TV NEWS AND "WHITE VOICES": *DAGSREVYEN'S* COVERAGE OF THE GAZA WAR

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Abstract

The media blockade imposed by Israel during its 22-day invasion of Gaza in December 2008 - January 2009 barred foreign reporters from entering Gaza. Eye witness reports were restricted to the invading Israeli military and to Palestinian and Arab journalists in Gaza. The blockade influenced media coverage and public opinion around the world. Two Norwegian aid workers and medical doctors managed to enter Gaza on the fifth day of the war to work at the Hamas-controlled Al Shifa Hospital. As the only Western doctors, they were interviewed repeatedly by global media. They frequently appeared also in Norwegian media, including *Dagsrevyen*, the prime time evening TV news of NRK - The Norwegian State Broadcasting Corporation. They attributed their media appearances to their "white voices," i.e. local Palestinian and Arab voices were less interesting to Western media. Drawing on framing theory, content analysis and interviews, we first discuss possible bias and framing in *Dagsrevyen*'s coverage of the Gaza War as it ran its course. We also reflect on post-war developments, before addressing the two Norwegian doctors and their media relations during and after the war. Were their interactions with the media "source-driven journalism," and how justified is their "white voices" claim?

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Background

Almost two years after the Gaza War that lasted from December 27, 2008 until January 19, 2009, public opinion in many countries remains divided on the causes of, and justification for, the Israeli invasion, and on the long-term effects.[1] That many Palestinian homes are still lying in rubble due to Israel's refusal to allow sufficient building materials into Gaza, reinforces an impression of excessive Israeli brutality. What Israel won militarily, it may well have lost morally.

The Israeli invasion was designed to stop Hamas rocket launches at Sederot and Askelon. Israel also wanted to strike at the Hamas government which had been democratically elected in 2006 but went on to force Fatah out of Gaza in June 2007. An important element was to impose a media blockade to limit the bad media coverage Israel got fighting Hizbollah during the 2006 invasion of Lebanon. The media blockade could prevent global media from covering the expected slaughter and civilian suffering. "Operation Cast Lead" had been carefully planned. Handling the media and influencing public opinion was the first major test of the National Information Directorate (NID) which had been set up in the spring of 2008 based on lessons learned in 2006 in Lebanon (Shabi 2009; Eliassen 2009). Blocked from entering Gaza, foreign reporters flocked to see the Israeli bombardment from Parash Hill near Sederot, a scenic resort for Israelis, subsequently named the "Hill of Shame."

Despite the blockade, the war attracted considerable worldwide media attention, not least due to the hundreds of Palestinian and Arab journalists in Gaza, including six reporters from *Al Jazeera.* There were also two Western eye witnesses: the Norwegian doctors Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse. Representing NORWAC (the Norwegian Aid Committee), they entered Gaza on the fifth day of the war and worked 12 days at the Hamas-controlled Al Shifa hospital before being evacuated.[2] They gave 10-15 daily interviews to all kinds of media and Mads Gilbert also sent dispatches to his Norwegian media contacts. They assert their media activities were not at the expense of their medical duties (Cohen 2009; Gilbert and Fosse 2009b, 109). They described Israel as a brutal aggressor collectively punishing the entire Palestinian population in Gaza of 1.5 million people, murdering innocent civilians, violating international law and committing war crimes. Branded as Hamas propagandists by U.S. critics (Fox News 2009) and as liars and false icons by Israeli critics (Steinberg 2009; Sandell 2009), they documented their story in the January 2009 issue of *Lancet*, a highly respected medical journal (Gilbert and Fosse 2009a), and in their subsequent book (Gilbert and Fosse 2009b).

As documented by the Goldstone Report, more than 1,400 Palestinians were killed and 5,000 wounded, mostly non-combatants, compared with 13 Israeli deaths (10 military and 3 civilians) and 523 wounded (UNHRC 2009; Heyerdahl 2009). The Palestinian Ministry of Health had originally claimed 1,314 dead and 5,400 injured, mostly non-combatant women and children. Israeli sources gave much lower Palestinian figures, justifying civilian Palestinian losses by asserting that Hamas was using civilians as human shields (BBC, 2009a). Also inside Israel there was opposition to the invasion. Some Israeli soldiers who took part in the invasion later recanted and admitted using Palestinians as human shields (BBC 2009b; Hammerstad 2009). Critics of Israel claim the attack is a reflection of a new military doctrine to strike back immediately at the sites of rocket launches and

target collectively civilians and civilian infrastructure to terrorise the population from aiding Hamas. If true, this amounts to a violation of international law, and is among the reasons why a lawsuit has been filed in Norway against Israeli leaders for war crimes (Gilbert and Fosse 2009b, 272ff).

On October 16, 2009, the UNHRC endorsed the controversial Goldstone report (UNHRC 2009; Falk 2009; Williams 2009). While a majority of the 47 members decided to submit the report to the Security Council, Norway was among 11 countries to abstain, claiming the resolution text was biased and only focused on Israeli responsibility (Larsen, 2009). The Goldstone Report accuses both Israel and Hamas of war crimes during the Gaza War and recommends that each side be given 6 months to conduct independent investigations. This has been rejected by both sides. On November 6, the UN Secretary General stated he was transmitting the Goldstone report to the UN Security Council at the request of the General Assembly. Depending on the Security Council, the report could end up with the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Research Objectives

This article addresses two research questions: The *first* concerns the coverage of the war as it ran its course by *Dagsrevyen*, the prime time TV news program of Norway's public service broadcaster NRK - The Norwegian State Broadcasting Corporation. *Dagsrevyen* plays an important agenda setting role and influences public opinion in Norway. To what extent was *Dagsrevyen*'s coverage biased and framed a pro-Palestinian representation of the war? The *second* question concerns the roles of aid workers and medical doctors Gilbert and Fosse, especially during the war but also afterwards in the shape of their documentary book *Eyes in Gaza*, published in September 2009, which has sold 30,000 copies and is a bestseller. (Gilbert and Fosse 2009b). Were they, and are they, spin doctors excelling in pro-Palestinian media manipulation and source-driven journalism?

Framing Theory and Methodology

Framing theory has surpassed agenda setting and cultivation theory as the most widely used analytical approach in communication theory, and it is also popular in journalism studies. Its relevance for public opinion is well documented, although there is discussion on the framing process and its measurable impact on audiences (van Gorp 2007; Entman 2007; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007; Weaver 2007). While the early work of Entman propounded a single model of the entire framing process, Scheufele (1999) identified several framing processes based on the interaction among interested sources and media organisations, journalists/media and audiences. These have been documented in Norwegian TV news media and press (Sand and Helland 1998/2004; Njaastad 2004; Bang 2006; Waldahl et al. 2009). Contemporary framing literature distinguishes three different framing paradigms: a) the *constructionist* model (journalists provide interpretative packages of the positions of sources); b) the *critical* model (frames are the outcomes of news gathering routines and hegemonic elite values) and c) the *cognitivist* model (journalistic texts become embodied in the minds of audiences) (McQuail 2010, 511-512). While the cognitivist model is closely tied with audience, effect and reception studies, the constructionist and critical models both concentrate on selected external and internal

factors on the sender and content side in the communication process. In the case of TV news, research has shown that the content is often not retained or understood by the audience, which has prompted some researchers to adopt narrative structures in the presentation of TV news in order to improve audience retention and comprehension (Machill et al. 2007). Framing theory therefore spans a variety of approaches, from comprehensive models of the entire communication process combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies (De Vreese 2005) to narrowly focused studies of issue-specific framing, measuring units limited to either the sender, content, audience and/or effect side of the communication process.

Our intention is to draw on constructionist and critical framing theory to address the two research questions. We will be concerned, first, with the news production process in *Dagsrevyen* and the contextualisation of NRK *Dagsrevyen* in Norwegian debate and politics. Secondly, we will discuss the roles of Gilbert and Fosse, especially the media management insights gleaned from their best-selling book, supplemented by interviews with key respondents listed in the references.

Dagsrevyen's Coverage of the Gaza War

In her content analysis of *Dagsrevyen*'s coverage of the Gaza War, Walsøe (2009) found a moderately pro-Palestinian frame, but less than expected (see Table 1). Her research question was whether *Dagsrevyen* gave a biased representation of the war, and her working hypothesis was that sources, the interviews with Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse and visual imagery constructed an overall pro-Palestinian frame. Her data included 124 news items on the Gaza war, all breaking news. A total of 4 hrs, 42 minutes and 10 seconds was broadcast. 105 Norwegian sources, as well as 36 Israeli, 36 Palestinian and 5 from Hamas plus 39 others were interviewed or cited. Norwegian sources included politicians, Gilbert and Fosse, representatives of both sides, academics, and NRK correspondents. Israeli sources included civilians, politicians and military personnel, while Palestinian sources were civilians affected by the war or political representatives. Hamas was listed separately. Other sources were The UN, politicians from the U.S. or other countries. The sources did not include Palestinian bloggers and citizen journalists in Gaza (Zayyan and Carter 2009). Of the 124 news items, 84 (66 percent) were seen as neutral, 29 (23 percent) as pro-Palestinian and only 11 (8 percent) as pro-Israel.

Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse were interviewed 7 minutes, 42 seconds and 8 minutes, respectively, including their appearances as special guests in studio on January 10 and 11, 2009. No other sources were used to such an extent, and all their interviews were seen as pro-Palestinian. Regarding images, all items had live images, one included stills and eight had other imagery (satellite pictures, maps). The sources of the imagery were on two occasions unidentified, while The Israeli Air Force and the Palestinian media service provider Ramattan were both used, as was YouTube. Against this background, Walsøe concludes that *Dagsrevyen*'s coverage during the war, despite varied sources, was moderately framed in favour of the Palestinian side.

The most surprising aspect of this finding is perhaps that coverage and framing was not even more pro-Palestinian, given the Israeli media blockade, the brutal Israeli invasion and the sheer scale of relative human loss of life and suffering. Some will also argue that showing Palestinian suffering is not framing, on the contrary, it is to uphold the journalistic ideals of truthful, impartial and accurate reporting.

Table 1: Summary of Findings in Walsøe (2009) Regarding Gaza Coverage by *Dagsrevyen*

Date	Time	Items	Sources					Doctors		Framing			Image1	Image2
			N	P	I	H	O	MG	EF	PP	PI	N		
27.12.08	13:45	6	3	2	2		1			2	1	3	L/O	Unident.
28.12.08	13:08	7	6	1	2		4			2		5	L/O	
29.12.08	12:28	6	6	1	1		1			3	1	2	L/O	
30.12.08	9:33	3	3	1	1		2	2:22		1		2	L	
31.12.08	10:33	5	3	1	4	1		2:35		2	1	2	L/O	Israel Air
1.1.09	5:57	3	1		3					1		2	L/O	YouTube
2.1.09	10:00	5	3	4			1			1		4	L/O	
3.1.09	18:15	8	4	3	3		1	2:05		3		5	L	
4.1.09	19:20	9	6	1	5	1	3		2:40	1		8	L/O	Ramattan
5.1.09	13:55	7	5	5	3	1	2			1		6	L	
6.1.09	13:12	6	8		1		1		0:06	2	1	3	L/S	
7.1.09	7:12	4	3		2		1					4	L	
8.1.09	12:31	6	5	4			3		0:45	1		5	L	
9.1.09	12:03	4	5	1	1		1					4	L	Israel Air
10.1.09	21:51	8	13	1				0:35	4:21	2	2	4	L	Ramattan
11.1.09	19:21	6	4	1	2		10			1		5	L/O	Ramattan
12.1.09	9:56	4	7	1	2			1:01	0:08			4	L	
13.1.09	6:39	3	3	1	1							3	L	
14.1.09	11:00	6	4	2	1		2			2	1	3	L	Unident.
15.1.09	12:10	6	5				4			3	1	2	L	
16.1.09	7:45	3	2		1	2	1				1	2	L	
17.1.09	7:19	4	3	1							1	3	L	
18.1.09	7:00	4	2		1		1					4	L	
19.1.09	7:17	2	1	5							1	1	L	
27.12.08 -19.1.09	**4:42:10**	**124 100%**	**105**	**36**	**36**	**5**	**39**	**7:42**	**8:00**	**29 23%**	**11 8%**	**84 66%**		

Time = minutes and seconds
Sources: N= Norwegian, P=Palestinian, I=Israeli, H=Hamas, O=Other
Doctors: MG=Mats Gilbert, EF=Erik Fosse
Framing: PP=Pro-Palestinian, PI=Pro-Israeli, N=Neutral
Image 1 S=Stills, L=Live, O=Other
Image 2 Images from other sources than NRK: Unidentified, Israeli Air Force, Ramattan (a Palestinian media service provider)

The research by Walsøe clearly belongs in the constructionist paradigm, and to some degree also in the critical paradigm. She has examined the extent to which *Dagsrevyen* constructed or framed a pro-Palestinian "interpretative package" based on selective use of sources and content, including imagery. She has partly also considered pro-Palestinian framing as a result of "news gathering routines" (sources) and "hegemonic elite values" (Labor party and leftist pro-Palestinian policies). Yet one element beyond the ramifications of her study was the involvement of NRK Middle Eastern correspondents Sidsel Wold and Anders Tvegård.

As we shall comment on later, they are surprisingly absent in Gilbert and Fosse (2009b) who state they regularly updated Norwegian media on developments at the Al Shifa Hospital.

Bias in news reporting, like slant, spin or propaganda can result from the more or less conscious and systematic skewing of news frames, e.g. by source-driven journalism, meeting deadlines, commercial pressures, political agenda or selective news values of gatekeepers (Entman 2007). Bias can also degenerate further into misinformation, deception or outright lies (Miller 2004; Pilger 2005; Jowett and O'Donnell 2006; Hobsbaum 2006). As the debate on media globalisation has shown, the nation state persists, and national media outlets like TV news channels, whether they are advertisement or license-fee financed, tend to frame international issues and events through national lenses or frames (Hafez 2007; Flew 2007; Vaagan 2008a). *Al Jazeera*, particularly its Arabic version, makes no secret of its pro-Palestinian sympathies and its coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict is often biased, which is acknowledged by *Al Jazeera* itself (Economist 2009a).

We now turn to two elements that can help explain and contextualise our findings: a) the debate in Norway regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict; and b) NRK *Dagsrevyen* gatekeepers, ideology and news values.

Norway and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

In 1974, Norway voted in favour of allowing Palestinian chairman Yasser Arafat to address the UN General Assembly. This marked a watershed in the policies of the ruling Labour Party and Norway towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Norway's pro-Israeli policy dating back to the creation of Israel in 1948, has from the 1970s gradually been replaced by a more even-handed policy through which Norway supports both sides and a two-state solution. This shift is reflected in the parliamentary membership basis of Friends of Israel, an informal grouping of MPs, which has dwindled from more than 50 percent of all MPs in the 1970s and 80s to the current level of 15 percent, most of which hail from the non-governing Progress Party and Christian People´s Party.[3] Today, while condemning the illegal Israeli occupation and settlement policy, Norway also insists that Fatah and Hamas accept Israel within pre-1967 borders, and negotiate a peace agreement with Israel, as demonstrated in the Oslo Agreement in 1993. As a key member of the donor country group, Norway today provides considerable support for the Palestinian Authority, and also advocates speaking to Hamas. These developments have not gone unnoticed in Israel, whose ambassadors to Norway, along with pro-Israeli groups in recent years have branded Norway as one of the most anti-Semitic countries in Europe.

The Israeli writer Manfred Gerstenfeld, head of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs thus claims that a small Norwegian elite headed by the Foreign Minister and including the Norwegian royal family, is spreading anti-Israeli hatred. Professor Hilde Henriksen Waage, a specialist on the Arab-Israeli conflict, rejects these claims, stressing that the right wing in Israel represented by the current Israeli Foreign Minister, The Centre of Public Affairs and The Jerusalem Post are trying to silence all criticism of Israel by framing as anti-Semitism any legitimate criticism of Israeli policies. Officially, The Israeli Foreign Ministry does not believe Norway to be anti-Israeli or anti-Semitic but notes strong disagreement with Norway is noted on specific issues, notably Hamas and Iran. Also, Norway's celebration of Nobel

Laureate Knut Hamsun who was a Nazi, is not understood in Israel, neither is the decision by the Norwegian Government Pension Fund (a major global investor) to withdraw from Elbit Systems (a supplier of surveillance technology for the separation wall between Israel and the West Bank) (Lohne 2009).

During the Gaza War public opinion was marked by considerable support for aiding the population of Gaza and stopping the Israeli onslaught. The normally pro-Israeli Norwegian Church protested to Israel that the use of military power in Gaza was creating a "totally unacceptable and immoral humanitarian situation" (Risholm 2008). On January 6, 2009, the same day 40 Palestinian school children were killed, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres told the EU that Israel was combating terror. Israel was going to teach Hamas a lesson, and was justified in defending its citizens. In Norway, this made a Labour MP call on Peres to return his Nobel Peace Prize from 1994 (Storvik 2009). Norwegian People's Aid, traditionally close to the Labor Party, accused Israel of war crimes and called for an independent UN-led inquiry (NORWAID 2009). In April 2009, 6 Norwegian lawyers, with the support of the Norwegian Bar Association, filed a lawsuit with the Norwegian state attorney of international crimes, accusing the Israeli leadership of war crimes in Gaza. The state attorney dismissed the lawsuit in early November, stating the war was beyond his jurisdiction.

In the wake of the Gaza War there has also been renewed discussion among Norwegian university academics and artists of a comprehensive academic and cultural boycott of Israel, although little concrete action has been taken, partly because the Norwegian government is opposed to any boycott (Åmås 2009; Johansen 2009). In November 2009, the Norwegian P.E.N. Committee awarded the Palestinian journalist Mohammad Omer the Ossietzky prize for outstanding contributions to freedom of expression. Omer has since 2003 been a regular contributor to the weekly Morgenbladet, a favourite of the cultural and academic elite. On returning to Gaza from London in June 2008, Omer was beaten up by Israeli police at the Allenby Bridge and was hospitalised in the Netherlands for one year (Gravdal 2009).

In public debate, a prominent figure who regularly draws criticism from pro-Israeli quarters is former Conservative Prime Minister (1981-86) Kåre Willoch. In his later years, Willoch has become quite outspoken on the Arab-Israeli conflict, which may help to explain why today only 3 MPs from the Conservative Party belong to Friends of Israel. Although describing himself as a friend of Israel, Willoch has on many occasions sharply criticised Israel's policies towards the Palestinians.

Adding to Norwegian debate on the Arab-Israeli conflict is the fact that Norwegian forces for several decades have served in the area, and Norwegian politicians and army personnel have held key UN positions relating to the Middle East such as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

Gatekeepers, Ideology and News Values

NRK *Dagsrevyen* 19:00-19:30 is the most widely seen TV news program in Norway, attracting a viewership of 723.000 and 722.000 in 2007 and 2008, respectively, as we see in Table 2. By comparison, the NRK 21:00 news aired on Mondays through Thursdays gathered 546.000 and 539.000 viewers in 2007 and 2008, respectively. The NRK daily local (regional) news and national late evening news also attract sizeable viewerships.

Table 2: Norwegian TV News 2007-2008

TV news programs in 2007 and 2008. Ratings in 1000		
Program	**2007**	**2008**
Dagsrevyen (19:00 daily)	723	722
Dagsrevyen (21:00 Mon-Thurs)	546	539
Distriktsnyheter (18:40 daily)	357	376
Kveldsnytt (23:00 daily)	418	442
TV2 (18:30 daily)	419	410
TV2 (21:00 daily)	485	481
TVN (18:00 daily)	135	120
TVN (22:00 daily)	163	174

Source: TNS Gallup/NRK Annual Report 2008.

The main competitor of NRK is the commercial media enterprise TV2, which is licensed as a commercial public broadcaster. The TV2 18:30 and 21:00 news attracted between 400.000-500,000 viewers. A third competitor has been the commercial media company TV Norge, which in mid-2009 ceased airing news altogether. *Dagsrevyen* is widely seen to exert a strong agenda setting and formative influence on public opinion in Norway (NRK 2009; Todal Jenssen and Aalberg 2007; Waldahl et al. 2009).

Of course viewership figures, while important for funding, legitimacy and other reasons are not an indication of influence on viewership opinions or behaviour. Receptionist studies have shown that the content of TV news is often not retained or understood by the audience (Machill et al. 2007). This should be a concern in newsrooms but what we see is that studies of news production are often limited to what journalists think and do (Machin and Niblock 2006) and take audience impact for granted.

Historically, the NRK has often modeled itself on the BBC, so one would expect that NRK gatekeepers, whatever their personal sympathies and political preferences, are committed to BBC-inspired independent, accurate and truthful reporting. These values are reflected in the statutes of NRK (§ 3-3 General requirements to NRK's public service offers) which identify as key criteria of all information dissemination: factuality, analysis, editorial independence and impartiality, including high ethical standards and balance over time (NRK 2009). In Norwegian media history, "the great change" that set in from around 1980 was characterised by deregulation, political liberalisation, privatisation and marketisation. The NRK monopoly was disbanded, the party press dismantled. New TV channels appeared: TV3 (1987), TV Norge (1988), TV2 (1992) along with many local radio and TV stations (Vaagan 2008b, 24). The main competitor to NRK has been TV2, a commercial, advertisement- funded TV channel. (TV Norge has just decided to abandon its news program). The competition between the two TV channels has been a researched in several studies, especially their news programs (Syvertsen 1997; Sand and Helland 1998/2004; Waldahl et al. 2009). A common conclusion in several studies is that their competition has made them become similar (converge) in terms of program content and genre, and has proven to be mutually beneficial: *Dagsrevyen* would probably

have been a more serious TV news program without TV2 news competition, while TV2 news would have been less serious without *Dagsrevyen*.

The gatekeeeping function of journalists and editors suggest that personal, professional and institutional news values have a framing effect on the way news are selected and presented. At the same time, TV news is an established genre with many fixed criteria. Until 2001, The Norwegian State Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) had been headed by a long succession of Labour Party politicians. While the NRK itself has modeled itself on the BBC standards of truthful, impartial and accurate reporting, the political right in Norway has always maintained that NRK journalism primarily served the socialist interests of the Labour Party, including an allegedly partisan and biased coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict. From 2001 to 2007, when NRK was led by a former Conservative politician and businessman Jon Bernander, these accusations were less pronounced. The head of NRK from 2007, Hans-Tore Bjerkaas, is an NRK insider and his party politics are not publicly known. Yet NRK's association with the Labor Party has not worn off in the eyes of its critics, especially in the opposition Progress Party and the Conservative Party. Many Middle East correspondents of NRK in the past, especially Odd Karsten Tveit (1979-83, 1990-94 and 2003-07), Fritz Nilsen (1994-99) and Lars Sigurd Sunnanå (1999-2003), have been very critical of Israeli policies towards the Palestinians. The present correspondent, Sidsel Wold, appointed in 2007, is the first in a long line of NRK correspondents to speak both Hebrew and Arabic. Based in Jerusalem, she regularly visits and reports from Gaza, but not during the Gaza War due to the media blockade.

Until around 2000, research on news traditionally dealt with the definition, process, power and ideology of news and spread across the spectrum of constructionist, critical and cognitivist framing. Tumber (1999) distinguishes between 5 strands of research: (1) the *definitions of news* (e.g. pseudo-events, i.e. man-made events often orchestrated by PR campaigns); (2) the *production of news* (e.g. gatekeeping, socialisation of journalists into news organisations); (3) the *economics of news* (e.g. the political economy or propaganda model of news, the market-led news model or tabloidisation of the press); (4) the *sources* of news (e.g. overreliance on government sources, the give-and-take process between journalists and sources); and finally (5) the *objectivity and ideology of news* (e.g. bias and framing arising from journalism culture). From around 2000, some researchers have, in addition and under the impact of new media and online journalism, focused on the reception, interpretation and psychology of news, employing a deconstructivist perspective (Meikle 2009).

Compared with print newspapers, TV news gives prominence to new visual material (footage, stills), and dramatic footage of war scenes and casualties, especially by "our own reporters" interviewing or reporting on a story (Dahlgren et al. 1991; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001; Allern 2001; Watson and Hill 2003, 198-199; Franklin et al. 2005, 173-174; Ulribe and Gunter 2007).

A number of news values are traceable in *Dagsrevyen* coverage of the Gaza War. Eye witness reports from inside Gaza and visual material were available, and international media again, as in the Lebanon 2006 War, turned against Israel. Our analysis suggests the following nine news values as the most prominent in *Dagsrevyen*'s coverage of the war:

- Magnitude (breaking news, invasion war, large military deployment, loss of lives).
- Surprise (Israeli invasion was expected but happened suddenly).
- New and challenging situation (Israeli media blockade).
- Significance (involvement of Norwegian interests and/or citizens).
- Availability of visual material (live and stills) from combatants and other sources.
- Availability of local Norwegian eye witness sources (Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse).
- Asymmetry (Israeli military might vs. Palestinian military inferiority).
- Legal injustice (Israel attacking the legally elected Hamas government).
- Bad news (significant loss of Palestinian lives and many casualties).

It should of course be added here in view of what has been stated about ethics, that many will also list here as the leading news values of *Dagsrevyen*'s independent, truthful and accurate reporting. We can conjecture that such values would be paramount in interviews with *Dagsrevyen*'s editors and journalists. We do not dispute this possibility, but the purpose is rather to explore which other news values could have played a role.

In constructivist framing, news values of sponsors and sources acting through source driven journalism filter down into the interpretative packages constructed by journalists. Here news values play an important role in the *mise-en-scene* of news broadcasting. All the 9 listed news values above lend themselves to this strand of analysis. In particular, the availability of visual material and local Norwegian sources seem important. This was essential in the case of the NRK *Dagsrevyen* interviews with Gilbert and Fosse. In critical framing, frames are seen as the result of news gathering routines (e.g. standard news values) and hegemonic elite values (e.g. elite news preferences). Critical framing also accord a major role to news values in the framing process. All nine news values above also fit into this type of analysis. Particularly interesting to explore further seems legal injustice. This is because the governing coalition of the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party and the Agrarian Party, has at times stressed that Israeli policies such as collective punishment against the entire Palestinian population in Gaza for Hamas rocket attacks against Israel are in violation of international law. To what extent did this influence *Dagsrevyen*'s reporting of the Gaza War? The nine news values can be analysed in terms of news gathering routines in the face of a crisis situation (field correspondents, news agencies, sources) and hegemonic elite values at the national or institutional level. Here reliance on Western news agencies can be seen to reproduce hegemonic Western frames of the rest of the world (Thussu 2006). In this perspective, drawing on mostly third-party sources but also sources from both belligerents, as *Dagsrevyen* has done, is consistent with the code of ethics of the Norwegian Press Association, as we shall return to below.

With hindsight, one may well ask if it could have been otherwise. Invading Israeli tanks and planes blasting Palestinian homes into rubble, accompanied by heavy Palestinian civilian casualties, with Palestinians trapped and nowhere to escape, could never be the ingredients of an Israeli media success.

White Voices

Doubtlessly, Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse did very valuable medical work at Al Shifa hospital. They also provided moral support for their beleaguered Palestinian colleagues and patients. On returning to Norway, they were thanked for their efforts officially by the Prime Minister of Norway. But were they also spin doctors excelling in pro-Palestinian media manipulation and source-driven journalism? What can one say about their media management based on their book? In it, they state the Israeli media blockade motivated them to supplement their medical work with alerts to global media of civilian suffering and Israeli brutality. Mads Gilbert claimed, first, on the Norwegian TV channel TV2 on January 5, 2009 that their popularity with Western media as sources were due to their white skin colour.[4] The claim is repeated in their book: Western media wanted "white voices" (Gilbert and Fosse 2009b, 110).

Source Credibility

Source credibility is often a decisive component in assessing whether reporting is truthful, impartial and accurate, and can be decisive for the formation of public opinion. Despite increased professionalisation in journalism in many countries, source-driven journalism remains a challenge to impartial reporting. This is aggravated by the PR and advertising industries' use of sophisticated techniques in persuasion, propaganda, manipulation, spin and marketing. The journalist-source relationship has been subjected to detailed research. Source-driven journalism, single source journalism, check book journalism and "off the record" leaks from anonymous sources whom journalists if necessary will go to jail to protect, are all challenging issues in journalist and media ethics (Allan 2005; de Burgh 2007). In Norway, a significant part of the code of ethics of the Norwegian Press Association deals with "Journalistic conduct and relations with the sources." A major concern is source credibility. For instance, professional journalists who want to abide by good professional standards must (article 3.2) "be critical in the choice of sources, and make sure that the information provided is correct. It is good press practice to aim for diversity and relevance in the choice of sources" (NPA 2009). It will be noted that NRK *Dagsrevyen* used a variety of sources in its coverage of the Gaza War. Yet the frequent and lengthy interviews with Gilbert and Fosse added decisively to the pro-Palestinian bias and framing found by Walsøe (2009). But how credible were Gilbert and Fosse as sources to the journalists who chose to interview them and to viewers who watched and listened to them, during the war? And what about the credibility of their book?

The Psychology of Trust

Research in social psychology shows that stereotyping is a natural response to a complex world (Best 1995; Myers 2002; LeDoux 2006; Ommundsen 2009).[5] Stereotyping is not *per se* wrong or dangerous, but can lead to a rigidity of thought and an inability to accept information that conflicts with values we attribute to this particular stereotype. Stereotyping filters the information in order for it to "fit into" the existing categories in our brain. The brain is lazy, so it prefers to use already existing categories rather than create new ones. As a result, we tend to put new information into a context that is already familiar to us, which sometimes alters the information and distorts the intended message.

In war reporting, facts are largely disputable, and the audience perception of the source (or alleged source) is crucial to audiences' interpretation of the information. Under these conditions, communication on any level is a more complex interaction than the simplistic sender > message > receiver process. The receiver actively interprets and changes the content of the message depending on who the sender is. In fact, the characteristics of the sender are so important that it is difficult to make communication meaningful without knowing the origin of the message. If we know the origin of the information, we can match the message with our associations of the sender (the values, history and identity we attribute to the sender). This enables us to make sense of a message, but it can also lead to false attributions and wrong conclusions regarding the intentions of the sender.

Yet sometimes we do not know the origin of the information, e.g. in war reports, when propaganda occurs on all sides. In such cases audiences tend to mentally create a likely sender of the message, and then attribute a meaning to the communicated text that fits this "imaginary" sender. In such cases the audience does not only interpret the message differently depending on who is saying it, but also depending on who they think are *likely* to be saying it. Of course, this often leads us to draw the wrong conclusions about someone, as there is often only an illusory correlation between the individual and the perceived group. "Illusory correlation – this is a perception of a relationship where none exists or perception of a stronger relationship than actually exists" (Myers 2002, 113). Also, our explicit (conscious) attitude and our implicit (automatic) attitude towards a person can be very different. Trust and reliability are not so much influenced by conscious reasoning as we would like to believe, particularly in the midst of a war. Conflict also brings out the darker side of humanity, such as racism and prejudice. "Racial prejudice is heightened during times of conflict" (Myers 2002, 342).

To what extent is this relevant to the "white voices" claim by Gilbert and Fosse? In times of conflict, psychological research shows that we look to those who appear to be similar to ourselves, who look like us, for trustworthy accounts of the situation. Racial prejudice is heightened. But research also shows that is tempered by our sense of identity: Who we believe to share our thoughts and values overall appears to be more important to our sense of trust than physical characteristics. This helps explain the popularity of Gilbert and Fosse with Western media. It also explains that in terms of Norwegian media and NRK *Dagsrevyen*, the fact that they were Norwegian ("our own correspondents") was probably paramount.

Eyes in Gaza

Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse documented their experiences in the January 2009 issue of *Lancet*, a leading medical journal. This reinforced their credibility in the eyes of many, since the scientific peer-reviewing process at this level is scrupulous. Here the devastating effects of the war are spelled out, including war casualties and the wounded they treated during their 12 days at the hospital (Gilbert and Fosse 2009a). Should the Goldstone Report be referred to the ICC, this article will be important scientific documentation. Later, in September 2009, they published for the broader public a 308-page book in Norwegian entitled *Eyes in Gaza* (Gilbert and Fosse 2009b). It has become a bestseller in Norway. Their dramatic narrative includes photographs from Al Shifa hospital, and contextualises the Palestinian

people's struggle under Israeli occupation. Again, their credibility was reinforced by the publication of a well-documented and best-selling book by one of Norway´s major publishing houses.

Our interest here lies mainly in the authors' relations with the media, including Norwegian media. The authors (Gilbert has written 8 chapters, Fosse the other 7) describe their media contacts in positive terms, they are pleased that their plight alongside Palestinian staff and patients got considerable media coverage and was cited even in the UN Security Council, thus effectively thwarting the Israeli media blockade (p. 257). Gilbert, who appears to have been the most active with the media, working at his "Gaza desk" in between operations (p. 113), writes that Al Jazeera reported directly from the Al Shifa emergency ward, providing 24 hour media coverage. He also explains there were 100 fulltime journalists in Gaza and 700 free lancers, but no Western journalists were allowed past the Israeli blockade (p. 109). BBC journalist Christian Fraser is presented as the first Western journalist to enter Gaza, having waited 19 days on the border between Egypt and Gaza (p.265). Gilbert ridicules Fox News describing him as "The Hamas Propaganda Doctor" (p. 110). Fosse rejects the Israeli claim that leading Hamas activists were hiding in the basement under the Al Shifa hospital, stating this was only an Israeli pretext to bomb the hospital (p. 260). They also claim Israel tried to assassinate them in Rafaa as they were leaving Gaza (p. 256-258).

A few direct quotes give the essence of how they dealt with the media (R. Vaagan's translation):

> *The West were looking for "White voices […] Imagine if Western media had been here. Imagine all the things that are not reported (p. 110-111).*
>
> *I felt considerable responsibility about disseminating what I could in terms of photographs and text to the Norwegian press corps. In all, I sent about 20-30 reports with attachments to different Norwegian press contacts. This did not take place at the expense of being a doctor and treating patients. Erik most often appeared on CNN, I was usually on BBC and Press-TV, and we alternated on Norwegian TV channels. We gave about 10-15 interviews daily to all types of media from all over the world (p. 117-118).*
>
> *We still have not seen a single Western journalist here, but very many competent Palestinian and Arab journalists (p. 168).*
>
> *We reported all the time to the media that 80-90 percent of the killed and wounded we saw at Al Shifa were civilians (p. 269).*
>
> *The intention (of Israel) was to collectively punish the entire Palestinian population in Gaza (p. 270).*

A content analysis of their book identifying all references to media contacts reveals some interesting findings. In terms of Norwegian media, which is our main concern, most frequent reference is made to TV2, a commercial public broadcaster that throughout the war maintained a reporter (Fredrik Græsvig) on "The Hill of Shame" overlooking Gaza (p. 167) This is from where global media, barred from Gaza due to the Israeli media blockade, reported on the Gaza War. In all, 8 references are made to TV2, including two references to Fredrik Græsvig (pp. 23, 58, 60, 71, 129, 140, 167, 257). Surprisingly, only 2 references are made to NRK, one of which

is to NRK's Nina Einem and Nils Mehren, from the local office of NRK in Gilbert's home region in Norway, (pp. 62, 167). Otherwise, the Norwegian national dailies *Aftenposten*, *VG* and *Dagbladet* are referred each twice: (pp. 243, 250 and pp.116, 167), respectively. Gilbert' s three regular contacts to whom he sent e-mails were Line Fransson (*Dagbladet*), Jon Magnus (*VG*) and Fredrik Græsvig (*TV2*) (pp. 116-117, 167), with copies to Nina Einem and Nils Mehren, both NRK regional office Troms and Finnmark.

Among global media outlets, Al Jazeera and BBC are each referred to three times (pp. 58, 139, 279 and pp. 28, 118, 265, respectively), CNN once (p. 118), ABC TV once (p. 70), and Der Spiegel once (p. 140). There are many general references to other media outlets such as French television, Norwegian journalists in Israel, the media, Iranian TV Press-TV and several press conferences.

It is noteworthy that no reference at all is made to NRK *Dagsrevyen* or to NRK's Middle Eastern correspondent, although – as we have seen from figure 2 – both Gilbert and Fosse had appeared on NRK *Dagsrevyen* in the period 30 December – 12 January. How can we explain this? Gilbert sent dispatches only to his regional contacts but not to NRK HQ at Marienlyst, nor to NRK Middle Eastern correspondent Sidsel Wold. Erik Fosse (2009) and Sidsel Wold (2009) both explain that their non-communication was not intentional, but the result of considerable media and work pressure. Nonetheless, Anders Tvegård, NRK correspondent in Gaza before the war, went on record describing Gilbert and Fosse as "activists with an agenda," which may help to explain why Gilbert did not include *Dagsrevyen* HQ in his dispatches (Tvegård 2009; Aftenposten 2009).

Conclusion

While *Dagsrevyen*'s coverage of the Gaza War as it ran its course was framed moderately pro-Palestinian, it is another matter to which extent this may have swayed public opinion in Norway. Our analysis is limited to constructivist and critical framing so we have not included cognitive framing data, e.g. surveys or opinion polls. But our analysis indicates that Norwegian public debate and opinion during and after the Gaza War were critical of excessive Israeli brutality towards Palestinian civilians, and that *Dagsrevyen* coverage may have contributed to this development.

Were Gilbert and Fosse also spin doctors during their stay at Al Shifa? Beyond doubt, they exceeded the duties of medical doctors, and they say so themselves. This was part of their rationale for going to Gaza. Still, their account was peer-reviewed, screened scientifically and accepted by *Lancet.* The Israeli media blockade encouraged global media to seek them out. In their accounts from Al Shifa hospital, Gilbert and Fosse gave what they saw as truthful and accurate reports on the suffering they witnessed. In their book, they expanded on their original article. Had this been spin and media manipulation, the book would not have been printed by one of Norway´s leading publishers. Regarding their "white voices" claim, research in social psychology provides some support in terms of Western viewers. For Norwegian viewers, the paramount factor was most probably that Gilbert and Fosse were Norwegians.

After the September 2009 elections, the Labour Party has strengthened its role in Norwegian politics, and it continues to advocate support for a peaceful two-state

solution and an end to Israeli occupation and settlement policy. This will be reflected also in NRK *Dagsrevyen*. Public opinion in Norway regarding the Palestinians on the Gaza Strip will in all probability continue to be mostly sympathetic, the more so the longer their plight continues.

Notes:

1. While the final version of the article has been written by Robert Vaagan, Frøydis Johannessen, a graduate student of journalism, has drafted the chapter "The Psychology of Trust," and also drew our attention to the "white voices" claim, and Marie Walsøe wrote a thesis on Dagsrevyen's coverage of the Gaza War as part of her undergraduate degree in Media and Communication Studies in the spring term of 2009, providing the starting point for this article.

2. Personal communication from Erik Fosse to Robert Vaagan, 2.10.09.

3. In November 2009, Friends of Israel included 26 of Norway´s 169 MPs: 3 from the Conservative Party, 10 from the Christian People´s Party and 13 from the Progress Party.

4. We are grateful to TV2 desk manager Gaute Tjelmsland for kindly providing us with a DVD of this program.

5. Interview by Frøydis Johannessen, April 15, 2009 with, Reidar Ommundsen, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oslo.

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