

THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ISRAEL AND
PALESTINE CONFLICT IN THE UNITED STATES
AND IN FRANCE

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Israel and Palestine conflict has a tremendous impact in the foreign politics of many countries. Not only it does mobilize the public opinion in the Arab countries but its influence also transcends the borders of the Middle East to reach areas such as the United States or Europe. Therefore the conflict between Israel and the Occupied Territories is largely covered by the Western media. For instance, on the *New York Times* website, the research including “Palestinians” as key word found almost 16,000 answers. The Gaza Strip counted more than 3,500 results. By the same token, a similar research in one of the main French newspapers, *Le Monde*, provided equivalent results. Therefore, when one used “Palestine” as a key word, one will find more than 3,500 results. The words “Bande de Gaza” produced similar findings. *The New York Times* and *Le Monde* are among the most important media of their countries, the United States and France respectively. But the conflict is also an important part of the news broadcast by less widespread media. Thus, the Israel and Palestine question is a significant topic on the French online newspaper *Mediapart*. For instance, in the United States, Palestine is mentioned more than one thousand times in the online version of the *Daily Oklahoman*.

These miscellaneous keyword searches are just random examples to illustrate how important the Israel and Palestine conflict is to Western societies.

The main point of this thesis is to look at the Western students' viewpoint about the coverage of the struggle between Palestinians and Israelis. Nowadays, students are exposed to many different sources and it is interesting to see how they perceive the media coverage of the conflict, especially since they are from Western societies because the Western world always had a special and ambiguous relationship to the Middle East. The development of mass communication did not help reducing the misunderstanding between the two societies and the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict tends to reflect that dichotomy between the East and the West. This paper is going to focus on the media coverage of the conflict in the United States and in France and its impact on college students.

It is important to analyze how the events, which could be tragic or simply refer to the daily life in Israel or in the Occupied Territories, are broadcasted abroad. It is easy to understand how the manner of discussing an event has its importance, especially at a time when mass communication is reaching a great number of people very fast. Journalism is a complex task with many consequences as it could influence people. In fact, many believe that journalists should be fair and unbiased in order to provide the best possible coverage of the current events. However, scholars and experts have stated that it is very difficult for journalists to always speak in objective terms even though they are trying. Because they are human beings, or because they do not always have the possibility to stand back to explain what is happening, news may not be the detached and non-partisan facts they should be. The main issue is to know if such an unbiased coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict is possible. This paper is going to focus on the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict in the United States and in France and on its impact of students from those two countries. Concerning the United States, the importance, and the supposed influence, of the Jewish community was crucial in the choice of the country.

On the other hand, France has both the most important Arab community and the most important Jewish community in Europe. Leila Shahid stressed the importance of the two communities in France in her article published in *La Revue Internationale et Stratégique*. She is supported by Denis Sieffert who explained in the same journal that the Jewish community in France is the most important in Europe. Because of its colonial past, France hosted people from Middle Eastern countries. They constitute a population which is very sensible to the question of Palestine. According to Denis Sieffert, French people from Arab origins found in the Israel and Palestine conflict some similarities with what they, or their siblings, suffered or have been through during the struggle for independence. By the same token, the Jewish community in France is large enough to be heard by the entire country. For instance, the CRIF (Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France) annual dinner is an urbane event in France. Moreover, the French Jewish community identifies itself to the Israelis and often condemns critics toward the Israeli government (Klein, 166). Within these two communities, the conflict, that occurs so far away on the other side of the Mediterranean sea, seems to have repercussions and ramifications on French society.

The idea of talking about the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict is not new. The documentation available on the subject is so large that the question has been studied by many scholars and experts for decades. In the collective book *Israel et Palestine: Les Enjeux Du Conflit* published in 2010, Philippe Bourmaud explained that the conflict has a tremendous impact on the work of researchers. It is almost impossible to separate the social studies from the events in Israel (Benbassa, 2010, 250). Nowadays, most of the works written about the region, even though they are done by researchers who are not from the Middle East, tended to focus, or at least to mention, the struggle between Palestinians and Israelis. Like many other aspects of the conflict, this is not a new tendency. Already in his book *Covering Islam; How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See The Rest of The World* published in 1981, Edward Said tackled

the difficult issue of the media coverage of the Middle East in the United States. Said's interests are broader than the topic of this paper since he covered how the US media pictured Islam in the news. However, he focused mostly on the news coverage which followed the Iranian hostage crisis which occurred for 444 days between November 1979 and January 1981. Sixty-six Americans, fifty-two of whom remained captive until the end of the crisis, were held prisoners by Islamic students within the US Embassy in Tehran. Obviously the event led the US media to broadcast many news reports not only about the crisis but also about Iran and about Islam. Edward Said emphasized poorly documented articles and reports which were published or broadcasted at that time. In fact, the news coverage of the Iranian hostage crisis illustrated the bad coverage Middle East received in the United States. Edward Said explained the dichotomy between the West and Islam which seemed to be, in the mind of some journalists or media experts, two completely different worlds. They seem to be unable to communicate and to understand each other (Said, 1981, 65). Edward Said stressed that, on the one hand, the West represents modernity and progress whereas, on the other hand, Islam which is equated to the entire Middle East, represents a backward culture whose techniques and spirit still belong to the Middle Ages. Moreover, Western journalists in general and especially U.S. commentators simplified to the extreme the question of Islam. For them, Islam is one indivisible block which has not evolved since the Renaissance. Articles and reports did not take into consideration the diversity of the Islamic world even though it is composed by countries as different as Indonesia, Sudan, Jordan or Turkey. "A very serious consequence is that Americans have scant opportunity to view the Islamic world except reductively, coercively, oppositionally. The tragedy of this is that it has spawned a set of counterreductions here and in the Islamic world itself. "Islam" can now have only two possible general meanings, both of them unacceptable and impoverishing." (Said, 1981, 55) Thus, it appeared that the stereotypes and the lack of analysis did not help the two sides to come closer. On the one hand, the West viewed Islam as threatening to its values whereas, on the other hand, the Islamic world believed Islam was a way to react Western domination. Such a

situation is due to the fact that the Muslims did not control the images ; the U.S. news media did not have any valuable counterpart to efficiently moderate its comments and reports.

In Europe, Edward Said explained that the problem is the same. The misunderstanding of Islam in the United States came from the European Orientalism that dominated European vision of the Middle East for a very long time. Thus, France was not to be considered as an example in the coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict but, according to Edward Said, France's relationship to the Middle East was different from the United States. "France's (and by extension *Le Monde's*) attitude to the East is an old and experienced one: studiously postcolonialist yet with colonialist attitudes toward its former colonies and protectorates; concerned less with brute power than with deployment, strategy, and process; focused more on the cultivation of interest rather than on protecting top-heavy investments in isolated regimes; selective, provisional, and nuanced (some would say opportunist) in the choice of what to regard with favor, what to criticize." (Said, 1981,126). Despite this statement, the conflict between Israel and Palestine is widely covered in France. Philippe Blanchard explained how important the conflict is for the French media. While it should not be as important to the French media as it really is since the Israel and Palestine conflict occurs in a small and far away country whose concerns seem to be very different from French concerns, the Swiss researcher stressed that there are more journalists dispatched in East Jerusalem than in Africa (Blanchard, 2003).

It is thus interesting to see if the news coverage has evolved in these two countries since statements about the misunderstanding between the East and the West and the distorted display of the East in the media have been made since the importance of the conflict is still very high in the news media in Western societies. With college students being surrounded by information, it is also interesting to understand how they respond to the coverage of the conflict and if they are able to identify problems related to the news reports. This paper is going to address these questions starting with a review of the existing literature, following by an analysis of an online survey about

the issues related to the media coverage of the conflict targeting college students from France and the United States, ending with an explanation of how the conflict impacts the United States and France.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study of the Israel and Palestine conflict generated a dense literature. The nature of the conflict, its length, and, of course, its intensity conducted many scholars and journalists to its analysis. Indeed, the struggle monopolizing Israel's focus and the Occupied Territories' politics is an on-going problem, which incapacitates not only the entire region but also an important part of the entire world which focus on the settlement of the conflict for several decades. The Israel and Palestine conflict is especially covered in the western news for several reasons.

In 1978, Edward Said wrote his book *Orientalism* in which he described a new concept called Orientalism. Orientalism is the tendency for the West to hold wrong and distorted ideas about the East. Thus, the world is divided between the Orient and the Occident which are looking at each other but do not share the same values and do not recognize each other as equal (Said, 1981). Furthermore, Said explained that Orientalism is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, it influenced the hearts and minds of the western explorers and scientists in the past.

In his book *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt During the Campaigns of General Bonaparte in That Country*, the French writer Dominique Vivant Denon who followed General Bonaparte in Egypt in 1798 and 1799, described his journey through the lens of his western heritage. Even though Vivant Denon was an educated man, curious about Egypt's ancient monuments, it is impossible for him not to judge the Egyptians. For instance, he always compared the Egyptian society he witnessed to those of the ancient times. Of course, the comparison is not in favor of the current situation: he emphasized how the society which produced a long time ago beautiful monuments such as the Giza Pyramids is now backward and different from the European societies. Dominique Vivant Denon stressed several times how poor the current Egyptian culture is now compared to the ancient one. Based on his cultural heritage and prejudices, he drew a line between the West and the Orient. For instance, noticing how different the Arabic music was from the one he listened to in Europe, the French author explained that such music only fit the ears of Arabs (Vivant Denon, 1802, 96). Thus, there is "us" on the one hand and there is "them" on the other hand.

Of course, Dominique Vivant Denon is not the only writer to carry such distorted ideas about the Middle East. Edward Said explained that even though the Orient has been at the state-of-the-art in many domains whereas Europe faced dark ages, Islam has always been seen as a threat to the Christian Europe (Said, 1981, 5). "For most of the Middle Ages and during the early part of the Renaissance in Europe, Islam was believed to be a demonic religion of apostasy, blasphemy and obscurity." (Said, 1981, 5) Then the East declined but the fear of Islam remained in the minds of people and passed to the artists and writers who started to picture a wrong image of the Orient. This tendency outlasted until these days and Orientalism seems to be more alive than ever.

United States

In 2001, Jack Shaheen published a book called *Real Bad Arabs; How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. His work described how Hollywood movies portrayed the Arabs. The assessment is tough for the images of Arabs in movies. Shaheen listed the characteristics of Arabs in many Hollywood movies. Most of the time, Arabs are nothing but terrorists whose only desire is to destroy the West represented generally by the United States. Furthermore, in addition to their endless and consuming will to annihilate and kill, Arabs are not trustworthy; they lie and manipulate. In other words, they represent the evil ones, the incomprehensible “Other” tangled in his hatred. From the men smoking pipes in colorful dresses, to the sensual women living in harems, to the heat of the desert, in other words to the romanticized ideas of the early Orientalism has succeeded another more violent, and even more ignorant form of misunderstanding.

The 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center did not help to improve Arabs images in the media. Thus, in another book *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs After 9/11*, Jack Shaheen continued to talk about Arabs in Hollywood movies. He noticed the mistakes and simplistic ideas carried by some movies. For instance, Jack Shaheen explained how wrongly the movie “Black Hawk Down” portrayed the Somalis. He regrets the lack of context. The story is told without explaining to the audience why the US soldiers and the Somalis are fighting. “I’m troubled by the omission of needed historical content and the simplicity of its good-versus-evil story line.” (Shaheen, 2008, 100) Somali deaths are not mentioned and “Black Hawk Down” simplifies the real events to the extreme. Once again, the context, as if it is not important, as if it does not even exist, as if everything happens regardless of the past, is put aside to emphasize the courage of US soldiers facing dangerous and violent Somalis.

In fact, the lack of context in story telling is one of the biggest inconsistencies news about the Middle East has to deal with. Unfortunately, these distorted images are not only present in fiction or based on true events stories. They are the fate of news broadcasted on TV, described in the newspapers, told on the Internet. In the documentary *Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land*, the journalist Alisa Solomon from the US newspaper, *The Village Voice*, explained that when it comes to report news about what is happening between Israel and Palestine, the context is always missing. This is especially true when it concerns news about the Palestinians. These omissions have tremendous impact on the manner people can shape their opinion about the conflict. She further explained in the documentary *Peace Propaganda and the Promised Land* that in 2001 “only 4% of reports” mentioned that the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem are under a military occupation. The simple fact to forget one word in the reports about the actual situation changed the entire perspective from which people will be able to understand the issues.

The old antagonism between the Orient and the Occident is still vivid. Jack Shaheen in his journal article, *Media Coverage of the Middle East: Perception and Foreign Policy*, published in 1985 in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, stressed the difference that exist between the way Israel is described with the way Palestine is portrayed. Indeed, he emphasized the difference in the use of vocabulary to talk about the Israelis or about the Palestinians. Hence, western countries are more willing to consider Israel as their “only friend in the Middle East” (Shaheen, 1985, 168) since it is considered as the country sharing common values with the West.

On the other hand, Palestinians are more likely to be considered as terrorists because the United States and Europe see them as being different. Finally, in his paper, Jack Shaheen points

to one fundamental contradiction which is necessary to acknowledge in order to understand why the West tends to picture Arab countries in such a negative manner. “The greater distance we are from any group, including Arabs, the greater the reliance upon preconceived images about that group.” (Shaheen, 1985, 161) Consequently, when talking about the Middle East, people do not always take time to go beyond their preconceived ideas. They just relied on the most convenient ideas they can find that is to say they rely on ancient stereotypes to build their analysis.

These omissions and simplistic notions about the Middle East in the news coverage are illustrated as mentioned before in the way media broadcast the Israel and Palestine conflict. The conflict has been present in the Western news coverage since the 1967 war. At that time, thanks to the lighting strike and the lighting victory of the Israel army against Egypt and Syria, the struggle that set alight the region burst into the news and the lives of Western countries. It is especially interesting to understand how the Israel and Palestine conflict is broadcasted in such countries where at the same time it implies so many consequences in foreign policies of these countries and it means almost nothing for the people living in these countries because the conflict occurs in a far away region which is in addition not very well known by people. Hence, Jack Shaheen quoted John R. Hayes’ comments about ignorance Americans have about the Middle East: “Most Americans don’t know much about the Middle East” (Shaheen, 1985, 161). Therefore, the United States seemed to discover the existence of the Middle East in 1973 when the public opinion measured the power Arab countries have over the control of energy through the price of oil. Lee Eggerstrom from the *Ridder* Newspapers explained in 1975 that as far as the US society is concerned the oil embargo had tremendous impact of the US citizen minds (Ghareeb, Jennings, Koven, McCartney, Eggerstrom, Robinson, 1975, 142). The Middle East finally comes to life for the citizens of the United States.

Since then, the news coverage in the United States of the Israel and Palestine conflict has been an important part of the daily media coverage. By the same token, the United States has

always been accused of privileging the Israel side of the conflict over the Palestinian side. Therefore, as early as 1975, journalists were accused to judge Palestinian decisions and Israel decisions in a different manner. *The Journal of Palestine Studies* published in 1975 several interviews of U.S. journalists who explained the news coverage of the conflict at that time. One surprising aspect of these accusations is that some journalists seem to be aware of the biases. For instance, Marilyn Robinson who was an NBC correspondent agreed with the assumption there are both a pro-Israel bias and an anti-Arab bias in the US media. Moreover, Peter Jennings, from ABC, regretted American ignorance of the Middle East (Ghareeb, and Jennings, and Koven, and McCartney, and Eggerstrom, and Robinson, 1975, 129). This ignorance led journalists to make no distinction between “Arabs” and the Palestinians. The latter are almost invisible in the news report. They just exist in opposition to the powerful Israeli state.

Ignorance and bias are linked because ignorance led people to have a distorted image of a region they do not know much about. By the same token, Ronald Koven, who was Middle East Editor of the *Washington Post*, explained the unbalanced coverage in favor of Israel’s policies is due to cultural heritage. But, more importantly the journalist points out the importance of understanding and playing the public relation game. According to him, the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine is defined by the way the two sides of involved in the struggle have understood how important public relations are in such a conflict. “The Israelis are of European origin, and they have an advanced public relations sense. They know how to play the public relation game, and how to speak our language. They understand how we reason, and *they are able to use that to their advantage*¹. The Arabs as a group have not even really played the public relations game.” (Ghareeb, and Jennings, and Koven, and McCartney, and Eggerstrom, Robinson, 1975, 132) It is interesting to notice that the difference a favorable report and an unfavorable report about either Israel or Palestine only depends on a simple, systematic, almost rational use of

¹ Emphasis is mine

communication. It seems it is not important to know which opponent is in its right and which is not as long as they are able to use communication tools in the right way. Being powerful and organized enough to be heard by foreign media is not only a way to be visible but it is also a manner to guarantee positive reports.

Of course, the reality is more complicated than the statements made by the journalists in the 1975 interview. In addition to the consensus about the pro-Israel bias in the news coverage, reporters and correspondents interviewed in 1975 stated that even though the situation is unbalanced and unfair for the Palestinians they believed the news coverage is about to change. Thus, Peter Jennings explained how things are about to change and how the news coverage is finally going to be balanced between Palestine and Israel. "I think if you go back some years it is quite true that there was a greater preponderance of attention paid to Palestinians' attacks on Israelis. But I don't think it is true any longer, whenever coverage is made possible by the authorities." (Ghareeb, and Jennings, and Koven, and McCartney, and Eggerstrom, and Robinson, 1975, 128) It is interesting to compare this statement to later studies about the news coverage of the conflict. In fact, from a more recent point of view the situation did not seem to have changed at all.

Many scholars and experts stressed that the United States still provide an unconditional support to Israel and such an attitude can be mirrored in the news coverage. Therefore, Ali Abunimah and Hussein Ibish explained the characteristics of the US news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. They noticed the omission to mention the Israeli occupation mentioned above. However, it is not the only characteristic they found about the conflict news coverage. Therefore, Ali and Ibish noticed the difference in which the deaths are portrayed in the news media. On the one hand, the Israeli casualties are humanized. The dead have a face, a name, and a family. In that case, journalists provide context and background (Abunimah and Ibish, 2001, 240). Sarah Weir emphasized the same tendency in her article *Reversing Reality: Newspaper*

Coverage of Israel and Palestine published in the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*: she explained that the deaths of Israelis receive a far better coverage which added to the unfairness of the illustration of the conflict. On the other hand, the Palestinian deaths are just numbers. There is no empathy towards the victims since the Palestinians are often portrayed as being the aggressor. However, Ali and Ibish noticed one exception to the dehumanization of Palestinian deaths. The death of young boy Mohammed Al-Dura, which is going to be discussed in details later in this paper, is a rare example where Palestinians victims got their names and their identity back (Abunimah and Ibish, 2001, 239). Thus, there are obvious differences in the way the news are broadcasted.

These differences are illustrated in the vocabulary used by the journalists to talk about the events in the Occupied Territories or in Israel. That is what Emad Fraitekh noticed in his article *American Media Vocabulary; Use of Passive Voice Exacerbates Israeli-Palestinian Imbalance* published in the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*. Whereas events involving Israeli government or Israeli soldiers or citizens are pictured using sympathizing vocabulary, journalists are using less powerful adjectives to describe Palestinian actions. Emad Fraitekh explained that whereas Israelis are “murdered”; Palestinians are just “caught in crossfire” (Fraitekh, 2001,1) By the same token, journalists tend to modify the reality by not presenting Israel as the aggressor. Seth Ackerman and Robert Fisk also emphasized this aspect of the news coverage. Thus, in the reports, Israel is responding to Palestinian aggression. The term “retaliation” is widely used to describe Israel’s actions. To that extent, Israel is described as being the victim. One part of the current situation is consciously forgotten. Following what has been said in the 1975 interview, it seems that since the Palestinians are not willing to enter the communication game and to play according to the rules of the West they cannot be portrayed in the proper and accurate manner. This unfair situation sounds like an old popular French poem moral from Jean de la Fontaine’s *Les Animaux Malades de la Peste* (The Animals Stricken With The Plague) published in *Les*

Fables in 1678 : “Selon que vous serez puissant ou miserable, les jugements de cour vous rendront noir ou blanc²” which could be translated as such “According to your powerful or weak status, the powers are going to decide whether you are black or white.” This moral is quite old but it seems to fit to the Israel and Palestine situation in the news media. According to the effort, the time and the money governments are willing (or are able) to spend in the public relation, the media system is going to decide whether or not they deserve a positive or a negative coverage.

The unfairness of the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict thus appeared to be embedded in the choice of vocabulary and in the choice journalists made about mentioning or not the Israeli occupation. As mentioned before, for a long time, American public opinion has been ignorant of the Middle East. Jack Shaheen noticed this ignorance by summarizing names and adjectives that are supposed to describe Arabs according to American citizens. All the words used to talk about the Arabs are negative words; they rank from “barbaric and cruel” to “mistreaters of women” via “treacherous” and “warlike” (Shaheen, 1985, 162). Even though the picture of Arabs in movies and in popular fictions has not improved during the past last years (as mentioned before), American public opinion is at least more in contact with the Middle East. It is possible Americans’ knowledge and understanding of the Israel and Palestine conflict have improved since Shaheen’s article has been published. However it is not a good initiative not giving all the keys for proper understanding of the conflict. It is very difficult to change one’s mind and one’s false convictions about something especially if the media, which have a tremendous influence on people are shaping wrong ideas. Thus, in the mass media one side of the picture is missing. “People have no idea that an occupation is going on” noticed Alisa Solomon in the 2004 documentary *Peace, Propaganda, and the Promised Land*. If the Israeli occupation, which is illegal under international laws and which correctly explained will help the audience to better understand the conflict, is forgotten in the picture, how can the public opinion improve its

² Translations in the paper are mine.

knowledge of what is happening in the Middle East? More importantly, it highlights the duties journalists should have toward the audience they are supposed informed.

Willard F. Enteman in the book *Images that Injure: Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media* explained that a journalist has the choice to use the words and the sentences he or she is using. “A journalist has always choices in reporting a story. They should be made in light of respect for person.” (Lester, and Dente Ross, 2003, 19) Hence, it is important to notice that journalists decide what they want to say. They are aware of the power they have upon audiences and that is why they should be more careful about the words they choose. Decreasing or even erasing the Palestinian struggle and suffering from the news coverage, US journalists are playing a dangerous game. Susan Dente Ross, again in the book *Images that Injure: Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media*, stressed the consequences of such a behavior. “By omitting the assertion of small, powerless and unpopular groups, media endorse social values, disassociate themselves from radicals and reflect the role of power in society.” (Lester, and Dente Ross, 2003, 32) Deciding what is newsworthy or not has consequences on people’s opinion and could also influences foreign politics.

France

It would be unfair to consider the United States as being the only country where the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict is problematic and unbalanced. News media in France are, by the same token, submitted to exterior influences that tend to shape the way the news media are broadcasting facts about the events in the Occupied Territories and in Israel. As

in the United States, the coverage of the conflict has evolved according to the evolution of the events. For instance, Philippe Blanchard explained how French media always treated the weakest warring party as the victim. France tended to support more the side they thought was the weakest displaying it as a victim. Thus, unaware of the military power of the Jewish State, between 1948 and 1967, Philippe Blanchard noticed that Israel was the victim (Blanchard, 2003, 870). Likewise Jerome Bourdon stressed how the media praised Israel's success. They supported the "A Land Without A People For a People Without a Land" announced by the first Zionists. The Kibbutzim are especially attractive to the French media (Bourdon, 2007, 48). The Kibbutzim, which are collective communities founded around sharing, hardworking, and agricultural ideas, represented an ideal for the French society. Moreover, before 1967, the specter of the *Shoah*³ hung upon Europe and guilt feelings still influenced the manner the media are willing to look at Jews in general and Israelis in particular. Since the Jewish community suffered tremendously during World War II when six millions of Jews were assassinated by the German Nazis in what is now known as the *Shoah*, the European media were reluctant to criticize the victims of the genocide.

Palestinians, as a people, are not considered in the media. They are almost invisible and so is their struggle. The 1967 war revealed Israel's power and the news media adapted themselves to the new situation. Israel's policy is suddenly perceived as colonial; an idea that the French public opinion does not look kindly upon considering the struggles for independence France had to face just a few years before in Algeria for instance. It is finally the time for a new participant of the Israel and Palestine question to emerge. After the 1967 war, Palestinians progressively gained greater recognition. Thus, Jerome Bourdon explained the three kinds of Palestinian people displayed in the news media at that time. It is as if a regular Palestinian citizen should not exist under the conditions of existence imposed by Israel. The Palestinian is a refugee, a fighter, or a terrorist (Bourdon, 2007, 55). Whereas the image of the Palestinian people improved through the

³ The *Shoah* is the extermination of the Jewish community in Europe by Nazi Germany which refers to it as "the final solution to the Jewish question" during World War II (Encyclopædia Britannica).

years, the one of Israel seems to suffer from its mistakes. The epoch has changed: the time of colonialism is definitively over and with it the time to celebrate the colonists. The media are not as lenient as they were before: Kibbutzim do not make the French opinion dream anymore. Other symbols are praised in the media. Therefore, Palestinian images continue to evolve. They appeared as innocent victims during the Sabra and Shatila massacres in 1982 and then the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1987 presented the desire for self-determinism of the Palestinian people. Even though, the massacres in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila had been committed by a Phalange militia, Israel appeared to be the conscience hidden behind the tragic events and in consequence its public image, despite its well organized public relation machine, had suffered from this story.

Since then, it seems that two opposite views are confronting each other in the news media. Strengthened with important Arab and Jewish communities, French media are the scenes of the dispute between the two cultures. Each opponent got ready to attack whenever it believes the coverage is unfair. Philippe Blanchard summarized the behavior of the Arab and Jewish communities in his article. "Les deux peuples impliqués s'affrontent effectivement pour la reconnaissance de leur identité respectives; pour leur existence en tant qu'Etat souverain avec une terre." ("The two people involved in the conflict confront each other for the recognition of their respective identities; for their right to exist as a sovereign state with a land") (Blanchard, 2003, 874). While talking about the al-Dura case, which is going to be discussed later in this paper, Jerome Bourdon from the Tel-Aviv University, noticed that one characteristic of the Israel and Palestine conflict is that it succeeded to mobilize people "loin des faits" (Bourdon, 2007, 90), that is to say far from the place where the events actually took place. The two French communities consider seriously the conflict and they both see in the development of the situation their own interests. When Palestinians died in the Gaza Strip, the French Arab community suffered with them. The members of this community believe they share, or have shared, the same colonial

heritage. By the same token, if Israelis have been attacked, the Jewish community displayed its power to condemn the action. It is not always simple to cope with two opposite views and desires. That is why there are often tensions between the two communities. Some even assume that beyond the condemnation of what is happening in Israel or in the Occupied Territories, or anywhere else in the Middle East, as long as one of the protagonists are involved, there is an importation of the conflict in France. Like the Al-Dura case, this theory is going to be discussed later.

Images are powerful. They are efficient tools to become visible to the world. By the meaning they carry they allow those they represent recognition and permanence. One should never forget though that images are not innocent. There are consequences, which should not be underestimated. For instance, Susan Dente Ross stressed the effects of particular images in the media. Thus, by emphasizing terrorism in the news talking about Palestinians, news media finally got to the point where they distort the reality. As a consequence, the Palestinians terrorists are opposed to the Israeli victims in the minds of the audience (Lester, and Dente Ross, 2003, 60). And in the end, the process that generates images goes beyond control. The communities that are depending on it are completely subdued in their representations and it becomes very difficult to change them. Jerome Bourdon explained this fact in his article *Du Sionisme au Compassionisme: La Television Française et le Conflit Israélo-Palestinien* (From Zionism to Compassion: French Television and the Israel and Palestine Conflict) published in the collective book *Israel Palestine: Les Enjeux d'un Conflit*. He stressed how the way Israel and Palestine are represented may become more important than the reality and totally may make it disappear. “Les deux camps peuvent ainsi se trouver pris dans des machines à représenter qui les dépassent, et dépassent parfois les médiateurs qui ne rendent compte du réel qu’à travers une symbolization massive et largement inconsicente.” (“The two sides can thus be trapped into representation mechanisms which surpass them, and sometimes surpass mediators who debrief reality only through a huge

and mainly unconscious symbolization.”) (Bourdon, 2007, 60) Therefore, it becomes almost impossible to modify the images once they have invaded the minds of the public.

As mentioned above, the choice of vocabulary is important in the news since it shapes the way people will understand a fact. In France, as in the United States, symbols and words are the key elements to understand the broadcasting of the Israel and Palestine conflict. However, contrary to the United States, different questions are asked. If Denis Sieffert suggested in his article *Gaza, La Désinformation dans les Medias Français* (Gaza: Disinformation in the French Media) published in the collective book *Israël Palestine: Les Enjeux d'un Conflit*, that the French media do not always take the necessary time to investigate the official version of the events told by the Israeli government, reports and articles have sometimes several reading levels “Les vérités sont dites mais avec un tel embarras qu’une lecture rapide – celle du plus grand nombre – en retirera des enseignements erronés.” (“The truth is told but in such embarrassed way that a quick look at the article – as most people are going to read it in such a way – will only allow the reader to draw incorrect conclusions about it.”) (Sieffert, 2005, 35) Thus, it is up to the reader to decipher the journalists’ codes and to figure out by him or herself the different meanings. Obviously, it is not an easy task and nowadays few people are willing to take the time to analyze by themselves the information they receive. For instance, Luc Beyer de Rybse described constraints that affect the news coverage. According to him, time and space are reduced. Wanting to understand how the Israel and Palestine conflict is broadcasted is for the one who decide to do it to pay close attention to these data. Indeed, it is impossible to deal with news coverage without taking into account time and space. Time refers to the moments the audience spent to inform itself whereas space means the length of the reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict in the news media. Most of the time, the reference to the events in Israel has to be very short for the news about the struggle between Palestinians and Israelis is directly competing with the news from all over the world.

This is an essential element of the post modernity, which is the condition under which human beings are living.

David Harvey explained in his book *The Condition of Postmodernity* how time and space impact the social relationships. By the same token, the author stressed that controlling these two notions generate power. Post modernity allowed the modification of how time and space comprehended in the past: the distances between men decreased as the communication tools developed. As a consequence, time does not carry the same meaning as it used to be. When it was a far less flexible notion, when traveling distance determined how fast the news of what was happening in Asia would reach Europe. It is not even necessary to consider such great distance: improving how quickly the decisions made by the government attained an entire country was a critical question. Now, through what David Harvey called the volatility of time and space, which is possible because of communication systems and technology improved drastically during the last two centuries progressively conducting societies into postmodernity, human beings tend to share information at the same moments wherever they are on the planet, and no matter how different from the events their lives could be. Thus, because they are dealing with time and space, media are tools which the power to control opinions and beliefs circulated. David Harvey explained the rationalization of the space and time which assign them “social meanings” (Harvey, 1990, 214). “Symbolic orderings of space and time provide a framework for experience through which we learn who or what we are in society.” (Harvey, 1990, 214) Through that process, the author allowed to better evaluate the power hold by the news media which finally helps us to assess their influence on the public opinion. Thus, the question of knowing if the manner the news media decides to broadcast a report about the Israel and Palestine conflict is obsolete. “Insofar as identity is increasingly dependent upon images, this means that the serial and recursive replication of identities (individual, corporate, institutional, and political) becomes a very real possibility and problem. We can certainly see it at work in the realms of politics as the

image makers and the media assume a more powerful role in the shaping of the political identities.” (Harvey, 1990, 289) As a consequence, there is no need to question the repercussion of the media on the people: the repercussion, as a characteristic of the power the news media have over the societies, is inevitable.

However, during a round-table conference in the French Senate in 2007, Sylvain Cyphel explained that the news media influence over the population is in fact quite limited. According to him, journalists have to tell facts but this is not enough to guarantee the facts to have an influence on people’s opinion (Ralite, and Sieffert, and Moll, and Cyphel, 2007, 30). Later in the article, he further explained that the words chosen are not the most important part of the news coverage. What matters is in fact the event by itself (Ralite, and Sieffert, and Moll, and Cyphel, 2007, 31). What is surprising about Sylvain Cyphel’s analysis is that he reduces the impact of journalists. News media are essential to our modern era. Everything is about communication. The good communication at the right time using the right vehicles assures great impact on the public opinion. It is true that not all the news matches up this description but it is certainly true for many of them. Thus, it is just too difficult to believe that in western societies where communication holds such a fundamental force, the influence of news media can be shrunk because words do not seem to be powerful enough; especially when dealing with a conflict, which is covered for decades by all the means available. Moreover, it is important to never forget as mentioned by Deni Elliott, in the first chapter of the book *Images that Injure: Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media*, that “media are responsible for the impact of their work.” (Lester, and Dente Ross, 2003, 12) So disregarding that journalists and media can influence the public opinion is a mistake. Furthermore, it is underestimating the power of images. If the words do not matter anymore, everything can be stated about everything and since nobody is listening news media become obsolete. How then explain why the media are still here and why there are so many of them? Why do they exist in so many different forms? And why so many scholars are still analyzing them?

How to understand Neil Kressel's assumption that "if one can influence the press, one controls a powerful weapon"? (Kressel, 1987, 223)

Other experts do not share the same opinion. They are satisfied with the way news media are talking about the Israel and Palestine conflict. For instance, Françoise Germain-Robin analyzed the use of words in the reports about the conflict. She stressed that it is necessary for journalists to think about the meaning of the idioms (Ralite, and Sieffert, and Moll, and Cyphel, 2007, 50). By the same token, during the same round-table conference, Amman Kapeliouk noticed that journalists have to be careful about quoting discussion. When a part of a discourse – as minimal as it could appear at first – is omitted then there is a risk that to alternate the real meaning of the things. When the omission is intentional it is even worse. Amman Kapeliouk feared the distortion of reality (Ralite, and Sieffert, and Moll, and Cyphel, 2007, 48) because it has consequences on the way people understand an event. It is always important to have a right discernment even though facts are complicated. One characteristic of the Israel and Palestine conflict is without any doubt its complexity. Since the independence war against the British Mandate and the birth of Israel in May 1948 that followed it, through the countless wars, attacks, deaths, and suffering that have sprinkled the history of the region, everything has already been said. Journalists have had time to contradict themselves several times. All this added to the ramification of the conflict. That is why it is necessary to provide information about the context. So, issues similar to those found in the United States are asked. Françoise Germain-Robin reminded how General De Gaulle used to talk about the Middle East. He thought it was a tangled region which was hard to describe.

More than ever the context of the events seems to be the most important thing to remember. Richard Labeviere explained this in the round-table conference. According to him, and to the many experts who participated to the conference, the framework and the circumstances are necessary to news coverage. An event mentioned in the media, especially when dealing with

the Israel and Palestine conflict, never occurs by itself, completely isolated from the rest of the events. It is the consequence of the past, the consequence of actions that happened before. Those decisions could be obvious but in the case of the Israel and Palestine conflict they are often more vague. It is, thus, necessary to remind these causes to the audience's minds.

In order to make the situation even more complicated to understand, experts like Philippe Blanchard deplored, on the contrary, the inability journalists showed to defend one opponent. Thus, he concluded his article about the French media's look at the Israel and Palestine conflict by disapproving the lack of engagement of the French media. According to him such a behavior will help more radical minorities to speak louder and to be heard by the population more easily (Blanchard, 880). "A ne pas savoir s'engager, à ne pas vouloir nourrir des enquêtes d'éditoriaux réellement politiques comme le faisait le journalisme du XIXème siècle, bref, à renoncer à prendre position au nom d'une illusoire neutralité informative, les grands medias subissent la vision du monde promu par la minorité engagée." (Because they do not want to involve themselves, because they do not want to write real political editorials like those from the 19th century, in other words because they refuse to take a stand in the name of an illusory news neutrality, main media are subjected to the view of the world of some few committed people.") (Blanchard, 880) Theo Klein stressed that it is due to the speed to which journalists have to react. Indeed, he believed many journalists do not have time to talk about the events the way they should do it (Klein, 132). In fact, the two communities are unsatisfied in the way the news about the Israel and Palestine conflict are reported. Therefore, one witness a dual and contradictory situation in which on the one hand Arabs complain about a pro-Israel bias while on the other hand Jews consider there is a pro-Arab bias in the way events are presented to the audience.

Balanced coverage

It would be unfair though to consider that the coverage of the Israel and Palestine is always questionable. A good and fair coverage of the dispute in the news media exists in France and in the United States. It is fairly more difficult to find. It also requires from the public opinion a greater dedication to the research of valuable and quality information. It means envisaging the audience as being more than just consumers ready to buy commodities as the former head of the main French TV channel TF1 stated it in 2004. In a book named *Les Dirigeants Français et le Changement* (French Leadership and the Change), Patrick Le Lay explained that the purpose of his TV channel is help brands such as Coca Cola to sell their products. The quotation offended the public opinion when it was published because it not only depreciated the intelligence of the audience but also it reduced the media to mere supports to sell products. The need for information and the quest for a better understanding of the world and of the societies seemed to have disappeared from the news media prerogative. By the same token, Tamir Sheafer and Shira Dvir-Gvirsman noticed in their study *The Spoiler Effect: Framing Attitudes and Expectations Toward Peace*, that the influence of a negative report is more likely to influence the viewers than a positive one (2010, 208). However, good coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict defied these mercantile considerations.

Thus, Ali Abunimah and Hussein Ibish summarized some journalists in the US news media who fairly reported the Israel and Palestine conflict. They stressed that the example of Charley Reese from the Orlando Sentinel who was an advocate of the question of Palestine for years (Abunimah, and Ibish, 2001, 253). By the same token, the *Los Angeles Times* includes “a wide range of views in its commentary section, which offered its readers an outstanding range of opinion, almost the most diverse in any major paper.” (Abunimah, and Ibish, 2001, 252). In the

same way, Serge Erlinger emphasized some good points about the coverage of the conflict by the French newspaper *Le Monde*. The author analyzed many articles about the Israel and Palestine dispute published in *Le Monde* in order to comprehend the position of one of the most powerful French newspaper. He noticed that *Le Monde* consciously used the word “colony” to talk about the Israel’s illegal building in the Gaza Strip or in the West Bank instead of the more neutral substantive “settlement” used in the United States (Benbassa, 2009, 63). However, even though writers and experts enlighten the good coverage of the conflict, they do not agree on the answer to the basic question: What is a fair coverage?

Is it up to the news media to have an equal proportion of pro-Palestinian news on the one hand and of pro-Israel news on the other hand? Philippe Blanchard talked about the media trying to be neutral in his article. He conceded that it was not an easy task. Ali Abunimah and Hussein Ibish listed several newspapers in which there is equilibrium between Israel and Palestine in the discussion of the events. Furthermore, Leila Shahid advocated for more neutrality in the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. Other experts however do not believe in a balanced coverage where the time and space allocated to each opponent will be carefully recorded. Thus, Neil Kressel expressed doubts about a search for exact treatment. According to him, the two communities would never agree on determining which news is fair and which news is unfair (Kressel, 1987, 216). “Pro-Arab partisans and pro-Israel partisans might in fact perceive different stimuli when examine the same sample of media coverage.” (Kressel, 1987, 223) It is thus very difficult to provide a fair coverage in the sense of numerical balanced reports. Moreover, Roselyne Koren explained in 1996 that objectivity in journalism is in fact almost impossible. According to her, the reader/viewer will only consider as objective news which is going to be displayed accordingly to his or her personal opinion (Koren, 1996, 31).

The balanced coverage, hence, becomes a research for more divergent opinions in the news media. While looking for neutral comments, Leila Shahid admitted that news needed more

than just stating the facts; journalists have to explain what they are showing or writing. “L’image raconte la réalité mais ne dira jamais la vérité.” (“An image shows the reality but it will never tell the truth”) (Shahid, 2005, 80). What matters then is for the public to have enough dissonant voices that it can hear them. As mentioned before the Palestinians have been for years the victims of the communication game. Not visible enough, not loud enough, or not powerful enough, the Western public opinion had trouble to hear them and, as a consequence, to understand them. So that is what is missing for a “fair” coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. Gadi Wolfsfeld published an article *The News Media and the Second Intifada: Some Basic Lessons in the Palestine-Israel Journal* in 2003, in which he explained his theories about the role of the media in the reporting of the Israel and Palestine dispute. According to him, the battle for having the media’s attention is as important as the actual battle fought on the ground (Wolfsfeld, 2003, 5). The author further stressed the key role entitled to the media in the case they are dealing with violent conflicts. “One of the most powerful roles the news media can play in such conflicts is when they become ‘equalizers’ by allowing the weaker party to enlist the support of third parties.” (Wolfsfeld, 2003, 5) The weaker party is Palestine and the third parties are the Western countries watching or reading the conflict from the comfort of their homes. Therefore, the media has to allow Palestinians to speak more or at least they have to be ready to defend Palestinian views more often.

As a result, the literature provides a lot of information about the role of the news media. The importance of the Israel and Palestine conflict demonstrates the questions, paradoxes and problems journalists and experts asked about the news coverage. Even though these inquiries can be extent to almost every event broadcast in the news media for it deals with essential requests about the social, political and moral implications about the job of a journalist, the analysis of the role of the media in the coverage of the Israel and Palestine dispute is especially important. Not only the conflict deals with two cultures, two communities and embedded unanswered

interrogations and violent grievances that last for many decades, but also it provides a useful tool to assess the reliability of the media, its tendency, which could be conscious or unconscious to shape images, and its ability to resist or not to external factors, personal beliefs, and cultural consideration which are looking to influence the use of words, the tone of the discourse, or the violence of the images displayed.

To that extent, it is important to see how the people to whom the news is targeted understand these questions. Obviously not all the paradoxes have been answered yet; the role of images and words on the one hand, the research of objectivity at any cost – or on the contrary the necessity for journalists and media to engage their personal beliefs into the covering of the news – on the other hand, are far too important to be solved quickly. Nevertheless, beyond the expert conferences and publications, the interrogations such as “Do the society wants to listen to the messages sent by the media or no?” (Shahid, 2005, 76), lie the beliefs and opinions of millions of people who are daily – or sometimes weekly depending on how “calm” the situation in the Gaza Strip or in the West Bank is – submitted to the images, the news, the reports exposed to these events. What do they think about this situation? How do they understand the problem? After years of exposure to the dispute, how do they assess their understanding of the Israel and Palestine conflict?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Statement of the problem

As mentioned in the previous chapter, The Israel and Palestine conflict has been well covered in the western media since the 1967 war. Authors and experts often noticed biases in the way journalists broadcast news about the conflict. They also regret the ignorance of the media especially when talking about the Palestinian culture. One aspect of the coverage is that often the reports are not detailed enough to explain issues correctly. There is no in-depth investigation to complete the analysis. It means that the audience, which is sometimes reluctant to further investigate itself and wait for the information to come to him without effort, may not have access to certain parts of the story. This is one of the purposes of the survey conducted. This survey is aimed to analyze the understanding of the broadcast of the Israel and Palestine among western students. The online survey sent to the participants was aimed to show whether students are able to recognize the gaps in the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict.

The survey selected some issues stressed by authors and experts about the news coverage of the conflict. Then the participants had to indicate whether or not they are aware of such issues. The lack of context in the reports is part of the survey as well as the biases that exist in the journalists' comments. In America, for instance, news media are accused of always privileging the Israel side of the events. Therefore, according to Ali Abunimah and Hussein Ibish, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, published more than the majority of articles, which are pro-Israel. Indeed compared to the articles which a pro-Palestinian, those promoting Israel's decisions over Palestinians' are almost eight times larger (Abunimah, and Ibish, 2001). Writers noticed the bias in the coverage, but the survey is aimed to see if students are able to recognize that the events in the Middle East are not broadcasted the way they should. It is also possible that they have a different opinion about that question and that is why it is interesting to ask them questions about the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. It is important to have the opinion of a part of the targeted audience of news reports to know if the public opinion is aware of certain aspects of the broadcasting of the Israel and Palestine conflict in the West. The survey focuses on two different communities: France and the United States. Both countries have a special relation to the conflict and it is interesting to assess the differences and similarities between them from the viewpoint of people living in those regions.

In the end, the situation is confusing for the public. Because, on the one hand, journalists are accused of not being as objective as they should be, but, on the other hand, they seem to be not involved enough in the news broadcasting. In the United States, the same problem has been stated by journalists or experts who studied the broadcasting of news about the Israel and Palestine conflict. Like in France, the Israel and Palestine conflict is well covered by the media since the 1967 war during which the population in the United States seemed to discover the existence of the Middle East and the issues related to the conflict that set alight the region. Since then, the coverage of the conflict has been dense and major events have been covered by the

journalists. There is however an important difference between the situation in France and those in the United States.

The participants also compared the news coverage of the conflict in their own country with the media coverage of the same events in the other country of the study. That is to say the American students considered the quality of the reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict in France whereas the French students estimated the U.S. coverage. It would be interesting to see whether the participants noticed differences or similarities in the way media in other countries broadcast the events in Israel. Finally, in addition to the fact that it is interesting to have the viewpoint of the public opinion about the coverage of the conflict, the on-going events make the broadcast of the Palestinians and Israelis' struggle a regular topic in the western media. Watching and readings facts about it almost every day make the participants aware of what is happening. The Israel and Palestine conflict is a familiar topic for most of the students. That is why they should have an opinion about it. The importance of the conflict in the western media makes this study easier to conduct.

Statement of the hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study are:

1. To understand if the students are aware of the biases in the media coverage of the conflict.

2. To compare the perception of the media coverage of the conflict in two Western countries.
3. To see, on the one hand, if the French students consider the U.S. media as being less objective than the French media when it comes to broadcasting the conflict; and, on the other hand, if American students see the French media as more sympathetic with the Palestinians.
4. To know if students are able to identify the biases in the news coverage.

Therefore, the first hypothesis is to better understand if students are aware of the biases in the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. Consequently, the hypotheses of this study deals with the knowledge of the participants. From beforehand research and previous readings, one can assume that students are going to identify a bias in the news coverage of the conflict. It is more likely that the participants are going to classify this bias as a pro-Israel bias because the communication power and the willingness of the Jewish community to appear in the front scene are more obvious and more developed than the communication strategy of the Palestinians. In this specific domain, they remain behind their opponent. By the same token, the purpose of this study is to identify if the studied population refers to conspiracy theories. In fact, when the power of the Jewish community is discussed, at some point, there are always people to refer to conspiracy theories to explain the reason why events are happening the way they are happening.

This is especially true concerning Zionism, which is often invoked to describe an alleged manipulation, or a presumed control over the media. Thus, Pierre-André Taguieff stressed in his book *La Nouvelle Propagande Antijuive* the characteristics of the conspiracy theories. According to him, they all share the same rules. First nothing happens by chance. Second, hidden willpowers decided for events to happen. Third, facts are not what they are supposed to be: true meanings and wills are hidden and well hidden. Finally, the last characteristic of conspiracy theories is, according to Pierre-André Taguieff, the connection that links all the facts together. These

connections are of course hidden so it is within one's province to find the evidence and to discover the truth (Taguieff, 2010, 59). Therefore, if participants identify a pro-Israel bias in the news coverage of the conflict, one may assume that among them a reasonable proportion is going to mention some kind of conspiracy theory in which a powerful and well-organized community is going to control the media and the way news should be broadcasted.

As mentioned above, another purpose of this research study is to compare how the participants perceive the broadcasting of news about the Israel and Palestine conflict in the other country concerned by the study. In other words, the third hypothesis will be that participants from France believe that the US news media are less objective than the French media; especially towards Israel's politics since the United States are considered to be a place where the Jewish lobby is fairly more powerful than anywhere else in the world. By the same token, American students are more likely to consider France as being more supportive of the Palestinian politics. They may be considered the French Arab community, and the old relationships relating France and some Middle Eastern countries - even though it was through the lens of colonialism - as determining in shaping the news about the Israel and Palestine conflict.

Thus, the last hypothesis of the study is that the participants are going to be able to identify biases in the news media by noticing differences between views about Israelis and views about Palestinians. The survey does not include questions allowing them to provide a clear opinion about what they think about the objectivity of the news media in their own country. But it will appear nevertheless in the answers. Moreover, this study is aimed to illustrate how the participants perceive the news coverage in another country. France and the United States are close enough culturally speaking to allow such a comparison. Indeed, the literacy theorist, Edward Said, in his book *Covering Islam*, considers the United States and France as western countries in which misconceptions and misunderstandings of Islam are fairly present. Thus, it was

interesting to know the population of each country envisions the news media in the other territory studied.

Significance of the study

The study of the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict is important because this topic is of highest importance in the media of the United States and France. Many experts stated how densely covered the conflict was even though it was happening far from the countries in which the news were broadcast. Thus, it is interesting to know how students from the participating countries conceive their own media system. This study proposed to consider the bias in the news but it is possible that participants are not aware of these biases. Considering how fast the news goes in this ever-changing world, the participants may have never noticed how news is broadcast. Therefore, the students do not always have time to consider news in-depth.

This research study is interesting because it will help to access the participants' opinion toward not only their own news media system but also the news media system of another country. It is also important to know if the participants are able to use their critical spirit in order to analyze the news. Are students from France or from the United States able to judge the accuracy of the information they receive from the media resort? Are they able to select in which way a piece of news should be understood? Those questions are important because they help to assess how critical the population studied can be especially when it deals with a major conflict of Modern Times where the Internet is playing a strategic role.

Students are typically the type of population who is aimed to receive a lot of information because they are still in the process of receiving, gathering and selecting data. They are often subjected to huge amount of information and because of the papers, assignments and research studies they have to do, students are getting used to select and sort data. Therefore, they may be more able to assess the validity of the news about the Israel and Palestine conflict, or at least they may be more able to express their opinion about the interests they believe to influence the news broadcast, even though it is a personal opinion, which do not rely on academic knowledge of the question.

Finally, it is interesting to understand the impact of the Israel and Palestine conflict on the lives of young people from western countries. At a time where the Arab world seems to undertake tremendous changes, the Israel and Palestine conflict is a long-drawn-out story which may seem to be distant from the worries of the students from the United States or from France. However, since the conflict is sometimes wrongly pictured as a struggle between “us”, the West and “them”, the East, it is interesting to know if the students understand the consequences of the conflict on their lives. By the same token, it is necessary to know if the studied population is aware of the injustices the conflict highlights. The difference and inequalities between the two powers involved in the conflict are important to access because it may help to think about the conflict.

Participants

It is interesting to analyze how the French and the American students perceive the way journalists broadcast news about the Israel and Palestine conflict. Since the media from the two

countries mentioned above has been accused by many experts to speak in favor of one of the opponents, this survey was aimed to illustrate what kind of biases load down the news about the Israel and Palestine conflict. Moreover, as the study submitted to the population is a survey, the initial population from which the participants are randomly sampled had to be as large and broad as possible in order to be able to compare and analyze the results. Thus, the research participants have to be representative of the population. Therefore, the research participants had to be French and American students. The population consists of undergraduate and graduate students from different majors. Hence, the research had to include students from different background and study interests in order to know if there is a link between the student awareness of the Israel and Palestine conflict and its field of study. Finally, the participants of the study have been selected from two separate populations. Indeed, on the one hand, the participants have been selected from a population of 4,500 students from the Burgundy School of Business in Dijon, France. This population is composed of French students since they received the French version of the survey. On the other hand, the second research participants have been selected from a population of 23,522 students of Oklahoma State University. The population is composed of students from the two campuses, Stillwater and Tulsa in Oklahoma, U.S.A.. Moreover, the population is multicultural and composed by undergraduate and graduate students from different majors. The cluster random sampling is the best way to select participants for that study because it is easy to conduct. It is also easy to conduct because the population refers to a group not to individuals. Moreover, the groups targeted are easy to access and to interrogate.

The size of the final samples is different in the two communities targeted. The size of the French sample is 200 whereas the size of the American sample is only 17. The answer rate corresponds to 4.44% and 0.07% for the French survey and the American survey respectively. The answer rate is especially low in for the American survey. This is a major issue in the analysis of the data because there are two samples to compare to each other, and the number of American

participants is not numerous enough to be statistically interesting. Thus, it is impossible to use the American results to generalize the answers to a bigger population. This aspect of the study limits the findings of the study. However, they are still worth the analysis in order to get an idea about possible findings.

Instruments

The instrument used for the purpose of the research is a survey aimed at gathering data about how the research participants perceive the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. The survey, which is composed of eleven questions has been developed specifically for the purpose of this study. It contains primarily closed-ended questions for they are easier to analyze. They also fit better the study because they allow people to give short and precise answers about the topic without letting them getting off topic. Indeed, they allow the evaluation of the overall feeling of the research participants towards the research problem. However, the survey includes one open-ended question in which the participants are asked to express their opinion about the media coverage in the other country concerned by the study. That is to say, if the sampling population is from France, they have to answer a question about the media coverage if the Israel and Palestine conflict in the United States. On the other hand, if the participants are from the United States, they have to answer the same question but in that case it deals about the media coverage of the events in Israel and in the Occupied Territories in France. Moreover, the survey depends on nominal variables to provide the values that have been analyzed. Therefore, the instrument used for the purpose of the research question is an affective test, which examines how the participants value certain aspects of the media coverage of the events between Israelis

and Palestinians. That is to say the questions refer to participants' beliefs towards the Israel and Palestine conflict.

Design

The goals of the study is to understand how students from two Western countries apprehend the coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict, not only in their own country but also in the other location concerned by the study. The purpose of the research study was to see if the students believe or not there are biases in the way journalists broadcast the news about what is happening in the Middle East. Finally, it helped to compare the experiences of two communities living in two western countries which, share common values about the freedom of the press but whose news traditions, and especially the way to broadcast them, are quite different. The survey administered to the participants in the United States and in France is the same. Only the "French" survey is a translation of the initial survey in English in order to make it more accessible for the French population, which may not be familiar with English. By the same token, the question concerning the participants' beliefs about the other country of the survey is different. In the "French" survey, the question is about the United States whereas in the American survey, it deals with the French media. The study only required one survey even though it has been submit to two different communities. In the one hand, it is then easier to stress comparisons and differences between the French and American people. It is also necessary the survey provided the same amount of information to the two communities.

Procedures

The population for the study is composed of two different communities. The first refers to American students and the second one refers to French students. In the two countries the communities are composed of either undergraduate or graduate students. The major of the participants does not matter for the purpose of the research study and should in fact be as broad as possible in order to better represent the entire population. For a matter of convenience, the participants have been chosen because of their belonging to a university in either in the United States or in France. A pre-test have been administered to a few people. They gave feedback about the possible mistakes or errors in the test. Then the survey has been sent to students in France. Students from Burgundy School of Business in Dijon received the survey in an email on their email address from the Burgundy School of Business. Clicking on the link provided in the email, they answered the quick survey. By the same token, the Oklahoma State University students received the link to complete the online survey. The survey was available online for an unlimited time but the data was gathered during two weeks for each survey in order for the research study to get enough answers on each side of the project. The data has been stored on excel files. Since, the two surveys were accessible on two separate webpage, there were two excel files: one collecting the data from the American survey and the second one collecting the answers from the French survey. The data from the two surveys was combined, analyzed and compared.

The data was studied in order to see if there are similarities or differences in the way the students perceive the coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict, in their own country and abroad.

Obviously, this research study includes some assumptions and limitations. First, it assumes that people are aware of the Israel and Palestine conflict. By the same token, it assumes that the students are aware that this conflict is a major topic in the media today. Even though, the survey does not require the participants to have any specific knowledge about the Israel and Palestine conflict, it may ask questions the sampling population never thought about. It is also possible that the participants do not know how the media coverage is in a country they may never been to. It is especially true for the American survey. Indeed, it is possible that the French students, because the American culture, which is more accessible and more widespread than the French culture, has a huge impact on communities around the world, are more aware of the way news media are working in the United States than their American counterpart do.

Another limitation of the survey is that students have just stated stereotypes about another country without knowing for sure how the media coverage really is in the country they are talking about. Of course, it is better to analyze the beliefs and the thoughts of the participants about the Israel and Palestine but avoiding stereotypes as much as possible is always interesting because it makes the survey more accurate and relevant.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

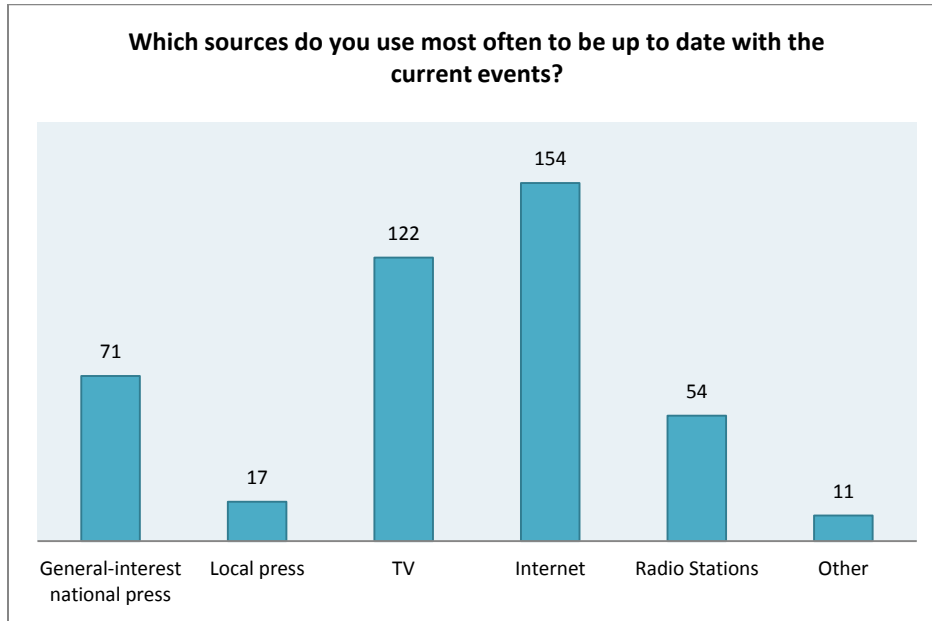
French Survey

The purpose of this online survey was to draw up a general statement about what the French students think about the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict in the French media but also in the United States. Here is some general information about the participants. 200 students answered the online survey. Among the respondents, 103 (52%) of the participants are women. Most of the students who participated in the study are graduate students: among them 153 (79%) are currently enrolled in a masters program. Twenty-five (13%) students are undergraduate. The eight remaining percentage which corresponds to 18 participants are divided between high school students, doctorate students and students who belong to special programs who do not have an equivalent in the United States (BTS and Classe préparatoire). However, in France these programs are equivalent to a bachelor degree. As a consequence these students may be considered as undergraduate students. The participants are from different regions in France. Some of them are even from the overseas regions of France. This question was not a mandatory question and some participants did not answer it.

Table 1. Gender

Gender	Participants	Percentage
Male	97	48.5
Female	103	51.5

Figure 1. Sources used most often by French students

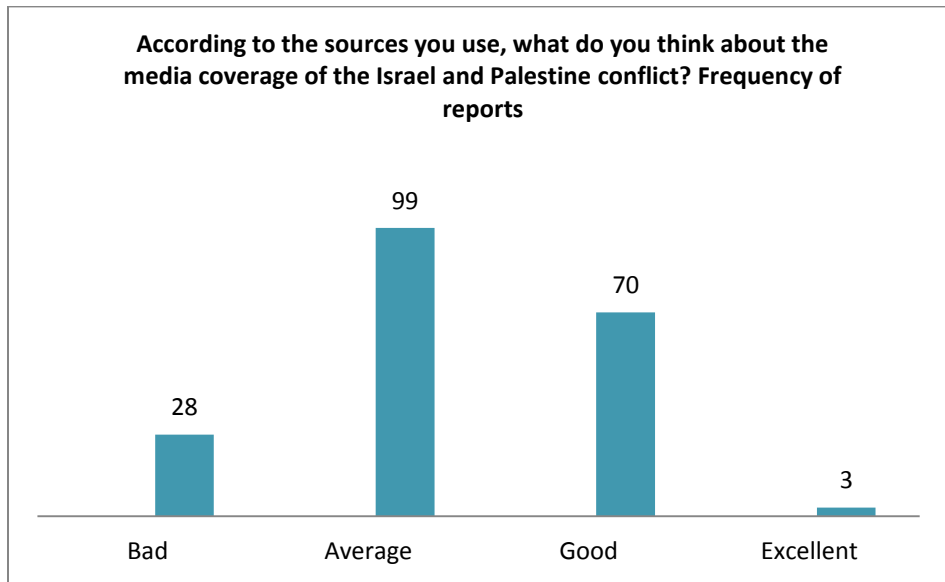


The first question of the survey is about which kind of sources the participants use to stay informed. It is important to know on which media students rely to inform themselves about what is happening because the different types of media imply a different relation to the news themselves through their availability, their reliability, their diversity, or the frequency of the updates. Students may have chosen several answers to the questions. Not surprisingly, the Internet is the most used source for students. Students represent a population, which is especially sensitive to the development of the new technologies. They belong to the generation through which Internet became a top-rank media. Thus, 71% (154 students of the 200 French students who answered the survey) of the students declared using Internet as one of the sources they refer to stay informed. Internet benefits from its nonconventional shape. Students who are most of the

time busy with their courses, their assignments and their ever-changing schedule do not always have time to follow regular or scheduled programs. That is why Internet is convenient for them: information is available in no time, whenever they need it. However, conventional media are still important for French students: television is the second source used by students to stay informed. 61% of them rely on it. Television is an integral part of the student life. It is furniture, which is present in almost every student house or dorm. That is why it is not surprising to see television is the second highest answer to this question. Thus, from it appears that the images and news broadcasted on television or available on the Internet have potentially a tremendous impact on students' minds since they are going to reach the vast majority of them.

The third highest answer is the general-interest national press. 71 students declared that they rely on the national press to stay informed; they represent 36% of the answers. The regional press is not very popular along students. Only 17 participants (9% of them) are reading a local newspaper to be informed about the world events. In France, the local press is not very attractive for students. Such a tendency could explain the low answer rate devoted to the local press. Radio stations are moderately popular among students. Only 54 students (27%) are listening to the radio to stay informed. Finally, this first question acknowledges the importance of Internet and television for students as sources for information. Thus, the impact of these two media on the students is increased compared to the one that can have the general-interest national press or radio stations for example.

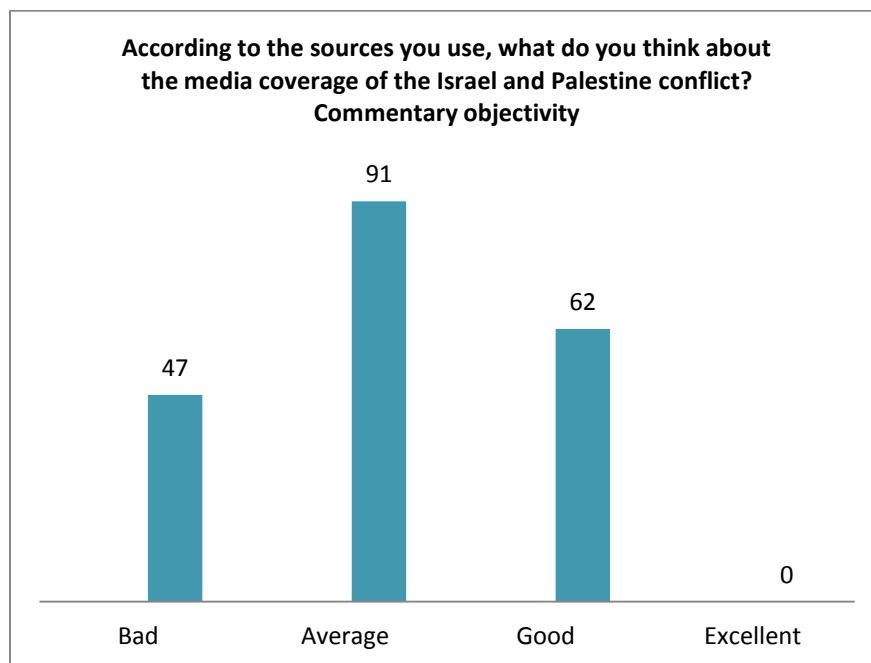
Figure 2. Frequency of reports about the conflict in France



The second question was about how the students perceived the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict according to the sources they mostly used. From the answers it appeared that French students are mostly moderate about the quality of the media coverage of the conflict. Indeed the survey proposed them to grade five aspects of the news reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict from bad to excellent. The aspects the survey took into account are the frequency of the reports, the objectivity of journalists' comments, the quality of the explanations, the presence of background information about the events reported, and the development of the reports. It is difficult to evaluate the news coverage according to these criteria. The same situation that divides the Jewish community in France and its Arabic counterpart may appear. Indeed some scholars have noticed that what can be considered offensive for one community will not be considered in the same way by the other community. Thus, comments some students may consider as objective and thoughtful may appear to be the exact opposite for other students depending on their personal background. However, the idea of this survey was to draw a general idea picture about the student perception of the media coverage. In fact, the students appeared to be not very happy about the coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. According to them, the

media coverage may be improved for all the aspects mentioned above. However, 99 students (almost 50% of the participants) believe that the frequency of the reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict is average. This is a “no opinion” because the students have not been able to evaluate the coverage of the conflict. The Israel and Palestine conflict is one of the most broadcast events of the past decades. Because of its length, it is in fact the most covered conflict over such a long period of time. It is interesting to see that half of the students have trouble to define the coverage. That kind of answer was unexpected and it is possible that the students do not see the Israel and Palestine conflict as a major topic in the news media. However 35% of the students (70 answers) are satisfied with the frequency of the coverage. According to them, it reflects what is happening in the Occupied Territories and in Israel.

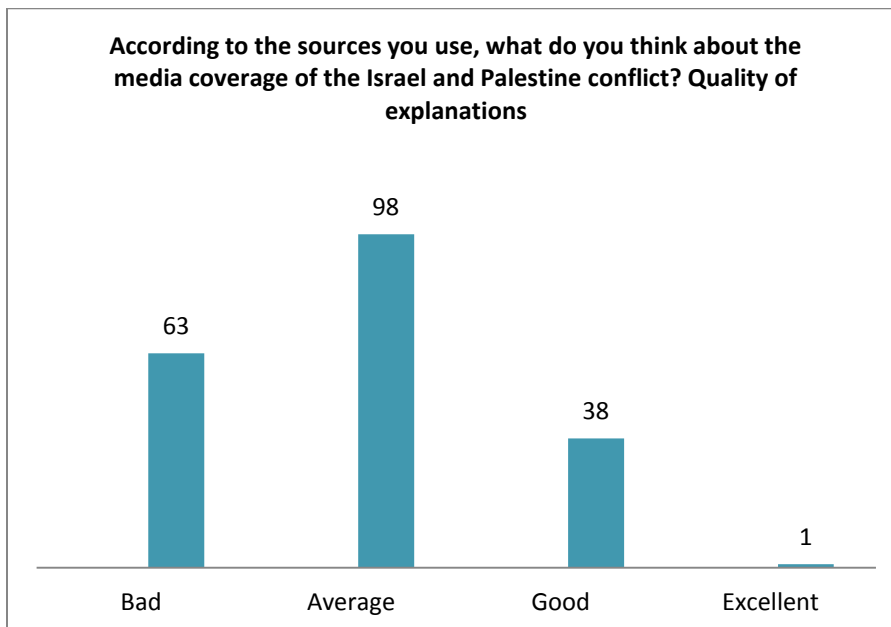
Figure 3. Commentary objectivity in the reports according to French students



By the same token, 62 participants (31% of the population) believed in the objectivity of the journalists. No participant considered the quality of the comments as being excellent. On the other hand, 91 respondents, which are 46% of the participants stressed that the quality of the journalists' comments is mediocre. If we add to this score the 47 (24%) students who think that

journalists are not fair in their comments, we have in fact 68% of the participants (138 among the 200 answers) who are not happy with the way journalists are commentated. The question does not signal how the comments may be improved or even why students do not consider them satisfactory. This is going to be clarified later in the survey. However, it is interesting to notice that some students are aware of a bias in the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. It could have been interesting to compare this assumed non-objectivity to students' feelings about the objectivity in the rest of the news coverage.

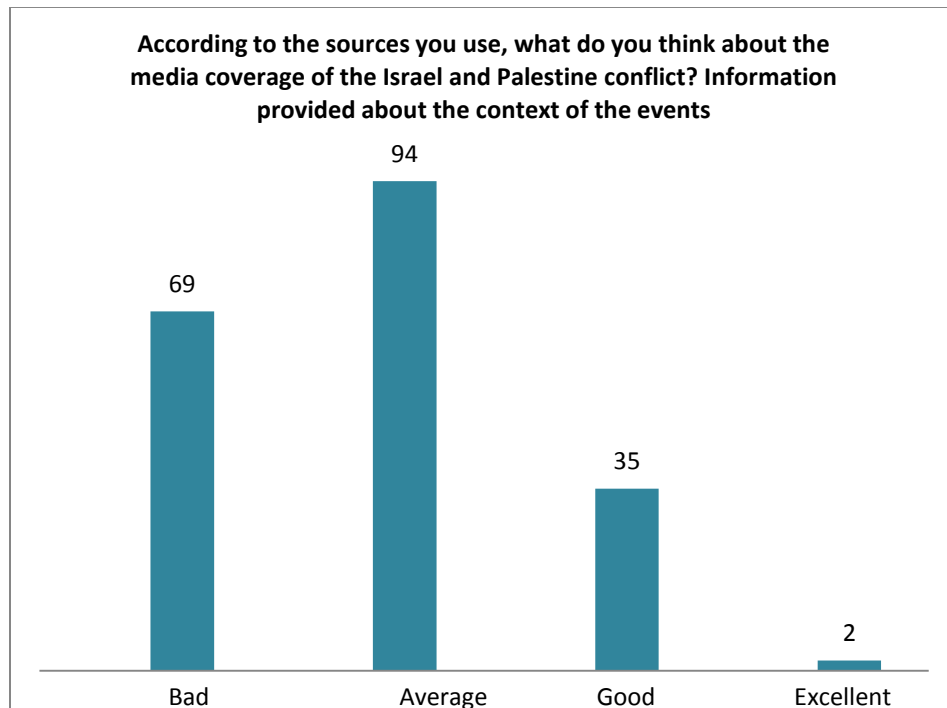
Figure 4. Quality of explanations in the French reports about the conflict



Furthermore, the students are not fully satisfied with the explanations: 98 answers up to the 200 students refer to the word “average” to describe the explanations in the news reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict. By the same token, there are even 63 participants, which correspond to 32% of the participants, to believe that the explanations are not good enough. Thus, one again, more than the majority of the students think the media need to provide the public better commentaries about the conflict. It is hard to access in what extend the information should be improved. It is the risk with close-ended questions, which provide only very short answers

without any explanations. It is yet a way to allow people with very little knowledge of the conflict to provide an answer for which they can quickly think about an answer.

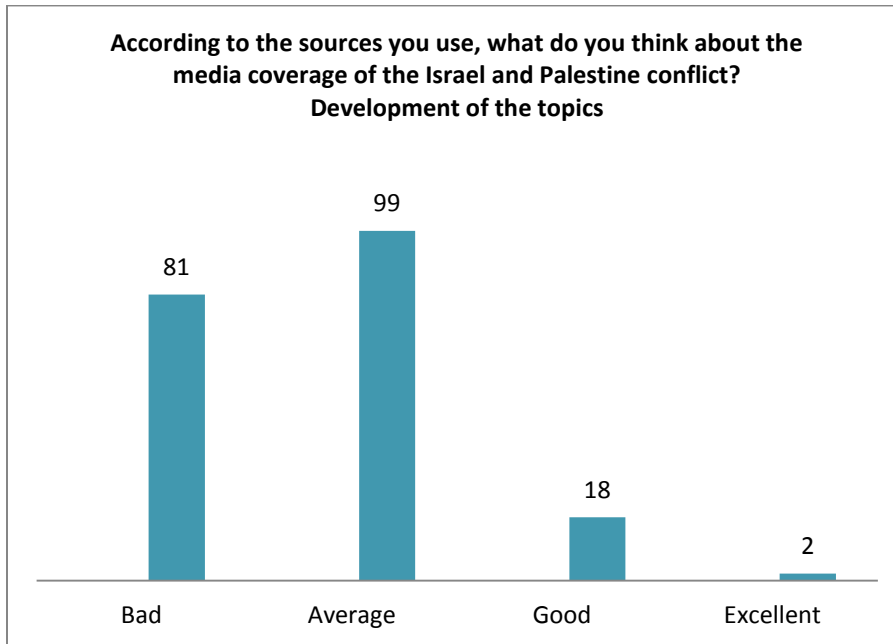
Figure 5. Evaluation of the information provided about the context of the events in France



The lack of context is an important aspect of the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. It is interesting to see that students are aware of the necessity to provide context in such an on-going conflict, which lasts for decades. Thus, 94 students (47%) believed the context in the reports about the events in Israel is mediocre. Furthermore, 69 participants (35%) thought the context is missing when talking about the events in the Occupied Territories. Moreover, it appeared that 163 participants (82%) believed the context is missing or at least the media could improve the presentation of the context of the events when broadcasting reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict. Since the struggle between Palestinians and Israelis lasted for several decades, journalists and experts do not always take the time to explain in details the entire background. Obviously, it is not always possible since the media have either a limited time or a limited space to dedicate to the Israel and Palestine conflict. However, students considered the

explanations of the circumstances of the stories displayed as being an important aspect of the coverage to improve. Providing good and accurate background is necessary to allow people to better understand the conflict.

Figure 6. Development of the topics dedicated to the conflict



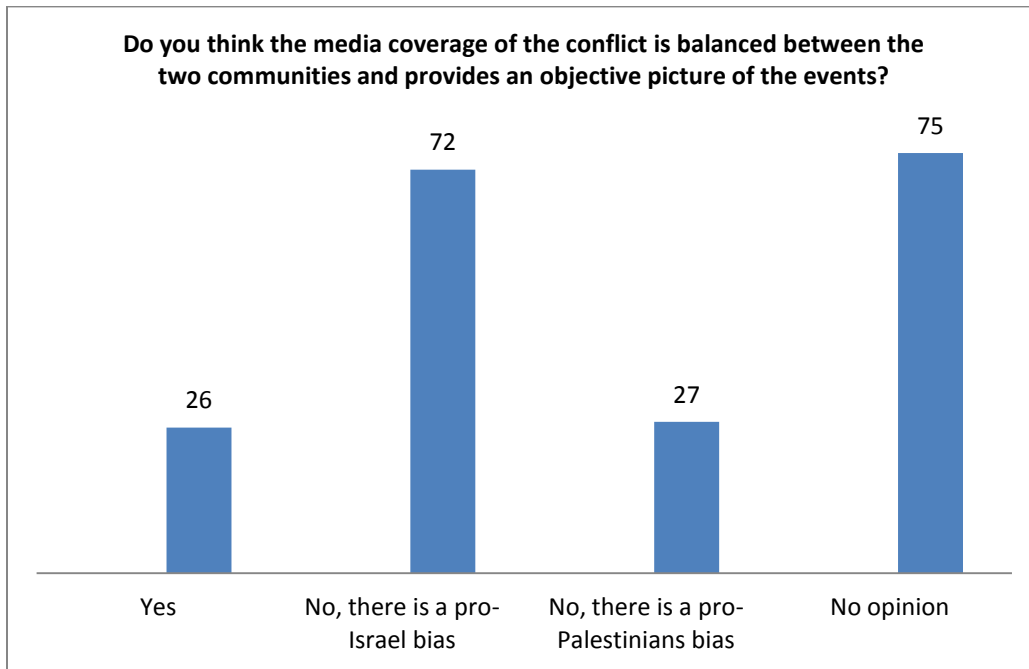
The last aspect of the coverage of the conflict dealt with how deep reports are. If media need to present facts about what is happening in the world, it is also true that in-depth reports are a good way to provide further information for the public. By displaying deeper stories about the Israel and Palestine conflict, especially when these reports are prepared by journalists living in the region, the news media pursued the debate and increased the knowledge of the public.

Nevertheless, the survey revealed that the students are not satisfied with the current state of the reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict. Indeed 91% of the participants, which corresponds to 180 students among the 200 participants, believed the reports are not developed enough. Thus, 81 students believed the development of the reports is poor. By the same 99 students noticed the broadcast of the reports is conventional. It means that only 10% of the participants (20 answers)

are satisfied with the way journalists furthered the investigation about the Palestine and Israel conflict.

From this series of questions, it appeared that students are rather critical about the news coverage of the conflict. They believe that media could improve the way journalists are presenting the Israel and Palestine conflict especially in television and on Internet since they are the two most used sources used by the participants. It is interesting to notice that even though Internet is said to provide the broader information about the conflict since the abundance of websites one can find on the Internet (he French writer Pierre-Andre Taguieff explained for instance in his book *La Nouvelle Propagande Antijuive* that Islamists and anti-Semitic are more willing to use the Internet to defend their ideas) students are still not satisfied with its accuracy. One reason to explain this tendency could be that students, no matter the kind of media they mainly refer to, stick to mainstream media who are supposed to display a unique viewpoint of the conflict. It is also possible that they do not have enough time to seek further information about the conflict. They have to deal with news that is not satisfactory for them because they do not have time to further the question.

Figure 7. Bias in the coverage of the conflict according to French students



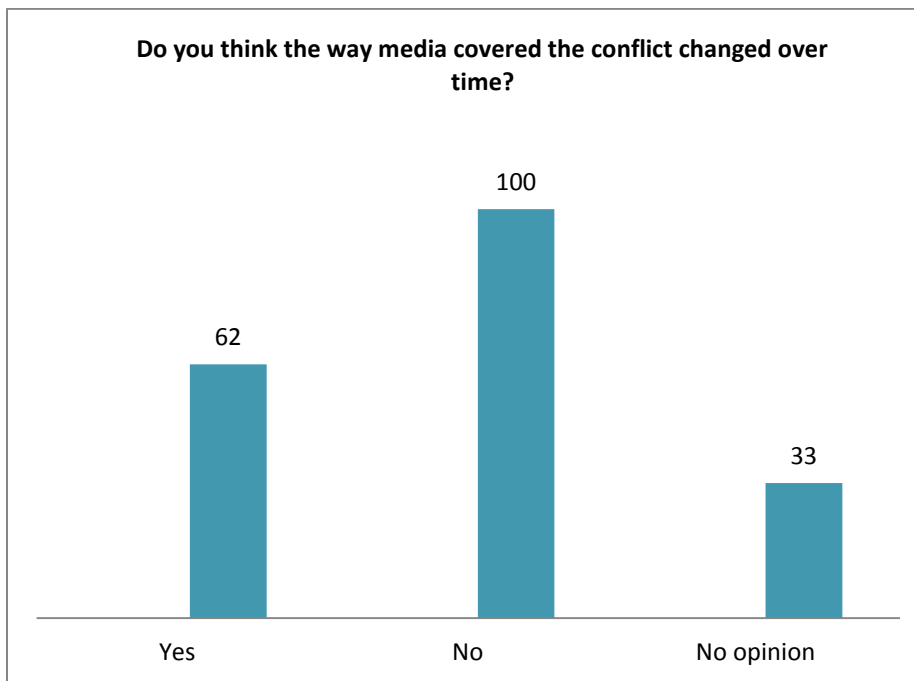
The next question in the survey is a very important question because it deals with the bias in the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. It is very interesting to see if students believe there are biases in the news about Palestinians or Israelis. Only 26 participants (13%) believed the coverage of the conflict is fair between the two communities. Among the 99 students who thought that the media coverage of the conflict is not fair, only 27 estimated that the bias in the media is a pro-Palestinian bias. The remainder supported the thesis of a pro-Israel bias in the media.

However the people without opinion about the bias in the media are numerous. This poor number of answers is not very helpful for the analysis of the data but it was necessary to include this item as a potential answer in order not to force the participants to answer. Otherwise, the persons who are really not sure about the bias would have been compelled to pick an answer not according to what they think but according to what the person who made the survey want them to answer.

Thus, the answers to the questions would have been incorrect. At least the students who chose an answer to that question did it because they have an opinion. So, half of the participants estimated that the news coverage of the conflict is not fair. Furthermore, when considering only the students

who have an opinion about the fairness or unfairness of the Israel and Palestine conflict, it appears that the majority of the participants do not believe in an objective report of the conflict between the communities. Indeed, on the 125 persons who are ready to answer about the balanced or unbalanced coverage of the conflict, 99 of them estimated that the media favor either the Palestinians or Israel. Thus, the students truly believe there is a bias in the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict in France.

Figure 8. Evolution of the conflict coverage in France through time



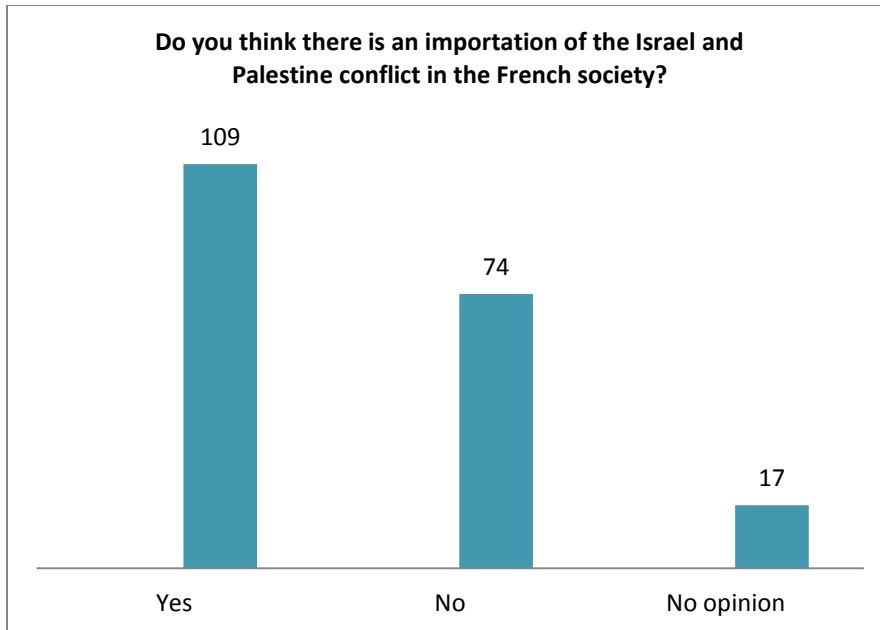
The next question deals with the evolution of the news coverage of the conflict over time. This is an important question because experts have noticed that the media coverage of the conflict evolved since its beginning, or at least since the 1967 war and the 1973 oil embargo when the West discovered the power of Arabs countries over this precious natural resource and when Israel ceased to be considered in the Occident always in a naïve manner. However, what may be obvious to experts and scholars may not be clear to less informed people. By the same token, they may also have a different opinion about the matter since even though they are analyzing the

conflict from uninitiated eyes, they do not have the same pressure experts and scholars may have. That is why it is interesting to see how students from France evaluate the evolution of the coverage in the news media. For this question, only 33 students (17% of the participants) do not have any opinion about the progression of the media coverage. The reason why such an answer was included among the possible choices is the same as the reason why the “no-opinion” answer has been added to the previous question. It prevented people who have no idea about whether or not coverage of the conflict evolved during the years to pick an answer randomly. However, the portion of participants who are without opinion on that topic is rather low. It may be people who do not have a serious interest in the Israel and Palestine. As they do not follow the events regularly they are unable to perceive a possible evolution. It is also possible that students do not consider the news about the conflict in their context: they just acknowledge them as separate facts. This could explain why they did not answer the question. Actually, this question was supposed to reflect the opinion of the participants upon the evolution of the conflict through the decades, over a long period of time.

However, the participants are too young to consider the evolution of the media’s manner to broadcast the conflict. At least they are young, since they are not experts on the subject (as their major mentioned it); to be aware of the way the media presented the Israel and Palestine conflict in the past decades. They do not have the necessary stand back to provide a meaningful answer to this question. They lack information about how the coverage of the conflict evolved, how for instance the Palestinians were more considered by the journalists after the 1967 war. It is actually a weakness of the survey: it should have taken into consideration what students precisely mean when they talk about an evolution in the way media are broadcasting the struggle in the Occupied Territories. Thus, only 39% of the students who gave an effective answer to the question think that the Israel and Palestine conflict has always been display in the same way in the media they refer to. Like the people who think that the conflict evolved it is not mentioned if

they estimate that the media always favored the Palestinians or if they favored Israel or if the news has always been balanced between the two communities.

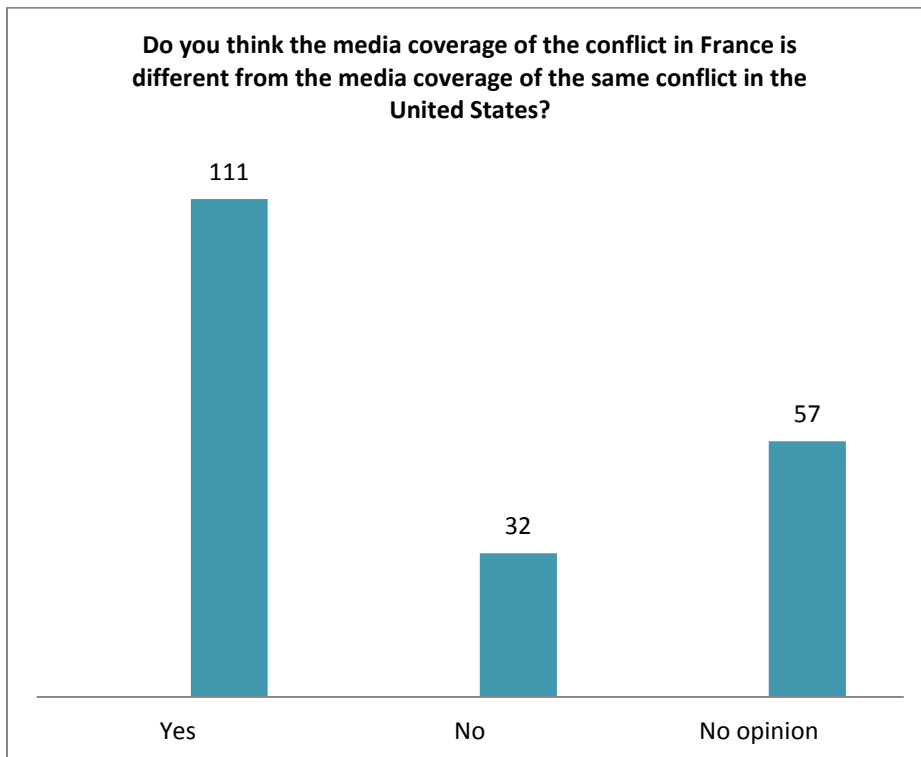
Figure 9. Importation of the conflict in France



The following question is about the importation of the Israel and Palestine conflict in France. The media often referred to that situation so this item is a way to address this issue. The “no-opinion” choice, which has been included for the same reason why it has been included in the two previous questions, was expected to get a very high answer rate. Indeed, it seems very difficult to access if the Israel and Palestine conflict influenced the French society. However it seems that students are very aware of that aspect because only 17 of them (9%) do not have any opinions about the problem. Therefore, 109 students among the 200 answers (55% of the population) estimated that the Israel and Palestine conflict has a direct impact on France. The students could not detail why they assumed that the French society used the conflict in the Occupied Territories or in Israel to talk about its own issues. It is clear yet that French students have the feeling that some parts of the events may have repercussions inside France. If we consider only the participants who have an opinion about this issue, the percentage of the students who believe that there is an importation of

the Israel and Palestine in France goes up to more than 59%. Nevertheless, it is very hard to be sure about the reasons why the participants stressed such a statement about the conflict.

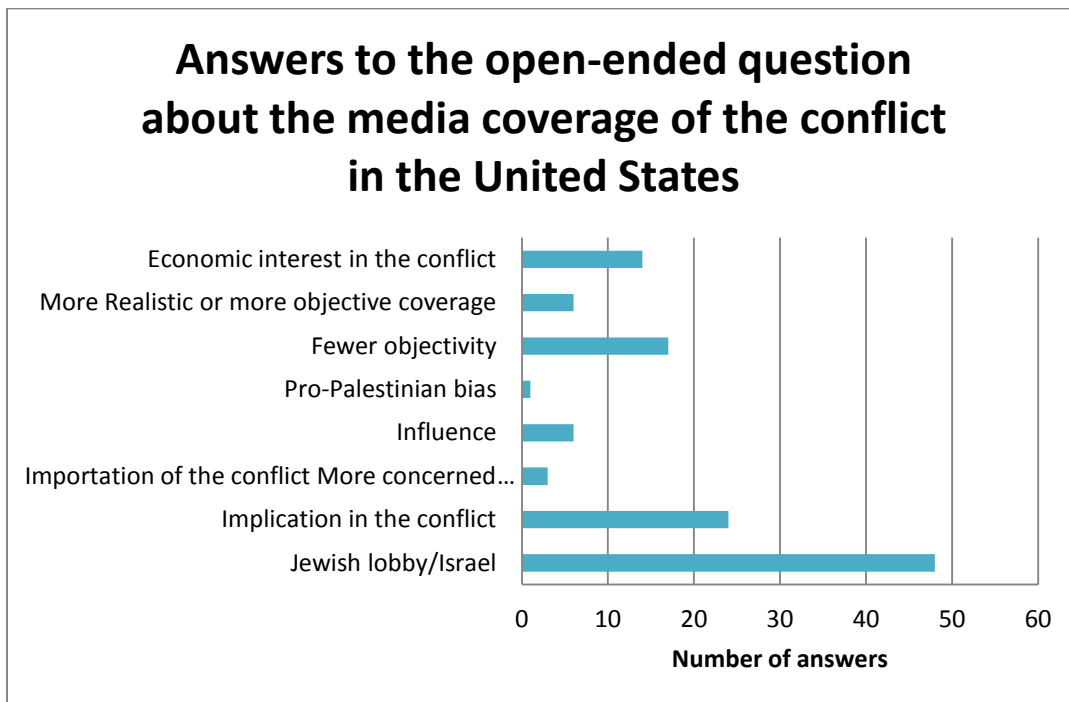
Figure 10. Is the media coverage of the conflict in France different from the coverage in the U.S.?



The last question about the Israel and Palestine conflict is about the media coverage of the conflict in the United States. Even though the population is from France, it was asked to say if they estimate that the news coverage of the conflict is different in the United States. The item deals exclusively with the Israel and Palestine conflict. The students had to take into account only this aspect of the media coverage. French people have a good access to products from the United States through movies, music, and press. This is especially true for young people for whom the access to different cultures thanks to the development of the Internet (and to a lesser extent thanks to the television) has often been present for many years. In other words, French students are aware of the American culture. Nevertheless, 57 students (28% of the participants) did not have an opinion about the differences and similarities between the French coverage of the conflict and

the American one. On the other hand, 111 persons (56%) believed that there are differences between the manner the United States displayed the struggle between the Palestinians and Israel. Moreover, if one just considers the participants who have an opinion about this issue, 78% of the studied population stressed that the media in the United States has a different manner to present the Israel and Palestine conflict. The second part of the question was for the students who answer “yes” to explain what they mean by that. It was important to detail the question because it will help to better understand the opinion of the studied population. It is necessary to know in what manner the news coverage in the United States differs from the one in France. Nevertheless, only 32 surveyed students (16%) do not see any difference between the United States and France in the way they broadcast news about the Israel and Palestine conflict.

Figure 11. Answers to the open-ended question about the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict in the United States



The second part of the question about the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict was hence an open-ended question. The answers have been quite diverse in length but students were obviously willing to demonstrate their knowledge of the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine

conflict. It is interesting to notice that most of the people who answered that question (79 answers up to the 200 students who took the online survey) mentioned the greater power of Israel or of the Jewish lobby in the United States. According to them, the US media are more influenced by Israel's interests, either through Israel itself or through the Jewish lobby, which is considered by the French students as one of the most powerful lobby in the United States. However when talking about the difference between France and the United States concerning the pro-Israel bias in the media coverage of the conflict the students do not agree. Some believed that French media are not influenced by Israel or a possible Jewish lobby whereas other stressed that the United States are just more influenced by the Israeli side of the conflict. The difference only lied in the degree to which the French media or the American media are affected by and ready to display the Israeli side of the conflict. By the same token, French students believe that a difference between the French and the American news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict is that the United States has more interests in the Israel and Palestine conflict than the Europeans and the French do. Thus, the French students explained that the United States' interests in the conflict could be divided into two groups. On the one hand, the participants stressed that Israel is the United States' ally therefore, they share political interest and that is why the United States in general and especially the American media is more sympathetic toward Israel's actions. On the other hand, the answers acknowledged the economic interests of the United States in the Middle Eastern region. Thus, by defending Israel, the United States are protecting its economic interests in the region and are increasing their power. Finally, the French students explained that even though the media coverage of the conflict is, according to them, far from being perfect, the news coverage of the conflict is worse in the United States. According to the participants, the American media, due to the importance of the Israel influence, is less objective than the French media even though some people believed that the two communities are equally represented in certain newspapers. Thus, the participants criticized the impact of the Israel's interests on the news coverage of the conflict in the United States. The cultural differences between France and the United States

explained why the population surveyed believed that the news coverage of the conflict is not totally the same in the two countries. Finally, it is interesting to notice that very few people believe that the media coverage is more objective in the United States.

So, it can be stressed from the French survey that most of the French students are critical toward the United States in the way they broadcasted the conflict. However, it does not mean that the participants are satisfied with the news coverage of the conflict in France either. In fact, they pointed the unfairness of the coverage, which is perceived as being less obvious than the one in the United States though. According to the French students the media favors Israel in its reports and comments. They think that the power of the Israel side of the conflict is more important that is why it is easier for the defenders of Israel to get access to the media to express their ideas. By the same token, some students explained that the Arab community in France does not benefit from the same ability to defend its viewpoint because the members of the community are not united enough to be heard by the public opinion. Most of French students noticed that it is easier for Israel and its defenders to express themselves in the media and by the same token to impose their opinions in the news coverage.

Nevertheless, it is not easy to stress conclusions from such a survey. Even though many participants hold clear-cut positions about the Israel and Palestine conflict, some participants wrote ideas that can be understood as mere stereotypes about the community they do not support. In fact, as it will be discussed later in this paper, it seems very difficult to have a detached interest in the Israel and Palestine conflict. Criticisms and supports are always very vivid and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish propaganda from viewpoints. Thus, Pierre-Andre Taguieff acknowledged in his book, *La Nouvelle Propagande Antijuive: Du Symbole Al-Dura aux Rumeurs de Gaza*, that the anti-Semitism increased in the past few years and that many people who too harshly criticized Israel are in fact Anti-Semitic. The Israel and Palestine conflict is a very sensitive topic in France due to the importance of the two communities in the French

society. The French writer also wrote about the stigmatization of the Jewish community in the world. For him, it is clear that the media are pro-Palestinians. Furthermore, he explained that when dealing with the conflict between Israel and Palestinians, it is always “deux poids, deux mesures” (Taguieff, 2010, 39) – double standard – for the benefit of the Palestinians. Pierre-Andre Taguieff considered the problem from his perspective. Even though, other writers such as Edward Said or Jack Shaheen for example explained that Arabs in general and especially Palestinians are always vilified in the media regardless of the type of media, Taguieff stated that Israel is the victim of a conspiracy leading by the worldwide Arab community (Taguieff, 2010, 37). Therefore, the facts he considered as being biased will be considered fair by its opponents. That is to say it is very necessary to analyze the conflict by examining detached opinions but since it is very difficult to get because the Israel and Palestine conflict is a conflict for which people are ready to share their viewpoints and that is why it is hard for them to stay unemotional when talking about it.

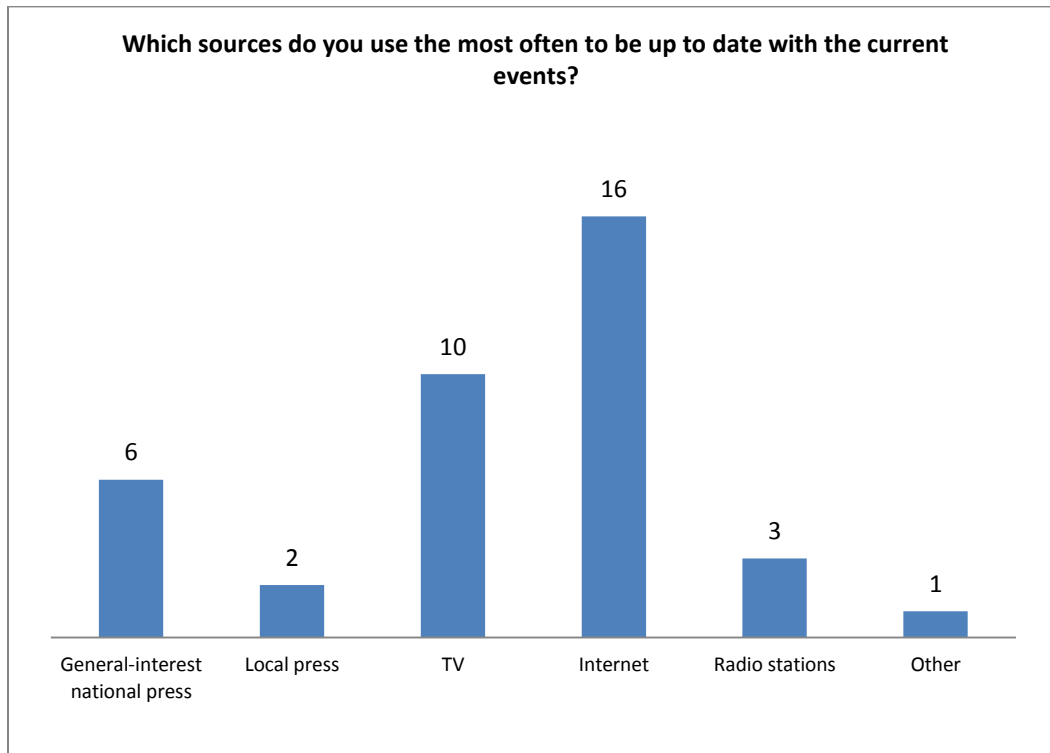
Finally, this survey asked students their opinion about the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. It may be difficult for them to answer the questions since it may be a field for which they do not have specific affinities with. Nevertheless, this survey helped to see that students are aware of some biases in the news media when dealing with the Israel and Palestine conflict. In general, students believe that the French media need to improve the manner they broadcast the conflict. They estimate that news reports need more unbiased comments from journalists in order to reestablish equality between the two communities. By the same token, students believe that the media favor the Israeli side of the conflict: they believe the news criticized more the Palestinians for their actions than it criticized Israel. As mentioned before the ability to analyze data about the Israel and Palestine conflict should take into account the possible relationship of the participants with the community involved and especially the Jewish community which is way more organized than the Arab community to tackle the images of the

conflict in the media. However, sometimes it is very hard for Israel to justify its acts especially when the entire world is watching and is waiting for explanations. Nevertheless, in some occasions the Israel and Palestine struggle seems to escape the attention and the control of the people who are living it daily to spread in the West and continue the fights outside the borders of the Occupied Territories.

The American survey

The purpose of the U.S. survey was the same as the French survey. It is aimed to acknowledge how Americans students perceive the Israel and Palestine conflict. Among the 17 participants nine are male and eight are female. However, most of the students who answered the survey are undergraduate students. In fact, only three of them are graduate students. By the same token, most of the students are from Oklahoma. Some, however, did not specify their home state. The participants in the U.S. survey are mainly history and political science majors. Another significant major is International Studies. It is interesting to stress that the students who answered the survey are from majors that are sensitive about international issues and conflicts if not about the Israel and Palestine conflict. One may assume that these students are more aware of the conflict than other students. Even though the number of answers is not sufficient enough to enable a proper analysis of the topic, it is worth noticing that the comments made by the participants considered several aspects of the conflict.

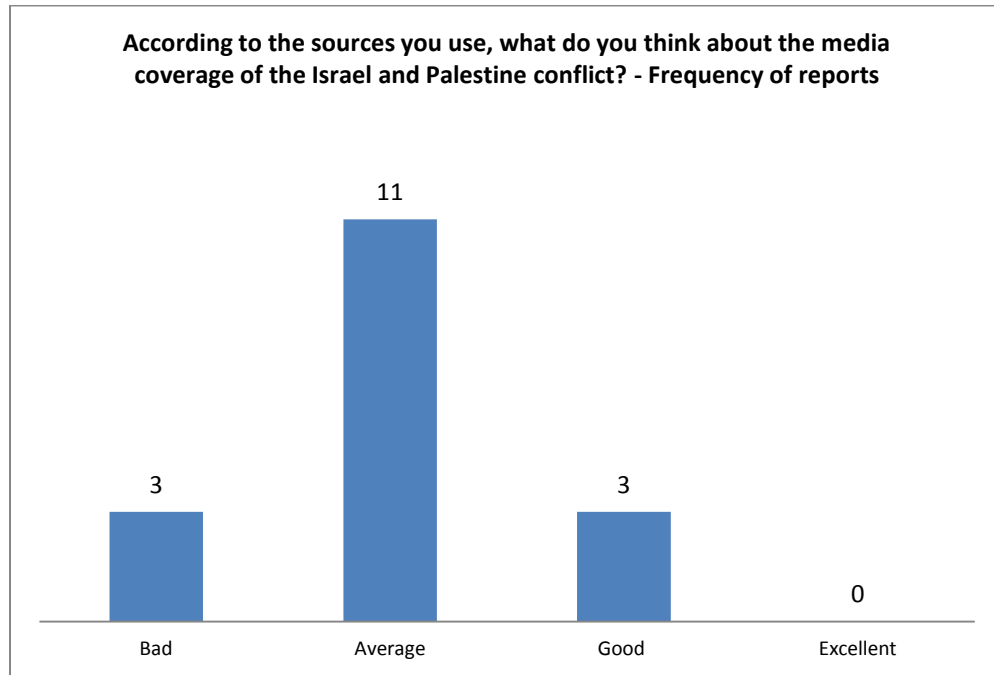
Figure 12. Sources used most often by American students



However, the purpose of the survey is not to assess the knowledge of the Israel and Palestine conflict among responsive students. It is to represent how students in the United States perceive the conflict based on what they see in the media. The U.S. survey is more difficult to analyze than the French survey because of the lack of answers. It is easier to draw conclusions from a higher number of answers. Like the French survey most of the students rely on the Internet to be up to date with the current events. Among the 17 participants, sixteen said they use Internet to get access to the news. Obviously, Internet is a major part of today's media because of its flexibility and diversity. The second most used media is television is which said to help 10 students (59% of the participants) to follow the current events. Television is still an important part of the western media. Even though Internet is more appealing to young people and students who like to use technology, television benefits from the fact that it is fully integrated to the lives of most people not only in the United States but also in Europe. Moreover, 35% of the respondents (six students) stressed they rely on the general-interest national press to be up to date with the events. Even

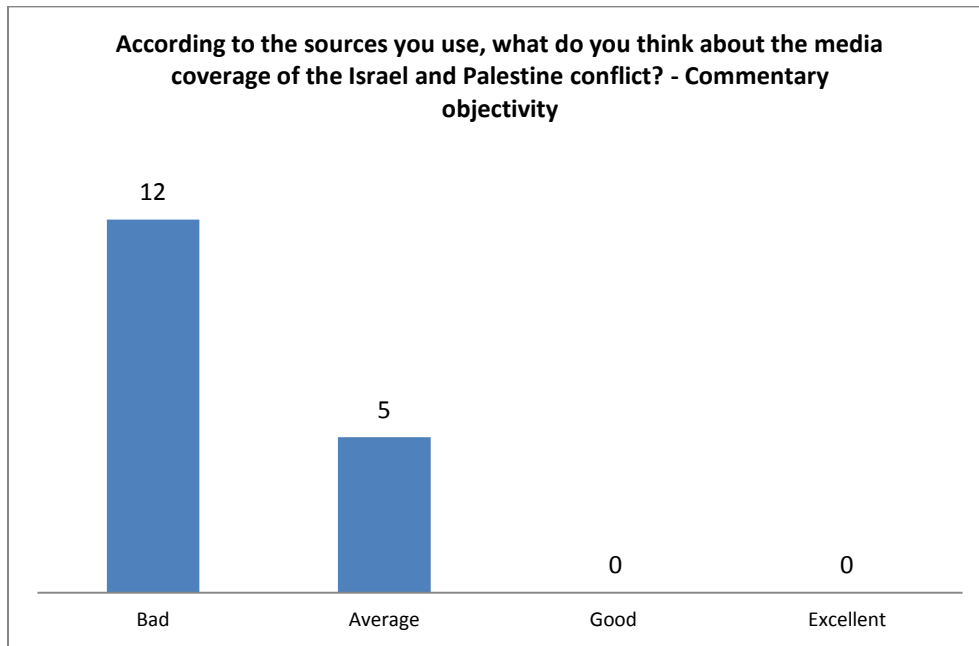
though it represents less 50% of the participants, it means that press still has power to influence people. Finally, the other answers got insignificant answer rates, which are not meaningful to analyze considering the low general answer rate to the survey.

Figure 13. Frequency of reports about the conflict according to U.S. students



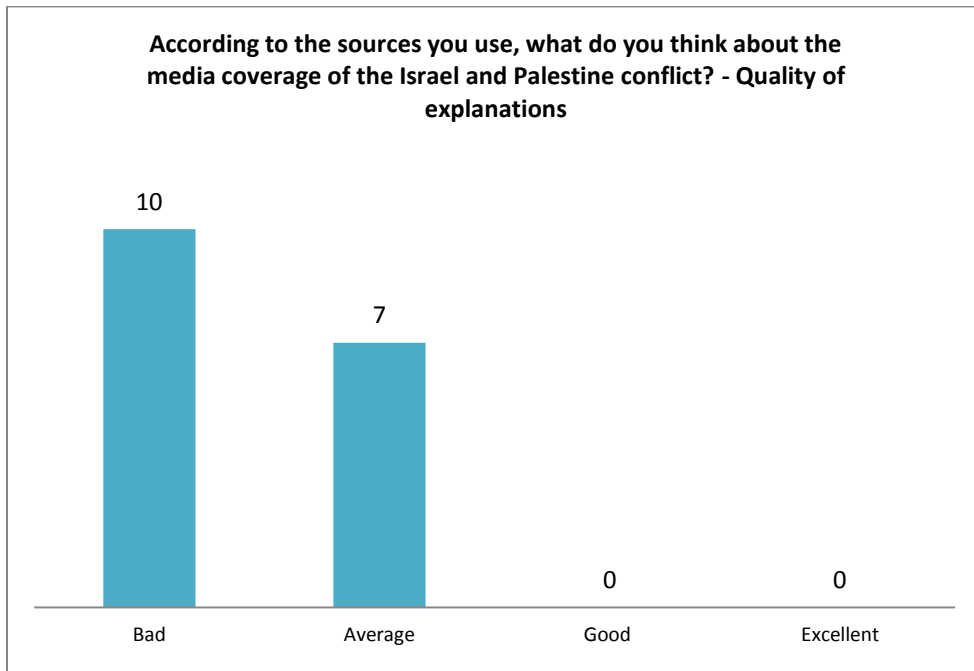
The second question of the survey dealt with the frequency of the reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict in the media. The students were asked to say according to their sources whether this frequency was sufficient or not. Compared to the rest of the news dealing with completely different topics, 11 persons (65% of the participants) believed that the frequency of reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict is average. Thus, they do not think there is a emphasis on the conflict in the news media. However, none of them think the frequency of reports is very good. Only three participants considered there is a good coverage of the events in Israel when considering the number of reports broadcast in the media. The same among of participants believe that, on the contrary, the frequency of reports is pretty low.

Figure 14. Commentary objectivity in the American reports about the conflict



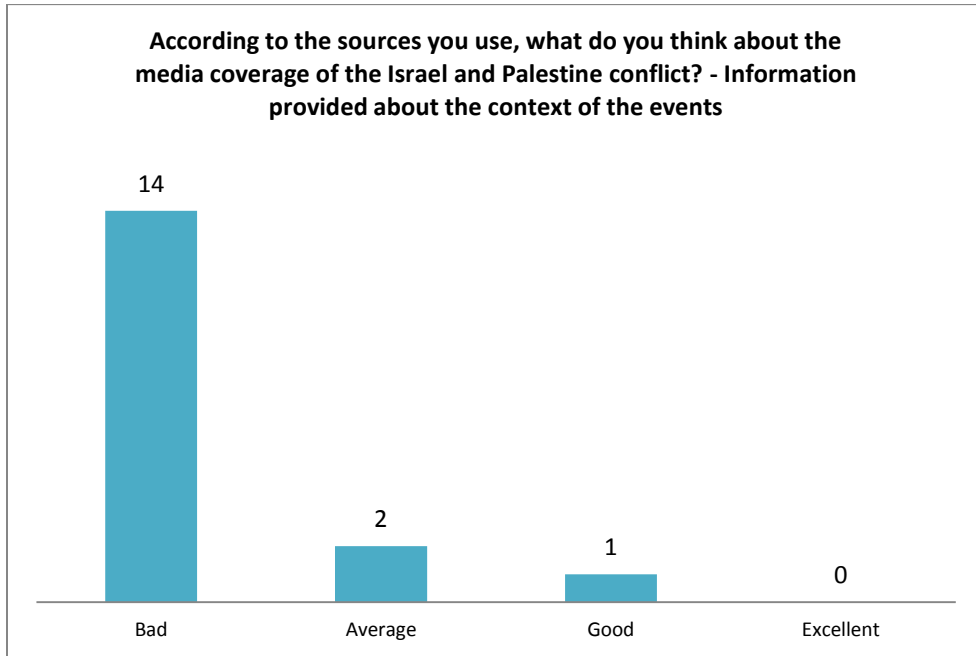
Although the participants seem to be neutral about the frequency of reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict, their assessment of the objectivity in the journalists' commentaries is rather harsh. Therefore, 12 students among the 17 participants (71%) considered the objectivity in the commentaries to be low. The rest of the respondents believe the commentaries are average. Thus, the American students are pretty critical toward the journalists' comments about the Israel and Palestine conflict. They think the journalists should be fairer in their comments. As the French students, American students do not like the way the media talk about the conflict. Considering the rest of the answers, they do not like the fact that media favored the Israeli side of the conflict in its reports.

Figure 15. Quality of explanations in the U.S. reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict



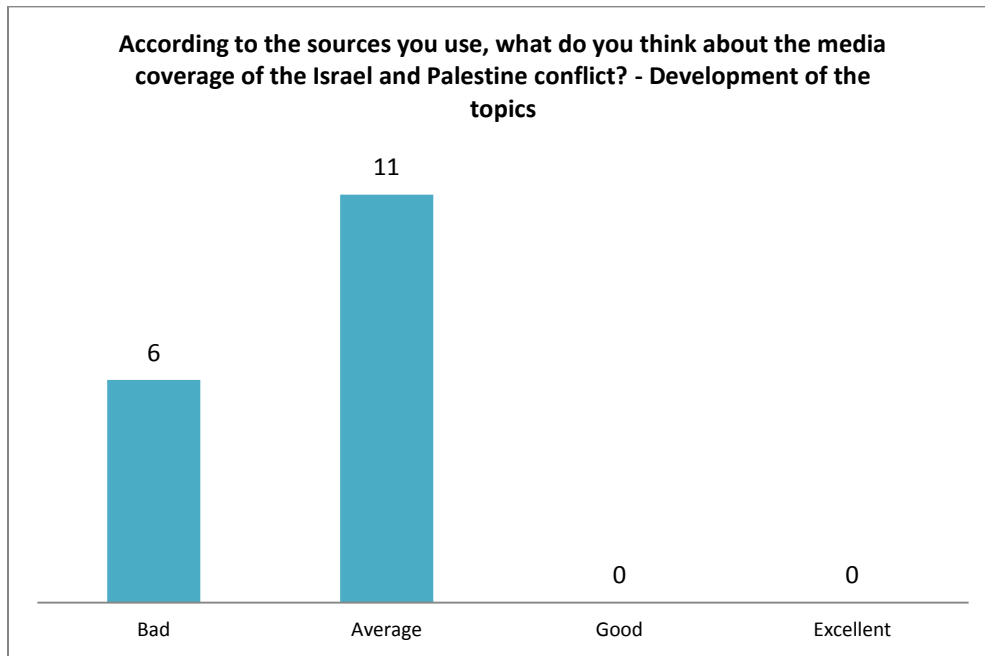
The same analysis can be made from the answers to the following question in the survey which deals with the quality of the explanations in the reports. Once again, most of the participants (59% which corresponds to 10 answers) believe that the explanations dealing with the Israel and Palestine conflict are not good enough and do not provide to the audiences a good picture of what is really happening. None of the students believe the quality to be neither good nor very good. They also have a very harsh opinion about the quality of the explanations provide by the journalists. From this small sample that American students are more critical than French students when talking about the quality of the explanations. Indeed French students mostly consider the quality of the comments as average that is to say neither better nor worse than the quality of the comments about other topics. Nevertheless, it does not mean that French students like the comments. They are just less demanding than American students about this issue.

Figure 16. Evaluation of the information provided about the context of the events according to the U.S. students



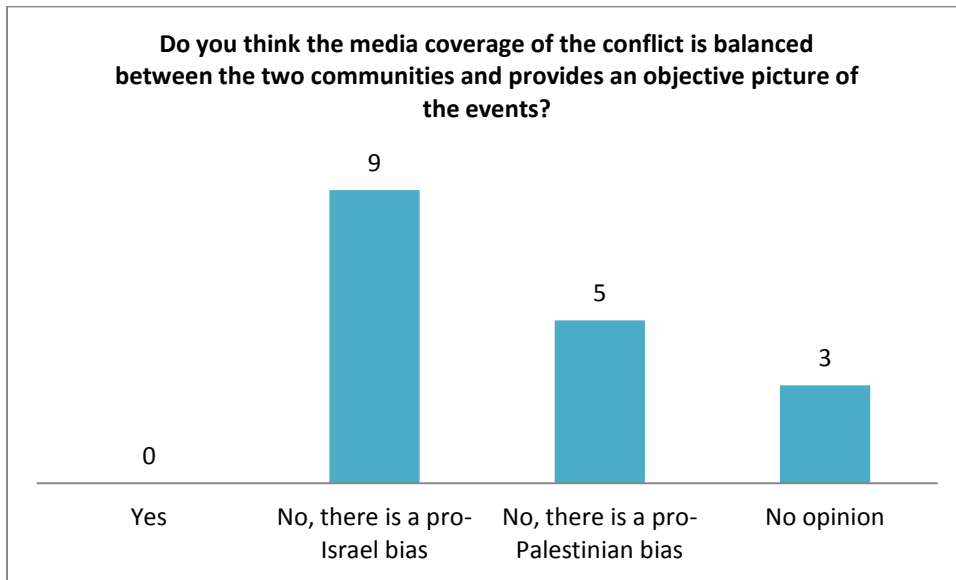
As mentioned before, it is very important to provide an explanation about the context of the events especially when talking about the Israel and Palestine conflict. 14 students (82% of the participants) acknowledge that the media does not provide enough contexts when reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict are displayed. The rest of the students believe that the context provided is just average. While answering this question, participants in the survey provided a severe assessment of the accuracy and the fairness of the reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict. It is interesting to notice that the students seem not only being aware that the context described by the media is not enough to provide a good understanding of the events, but also they understood that the Israel and Palestine conflict is a complicated and dense struggle that needs to be carefully explained to audiences.

Figure 17. Development of the topics related to the conflict in the U.S. media



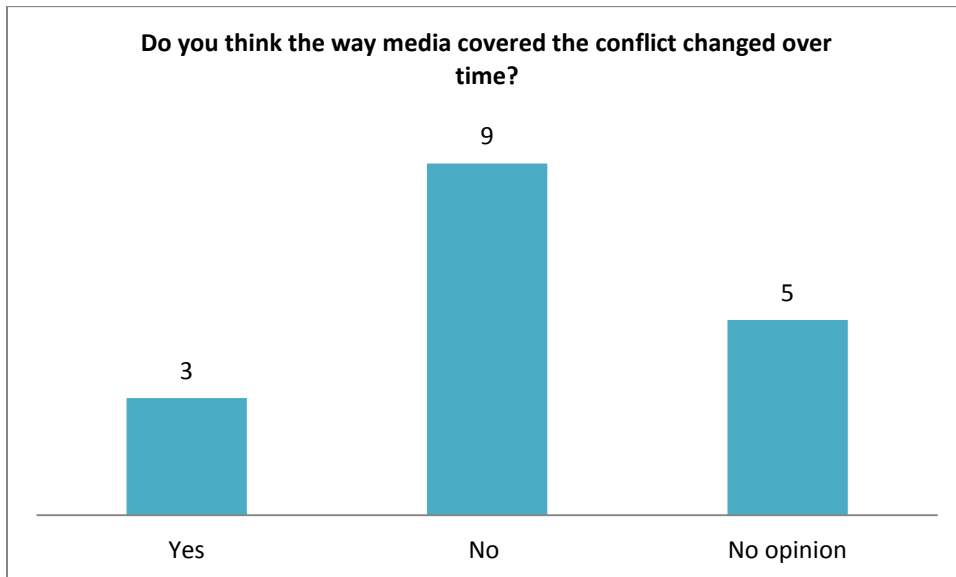
Finally, the last question of the series about the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict dealt with the developments of the topics. According to the participants, the reports in the news media in the United States are not developed enough. Thus, 11 students (65%) believe that the development of the topics is average: the media do their job but they do not further the investigation. One student has a positive image of the development of the topics when it comes to the Israel and Palestine conflict. Therefore, the rest of the participants said the development of the topics was not good enough. It is interesting to see that students want longer reports. They are not satisfied with the length of the current reports, which do not allow journalists to develop their analysis. In fact, this item could explain why students believed that the news coverage do not provide enough context. It is because journalists do not have time, they have to produce short reports. Therefore, they do not have much time to spend on explanations and context.

Figure 18. Is the U.S. news coverage of the conflict balanced?



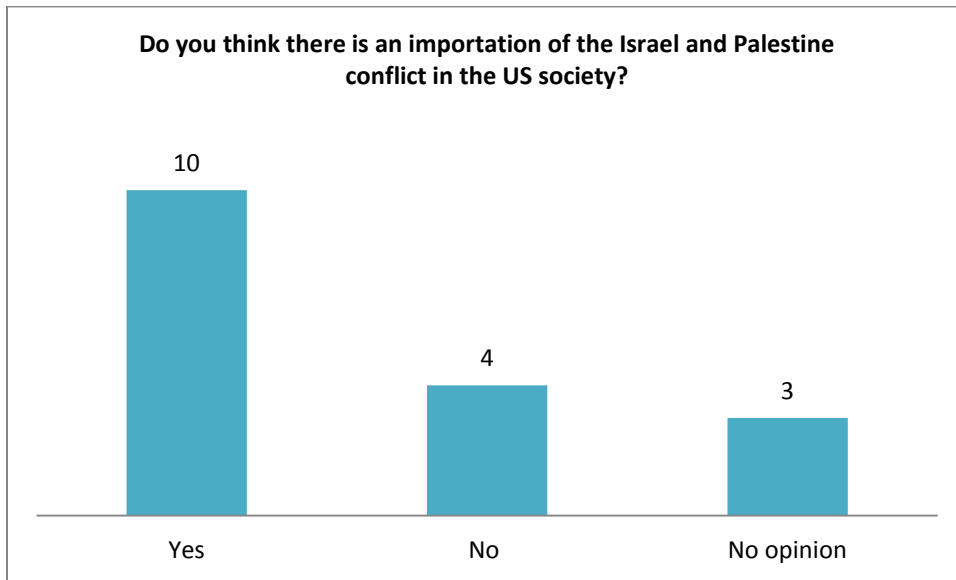
The next question was about the bias in the reports about the Israel and Palestine conflict. The participants were asked to state whether, according to their opinion, the coverage of the conflict was biased in the United States. None of the participants estimated that the coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict was fair. Indeed, 9 of them (53%) believed that there is a pro-Israel bias in the media. Whereas 29% of the students, in other words 5 students, stressed that the media are more favorable to the Palestinians. The rest of the respondents do not have an opinion about the question (it is important to let them express their non opinion instead of forcing them to chose a side when they have no idea about the topic). Thus, it appears that most of the participants are aware of a pro-Israel bias in the news coverage of the conflict in the United States. They acknowledge that the coverage of conflict in the U.S. media should be improved since 14 of the respondents believe there is a bias of some sort in the way media displayed the Israel and Palestine conflict.

Figure 19. American participants evaluate the evolution of the conflict coverage through time



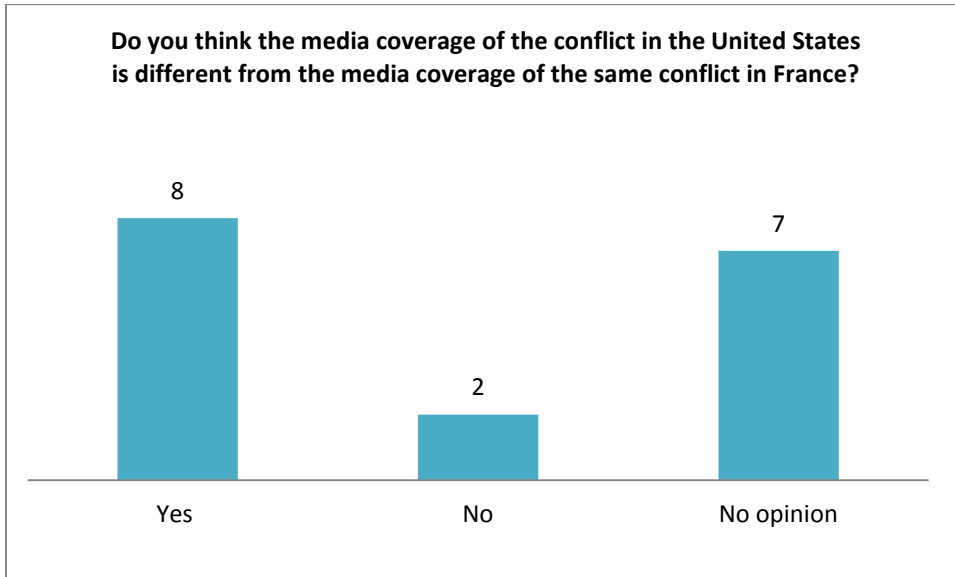
The next question was about the evolution of the conflict through time. Most of the participants (9 answer) estimated that the coverage of the conflict evolves through time whereas 3 of them (18%) believed it didn't. The rest of the students did not express their viewpoint. It is interesting to notice that according to the students the coverage of the conflict did not evolved. However, one may make the same comment about this question as the similar question in the French survey. The time frame is not well defined enough to allow the respondents to provide a meaningful answer. Because one can measure an evolution over the decades, since the beginning of the conflict for instance, or since the 1967 war when Israel was not the only country to take into account and that the Palestinians appear in the Western media; but it can also be measured since Oslo Peace Process, or even since the development of the Internet as a mass media. Thus, it is difficult to analyze the results for that question.

Figure 20. Importation of the conflict in the United States



The following question was about the importation of the conflict in the United States. It is interesting to notice that many respondents believe there is an importation of the conflict abroad. In fact, 10 participants (59%) stressed that there is an importation of the Israel and Palestine conflict in the United States. Only 4 of them (24%) did not see any relationship between what is happening in the United States and the conflict in Palestine. By the same token, 3 participants (18%) did not express their opinion. It is sometimes difficult to find information about this question especially if people do not have time to spend on that research, they may have trouble to relate the events in Israel to events in the United States. Once again, the American students and their French counterpart shared the same feeling about the importation of the conflict. Most of them indeed stressed that it is possible to find repercussions of the Israel and Palestine conflict in their own country. However, one cannot be sure about the reason why they believe there is such an importation of the conflict. It could be from their readings or from events they witnessed in their daily life.

Figure 21. Is the news coverage of the conflict in the United States different from the news coverage in France?



The last close-ended question of this survey dealt with the comparison of the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict in the United States and the coverage in France. Among the ten participants answered the question by expressing their opinion, eight stressed there is a difference in the media coverage of the conflict between France and the United States. However, seven participants (41%) did not have an opinion about the topic. Whereas it is easy for French students to have access to the U.S. news media because they are very popular - in France most people know at least about CNN, Fox News, and the New York Times for instance - the opposite is not true. American students are less likely to be aware of French media and even less likely to read articles or see reports from French media even the most important of them such as TF1 and Le Monde. Therefore, one of the participants explained they could only guess how the media coverage of the conflict is in France since he or she does not know it very well. Thus, it explains why many participants did not express their opinion in that particular question. However, most of the students who answered the question believe that there is a difference between France and the United States concerning the Israel and Palestine conflict. Some explained their choice in the second part of the question, which was the only part in the survey where students may develop

their viewpoints. Thus, some participants stressed that the coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict is different because the United States and France do not have the same interests in the conflict. By the same token, some students believe that the fact that France is geographically speaking closer to the events, its media provide a different coverage. The participants also consider that the news coverage in the United States promotes the Israel side of the conflict whereas in France, because of the importance of the Muslim community, which therefore has more chances to be heard if it decides to speak up, the Palestinian side is believed to be more present in the news. One student stressed that, according to his or her readings, the coverage of the conflict in France is similar to the one provided by BBC in the United Kingdom.

Findings

It is interesting to compare and to analyze the differences and the similarities between the French and the American participants to the survey. Even though it is very difficult to find a pattern in the answers of the American survey since there are only few answers. However, one may notice that both groups of students are rather critical toward the media coverage of the conflict in their own country. Most of them recognize the existence of a pro-Israel bias in the way journalists broadcast the news. France and the United States seem to share similarities in the way they display Palestinians. Students are also not satisfied with the quality of the coverage. In addition to the pro-Israel bias, participants regret the poor quality of the comments in the reports. They are harmful to the good understanding of the events in the Middle East. Thus, participants from France and from the United States recognize the necessity of having context in the news reports. Despite these similarities, French students explained that the way events about the Israel

and Palestine conflict are displayed in France is more satisfactory than the way U.S. displayed them in them United States. Thus, they emphasized the pro-Israel bias in the United States. Indeed, they think that the bias is even more important in the United States where the Jewish lobby is often said to play an important part in the way the U.S. media display the news about the Middle East. By the same token, some students in the United States highlighted a similar pattern in the news coverage of their own country. They believe that the media tend to defend Israel more than the Palestinians. However, the distance between the United States and the conflict on the ground seems to influence the news coverage. For some of the participants for instance, the geography makes France more aware of, and more concerned about, the Israel and Palestine conflict than the United States are. It is as if the further reports about the events in Israel travel, the less accurate, or at least the more distorted, they are. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that participants from both countries are critical toward the broadcast of the Israel and Palestine conflict.

Thus, they identify interests in the conflict that explain why the Israel and Palestine conflict is widely covered in the western media. They understand the economic interests that may influence both the attitude of France and the United States and the way media deal with the news coverage of the conflict. The relation between the interests of outside countries in the events and the media coverage explain why many students perceive an importation of the conflict either in France or in the United States. They understand that the conflict goes outside its border because it bears important issues. That the coverage of the Israeli occupation is not fair, unbiased, and contextualized seems to be, for the participants, harmful for the future resolution of the conflict. Most of the respondents tend to regret that situation.

However, it was difficult to analyze these data especially those coming from the American survey since the answer rate was quite low. Comparing the 17 American answer sheets to the 200 French answer sheets was not an easy task because, if one can try to find a pattern

among the French answers, it is much more difficult to achieve with only a small amount of answers. It is hence always impossible to generalize the results to the entire population of American students. However, those American surveys have been helpful to better understand the difference and the similarities in the way French and American perceive the conflict. If the results prevent from having a general picture of the attitudes of the American students toward the Israel and Palestine conflict; they, on the other hand, allow to compare and to contrast the French results to another set of data.

American and French students, hence, seem to have a quite good understanding of the problems related to the coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. They are able to see that the media do not always provide a very accurate picture of the events. They seem to be able to confront their own knowledge of the conflict to what they see on television or on the Internet or on what they read in the newspaper. It is a good thing they are able to question themselves about the conflict. By the same token, it is also a good thing to know that they are not willing to accept the news as they are without cross-checking information. Obviously students - especially those in history or political science majors - are more sensitized to other cultures and international issues than the rest of the population since they have to do research and write papers about very different topics. That is why it is difficult to enlarge those results to a wider population. More data may result in discovering that French and American students are not sensitive to the conflict in the exact same way. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that the young generation, often depicted as selfish and dissociated from the international issues, have interests in the Israel and Palestine conflict and understand what is at stake. It could be helpful for the future resolution of the conflict. The survey demonstrates that students are aware of the power of the images in the resolution of the conflict since they identified the biases in the media. If such biases exist, it is because they are important. Winning the hearts and minds of the audiences abroad is a way to increase one's power in the conflict.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Summary

The survey presented to the American and French students underlined questions about the coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. In fact, if the participants recognized the news coverage of the conflict as providing most of the time a pro-Israel bias in the reports, they are less convinced about the importation of the conflict abroad. Indeed, in both surveys, many French and American students did not answer the question about the importation of the conflict in their own country. They selected the “no opinion” item instead. The question of the importation of the conflict beyond the borders of Israel and the Occupied Territories is not easy to consider. It may be difficult to assess what importation of the conflict in the United States means for instance. It is possible that the students answered “no opinion” because they could not find easily examples of such a phenomenon. In fact, it is rather difficult to find information about the importation of the conflict. The daily reports about the events in the Occupied Territories seldom talk about that because they tend to focus on the conflict not its consequences abroad. It could explain why students have trouble to identifying the problem. However the importation of

the Israel and Palestine conflict interested authors and after some research it is possible find information about it. Since, the lack of context in the news reports, the biases and ignorance about some aspects of conflict appeared to most of the participants of the study, the last part of this paper is going to focus on the importation of the conflict abroad. This phenomenon appears through several means. First, the images of the conflict are used by the media to help to explain the facts. Sometimes they carry stronger meaning and seem to generate a sudden awareness about the public opinion, which means it is important to control the images of the conflict beyond the borders of Israel because it helps to share opinions. Second, events occurring in the region of the conflict find a bigger resonance far from the events. The Freedom Flotilla and the Al-Dura case, which are going to be discussed in this paper are examples of this echo. The Al-Dura is especially relevant since the starting point of the case occurred more than ten years ago. Finally, the importation of the Israel and Palestine is to be found in debates among the Jewish and Arab communities living abroad. Through those discussions, the two communities take up and even distort the reel elements of the conflict to fight their own battles. This is especially important in France where, as mentioned before, the two communities are well established.

Images

Like any other conflict, the conflict between Israel and Palestine displays in Western countries is subjected to images. These images could be the pictures taken by photographs or the videos taken by cameramen. As diverse and different as these two kinds of images could be, they share the important fate of carrying the conflict beyond the borders of the Occupied Territories on the other side of the world where the conflict continues under different forms and for different

purposes. Moreover, the struggle between Palestinians and Israelis is one of the most popular – journalistically speaking – conflicts of our modern days. Thanks to the hundred of journalists and individuals who are working or have worked around the dispute, the amount of images available for the Westerner to see is enormous. They have been sympathetic to the Palestinians, or on the contrary they supported the Israel government, they have carried hope or despair depending on how the media saw the evolution of the situation. They enlightened the promises of the Peace Process. They witnessed the violence and the unfairness of the situation. To summarize, images have been present during the entire conflict. They provided thanks to news media which broadcasted and displayed them to the world a snapshot of the events, and most of the time, they are the only means available to the public opinion to access the situation between Israel and the Occupied Territories. Images when they deal about conflict are more than ever powerful tools. As such they should be handled carefully.

It is important to provide good images of the Israel and Palestine conflict. Therefore, Deni Elliott in the book *Images that Injure: Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media* explained the power that lied within a picture. In fact through them the media, consciously or unconsciously, is able to influence public opinion (Lester, and Dente Ross, 2003, 12). Because of that, journalists have to explain the images. They cannot accept stereotypes and promote by the lack of time the discrimination of a people. Concerning Israel and Palestine, experts revealed that in the West there are differences in the manner in which journalists talk about Israelis or about Palestinians. For instance, Neil Kressel noticed that the US media tend to present every Palestinian action as “terrorist” while on the other hand, Israel is always pictured as defending itself (Kressel, 1987, 214). By the same token, Deni Elliott noticed that the difference between calling someone a terrorist and calling him a freedom fighter depends on “several factors including the US government agenda.” (Lester, and Dente Ross, 2003, 54) However, as important the choice of words could be, images are even more important. That is the theory advocate by the author Susan

Dente Ross. "A million words may not be able to undo the negative impact of a single bad picture." (Lester, and Dente Ross, 2003, 19) The development of Internet during the two past decades seems to reinforce her opinion. The means of communication are so efficient that only a few minutes are necessary for a image, good or bad, true or false, to reach the entire planet.

While Jack Shaheen described the Arab image in the movies listing the stereotypes and negative characteristics used to depict Arabs since the beginning of the 20th century, the images in the news media are more difficult to comprehend because they do not seem to fit into a frame. In a movie, the synopsis, and the codes of the genre make it easier to spread stereotypes or at least to see them. When it comes to non-fiction images, the specter is the range of possibilities is broader which makes the analysis of images more complicated. In December 2008, *Time Magazine* published online a series of pictures about the consequences of the "Cast Lead" operation. This destructive military campaign launched by Israel to destroy Hamas compounds in the Gaza Strip destroyed many Palestinians lives. The international community witnessed the violence of Israel and its military power. Criticized for being the one responsible for the breaking of the truce with Hamas, which lasted for several months, Israel's public image tarnished during the weeks that surrounded the events. The pictures displayed by *Time Magazine* provided a good idea of the destruction of the Gaza Strip. They portrayed children fleeing chaotic and destroyed streets. Ironically, *Time Magazine* noticed in the caption that there is nowhere to go for the Gaza Strip inhabitants; the Strip is closed environment, which asphyxiates the trapped population living within it by Israel's will. Destruction is present in every image. Huge curls of smoke blurred the scenes where Palestinians are helping each other looking for injured people lying in the ruins. Other pictures displayed families in tears either because they lost a sibling or because they are scared. Who would not be scared facing such a powerful destructive power? From his or her home, far from the violence and the destruction displayed by the images of the consequences of the Operation Cast Lead, the American viewer witnessed the military power of Israel. Very few

among the international country supported Israel during Operation Cast Lead so, for this time the Palestinians were the innocent victims of Israel's excesses. Of course, Hamas is mentioned in the Time Magazine's captions but surprisingly the price to pay to stop and destroy Hamas seemed to be too high.

Hamas is often described as a terrorist organization whose only objective is the destruction of Israel. Thus, the US writer Jonathan Schanzer, in his book *Hamas vs. Fatah*, explained how dangerous Hamas is. According to him, it is a vicious faction incapable of achieving anything but the destruction of Israel by spoiling Palestinians' goods (Schanzer, 2008, 167). Embedded in violence and rejecting a peaceful solution to the struggle with Israel, Hamas appeared to be in western eyes a movement that should be destroyed. Therefore, Israel's victory during the 2007 battle for the control of the Gaza Strip has been criticized by many journalists in France and in the United States. For instance, Dan Murphy and Joshua Mitnick described in their 2007 article how the United States supported Fatah in order to reduce Hamas' influence. However, in December 2008, even the threat of Hamas is not enough to cover Israel's mistake. As a consequence, Internet is going to save the pictures. From now, everyone who wants to them will be able to find these pictures. The death of four year old Dena Balosha and the man reaching for help while being extracted from the ruins of a destroyed building will remind Israel's Operation Cast Lead and the irrational and disproportionate measures the Israeli government took against a population who already suffered in area of the world under a harsh blockade.

By the same token, Israeli soldier Eden Abergil produced vivid reactions when she published on her personal page pictures of herself seating next to attached and blindfolded Palestinian prisoners. The title of the album where the incriminating pictures were explained that the years the young women spent in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) were the best years of her life. The suffering of the Palestinian prisoners unable to move combined with the name of the photo album created a paradox that spread all around the world. Therefore, the images shocked in

Israel but they were also displayed on European and American websites where journalists and individuals harshly criticized the IDF soldier and her comments. Although they were not initially meant to become part of the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict, Internet's tendency to make data available to everybody allowed online media to discover the case and to broadcast it worldwide. Thus, France and the United States observed a new occupation characteristic. It was a part of Israel's control they knew very few about. The French journalist Augustin Scalbert noticed that the publication of Eden Abergil's pictures led to the creation of a website where other IDF soldiers were posing next to Palestinian prisoners demonstrating that this yet unknown practice was in fact popular among Israelis soldiers for about ten years. Augustin Scalbert described the *Breaking the News* website's catch phrase in his article. "Nous suggérons au porte-parole de l'armée israélienne de ne pas insulter l'intelligence du public israélien, et de reconnaître qu'il s'agit d'un phénomène de grande ampleur, pas d'un incident isolé provoqué par un seul soldat." (Scalbert, 2010, 1) ("We suggest to the IDF spokesman to not insult Israeli public intelligence, and we suggest him to recognize that it is a widespread phenomenon and not an isolated incident caused by a single soldier.") In that case, the images were at first private pictures but thanks to Internet they became public and guaranteed to Eden Abergil a fast notoriety. However, the news impact contrary to the pictures of the Cast Lead Operation was mostly restricted to the online news media. The traditional media did not mention it maybe because its impact and its influence were not important enough to reach more people. Nevertheless, these articles and analysis are going to stay available for a long time, which also demonstrates the power of images to shape someone's perception.

Finally, the two cases that are going to be discussed in later in this paper depend on the power of images. The first example is the death of the young Palestinian boy Mohammed Al-Dura in Netzarim in September 2000 at the very beginning of the Second Intifada. The broadcasting of his death recorded by the Palestinian cameraman Talal Abou Rahme on a French

TV channel associated with the comment of the French journalist who covered the conflict for the French television, Charles Enderlin, will cause many reactions and will transform the death of Mohammed Al-Dura into a long-term debate. Jerome Bourdon explained that the importance of the case grew because the death of the young Palestinian boy has been televised. According to Jerome Bourdon, it only responds to the “passion for images,” (Bourdon, 2007, 89) which exists on television. In other words, television experts like images because they reach the audience more easily. “Si elle n’avait pas été imagée, la mort de Mohammed Al-Dura aurait été un chiffre, une ligne de plus, dans une dépêche d’agence.” (“If it had not been televised Mohammed Al-Dura’s death would have been a mere number, an additional line published in a press dispatch.”) (Bourdon, 2007, 89) Therefore, this single video proved the power of images because it caused to Talal Abou Rahme and Charles Enderlin many problems, which are not over more than ten years after the death of the boy.

The second case which is going to be discussed is the more recent Freedom Flotilla case. On May 31st, 2010, nine people belonging to nongovernmental associations were killed by Israelis soldiers in international waters while heading toward the Gaza Strip to bring medicine and goods to Gazans who suffer from Israel blockade since 2007. Among the flotilla were several journalists and people with recording equipment. They recorded the attack of Israelis soldiers. However, Israel seized the devices and finally used the material as a proof to support its theories. In fact, Israel public relation office stated that the people on the ships were terrorists who carried weapons. Once again, Israel said it just defended itself. The attack was a mere act of retaliation to protect its interests. Again, images opposed the attackers to the attacked people. They represent a proof and even manipulated by Israel public relation machine they prove to be efficient tools to control media and public opinion.

The Al-Dura Case

On September 30th 2000, a 12 year-old Palestinian boy, Mohammed al-Dura is killed in Netzarim, an Israeli settlement in the Gaza Strip. His death, occurring at the beginning of the second Intifada, immortalized by a French cameraman became a symbol of the Palestinian resistance at the hands of the Israeli occupation. Therefore, Charles Enderlin, the journalist who described the images clearly attributed the responsibility of the child's death to the Israeli soldiers. Mohammed al-Dura became a martyr. His face has been printed on flags, posters and stamps (Bourdon, 2007, 90). Jerome Bourdon explained that the death of Mohammed al-Dura could have been just another line in the long list of the victims of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. However, the worldwide broadcasting of the report had tremendous consequences. Thus, ten years later, the incident is not solved yet and the death of the little boy is still the talk of the town.

Jerome Bourdon stressed in his paper that the special features of the case are based on "the passion of images" (Bourdon. 2007, 89) but more importantly that Mohammed al-Dura's death "mobilizes people in places distant from the locus of the events" (Bourdon, 2007, 90). Therefore, people who are involved in the debate come from above all from France but also from the United States. The French journalist who gave a commentary on the report, Charles Enderlin, is especially the target of the critics. Therefore, since the broadcasting of the report on French television and then all around the world; several Jewish organizations, personalities and journalists have picked on Charles Enderlin. They reproach him for "making up facts" (Bonnet, 2010) about what really happened that day at Netzarim. Charles Enderlin's opponents can actually be divided into two groups: those believing that the Palestinians are the one who killed Mohammed al-Dura and those who believing that the whole story is completely false. The latter

think that the entire report has been staged by the Palestinian army in order to create symbols for the Intifada (Poller, 2005, 29). Mohammed al-Dura is not dead and the whole scene was just fictitious.

James Fallows explained the role of Nahum Shahaf in the development of the fake story's theory. Therefore, Shahaf spent a lot of time studying every aspect of the event. First his investigation was aimed to prove that the Israeli soldiers could not have shoot Mohammed al-Dura because of their position. To do so, he carried a detailed review of the event. Nahum Shahaf even conducted several reconstruction of what happened that afternoon at Netzarim. However, while immersing himself in the exercise, he soon became convinced that nothing happened to the boy that day at Netzarim. From his viewpoint, the objective of this false story was to construct "a child martyr" (Fallows, 2003, 55) in order to discredit the image of the Israeli army and consequently of Israel around the world. By the same token, James Fallows noticed that Amnon Lord also believes that the Palestinians and the journalists made up Mohammed al-Dura's death. Furthermore in France where the news has been analyzed by many journalists and specialists, objections to the veracity of the report are numerous. James Fallows mentioned Gerard Huber and his book *Contre-Expertise d'une Mise en Scene* (Fallows, 2003, 56). But he is not the only one. In fact, Charles Enderlin himself, the target of most of the criticisms, wrote a book about the case that has been chasing him for ten years. He thus explained that one of his main opponents is Philippe Karsenty, a French former businessman, who conducted a series of conferences in the United States about the death of Mohammed al-Dura. Since 2002, he devoted him to the case. He sued *France 2*, the French public TV channel for which Charles Enderlin is working. The trial was a long process which is still lasting today. On May 23th 2008, the French justice rejected the libel charge against Charles Enderlin and France 2 (Martin-Castelnau, 2008, 1). To this day, the journalist and his cameraman Talal Abu-Rama are still under investigation.

In addition to Philippe Karsenty, Jerome Bourdon summarized the other supporters of the conspiracy theory. In France, Denis Jeambar, the chief editor of the French newspaper *L'Express* and Daniel Leconte, a TV producer, are among the first ones who had doubts about the report. A former *Le Monde* journalist, Luc Rozensweig, is also an opponent to Charles Enderlin. The debate is especially virulent on the Internet and the pro-Israel webzine *Mena (Metullah News Agency)* created by 2002 by Stephane Juffa is deeply involved in the development of the investigation of Mohammed al-Dura's death (Bourdon, 2007, 93). Moreover, Charles Enderlin stressed, in his book *Un Enfant Est Mort*, the role of Elisabeth Levy in the case. Indeed, she also agreed with the conspiracy theory about the scene being staged by the journalists and the Palestinians in order to create a symbol for the fight against Israel. Like Nahum Shahaf, Elisabeth Levy explained that there is no blood on the video and she argued that one sees young Mohammed moving while is supposed to be dead (Enderlin, 2010, 142). All of these people called into question either the origins of the shots that killed Mohammed al-Dura or they refuse to admit that the boy has been killed. For them, reminded Charles Enderlin, the most probable theory is that Mohammed al-Dura is alive somewhere, "like Elvis Presley or Hitler" (Enderlin, 2010, 154).

However Mohammed al-Dura does not rally opinions only in France. As mentioned before, Philippe Karsenty recently toured the United States in order to demonstrate in the universities his theory about the report filmed by Talal Abu-Rama. Furthermore, the Zionist Organization of America supports Phillippe Karsenty. The Organization repeated the Nahum Shahaf arguments and also stressed that *Wall Street Journal*, *Atlantic Monthly* and *CBS News* have concluded that the report broadcasted on TV has been falsified (Enderlin, 2010, 139). Therefore, James Fallows believes that Mohammed al-Dura was killed by Palestinians. He did not however agree with the conspiracy theory. By the same token, Nidra Poller talked about two levels of reality: "the reality zone" and "the theatrical zone" (Poller, 2005, 27). In the latter,

Mohammed al-Dura is dead, victim of the scenario for the Palestinian cause; in the former nothing happened to him. Once he left “the theatrical zone” to return in “the reality zone”, young Mohammed is still alive. His father is not wounded but the Palestinians have created a martyr. According to Charles Enderlin, several conservative US websites attacked him about the report (Enderlin, 2010, 139). Finally, Esther Shapira, on German TV, broadcasted a documentary in which she concluded that the bullets one sees on the report did not kill Mohammed al-Dura in the end. Therefore, criticisms about the report are numerous and vivid. The death of the boy still mobilizes and divides ten years after the fact. Charles Enderlin is in the center of the debate as being the main target of the attacks. His opponents accused him for not being present in Netzarim that day (Poller, 2005, 29). Moreover, Pierre-Andre Taguieff saw beyond the report propaganda against the Jewish community (Bonnet, 2010, 1). Charles Enderlin’s cameraman, Talal Abu-Rama is also accused but for ten years Charles Enderlin always stood up for him. In a recent interview, the journalist repeated again that Talal Abu-Rama is trustworthy.

Charles Enderlin found some support. In 2009, *Le Nouvel Observateur* published an online petition for people to express their support to Enderlin. The list of supporters is updated every Friday and is available on the website of the newspaper. Many journalists have signed it. *Le Nouvel Observateur* regrets that Charles Enderlin’s integrity is questioned. Moreover, the online newspaper *Mediapart* reminded the inconsistencies of the conspiracy theory’s partisans. Francois Bonnet summarized the unanswered questions that Philippe Karsenty, Nahum Shahaf, and others failed or never dared to answer. For instance, the list took into consideration the entire population that needed to be in the confidence to stage such a death. It included the medical staff in Gaza but also in Jordan where the father of the child has been transferred. In fact the theory of the false death even included an attempt to manipulate the King of Jordan because he visited Mohammed’s father Jamal al-Dura in hospital (Bonnet, 2010, 4). Guillaume Weill-Raynal also tackled in Marianne the arguments defended by Philippe Karsenty who is in fact the main target of the other side of

the case. He refuted step-by-step the staged scene and was even ironic about Karsenty's mentality. Weill-Raynal's tone is bitter and he regrets that the opposite camp does not listen to Enderlin's arguments (Weill-Raynal, 2008, 2). Furthermore, Charles Enderlin noticed in his book Paul Moreira's viewpoint. The journalist criticized the fact that some people argued about the case while talking about the weird behavior and should have been done in Netzarim that day. Moreira reminded how Netzarim was. He also explained that only those who went to that corner could understand the reality and the dangerousness of Netzarim (Enderlin, 2010, 153). On his own blog and in the media Charles Enderlin defended his cause and year after year, he affirmed and supported his cameraman and the truthfulness of their report. He also reminded that most of all beyond the conflict, the trials and the conspiracy one should not forget that a child died at that corner. That should be the most important fact.

Finally, Jerome Bourdon explained that what happens in Gaza is always very fast. Things occur quickly. Journalists have to respond to that and sometimes they make mistakes or inconsistencies by doing so (Bourdon, 2007, 96). It is easy to criticize attitudes a posteriori without being on the field. By the same token Jean-Paul Mari, a *Nouvel Observateur* journalist, not long after the event, went to Netzarim. He described it as a frightening place. He also wrote an interesting article about what happened that day. He stressed the life of the al-Dura and provided a background for the family. He also described the aftermath of the catastrophe for the family (Mari, 2000, 3). By doing so, the journalist humanized the death of Mohammed al-Dura. Most of the time in the media, the death of Palestinians are just numbers. The context of their deaths is always missing contrary to the Israelis. Although the funeral of Jewish people is often broadcasted, Palestinians are most of time pictured as full of anger without further explanation. Yet, this time Mari provided a painting of the Palestinian population that suffers from the situation and counts its deceased at the end of the day because unarmed teenagers are confronting

trained Israelis soldiers (Mari, 2000, 3). What happened to Mohammed al-Dura on September 30th 2000 is not an insolate event.

It is very interesting that such a report still manages to mobilize people after one decade. It also proves that Israel's defenders are willing to fight long-term battles to support their ideas. Therefore, it demonstrates how important is the control of images, and to a certain extent how important the media is for Israel. The Al-Dura case explained why such passion and rage have been display to examine the death of the child. Thus, the French writer Pierre-Andre Taguieff stressed in his book *La Nouvelle Propagande Antijuive: Du Symbole Al-Dura aux Rumeurs de Gaza*, published in 2009, that the death of Mohammed Al-Dura (for which he does not give much credence) has been used to justify "terrorist attacks" (Taguieff, 2010, 2) against Israel. According to him, Israel and, by extension, the entire Jewish community, are the victims of a conspiracy led by "the Arab community and its allies" (Taguieff, 2010, 37). This conspiracy is aimed to eradicate the Jewish community pictured as evil Zionists. The death of Mohammed Al-Dura in Netzarim on September, 30th is only an example among many others. Pierre-Andre Taguieff deplored that Mohammed Al-Dura became "famous" (in the sense that his name spread worldwide after the events and that the boy has boy been forgotten ten years after his death) whereas the death of a Israeli boy nine years after the Netzarim events did not meet the same coverage around the world (Taguieff, 2010, 41). Taguieff tried to denounce a fallacious conspiracy in which Palestinians would always show themselves in the good light. However, there is not a lot of Mohammed Al-Dura. Moreover, when talking about the conflict defenders of Israel and Charles Enderlin's opponent seem to forget that a child is dead. That seemed to be Charles Enderlin's main point in his book *Un Enfant Est Mort*, published in 2010.

However, Pierre-Andre Taguieff stressed that the death of Mohammed Al-Dura had been staged by Israel's opponents. Furthermore, he explained that the whole case is part of the conspiracy against the Jewish community what he called the "new anti-Jewish propaganda"

(Taguieff, 2010, 281). Indeed, Taguieff believed that the use of the Mohammed Al-Dura death is an example among many others which justify that the Muslim community around the world set up a plan to destroy Israel by any means available and especially through the manipulation of evidences (Taguieff, 2010, 292). He tried to demonstrate through which horrible processes Israel's opponents manipulated public opinion to build their case. However, in his book, Pierre-Andre Taguieff is doing the same thing he reproached the conspirators to do. Thus, in the beginning of his essay, the French writer explained the characteristics of conspiracies against the Jewish community. Therefore, the propagandists always divided the world in two parts: "Us" and "Them" as Edward Said noticed it in his book *Covering Islam*. Even though Taguieff believed that "them" applied to Jews instead of Arabs. According to Taguieff the entities (especially the Islamist groups) that want to destroy Israel and the entire Jewish community are using stereotypes and wrong ideas to spread their theories worldwide (Taguieff, 2010, 13). But by avoiding making distinctions and by avoiding detailing the conspirators, Taguieff advocated the same mistakes. Thus, he did not blame Charles Enderlin for his comment but on the other hand he believed that the French journalist has been misled by his camera reporter who is Palestinian which, according to the author, means that he is part of the conspiracy (Taguieff, 2010, 299). Therefore, there is no nuance in the way Pierre-Andre Taguieff described the tactics and plans of the enemies of Israel whereas the State of Israel is never responsible for what is happening in the Occupied Territories. Thus, it appeared that the Al-Dura case outraged far beyond the borders of the media world. It is also used as an evidence of a worldwide conspiracy against the Jewish community. But more than its assumed staging, the death of Mohammed Al-Dura is questioned because it showed the power of images in a time of conflict. For Israel controlling the meaning of this image is to control its own image in the world.

Finally, Mohammed al-Dura's case is far from being solved. In France, the trial is still an on-going process since Charles Enderlin contests the Justice's decision. The proponents of the conspiracy theory and of Mohammed al-Dura's false death are not ready to abandon their quest for there is too much symbolism at stake. Mohammed al-Dura is a martyr for the Palestinians and for some Zionists; he thus represents something they want to hide at any price. Indeed, to win the international support Israel cannot afford to be pictured as a violent country killing unarmed children. This does not fit with the images Zionists are customary to broadcast. So as long as Mohammed al-Dura's death will remain a problem for Israel public image, opponents of Charles Enderlin's report will be on stage. Hence, Guillaume Weill-Raynal regrets that Zionists just want to see the event at Netzarim "the way they want it to be instead of the way it is" (Weill-Raynal, 2008, 2). To conclude, Jerome Bourdon condemned the fact the debate about the death of Mohammed al-Dura "introduces faults into the journalistic universe" (Bourdon, 2007, 94). It weakens the work of the journalists by attacking their integrity and preventing the audience from having a clear conclusion. The Internet had an important in the development of the case and Jerome Bourdon stressed its influence on the relationships between countries. What is obvious is that the death of Mohammed al-Dura is just the background for a battle that is fought outside the Gaza strip, outside Israel. Mohammed al-Dura is become an Affair whose consequences are far greater than the mourning of a Palestinian family.

The Freedom Flotilla Case

On May 31st 2010, an international flotilla was about to dock in the Gaza Strip in order to bring to the population about 10,000 tons of goods. Indeed, the flotilla chartered by several

humanitarian organizations to fight the Israeli blockage of the Gaza Strip. Therefore, since the 2007 election, the Islamic organization Hamas ruled the Gaza Strip. Because of this victory, Israel decided to blockage the region to prevent the organization from getting weapons. In fact, according to Ilan Pappé, who published an article about the flotilla attack in the book *Midnight on the Mavi Marmara: the Attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and How It Changed the Course of the Israel/Palestine Conflict*, Hamas will never accept Israel's decisions. It is obvious that the organization is always going question the Israeli government especially since the faction won the election, which guarantees it legitimacy. That is why in order to destroy Hamas' power and to turn the Gaza Strip population against the organization; Israel decided a harsh blockage of the region. Ilan Pappé explained that the closure of the Gaza Strip "is supposed to lead the Gazans to replace the current Palestinian government with one which would accept Israel's dictate – or at least would be part of the more dormant Palestinian Authority in the West Bank." (Bayoumi, 2010, 166)

Thus, Israel imposed on the population of Gaza a list of forbidden goods, which instead of achieving the intended objectives turned Gazans daily lives into a nightmare. Noam Chomsky noticed the alarming situation of the Gazans in the book *Midnight on the Mavi Marmara : the Attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and How It Changed the Course of the Israel/Palestine Conflict*. "The siege is savage, designed to keep the caged animals barely alive so as to fend off international protest, but hardly more than that." (Bayoumi, 2010, 93) In the same book, the website gisha.org (the legal center for freedom of movement) published a list of the goods banned from Gaza. Among the prohibited items are for example fresh meat, cement, rope for fishing, size A4 paper, and musical instruments (Bayoumi, 2010, 117). Israel authorized some goods after having banned them for three years. For example since June 22 2010, chocolate is permitted to enter Gaza so are towels and mattresses (Bayoumi, 2010, 117). By the same token, fruits preserves and biscuits are permitted since June 9, 2010 (Bayoumi, 2010, 116). It is difficult to

imagine why some goods are not allowed to enter the Gaza Strip when other goods are allowed.

How can an A4 paper be used by Hamas to threaten Israel? During the French talk show *Ce Soir Ou Jamais* broadcasted on June 3rd 2010, Olivier Py who traveled in the Gaza Strip did not understand why some products are products of first necessity while others products are not.

“Sweet peas are products of first necessity but preserves fruits are not.” (Bayoumi, 2010)

According to him, the situation in the Gaza Strip under the occupation of Israel is not only absurd considering the list of permitted items and the list of prohibited items but also it is unbearable for the population. And for good reason, it is hard to understand how the population of the Gaza Strip can have a normal life when they are trapped into their own territory. Thus, the blockade prevents them from leaving even for work.

That is why many humanitarian organizations decided to force the blockage to carry to the Gaza population some staple products. The 2010 flotilla was not the first one attempt to deliver necessity products to the Gaza Strip. In fact, Ken O’Keefe explained he joined the Free Gaza Movement in 2007. He further noticed that on August 23th, 2008, the Free Gaza Movement tried for the first in forty-one years to bring products to Gazans (Bayoumi, 2010, 36). The flotilla was composed of people from different countries who share a common desire to end the Gaza blockade through non-violent means. Iara Lee explained that the flotilla was not a threat to Israel government. She did not understand why the situation deteriorated. “I joined the flotilla effort nonetheless because I believed that resolutely nonviolent actions which call attention to the blockade are vital in educating the public about what is taking place. Simply put, there is no decent justification for preventing shipments of humanitarian aid from reaching a people in crisis.” (Bayoumi, 2010, 29) Several members of the boats made the same statement about the necessity to do something to end the blockade. They also emphasized the fact that the participants were regular citizens and, as a consequence, they carried no weapons. Ken O’Keefe explained how it is to be part of the Freedom Flotilla. “So participating in the Freedom Flotilla is like a

family reunion to me. It is my long lost family whose conscience is their guide, who have shed the fear, who act with humanity.” (Bayoumi, 2010, 36). Thus, the participants’ intentions were just to help Gazans.

However, the ships met some difficulties before even leaving for Gaza. After several problems and delays, the Freedom Flotilla was stopped in the middle of international waters. Finally, the ships were attacked by the Israeli army in the middle of the night at about 4 am. The Israel Army approached the boat *Mavi Marmara* and commandos went on it. Many participants described the attack and the chaos that surrounded Israel intervention. Iara Lee stressed the behavior of the IDF soldiers on the ship. “I had expected soldiers to shoot in the air or aim at people’s legs, but instead I saw the bodies of people who appeared to have been shot multiple times in the head or chest.” (Bayoumi, 2010, 29) During the assault, the humanitarians fought back with makeshift weapons. Even though many of them were non-violent advocates they believed they have to defend themselves since Israel was attacking them in international waters. At the end of the attack nine persons have been killed and several others have been injured. Two Israeli soldiers were also injured by the members of the Freedom Flotilla. However, it was not the end of the story for the humanitarians. Israel took them in Israel for a few days before sending them back to Turkey. After the attack the participants could not still understand Israel’s attitude. International waters where the ships stopped did not prevent Israel from attacking. It decided to attack to a civil flotilla instead of using diplomatic and non-violent means to stop the humanitarian mission. The Israeli government proved its disdain for humanitarian aid.

The international community was indignant about what happened but at the same time, as rumors about pro-Palestine activists involved in the fight spread, it remains divided about Israel responsibilities. In the United States and in France, Free Gaza flotilla has been debated in the media. And the event asked questions about international laws. However, beside the UN recommendation for an independent investigation committee – which is in fact not considered by

international community as being independent – no measures have been taken against Israel. Noam Chomsky regretted European and American reactions in the collective book *Midnight on the Mavi Marmara : the Attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and How It Changed the Course of the Israel/Palestine Conflict*. According to him, the situation remains the same because Israel benefits from a special treatment. The writer stressed the opinion of the editors of the Guardian about the Freedom Flotilla event. “If an armed group of Somali pirates had yesterday boarded six vessels on the high seas, killing at least ten passengers and injuring many more, a NATO task force would today be heading for the Somali coast.” (Bayoumi, 2010, 91) Therefore, the Freedom Flotilla case illustrated the double standard Israel is benefiting. By refusing to take sanctions against Israel and by refusing to see the attack of the *Mavi Marmara* as piracy, the international community did help neither the Gazans nor the Peace Process. Juan Gonzalez on the website *Democracynow.org* regretted that the international community did not ask for the event to be reconstructed despite the numerous witnesses who will be able to talk about what happened. In an article called *Gaza Flotilla Raid and Its Aftermath*, Bulent Aliriza and Stephen Flanagan explained the consequences of the attack would damage the Turkish and Israeli relations especially since the United States was not ready to punish Israel. The Freedom Flotilla was indeed related to Turkey. This is really harmful since Turkey has been a support to Israel politics for a long time. In a region dominated by anger toward Israel’s immunity, Turkey was one of the few country, which displayed positive views for Jewish State.

Demonstrations of sympathy for the Gazans and the humanitarians occurred around the world. Camille Garcia from the French online newspaper *Mediapart* summarized these reactions in her article. However, assistances and encouragements came from individuals but not from governments. Thus, Ilan Pappé explained that “as long as the international community is complacent, the Arab world impotent, and Gaza contained, Israel can still have a thriving economy and an electorate that regards the dominance of the army in its life, the continued

conflict, and the oppression of the Palestinians as the exclusive past, present, and future reality of life in Israel.” (Bayoumi, 2010, 167) The news media reported the raid. They discussed the consequences on Israel’s public image, condemned the attack in international waters, the treatments of the prisoners before they were released and, of course, the loss of nine people. However, even though the Freedom Flotilla was in the first place aimed at helping Gazans and even though they were supposed to get the goods the vessels carried for them, the international attention soon focused on Israel. Thus, the Freedom Flotilla called up considerations from the entire world but it was Israel’s attitude they condemned. Of course, Israel’s general behavior was questioned which included the harsh living conditions it imposed upon the Gaza Strip. Nevertheless, Palestine and Palestinians remained in the background.

As Israel persisted to deny any responsibility in the attack, news media enlightened the paradoxes stated by the Jewish State. Camille Garcia noticed that not only Israel refused to be responsible for the attack on the *Mavi Marmara* but also did the government blame the flotilla for starting the struggle. She explained that Israel was sure that on board the *Mavi Marmara* were terrorists (Garcia, 2010, 2) it was the reason why the army landed on the ship. Moreover, Amy Goodman in the DemocracyNow’s article explained that Israel tried to blame the humanitarian organization. She further noticed that this statement was a real surprise for them because they could not believe Israel would deny the responsibility facing so many witnesses. By the same token, Pierre Puchot, in his article *Free Gaza, Une Operation Humanitaire Pour Briser le Blocus Israelien* (“Free Gaza, a Humanitarian Operation to Break the Israeli Blockade”) published in the online newspaper *Mediapart*, noticed that when dealing the protection of Israel’s interests one should be ready to expect anything. Julien Rivoire in the same article stated that “Plus c’est gros, plus ça passe.” (“The bigger the lie is the better”) (Puchot, 2010 a., 1) In the book telling the Freedom Flotilla events, Stephen M. Walt designed a defense guide, which illustrate Israel’s attitude. Using humor and irony, the professor of international affairs pointed Israel’s disastrous

attitude and sadly reminded to the readers the pragmatism underlying the Israeli army. In fact, when one reads the stories of the Freedom Flotilla participants, when one becomes more familiar with the events, when one sees Israel's politics in the settlement of this crisis, it is impossible to believe that Israel made an honorable mistake. The facts were obviously against Israel public relations' statement. More importantly, it is also impossible to believe that Israel would think for one second that its denying behavior and its systematic negation of its responsibility in the killing of eight Turkish citizens and one Turkish-American citizen would be accepted by the international community. This demonstrated that Israel did not even care of being criticized. Its status in the Middle East prevents Israel from caring about its public image.

Israel's communication skills are so developed that they protect it from international hostility. The United States' protection is also a powerful immunity tool. Even the balance between forces is at this point biased, it is difficult to see how Palestinians can still exist for the international community especially since they are living in the middle of Israel's public diplomacy which tends to act like a tornado destroying everything that stand on its way. To that extent, the Turkey-Israel relations seemed to be one more obsolete positive relation, which Israel can weaken in no time. The most important thing is for Israel to be the victim no matter the circumstances. Being victimized, even if it's entirely on its own, will allow Israel to continue its politics. Thus, it benefits from the fact that no powerful western country is in its position; that is to say surrounded by supposedly aggressive, unstable countries whose only desire is to destroy Israel for religious reasons, for their own economic interests while advocating revenge for Palestine's defeat. As a consequence, no country in the world – that is to say no Western country since Israel does not care much about what Arab countries for instance think about him – is able to understand what Israel is going through. And sometimes it works. For instance, Arun Gupta explained to what extent Israel is a victim. "Only Israel has 'legitimate security needs', as Hillary Clinton explains, whereas Palestinians' 'legitimate needs' are limited to "sustained humanitarian

assistance and regular access to reconstruction materials'. Because Palestinians 'are not sure what democracy means', their needs do not include an end to the siege, basic human rights, or a viable state." (Bayoumi, 2010, 236-237). Thus, in the end, Palestinians are those who are suffering while Israel, despite its disastrous public image, managed to defy international laws and ethics with almost no consequences.

Importation of the conflict in France

Because of the importance of both the Jewish community and the Arab community in France, the question of knowing if there is an importation of the Israel and Palestine conflict has been asked several times. Indeed, critics and remarks about the transformation or, on the contrary, the lack in progression of the dispute between Israel and Palestine has been vivid since the burst of the first Intifada in 1987. Thus, the Arab community, and with it the entire French population discovered the Palestinian suffering. Put down by Israel's harsh decisions, the Palestinians gained international recognition in the pursuing of the improvement of their living conditions. Jerome Bourdon explained how Palestinians children and their stones broadcasted everyday on television became the symbols of the First Intifada. During the civil unrest in 2005, the awkwardness of the young population from poor suburbs have been seen as a French equivalent – in the spirit of the unrest of course, obviously the situation in France is nothing compared to what Palestinians have to suffer in their own country – to the Palestinian struggle. Thanks to the news media and the images of the conflict they brought, the issues raised by the struggle echoed in the desire of the French youth who were unsure about its status in the society. Thus, Esther Benbassa explained that the question of Palestine crossed the borders to reach people who are attracted by the self-

determination right they found in the rising of Palestinians. “Cette cause n’est plus seulement celle des Palestiniens, qui revendiquent le droit à un Etat et à une terre, mais aussi celle des discriminés, des jeunes de banlieue, des malmenés de la société et de ses victimes, ainsi que celles des nostalgiques des causes à defender.” (“This fight does not belong only to the Palestinians who claim the right to have a state and a land, anymore; it is also the fight of the rejected people, of the youth from the suburbs, of the victims and the battered people of the society, and also the fight of people who like to stand up for causes”) (Benbassa, 2010, 7) By the same token, Michele Sibony explained social injustices and economic disillusion felt by the youth led to mix up their anger feelings with Palestine struggle and led them to assimilate it as part of the battle for recognition (Sibony, 2005, 161). As the social ladder did not work for these young people, they merge their own resentments those of the Palestinians. Thus, they become another kind of oppressed spiritually linked however to the Palestinian people because they believe they share the same fate and the inequities. Their cause is just but they are prevented from succeeding by more powerful and negative entities.

By the same token, Israel benefits from firm support in France. However, experts are divided about the role of the Israel and Palestine conflict for the Jews in France. Denis Sieffert stressed that it is difficult for the French Jewish community not being affected by what is happening between Israel and Palestine. But according to him, many French Jews are also touched by the question of Palestine (Sieffert, 2005, 166). On the other hand, others regretted the increasing number of anti-Semitism in France especially since the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000. This tendency is sometimes considered as the importation of the conflict in France. Thus, the former Minister Marie-George Buffet denounced the accumulation of anti-Semitism offenses. According to her, it was due most to neo-Nazi movements even though scorned young people who do not belong to extremist movements avenged their despise of the society (Buffet, 2005, 20). However; according to Alain Finkielkraut the entire French society is

responsible for these acts. In fact, he believed that in order not to upset the Arab community in France, the society became too severe toward Israel. “Cela montre bien que l’on est entré dans une phase de ‘délégitimation’ de l’Etat d’Israel qui met d’ailleurs l’opinion progressiste en porte-à-faux avec la plus grande partie de la gauche israélienne.” (“It demonstrates that France enters a ‘delegitimization’ of Israel who put progressists and the majority of the Israeli left-wing on the spot.”) (Finkielkraut, 2005, 88) He further explained that Palestine – and its scholars – should be blamed for what is happening. According to Israel tried everything to improve the situation (Finkielkraut, 2005, 89). If the Peace Process failed, Palestinians should be responsible for it. So Israel, in France, should not be jeopardized for something it did not do.

Furthermore, in France the Jewish community is really paid attention to racists and anti-Semitic acts. They are often explained as being of repercussion of the events in Israel. For instance, Antonin Sabot noticed the 2009 statement from the “Service de protection de la communauté juive” about the increase in racist and anti-Semitic offences in France. By the same token the author of the article quoted Michal Forst, from the Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l’Homme (which can be translated into National Consultative Council for Human Rights), who talk about the link between racist offences and the events in the Middle East (Sabot, 2009, 10). Under the CRIF watch, the most powerful Jewish association in France, experts and scholars sounded the alarm. They are very concerned by the situation and asked the French government to condemn these acts and to be stricter toward the offenders. However, what lies beneath the Jewish associations recommendations is more difficult to understand as it seems in the first place. Vincent Greisser in his article *Les Institutions Juives Face au Spectre de l’Islamisation* de la Cause Palestinienne en France stressed the fears of some important actors of the Jewish community. In fact the French Jewish community worried about the Islamization of the Palestinian cause in France. During the CRIF annual dinner, its president Richard Prasquier explained in his speech that the demonstrations for the Palestinians are in fact an excuse for

Islamists to support Hamas and to violently criticize Israel (Benbassa, 2010, 224). The writer further explained the enemy is close and its status had evolved during the years. “Si les premiers activistes politiques issus de l’immigration maghrébine portaient le keffieh palestinien et en appelaient à la solidarité avec le “peuple palestinien”, il le faisaient rarement au nom de leur appartenance musulmane mais davantage au nom d’une arabité symbolique, voire du tiers-mondisme ambiant. Or, à partir de la fin des années 1990 et le début des années 2000, le soutien à la Palestine se manifeste de plus en plus dans un lexique religieux et développe l’idée d’une solidarité islamique avec les “frères palestiniens.” (“If the first political activists from the Maghrebi immigration wore the Palestinian *kaffiyeh*, they seldom wore it on behalf of their Muslim affiliation instead they rather wore the *kaffiyeh* on behalf of a symbolic Arabism not to say on behalf of the widespread willing to be part of the Third World.”) (Benbassa, 2010, 228) Thus, the idea of a Palestinian people has been replaced by the idea of brotherhood. It seems that religion, and consequently rebellion against western values, is what unites Palestinians and French Muslims. However, Vincent Greisser does not believe that such a tendency should be perceived as a radicalization of the claims in France. Therefore, the author stressed that turning to more religious messages to address the Palestinian issue did not mean an increase in attacks against Jews or Jewish symbols (Benbassa, 2010, 229). These offences are no related to the development of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. By the same token, *Le Monde*’s Antonin Sabot upheld there is no importation of the Israel and Palestine conflict in France. In his article *Y a-t-il une Importation du Conflit Israélo-Palestinien en France?* published in January 2009, based on the report of the Institut Français des Relations Internationales’ researcher Marc Hecker, he explained violent acts are not committed by people who claim to be representative of the Palestinian cause. They are just offenders who want to disturb the society but they are not involved in the conflict whatsoever. Antonin Sabot summarized marc Hecker’s findings when he stressed that the situation has changed since the 1970s (Sabot, 2009, 1). At that time, the importation of the conflict in France was done through bombings by military organized. Thus, it

appears that in order to talk accurately about a repercussion of the Palestine and Israel conflict in France, one should take into account offences committed by organized groups not just isolated hatred acts committed by people which are not concerned by foreign politics.

However, the debate is vivid and largely debated on television and in articles. As it appears from the reading of the opinions and fears expressed by Jewish organizations or by antagonists whether or not people can talk about an importation of the conflict is not clear. Even though one should consider this question from a rational and pragmatic viewpoint by analyzing who are responsible for the racist and anti-Semitic acts, it is very difficult to get unemotional statements about these issues since both the Arab community and its Arab counterpart have consider themselves close to the Palestinians for the former and to the Israelis for the latter. But they are not the only ones. Vincent Greisser explained that the radicalization of the opinions about the conflict in the French Muslim communities is also feared by what he called “traditional campaigners” (Benbassa, 2009, 229) in the demonstrations. Therefore, the importation of the conflict though the Islamization of the population is a widespread fear among the French society. The thesis about a increase in the importance of Islam for the young French Muslims is a on-going debate. Vincent Greisser summarized this situation in his article by noticing the always more important concerns about a violent but mostly imaginary Islam seizing power in France. “En definitive, la peur de l’islam imaginaire est autant présente chez les propalestiniens que chez les pro-israéliens, sans parler des acteurs neutres qui, bien qu’ils n’aient pas de position tranchée sur la question israélo-palestinienne, sont tout de meme effrayés par l’émergence d’une ‘rue musulmane’ dans les grandes villes françaises (Paris, Marseille, Lille ou Lyon) et tendent à interpreter les manifestations propalestiniennes comme des mobilisations exclusivement musulmanes.” (“Eventually, the fear of an imaginary Islam is a much present in pro-Palestinian circles as in pro-Israeli circles, not to mention the neutral participants who, although they do not have a clear-cut opinion about the conflict, feared the emergence of a “Muslim street” in some

big French cities (Paris, Marseille, Lille or Lyon) and tend to interpret pro-Palestinian demonstrations as exclusively Muslim mobilizations.”) (Benbassa, 2009, 230) The issue overcomes the two communities at stake and that is why the debate over the potential importation of the conflict is possible.

Scholars, journalists and experts, as well as supporters of both sides, tried to understand how society assimilated and digested the conflict. Nevertheless, Michele Sibony explained that the look at Arabs and Muslims, sometimes displayed by the news media, tended to globalize the communities, which in consequence led to communitarianism because the populations concerned by these generalizations did not recognize themselves in the picture (Sibony, 2005, 160). Actually, once again the power of the media is determinant for the issue of the importation of the conflict. Thus, it appeared that the fear of the importation of the conflict, which is in fact linked to a apprehension in the rising importance of Islam in France, only deals with one community on the two involved in the conflict. The influence of the Jewish community in France is more important than the impact of the Arab community. Thus the power of its speeches is far more developed than the one of the Arab community, which in comparison appeared to be much less organized. It is not surprising that, for instance, the Union de Organisations Islamiques de France (UOIF) charged the CRIF in its 2009 statement, which directly followed the Richard Prasquier’s speech during the CRIF annual dinner. According to UOIF, the Israeli government is responsible for taking to Israel and Palestine conflict out of its borders. Through the CRIF it tried to increase the unrest among the French society by emphasizing anti-Semitic offences and focusing of the wrong issues.

Furthermore, Vincent Greisser explained that the Islamization of the conflict has been emphasized by the news media (Benbassa, 2009, 237). Moreover, the Jewish community benefits from a better access to the news media. Its attitude toward the news media seemed to be in contradiction to the statement that the media coverage of the conflict is favorable to Israel

because experts and authors always stressed the bad image of Israel in the media. For instance, Alain Finkielkraut told about the criticism of Israel in television. He accused Alain Minc or the French-German TV channel Arte to broadcast pro-Palestinian propaganda (Finkielkraut, 2005, 91). By the same token, the former Israel's ambassador to France, Nissim Zivli, explained that the debate about the importation of the Israel and Palestine conflict is to be found in the media (Zvili, 2005, 47). However, talking about the conflict in the media raised question about neither what can be said nor what cannot be said about Israel's policies. In fact, many writers noticed that criticizing Israel in the media will imply strong criticisms from Israel's supporters in France. Thus, Pascal Boniface explained that there are risks for people who criticized Israel that do not exist for those who do not express negative opinion about it (Finkielkraut, 2005, 92). By the same token, the Al-Dura case as mentioned above is an example of this tendency. Because the death of Mohammed Al-Dura has been broadcasted worldwide and because of Charles Enderlin's negative comments about Israel being responsible for the death of the boy, the journalist has been obsessed by acerbic and long-scale critics especially from the Israel's supporters in France.

Finally, it is obvious that the Israel and Palestine conflict has been important for the French society considering its background and the size of the Arab community and the Jewish community living in that country. But the control of the Jewish community over the news media, as well its tendency to criticize vividly any negative coverage of the events and its tendency to emphasize the threat of Islam as being the most important support to the pro-Palestinian mobilizations, makes it difficult to assume there is an importation of the conflict in France. Talking about the conflict could also be considered as importing the conflict. Thus, it is necessary to carefully analyze the acts supposedly related to the Israel and Palestine struggle to see if a relation can be found. However, the only certain thing about the debate over the conflict is that the huge amount of documentation available to researchers makes it a major influential issue in the field of research as stated by Philippe Bourmaud in 2009.

Conclusion

The Israel and Palestine conflict transcends the borders of the Occupied Territories to mobilize people abroad. Thanks to the wide news coverage of the event, every citizen in the West is a potential target to this news. This is why is necessary to make sure that the coverage is fair and that it recognizes the rights of both sides without decreasing the responsibilities of Israel by, for instance, renouncing to provide enough context to improve the public's understanding of the conflict. It appears thus that the media is another place for battle, which seems to be as important as the situation on the ground. In fact, winning the international community's approval and recognition is a way to win the general conflict. Israel is one step ahead in this battle and benefits from its international network to spread images and information. However, Palestinians also have their way to communicate with the rest of the world. The Al-Dura case and the events about the Freedom Flotilla's attack stressed that people living outside the borders of the conflict got involved. Thus, it is interesting to notice that a conflict within such a small territory manages to unite people far from its borders.

It is also important to see how media became such a powerful tool in the conflict. Because they reach a lot of people in the West, which is the main target of the communication campaign of the Israel and Palestine conflict, it is necessary to study their impact on the hearts and minds of the public. Understanding how the conflict works will increase the chances for people to understand how means of communication increase the chances of manipulation. The Palestinians who mainly lay behind the Israelis could find their own way to play the game and develop their own public communication. Until now Israel's public diplomacy has been the best

but the situation may change if the Palestinian leaders learn how to use the media to spread their messages.

Finally, studying the coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict in the western media refers to the recent events what occurred in the Middle East during the past few months. The West, ordinary very critical toward Middle Eastern politics, for the reasons mentioned in the previous pages by Edward Said for instance, saw the uprising of one part of the Middle East. Asking for changes, people from Tunisia or Egypt, to name a few, challenged their governments and established orders. This shows that the West tended to underestimate the capacity of the Middle East to enter the modernity. By the same token, the French sociologist Emmanuel Todd explained in an interview published by the French website *arretsurimages.net* the reasons of such riots. He also explained that the development of Tunisia and Egypt in the past few decades made the revolutions predictable. He further stressed that nothing is fixed in the Middle East. Change may occur any time.

Of course, the situation in the Occupied Territories is not even close to the situation in Tunisia and in Egypt. For that matter, the winds of the revolution seem to have missed Palestine for now. But with the battle for images and recognition, it is not impossible that the situation may evolve one day. Students are more and more aware of the situation. By their actions and their opinions, they can challenge the media and improve the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict.

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fS42kahCrJI>

APPENDICES

United States survey questions

The Israel and Palestine conflict and the US media

Thank you for filling in my survey. It won't take you more than ten minutes.

* Required

What sources do you use the most often to be up to date with the current events? *

- General-interest national press
- TV
- The Internet
- Radio
- General-interest local press
- Other:

According to the sources you use, what do you think about the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict? *

	Low	Average	Good	Very good
Frequency of reports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Commentary objectivity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of explanations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information provided about the context of the events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Development of the topics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you think the media coverage of the conflict is balanced between the two communities and provides an objective picture of the events? *

- Yes
- No, there is a pro-Israel bias in the media
- No, there is a pro-Palestinian bias in the media
- No opinion

Do you think the way media covered the conflict changed over time? *

- No
- Yes
- No opinion

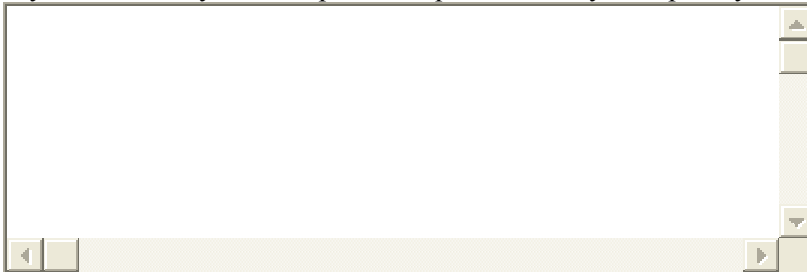
Do you think there is an importation of the Israel and Palestine conflict in the US society? *

- Yes
- No
- No opinion

Do you think the media coverage of the conflict in the United States is different from the media coverage of the same conflict in France? *

- Yes
- No
- No opinion

If you answered yes to the previous question, can you explain your opinion?



You are *

- Male
- Female

You are *

- Undergraduate student
- Graduate student

What is your major? *

Which state/country are you from? *

France survey questions

Le conflit israélo-palestinien et les medias français

Merci de remplir ce questionnaire : ça ne vous prendra pas plus de 10 minutes.

* Required

Quelles sources utilisez-vous le plus souvent pour vous informer sur l'actualité? *

- Presse nationale
- Presse locale ou regionale
- Télévision
- Internet
- Stations de radio
- Other:

D'après les sources que vous utilisez, que pensez-vous de la couverture médiatique du conflit israélo-palestinien ? *

	Mauvais	Moyen	Bon	Excellent
Fréquence des reportages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Objectivité des commentaires des journalistes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Qualité des explications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contextualisation des évènements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Approfondissement des sujets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Toujours d'après vos supports personnels, pensez-vous que la couverture médiatique actuelle du conflit israélo-palestinien est équilibrée et objective entre les deux communautés ? *

- Oui
- Non, elle privilegie le cote israelien
- Non, elle privilegie le cote palestinien
- Ne se prononce pas

A votre avis la façon de couvrir le conflit a-t-elle évolué avec le temps ? *

- Non
- Oui
- Ne se prononce pas

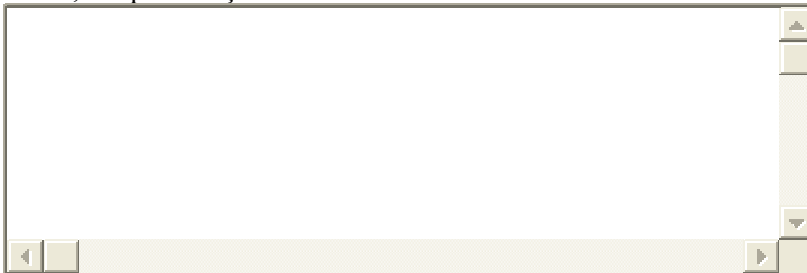
Pensez-vous que le conflit israélo-palestinien a des repercussions sur la société française ? *

- Oui
- Non
- Ne se prononce pas

Pensez-vous que la couverture du conflit en France est différente de celle que l'on peut trouver aux Etats-Unis sur le même thème ? *

- Oui
- Non
- Ne se prononce pas

Si oui, de quelle façon ?



Vous êtes *

- Un homme
- Une femme

Quel diplôme préparez-vous ? *

- Baccalaureat
- Licence
- Master
- Doctorat

- BTS
- Classe préparatoire
- Autre

Quel est votre domaine d'études ? *

Quel est votre département d'origine ? *

IRB letter

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Thursday, April 14, 2011
IRB Application No GU115
Proposal Title: The Media Coverage of the Israel and Palestine Conflict in the United States and in France

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 4/13/2012

Principal Investigator(s):

Julie Schweitzer	Michael Bracy
25 N. Univ. Place	161 Murray
Stillwater, OK 74078	Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

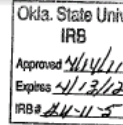
As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,


Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board



**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A ONLINE RESEARCH STUDY
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY**

PROJECT TITLE: The media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict in the United States and in France

INVESTIGATOR: Julie Schweitzer, Master of International Studies.

PURPOSE:

This online study, which is research conducted for a student honor thesis, is being conducted through Oklahoma State University. The purpose of this study is to analyze how students perceive the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict in the United States but also in France.

PROCEDURES:

The project will involve completion of one online survey. The survey will ask about your perceptions of the news coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict in the US media regarding the objectivity of the journalists comments or the evolution of the coverage through time. You will also have to evaluate the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict in France. The survey will also ask for demographic information such as, gender, major or home state.

The study is designed to last approximately 5-10 minutes.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:

There are no risks associated with this project, including stress, psychological, social, physical, or legal risk which are greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:

There are no direct benefits to you other than what you learn from answering the questions and knowing that you are helping research.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

All information about you will be kept confidential and will not be released. Surveys will have identification numbers, rather than names, on them. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. This information will be saved as long as it is scientifically useful; typically, such information is kept for five years after publication of the results. Results from this study may be presented at professional meetings or in publications. You will not be identified individually; we will be looking at the group as a whole. No information on the spreadsheet can link you to your answers. And, only the investigators will have access to the web page where the data is stored.

EMAIL EXAMPLE

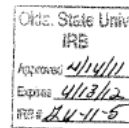
Good Morning,

As part of my thesis about the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict, I am doing research about how students perceive it. That is why I would like to know if you can participate to this research project simply by filling in the online survey whose link is provided at the bottom of this email.

Please find below the information about the research project. Please read it carefully and if you agree to participate click on the link at the bottom of the mail.

Thank you.

Julie Schweitzer, Master of International Studies.



VITA

Julie Schweitzer

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ISRAEL AND PALESTINE CONFLICT
IN THE UNITED AND IN FRANCE

Major Field: International Studies

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science/Arts in International Studies at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, May, 2011.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science/Arts in Business at Burgundy School of Business, Valence, France in 2008.

Experience:

September 2009 – May 2011	French tutor
June 2010 – July 2010	Temporary job, exams department, Lycée Le Dauphiné (Romans): Assistant in the exam department prepared and organized written and oral exams.
September 2008 – March 2009	Six-month placement, marketing services department, Opendisc (Paris): Project manager assistant, development of a new marketing tool.
May 2008 – July 2008	Temporary job, exams department, Lycée Le Dauphiné (Romans): Assistant in the exam department prepared and organized written and oral exams.
June 2007 – August 2007	Three-month placement, economics department, Conseil Général de la Drôme (Valence) : Creation of economic studies about the economic interests of the Conseil Général.

Name: Julie Schweitzer

Date of Degree: December, 2011

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ISRAEL AND PALESTINE
CONFLICT IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN FRANCE

Pages in Study: 126

Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science/Arts

Major Field: International Studies

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this study is to analyze the differences and similarities in the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict in the United States and in France. The first part of the paper discussed the evolution of the news coverage and the current situation in the United States and in France. The second part of the paper discusses how the French students understand of the media coverage of the Israel and Palestine conflict. Finally, the paper presents some examples of how the conflict impacts the United States and France.

Findings and Conclusions: The Israel and Palestine conflict is a very sensitive topic in the media both in the United States and in France. Since it involves two important communities, it is very hard to avoid tensions between them. Beside what seems to be a lack of objectivity from the viewpoint of one community is considered fair by the other community and vice-versa. Moreover, French students are aware of existing biases in the way the media broadcast the conflict. They regret the way the media favors the Israel side of the conflict.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Michael Bracy
