareth looks like a battleground. A 'siege' of the Jewish settlements ..." Later in the same broadcast, anchorman Ya'akov Eilon asked Mohammed Zidan (chairman of the committee of heads of Arab local councils): "What are you doing to calm things down?" It is important to note that no such essential questions were directed at the police, the other party involved in the violent incidents.

Only after the politicians understood the gravity of the events and established a committee to investigate them (October 4), did Sever Plotzker, one of the newspapers' senior editors, criticize the use of the War of Independence's terminology. Plotzker criticized the use of live bullets by the police against Arab citizens and argued: "We are not in 1948, not 'few against many' ... we are a military and economic power in the Middle East."

The inclusion created an atmosphere of such intense menace that Israel's very existence seemed to be threatened. This position is epitomized by an interesting headline in *Yedioth Aharonoth* (October 2). The headline was stretched across the tops of two pages (2 and 3), which featured stories and pictures of the previous day's events. Written in unusually large print, it read: "A War of Independence?" The open-ended phrasing of the headline, which was not attributed to any particular source or given an answer, created ambiguity. It could have referred to the Arab Israelis' or Palestinians' fight for independence, but at the same time it also implied that the State of Israel was (still?!) fighting for its own independence and survival.

The meaning deriving from both ways of reading is the same. There is a deadly threat to Israel's existence; if it is a continuation of Israel's 'war of independence' then the end justifies the means. If the headline implies the 'war of independence' of the Palestinians, then the conclusion must be the same, because their independence conflicts with to the existence of Israel.

The inclusion process had obvious practical implications. If the phenomenon on both sides of the Green Line was the same – that is, if it involved the same Arabs and the same kind of menace – then it had to

be treated in a similar way and by the same means. If this was an Intifada, Israel had to handle it just as it had handled the first Intifada, which broke out in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the late 1980s. By using this analogy, one might even argue, the media essentially legitimized the use of extreme measures by the security forces against Arab Israeli citizens.

Other voices were hardly heard in the media and the words of Amram Mitzna (at the time the mayor of Haifa) were an exception underscoring the predominant voice. In Channel One's news edition (October 2), Mitzna stated that "the police must not use live bullets against Israeli citizen demonstrators. I do not think that a road junction, important as it might be, is another Massada. A distinction must be made between both sides of the Green Line".

The visual aspect of the exclusion/inclusion

The inclusion of Arab Israeli citizens with the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza, and the analogy established between their respective actions, did not consist solely of verbal manifestations (e. g., names and epithets). It was reinforced by visual means such as photographs and the combination of text and pictures.

Contradictions between the visuals and verbal commentary. A Channel Two television interview with Mohammed Zidan (October 3) was conducted against a background of pictures from Ramallah, Netzarim and Hebron. The studio interview with a representative of Arab Israeli *citizens* was thus juxtaposed with a visual from the *territories*. This combination constructed a meaning, linking and analogizing the protest activity of Arab citizens to the occurrences in the territories.

A reporter on a Channel Two-news edition (October 1) described the events in Jaffa as "a real war between the rock-throwers and the security forces". Later, during a live report from Jaffa, he continued describing a warlike situation. The live images shown on the screen, however, were of quiet streets, not rioting crowds. In other words, even during a period of calm, the reporter continued to describe violence that had taken place earlier, thereby keeping reality (calmness) from breaking out of the frame of coverage (violence).

Maps blurring the boundary between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Several newspapers used maps to indicate where events had taken place the day before. *Yedioth Aharonoth* (October 3) featured a map of "all the main points of conflagration". Though the Green Line was marked on this map, it was very blurred and unclear. In fact, neither the map nor

its accompanying text made any real distinction between ‘points of conflagration’ inside and outside the Green Line³.

In the next page (p. 3) of the same edition appears a caption that read: “Limitless Battle”. This ambiguous title can be interpreted in several ways. The first is that Israel is in a state of war against the Palestinians outside its borders, as well as against the Arab citizens, inside its borders. The second interpretation implies that Israel is in such a severe military conflict that it may be justified in using all means to fight for its survival.

Page 2 of that day’s *Ha’aretz* also provided a map and a list of the places where violent events and riots had occurred. The list made no distinction between events inside the Green Line and outside of it, but the line itself was clearly marked on the map. In general, the elite newspaper was clearly less prone to connoting and evoking Israel’s War of Independence and therefore communicated a lesser sense of threat than *Yedioth Aharonoth*.

The analysis of visual material and its use also shows that the nature of the coverage was not dictated by a genuine similarity between events (on both sides of the Green Line). Rather, the type of coverage was prescribed by a perception of the respective players – Arab citizens and Palestinians in the territories – as being essentially ‘the same’. In other words, coverage in the Hebrew-language media did not follow the nature of the events being reported, but rather adhered to its own perception of the actors involved. To the journalists covering the October events inside the Green Line, Arabs – be they Israeli citizens or residents of the territories – were all one and the same.

Conclusions

This paper has examined the various visual and rhetorical forms of journalistic praxis used by Israel’s Hebrew-language media in covering the violent incidents of October 2000.

The coverage of the October events has a special value because it reveals the immediate reaction of the journalists, before establishing inner-professional discourse or a broader discourse within the political or the public sphere.

Hence, during the first days of the El-Aksa Intifada, the Hebrew-language press and television framed the Arab Israeli citizens as Palestinians, blurring the line between the riots within Israel and the armed violence in the West Bank and Gaza. The tactics used by the media in its exclusion/inclusion framing were: 1) superficial coverage of Arab Israeli casualties, 2) using a rhetoric of balance to avoid judgment, 3) using the terminology of war to refer to Arab Israeli citizens, and 4) creating

contradictions between visuals and verbal commentary in referring to Arab citizens.

This coverage changed after the first and most intense days of riots. After the Israeli journalists established an inner as well as an outer discourse (mainly with the politicians) they switched to a civil framing. Thus, the journalists followed the political developments – with the then Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, establishing a committee to investigate the events – and turned to describe and explain the October 2000 events within the Arab Israeli population as caused by economic and social discrimination. After using the national-ethnic frame during the first and more violent days of the riots, Israeli journalists adopted an increasingly civic frame, which is more neutral and balanced.

On October 6, *Yediot Aharonot* printed the pictures, names and places of residence of six of the dead Arab Israeli citizens. In the same edition, it presented the headline: “Fire Within The House” on the front page of the weekend news supplement. On Oct. 10 the front-page headline read: “Jews and Arabs in civil battles: Shooting, arson and plunder”.

These examples do not follow the line of national emergency that the newspapers had shown in the first days. It seems as if during the first days of the events, when violence was at its peak and the politicians did not define the events, the national allegiance of Israeli journalists prevailed over the loyalty to their profession. Their coverage exposed the ethnic-Jewish point of view rather than the civic-Israeli one.

We see this coverage as an example of the media’s inextricable link to its social and cultural context. It seems that the Hebrew-language media applied a praxis that distances it from the “Search for the great community” (Dewey, 1927). At a time of violent ethnic conflict, the media search for the narrow community and take its point of view.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Issam Aburaiya for analyzing the Arab-language press and his valuable contribution to the research. We also thank “Keshev – Center for Defending Democracy in Israel” for its help in financing the project.

Notes

1. The two authors have contributed equally to the writing of the article, and they wish to thank Dan Berkowitz, Tamar Liebes, Ben Rabinovitch, Eran Ravin and Yona Kranz for their intellectual and material support.
2. In *Ha'aretz* an average of only nine percent of the items supported the exclusion/inclusion framing during the ten-day period, while in *Yedioth Aharonoth* an average of fifty percent of the items supported this framing.
3. See Dor, 2001: 45. Similar phenomena described by Asia (2000: 33) regarding the Israeli press during the first Intifada.

References

- Aburaiya, I., Avraham, E., and Wolfsfeld, G. (1998). *The coverage of the Arab citizens of Israel in the Hebrew-language press* [in Hebrew]. Givat Habiba: The Peace Institute.
- Anderson, R. (1988). Vision of stability: US television's: Law and order news of El Salvador. *Media, Culture and Society*, 10(2), 236–264.
- Asia, I. (2000). Stick and carrot: Israeli newspapers' attitude towards Arab Israeli citizens during the Intifada [in Hebrew]. *Kesher*, 27, 30–39.
- Avraham, E. (2000). *The media in Israel: Center and periphery*. Jerusalem: Akademon.
- Avraham E., Wolfsfeld, G., and Aburaiya I. (2000). Dynamics of the news coverage of minorities: The case of the Arab citizens in Israel. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 24(2), 117–133.
- Assad, G. (1997). The Palestinians in Israel: Their status in an era of peace [in Hebrew]. *Medina, Mimshal Ve'yahasim BenLeumim*, 41–42, 123–154.
- Bennett, W. L. (1983) *News: The politics of illusion*. New York: Longman.
- Berger, P. and Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality*. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday.
- Berkowitz, D. (1992). Non-routine news and newwork: Exploring a what-a-story. *Journal of Communication*, 42, 82–94.
- Berkowitz, D. (2000). Doing double duty: Paradigm repair and Princess Diana. *Journalism*, 1, 125–144.
- Bishara, A. (1996). The Arab Israeli: Study of political discourse. [in Hebrew]. *Zionism: Actual debate* (pp. 312–339). Beer-Sheva: The Ben-Gurion Center.
- Bishara, A. (1993). On the question of the Palestinian minority [in Hebrew]. *Teoria U' Bikoret*, 3, 7–20.
- Carey J. W. (1989). *Communication as culture*. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman.
- Carey J. W. (2000). Some personal notes on journalism education. *Journalism*, 1, 12–23.
- Cohen, A. A. and Roeh, I. (1990). A 5-version tale of one jeep, one Palestinian and two Israelis. *Feedback*, 31(4), 6–12.
- Davis, H. (1985). Discourse and media influence. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed), *Discourse and communication* (pp. 44–60). Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.
- Dewey, J. (1927). *The Public and its problems*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Dor, D. (2001). *Newspapers under influence*. Tel Aviv: Babel.
- Entnam, R. (1991). Framing US coverage of international news: Contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran Air incidents. *Journal of Communication*, 4, 6–27.
- First, A. (2001). The good, the bad and the missing: On conflicting tendencies towards the Arabs in Israeli media [in Hebrew]. *Panim*, 17, 86–94.
- Gans, H. (1979). *Deciding what's news*. New York: Vintage.
- Hall, S. (1973). Encoding and decoding in the television message. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, and P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language* (pp. 128–138). London: Hutchinson.
- Hallin, D. (1994). *We keep America on the top of the world*. London: Routledge.
- Hallin, D. (1986). *The uncensored war: The media and Vietnam*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Husband, C. (1982). *'Race' in Britannia: Continuity and change*. London: Hutchinson.
- Iyengar, S. (1990). The accessibility bias in politics: Television news and public opinion. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 2(1), 1–15.
- Lerman, C. L. (1983). Dominate discourse: The institutional voice and the control of topic. In H. Davis (Ed.), *Language, image, media* (pp. 74–103). Oxford: Blackwell.

- Levi, D. (1991). The ideological role of television news: The case of the Intifada in 'Mabat' [in Hebrew]. *Patuah*, 1, 9–30.
- Liebes, T. (1997). *Reporting the Arab-Israeli conflict – How hegemony works*. London: Routledge.
- Liebes, T. and Katz, E. (1993). *The export of meaning*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Peled, Y. (1993). Strangers in Utopia: The civic status of the Palestinians in Israel [in Hebrew]. *Teoria U'Bikoret*, 3, 21–35.
- Rabinowitz, D. (1993). How the Palestinians became Arab Israelis? [in Hebrew]. *Teoria U'Bikoret*, 4, 141–151.
- Roeh, I. (1994). *Seven openings for discussion on communication* [in Hebrew]. Eben Yehuda: Reches Publishing.
- Roeh, I. and Cohen, A. (1992). One of the bloodiest days: A comparative analysis of open and close TV news. *Journal of Communication*, 42(2), 42–55.
- Ross, K. (1998). Making race matter: An overview. In B. Franklin and D. Murphy (Eds.), *Making the local news* (pp. 228–240). London: Routledge.
- Rorty, R. (1991). *Objectivity, relativism and truth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smooha, S. (1990). Minority status in an ethnic democracy: The status of the Arab minority in Israel. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 13, 389–413.
- Schudson, M. (2002). What's unusual about covering politics as usual. In B. Zelizer and S. Allan (Eds.), *Journalism after September 11* (pp. 36–47). New York: Routledge.
- Schudson, M. (1989). How culture works: Perspectives from media studies on the efficacy of symbols. *Theory and Society*, 18, 153–180.
- Schudson, M. (1982). The politics of narrative form: The emergence of news conventions in print and television. *Daedalus*, 3(4), 97–112.
- Tuchman, G. (1973). Making news by doing work: Routinizing the unexpected. *American Journal of Sociology*, 79(1), 110–131.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1988). *News as discourse*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1996). Power and the news media. In D. Paletz (Ed.), *Political communication in action* (pp. 9–36). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Waisbord, S. (2002). Journalism, risk and patriotism. In B. Zelizer and S. Allan (Eds.), *Journalism after September 11* (pp. 201–219). New York: Routledge.
- Zelizer, B., Park D., and Gudelunas, D. (2002). How bias shapes the news: Challenging The New York Times' status as a newspaper of record on the Middle East. *Journalism*, 3(3), 283–307.
- Zelizer, B. (1993). Journalists as interpretative communities. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 10, 219–237.