

EMERGING ALTERNATIVES OR TRADITIONAL NEWS GATES

Which News Sources Were Used to Picture the 9/11 Attack and the Afghan War?

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Abstract / This study examines news sources used to visually portray the 11 September 2001 attack and the war in Afghanistan in the English-language newspaper *The International Herald Tribune* and the Arabic-language newspaper *Al-Hayat*. Differences were noted between news sources of images depicting the 9/11 attack and the Afghan War. However, despite these differences, the vast majority of photographs were from the main western news agencies: AP, AFP and Reuters. Results overall suggest, while there is no indication of changes in patterns of information flow, western news agencies provide a variety of news to be framed differently by different media.

Keywords / 9/11 attack / Afghan War / framing / news sources / transnational media / visual coverage

On 11 September 2001, when terrorists flew planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the effects were dramatic not only on individual lives, the global economy and financial flows, foreign relations, military and political actions, but also on media gatekeepers worldwide. The impact on international relations, and the challenges for democratic societies, made the events global. As news providers traditionally receive most international news from *a few local global news organizations* (Paterson, 2001: 337) these became the main context in which the news making and framing of the 9/11 attack and the aftermath occurred.

The current study compares news sources used in picturing 9/11 and the Afghan War in the English-language newspaper *The International Herald Tribune* and the Arabic-language newspaper *Al-Hayat*. Interviews with elite editors responsible for the photo-selection process in both newspapers are used to explain the findings.

Results of a content analysis of photographs depicting the 9/11 attack and the war in Afghanistan showed that English- and Arabic-language newspapers published different images. Differences were noted in the overall theme of the photographs, topics, level of graphicness and use of thematic reporting (Fahmy, 2004). While research suggests visual framing differences between English- and Arabic-language newspapers, the question remains whether the press selected photographs from different news sources. In other words, were different pools

of photographs made available to English and Arabic gatekeepers in a way that allowed them to over-select certain types of photographs? Did the differences in visual framing identified lie in changes in patterns of information flow or in use of information made available?

About the Study

This study compares news sources used to visually depict the September terrorist attack and the war in Afghanistan across a 10-week time period for:

- *The International Herald Tribune*, a transnational English-language newspaper based in Paris with a daily circulation of 210,000 (*Editor and Publisher*, 2002);
- *Al-Hayat*, a transnational Arabic-language newspaper based in London with a daily circulation of 196,800.¹

An examination comparing the news sources of published photographs is important for a number of reasons. To start with, photography has authority and allure because readers assume photographs are objective slices of reality (Sontag, 1977). Thus, given the presumption of veracity that readers ascribe to photographs and to the role they have in producing meaning, photographs carry great weight. From a practical standpoint, the study's findings demonstrate possible ways for gatekeepers to seek alternative news sources to visually capture the complexity of news events, because it provides some indication of the news sources used in two different political/cultural environments. Moreover, the rise of transnational regional media and the revolution in communication technology in the world in general, and the Arab world in particular, combined with the changes in newsgathering routines, may have influenced the use of news sources. These changes may perhaps indicate the rise of new structures in the international flow of news. In addition, this study is timely because most of the 9/11 terrorists were from the Arab world. If the events were pictured differently in the Arab-language press than the English-language press, the news sources from which the images were selected become even more important.

Background

News framing occurs in the global context of information flow. Past literature suggests western news agencies provide more than 75 percent of non-local news in developing countries, forcing these countries to see issues from the western perspective (Rampal, 1995). Studies suggest that the majority of international news flows vertically from the developed to the developing nations through western news agencies.

Wu (2000), for example, found that, in most countries, international news coverage gravitates to the few powerful nations. Hless (1996) reported that a tenth of the countries in the world accounted for 80 percent of the foreign news broadcast on network television. Rampal (1995) explained that the US and

western nations receive the largest amount of coverage, and news flow among developing nations exists on a relatively small scale.

Past literature suggests developing nations are consistently depicted as the location of criminal activities, the recipient of disaster relief and aid, more prone to internal conflicts and crisis, and more likely to be the setting of armed conflict (Ciffard, 1982). Kim (2000), for example, found that the major visual themes of Pulitzer Prize photographs depicting international events are war, coups and political upheaval.

Overall, past studies found the monopoly of information by western countries has caused a heavy imbalance of news flow. The West compared to the developing world provides and receives the greatest amount of coverage (Mowlana, 1986). Furthermore, the western coverage of the developing world is full of stereotypes focusing on negative news (Rampal, 1995). These criticisms of negative media content, monopoly and unbalanced flow of news represent the global system of newsgathering and news flow (Wu, 2000).

The Real World vs the News World

Several scholarly approaches have been used to explain the discrepancy between what happens in the *real world* and the *news world* (Wu, 2000: 110). The first approach examines newsgathering and distribution through a gate-keeping approach, suggesting that criteria such as unexpectedness, proximity, conflict, discrepancy and prominence determine the newsworthiness of information. The second approach uses the world system theory. In this approach, discrepancy in news flow on the international level is a reflection of the earlier imperial system. In other words, western nations by virtue of their economy have the financial means to maintain their own newsgathering systems. Wu (2000) suggests reporters are typically assigned to foreign regions with traditional and current links to their home country. He explains the *systematic factors* of trade, territorial size, cultural ties, communication resources and distance influence the content and volume of international news flow (Wu, 2000: 111).

Transnational Media and the Arab World

Transnationalization is a process of information flow that crosses national borders by which media content and audience experiences are globalized (McQuail, 2001). In the Arab world, transnational media have capitalized on advances in technology to bridge borders and create regional media markets that did not exist before (Alterman, 1998). These media are important because they are not representative of traditional media conceptualization.

Traditionally, Arab governments have not appreciated a free press. Newspapers, whether government owned or private, were all subject to censorship by authorities (Ogan, 1995). Often censorship issues have been framed under *national interest* (El-Nawawy and Iskandar, 2002: 42). The fear, scholars explain, stems from the need for the ruling body to stay in power and the belief that western media could corrupt traditional values and undermine local

culture. In other words, the concerns have been mainly cultural, specifically religious and undeniably political (Schleifer, 1998). Overall, the media in the Arab world have seldom enjoyed democracy and free speech and transnational media are said to have altered this equation.

The emerging transnational media in the Arab world represent a plausible alternative to the nationally controlled media (El-Nawawy and Iskandar, 2002). Because of advancements in communication technologies, the transnational media enjoy a degree of unprecedented independence. Thus, their role is less manipulative than their traditional government-controlled counterparts.

In the 1980s, the first major impact of new satellite technologies upon Arab media took place in the form of transnational daily newspapers (Schleifer, 1998). First *al-Sharq al-Awsat* newspaper and later *Al-Hayat* newspaper began satellite transmission from London to major population centers throughout the Arab world. These transnational media reflected a sense of a pan-Arab audience (Schleifer, 1998) and sympathized with Arab issues and perspectives (El-Nawawy and Iskandar, 2002).

The accelerating advances in information technologies and the political democratization and socioeconomic liberalization of some Arab societies have created a new transnational media environment (Ayish, 2001). The rise of the *Al-Jazeera* news channel in 1996 is a good example of the new media environment in the region. Aside from maintaining their bases abroad, transnational Arab media have adopted western presentation formats and have stationed correspondents in major Arab and international cities (Ayish, 2001). These changes led some scholars to suggest that the transnational regional development that took place in recent years implies that the older dependency model may be insufficient for the new global communication environment.

Maxwell and Eric (2003) explain that technological advancements lower the economic barriers and encourage the proliferation of non-traditional international news sources. Baldwin et al. (1996) and Sussman (1997) suggest that with the development of global communication and media infrastructure, the older center-periphery model may be inadequate.

Overall, the emergence of technological advancements may be reshaping the flow of international news. It seems reasonable for the Arab transnational media then, given their attempt to report news from the Arab perspective, their unprecedented independence and the decrease in economic barriers, to seek alternative news sources – preferably Arab news sources such as the Middle East News Agency (MENA) – that are not dominated by the western world. In sum, with the emergence of independent transnational media in the Arab world, the dynamics of international information flow may have altered.

Theoretical Framework

An important element in analyzing visual framing is the news source. Scholars explain that repeating visual images that reference some ideas and not others creates frames that render certain ideas more salient and memorable than others. Entman (1993) writes that for breaking news events, initial interactions between sources and journalists initiate the framing process. In the discussion

of the news framing process, Pavlik (2001) and Wanta (2002) suggest sources of a news story determine the basic nature of the story and influence the flow of information through the media.

While gatekeepers winnow down potential storytelling images to a few that are transmitted through the mass media, in non-local news stories, the visuals created by a news agency dictate the news frame (Paterson, 2001). For example, Wanta and Roarke (1993) found the photographic outcome of newspapers represented to a large extent the pool of photographs sent by the wires. Echoing this view, Paterson (2001) suggested even if one accepts the fact that editing of visuals is highly or minimally influential in determining meaning, the fact remains that substantial selection decisions are made by the news agency. In this view, the news source becomes a potentially crucial factor in visual framing and the construction of international discourse (Paterson, 2001).

News Sources Framing 9/11 and the Afghan War

Past studies found the media frame news according to their interpretation of the events in a politically and culturally advantageous manner (see Entman, 1991; Fahmy, 2004). Results of a content analysis of photographs depicting the 9/11 attack and the Afghan War in the English-language newspaper *The International Herald Tribune* and the Arabic-language newspaper *Al-Hayat* found the English-language newspaper emphasized guilt in the 9/11 attack by showing visual messages that humanized the victims and de-emphasized the bombing of Afghanistan by showing images that focused less on the victims and more on humanitarian aid, patriotism, arsenal and weaponry, thus framing the Afghan War in a technical frame. On a similar level, the news coverage of the Arabic-language newspaper emphasized guilt in the Afghan War by showing photographs that humanized the victims. It de-emphasized the 9/11 attack by showing visual messages that focused less on the victims and more on material destruction and planes crashing into the World Trade Center, thus also framing the terrorist attack in a more technical frame (Fahmy, 2004).

Based on the past literature, one would assume the English- and Arabic-language newspapers used different news sources to visually portray the 9/11 attack and the war in Afghanistan. Past studies suggest news coverage is predominantly determined by the availability of news sources (Wu, 2000). Because news sources determine the basic nature of news and news practitioners actively select news frames from the pool of daily events, it is expected that differences in visual framing would lie in differences in news sources. For example, the Arabic-language newspaper could have used the majority of its photographs from Arab news sources to depict the events from the Arab perspective. If this is the case, it could imply the global structure and the monopoly of western news agencies discussed earlier may be shifting.

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are presented:

Hypothesis 1: In picturing the September 11 attack, news sources used by *The International Herald Tribune* will differ significantly from the news sources used by *Al-Hayat* newspaper.

Hypothesis 2: In picturing the war in Afghanistan, news sources used by *The International Herald Tribune* will differ significantly from news sources used by *Al-Hayat* newspaper.

Method

The selection of the English-language newspaper *The International Herald Tribune* and the Arabic-language newspaper *Al-Hayat* is based on past research that found the visual coverage of 9/11 and the Afghan War significantly differed between the two newspapers (Fahmy, 2004). Investigating these newspapers' use of visual news sources, therefore, allows us to further speculate on news sources made available and information used by other media in the US and the Arab world. Both newspapers are well-respected elite newspapers with an approximate circulation of 200,000 each. They are both transnational newspapers based in Western Europe and represent two of the best foreign news organizations afforded by transnational press catering to both English and Arabic cultures.

Two data sets were collected from 12 September 2001 to 15 November 2001. The first set of photographs is from the daily English-language newspaper *The International Herald Tribune*. The second data set is from the daily Arabic-language *Al-Hayat* newspaper. The start date is the day following the 9/11 attack. The end date is two days after the fall of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. The sampling allowed for the examination of news content of connected events produced in a certain period of time.

All photographs depicting events related to the 9/11 attack and the war in Afghanistan were coded. For the purpose of this study, all photographs were content analyzed on the following two variables:

1. *Theme:* each photograph was coded for portraying the 9/11 attack, the war in Afghanistan or mixed/related.²
2. *Source:* each photograph was coded for the news source: AP/other US sources, Reuters, AFP, Arab news source or unidentified.

Guidelines were used to provide a systematic way in which all photographs were handled. Two researchers coded 10 percent of the photographs. Several questions were clarified and instructions altered to address items where disagreements occurred. Inter-coder reliability was 0.97 on both variables.

Chi-squares were computed to test differences between the two sets of photographs. Significant results pinpointed differences in the use of news sources between the English- and Arabic-language newspapers.

Finally, interviews with elite editors in both newspapers were conducted to explain the findings of the content analysis. Because the purpose of this study was to examine the use of news sources by news professionals, conducting interviews with elite editors at *The International Herald Tribune* and *Al-Hayat* newspapers proved invaluable.

All editors interviewed were responsible for the visual gatekeeping process of the visual coverage of 9/11 and the Afghan War. The editors were: (1) Samir

Saadawi, the international section editor of *Al-Hayat* newspaper; (2) Nick Stout, who held the position of assistant managing editor at *The International Herald Tribune* during the 9/11 attack and the Afghan War;³ and (3) Robert McCartney, the managing editor of *The International Herald Tribune* at the time.⁴

Editors were first contacted by email describing the purpose of the study. A list of questions was also included in the email to familiarize them with the focus of the interview. The editors were given the option to answer the questions via email or a telephone conversation. Although many questions were formed based on each editor's responses, a short questionnaire of open-ended questions was used as a general guideline. The questions explored the news sources available, the decision-making process for selecting photographs of 9/11 and the Afghan War and whether the selections differed based on the news event.

Results

The two data sets were first coded as depicting: the 9/11 attack, the Afghan War or mixed. A total of 1387 photographs were coded. Next, the images coded as mixed in the theme category were excluded, leaving a total of 1095 photographs to be examined. All photographs accompanied news stories covering 9/11 and the Afghan War. For a contextualization of the photographs under scrutiny, see Tables 1 and 2 for a complete breakdown of categories and percentages.⁵

TABLE 1
Percentages of Images Picturing 9/11 in *The International Herald Tribune (IHT)* and *Al-Hayat* Newspapers

	<i>IHT</i>	<i>Al-Hayat</i>
Planes crashing into the Twin Towers	1.8%	3.8%
The collapse of the Twin Towers	1.3%	4.8 %
WTC wreckage	5.4%	11.8%
Striking the Pentagon	1%	1.6%
Victims/mourning	6.7%	0%
Salvation efforts	6.7%	2.1%
Funeral	1%	0%
Memorializing victims	8.1%	4.8%
Celebration/Palestinians cheering	0.5%	0%
Airport delays	3.6%	0%
Photographs/mug shots – victims	19.4%	0%
Photographs/mug shots – suspected terrorists	23%	61.3%
Security	9.4%	6%
Economic shakeout	12.1%	3.8%
Total	100%	100%

TABLE 2

Percentages of Images Picturing the Afghan War in *The International Herald Tribune (IHT)* and *Al-Hayat* Newspapers

	<i>IHT</i>	<i>Al-Hayat</i>
War preparations	36%	34%
Ongoing combat	4%	4.5 %
Destruction	4%	6%
Refugees	21.6%	17.5%
Casualties/deaths	0%	1.8%
Anti-war protests	22.4%	20%
Everyday life	2.4%	10.8%
Security	2.4%	3%
Displaying US food packages	2.4%	0%
Celebration	4.8%	2.4%
Total	100%	100%

Some images did not have a news source. Of the remaining images, 99.3 percent used sources from western news agencies: The Associated Press (AP), Agence Français Press (AFP) and Reuters.

Results show one in four images under scrutiny was not identified in terms of origin. When editors were asked about the source of images to clear up the data set, however, they explained they always strive to mention the origin of all photographs they publish. 'Normally we always identify the source of the photograph', said Stout from *The International Herald Tribune*. Saadawi, the editor at *Al-Hayat* newspaper, also explained there is 'no reason not to mention the sources unless this is by mere mistake or lapse. . . . No respectable newspaper publishes images without identifying the source.'

A closer examination of these photographs revealed these images exclusively consisted of: (1) mug shots of suspected terrorists; (2) mug shots of victims; (3) cropped archival photographs of Afghan people and miscellaneous images of life in Afghanistan during the Taliban regime; and (4) cropped photographs of the planes crashing into the twin towers. Thus, it is possible that editors felt no real need to list the credit line of mug shots⁶ or small archival/cropped images of the events under study.

News Sources Used to Depict 9/11

In covering the 9/11 attack and the aftermath, the selection of news sources differed significantly ($\chi^2 = 125.998, p < .001$) between the two newspapers. While *The International Herald Tribune* ran the majority of its photographs from AP and other US news sources (59.8 percent), *Al-Hayat* newspaper ran only 15.1 percent of its images from AP and other US news sources. The English-language newspaper used 13.3 percent of the images from Reuters, 11.1 percent of the images from AFP, no images from Arabic news sources and 15.9 percent of the images without a news source accredited. As shown in Table

1, *The International Herald Tribune* ran mug shots of victims and suspected terrorists. It was, therefore, highly unlikely that any of these images had a news source mentioned.

The Arabic-language newspaper used 9 percent of the images from Reuters, 13.7 percent of images from AFP, 1.4 percent of the images from Arabic news sources and 60.8 percent of images without a news source. Here, it is important to note, as shown in Table 1, more than half of the photographs that ran in the Arabic newspaper were mug shots of suspected terrorists. These images, as mentioned earlier, did not have a news source identified.

Overall, it is important to note the following. First, despite the significant differences in use of news sources, in some cases both newspapers published identical images from the same news agencies. Both *The International Herald Tribune* and *Al-Hayat*, for example, included the same public relations photograph of Yasser Arafat, the late president of the Palestinian National Authority, donating blood in support of 9/11 victims. Second, only three images were published from Arab sources. And these images were published exclusively in *Al-Hayat* newspaper.

Because more than six of every 10 photographs published in *Al-Hayat* had no source identified, chi-squares were recalculated after excluding all images without a news source from the data set. In the second analysis, the selection of news sources again differed significantly ($\chi^2 = 35.497, p < .001$). Table 3 shows that while *The International Herald Tribune* used more than two-thirds (71.1 percent) of photographs from AP and other US news sources, *Al-Hayat* used two-thirds of the photographs from a combination of US and French news sources: one-third (38.6 percent) of the photographs came from AP and other US news sources and one-third (34.9 percent) of the photographs from the French news agency AFP.

Overall, findings of this study support the first hypothesis that predicted differences in news sources between *The International Herald Tribune* and *Al-Hayat*. However, despite these differences, the results show the overwhelming selection of images from western news agencies in both newspapers. The second analysis of photographs – including only photographs with a news source accredited – shows the English-language newspaper selected 100 percent of the

TABLE 3
Percentages of Identified News Sources Used in Depicting 9/11 in *The International Herald Tribune* (IHT) and *Al-Hayat* Newspapers

	IHT	Al-Hayat
AP/other US sources	71.1%	38.6%
Reuters	15.8%	22.9%
AFP	13.2%	34.9%
Arab sources	0%	3.6%
Total	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 35.497, p < .001.$

photographs from western news agencies and the Arabic-language newspaper selected 96.4 percent of the photographs from western news agencies.

News Sources Used to Depict the Afghan War

Similar to images portraying the 9/11 attack, among the 612 images used to depict the Afghan War, significant differences in news sources were noted ($\chi^2 = 54.067, p < .001$). While *The International Herald Tribune* used more photographs (42.8 percent) from AP and other US news sources, *Al-Hayat* used only 19.4 percent of its images from AP and other US sources. Results also show the English-language newspaper ran 30.6 percent of its Afghan War images from Reuters, 25 percent from AFP, 0.6 percent from an Arabic news source and only 1 percent of its images lacked a news source. The images without a news source identified were archive photographs depicting everyday life in Afghanistan during the Taliban regime.

The Arabic-language newspaper, on the other hand, used more images from the British news agency Reuters (34.7 percent) and 28 percent from the French news agency AFP, 0.5 percent of images from Arab news sources and 17.4 percent without a news source accredited. Those unidentified photographs were also archive photographs of Afghan people and life in Afghanistan before the start of the war.

Similar to the data set portraying the 9/11 attack, only three images were from Arab news sources. In this data set, however, the English-language newspaper used one photograph and the Arabic-language newspaper used two photographs from Arab news sources. It is also important to note that only a few images published in both newspapers were identical images from the same news agency.

Again, because a substantial number of the photographs in *Al-Hayat* had no source identified, chi-squares were recalculated after excluding the images without a news source from the data set. In the second analysis, the selection of news sources again differed significantly ($\chi^2 = 22.034, p < .001$). Table 4 shows *The International Herald Tribune* used 43.3 percent of its photographs from AP and other US news sources and *Al-Hayat* newspaper used less than one-quarter (23.5 percent) of its photographs from AP and other US news

TABLE 4
Percentages of Identified News Sources Used in Depicting the Afghan War in *The International Herald Tribune (IHT)* and *Al-Hayat* Newspapers

	<i>IHT</i>	<i>Al-Hayat</i>
AP/other US sources	43.3%	23.5%
Reuters	30.9%	42%
AFP	25.3%	33.9%
Arab sources	0.6%	0.6%
Total	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 22.034, p < .001.$

sources. Results show 42 percent of the photographs published in the Arabic-language newspaper were from the British news agency Reuters.

Overall, the findings support the second hypothesis, which predicted differences in news sources between *The International Herald Tribune* and *Al-Hayat* newspapers. However, despite these differences, again the results show the overwhelming selection of images from western news agencies in both newspapers. The second analysis of photographs – including only photographs with a news source accredited – shows the English-language newspaper and the Arabic-language newspaper selected 96 percent of the photographs from western news sources.

Discussion

This study examined the news sources used to visually portray the 9/11 attack and the Afghan War by content analyzing photographs in the English-language newspaper *The Herald Tribune of Paris* and the Arabic-language newspaper *Al-Hayat*, from 12 September 2001 to 15 November 2001. As past research found significant differences in visual framing in English- and Arabic-language transnational newspapers (Fahmy, 2004), it was expected newspapers would select photographs from different news sources. In other words, because past research suggests news practitioners actively select images from the pool of available resources, this study assumed different news sources would be used. While this study provides support for both hypotheses, it did produce mixed findings.

Results suggest significant differences in news sources between the two newspapers. Significant differences were noted in use of news sources of images depicting the 9/11 attack and images depicting the Afghan War. However, despite these differences, the vast majority of images were selected from the three main western news agencies: AP, AFP and Reuters.

The monopoly of western news sources is clear. While the literature suggests journalists may increase their possibility of reporting the whole story by seeking multiple sources for news (Vincent, 1992), this study does not show the use of alternative competing news sources. Results indicate hardly any coverage from Arab news sources. Out of all 1095 photographs analyzed, the English-language newspaper identified only one image and the Arabic-language newspaper identified only five images – less than 0.5 percent – from Arab news sources. Certainly, the limited number of images used from Arab sources is noteworthy, particularly when Arab media, such as the broadcaster *Al-Jazeera*, had unique access in covering the Afghan War (Sachs, 2001).

The findings of this study then, while they add to the body of literature that news providers still receive most international news from a few local global news organizations (see Paterson, 2001), raise important issues.

For example, the results indicate issues related to the limited news coverage from Arabic news outlets, such as *Al-Hayat* correspondents and the MENA. Saadawi, the editor at *Al-Hayat* newspaper, explained that the photographs used were first and foremost from the western news sources (AP, AFP and Reuters). He said '*Al-Hayat* sent journalists on location to cover the events,

especially in Afghanistan, but relied primarily on Western news wires for photos because it's hard to compete with them. They have the best staff.'

This finding, therefore, further puts forth issues related to cost, efficiency and credibility of Arab news sources among Arab and western press. Editors at the English-language newspaper explained *The International Herald Tribune* had no resources to have its own photographers on location. Editors, therefore, relied on photographs provided by news agencies. While they also had access to *The New York Times* sources of photographs, the editors explained they did not use them often, due to the time difference. Stout, assistant managing editor at the time, said while the newspaper occasionally ran images taken from *Al-Jazeera* television, such as images of Bin Laden appearances, *The International Herald Tribune* mainly used western news sources because 'we believe they are the most objective'.

The results, therefore, further indicate that the monopoly of information by western news sources may be less harmful than researchers have claimed. Adding the results of this study to past literature that shows the visual content of the events differed in Arabic- and English-language newspapers implies that the western news agencies provided a variety of images, allowing each newspaper to select images according to its own interpretation of events. On the one hand, the English-language newspaper relied more heavily on AP and showed images that were more sympathetic to the US, e.g. extensive pictures of 9/11 victims. On the other hand, the Arabic-language newspaper relied heavily on western news agencies AP, AFP and Reuters, and showed images that were more sympathetic to the Arab and Muslim world, e.g. extensive images of Afghan casualties. In other words, despite the use of a limited number of western news sources, each of the newspapers was still able to frame news into the existing paradigm, reinforcing existing political and social agendas. Stout from *The International Herald Tribune* explained, 'The process for selection was very subjective – a page editor would scan all the incoming pictures and choose the most dramatic for his purposes.'

Indeed, to illustrate the variety of images available from the western news agencies and to shed light on the subjective nature of the process, one of the most controversial images of the 9/11 attack was the Reuters photograph of Palestinians cheering following the event (see Figure 1). Anecdotal evidence suggests this particular image was highly criticized by the US public. However, research shows that *The International Herald Tribune* published the image, and the Arabic-language newspaper did not (Fahmy, 2004). Trying to depict people's reaction in Arab/Muslim countries to the attack, *Al-Hayat* newspaper instead published several images of Arabs and Muslims memorializing 9/11 victims. Figure 2 shows an AFP photograph portraying Iranian men chanting anti-terrorism slogans and holding candles for 9/11 victims. Similarly, Figure 3 shows an AP photograph portraying Arab women mourning victims of the terrorist attack at a church in Damascus, Syria. Such images were absent in the English-language newspaper. The results further suggest, then, that the differences in visual reporting identified between the newspapers represent differences in use of information available from the three main western news agencies.

FIGURE 1

A Palestinian guerrilla fires from his rifle, as children dance around him at Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp near the port city of Sidon in South Lebanon 11 September 2001. Palestinians in Lebanon met news of attacks on American targets on Tuesday with jubilant gunfire, dancing and cheering, saying Israel's chief backer deserved such punishment



©Reuters/Ali Hashisho 11 September 2001.

Both newspapers had access to the same three western news agencies, making differences in use of available information noteworthy. In other words, results of this study suggest English and Arabic gatekeepers over-selected different images from similar pools of photographs made available by a few western news agencies. This selection process was then manifested in unbalanced reporting and differences in framing of news events, which have long been the focus of criticism in international reporting.

This suggestion challenges the notion that visuals created by a news agency dictate the news frame. Findings of this study instead propose that news selection and use of available news become potentially crucial factors in visual framing. Saadawi, the editor at *Al-Hayat* newspaper, explained the selection process of photographs differed based on the news event:

When a poor country is destroyed you don't care about the buildings, instead you concentrate on the vulnerabilities, for example, how the Afghans were running for food, medicines etc. In 9/11, the event was much more symbolic. We wanted to demonstrate that power itself is vulnerable, no matter how forceful it is.

FIGURE 2

Mainly Muslim Iranian men chanting 'death to terrorism' hold candles as they gather during a memorial for the victims of the terror attacks in the US on 11 September, on Mirdamad Street in northern Tehran 18 September 2001. Thousands of people were killed when two jetliners slammed into the World Trade Center in New York and another jetliner crashed into the Pentagon in Washington. Iran's leader also condemned the attacks against civilians



©AFP Photo/Behrouz Mehri.

While the editor of the Arabic-language newspaper was able to articulate the photo selection process quite clearly, the editors of the English-language newspaper explained there was 'certainly no conscious policy' to articulate. They said the selection was based on how newsworthy the photographs were and how well they illustrated the accompanying news story. Stout, the assistant managing editor at the time, explained

There was no conscious effort to differentiate between the coverage of the events in any way. We simply tried to choose the photos that told the story in the most objective manner. If we attempted to portray only one side of the story, we never did that intentionally.

Overall, then, the results of this study further suggest that visual framing previously identified between English- and Arabic-language press might be determined by subjective rather than objective operational policies. Wanta and Leggett (1989) found that through their gatekeeping function editors may be reinforcing stereotypes. In their view, it is possible gatekeepers over-select images from the pool of wire photographs available at different stages of the

FIGURE 3

Two Syrian women light candles in memory of the victims of the attacks in the US, following Mass at the Eastern Catholic Church in Damascus, Syria, Sunday, 23 September 2001. During Mass Patriarch Gregorius Laham III called on world leaders to work together to confront terrorism



©AP Photo/Hussein Malla.

news making process. The framing process, however, although subjective, is not necessarily intentional.

Because past studies found story selections may vary according to a reporter's background rather than newsworthiness (Peterson, 1979), it could be argued that the *use* of available information is the ultimate key to the news framing process. In other words, while news selection is *produced by* the biased world we live in, news selection also *produces* the biased world we see in the news. McCartney, managing editor of *The International Herald Tribune* at the time, explains, 'It [the framing process] may have been below my conscious level.'

Finally, it should be noted the September 11 terrorist attack revitalized the concept of globalization, making understanding the global context in which news production and news framing occur crucial. The western news sources are now decentralized and localized. They use a network of local media organizations, stringers and freelancers to collect raw materials. Results of this study indicate that although western news agencies by and large dominate news production, they provide a variety of news to be framed differently by different media.

In conclusion, a few shortcomings should be noted. First, the study examined photographs of two news events. These photographs represented the news sources of only two English- and Arabic-language transnational newspapers, so generalizations are dangerous. Second, the scope of this study could have expanded to include a larger number of national and transnational newspapers from around the world.

More than in the past, comparative research is needed. It is clear that selective reporting becomes misleading to both the public and decision-makers (Graber, 1993). On one hand, people of any nation use the media to learn about the world. On the other hand, as most people know little about the complexity of world events, Perlmutter (1998) explains they become prone to ideological manipulation. It becomes, therefore, imperative to assess news frames, particularly in issues related to international reporting.

Past research suggests most images accompany news articles to illustrate the news events. A fruitful area of research is to examine the use of different types of photographs and the accompanying news stories, in terms of background information the stories provide, placement and length of the news articles. Further research should also strive to compare international media coverage in a global context to allow more decisive conclusions about the trends observed here.

Notes

1. P. Khoury, representative of *Dar Al Hayat*, Beirut, Lebanon, pers.com., 30 October 2002.
2. For example, a photo of officials and leaders reacting to the terrorist attack and planning a retaliation attack on Afghanistan was coded as mixed.
3. Nick Stout reported he is currently in Hong Kong, working as the deputy managing editor and chief editor for *The International Herald Tribune* in Asia.
4. Robert McCartney is back in Washington DC, as the assistant managing editor for continuous news at the *Washington Post*. He is in charge of the desk that provides breaking news coverage to washingtonpost.com and serves as the principal liaison between the newspaper and the website.

5. Miscellaneous photographs were coded as missing
6. The editor of *Al-Hayat* explained: 'We sometimes got the mug shots for suspected terrorists from web sites (mostly fundamentalists sites). We did not accredit those because these sites were "pirate sites" that were on for a while then they disappeared.' In the case of *The International Herald Tribune* the editors explained, 'In many cases, news organizations do not use credits with head-and-shoulders shots, as in general these are not true news pictures but instead are company handouts, family portraits and images of similar provenance.'

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