



News About the Other in Jordan and Israel: Does Peace Make a Difference?

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This article examines whether the inauguration of peace between countries has a significant effect on how the news media cover the other side. It is argued that, due to the nature of news, leaders will generally find it easier to mobilize the media for conflict than for peace. However, the actual role the media will play in such attempts can be understood by looking at the political and media environments in which journalists construct news about peace. A joint project was conducted involving both Israeli and Jordanian researchers. The methodology included in-depth interviews with journalists from both countries and a content analysis of newspaper articles published during three different historical periods. The findings demonstrate that although there was a temporary improvement in the media image of the other side, there was little evidence that peace had a significant and lasting influence on coverage. There were, however, some important changes in the prominence of certain news slots. The interviews with the journalists provided valuable insights about some of the political and professional reasons for these findings.

Keywords conflict resolution, enemy images, Jordan-Israel, media and conflict, media and peace

The news media have always been found to be an extremely effective tool for mobilizing the public for war. Knightley's (1975) classic work, *The First Casualty*, provides compelling evidence that journalists' willingness to contribute to the war effort has continued for hundreds of years. Many think of the Vietnam War as the exception to this rule, but Hallin (1986) demonstrates that for most of the time the American press was extremely supportive of government policy. More recent studies concerning the role of the international news media in the Gulf War (Bennett & Paletz, 1994) show that little has changed. The news media remain important agents for demonizing enemies and transforming political and military leaders into heroes.

This study deals with a question that has received far less attention: Can leaders also mobilize the news media for peace? In other words, does the process also work in reverse? It is clear that the news media have the potential of playing a vital role in a peace process. They can provide legitimacy for leaders engaging in the process, they

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can emphasize the benefits that come from peace, and they can humanize the enemy. If the news media can help create a climate for war, they should also be able to create an atmosphere conducive for peace.¹

There is good reason to believe that mobilizing the news media for peace is a much more difficult endeavor. Whereas news and conflict have a very natural fit, news and peace make for awkward bedfellows. A number of scholars have pointed to this problem, and some have even called for journalists to adopt alternative models for covering such issues. Galtung's (1998) work on "peace journalism" is a good example of this approach. He argues that current models of journalism adopt a "zero-sum" approach to conflict that mostly ignores any ideas that might lead to solutions. Battles are considered newsworthy, but ideas for preventing battles are not. He argues that the role of the news media will change only when journalists adopt a "high road" of peace journalism that focuses on ways to transform conflicts as a challenge for the world to embrace.

The contradiction between the construction of news and peace can be partially explained by focusing on two major criteria in the editorial process. The first criterion has to do with the media's need for drama. Conflict is interesting; a lack of conflict is not. Threats are always considered more newsworthy than opportunities. News is almost always about negative events, about fears rather than hopes (Shoemaker & Eicholz, 2000; Shoemaker, 1996). The problems associated with the media's stress on drama are certainly not limited to issues having to do with peace and conflict. Nevertheless, this emphasis may have an especially significant impact on the ability of leaders to promote peace.

Leaders are likely to confront these difficulties both before and after signing a peace agreement. A peace process is for the most part a pretty dull affair. More than anything else, it consists of endless negotiations among diplomats who have a vested interest in maintaining as much secrecy as possible. Thus, political leaders have very little dramatic material to provide the news media in order to build public support for the process (Wolfsfeld, 1997b). In fact, if the antagonists are making some progress, they are likely to make an even more concerted effort to keep the details out of the news. Leaks about concessions can have a devastating impact on such talks.

There is one stage in which the media's emphasis on drama is likely to be beneficial for a peace process. If and when the parties have a serious breakthrough and actually sign an agreement, the media will often treat this as a major achievement. Indeed, such periods may be marked by banner headlines and euphoric stories purporting a rosy future for everyone. The news media will be more than willing to cooperate in such celebrations, especially if there is an extensive amount of support for the accords.

Once the hoopla has died down, however, the emphasis on drama again becomes problematic. While the initial acts of cooperation and reconciliation may be considered news, they soon become routine. The media's preference for negative news once again takes over as tensions and conflict dominate the coverage. Thus, one of the more encouraging aspects of the Oslo accords signed in 1993 between the Israelis and the Palestinians was the initiation of joint military patrols to deal with problems. The Israeli news media had little reason to report on these and comparable activities on an ongoing basis. Israelis only heard about these patrols when there were conflicts between the two forces. Perhaps the biggest news took place 7 years later when a Palestinian policeman shot and killed his Israeli counterpart while on patrol.

The point is that while conflict and war always provide self-sustaining drama, a peace process rarely does. It is not that a peace process is not considered major news, but rather that negative aspects of the process will generally be considered more news-

worthy than positive ones. This makes it much easier for leaders to create enemy images than to moderate them.

There is a second, equally problematic criterion associated with the construction of news about peace. News is fundamentally ethnocentric, especially news about enemies (Dorman & Livingston, 1994; Liebes, 1997; Ottosen, 1995; Mowlana, Gerbner, & Schiller, 1992; Wolfsfeld, 2001a). Enemies are newsworthy because they threaten us. News stories about enemies are based on a common set of cultural assumptions, beliefs, myths, and symbols all of which intensify the level of hostility and suspicion toward the other side. Journalists routinely feed into these fears because they resonate with their audience. We are the victims and they are the aggressors. Graphic news images of our dead and wounded remain firmly implanted in collective memories for decades. A peace process is considered important if it brings peace to *us*.

A genuine peace process should include an element of reconciliation. As noted, the news media have the potential to play an important role in this process by providing more human images of the enemy. The basic ethnocentrism of the media places important limits on this process. This ethnocentrism impedes the peace building that is supposed to take place after agreements are signed. In an ideal world, peace would bring an increasing willingness among journalists and citizens to learn about the culture and society of the other side. In the real world, however, once the threat is removed, the neighbor can be ignored, unless tensions should again rise. Thus, even after the initiation of peace, most of the news about the other side will still be concerned with threats. In other words, good news is no news.

Variations Over Time and Circumstance

The ability of leaders to promote policies to the news media varies over time and circumstance. Government efforts to increase military spending, for example, are more likely to resonate with the news media in times of international crisis than during times of peace. It is important therefore to think about which factors are most likely to facilitate or inhibit the promotion of peace to the news media. Here we will point to two major sets of variables. The first has to do with the *political environment* surrounding the peace process and the second the *media environment*.

The political environment refers to the aggregate of private and public beliefs, discourse, and behaviors concerning political matters within a particular setting and time (Wolfsfeld, 1997a). It is a “macro” concept referring to the political “situation.” What is the political mood concerning the possibility for peace? What issues are people talking about? What are various leaders doing, and how are people reacting to these activities? What is the distribution of opinion on a particular issue? What are the most common interpretive frames being employed to explain and evaluate what is happening in the political realm?

The news media construct stories that reflect the environment in which they are produced. Clearly, some climates are more conducive to the promotion of peace than others. One of the most important aspects of the political environment has to do with the level of elite consensus in support of the agreement (Wolfsfeld, 1997a, 1997b, 2001b). The greater the level of support for the accords, the easier time leaders will have promoting peace to the news media. Journalists depend on their sources in order to gauge the amount of controversy associated with a given policy. The greater the number of sources and institutions promoting the same interpretive frame, the more that frame will tend to dominate media discourse. The legitimacy of the policy will be taken as a given.

When the opposition forces are extremely small, they will either be ignored or treated as deviants. The American media's coverage of the Gulf War (Wolfsfeld, 1997a; Bennett & Paletz, 1994) and its coverage of the early stages of the Vietnam War (Hallin, 1986) provide excellent examples of this process.

A supportive environment will be especially important when a peace process runs into difficulties. Wolfsfeld (2001b) carried out a comparative study looking at the role of the news media in the Northern Ireland peace process and the Oslo process in the Middle East. While the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland enjoyed a fairly wide level of consensus, the Israeli public was completely divided over the agreement with the Palestinians. These differences help explain the very different frames the media in each country adopted in the wake of terrorist attacks designed to derail the two agreements. In Israel, the tone of the coverage turned extremely negative toward Oslo, and the government was placed on the defensive. The reaction of the news media in Northern Ireland after the attack at Omagh was exactly the opposite. The underlying theme of coverage focused on the need to intensify efforts to bring about peace so that such violence would never take place again.

Another important aspect of the political environment concerns the changing *level of political tension* between the antagonists. Similar to the point made earlier about military spending, increasing political tension increases the difficulties leaders face in promoting peace. Monitoring the changing level of hostility helps researchers understand how the role of the news media changes over time. The level of tension between societies tends to vary in different periods and with it the resonance of peace. This principle should be helpful in explaining the impact of both long-term and more short-term changes in the political environment. Thus, the very fact that two countries move from a period of violence to a peace process should lead to a certain softening in the media images of the enemy. The previously discussed mood of public euphoria that often follows a breakthrough is an example of a more short-term effect. More long-term effects on such images will depend on subsequent events.

All of this is not meant to suggest that the news media play a completely passive role in a peace process. The role of the news media in any political process is best seen as a cycle. Variations in the political environment lead to changes in media behavior that can lead to further changes in the political environment. The first stage of this process can be understood by examining how variations in political context influence journalistic norms and routines.

Consider, for example, how the peace process can influence the creation of "news slots." News slots can be defined as topic areas that are routinely covered by journalists.² The very fact that a peace process is instituted leads reporters to turn to new sources and scenes. As a result, citizens from both sides of a conflict become exposed to a rather different view of the enemy: Diplomats become more prominent in news reports than military leaders. Governments can also exploit such slots in order to promote optimistic news stories about a peace process. The creation of novel news slots does not, however, guarantee positive coverage. The relative level of tension between two countries is likely to have an impact on both the prominence of various slots and the tone of information that flows through.

Journalistic routines for covering peace are also influenced by the relative *salience* of different countries within a particular political environment. All nations, friend and foe, enjoy a certain political status, and this is directly reflected in their media status. Some enemies are considered more important than others, and this too can change over time. Until the invasion of Kuwait, for example, Iraq was not considered an important

enemy of the United States. The political leadership in the U.S. was more focused on other threats such as Iran and Libya. This helps explain why the news media devoted so little attention to Iraq before the Gulf War (Dorman & Livingston, 1994). As a result of that conflict, however, as well as subsequent confrontations between the U.S. and Iraq, the American news media took a growing interest in that part of the world.

Thus, when thinking about media images of enemies, it is important to consider both the valence *and* the salience of those constructs (Manheim & Albritton, 1984). The ramifications of differences in salience will depend on the particular political circumstances. In some cases, for example, it may be easier for some leaders to promote peace with a less prominent enemy. Media images of enemies are not necessarily symmetrical. More powerful countries often have multiple enemies, some of which are more important than others. The less powerful countries will feel more threatened by the United States than the U.S. will feel threatened by them. Accordingly, the image of the United States in the smaller countries' media will be much more prominent than the image of the less powerful countries in the American media.

The Media Environment

The ability of leaders to promote peace will also depend on the nature of the media environment. The media environment can be defined as the aggregate of professional beliefs, norms, and routines that journalists employ in the construction of news stories. Whereas the nature of the political environment provides important information about the *inputs* journalists receive, it is the media environment that helps explain just how they transform those inputs into news stories. These definitions also vary over time and culture, and this is one of the reasons why the role of the news media in political processes varies as well.

Here we will limit our focus to one particularly important aspect of the media environment: the level of government control over the press. It is helpful to think in terms of a continuum of media systems. On the one side we would find systems that are completely under government control, while at the other end one would place totally commercial systems. Thus, in the first type of system (e.g., developmental model) journalists are loyal to the regime, while in the second the most important considerations have to do with audience appeal (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995). In the latter type of systems, journalists are clearly more likely to employ a confrontational approach toward the political elite. Most media systems fall somewhere in between these two extreme, and thus it is a question of examining just how much influence is exerted either by government or commercial forces.

When leaders have a certain amount of official or unofficial control over the news media, they naturally find it much easier to promote their policies—including policies having to do with peace. It is more difficult for leaders working in a commercial media environment to promote peace, especially if it is dominated by sensationalist news values. Sensationalist norms place a high value on emotionalism rather than reason, on entertainment rather than information, on specific events rather than long-term processes, and on personalities rather than institutions (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999; Brants, 1998; Brants & Neijens, 1997). A sensationalist press is a perfect weapon for war and a rather poor tool for peace (Wolfsfeld, 2001a).

Thus, one of the most important questions concerns the intended audience for such news. In a more controlled environment, concerns about government reaction serve as a filter for everything that is produced. Journalists find themselves constantly balancing

between the needs of the general public and official expectations. This dynamic becomes especially important when the government is attempting to promote peace to a reluctant public. In such cases, these filters prevent the media from taking too active a stand against peace. The press in such societies will also be more “willing” to publish official stories about peace, even when they fail to meet normal standards of newsworthiness.

In a more commercial environment, on the other hand, the general audience serves as the major filter for editorial decisions. The amount and tone of media attention toward the other side depend almost entirely on what sells. It is a more open competition, and if the negative news about peace is more interesting, that is what will be publicized. Equally important, if there is nothing newsworthy to say about the other side, journalists will simply move on to other more interesting topics.

These, then, are some of the major factors that are likely to either enhance or hinder the ability of leaders to promote peace to the news media. Selling peace to the media is never easy, because the press is so enamored with conflict. However, there are certain types of political and media environments that can either magnify the problem or reduce it. The validity of these points becomes clearer when they are applied to the peace process between Israel and Jordan.

The Israeli–Jordanian Peace Process

Jordan and Israel have always had a rather complex and unusual relationship that differs from Israel’s relations with other Arab states or peoples. Although the countries fought two wars against each other (in 1948 and in 1967) and a war of attrition in the period from 1968 to 1970, both maintained backdoor communication and cooperation channels, especially during times of crisis. Each country had its own reasons for maintaining this tacit understanding.

Jordan’s attitude toward Israel can be better understood within the context of Jordan’s regional and global priorities. Historically, Jordan and its Hashemite leadership have successfully adapted to the need to coexist with two important movements in the modern Middle East—Islamism and Zionism—both of which have engaged in occasional armed conflicts or longer running verbal battles with Jordan. The more serious modern threats to Jordan have emanated from other sources, especially communism, Nasserite pan-Arabism, Ba’athism, and other leftist movements that challenged Jordan’s role in the Arab East Mediterranean region.

Israel’s attitudes toward Jordan are also complex. Jordan shares the longest border with Israel, and its military forces were the closest Arab forces to Israel’s major cities. Until 1967, Jordan also controlled the eastern part of Jerusalem and prevented Jews from gaining access to the Western Wall. On the other hand, Israel always saw Jordan as the most moderate of her Arab neighbors and as a political and geographic bulwark against her more extreme enemies such as Syria and Iraq. Israelis also had a remarkably favorable opinion of the late King Hussein. The king was considered an extremely charismatic leader who exuded trust and a genuine desire for peace.

The Palestinian issue has always played a major part in Israeli-Jordanian relations. Massive numbers of Palestinian refugees fled to Jordan during the wars in 1948 and 1967, a fact that had a devastating impact on the country. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Jordanian leadership feared that an Israeli plan to transfer Palestinians from the West Bank to the East Bank would result in Jordan becoming a Palestinian state, at the expense of the Hashemites and the interests of Transjordanians. This helps explain why the large number of Palestinians living in Jordan has been a source of both conflict and

cooperation between the two countries. The fact that so many Jordanians are either Palestinian or related to Palestinians means that every Israeli and Palestinian clash inevitably leads to an increase in tension between Israel and Jordan. Nevertheless, both Israel and Jordan often feel threatened by dynamic manifestations of Palestinian nationalism and self-determination.

All of which brings us to the process that culminated in a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan in October of 1994. Here, too, it is impossible to separate between the ups and downs of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the relations between Israel and Jordan. It was the initial breakthrough at Oslo that provided the impetus for Israel and Jordan to initiate serious negotiations. These talks were exceedingly rapid and cordial, in part because there were few territorial issues to resolve. The mood at the signing ceremony was euphoric as King Hussein, Prime Minister Rabin, and President Clinton all expressed hopes that the agreement would facilitate a period of reconciliation between the two peoples.

The surrounding political environment for this agreement was very different in the two countries. In Israel, there was an enormous amount of support for the agreement. Whereas the Knesset was completely split over the Oslo accords with the Palestinians, the Jordanian agreement passed by a vote of 92 to 3. The level of elite support in Jordan was considerably lower. Although King Hussein was able to use his prestige and power to mobilize support for the accords, a number of political parties and institutions were opposed to making peace with Israel.

This opposition became even more prominent when the Israeli-Palestinian peace process ran into troubles. The establishment of a right-wing government that followed the election of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in May of 1996 served to galvanize the opponents in Jordan. The relatively short period of time between the optimism associated with the signing in the fall of 1994 and the pessimism that marked the Netanyahu period (1996–1999) provides an excellent case for examining how quickly the environment can change and, with it, the nature of media coverage.

Thus, the political environment in Israel was conducive to peace, while the Jordanian environment was more negative. Based on this alone, we would expect the leadership in Israel to find it much easier to promote peace than the leaders in Jordan. However, as discussed, the media environments in which journalists work can also influence the construction of news about peace. What proved interesting about this case was that in both countries, the nature of the media environment pulled coverage in exactly the opposite direction of the political environment.

The Media Environments in Israel and Jordan

The most important differences in these two media environments concern the amount of government control. The Jordanian news media have traditionally presented government viewpoints on domestic and foreign issues, although they have enjoyed more pluralism in news reporting and opinion/analysis since 1989. The government has always owned and managed the television, radio, and news agency services, all of which see their role primarily as presenting the government viewpoint on public issues. The official press has limited credibility, suffers from erratic standards and low levels of training, and has seen some of its audience drift away to more credible or entertaining commercial media in recent years. Nevertheless, it still has a fairly wide audience because of the fact that it announces official news and covers local events.

The government traditionally guided the editorial coverage of privately owned

publications by requiring them to obtain a government-issued license—which could be suspended or revoked if publications technically broke the law or veered too far from the state line. There are 4 Arabic-language dailies today, an English daily and a weekly, and around 15 weekly newspapers that are largely ideological or purely profit motivated.

As noted, strict government controls of the press have been liberalized somewhat since 1989, owing to domestic demands for more freedom and also to the impact of competition from satellite television channels and other sources of news that the state could not control. The state has taken scores of journalists and publications to court in the past 9 years, but in many cases the courts have decided in favor of the press and against the state. Thus, a new balance of power, freedom, rights, and responsibilities is slowly being established in Jordan between the private press and the state. The privately owned print media continues to offer a wider range of dissenting opinions than the state-owned media.

One of the more important things to understand about the media environment in Jordan concerns the Press Association. This organization joined the other professional associations in criticizing the peace treaty with Israel and continually threatens to punish journalists who “normalize” relations with Israelis. Jordanian journalists who go to Israel to cover a story risk being thrown out of the organization and thus not being able to work in the profession. On the other hand, it is worth noting that the Press Association is considered a relatively weak body with only a minimal amount of professional impact or standing.

The Israeli news media has also gone through some dramatic changes in recent years, albeit in very different directions (Peri, 1999). Television in Israel was inaugurated in 1968. Until 1990 there was only one television station in Israel, but during the time period studied, Israelis were given access to a second, commercially based station and a wide variety of cable channels. Israeli news is broadcast in Hebrew on Channels 1 and 2, and homes with cable can view international news from such stations as CNN, BBC, and Star.

The television news departments have a great degree of independence. Nevertheless, the director of the Israel Broadcasting Authority is a political appointee, and this can have important effects on editorial policy. When the right-wing Likud party was in power in the 1980s, for example, it was forbidden to interview any PLO leaders on television, and there were strict guidelines about covering that organization. That policy was changed when Prime Minister Rabin came to power, even before the breakthrough at Oslo. It is worth noting that there were never any such restrictions on covering Arab countries.

Most of the Israeli newspapers that appeared in the 1950s and 1960s were owned and operated by political parties. Little distinction was made between journalism and ideological activism, and journalists were dedicated to helping their party and their country. Over the years the partisan press lost most of their audience share to the privately owned commercial newspapers that developed a more tabloid format. News became much more critical and aggressive toward the government, but there was still a certain sense of “social responsibility” when covering foreign policy and security (Peri, 2002).

In sum, the Israel news media is closer to what one would find in most democracies, while the Jordanian model is more of a hybrid between a developed and developing state model. While the press in both countries has become more independent over the years, the change in Jordan is both more recent and more moderate. In addition, while the emphasis on drama is an important consideration for all news media, it appears to be a more central factor in explaining the construction of news in Israel. As we

shall show, these differences had an important impact on the construction of news about peace in the two countries.

Research Methods

There were two major research questions guiding this project:

1. Did the signing of a formal peace agreement between Israel and Jordan have a significant and lasting influence on the way each country covered the other?
2. Which political and professional factors best explain the way Israel and Jordan construct news about each other?

A joint project was conducted involving both Israeli and Jordanian researchers. This is, as far as we know, the first joint Arab-Israeli research venture carried out in the field of communication. There were two stages to the project. The first stage consisted of in-depth interviews with editors and reporters who were responsible for constructing news about the other country. The goal of these interviews was to try to understand the norms and routines for covering the other side and whether or not the establishment of peace between the two countries had any effect on these practices. The second stage involved a content analysis of news articles that allowed us to look more directly at the coverage in each country and to explore any changes that had taken place in the wake of the peace agreement between the two countries. Combining the two methods provided a more comprehensive picture of how journalists in each country construct news about the other.

We interviewed a total of 9 journalists in Jordan and 12 in Israel during 1997.³ They came from newspapers, radio, and television, and all had been responsible for covering the other country. The relatively small number of interviewees reflects the meager number of people who are directly responsible for reporting in this area. This number constitutes the vast majority of journalists who were responsible for constructing news stories about the two countries.

The interviews were carried out in a semistructured approach. This approach uses the same core of questions but allows the interviewer to follow interesting avenues that develop in the course of the session. The interviews lasted about an hour. The journalists were asked about such issues as the sources they use to cover stories about the other country, the relative importance of stories about the other country in comparing with other topics, whether they think the importance of such stories or how they are covered fluctuates according to the political events or the mood of the moment, what types of stories from the other country are considered news, how often they visit the other country, whether they speak the language of the other country, what changes were brought about by the inauguration of peace and subsequent events, whether their personal image of the other country has changed since the inauguration of peace, what kinds of pressures they face in writing about the other country, their attitudes toward the other country and the peace process, and whether they believe that such attitudes also influence the way they cover the other country.

The content analysis was based on a sample of newspaper articles that were published in each country during three different years. Two newspapers were selected from each country. The newspapers selected from Jordan were *Al-Ra'i* and *Al-Dustour*, respectively with majority and minority government shareholdings. Both are full-size, serious dailies that diligently reflect government thinking in their editorials and official news coverage. Nevertheless, they also provide a wide variety of pro- and anti-government

views in their op-ed pages and cartoons. *Al-Ra'i* has traditionally been seen as the semi-official newspaper of the government, while *Al-Dustour* has a more independent, pro-Palestinian reputation.

The two newspapers used in Israel were *Yediot Achronot* and *Ha'aretz*. *Yediot Achronot* is by far the most popular newspaper in the country and employs a tabloid format. One of the reasons for its popularity is that it attempts to include some serious reporting and analysis along with the more typically sensationalist content. *Ha'aretz* is considered the more "quality" newspaper and appeals to a more elite audience. As a result, it has a much smaller circulation.

The three periods that were chosen allowed us to examine the influence of changing political climates on media coverage. The first period—from October 1992 to September 1993—was a time before there were any negotiations between Israel and Jordan. The second period—from October 1994 to September 1995—was chosen to represent the "peace year." The peace agreement between the two countries was signed on October 24, 1994, and thus this was an exceptionally positive time for Israeli-Jordanian relations. The third and final period ("post-peace agreement") ran from October 1996 to September 1997 after Prime Minister Netanyahu had taken office. As noted, this was a time of increasing tension between the countries, in part because of Israel's ongoing conflict with the Palestinians. Fifty dates from each year were randomly selected, and all articles in each country that dealt with the other side were analyzed.

A coding sheet was developed that looked at two major variables: the general topic area of the news story and the overall valence (evaluative direction) of the story. Based on an extensive pretest, it was found that the stories could be divided into six topic categories that were applicable in both countries: stories having to do with the peace process and/or normalization between the two countries, political and economic meetings/relations, multilateral relations (Jordan/Israel and others), the foreign policy of Jordan/Israel, security issues related to Jordan/Israel, and the internal affairs of the other.⁴ This division into topics was intended to provide evidence about the prominence of various news slots over time and political circumstance.

The stories were also divided into three evaluative categories in order to gauge the overall valence of the story: positive, neutral, and negative. Making such distinctions in content analysis is never easy, but coders in both countries were given instructions that increased the reliability of the coding. They were asked to consider the perspective of the average Jordanian or Israeli. Was the news story they had read likely to leave a more positive impression about the other country, a more negative one, or neither? If the answer was neither, or if they were at all unsure about the answer, they were asked to code the story as neutral.

It was understood that this measure would provide only a rough estimate concerning the valence of news stories about the other side. Negative stories concerning violence, for example, are likely to have more impact than negative stories about a problematic meeting between Israeli and Jordanian leaders. On the other hand, the power of negative and positive stories was partially reflected in the number of different articles about each incident. Thus, while this indicator is not intended to be a definitive measure of the media image of the other, it does tell us something about the overall tone of such coverage and how it changed over time.

Developing reliable coding categories proved to be long and difficult, in part because of the differences between the way news is reported in the two countries. The level of intercoder agreement for valence was 82% in Jordan and 85% in Israel. The level of agreement for topic area was 83% in Jordan and 88% in Israel.⁵

The discussion will be divided into two major sections. The first attempts to explain the coverage of Israel in Jordan, and the second part deals with news about Jordan that appeared in Israel.

The Coverage of Israel in Jordan

We start with the most important question concerning media and peace. Did the establishment of a formal peace have a significant and lasting influence on media coverage of Israel in Jordan? One of the ways to examine this question is to look at the proportion of negative, neutral, and positive news stories that were published during the different periods. We assumed that the coverage would be notably more positive during the peace year, when the political climate was so positive. The more interesting question was how far Israel's image would retreat after this initial burst of enthusiasm. If the inauguration of a formal peace between the two countries did have a lasting effect, we would expect to find images to be less negative after peace than before. As can be seen in Table 1, this is certainly not the case.

These findings suggest that the signing of a peace treaty had no lasting effects on Israel's media image in Jordan. As expected, there was a significant increase in the amount of positive news about Israel during the euphoria of 1994–1995. The proportion of positive stories rose from 8% to 26%, and the proportion of negative stories dropped from 28% to 12%. This is indeed a serious change. A closer look reveals that a good deal of this change took place in the first few months during the more celebratory stage. King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin worked closely together during those months to initiate as many events as possible. The goal was to promote the new peace to both populations. The proportion of negative stories about Israel and the peace process had already begun to rise during the second part of that period.

More important, none of this positive outlook carried over into the Netanyahu year (post-peace agreement). If anything, the situation was even worse than it was before peace was inaugurated. The proportion of negative stories about Israel rose to an extremely high 43%. These results make clear that the effects of the political climate on media coverage also take place within a more controlled media environment. The fact

Table 1

Coverage valence of Israel in Jordan during three time periods: Overall evaluation

Period	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total
Pre-peace agreement (1992–1993)	56 (28.3%)	126 (63.6%)	16 (8.1%)	198
Peace year (1994–1995)	45 (12.3%)	224 (61.4%)	96 (26.3%)	365
Post-peace agreement (1996–1997)	121 (43.2%)	144 (51.4%)	15 (5.4%)	280
Total	222 (26.3%)	494 (58.6%)	127 (15.1%)	843

that Jordanian journalists reflect the prevailing political atmosphere also came through in the interviews we conducted. A television manager and reporter put it this way:

The importance of stories from Israel fluctuates according to the news and the mood of the day. I remember when the peace agreement was signed we planned to do some cooperative television work with Israelis, such as parallel documentaries and joint programs; this was one of the fruits of peace. We started working together in 1996, but then we stopped after the Jerusalem tunnel incident, Abu Ghneim (Har Homa), and other such events angered us. Our judgment changed about working with Israelis when their policies turned aggressive, especially after Netanyahu's election. (Jordanian interview #6)

The Jordanian journalists found themselves working under a number of cross pressures in covering Israel. On the one hand, they were attempting to reflect the mostly negative attitude of their audience. At the same time, the government expected them to help in promoting the peace process. One columnist and editor described these pressures as follows:

We tend to get conflicting pressures from different sources in society; the government mildly pushes us to promote peace and normalization with Israel, while the opposition, professional associations, and parts of the public at large pressure us against normalization of ties with Israelis. We have to be careful because in some cases the professional unions will expel members for dealing with Israelis, and this could mean the loss of a job. We do feel the pressures for and against normalizing ties with Israel, but we also devise ways to deal with them. (J9)

That same editor raised another theme that was also heard from other interviewees. He argued that, for some journalists, news about Israel was seen as a means of striking back against that country:

We cannot treat Israel like Nigeria or South Africa or some other foreign story. People in Jordan want to see and to show the negative aspects of Israel, because the conflict is not settled yet and people use their perceptions of Israel as a means of fighting Israel. Many distorted facts form the basis of commentaries about Israel in the Arabic-language press, which simply confirms the public's willingness or even its desire to see the negative side of Israel. (J9)

Similarly, the editor of a weekly newspaper put it even more bluntly:

The full scope and complexity of Israeli society are not adequately represented in our paper, because we prefer to cover the negative aspects of Israel, we avoid using positive news, and sometimes we even exaggerate a little bit about aspects of Israel, like portraying the far-right fringe extremists in Israel as part of the mainstream. (J4)

These last quotes demonstrate that one cannot understand the construction of news about enemies without taking into account *both* the political and media environments.

The fact that many of the events associated with the Netanyahu period were negative, and that the mood had turned pessimistic, is one part of the story. However, it is professional norms and routines that determine how journalists turn these inputs into news stories.

Thus, the fact that King Hussein and Yitzhak Rabin signed a peace treaty did little to improve the basic attitude of the Jordanian press toward Israel. It is also possible that the fact that Israel's media image became even worse can be attributed to dashed expectations. The two leaders may have made a strategic mistake in placing such a large emphasis on the benefits that would come with peace. In subsequent months, the conventional wisdom was that Jordanians were "disappointed" that they never saw the "fruits of the peace." Nevertheless, the most direct reason was the extremely negative reaction to Netanyahu's policies with regard to the Palestinians.

There is one more insight to be learned from Table 1 that will become even more important when we turn to the Israeli perspective. Israel was and remains an extremely important news story in Jordan. Israel is considered a major threat to Jordan and the Palestinians, and this leads to an extremely high level of media attention. It will be remembered that a total of 150 identical dates were chosen in each country. In Jordan, this led to a total of 837 news stories about Israel. In other words, there are an average of 5.5 stories about Israel on any given day in the two newspapers that were studied. This is a remarkable amount of attention that both reflects and reinforces the salience of Israel within the political culture of Jordan.

Changes in News Slots

It was argued earlier that one of the reasons it is so difficult to promote peace to the news media has to do with definitions of newsworthiness. The emphasis on drama, it was claimed, means that editors will be more interested in conflict stories than those that deal with cooperation. In addition, the fundamental ethnocentrism of most news media means that journalists will have little interest in learning about the internal affairs of the other side. There is little reason to believe that the initiation of a peace process should change this basic dynamic in the long run. One way to explore this issue is to examine the effects of peace on the prominence of various news slots. This allows us to move beyond questions about the general tone of the news and deal with the more specific issue of what was actually covered.

One of the first things that emerged from this analysis was the extremely small percentage of news stories in Jordan that dealt with the internal affairs of Israel. Despite the enormous amount of attention devoted to dealing with Israel, less than 1% of all news stories dealt with this topic. We also found no change in this situation after the inauguration of peace between the two countries. This finding is a perfect illustration of the overall ethnocentrism of the news media.⁶ It is also an accurate reflection of how Jordanian journalists use the media as a tool of conflict. Thus, for many years the Jordanian press would not even use the word "Israel."

This problem of ethnocentrism also emerged in the interviews that were carried out prior to the content analysis. Even those Jordanian journalists who supported the peace process with Israel were unable to modify basic definitions of newsworthiness. Here are the comments of a senior Jordanian journalist (and government employee) responsible for television coverage:

Israel gets more than enough coverage in the Jordanian media, but the coverage is one-dimensional, mainly linked to the Arab-Israeli issues; we do not provide

our readers with sufficiently deep or wide coverage of Israeli society as a whole. We need to understand Israelis better, if we want the peace process to succeed. (J1)

Despite the basic ethnocentrism of the news media, one would still expect the initiation of peace to influence the prominence of various news slots. Thus, the very fact that journalists are assigned to cover negotiations should provide leaders from both sides with an opportunity to convey encouraging information about the process. The initiation of cooperative efforts between former enemies should also provide a new angle for news coverage.

We decided to look at this issue by asking two questions. First, we wanted to know how much positive and negative news was generally associated with different news topics. The assumption was that certain topics were more likely to bring negative news about the enemy than others. We calculated a rough “valence score” based on the percentage of positive stories appearing about a certain topic minus the percentage of negative stories. Thus, a positive score indicates that such news stories were more likely to paint the other side in a sympathetic light, while negative scores suggest more hostile images.⁷ In Table 2, we present the valence of each of the various news slots and the changes in prominence of each topic over time. The extremely infrequent category of internal affairs was removed in order to simplify the table.

The first thing to note is that the most frequent category has to do with Israel’s relations with others (multilateral relations). It is also the most negative slot for news about Israel. Looking over the actual headlines, one finds that the vast majority of these

Table 2

Valence of Jordanian news slots about Israel and prominence during three periods

	Multilateral relations	Peace process and normalizaiton	Diplomatic and economic relations	Israel’s foreign policy	Security issues	Total
Valence scores	-28.9	-19.2	+18.8	-2.4	+24	
Pre-peace agreement (1992–1993)	125 (64.5%)	30 (15.5%)	15 (7.7%)	22 (11.3%)	2 (1%)	194
Peace year (1994–1995)	86 (24.2%)	118 (33.1%)	109 (30.6%)	23 (6.5%)	20 (5.6%)	356
Post-peace agreement (1996–1997)	100 (36.9%)	80 (29.5%)	57 (21%)	27 (10%)	7 (2.6%)	271
Total	311 (37.9%)	228 (27.8%)	181 (22%)	72 (8.8%)	29 (3.5%)	821

stories have to do with the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This did not come as a surprise. Given the centrality of the Palestinian issue within Jordan, it is only natural that a good deal of the news about Israel revolves around this conflict. The ongoing confrontation between the Israelis and the Palestinians provides two of the most important criteria for news: drama and relevance. The most dramatic aspects of this relationship also tend to be the most negative.

The second most prominent topic for news about Israel had to do with the peace process between the two countries and the issue of normalization. One is struck by the surprisingly negative valence of this category. Looking at the actual numbers behind the score, one finds that there are over twice as many negative stories (79) as positive stories (35) that fall into this category. Thus, there is nothing inherently optimistic about this news slot. While it is true that the prominence of this topic provided important opportunities for the pro-peace government in Jordan, it also provided opportunities for those opposed to the process, including some of the journalists.

Nevertheless, we would argue that pessimistic stories about a peace process are better than negative stories that focus on conflict. In keeping with what was said earlier, news items that deal with tensions between the two countries are less likely to rouse passions than pieces that report on violent confrontations between Israel and the Palestinians. Jordanians are unlikely, for example, to take to the streets because of a dispute over trade agreements. The change in political context that is associated with a peace process does have an influence on "what is at issue." A debate about whether or not to make peace or to normalize relations with Israel is quite different than a dispute about how to defeat her.

The most positive news slot with a significant number of news stories has to do with the ongoing meetings and economic relations between the two countries. As can be seen, there was a dramatic rise in these types of stories during the peace year. The two governments no doubt promoted many of these items in an effort to convince the Jordanian people about the benefits of peace. This demonstrates how a change in the formal relations between the two countries created news slots that were unavailable in the past. Journalists adapt themselves to such changes by developing new routines for covering such stories. As can be seen, however, 2 years later these types of news stories became less newsworthy.

They also became decidedly more negative (not shown). The proportion of positive stories about these topics dropped from 41% during the peace year to 12% during the Netanyahu year; the proportion of negative stories rose from a mere 3% to 26%. The reasons for these changes became clear from the interviews. First, cooperation between the two countries was no longer considered novel, especially when compared with the increasing tensions between Israel and the Palestinians. Second, positive stories about such cooperation were considered less appropriate given the change in the political climate.

In sum, the findings provide little evidence that the inauguration of peace between the two countries had any lasting influence on Israel's image in the Jordanian media. Although there was a dramatic improvement during the first year of peace, the press again became antagonistic after Netanyahu was elected to office. Indeed, if not for government controls, the Jordanian press would have been in the vanguard of those trying to derail the peace process. This latter point suggests a disconcerting inconsistency between the desires to achieve peace and to maintain freedom of the press.

The one important exception to this generally negative conclusion has to do with the creation of news slots that were unavailable before the inauguration of peace. The

nature of the debate about Israel did change, and this is well reflected in journalistic routines. While the creation of such slots does not ensure positive coverage of the other side, it could lead to changes in the public's frames of reference.

The Coverage of Jordan in Israel

As discussed, the political environment surrounding the peace process in Israel was very different than the situation in Jordan. There was an extremely high level of consensus surrounding the accords. Officials from the government who were interviewed at the time talked about how much easier it was to promote the Jordanian than the Oslo peace process (Wolfsfeld, 1997b). It was also clear that Israeli journalists were only too happy to participate in the festivities.

Thus, peace with Jordan began from an unusually positive position. The major question however, remains the same. Did the inauguration of peace with Jordan have a significant and lasting impact on media coverage of that country in Israel? The findings with regard to this question can be found in Table 3.

The results suggest that if the peace process did have any effects on media coverage, they were small. In many ways, the most striking finding concerns the *lack* of news about Jordan in Israel. The same sample of 150 days led to almost five times as many stories in the two Jordanian newspapers as what appeared in Israel. This asymmetry in the importance each side attributes to the other is reinforced when one looks at the placement of the news stories in the two countries (not shown). Whereas a remarkably high 47% of all stories about Israel appear on page one of the Jordanian newspapers, only 13% of stories about Jordan were placed on the front page in Israel. Israel is an important story in Jordan; Jordan is a marginal story in Israel. There is no indication that peace had any influence on this difference.

The reasons for Jordan's lack of salience in Israel's media environment are instructive. Traditionally, Syria and Egypt were considered more powerful and more hostile, and the confrontation with the Palestinians has dominated coverage for quite some time. Thus, the lower the threat, the less the media covers an enemy. It is interesting that the dominance of the Palestinian story *increases* the importance of the Israeli story in Jordan

Table 3

Coverage valence of Jordan in Israel during three time periods: Overall evaluation

Period	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total
Pre-peace agreement (1992–1993)	19 (54.3%)	7 (20%)	9 (25.7%)	35
Peace year (1994–1995)	21 (22.8%)	20 (21.7%)	51 (55.4%)	92
Post-peace agreement (1996–1997)	20 (45.5%)	8 (18.2%)	16 (36.4%)	44
Total	60 (35.1%)	35 (20.5%)	76 (44.4%)	171

and yet *lowers* the salience of Jordan in Israel. One of the Israeli political reporters put it this way:

The Palestinian issue is so acute that it drowns out everything else. In the Egyptian coverage there is an additional dimension because they see themselves as mediators concerning the Palestinian issue. Therefore it is only natural that the Egyptian coverage is more extensive. The Jordanian story is more on the margins . . . even though there is more empathy for the Jordanians, there's nothing to do. (Israeli interview #9)

This lack of interest is also reflected in the assignment of reporters. Most of the news organs have one specialist in Arab affairs who deals with all of the parties involved. Thus, unless something unusually newsworthy takes place in Jordan, there is no reason to divert attention from the usual stories. Even when these journalists are convinced that certain events justify a story, they find it difficult to sell it to their editors. A good example was provided by one of the Israeli reporters working for one of the national radio stations. In August 1996, there were two days of localized riots over the cost of bread in Kerak and other areas in south Jordan. One would have thought that this would have been a major story, yet the journalist had trouble convincing his editor to allow him to report on it. In a commercial media environment, professional definitions of newsworthiness take precedence.

One also finds little evidence that the establishment of a peace had much of an influence on the overall tone of coverage. It is true that, as expected, the image of Jordan in Israel is generally more positive than Israel's image in Jordan. There is also a dramatic increase in the number of stories about Jordan during the peace year, and 55% of these pieces are positive. The coverage during the post-peace agreement period, on the other hand, looks only marginally better than what was published before the peace process. There are still very few stories, and there are still more negative stories than positive ones. The fallback is not as severe as in Jordan, but given the very small number of articles, it is unlikely that such changes would have much of an impact on public images.

There is another interesting finding that emerges from Table 1. The proportion of "neutral" stories is much smaller in Israel than it is in Jordan. It is possible to come up with three reasonable explanations for this difference. The first has already been discussed: Jordanian journalists may adopt a more neutral style of reporting in order to deal with conflicting pressures they face from the government and the public. The second is that the Israeli media environment is more sensationalist than the one in Jordan, and this leads to a greater emphasis on drama. The third explanation brings us back to Jordan's relatively low media status in Israel. Given that lack of interest, only events that are especially positive or negative will pass the strict threshold of newsworthiness. Routine events, which are more likely to be neutral, are simply left out.

The interviews with the Israeli journalists provide additional insights about this process. It is true that the amount and quality of access improved considerably after the establishment of peace: Reporters could now contact Jordanian officials directly rather than depend on secondary sources. Yet, not a single one of the Israeli news media stationed a correspondent in Jordan. After a wait of 50 years for the opening of the borders between the two countries, there appears to be little need for an extended stay. Coverage of Jordan becomes episodic, and often negative. This type of coverage is typical of the ways in which the news media cover the political periphery (Van Dijk, 1996; Wolfsfeld, Avraham, & Aburaiya, 2000).

Consider, for example, the two most important news stories about Jordan that appeared in the Israeli press in 1997—the last year that was studied. One, in March of that year, concerned a Jordanian soldier opening fire and killing seven Israeli schoolgirls who were on a class trip to a “peace park,” which had been dedicated in honor of the agreement. The second took place in October and centered on a botched attempt by Israeli intelligence to kill a Hamas leader (and a Jordanian citizen) living in Amman. The second incident led to a crisis between the two countries that also received a considerable amount of coverage. Thus, only a truly negative story from Jordan is likely to provide sufficient drama to divert attention from routine coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Changing News Slots for Jordan

This brings us to the issue of news slots. The first thing to note is that, as in Jordan, the proportion of stories about the internal affairs of the other side remains extremely small: Less than 6% of all news stories that appeared in the two Israeli newspapers dealt with such topics. While this is a somewhat higher *proportion* than in Jordan, given the extremely small *number* of articles, very few Israelis were likely to notice them. This finding again demonstrates the inherent ethnocentrism of the news media.

Despite this, the formal inauguration of peace did have a notable effect on the prominence of certain news slots. The same analysis that was carried out with regard to the Jordanian news was also carried out in Israel. The results are presented in Table 4.

The first thing worth noting concerns the valence associated with each topic. The

Table 4
Prominence of Israeli news slots about Jordan during three periods

	Peace process and normalization	Meetings and economic relations	Multilateral relations	Jordan's foreign policy	Security issues	Total
Valence scores	+50.2	+58.3	-44.5	-5.3	-62.5	
Pre-peace agreement (1992–1993)	3 (9.4%)	3 (9.4%)	8 (25%)	12 (37.5%)	6 (18.8%)	32
Peace year (1994–1995)	40 (48.8%)	18 (22%)	13 (15.9%)	7 (8.5%)	4 (4.9%)	82
Post-peace agreement (1996–1997)	5 (12.8%)	15 (38%)	10 (25.6%)	3 (7.7%)	6 (15.4%)	39
Total	48 (31.4%)	36 (23.5%)	31 (20.3%)	22 (14.4%)	16 (10.5%)	153

most negative context for news centers on two topics: Jordan's multilateral relations and security issues related to Jordan. This is understandable as both subjects are directly linked to the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict. The findings also show that the most positive news slots have to do with the peace process and with the meetings and economic relations between the two countries. Thus, one can say that we have two major slots for news about Jordan: the more negative slots that deal with confrontation and the more positive ones that deal with areas of cooperation.

The findings in this table again illustrate the influence of political context on the prominence of the various news slots. The inauguration of peace increased the prominence of two topics: those directly associated with the process and those having to do with the ongoing relations between the two countries. It is these stories that provided the basis for the increase in positive media attention during the peace year. Once the peace agreement with Jordan was signed, however, there was no process to report on. This is not a trivial finding because the issue of normalization remained an important (and controversial) topic in Jordan. For Israel, questions about peace with Jordan were resolved; for Jordan, they were not.

A more encouraging finding concerns the proportion of stories dealing with meetings and economic cooperation. Here the number of news stories dropped only slightly between the peace year and the Netanyahu period. Prime Minister Netanyahu had a definite interest in showing that despite his generally skeptical attitude toward the Palestinians, he did want to solidify the peace with Jordan. Arranging meetings with Jordanian leaders and talking about possible areas of cooperation between the two countries provided a useful means of achieving this goal. Had a peace agreement never been signed between the two countries, such initiatives would have been impossible.

The results from Israel, then, are somewhat more encouraging than in Jordan but still mixed. The more encouraging finding is that Jordan's media image started out more positive, improved after the establishment of peace, and suffered less of a setback when relations between the countries took a turn for the worse. One also finds that the establishment of relations created news slots that were more conducive for building peace between the two countries.

The importance of this change is limited, however, by the rather small number of news stories about Jordan. The peace process also did not lead to any increase in media interest in the internal affairs of Jordan. Open borders mean very little when journalists have no professional interest in crossing them.

Conclusion

We return to the two major research questions that were raised. The first question asked whether or not the inauguration of peace between Israel and Jordan had a significant and lasting influence on the way each country covered the other. For the most part, we have to conclude that the answer is no. The findings from Jordan are especially negative. While there was a significant change in the tone of news about Israel during the first year of peace, it did not last. In fact, the proportion of negative stories was even greater than it had been before the establishment of relations between the two countries. The situation in Israel was somewhat different, but the overall trends remained the same. It is true that Israeli news about Jordan was more positive and that the fallback during the Netanyahu year was less dramatic. But far more significant in Israel was the continuing lack of media attention concerning Jordan. Jordan was just as likely to be overlooked after the establishment of peace as before.

The analysis of changing news slots in the two countries afforded a somewhat different perspective on this issue. The establishment of ongoing and formal relations between the two countries did alter the focus of media attention, providing leaders with important opportunities for the promotion of peace. At the very least, news stories about high-level meetings and economic cooperation suggested that peace was possible. As discussed, even negative news stories about such issues are less likely to damage the prospects for peace than items that focus on violent confrontations. The findings in both countries suggest that there was an important change in the prominence of constructive news slots. In this way, the news media do not merely reflect the change in political context, they help define it.

This brings us to the second research question: Which political and professional factors best explain the way Israel and Jordan construct news about each other? The interviews carried out in the two countries provided valuable insights into the norms and routines journalists employ to cover each other. Such practices are clearly rooted in the political and media environments in which these journalists operate. In Jordan, the journalists found themselves caught between a pro-peace government and a good part of the public that grew increasingly angry over Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. In addition, many of the journalists themselves had serious reservations about the peace process, and at least some believed that the news should be used as a weapon. In any case, despite government controls, when the political climate turned more hostile toward Israel, so did media coverage of Israel.

In Israel, the political environment was more conducive to peace, but the media environment was less so. It is true that Israeli journalists were just as enthusiastic about peace with Jordan as the rest of the public. Political enthusiasm, however, has a very limited shelf life. Jordan was never considered a major threat, and the Israeli media had more than enough genuine threats to deal with. Once a formal peace had been established between the two countries, there was little reason to think about Jordan again. The fact that the Israeli media do not have a single correspondent permanently stationed in Amman is telling.

After the collection of the data, the situation in the Middle East first took a more hopeful turn with the election of Ehud Barak and then became much worse (Wolfsfeld, 2001b). The outbreak of the second Palestinian *Intifada* in September 2000 and the Israeli reaction led to another round of tension between Jordan and Israel. In an act of protest, Jordan refused to send a new ambassador to Israel to replace the one who had left before the outbreak of violence. As one would expect, the Jordanian press has again become extremely hostile toward Israel.

In Israel, the Jordanian story is still considered rather marginal, and only worth covering if it includes serious acts of violence. Thus, protests against Israel and a number of attacks on Israeli diplomats did receive a certain amount of coverage. However, it is now more difficult and dangerous for Israeli journalists to cover stories in Jordan. It is both ironic and inevitable that the more interest Israeli journalists have in covering Jordan, the less they are likely to be welcome.

The peace process between Jordan and Israel was more amicable than most. Thus, one might have thought that at least in this case leaders would have little trouble promoting peace to the media. The findings suggest that such a development is unlikely to occur in even the best of circumstances. Only if both the political *and* media environments point in the same direction is the press likely to play a constructive role in such processes. The news media are much better suited for the conduct of war than the pursuit of peace. Despite the biblical adage, it is almost impossible to turn journalistic swords into effective plowshares.

Notes

1. For a review of the literature concerning media and peace, see Wolfsfeld (2001a).

2. News slots should not be confused with media frames (for a review of literature on frames, see Scheufele, 1999). While there are some interesting overlaps between the two constructs, news slots have to do with the mostly administrative decisions about the assignment of reporters and news space. Media frames, on the other hand, have to do with interpretive principles that govern the collection of information and the construction of news stories.

3. Readers may wonder about the long delay between the date of these interviews and the publication of the findings. Unfortunately, the second stage of this project—the content analysis—took much longer than we anticipated. The increased tensions between the two countries led to quite a few logistical problems in coordinating our joint efforts. Nevertheless, it was decided to maintain the same dates for the content analysis in order to ensure that the interviews referred to the same time periods. A new project is now under way that will cover a longer time period.

4. There were actually eight categories, but in the interest of conciseness it was decided to collapse two and drop one for these analyses. The political and economic relations/meetings category includes both news stories about meetings between the two sides and stories having to do with economic relations between the two countries. No significant differences were found in either the overall evaluation of stories associated with these topics or the relative prominence of these categories over time. The category that was dropped was labeled “other” and referred to those news stories that did not fall into any of the other groupings.

5. The level of agreement was based on coding 60 articles in each country from the different time periods. The reliability figures concerning topic areas refer to the amount of agreement after the codes were collapsed (see above) and the “other” category was dropped from the analysis.

6. It is also worth noting that very few Jordanian journalists have any working knowledge of the Hebrew language.

7. These valence scores were created in order to reduce the overall number of tables. In addition, owing to the rather small numbers of articles in some of the categories, it was decided not to detail the changes in valence over time for each category. This would have been especially problematic with regard to the Israeli data, where the overall number of stories was even smaller. The actual percentages of negative, neutral, and positive stories associated with each news slot were as follows: multilateral relations (35.7%/57.6%/6.8%), peace process normalization (34.6%/50%/15.4%), diplomatic and economic relations (9.9%/61.3%/28.7%), Israel’s foreign policy (12.5%/77.8%/9.7%), and security issues (6.9%/62.1%/31%).

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