

MA Thesis

Through the Lens of CNN.

The Representation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in visual and textual content of CNN Digital after Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel: a Multimodal Framing Analysis

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10098 words



“I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”

- Confucius

Front page image retrieved from : Vox (2016). *Everything you need to know about Israel-Palestine*. URL: <https://www.vox.com/2018/11/20/18079996/israel-palestine-conflict-guide-explainer>

Acknowledgments

In this opening of my thesis, I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to various people

First and foremost, I would like to heartfully thank my thesis supervisor Emmeline for the fun and educational weekly meetings, your constructive feedback, and patience throughout the process

A big thanks to my thesis groupmates Julia, Josephine and Anouk for their interesting insights, peer feedback, and support

Then, I would also like to thank Carolin for the useful feedback on my research proposal and for her willingness to be the second reader

Lastly, I would like to thank my friends and family for the constant pillars of support during the thesis and my academic career

Abstract

This thesis investigates how CNN Digital represented the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the days following Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel on December 6th, 2017, and the opening of the US embassy in the holy city on May 14th, 2018. The multimodal research sought to answer how the conflict is represented in images and text and how these interact, drawing on the multimodal framing devices of Belmonte and Porto (2020) including topic choice, composition, distance, and point of view (POV).

In texts, CNN Digital avoided showing positions by attributing the responsibility for discourse and actions to the source. In both periods, US politicians and their stances were predominant in texts. Whereas this result could be referred to as CNN Digital being US-oriented, traditional US news outlets are responsible for closely examining the US government. Thus, the label cannot be placed on CNN Digital's coverage of the events.

However, in images of both periods, Palestinian protests and clashes with Israel occurred most often. Further findings indicate how Israeli forces were often shown as detached and machine-like in visuals, emphasizing their weaponry and not showing their faces. Meanwhile, Palestinian protesters were more frequently depicted in an animalistic dehumanizing manner, such as by depicting aggressive behavior and presenting high-angle camera shots that frame a group of protesters as chaotic and looked down upon.

Overall, this study found that CNN Digital frames the conflict as a dispute between two groups fighting over the same land rather than a religious dispute. The study also confirms that texts focus more on political and distant information, while images elicit emotions through close-ups and dramatic situations. Previous research by Jungblut and Zakareviciute (2018) showed that sympathy for the affected people increases over time due to unease about human suffering and the will to resolve a conflict. However, this research suggests that the selection of images in covering this conflict is primarily influenced by the events of focus. In order to determine whether sympathy indeed increases over time, further research is recommended that covers one more prolonged period in the conflict. Moreover, framing researchers could analyze another transnational news outlet to compare whether CNN Digital is indeed more US-focused in its textual news coverage.

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1. Introduction

“I have no comment”, a young American said in a Facebook reel regarding Americans’ attitudes towards the Middle East and Muslims. Some others also responded quite vaguely or declined to provide input. Although it is clear that a singular video is no accurate representation of what all Americans think of the Middle East, their reactions surprised me. I thought that the efforts to promote a more positive image of the Middle East by celebrities, such as the Palestinian-American supermodels Gigi and Bella Hadid, Harry Potter star Emma Watson, and actress Zendaya, would have had a significant effect on the youth’s attitude. Yet, the video showed that there are still many negative perceptions towards the region.

A prolonged conflict in the Middle East that has consistently garnered American political interest is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for which the US aimed to take the role of mediator. In the Netherlands, however, it seems as if pro-Palestinian sentiments are growing, even though the country has largely supported Israel in its search for nationhood. A reason for this sentiment could be the growing number of immigrants from the Middle East and their perspective on the conflict. When reading Dutch news on Instagram concerning the war in Ukraine and the supportive US involvement, the responders often comment why the US is not doing something similar for the “Palestinian children that get killed every day by Israel”.

As we live in an ever-changing, interconnected, and globalized society, the difference in attitude towards the Middle East between the young American people in the video and the Dutch Instagram responders sparked my interest. During my master’s studies in Intercultural Communication, we learned about the impact of news channels on the representation of groups and conflicts, and subsequently how it influences perception. Consequently, the question I would like to raise in this research is: how is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict represented in US-owned media?

In order to dive into this question, the thesis will study visuals and texts of CNN Digital, the online news outlet of Cable News Network (CNN) that is the global leader of online news in regard to audience reach. While CNN Digital strives for credibility and objectivity in its news coverage, former president Donald Trump accused the outlet of sharing “fake news” (Leon & Huss, 2017). Other sources refer to the outlet as being anti-Trump and say that the outlet tends to cover news from a more Western perspective while downplaying news from other regions. Therefore, this research aims to uncover the extent to which CNN Digital represents the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The next chapter of this thesis first provides the background on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, how the US deals with the conflict, the nature of CNN and how it is involved in conflicts, and underpins the social relevance of this study. Chapter 3 extends on the concepts of framing, multimodality, multimodal framing devices, and the academic relevance of this research. In chapter 4, the analysis method that is applied in this research is described. The analysis results are presented in chapter 5, and discussed in chapter 6 in light of previous studies concerning multimodal framing. In the conclusion chapter, the main research question will be answered, and the limitations and recommendations for further research are discussed.

2. Contextual Framework

The thesis research zooms in on the visual and textual representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by the online news coverage of the Cable News Network (CNN), CNN Digital, after the former president of the United States (US), Donald Trump, recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Due to the complexity of the conflict that has been ongoing for ages, it would be impossible to cover the conflict in its full-length with the contextual framework. Therefore, the contextual framework elaborates on *the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* in general, *the Response of the US, CNN*, and the *Main Research Question and Social Relevance* of this research.

2.1 The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

To contextualize the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this paragraph first dives into “the Holy Land”, which is the region of concern in this conflict. The paragraph will subsequently examine the involvement of Great Britain, Zionists, and Palestinian nationalists in this conflict.

The Holy Land is a Middle-Eastern region encompassing Israel and Palestinian territories, and holds immense significance for three monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Particularly Jerusalem is a place of religious importance. In Judaism, the city hosted the return of Jewish exiles from Babylon, and is currently home to the remnant of the most sacred site in Jewish worship, the Western Wall of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was located on the Temple Mount. In Christianity, it is believed that Jesus often visited the Temple in Jerusalem for teachings (Goodwin, 2014). Some Christians and Jews believe that rebuilding this Temple is a precondition for the (second) coming of the Messiah. However, the Temple’s site in Jerusalem now houses the Al-Aqsa Mosque, where the Islamic prophet Muhammad often led his prayers, and the Dome of the Rock from which he ascended to heaven (DeYoung, 2012). The Temple Mount is subject to a status quo agreement that regulates access to the Islamic holy sites, restricting worship exclusively to Muslims. Jews and others are only allowed to visit (Baker, 2022). Israel would ensure security and maintain the status quo over the Temple Mount. The agreement was made between Israel and the Islamic Waqf after Israel captured the site during the six-day war of 1967 to secure the region’s stability by providing both parties influence (Baker, 2022).

According to Inbari (2018), the Israeli-Palestinian conflict encompasses religious disputes involving the status quo, but predominantly it is a national dispute of two groups fighting over the same land. Jews, Muslims, and Christians have lived peacefully together in the Palestinian lands for centuries (Halper, 2021). However, the longing of European Jews to return to the “Promised Land” for Abraham’s descendants, the experience of settlers in other parts of the world, and the long-reflected misery of Jewish existence in Europe fueled the nationalist movement of Zionism (Halper, 2021). A widely known Zionist phrase that marks their interest in establishing a Jewish state reads as follows: “A land without people for a people without land” (Muir, 2008, p. 55). This phrase refers to the Holy Land as uninhabited and denies the existence of a distinct Palestinian culture (Muir, 2008).

During World War I, Great Britain promised Arab leaders to support their establishment of sovereign national states in return for support against the Ottoman empire. The League of Nations, an organization for international cooperation initiated by the victors of the war, decided that Palestine would become under the mandate of Great Britain, granting it authority over the region (United Nations, 2023). The mandate was meant to be a transitory phase until Palestine would attain the status of an independent state, which has never happened because of conflicting obligations. In fact, the Balfour declaration stating that the British government favors the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine was incorporated in the Mandate (United Nations, 2023). Both the Zionist and Arab leaders were dissatisfied as Great Britain had no power to award the land to either Jews or Palestinians under the terms of the mandate, resulting in fierce opposition towards the British. The British government decided to submit the problem to the United Nations (UN) in 1947 (Stein, 2022). On November 29th, 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181: Palestinian territories would be divided between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, and were to be linked in an economic union; Jerusalem would come under international control (Ben-Dror, 2013).

While the Zionists approved this plan, Palestinian Arabs boycotted the commission due to most of the Assembly’s members’ pro-Zionist stand, and the belief that the inquiry was a foregone conclusion (Ben-Dror, 2007). Afterwards, violent operations were launched in Palestine to thwart the implementation (Ben Dror, 2013). Consequently, the UN focused on implementing this plan for a Jewish state by developing the Jewish Militia that would control the process of independence. However, the Zionists failed to establish the Jewish Militia. Instead, independence was declared and a military force was formed without UN assistance (Ben-Dror, 2013). The failed partition plan and its consequences sparked ongoing tensions between the Palestinians and Israelis, resulting in a prolonged conflict (Elvira, 2013, as cited

in Arrosyid & Halwati, 2021). The conflict that has been ongoing for ages has caused radicalization of both societies and dehumanization of the ‘other’ (Pappé, 2010; Chomsky & Pappé 2010; Khalidi 2010; Finkelstein 2003; Carter 2006, as cited in Richmond, Björkdahl, & Visoka, 2023).

2.2 The Response of US Politics

Wilcox (2016) explains that the US’s primary Middle East policy goal is achieving the two-state solution for Palestine and Israel, in line with the UN resolution. Throughout the years, all US administrations have arranged high-level diplomatic negotiations between Palestine and Israel to achieve a peaceful agreement on two states, which have all been unsuccessful (Pressman, 2016). Despite its mediating role, the US was the first nation to recognize the state of Israel (Truman Presidential Museum & Library, n.d.). Regarding the “State of Palestine”, which has been recognized by a majority of 137 UN member states, the US has been a leading opponent of the Palestinian statehood bid, as Israel is a fundamental ally with strong economic, military, and diplomatic relations (Zanotti, 2022). Due to this alliance, largely impacted by domestic politics and the powerful influence of the “Jewish Lobby” organizations in the US that work for Jewish and Israeli interests (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006), the US supports Israel’s claims. The country often criticizes the UN for supporting the Palestinian cause (Zanotti, 2022).

During his presidential campaign, former US President Donald Trump voiced the ambition to bring peace to the Middle East (Cohen-Almagor, 2017). Nonetheless, under Trump’s administration, the US policy shifted in a direction that more explicitly favored Israel vis-à-vis the Palestinians (Zanotti, 2022). During that period, multiple notable actions were taken, including stopping the financial support for Palestinians, and Israeli settlements in the West Bank were given a more favorable position. The US also officially acknowledged Jerusalem as the capital of Israel on December 6th, 2017, and moved their embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem on May 14th, 2018.

2.3 CNN

The decision by Donald Trump to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move its embassy was broadly covered in news outlets, such as the Cable News Network (CNN). The following sections extend upon CNN, its digital news outlet CNN Digital, “the Fourth Estate” and “the CNN Effect”, followed by a section on CNN’s political stance.

CNN has been operating for over 35 years. CNN Digital, which provides online news, is the world leading online news outlet and began operating in 1995 (CNN, 2023). Bashri et al. (2012, as cited in El Damanhoury & Saleh, 2017) state that CNN follows the tradition of American journalism, where the media is responsible for closely examining the US government and its executive, legislative and juridical power, often being dubbed as “The Fourth Estate”. Besides a national, US character, CNN has a global presence and is thought of as a world leader in covering war and international conflicts (Mhamdi, 2017). Its 24/7 news coverage on television is broadcasted in 200 countries and territories worldwide (Brown & Youmans, 2012).

“The CNN effect” suggests that the media has a significant relationship with politics, as “compelling television images, such as images of a humanitarian crisis, cause US policymakers to intervene in a situation when such an intervention might otherwise not be in the US national interest” (Feist, 2001, p. 713, as cited in Gilboa, 2005). For example, CNN was the only channel providing live 24-hour coverage of the Gulf War of 1991 (Gilboa, 2005). Benabid (2022) explains that in covering major events, news outlets such as CNN can shape public opinion, which, in turn, impacts policymakers’ agendas. Thus, news outlets play a cardinal role in creating an understanding of global affairs through meaningful exchange of information and ideas (Okon, 2013).

As a top rating channel, CNN has a clear mission to report news stories framed within a global outreach (Kevin et al., 2013; Pew Research Center, 2012; Valassopoulos, 2012, as cited in Elena, 2016). However, some critics argue that CNN is pro-American and Eurocentric in its representation of countries and underrepresentation of others (Al-Najjar, 2009, as cited in El Damanhoury & Saleh, 2017). This could suggest that CNN takes a politically Western-oriented stance in the conflict. Furthermore, both Democrats and Republicans in the US have criticized CNN for being biased (Bossie, 2013, as cited in El Damanhoury & Saleh, 2017). Multiple studies suggest that placing a “Democrat” or “Republican” label on news outlets can only be explained by readers’ political affiliation (Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley, & Matsa, 2014; Grieco, 2020). In 2017, the majority of American CNN readers, namely 61 percent, identified as Democrat (Watson, 2021).

No research has yet been conducted to suggest whether the “Democrat-oriented” CNN, which some refer to as “pro-American” and “Eurocentric”, favored the former president’s recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. It is unclear whether CNN supported one party over another during that event of the conflict, such as by supporting Palestinians in contradiction to US policies.

2.4 Main Research Question and Social Relevance

The thesis will focus on the following research question: “How does CNN Digital represent the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel?” The research delves into the broader issue of media bias. CNN, specifically its digital edition, has immense global reach and therefore bears great responsibility as a gatekeeper of information for the audience. Understanding how CNN Digital represents the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is socially relevant, as it may influence US policymakers and public opinion on this violent conflict.

3. Theoretical Framework

In order to create an understanding in how to approach the main research question, it is essential to introduce several important concepts. The first paragraph elaborates on *Framing*, followed by *Multimodal Framing*, and *Multimodal Framing Devices*. Afterwards, the *Research Question*, *Sub-Questions*, and *Academic Relevance* are formulated.

3.1 Framing

The media reports on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on a daily basis. Yet, while channels need to bring factual information, contents can differ depending on whether it is from local or international news sources (Zanuddinn & Almahallawi, 2017). Transnational news outlets are expected to be more balanced and less biased or ethnocentric than local and national ones, due to a broader and more diverse audience (Baden & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2017). As the CNN Effect (see paragraph 2.4) suggests, the contents of such mass media, including the production of signs and symbols such as texts and images, play a crucial role in informing the public and influencing policymakers.

Media products can also align with and promote *ideology*, which is defined as “a system of meaning that helps define and explain the world and that makes value judgments about that world” (Croteau, 2002, p. 159). Thus, ideology indicates a set of beliefs and ideas that people use to make sense of the world. Framing in the media refers to the modes of presentation of a topic in news articles, through which the media can influence the public’s understanding of a message (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Entman (1993, as cited in Scheufele, 1999) states that the media provides the audience with schemas for interpreting events, highlighting the essential factors of selection and salience: “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such ways as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). Thus, in making certain parts of stories and situations stand out more, such as by contextualization or judgements, the media can shape individuals’ perceptions.

Framing can be constructed on both a micro-level and a macro-level. Whereas macro-level framing refers to the way journalists and other communicators portray news to convey meaning in a manner that resonates existing underlying schemas of audiences, microlevel framing refers to how individuals use this presentation to form their own expressions (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006). Although media framing can include the sender’s intent,

motives for choosing certain texts or visuals can also be unconscious ones (Gamson, 1989, as cited in Scheufele, 1999).

3.2 Multimodal Framing

Framing can occur in texts, such as headlines, quotes, captions, and also in images and videos. Texts and visuals have different framing effects. According to Coleman (2010), visuals can evoke emotions that are not integral regarding processing factual and argumentative content in an article, such as with texts. However, these evoked emotions are crucial in shaping how readers remember a story and are more accessible to be understood (Coleman, 2010). To extend upon the latter, in a single image, information, values, and emotions are conveyed (Rojas-Padille, Metze & Termeer, 2022). Emotional reactions evoked by visuals drive political behavior, but these cues can be overpowered by systematically processed verbal content in news articles (Powell, 2017). Messaris and Abraham (2001) also explained that visuals draw readers into a story whose meaning is elaborated via text. However, considering the power of images, there are still few studies that focus on analyzing visual frames (Amores, Calderón & Stanek, 2019). Lilleker, Veneti, and Jackson (2019) agree by stating that despite the emergence of a visual culture, the use of visual data in social research is still limited and lacking a systematic framework for analysis.

Acknowledging the equal importance of visual and textual frames, Jungblut and Zakareviciute (2018) conducted a multimodal framing analysis on the Israeli-Gazan conflict of 2014 in online US news outlets. Multimodality refers to “the study of any form (media, mode, semiotic resource) of communication other than the supposed dominant (at least in academic terms) form, written and spoken language” (O’Halloran & Smith, 2013, p. 7). Jungblut and Zakareviciute (2018) uncovered the interaction between textual and visual frames in their research. The results showed that while texts focused more on solutions and negotiations of the conflict, images depicted the human and violent side of the conflict as if the two communication modes were telling their own stories. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that regardless of the phase of violence the conflict was in, sympathetic visual coverage that focuses on depicting the victims and consequences of violence increases over time. They suggested that this finding was most likely due to the unease of human suffering from the public’s side and the desire to find a solution. However, they also suggested that further research is needed on different cases to contribute to the understanding of multimodal framing (Jungblut & Zakareviciute, 2018).

Another multimodal research on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, conducted by Doufesh and Briel (2021), examined whether ethnocentrism affects the coverage of protesters in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict of two regionally based transnational English language news websites, namely the more pro-Israeli news outlet *The Times of Israel* (TOI) and a news outlet with a more Arab perspective, *Al Jazeera* (AJE). The research presented different findings than those of Jungblut and Zakareviciute, as the researchers found that text and images were relatively coherent in the framing of events. In the limitations of their research, it is suggested to investigate international, and non-regional media outlets to ascertain whether the multimodality practices differ from local or regional ones (Doufesh & Briel, 2021).

3.3 Multimodal Framing Devices

In another study, Belmonte and Porto (2020) conducted a multimodal analysis on the most salient frames used in the news from different European countries to cover the US embassy opening and subsequent revolts. The researchers focused on newsbytes instead of full articles, containing both textual and visual elements. Newsbytes are found on online news outlet homepages and are presented in the form of headlines, a lead, hyperlinks, and visual support to respond to online readers' needs for quickly seeking and obtaining information (Kolodzy, 2006, as cited in Belmonte & Porto, 2020). Moreover, Moran (2020) explains that most online readers prefer to scan a news article rather than read the full text. Therefore, newspapers tend to place information upfront in the structure of content, make clear and noticeable headings and subheadings, employ different formatting techniques, and use plain language and images to facilitate readers (Moran, 2020).

In order to analyze quick bursts of visual and textual information simultaneously, such as newsbytes, Belmonte and Porto (2020) conducted a framing analysis that incorporated the following multimodal framing devices: subject choice, composition, distance, and point of view. Belmonte and Porto (2020) explained these devices as follows:

- **Subject (topic) choice** signifies “what we choose to look at”, and refers to the specific news topic that is selected and profiled over others in the article, such as “US Embassy Opening”. This thesis will use “topic choice” instead of “subject choice” to avoid confusion.
- **Composition** refers to the specific human and non-human compositional elements that appear in articles, such as people, objects, institutions, and organizations. The study particularly distinguished between human and non-human elements. For example, the

study found that in 81% of articles, “anonymous Palestinians” appeared in text and visuals, while only two out of 37 news articles showed “anonymous Israeli soldiers”. However, the Israeli bombs, were presented in approximately 60% of the articles. The absence of the human element of Israeli forces is a form of “mechanistic dehumanization” of Israeli forces, as they were viewed as mere instruments of war rather than individual human beings with feelings (Haslam, 2006). Another form he identified as “animalistic dehumanization”, which denies human attributes such as refined emotions or moral sensibility (Haslam, 2006).

- ***Distance*** refers to the level of detail provided to the audience, or “how closely we examine it”. When a news text or image is presented with a close-up shot or uses specific details, it creates a sense of proximity and emotional involvement. For example, specifying the number of deaths during clashes creates a greater emotional connection than simply stating “dozens die”. Direct quotations from individuals also create closeness. However, when no individuals are presented in images, or when these are presented from a distance (e.g. an airstrike, or a distant group of people), serves to distance the viewer from the content.
- ***Point of View*** refers to “where we view it from”. Hart (2015, as cited in Belmonte & Porto, 2020) argues that adopting a particular point of view in presenting a situation is equivalent to taking sides. The reason for this is that the metaphorical stance is a position in space that associates visual and ideological points of view, and Hart identifies two primary positions: an external observer’s perspective and an involved participant’s perspective. The former forms no emotional connections to subjects, whereas the latter does. In images, emotional connections are evoked by a front view, whereas in text this is accomplished by presenting the opinions or emotions of the journalist. Moreover, the camera angle can uncover the point of view, as a low-angle is associated with the dominance of the subject in an image. In contrast, a creates a sense of chaos among subjects who are looked down upon (Belmonte & Porto, 2020).

Paragraph 4.3 in the Analysis Methods chapter elaborates on these devices by operationalizing them into questions. Consequently, these questions can be used for analysis.

3.4 Research Question, Sub-Questions, and Academic Relevance

As formulated in paragraph 2.4, the main research question in this study is: “How does CNN Digital represent the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as

the Capital of Israel?” According to the studies by Jungblut and Zakareviciute (2018), Doufesh and Briel (2021), and Belmonte and Porto (2020), multimodal studies are still underexamined. Doufesh and Briel (2021) explained in their limitations that it is essential to apply multimodal studies on more transnational and non-regional news outlets besides Al Jazeera and the Times of Israel. Furthermore, the study suggested that more disciplines, besides communication, should apply multimodality in research to broaden its application. Belmonte and Porto (2020) mainly focused on cultural differences in multimodal framing and applied intercultural communication principles to their research. However, their corpus was derived from national European news outlets. Moreover, the study acknowledged in its limitations that the multimodal framing devices were quite overlapping, causing difficulties in analyzing texts and visuals. Therefore, the following three sub-questions are formulated:

SQ 1: “What categories within each framing device; topic choice, composition, distance and point of view, are foregrounded in images of the news articles?”

SQ 2: “What categories within each framing device; topic choice, composition, distance and point of view, are foregrounded in highlighted texts of the news articles?”

SQ 3: “Drawing on multimodal framing analysis, how do images and highlighted texts interact with one another to construct meaning and represent the conflict?”

Because of the possible difference in framing effect in text and visuals, the first two sub-questions address these communication methods separately. Subsequently, sub-question three focuses on how images and highlighted texts interact with one another to construct meaning and represent the conflict, considering the data of the previous questions and prior research. Thence, this study aims to address an academic gap by analyzing another transnational news outlet that is multimodally relatively unexamined in the conflict, namely CNN Digital. The multimodal framing devices by Belmonte and Porto will be applied to contribute to their research and potentially broaden insights into these devices. However, whereas their research focused on online newsbytes framing, this research will focus on images and highlighted text (headlines, subheadings, bold texts etc.).

4. Analysis Methods

This chapter describes the corpus selection and what analysis steps were taken in this research. The chapter is divided into the following sections: *Research Design*, *Data Collection Method* and *Data Analysis Method*.


4.1 Research Design

The aim of this research was to explore how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is represented in CNN Digital after Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel on December 6th, 2017. Accordingly, the US opened an embassy there on May 14th, 2018. The multimodal framing analysis of Belmonte and Porto (2020) used to investigate this question is qualitative in nature and combines data analysis with interpretation (Jnanathapaswi, 2021). Therefore, thematic analysis was used as a data analysis tool to structure interpretations, examine patterns and connections between identified themes, and weigh them according to their frequency of occurrence (Jnanathapaswi, 2021). This enabled the comparison of themes appearing in the dataset. The following steps were taken to conduct a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

1. Familiarizing with data by noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating codes by coding specific features of interest to the study.
3. Searching, reviewing, and defining themes.

Table 1 presents an example of the thematic analysis based on the framing devices for texts and images.

Table 1 – Example of Thematic Analysis to Analyze the Multimodal Framing Devices

Textual Analysis		Article 1 - 06/12/2017	Period 1
Headline	Devices	Initial Ideas	
Pope Francis prays for the preservation of Jerusalem	Subject Choice	Pope Francis prays for the preservation of Jerusalem	
	Composition	Pope Francis	
	Distance	Prays, an individual, no direct quote, an action	
	Point of View	Pope Francis does something, his act is presented	
	Codes		Themes
	Reactions from Religious Actors		Religion
	Religious Actors		Christianity Personalities
	Reported action		Close to medium
	Nomalization and reported act/speech		External observer - unexplicit
Visual Analysis		Article 1 - 06/12/2017	Period 1
Image (Instagram)	Devices	Initial Ideas	
	Subject Choice	Pope prays at the wailing wall	
	Composition	The pope, a wall	
	Distance	From top to waist, not close but not medium either	
	Point of View	Subjects do not look straight into camera, rear view	
	Codes		Themes
	Pope, wailing Wall		Religion
	Pope, wall		Christianity Personalities, Holy Sites
	Close to Medium		Close to Medium
	Rear View, no POV, Medium		External Observer - Unexplicit - Medium angle

4.2 Data Collection Method

The data collection source used for this research was the Nexis Uni search engine. This tool enables the filtering of CNN Digital's (CNN.com) articles by keywords and timeframes.

The keywords that were selected for this research are “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”, “Palestinian-Israeli Conflict”, “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”, “Jerusalem”, “Palestine Israel” (separate words) and “Palestine Israel Conflict” (separate words). The keywords containing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were chosen for the reason that these name the conflict that has been subject to analysis. However, in case other names were given to this conflict, Palestine and Israel were also used as keywords. Furthermore, Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, after which the US embassy was opened in this city. Thus, Jerusalem has been included as a keyword.

The timeframe selected is December 6th, 2017 to December 27th, 2017, and May 14th, 2018 to June 4th, 2018. The timeframe covers the day of the recognition on December 6th, 2017, and the opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem on May 14th, 2018. Both events are consequences of the pro-Israeli US policy. The lifespan of news coverage of events typically lasts not longer than 12 days (O'Neill, 2019). However, according to Figueras, Caselli, and Broersma (2020) the lifespan depends on whether the news story covers a prominent, governmental, or a sensational issue. Since the recognition directly impacted people living in the Holy Land, it has a lifespan of approximately 22 days after the climax day. As

representation studies require a longer sample period, the decision was made to cover a timeframe of 22 days instead of 12 days, starting from the climax days.

To collect the data, the search terms, dates, and source that were previously mentioned were applied. Duplicates were removed (see figure 1).

During the familiarization process of the dataset (step one of the thematic analysis), it appeared that some articles only mentioned the key terms once or did not cover any text or images relating to the selected events. For example, “the day’s news” covered more stories besides the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In such cases, only the photos and highlighted texts that adhered to the selected events were included in the corpora. Furthermore, many photos in the articles were links to videos, yet these videos are not included in the analysis. Since the small texts accompanying the images with links to videos often provided information on the video rather than the image, the texts accompanying the images were not included in the analysis. The selected corpora ultimately consists of 110 articles (see figure 1). Appendix A presents the selected articles of period one (corpus 2a) and Appendix B the articles of period two.

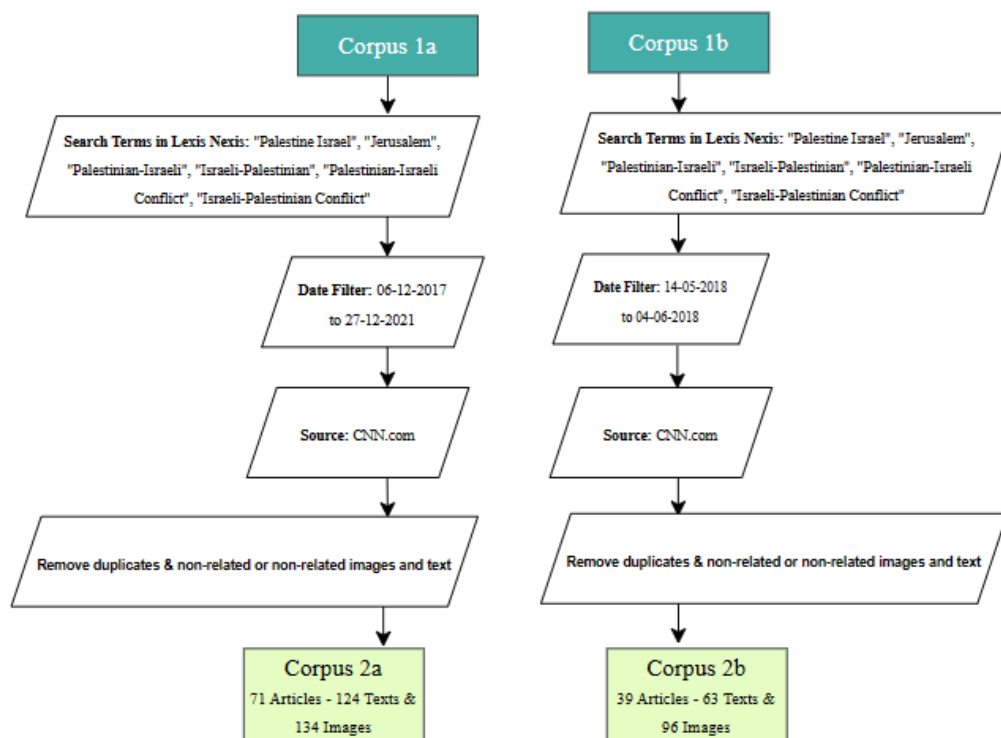


Figure 1 – Corpus Flow Chart

4.3 Data Analysis Method

The data analysis method that was used to answer the research questions involved a multimodal framing analysis incorporating the framing devices of Belmonte and Porto (2020): topic choice, distance, composition, and point of view (see paragraph 3.3). To clarify the process of analyzing framing devices, this paragraph presents their operationalization.

According to Belmonte and Porto (2020), topic choice refers to the topics present in news articles that can be detected through a brief descriptive analysis that summarizes the data. The device has been operationalized as follows: **“What is/are the main topic(s) present in images? What is/are the main topic(s) present in text?”**

The composition framing device aims to identify additional elements that are used to visually or textually contextualize topics in articles. These elements can be either human or non-human elements. A way of operationalizing this element for text and images is as follows: **“What human and non-human compositional elements are present in images? What human and non-human compositional elements are present in text?”**

Next, the distance of both textual and visual elements have been analyzed. Belmonte and Porto use “proximation strategies” such as numerals, metonymies, mass nouns, and emotional terms to assess textual distance. For images, the use of close-up shots is equivalent. Therefore, the following questions were asked: **“Is the proximity in images close, medium to close, medium, distant to medium, or distant considering the photo shots? Is the proximity in text close, medium to close, medium, distant to medium, or distant considering numerals, metonymies, mass nouns, and emotional terms?”**

Points of view in text and images can either be that of external observers or involved participants. In images, a view where the subjects look straight into the camera, placing the audience in the middle of an event, is considered to be that of an involved participant. Conversely, a rear or side view places the audience in the position of an external observer. The use of reported speech and actions is also considered as the audience taking an external position. However, using emotional and contrasting terms that could expose opinions presents an involved participant’s point of view. In their research, this visual and textual point of view was either from Palestinians or Israelis, depending on what side was dehumanized. Therefore, the following questions should be asked: **“To what extent does text present emotions or contrasting terms? To what extent do images show front views of subjects? What subjects in the conflict are presented in a negative or a positive light?”** Additionally to point of view, Belmonte and Porto added that camera angles can also frame individuals in a conflict, for which the following question was asked: **“Are there any observable patterns in shot angle?”**

5. Results

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis. Firstly, the most foregrounded categories of the framing devices in text will be presented, followed by the results for images.

5.1 Textual Analysis Results

The figures below display the frequency of textual themes identified by answering the operationalized questions for the framing devices in paragraph 4.3, using a thematic analysis approach. The results are divided into two periods: period one covers the 22 days after Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and period two covers the 22 days after the opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem and the subsequent revolts.

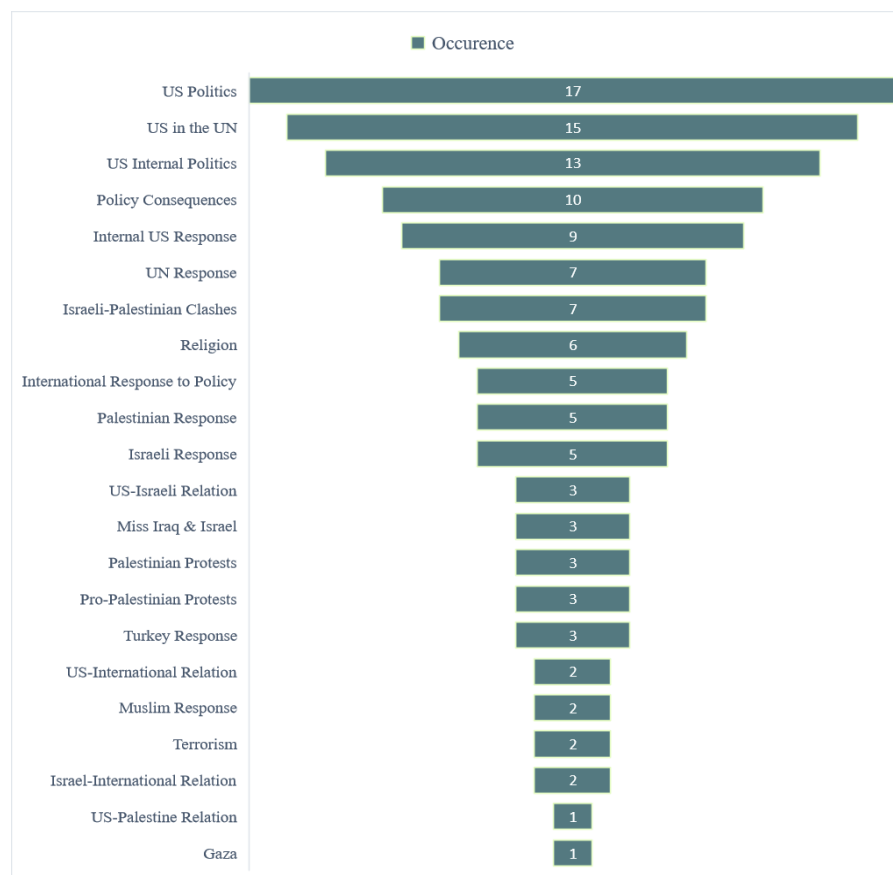


Figure 2a – Textual Topic Choices in Period 1 (Recognition Jerusalem)

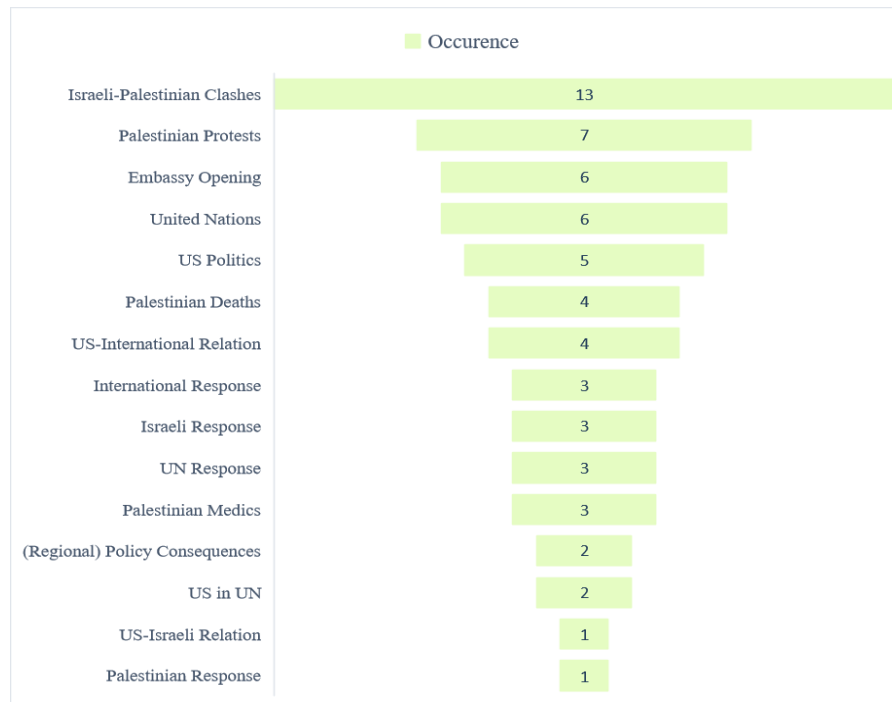


Figure 2b – Textual Topic Choices in Period 2 (Embassy Opening)

The first device examined for the highlighted texts was **topic choice**, which helps determine what topics CNN Digital prioritizes in its coverage of an event. Period one (figure 2a) predominantly discussed news revolving US politics, how the US acted in the UN, and how the recognition influenced internal politics. The predominant topic choices are aligned with the US foreign policy to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. An example that shows the topic choice of the US in the UN is the following headline:

“US stands alone, defiant at UN Security Council over Jerusalem” (Liebermann, 2017).

In period two (figure 2b), the focus shifted to Israeli-Palestinian clashes, Palestinian protests, and the embassy opening. The results are in accordance with the event of focus, namely the embassy opening and subsequent revolts. US politics became less prominent.

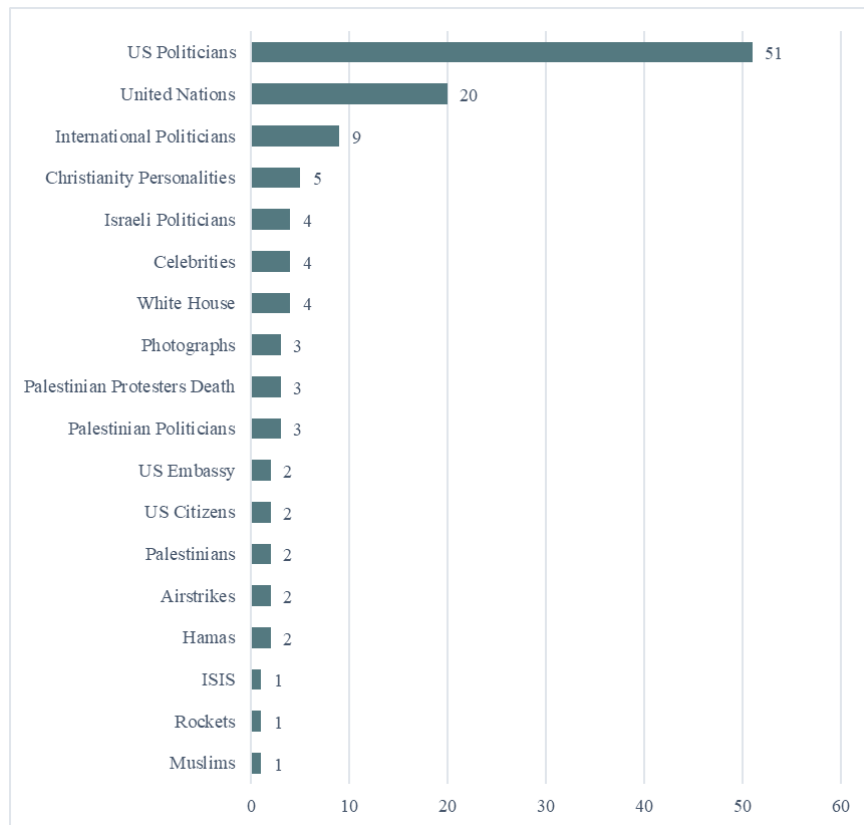


Figure 3a – Textual Compositional Elements in Period 1 (Recognition Jerusalem)

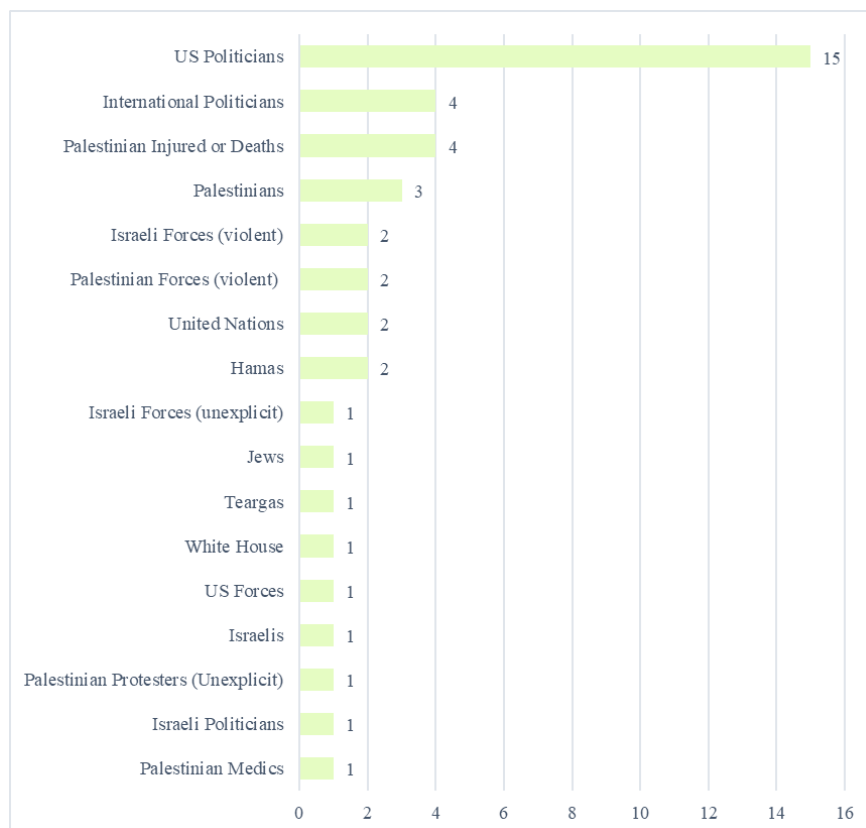


Figure 3b – Textual Compositional Elements in Period 2 (Embassy Opening)

The second framing device that was looked at was **compositional elements in text**, which comprise both non-human and human elements that contextualize sentences (figures 3a and 3b). Both corpora specifically added the human element of US political personalities to texts, and most often Donald Trump (see example below). The UN was often added as non-human composition (organization), and international politicians were also frequently used.

“Trump has to live with the consequences of his Israel decision” (Robertson, 2017). Donald Trump is coded as a compositional element, and the theme for this code is US Politicians.

While CNN Digital’s coverage in period one placed a greater emphasis on politicians and the UN, period two shifts this focus towards the regional consequences of the US Middle East policy. Notably, Palestinians were frequently included as human compositional elements (see example below). Israelis as human compositional elements were less present. Still, US politicians remained the most frequently added human compositional element in both periods.

“The Gazan leading a popular uprising against Israel” (Lee & Abdelaziz, 2018). The protesting Gazan is coded as a compositional element, and the theme for this is Palestinian protesters (Unexplicit). Unexplicit indicates that the protesters were neither associated with peacefulness, victimhood, or violence.

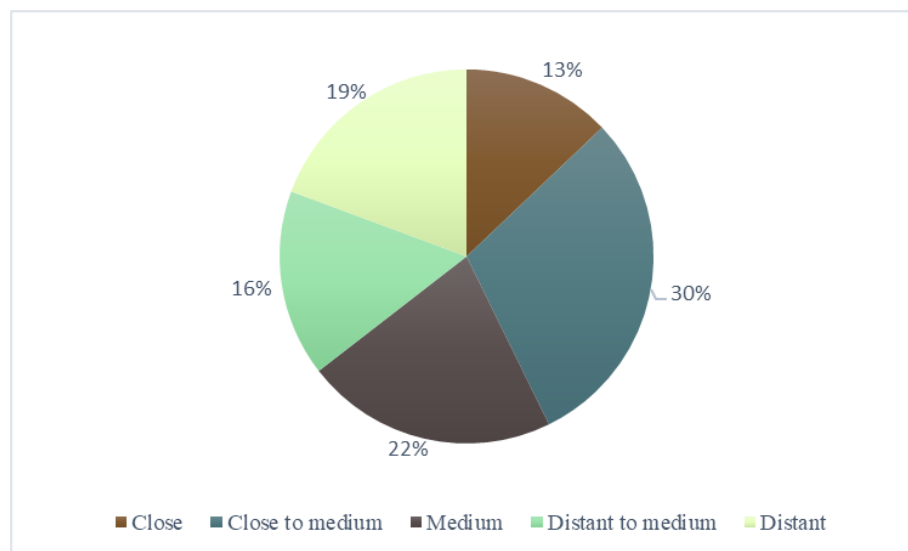


Figure 4a – Textual Distance in Period 1 (Recognition Jerusalem)

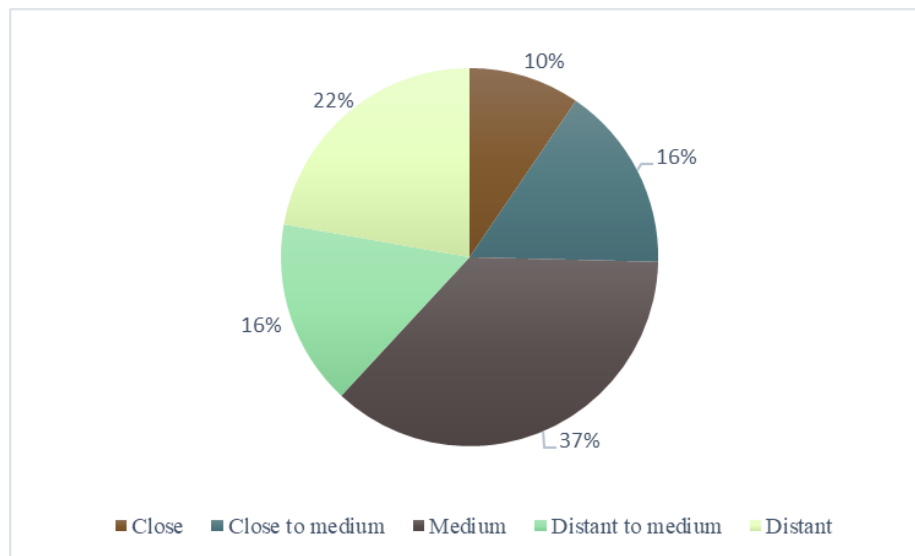


Figure 4b – Textual Distance in Period 2 (Embassy Opening)

Figures 4a and 4b present the **textual distance**, which measures the extent to which text zooms in on the actions or words of individuals. In period one, the largest category was that of a close to medium distance. A close to medium distance presents either actions or indirect words of individuals, or direct quotations of organizations (see example below). Period two presented a more distant approach to texts, with the majority presenting a medium distance: actions of organizations or groups of individuals. Close-ups in texts, the third-largest category for both corpora, indicate the use of direct quotes from individuals.

“He’s treated thousands. The surgeon who keeps returning to Gaza” (Wedeman, 2018). The textual distance was close to medium, since it involves an action taken by an individual, but without any direct quotation from that person.

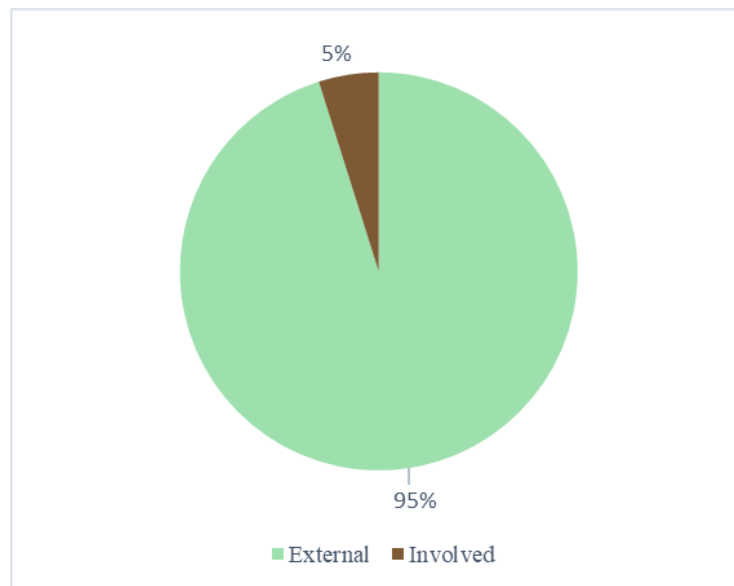


Figure 5a – Textual Degree of Involvement in Period 1 (Recognition Jerusalem)

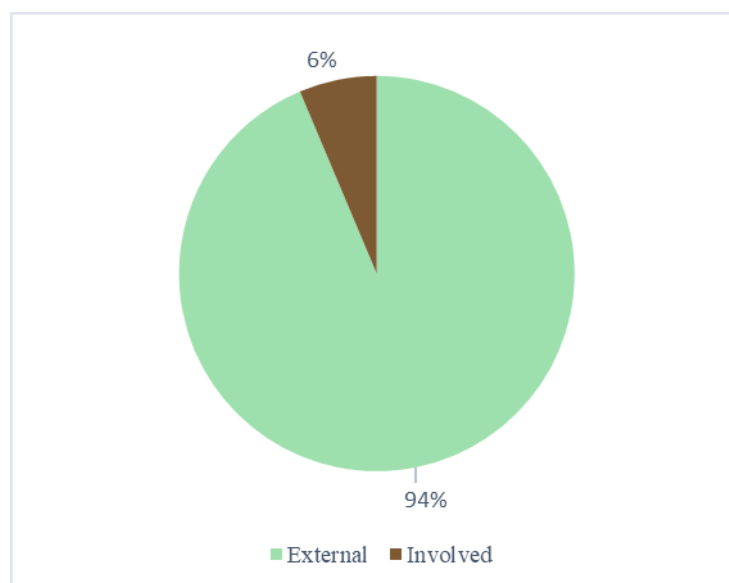


Figure 5b – Textual Degree of Involvement in Period 2 (Embassy Opening)

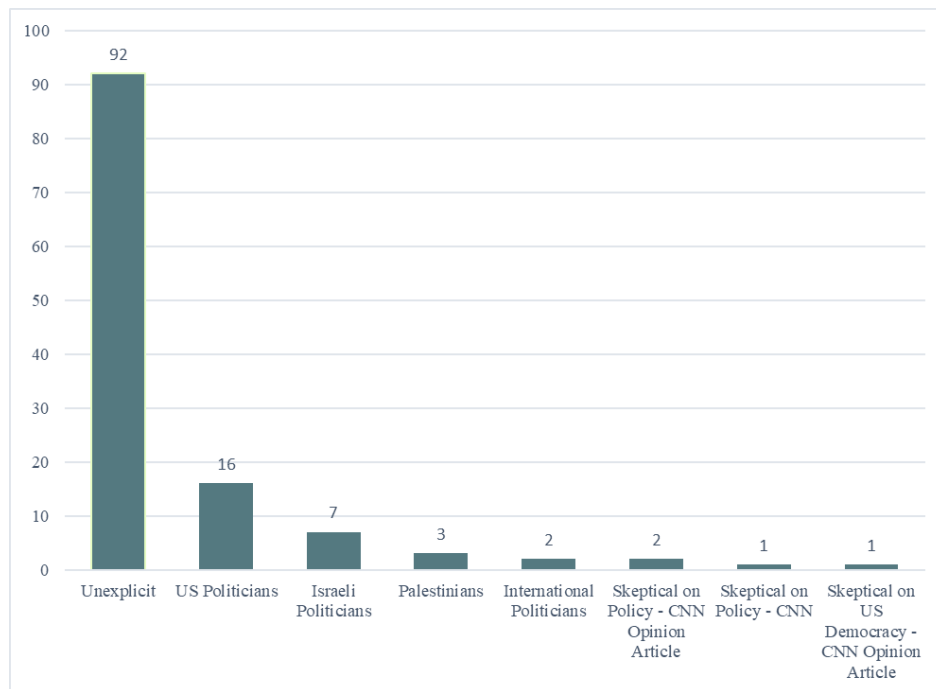


Figure 6a – Textual POVs in Period 1 (Recognition Jerusalem)

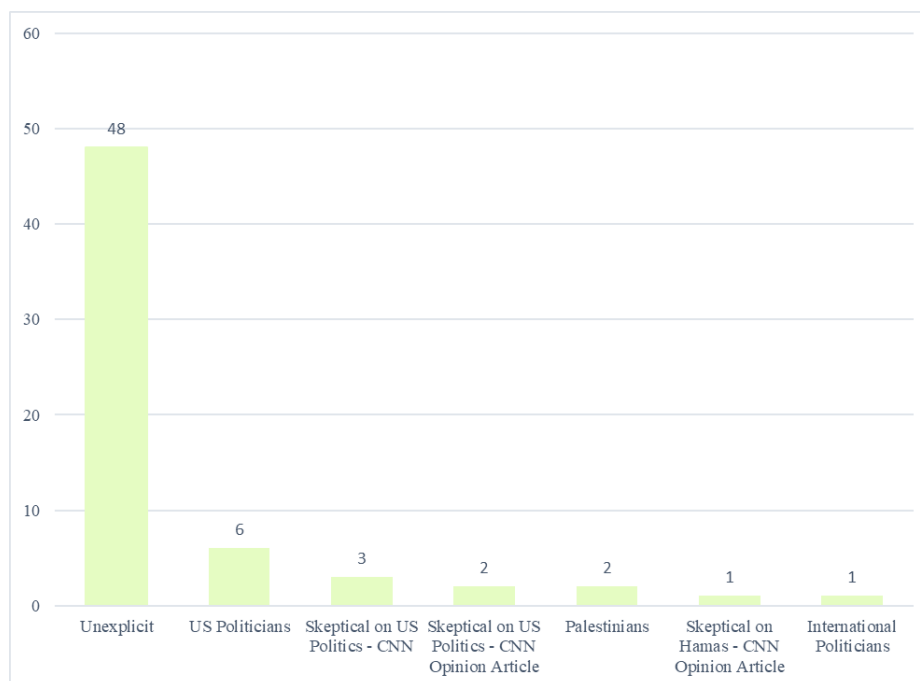


Figure 6b – Textual POVs in Period 2 (Embassy Opening)

The fourth framing device, point of view, was analyzed to evaluate CNN Digital's stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The results show that the degree of involvement in both periods was predominantly external, indicating that the journalists rarely expressed emotions on topics and often attributed the responsibility of actions or words to the source (figure 5a and 5b). Whenever a point of view from CNN Digital's side was presented, it was usually in an "opinion" article that has the purpose of presenting point of views. These viewpoints were largely skeptical towards US politics and the policy (see example below).

"Thanks to Trump and Netanyahu, it's Jew vs. Jew" (Freedman, 2018). The sentence in the opinion article contains an opinion on the actions of Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, suggesting that their actions cause division within the Jewish community. The sentence reflects the journalist's opinion, which is critical of the policy.

External texts can, however, give the floor to the point of view of individuals and organizations by using direct quotations. The predominant point of view in both periods was that of US politicians (figure 6a and figure 6b). It is worth noting that in period one, there was a greater emphasis on the Israeli point of view compared to the Palestinian point of view, and in period two the opposite was observed.

5.2 Image Analysis Results

The figures in this paragraph display the frequency of image themes identified by answering the operationalized questions for the framing devices in paragraph 4.3, using a thematic analysis approach. A difference will be made between the first period and the second period.

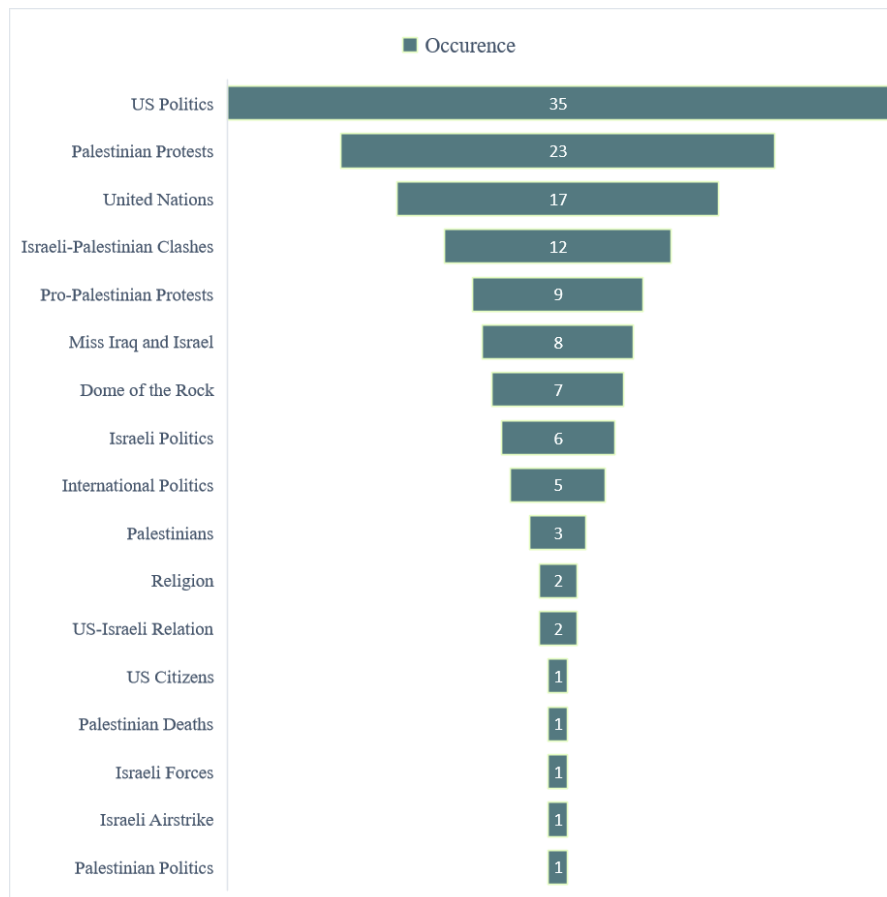


Figure 7a – Image Topic Choice in Period 1 (Recognition Jerusalem)

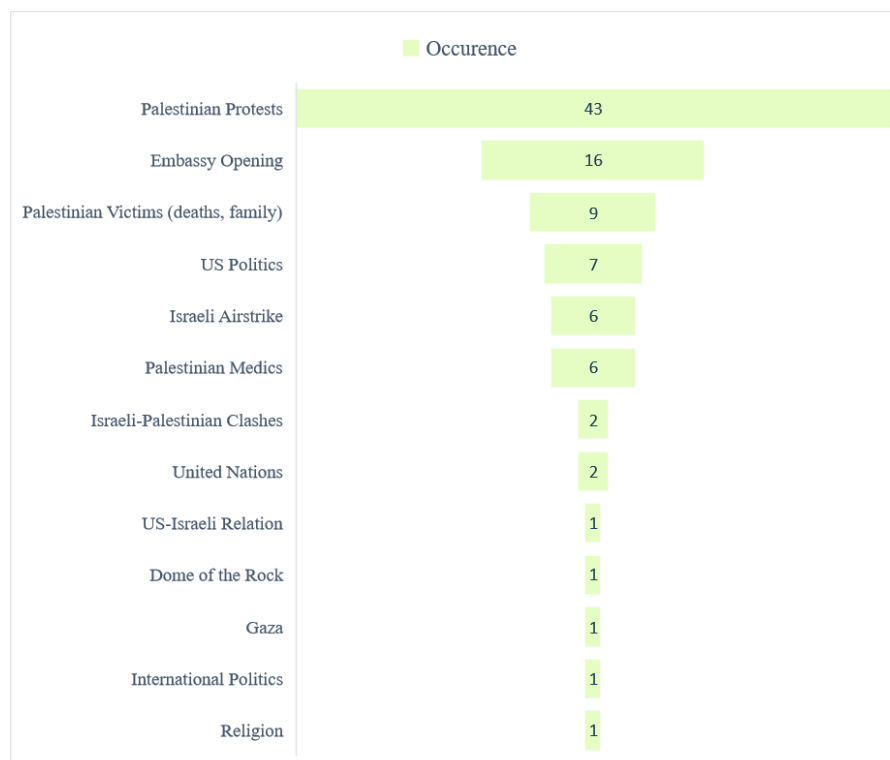
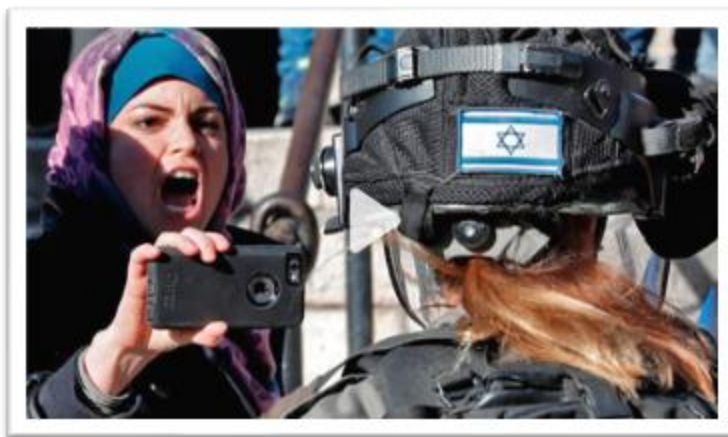


Figure 7b – Image Topic Choice in Period 2 (Embassy Opening)

Figures 7a and 7b show the **image topic choices** in both corpora. When comparing these results to the primary textual topics (see figures 2a and 2b), it can be observed that the most prominent image topics are aligned with those. In period one, the focus was placed on US politics in both communication modes. In period two, Israeli-Palestinian clashes were the most frequently chosen topic in text, and Palestinian protests in images. Yet, it is significant to note that in period one, Palestinian protests were considerably more foregrounded in images compared to text (see example below)

“Trump’s Jerusalem decision roils Pence’s Middle East trip” (Smith-Spark & Carey, 2017). The headline focuses on US foreign politics, while the image that accompanies the headline was themed as “Israeli-Palestinian clashes”.



Photographed owned by Coex (2017)

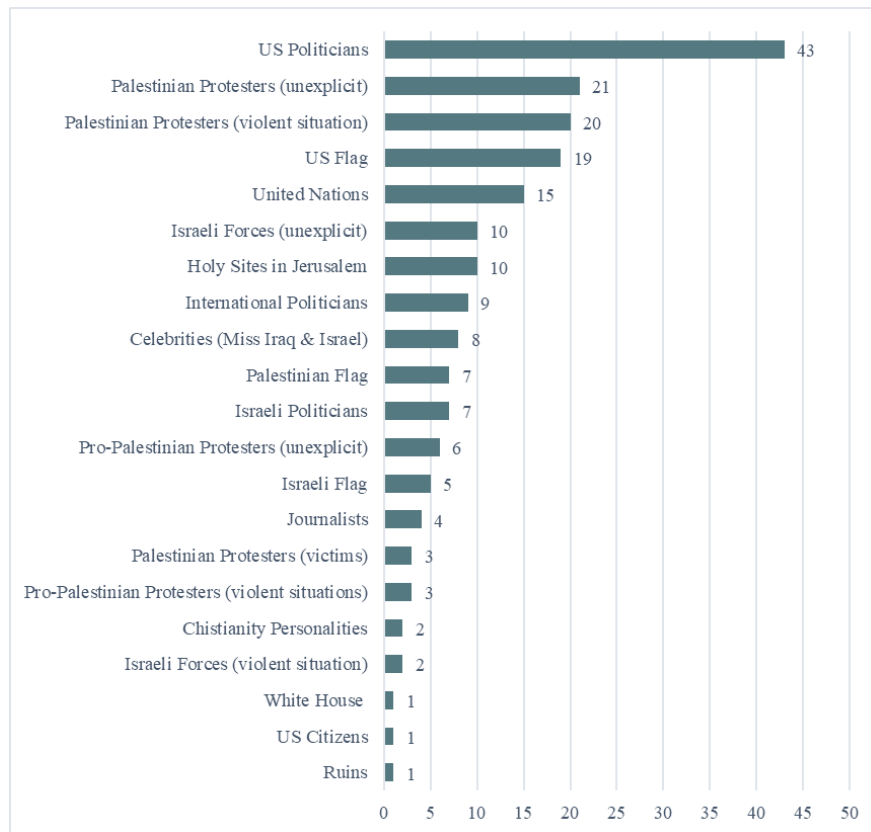


Figure 8a – Image Compositional Elements in Period 1 (Recognition Jerusalem)

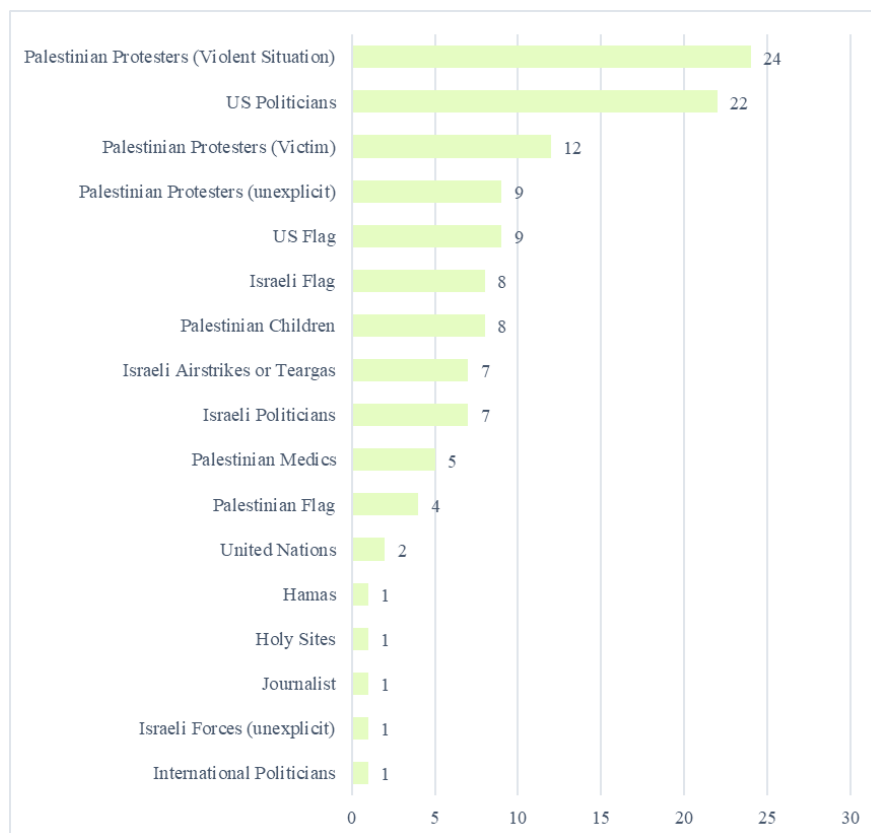


Figure 8b – Image Compositional Elements in Period 2 (Embassy Opening)

Figures 8a and 8b reveal that while period one typically features US politicians as **compositional elements** in images, period two predominantly features Palestinian protesters in violent situations (such as being attacked by teargas, or setting tires on fire). While Palestinian protesters also appeared in period one, they were not depicted as frequently in violent situations or as victims, while they were in period two. In addition, while Israeli forces were more often portrayed as human compositions in period one, in period two their side was depicted frequently with non-human compositions, such as Israeli airstrikes or teargas. Framing the Israeli side of the conflict less often in a human compositional form was also observed in text.

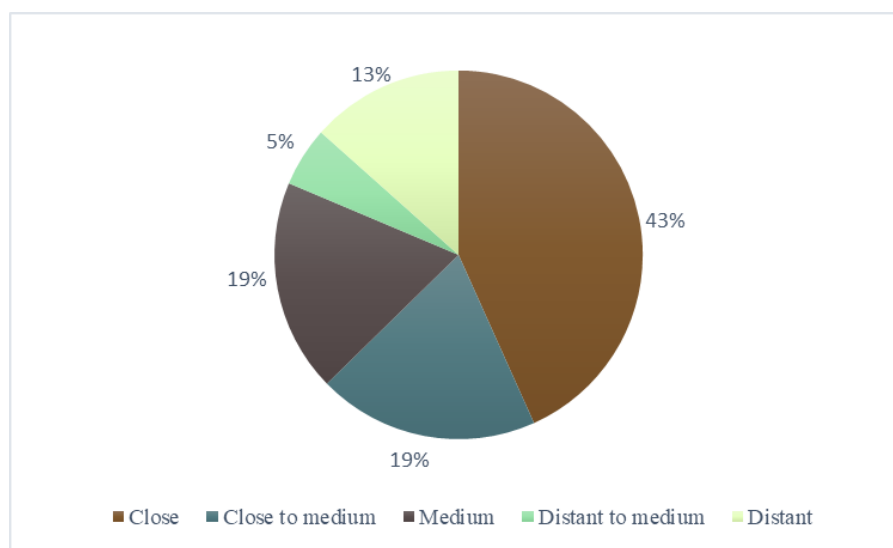


Figure 9a – Image Distance in Corpus 2a (Recognition Jerusalem)

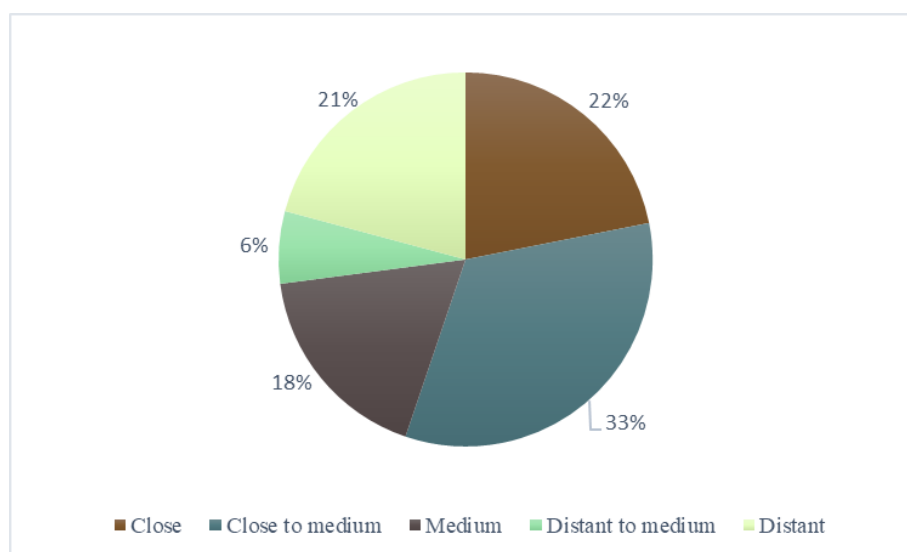


Figure 9b – Image Distance in Corpus 2b (Embassy Opening)

When comparing figures 9a and 9b to figures 4a and 4b, it is evident that the camera shot **distances** are much closer to the subjects than in text. In period one, most images are close-ups of subjects showing at least their faces to the upper body. Close-ups were mainly used when politicians were the subject in a photo. The camera shots in period two are mainly close to medium (from face to waist), often visible in photos showing Palestinians. The disparity between the textual and visual results suggests that images are often presented in a more closed-up manner.

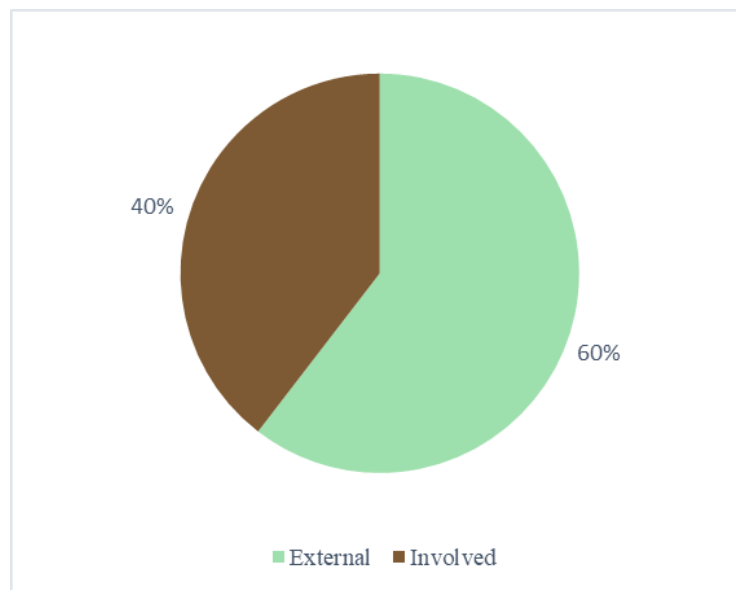


Figure 10a – Image Degree of Involvement in Corpus 2a (Recognition Jerusalem)

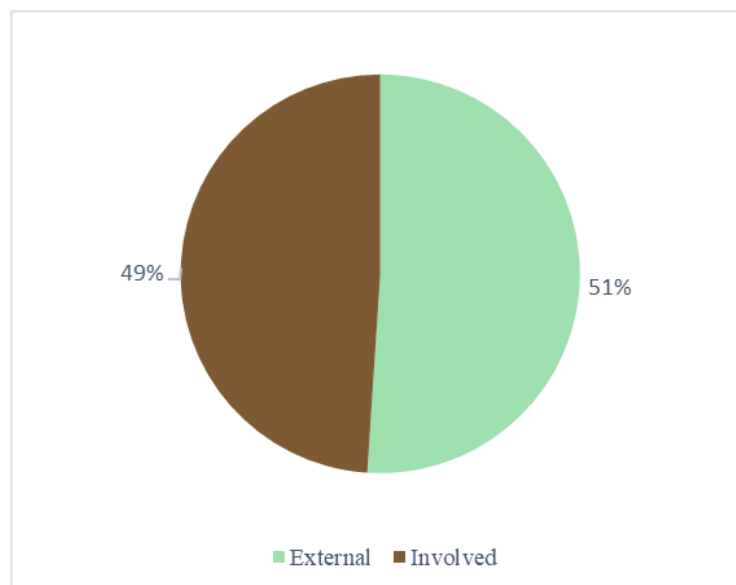


Figure 10b – Image Degree of Involvement in Corpus 2b (Embassy Opening)

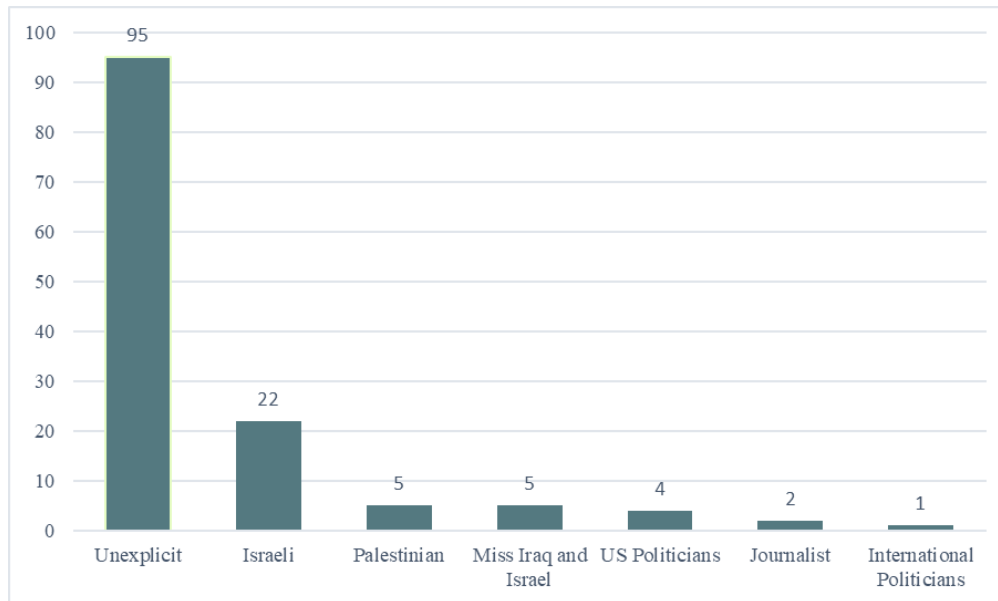


Figure 11a – Image POVs of Corpus 2a (Recognition Jerusalem)

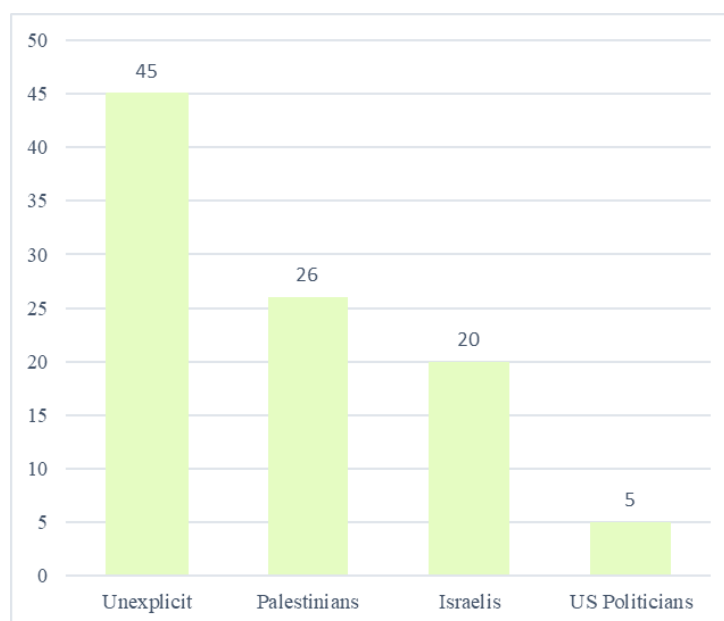


Figure 11b – Image POVs of Corpus 2b (Embassy Opening)

Figures 10a and 10b reveal that images involved the viewer more than text, for example by ensuring “face-to-face” contact, or a front view of a subject in the image. Front views mostly showed up for politicians in the images. Furthermore, while 26% of the images with Palestinians in period 1 and 38% in period 2 were front views, this was 0% for Israelis in both periods (these results exclude Palestinian and Israeli politicians). It is worth noting that an Israeli point of view is not entirely absent in images, as Palestinians are often depicted as

violent when tires are burnt, or their faces are entirely covered. In figures 11a and 11b, it can be seen that an Israeli point of view is more common in period one than in period two (see examples below). Whenever a Palestinian point of view is taken, however, this usually occurred through presenting victims of Israeli violence and involved children. In text, the viewpoints of US politicians were more often presented.

The photo below presents an Israeli point of view due to “othering” of the woman. The dramatic photo sensationalizes the protests by showing an anonymous Palestinian woman escaping the flames of burning tires that Palestinians set on fire themselves.



Photograph owned by Hamra (2018)

The photo below presents a Palestinian point of view, as the kid is pointing with a simple swing toward Israeli forces from the sky, which shows the helplessness of an individual fighting a powerful entity (Israeli forces).



Photograph owned by Khatib (2018)

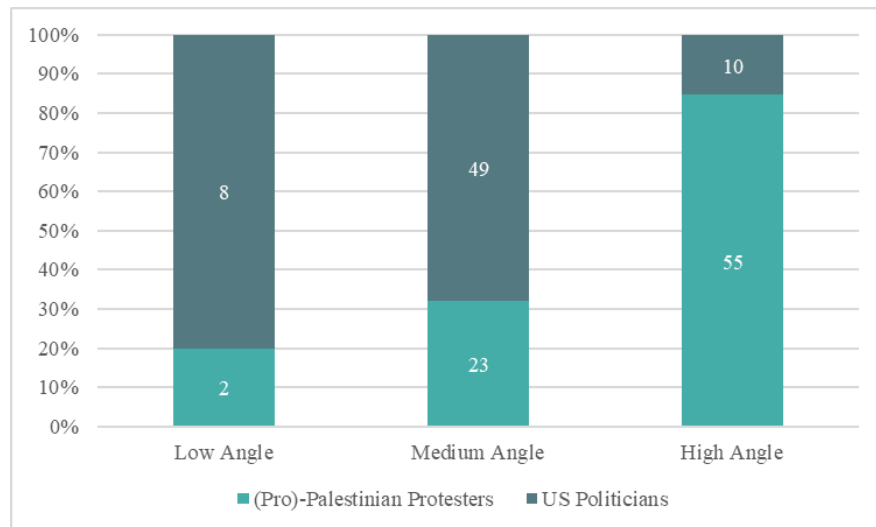


Figure 12 – Shot Angles

An observation worth mentioning for point of view is the pattern observed in both corpora regarding **camera shot angle** of subjects, and particularly regarding the two most prominent compositional elements: (pro)-Palestinian protesters and US politicians. The protesters were often shot from a high angle (see example below), and the politicians from a medium height or a low angle (figure 12). As Israeli forces were not presented as often as (pro-)Palestinian protesters in the corpora, it was impossible to fairly compare the two.

The photo below taken of Palestinian protesters is taken from a high angle, which makes a viewer looking down on the protesters and forms a sense of chaos among them.



Photograph owned by AFPTV (2018)

6. Discussion

The study aimed to investigate how CNN Digital represented the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, focusing on Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the opening of the US embassy in the holy city. The discussion attempts to answer the three sub-questions that will help approaching the main research question in the conclusion: "How does CNN Digital represent the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel?"

6.1 Multimodal Framing Devices in Text and Image

The following paragraph elaborates on the multimodal framing devices' most prominent themes for text and images in the corpora, while considering previous studies. Thus, sub-questions 1 and 2 are discussed.

The first sub-question was as follows: "What categories within each framing device; topic choice, composition, distance and point of view, are foregrounded in highlighted text of the news articles?" The results indicate that CNN Digital often presents the words, actions and direct point of views of **US politicians** in relation to the conflict. While transnational news sources and CNN, in general, strive to provide less biased perspectives to appeal to all audiences (Baden & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2017), the textual analysis shows that CNN Digital, being a US-owned media outlet, tends to present more US perspectives. However, the recognition and US embassy opening are also initiated by US politics. Bashri et al. (2012, as cited in El Damanhoury & Saleh, 2017) highlight that, in accordance with the US journalism tradition, the CNN is responsible for closely examining the US government and its executive, legislative, and juridical power. This could explain why CNN Digital often features US politicians. However, the focus on US politics and politicians could also suggest that CNN Digital has a US-focused perspective and underrepresents other parties involved in the conflict, such as stated in the research of Al-Najjar (2009, as cited in El Damanhoury & Saleh, 2017). In addition to the latter perspectives being less frequently present compared to US perspectives, during period one there was a tendency to present Israeli viewpoints more often than those of Palestinians. This could be due to CNN Digital being a US-owned media outlet, and traditionally, the US has been a strong ally of Israel (Zanotti, 2022). Yet, in period two, the Palestinian point of view was more often presented than the Israeli point of view. One reason for this could be that the predominant topic choice shifted from **US politics** (period 1) to

Israeli-Palestinian clashes (period 2), in which the regional and human consequences of the US policy were more emphasized. Predominantly, the news outlet attributed the responsibility of actions to organizations or groups, creating a **medium distance** between the reader and the subject of the texts. Thus, when considering the proximity effects described by Belmonte and Porto (2020), CNN Digital neither excessively involves nor totally detaches the reader from the text subjects. Additionally, CNN Digital refrained from taking involved positions in the conflict by presenting emotions or opinions. Whenever a position was taken in text, these articles were mostly referred to by CNN Digital as “opinion” articles. Moreover, these positions usually showed skepticism toward Trump’s policy. As the administration was Republican, this may suggest that CNN Digital leans more towards being Democrat-oriented, similar to the political affiliation of most of the CNN readers from the US (Watson, 2021). Using mainly factual information and references by CNN Digital made the readers and journalists **external observers**.

The second sub-question was: “What categories within each framing device; topic choice, composition, distance and point of view, are foregrounded in images of the news articles?” In the first period, **US politics** was the most foregrounded topic choice, primarily including photos of **US politicians** as compositional elements. In the second period, the news outlet specifically covered **Palestinian protests** as news topic and **Palestinian protesters** as compositional elements. The predominant distance between the camera and the subject in a photo was a **close-up**, creating an emotional connection between the viewer and the subject (Belmonte & Porto, 2020). Closer camera shots were mostly used for politicians. The images also presented an **involved observer**’s point of view significantly more often than text, which usually occurred due to a front view of politicians. Furthermore, whereas Israeli forces were never presented in a front view, Palestinians were. The emotional and physical distance between Palestinians and Israeli forces, combined with frequent exposure to tear gas and airstrikes, can lead to a sense of “mechanistic dehumanization,” in which the Israeli forces are perceived as cold and lacking agency (Haslam, 2006). However, the form of “animalistic dehumanization” that portrays individuals as lacking refined emotions or moral sensibilities (Haslam, 2006) was more common in images of Palestinians due to their covered-up faces and burning tires. According to Belmonte and Porto (2020), a high camera angle shot causes a viewer to subconsciously “look down” on the Palestinian subjects in a photo, creating a sense of superiority. Such a camera shot is also associated with creating a sense of chaos about what is happening between the subjects in a photo. As Israeli forces were barely present in images, this compositional element could not be used for finding patterns in shot angle. Therefore, the

results compared the shot angle difference between US politicians and (pro-)Palestinian protesters. The shot angle results presented that a medium and low camera angle was often employed for presenting US politicians, and a high angle for the protesters. Thus, viewers are placed in the position of looking up or from a medium position to US politicians, while looking down upon the chaos (pro-)Palestinian protesters are in. The points of view that were presented with this information, amongst others, were in period one primarily that of **Israelis** depicting Palestinians as violent, and in period two that of **Palestinians** being considered victims of Israeli violence.

Whereas the two sub-questions focused on the predominance of themes in each framing device, it is also vital to consider themes that were less prominent, by considering the information of the contextual framework. While CNN Digital did not exclude religion in its coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it was not a predominant theme in images (such as photographs of holy sites or religious personalities) and was even less so in text. Inbari (2018) explains that the conflict is primarily a national dispute of two groups fighting over the same land, besides often being represented as a religious dispute between Jews and Muslims. According to Entman's (1993, as cited in Scheufele, 1999) framing theory, the media's selection and salience of certain aspects of a perceived reality can shape individuals' perceptions of events. By making religion less salient in news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, CNN Digital may be framing the conflict more as a dispute between two groups over the same land than as a religious one. The non-prominence avoids promoting of a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation that could be influenced by the media treating the conflict as a religious dispute (Entman, 1993, as cited in Scheufele, 1999).

6.2 Multimodal Interaction

The third sub-question posed was: "Drawing on multimodal framing analysis, how do images and highlighted texts interact with one another to construct meaning and represent the conflict?" The results presented in the previous chapter confirm the research of Jungblut and Zakareviciute (2018). While text focused more on the conflict's political and distant side, images depicted the conflict's humane, involved, and violent side by frequently featuring protests and clashes (Jungblut & Zakareviciute, 2018). Coleman (2010) described that such visuals elicit emotions crucial in shaping how readers remember and understand stories. Therefore, CNN Digital appears to employ a framing strategy that engages readers and makes

them remember the human consequences of the political decisions, which are then expounded upon with factual elaboration in accompanying texts. Involving the readers in images has also increased between period one and period two, and more Palestinian perspectives are shown with Palestinians portrayed as victims.

Jungblut and Zakareviciute (2018) demonstrated that, regardless of the phase of violence, sympathetic visual coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict increases over time. The researchers suggested that the increase in sympathy is likely due to the unease of human suffering from the public's side and the desire to find a solution. Even though the two periods in this study cover different events in the conflict, they are both consequences of a pro-Israeli US policy shift. Regarding the sympathy notion, it is unlikely that sympathy towards Palestinians has grown between these two periods, given that the conflict has been ongoing for ages. However, the multimodal framing analysis conducted by Doufesh and Briel (2021) indicated that the coverage of Al-Jazeera and the Times of Israel on this conflict mostly aligns with the main events presented in the text. As the Palestinian protests and clashes with Israel intensified in the second period due to the embassy opening, the increased sympathetic coverage of Palestinians is more likely to be event-based rather than a sudden growth of sympathy from CNN Digital. Therefore, the findings of this study are consistent with those of Doufesh and Briel (2021).

7. Conclusion

In 2017, the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict was intensified by Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and relocate the US embassy there in 2018. Given CNN Digital's prominent position as the world's leading online news outlet that shapes public opinion and understanding of the conflict, this study examined how the outlet represented the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in news coverage of these events. The study addressed this question by exploring three sub-questions in the discussion, analyzing the predominant themes occurring within four multimodal framing devices and how images and highlighted text interact to construct meaning and represent the conflict. Ultimately, the study sought to answer the main research question: "How does CNN Digital represent the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel?"

The findings suggest that during the first period, which covered the 22 days after Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, CNN Digital's coverage specifically focused on US politics and US politicians in both text and images. Textually, the viewpoints of US politicians were also predominant. The study of Al-Najjar (2009, as cited in El Damanhoury & Saleh, 2017) showed that CNN is indeed more US-centric in their coverage and underrepresents others, which could explain the results. However, the event of focus in this thesis was initiated by US politics, and CNN has the responsibility to closely examine the US government in accordance with the tradition of US journalism. Therefore, this statement should be considered cautiously in relation to this research.

In the second period, revolving the 22 days after the US embassy in Jerusalem was opened and subsequent revolts, CNN Digital shifted its textual and image focus to presenting the Palestinian protests and Israeli-Palestinian clashes. US politics and US politicians were still prominent in terms of topic choice and composition, but the focus was now on the region. Whereas in period one, CNN Digital tended to present the Israeli viewpoint, depicting Palestinians as violent in an animalistic and dehumanizing way (e.g., through high-angle shots or images of rioting protesters), in period two, the Palestinian viewpoint predominated, with Palestinians being depicted as victims of Israeli violence. Israeli forces were more often mechanistically dehumanized, appearing less often as human compositional elements, were never presented from a front view, and were more frequently represented by their weapons (e.g. teargas or airstrikes). Yet, CNN Digital itself rarely took a position in its reporting, except in opinion articles that tended to show a more skeptical viewpoint toward US politics and the policy. Furthermore, while religion is often associated with the conflict, CNN Digital did not

overemphasize topics or compositional elements related to religion, framing the conflict primarily as a dispute between two groups over land rather than over religion.

The study found that the distance between readers and textual subjects was often moderate, creating a balance between emotionally engaging the reader and distancing the reader from subjects. As a result, the texts mainly provided factual information by attributing the responsibility of actions and discourse to others and avoiding emotional language or possible opinions. However, the images often evoked taking an involved position (e.g. front views), and included more close-ups of subjects. Both promote emotional engagement between the viewer and the subjects in images. The study confirms that while text primarily provides factual information, images have the power to evoke emotions through close-ups, front views, and depictions of human suffering. As Confucius said, "I see and I remember," suggesting that images help in remembering the human side of the conflict. Text helps in understanding underlying politics by means of reading: "I do, and I understand". The study of Jungblut and Zakareviciute (2018) also suggested that sympathy for a particular side in a conflict typically increases over time due to the unease of human suffering and the desire to find a solution, which could explain the difference in results between period one and two. However, given that the conflict has been ongoing for ages, it is likely that the pro-Palestinian framing in period 2 was mainly event-based due to subsequent revolts.

Of course, it must be noted that framing studies are highly interpretive, which can reflect a researcher's bias more often than quantitative studies. To conduct more reliable research, it is recommended to conduct a multimodal framing analysis over a more extended period of time to identify patterns in the increase of sympathy for particular sides in the conflict. Additionally, further research could explore whether other transnational online news outlets, such as BBC's online service, also cover US politics initiated events in a more US-focused manner. Comparing CNN Digital's coverage to that of other news outlets may reveal whether CNN Digital is indeed more US-focused or whether it is just fulfilling its duty as the "Fourth Estate".

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Appendices

Appendix A: Selected Articles of Period 1

	Date	Authors	Article Name	Link	Category	No. of Words	No. of Texts	No. of Images
1	6-12-2017	Katishi Maake	<i>Pope Francis prays for the preservation of Jerusalem</i>	Link	Politics	292	1	2
2	6-12-2017	Laura Smith-Spark and Andrew Carey	<i>Trump's Jerusalem decision: How the world reacted</i>	Link	World	1926	8	2
3	6-12-2017	Daniel Burke	<i>Why evangelicals are 'ecstatic' about Trump's Jerusalem move</i>	Link	Politics	741	1	1
4	6-12-2017	Jeremy Diamond, Elise Labott	<i>Trump recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital</i>	Link	Politics	987	4	4
5	6-12-2017	Eli Watkins	<i>Haley: Despite Jerusalem announcement, US won't 'weigh in' on city boundaries</i>	Link	Politics	497	1	1
6	6-12-2017	Tim Lister	<i>For Palestinians, Trump's Jerusalem move is the end of the peace process</i>	Link	World	832	1	2
7	6-12-2017	Elise Labott, Jeremy Diamond	<i>White House officials: Jerusalem decision could hurt peace process</i>	Link	Politics	561	1	1
8	6-12-2017	Nicole Gaouette	<i>Trump administration defends Tillerson's absence for Jerusalem announcement</i>	Link	Politics	1074	4	1
9	6-12-2017	Alice Stewart	<i>The campaign promise Trump chose to keep</i>	Link	Opinion	716	1	1
10	6-12-2017	Laura Koran	<i>Tillerson says opportunity for Middle East peace deal remains</i>	Link	Politics	365	1	1
11	6-12-2017	Stephan Collinson	<i>Donald Trump -- keeper of promises</i>	Link	Politics	1138	3	4
12	6-12-2017	Lindsey Efferson	<i>5 noteworthy moments from Kellyanne Conway's 'New Day' appearance</i>	Link	Politics	684	6	1
13	6-12-2017	Gary Cotton	<i>Quickly catch up on the day's news: Wednesday, December 6</i>	Link	All News	252	1	0
14	7-12-2017	Nicole Gaoutte	<i>Tillerson says Jerusalem step changes 'nothing'</i>	Link	Politics	615	2	1

15	7-12-2017	Angela Dewan	<i>Protests break out following Trump's Jerusalem decision</i>	Link	World	869	3	4
16	7-12-2017	Judith Vonberg, Abeer Salman, Nic Robertson	<i>'Jerusalem is our right': Palestinians enraged by Trump decision</i>	Link	World	816	1	9
17	7-12-2017	Andrew Carey, Ian Lee, Laura Smith-Spark	<i>Trump's Jerusalem move: Deadly clashes erupt after Friday prayers</i>	Link	World	1423	5	7
18	7-12-2017	Wardah Khalid	<i>Trump's Jerusalem decision puts the Middle East on knife's edge</i>	Link	Opinion	713	1	1
19	7-12-2017	Sara Afzal	<i>Quickly catch up on the day's news: Thursday, December 7</i>	Link	All News	280	1	1
20	8-12-2017	Schams Elwazer, Hillary McGann	<i>Tillerson: Jerusalem embassy move not this year or next</i>	Link	Politics	230	1	1
21	8-12-2017	Dan Merica	<i>Trump deputy national security adviser is leaving White House</i>	Link	Politics	549	1	1
22	8-12-2017	Nic Robertson	<i>Trump has to live with the consequences of his Israel decision</i>	Link	Opinion	1445	1	2
23	8-12-2017	Zachary Cohen, Tony Marco	<i>Haley slams UN for treatment of Israel in face of strong criticism</i>	Link	Politics	503	1	1
24	8-12-2017	Daniel Burke	<i>Roy Moore, Jerusalem and LGBT rights: Why is religion so divisive?</i>	Link	US	1878	1	1
25	8-12-2017	Deena Zaru	<i>The week in politics</i>	Link	Politics	730	0	1
26	8-12-2017	Ben-Ghiat	<i>Obama is right: US democracy is fragile</i>	Link	Opinion	785	1	1
27	9-12-2017	Laura Smith-Spark, Bijan Hosseini, Nic Robertson	<i>Israel airstrikes, Gaza rockets amid tensions over Jerusalem</i>	Link	World	930	3	4
28	10-12-2017	Sophie Tatum	<i>UN Ambassador Haley cites 'will of American people' on Jerusalem decision</i>	Link	Politics	419	1	1
29	10-12-2017	Ben Wedeman, Ghazi Balkiz, Gul Tuysuz, Isil Sariyuci	<i>Turkey's Erdogan calls Israel a 'child-murderer' state</i>	Link	World	767	3	4

30	10-12-2017	Allie Maloy	<i>Pence and Abbas won't meet, vice president's office confirms</i>	Link	Politics	286	1	1
31	11-12-2017	James Masters, Stephanie Halasz	<i>Netanyahu: European countries will follow Trump on Jerusalem</i>	Link	World	878	4	4
32	11-12-2017	Doug Criss	<i>5 Things for December 11: Nobel Peace Prize, Roy Moore, California wildfires</i>	Link	US	755	1	1
33	11-12-2017	Ray Sanchez, Joe Sterling	<i>Akayed Ullah: What we know about the Manhattan explosion suspect</i>	Link	US	1168	1	0
34	13-12-2017	Isil Sariyuce, Arwa Damon, Tamara Qiblawi	<i>Muslim leaders call for recognition of East Jerusalem as Palestinian capital</i>	Link	World	419	1	2
35	13-12-2017	Brenna Williams	<i>Presidents giving serious speeches in front of Christmas decorations</i>	Link	Politics	869	1	8
36	14-12-2017	Oren Liebermann, Joshua Berlinger	<i>Israel closes Gaza border crossings</i>	Link	World	629	2	2
37	14-12-2017	Oren Liebermann, James Masters	<i>Pence's visit to Israel delayed</i>	Link	Politics	586	1	1
38	15-12-2017	Oren Liebermann, Ray Sanchez, James Masters	<i>Four dead, hundreds wounded as protests over Jerusalem hit second week</i>	Link	World	641	1	5
39	15-12-2017	Thane Rosenbaum	<i>Why Gaza is no Selma</i>	Link	Opinion	1005	1	1
40	15-12-2017	Jeremy Diamond	<i>Trump administration envisions peace deal with Western Wall in Israel</i>	Link	Politics	596	1	2
41	16-12-2017	Ian Lee, Salma Abdelaziz	<i>Hamas claims 50 of its members died in Monday's clashes in Gaza</i>	Link	World	346	1	1
42	17-12-2017	Aaron David Miller	<i>Trump's Jerusalem decision roils Pence's Middle East trip</i>	Link	Opinion	1134	1	1
43	17-12-2017	Oren Liebermann, James Griffiths	<i>Erdogan defies Trump, says Turkey has own embassy plans for Jerusalem</i>	Link	World	605	1	4

44	17-12-2017	Ober Liebermann	<i>Palestinians aim for UN after Trump announcement</i>	Link	World	780	1	1
45	17-12-2017	Yasmin Khorram	<i>Death threats haunt Miss Iraq in wake of selfie controversy</i>	Link	US	906	2	3
46	18-12-2017	Oren Liebermann	<i>US stands alone, defiant at UN Security Council over Jerusalem</i>	Link	World	788	1	1
47	18-12-2017	Jeremy Diamond	<i>Mike Pence delays Israel , Egypt trip as tax vote nears</i>	Link	Politics	326	1	1
48	18-12-2017	Doug Criss	<i>5 things for December 18: Atlanta airport outage, tax overhaul, Russia investigation</i>	Link	US	828	1	1
49	19-12-2017	Elise Labott, Jeremy Diamond	<i>White House confidence in Mideast peace process faces challenges</i>	Link	Politics	1569	4	1
50	19-12-2017	Kevin Liptak, Michelle Kosinski	<i>Trump and May speak after an awkward silence</i>	Link	Politics	825	1	1
51	19-12-2017	Gayle Tzemach Lemmon	<i>If only peace were as easy to share as a selfie</i>	Link	Opinion	648	1	2
52	19-12-2017	Doug Criss	<i>5 things for December 26: Putin foe, Guatemala , Erica c, Philippines , Vatican</i>	Link	US	705	0	1
53	19-12-2017	Doug Criss	<i>5 things for December 22: Shutdown, UN , Catalonia , Papa John's , life expectancy</i>	Link	US	784	0	1
54	20-12-2017	Jennifer Hansler	<i>Nikki Haley: The US is 'taking names' on Jerusalem resolution</i>	Link	Politics	453	1	1
55	20-12-2017	James Griffiths	<i>Which countries are most vulnerable to US pressure over UN Jerusalem vote?</i>	Link	Politics	1197	4	3
56	20-12-2017	Nicole Gaouette, Richard Roth, Michelle Kosinski	<i>Haley's vow to 'take names' upsets diplomatic norms at UN</i>	Link	Politics	1269	5	2
57	21-12-2017	Eric Levenson	<i>Miss Iraq 'disappointed' in Iraqi government after selfie blowback</i>	Link	US	415	1	3
58	21-12-2017	Nicole Gaouette	<i>Despite Haley threat, UN votes to condemn Trump's Jerusalem decision</i>	Link	Politics	1527	2	1

59	21-12-2017	John Kirby, CNN National Security Analyst	<i>With UN vote, Trump gets what he deserves</i>	Link	Opinion	841	1	1
60	22-12-2017	Jennifer Agiesta	<i>More say fight against ISIS going well, but terror concerns linger</i>	Link	Politics	864	2	0
61	22-12-2017	Samantha Vinograd	<i>US vs. UN : Who's taking sides over Jerusalem and why?</i>	Link	Opinion	8172	1	1
62	22-12-2017	James Masters	<i>How each country voted at the UN on Jerusalem status resolution</i>	Link	World	354	4	1
63	22-12-2017	Oren Liebermann	<i>Netanyahu: 'Several countries' considering following US lead and moving embassies to Jerusalem</i>	Link	World	736	4	5
64	22-12-2017	Oren Liebermann, Abeer Salman	<i>2 Palestinians killed in Gaza 'Day of Rage'</i>	Link	World	394	2	1
65	22-12-2017	Ben Wedeman	<i>How President Trump's first year changed the Middle East</i>	Link	World	1446	1	2
66	24-12-2017	James Griffiths, James Masters	<i>Pope prays for two-state solution to Israeli - Palestinian conflict</i>	Link	World	860	1	1
67	24-12-2017	Clara Lopez, Joe Sterling	<i>Guatemala to move embassy to Jerusalem, president says</i>	Link	World	341	2	2
68	25-12-2017	Nadeem Muaddi	<i>Lorde cancels Israel concert c calls for cultural boycott</i>	Link	Entertainment	644	1	1
69	25-12-2017	Peter Bergen	<i>Trump has scored some successes in foreign policy</i>	Link	Opinion	1760	1	0
70	26-12-2017	Eli Watkins	<i>Haley touts reduced UN budget</i>	Link	Politics	572	1	1
71	27-12-2017	Oren Liebermann	<i>Israel plans a Trump rail station as Trump-naming frenzy sweeps country</i>	Link	Politics	776	1	1

Appendix B: Selected Articles of Period 2

	Date	Authors	Article Name	Link	Category	No. of Words	No. of Texts	No. of Images
1	14-5-2018	Oren Liebermann	<i>Jerusalem and Gaza -- A world apart</i>	Link	World	779	1	7
2	14-5-2018	Oren Liebermann, James Masters	<i>Beitar 'Trump' Jerusalem: Israeli soccer club renames itself after US President</i>	Link	Sports	255	1	1
3	14-5-2018	James Zogby	<i>US Embassy opening in Jerusalem is nail in coffin of peace process</i>	Link	Opinion	747	1	1
4	14-5-2018	Abeer Salman, Nicola Gaouette, James Masters	<i>US opens new embassy in Jerusalem as dozens are killed in Gaza</i>	Link	Politics	1185	3	7
5	14-5-2018	Jeremy Diamond	<i>Kushner's split screen moment in Jerusalem</i>	Link	Politics	688	1	1
6	14-5-2018	Ben Wedeman	<i>The dream of 'peace in our time' in the Middle East died on Monday</i>	Link	World	699	1	6
7	14-5-2018	AJ Willingham	<i>5 things for May 14: China, Jerusalem, Iraq, Indonesia</i>	Link	US	785	1	1
8	14-5-2018	Nicola Gaouette, Michelle Kosinski	<i>Turkey recalls envoys to US, Israel over embassy move</i>	Link	Politics	311	1	1
9	14-5-2018	Barbara Starr	<i>US Marines beef up embassy security in Middle East</i>	Link	Politics	493	1	1
10	14-5-2018	Michael D'Antonio	<i>What Ivanka's smile can't hide</i>	Link	Opinion	718	1	1
11	14-5-2018	Christian Duchateau, Jo Parker	<i>Tension across Gaza, Mideast: What we know</i>	Link	World	1236	5	5
12	14-5-2018	Jeremy Diamond	<i>White House blames Hamas for dozens of deaths in Gaza protests</i>	Link	Politics	307	1	1
13	14-5-2018	Sophie Tatum	<i>Merkley: Palestinians see embassy move as the end of the two-state solution</i>	Link	Politics	356	1	1
14	14-5-2018	Ian Lee, Tamara Qiblawi, Abeer Salman	<i>Dozens of Palestinians killed in Gaza clashes as US Embassy opens</i>	Link	World	1424	5	9
15	14-5-2018	Gregory Krieg	<i>You had one job, Jared Kushner. Actually, you had many.</i>	Link	Politics	945	1	1

16	15-5-2018	No known Author	<i>CNN 10 - May 15, 2018</i>	Link	All News	133	0	1
17	15-5-2018	Ian Lee, Salma Abdelaziz	<i>The Gazan leading a popular uprising against Israel</i>	Link	World	1207	1	5
18	15-5-2018	Nicole Gaouette, Richard Roth, Elizabeth Joseph	<i>Gulf widening between US and key allies over Gaza</i>	Link	Politics	1373	4	2
19	15-5-2018	Harry Enten	<i>Democrats may be approaching a turning point on Israel</i>	Link	Politics	617	1	1
20	15-5-2018	Ian Lee, Salma Abdelaziz, Ibrahim Dahman, Richard Roth	<i>Israel defends Gaza crackdown as Palestinians bury their dead</i>	Link	World	1427	4	6
21	15-5-2018	Samuel G. Freedman	<i>Thanks to Trump and Netanyahu, it's Jew vs. Jew</i>	Link	Opinion	901	1	1
22	15-5-2018	Brian K. Barber	<i>This is why Gazans won't back down</i>	Link	Opinion	1134	1	1
23	15-5-2018	Zachary Cohen	<i>US sanctions Iranian bank accused of funneling millions to terror group</i>	Link	Politics	583	1	1
24	15-5-2018	Chris Cillizza	<i>Mike Pence's Mount Rushmore: Trump, Trump, Trump, Trump</i>	Link	Politics	581	1	1
25	15-5-2018	AJ Willingham	<i>5 things for May 15: Melania Trump, royal wedding, Gaza protests</i>	Link	US	848	1	1
26	16-5-2018	Doug Criss	<i>5 things for May 16: North Korea, immigration, Tom Wolfe</i>	Link	US	912	1	1
27	17-5-2018	Ben Wedeman	<i>He's treated thousands. The surgeon who keeps returning to Gaza</i>	Link	World	723	4	5
28	18-5-2018	Karol Brinkley	<i>Must-watch videos of the week</i>	Link	All News	179		1
29	20-5-2018	YJ Fischer	<i>Trump keeps giving Kim the upper hand</i>	Link	Opinion	797	1	1
30	23-5-2018	Michael Schwartz, James Masters	<i>David Friedman photograph sparks Jerusalem controversy</i>	Link	World	455	2	1
31	23-5-2018	Danny Danon	<i>Why the UN should condemn Hamas</i>	Link	Opinion	918	1	1
32	25-5-2018	Nicole Gaouette	<i>Key US allies 'perplexed' as Trump treats friends like enemies</i>	Link	Politics	1194	4	1

33	29-5-2018	Sam Kiley	<i>Hamas struggles to co-opt Palestinian uprising against Israel</i>	Link	World	1195	1	6
34	29-5-2018	Phil Black, Andrew Carey, Abeer Salman	<i>Gaza militants launch mortars, rockets at Israel , which responds with airstrikes</i>	Link	World	1109	3	2
35	30-5-2018	Chris Cillizza	<i>The 45 most astonishing lines from Donald Trump's Nashville speech</i>	Link	Politics	1591	1	1
36	30-5-2018	Abeer Salman, Andrew Carey	<i>Hamas says Gaza ceasefire reached following intense fighting with Israel</i>	Link	World	699	2	3
37	1-5-2018	Ian Lee	<i>Israeli forces kill medic, wound 100 protesters in Gaza unrest, Palestinian ministry says</i>	Link	World	360	1	2
38	02/05/2018	Andrew Carey	<i>Gaza militants fire rockets towards Israel ; IDF responds with airstrikes</i>	Link	World	248	1	1
39	3-5-2018	Ian Lee, Dominique van Heerden	<i>'Her only weapon was her medical vest': Palestinians mourn death of nurse killed by Israeli forces</i>	Link	World	682	1	6