

Normalizing Normalization: Emirati and Israeli Newspaper Framing of the Israel–Palestine Conflict Before and After the Abraham Accords

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This quantitative content analysis examined Emirati and Israeli news framing of Israel–Palestine before and after the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel formally signed the September 2020 Abraham Accords, a normalization agreement overseen by the United States. The purpose of the study was twofold. First, it aimed to compare Emirati and Israeli news coverage to determine the extent to which Emirati and Israeli editorial positions either converge with or diverge from one another. Second, the analysis sought to compare pre-and-post normalization Emirati news coverage of the Palestine issue. Findings affirmed the researchers' expectations that *Al-Bayan* would be more critical of Israel than *Israel Hayom*, and that it would frame Israel more negatively than *Israel Hayom* by including more coverage of Israeli oppression, violence, and aggression against the Palestinians, regardless of time period. Findings also showed that *Al-Bayan* shifted away from its prenormalization negative framing of Israel and adopted an overt and unequivocal pro-Israel postnormalization frame.

Keywords: framing, normalization, content analysis, Israel, Palestine, United Arab Emirates, Al-Bayan, Israel Hayom

For more than 70 years, the Palestinian cause has served as a rallying cry for Arab citizens, leaders, and political and social movements. Since the 1948 establishment of Israel, an act facilitated by the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians (Pappe, 2007), neighboring Arab states have often been the forerunners of defending Palestinian rights. Indeed, rare exceptions notwithstanding, one historical constant in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians—through decades of military occupation, war, and peace talks—has been outward Arab support for the Palestinian right to self-determination.

Recent years, though, have brought cataclysmic change. For arguably the first time in history, official Arab political positions on Israel have been meaningfully splintered. In 2020, a number of Arab states announced formal diplomatic normalization agreements with Israel. Some individual Arab states have quietly cooperated with Israel for decades (Black, 2019), with a handful of Arab countries previously signing

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individual peace, military, and economic agreements. However, 2020 normalization efforts were, for at least three reasons, different.

First, 2020 normalization was a group effort, with several Arab countries—the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Sudan—all declaring normalization agreements within the span of a couple of months (Chappell, 2020). Second, previous conditions for Arab normalization with Israel—the formal end of the occupation of Palestinian territory, for example—were deemphasized (Hellyer, 2020). Third, and importantly, the more recent normalization efforts were accompanied by more aggressive public campaigns.

Recent normalization efforts have been widely condemned by Palestinians and pro-Palestinian rights activists, who have viewed the recent developments as a type of betrayal of Palestinians ("Palestinians Protest Arab Normalization," 2020).

This study focuses on the UAE, which was the first Arab country to normalize and arguably the loudest and most aggressive proponent of normalization. The UAE and Israel signed the Abraham Accords on September 15, 2020.

Following the normalization agreement, the UAE openly pursued Israeli–Emirati business and investment partnerships (Lieber, 2020), as well as bilateral tourism (Halbfinger & Rasgon, 2020). An Emirati poet was reportedly banned from travel due to her critical remarks about normalization ("Prominent Emirati Poet," 2020).

Specifically, this research compares Emirati and Israeli news coverage of normalization. The purpose of the study is twofold. First, it aims to compare Emirati and Israeli news coverage to determine the extent to which Emirati and Israeli editorial positions either converge with or diverge from one another. Second, the analysis seeks to compare pre- and postnormalization Emirati news coverage of the Palestine issue. This second aim is motivated by a desire to determine to what extent Emirati editorial positions may have changed in the aftermath of a formal normalization agreement.

This quantitative content analysis examines two widely circulated, influential newspapers, the Emirati *Al-Bayan* and the Israeli *Israel Hayom*, which are taken as case studies. The coding scheme considers sourcing patterns and how issues of oppression, aggression, and cooperation are framed.

The Palestinian–Israeli Conflict in Arab and Israeli Press

The Palestinian–Israeli conflict, ongoing for decades, has witnessed various stages, landmark events, and turning points that have stirred opposing emotions on the Arab and Israeli sides. Since its beginning, the conflict has always been the center of attention for Arab and Israeli news media. In fact, "the [news] discourse of the conflict is as ideological and controversial as the conflict itself" (Zaher, 2009, p. 3).

Studies analyzing Arab and Israeli press coverage of the conflict point to different patterns of reporting. Arab media have generally been sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and supportive of

Palestinian calls for an end to their struggles, while the Israeli press has justified Israeli actions and has been less focused on Palestinian victims.

A qualitative textual analysis examining coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in three Palestinian newspapers (*Falistin Muslimeh*, *Al-Quds*, and *Al-Ayyam*) between 1998 and 2014 found that all three newspapers highlighted what they described as Israel’s attempts to sabotage the peace process by expanding illegal settlements (Farrah, 2018).

A qualitative analysis of the *Arab News*, a Saudi English-language daily online newspaper, showed that, in the immediate aftermath of the second Palestinian Uprising (Intifada), the paper featured more quotes from Palestinian sources than Israeli sources and focused on condemning Israeli actions (Zaher, 2009).

A framing analysis of *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Arabiya* coverage of the 2008–2009 Gaza conflict pointed to a clear bias on the part of the two pan-Arab networks toward the Palestinian side. Both networks highlighted Palestinian positions and framed Palestinians as underdog in a struggle against Israeli transgression (Elmasry, El Shamy, Manning, Mills, & Auter, 2013).

Another study that analyzed *Al-Jazeera’s* coverage of the 2008–2009 invasion of Gaza found that the network justified Palestinian rocket fire (Aguiar, 2009). The study also found that *Al-Jazeera* focused almost exclusively on Palestinian victims and ignored Israeli civilians (Aguiar, 2009).

A quantitative content analysis of *Al-Jazeera America’s* online coverage of the 2014 Gaza war revealed that the network “cited only Palestinian citizens in its articles and always differentiated between militants and civilians when reporting on the Palestinian death toll” (El Damanhoury & Saleh, 2017, p. 85).

Another study examining Palestinian and Israeli news coverage of the 2014 Gaza war found that the *Palestine News and Information Agency* (WAFA) website, which is affiliated with the Palestinian group Fatah, focused on two players in the conflict: “the powerful Israeli army and the powerless Palestinian civilians” (Qawariq, 2016, p. 243). Findings from the same study pointed to the adoption by three online Israeli newspapers (*Ynet*, *JP*, and *Haaretz*) of a nationalistic, “Zionist” position that avoided blaming the Israeli government (Qawariq, 2016, p. 246).

Another comparative study by Wolfsfeld, Frosh, and Awabdy (2008) analyzed coverage of two events—a Palestinian suicide bombing that killed 19 Israelis in June 2002 and the Israeli killing of a Hamas leader in July 2002—on Palestinian public television and Israeli’s Channel Two. The analysis revealed attempts by both outlets to dramatize events through humanizing victims visually and narratively. Findings also pointed to a high level of ethnocentrism and “ethnic solidarity” with victims (Wolfsfeld et al., 2008).

A quantitative study by Rinnawi (2007) examined coverage of the second Palestinian uprising in two Israeli newspapers: *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Haaretz*. Findings showed a polarized approach of Us (as the Israelis) versus Them (as the Palestinians and all other non-Israelis). This approach was reflected in

the tendency to refrain from attributing direct responsibility of “we” as “our people,” to present the incident as an indirect means of cause (Palestine violence) and effect (the Israeli violent response) and to blur the perception of the Israeli as an actor responsible for the incident. (Rinnawi, 2007, p. 167).

A content analysis by Arqoob and Ozad (2019) of 2014 Gaza war coverage in the Israeli *Yedioth Ahronoth* showed pro-Israel positions. Coverage provided rationalizations for Israeli attacks against Palestinian targets and relied primarily on Israeli sources (Arqoob & Ozad, 2019).

Background on Emirati Press

According to the Oxford Business Group, the UAE has 14 daily newspapers and enjoys “some of the highest press circulation figures in the [Arabian] Gulf” (“Media in the UAE,” 2012, para. 15).

The Emirati press is subject to restrictive measures imposed by the government, and local journalists are subject to severe penalties—including firing and jail time—if they cross certain red lines (Kadragic, 2010). In fact, the UAE was classified as “severely repressed” in the 2016 World Press Freedom Index (International Centre for Justice and Human Rights, 2017, p. 1).

The UAE’s press law prohibits criticism of the country’s government and its rulers and sets penalties—including long-term imprisonment and hefty fines—on journalists who violate this provision (Duffy, 2014). This leads to what Pejman (2009) described as self-censorship and a fundamental lack of investigative reporting. Pejman’s in-depth interviews with top editors of several English-language daily newspapers in the UAE pointed to the editors’ submissive relationship to government authorities (Pejman, 2009).

Al-Bayan

Not much has been written about the newspaper *Al-Bayan*. It is a daily Emirati newspaper launched in 1980. Based in the Emirati city of Dubai, it covers a wide variety of stories but focuses mostly on political news. *Al-Bayan* issues several supplements dealing with different branches, such as the economy and sports (Abdul Hadi & Jwaniat, 2021). It is owned by Emirates Media, a government-owned media company (Abdelmogeth & Metea, 2018).

Background on the Israeli Press

The Israeli press includes five daily nationwide newspapers (*Israel Hayom*, *Haaretz*, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, *Maariv Haboker*, and *Maariv Hashavua*), three financial papers, and seven papers published on weekends (Dorot, 2020, p. 4). The local press in Israel has been affected by the global financial crisis, with most papers suffering significant budget deficits” and a “declining ability to maintain high standards” (Dorot, 2020, p. 15).

Israeli newspapers function in a relatively open environment allowing for a margin of freedom to criticize the government. However, strict military censorship often affects Israeli press coverage of certain issues, particularly those deemed by authorities to pertain to national security (Gonen, Kampf, & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2022). This is why Israeli journalists often practice self-censorship, "which can include moderating criticism, embellishing or changing the frame of an issue, outright avoiding and silencing disagreement, or providing misinformation and even lies" (Elbaz & Bar-Tal, 2019, p. 2).

The relationship between the Israeli government and the press has often been overshadowed by continuous divisiveness, polarization, and conflict in a highly politicized environment. The government tries to control media discourse through information leaks, and the newspapers attempt to maintain continuous access to political sources (Mandelzisz, 2003). In such an environment, Israeli reporters "inevitably interpret the world from a national, or even nationalistic, perspective" (Mandelzisz, 2003, p. 4).

Israel Hayom

Israel Hayom (meaning "Israel Today") is a major nationally distributed daily newspaper circulated inside Israel free of charge. It was launched in 2007 by Sheldon Adelson, a Jewish American media entrepreneur. Its right-wing ideology and use of colloquial Hebrew make it appealing to conservative Israelis. The paper was a strong supporter of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (Dorot, 2020).

According to Dorot (2020), "The booming success of this populist newspaper and the ongoing right-wing radicalization processes of the Israeli public . . . could be sociologically interpreted as highly correlated" (p. 15). The paper has a weekday share of approximately 30% (Tucker, 2020). It is considered the most widely circulated daily newspaper in Israel, with readership rates of close to 40% among people who are 18 and older (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2017).

Despite its popularity, *Israel Hayom* has suffered financial losses since its launch. Still, the paper continues to hire highly professional journalists, provide competitive salaries, and engage in intensive marketing campaigns (Dahan & Bentman, 2017).

Framing Theory

Framing refers to the process of highlighting certain dimensions of an issue or phenomenon "in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). The frames that result from this process play a critical role in shaping receiver understanding and processing of issues (Entman, 1993).

According to Gamson and Modigliani (1989), a frame is a principal thematic concept that holds together the "interpretive packages" (p. 3) of a particular discourse. A frame, then, contributes to "making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 3). Frames in general and news frames in particular "create semantic associations within an individual's schemata. Textual propositions that encode frames are, at least for a short period of time, 'let in' by the individual into their prior knowledge, providing the basis by which schemata are updated" (D'Angelo, 2002, p. 876).

Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) argued that framing is a conceptual approach that can be studied at the macro level through analyzing methods of idiomatic and visual expression that newsmakers adopt to steer audiences, or at the micro level through focusing on how members of an audience deal with information to form positions.

News frames are exemplified through a story's headline, lead paragraph, body, and conclusion. Journalists develop frames through lexical, syntactical, and rhetorical devices, including words, labels, sentences, metaphors, sources, quotes, and narrative and visual representations (de Vreese, 2005; Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

Frames that are newly developed through individuals' exposure to mediated messages often affect predetermined opinions about issues at hand and elicit nuanced levels of affective and cognitive interactions with the issues (Shah, Kwak, Schmiebrach, & Zubric, 2004). Processing information attained through media frames may be the function of "individuals' preexisting networks of knowledge concerning the topic, which in turn are a function of education, news consumption, interpersonal discussion, and media reflection" (Shah et al., 2004, p. 115).

Chong and Druckman (2007) looked into multiple factors that may determine the extent of framing impact on news consumers. Factors include recipient knowledgeability about the issues being framed. Contrary to many researcher expectations, more knowledgeable individuals are more susceptible to news framing effects. Another factor is a frame's predominance. That is, the more frequently consumers are exposed to a frame, the higher the possibility they will be impacted by it. Another predictor of a frame's effectiveness is whether it is presented by itself or in combination with other frames. Chong and Druckman (2007) note that "opposing frames of sharply contrasting strengths may give rise to a countereffect" (p. 111).

A multitude of news frames have been identified by scholars. An experiment by Valkenburg, Semetko, and de Vreese (1999) pointed to four specific frames commonly used by journalists: highlighting conflict and struggle, accentuating a human-interest dimension through personalization and the playing up of emotions, assigning responsibility to certain parties, and focusing on economic effects.

In his typology of news frames, de Vreese (2005) made a distinction between "issue-specific" frames, which revolve around particular events or incidents, and "generic" frames, which deal with broader themes that go beyond a specific subject, incident, or context (p. 54).

Entman (2007) argued that frames reflect inherent biases built into a journalist's consciousness. He pointed out that biases can work for or against the individuals and/or groups being framed. For example,

when news clearly slants, those officials favored by the slant become more powerful, freer to do what they want without the anticipation that voters might punish them. And those who lose the framing contest become weaker, less free to do (or say) what they want. (Entman, 2007, p. 170)

On the other hand, Carpenter (2007) argued that journalists do not deliberately uphold ideological biases; rather, they “use similar or even predictable frames that they believe will attract news consumers” (p. 764).

Scheufele (1999) argued that news framing goes through four processes: (a) frame building, through which journalists’ framing decisions are affected by several factors such as society’s unwritten rules, organizational and journalistic practices, pressures from lobbying groups, and journalists’ ideological inclinations; (b) frame setting, which has to do with making certain dimensions or aspects of an issue more salient; (c) individual-level framing effects, where media frames help audiences digest and process information; and (d) journalists as audiences, which means that “journalists, like their audiences, equally . . . to the very frames that they use to describe events and issues” (Scheufele, 1999, p. 117).

Hypotheses and Research Question

Based on framing theory and the prior literature presented above, this research seeks to test five hypotheses and answer one research question:

- H1: Al-Bayan will be more critical of Israel than Israel Hayom.*
- H1a: Al-Bayan will include more coverage of Israeli oppression against Palestinians than Israel Hayom.*
- H1b: Al-Bayan will include more coverage of Israeli violence against Palestinians than Israel Hayom.*
- H1c: Al-Bayan will be more likely than Israel Hayom to frame Israeli violence as an act of aggression.*
- H1d: Al-Bayan will be less likely than Israel Hayom to frame Israeli violence as an act of self-defense.*
- H1e: Al-Bayan will use the word “occupation” more frequently than Israel Hayom.*
- H1f: Al-Bayan will frame Israel more negatively than Israel Hayom.*
- H2: Coverage of Israel in Al-Bayan will be less critical after normalization than before.*
- H2a: There will be less coverage in Al-Bayan of Israeli oppression against Palestinians after normalization than before.*
- H2b: There will be less coverage in Al-Bayan of Israeli violence against Palestinians after normalization than before.*
- H2c: In Al-Bayan, coverage of Israeli violence against Palestinians will be less likely to be framed as an act of Israeli aggression after normalization than before.*
- H2d: In Al-Bayan, coverage of Israeli violence against Palestinians will be more likely to be framed as an act of Israeli self-defense after normalization than before.*

- H2e: In Al-Bayan, the word "occupation" will be used less frequently (on average) after normalization than before.*
- H2f: Al-Bayan will frame Israel less negatively after normalization than before.*
- H3: Coverage of Palestinians in Israel Hayom will be less critical after normalization than before.*
- H3a: There will be less coverage in Israel Hayom of Palestinian oppression against Israelis after normalization than before.*
- H3b: There will be less coverage in Israel Hayom of Palestinian violence against Israelis after normalization than before.*
- H3c: In Israel Hayom, Palestinian violence against Israelis will be consistently framed as aggression and not self-defense, regardless of time period.*
- H3d: Israel Hayom will frame the Palestinians less negatively after normalization than before.*
- H4: Both newspapers will be more likely to discuss cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians after normalization than before.*
- H5: There will be a higher likelihood that both newspapers will frame the Israeli–Palestinian relationship as "friendly" more after normalization than before.*
- RQ1: How will normalization affect sourcing, if at all?*

Method

This study aimed to examine Emirati and Israeli news coverage of Israel–Palestine before and after the UAE and Israel formally signed their September 15, 2020, normalization agreement. The research employed quantitative content analysis, a method that facilitates the systematic examination of relatively large samples of communication content, including news.

Two newspapers, one Emirati and one Israeli, were selected for analysis: the UAE's *Al-Bayan* and Israel's *Israel Hayom*. Both newspapers are influential in their respective countries, circulate widely, and have easily accessible digital archives. *Al-Bayan* is an Arabic language newspaper, while *Israel Hayom* publishes in Hebrew.

The entire months of November and December 2020 were selected for analysis because they were the first two full months following the Israeli cabinet's mid-October approval of the normalization deal ("Israeli Government Approves Normalization Deal," 2020). These two months were also selected because they were the last two months of 2020 and fell immediately before coding work began (in early 2021). The same months—November and December—were also selected for 2017, 2018, and 2019 years. Periods both

before and after normalization were desired to determine what editorial changes the normalization agreement may have produced, if any.

The unit of analysis was the individual newspaper article. During the selected time periods, *Al-Bayan* published a total of 680 articles about Israel–Palestine, while *Israel Hayom* published a total of 340. Table 1 shows how the articles were distributed by time period.

Table 1. Articles Published by Newspaper and Time Period.

Paper	Nov	Dec	Nov	Dec	Nov	Dec	Nov	Dec	Total
	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019	2020	2020	
<i>Al-Bayan</i>	62	173	86	79	106	94	21	59	680
<i>Israel Hayom</i>	45	64	39	33	39	39	41	40	340

Every third article from *Al-Bayan* was systematically selected for analysis, while every other *Israel Hayom* article was selected. Articles were systematically selected from within individual time blocks (e.g., November 2017, December 2019). This strategy left a total of 405 articles, 232 for *Al-Bayan* and 173 for *Israel Hayom*.

The coding scheme, which was informed by past literature and media framing theory, measured various variables, including whether articles discussed oppression of Palestinians by Israel, oppression of Israelis by Palestinians, Israeli violence against Palestinians, Palestinian violence against Israelis, and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians. The coding scheme also assessed how often the papers used the word “occupation”; how the Israeli, Palestinian, and UAE sides were framed; and how often Israeli and Palestinian official and civilian sources were used. Some variables, such as those addressing the presence of certain frames, lent themselves to measurement at the nominal level, while others, such as those concerned with the frequency of source usage, lent themselves to measurement at the ratio level.

Two research assistants fluent in both Arabic and Hebrew served as coders. Three separate rounds of training on the coding scheme were carried out. After some initial disagreement, measures were clarified. Final intercoder reliability testing was carried out following the third round of training and produced almost no disagreement. No disagreements were recorded for the nominal-level questions, which all scored perfect Scott’s pi scores of 1. A few small disagreements were recorded on two of the ratio-level variables. However, the Krippendorff’s alpha scores still rounded up to 1. Effectively, then, intercoder reliability scores for this study were perfect.

Findings

Overall, findings fell in line with predictions. *Al-Bayan* was more critical of Israel and more friendly toward Palestinians than *Israel Hayom*. However, the normalization agreement brought about a major shift in news framing, with *Al-Bayan*, in particular, undergoing a significant postnormalization shift. Following the normalization agreement, the paper adopted pro-Israel framing and began to effectively ignore Palestinian voices. This section will detail the results of hypothesis testing and provide an answer to the study’s lone research question.

H1 compared *Al-Bayan* and *Israel Hayom* in terms of their framing of Israel, regardless of time period. The hypothesis, which was supported, predicted that *Al-Bayan* would be more critical of Israel than *Israel Hayom*. H1 included six subhypotheses, H1a–H1f, all of which were supported. Each subhypothesis will be discussed here in turn.

H1a predicted that *Al-Bayan* would be more likely to cover Israeli oppression against Palestinians than *Israel Hayom*. Results were consistent with expectations. As displayed in Table 2, about 71% ($N = 164$) of *Al-Bayan* articles addressed Israeli oppression against Palestinians, compared with just 12% ($N = 20$) of *Israel Hayom* articles. These differences were statistically significant at the .05 level, $\chi^2(df = 1, N = 405) = 139.7, p < .001$.

Table 2. Coverage of Israeli Oppression Against Palestinians by Newspaper.

Covered Israeli oppression against Palestinians	Newspaper	
	<i>Al-Bayan</i> <i>n (%)</i>	<i>Israel Hayom</i> <i>n (%)</i>
Yes	164 (70.7)	20 (11.6)
No	68 (29.3)	153 (88.4)
Total number of articles	232 (100)	173 (100)

$\chi^2(df = 1, N = 405) = 139.7, p < .001$.

H1b predicted that *Al-Bayan* would be more likely to cover Israeli violence against Palestinians than *Israel Hayom*. This subhypothesis was supported. About 55% ($N = 128$) of *Al-Bayan* articles and 18% ($N = 31$) of *Israel Hayom* articles covered Israeli violence against Palestinians. A chi-square test showed this difference was statistically significant, $\chi^2(df = 1, N = 405) = 57.67, p < .001$. Table 3 shows these results.

Table 3. Coverage of Israeli Violence Against Palestinians by Newspaper.

Covered Israeli violence against Palestinians	Newspaper	
	<i>Al-Bayan</i> <i>n (%)</i>	<i>Israel Hayom</i> <i>n (%)</i>
Yes	128 (55.2)	31 (17.9)
No	104 (44.8)	142 (82.1)
Total number of articles	232 (100)	173 (100)

$\chi^2(df = 1, N = 405) = 57.67, p < .001$.

H1c and H1d predicted, respectively, that *Al-Bayan* would be more likely than *Israel Hayom* to frame Israeli violence as an act of aggression and less likely than *Israel Hayom* to frame Israeli violence as an act of self-defense. Both of these subhypotheses were supported. *Al-Bayan* framed Israeli violence against Palestinians as an act of aggression about 99% of the time ($N = 127$) and as self-defense about 1% of the time ($N = 1$). Meanwhile, *Israel Hayom* framed Israeli violence against Palestinians as an act of aggression about 13% ($N = 4$) of the time and as self-defense 81% of the time ($N = 25$). These differences are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Framing of Israeli Violence by Newspaper.

Framing of Israeli violence against Palestinians	Newspaper	
	<i>Al-Bayan</i> <i>n (%)</i>	<i>Israel Hayom</i> <i>n (%)</i>
Act of aggression	127 (99.2)	4 (12.9)
Self-defense	1 (0.8)	25 (80.6)
Unintended accident	0 (0)	2 (6.5)
Total number of articles	128 (100)	31 (100)

$\chi^2(df = 2, N = 159) = 128.1, p < .001.$

H1e, which predicted that *Al-Bayan* would be the more likely of the two newspapers to use the word "occupation," was also supported. On average, *Al-Bayan* used the word "occupation" 2.67 times per article, while *Israel Hayom* only used the word .11 times per article. As shown in Table 5, a *t* test showed these differences to be statistically significant, $t(403) = 9.15, p < .001.$

Table 5. Usage of the Word "Occupation" by Newspaper.

Newspaper	Mean word count	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>Al-Bayan</i>	2.67	3.6	232
<i>Israel Hayom</i>	0.11	0.5	173

$t(403) = 9.15, p < .001.$

H1f was concerned with overall directionality of coverage. This subhypothesis, which was supported, predicted that *Al-Bayan* would frame Israel more negatively than *Israel Hayom*. A total of approximately 73% ($N = 170$) of *Al-Bayan* articles framed Israel negatively, compared with only about 7% ($N = 16$) positive framing. Meanwhile, *Israel Hayom*'s framing of Israel was overwhelmingly favorable, with about 86% ($N = 149$) of articles framing Israel positively and only about 6% ($N = 10$) framing the country negatively.¹ Results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Overall Framing of the Israeli Side by Newspaper Category.

Overall framing of Israeli side	Newspaper	
	<i>Al-Bayan</i> <i>n (%)</i>	<i>Israel Hayom</i> <i>n (%)</i>
Positive	16 (6.9)	149 (86.1)
Negative	170 (73.3)	10 (5.8)
Neutral	23 (9.9)	7 (4.0)
Not applicable	23 (9.9)	7 (4.0)
Total number of articles	232 (100)	173 (100)

$\chi^2(df = 3, N = 405) = 263.4, p < .001.$

¹ Of note, too, is that all instances of negative framing of Israel in *Israel Hayom* occurred before normalization.

H1 was important to this research because it established a comparison between the two newspapers under study. However, a primary focus of this study was the potential impact of normalization on *Al-Bayan* and *Israel Hayom* coverage patterns. The study's remaining hypotheses and research question assess potential changes in the papers' coverage following the normalization agreement.

H2 was concerned with *Al-Bayan's* coverage of Israel before and after normalization. It predicted that the newspaper's coverage of Israel would be less critical after normalization than before. There were six subhypotheses, H2a–H2f.

H2a predicted that *Al-Bayan* would feature less coverage of Israeli oppression against Palestinians after normalization than before. This subhypothesis was supported. Before normalization, 80% of *Al-Bayan's* articles ($N = 164$) discussed Israeli oppression against Palestinians. None of *Al-Bayan's* postnormalization articles discussed Israeli oppression against Palestinians ($N = 0$). A chi-squared test showed that these differences were statistically significant, $\chi^2(df = 1, N = 232) = 73.6, p < .001$. Table 7 displays the results.

Table 7. Coverage of Israeli Oppression Against Palestinians in Al-Bayan Newspaper.

Covered Israeli oppression against Palestinians	Before normalization <i>n</i> (%)	After normalization <i>n</i> (%)
Yes	164 (80)	0 (0)
No	41 (20)	27 (100)
Total number of articles	205 (100)	27 (100)

$\chi^2(df = 1, N = 232) = 73.6, p < .001$.

H2b predicted that there would be less *Al-Bayan* coverage of Israeli violence against Palestinians after normalization than before. This subhypothesis was also supported. A total of 62.4% of *Al-Bayan's* prenormalization articles ($N = 128$) mentioned Israeli violence against Palestinians, while none of *Al-Bayan's* postnormalization articles discussed Israeli violence against Palestinians ($N = 0$). Results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Coverage of Israeli Violence Against Palestinians in Al-Bayan Newspaper.

Covered Israeli violence against Palestinians	Before normalization <i>n</i> (%)	After normalization <i>n</i> (%)
Yes	128 (62.4)	0 (0)
No	77 (37.6)	27 (100)
Total number of articles	205 (100)	27 (100)

$\chi^2(df = 1, N = 232) = 37.6, p < .001$.

H2c and H2d, respectively, predicted that *Al-Bayan's* coverage of Israeli violence against Palestinians would be less likely to be framed as an act of Israeli aggression and more likely to be framed as an act of Israeli self-defense after normalization than before. Since none of *Al-Bayan's* postnormalization articles even mentioned Israeli violence against Palestinians, hypothesis testing for both H2c and H2d was rendered impossible.

H2e predicted that *Al-Bayan* would be less likely to use the word "occupation" after the normalization agreement than before. This subhypothesis was supported. On average, *Al-Bayan's* prenormalization article employed the word "occupation" 3.02 times. The newspaper did not use the word "occupation" after normalization. Table 9 displays results.

Table 9. Usage of Word "Occupation" in Al-Bayan Newspaper.

Newspaper date	Mean word count	<i>N</i>
Before normalization	3.02	205
After normalization	0.0	27

$t(230) = 4.18, p < .001$.

H2f predicted that, in terms of directionality of coverage, *Al-Bayan* would frame Israel less negatively after normalization than before. This prediction was supported. Before normalization, *Al-Bayan* framed Israel negatively about 83% of the time ($N = 170$) and did not frame Israel positively at all ($N = 0$). After normalization, however, 59% of the paper's articles ($N = 16$) framed Israel positively, while none ($N = 0$) framed Israel negatively. Table 10 displays the results.

Table 10. Overall Framing of the Israeli Side in Al-Bayan Newspaper.

Overall framing of Israeli side	Before normalization	After normalization
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Positive	0 (0)	16 (59.3)
Negative	170 (82.9)	0 (0)
Neutral	14 (6.8)	9 (33.3)
Not applicable	21 (10.2)	2 (7.4)
Total number of articles	205 (100)	27 (100)

$\chi^2(df = 3, N = 232) = 160.9, p < .001$.

H3 effectively mirrored H2 but was focused on *Israel Hayom* and Palestinians (rather than *Al-Bayan* and Israel). H3 predicted that *Israel Hayom's* coverage of Palestinians would be less critical after normalization than before. This hypothesis included similar subhypotheses to H2, but some of H2's subhypotheses were irrelevant to H3. For instance, since there is no equivalent "occupation" of Israel by the Palestinians, H3 did not include a subhypothesis about usage of the term "occupation." H3, then, featured four subhypotheses.

H3a predicted that *Israel Hayom* would feature less coverage of Palestinian oppression against Israelis after normalization than before. This subhypothesis was supported. Before normalization, approximately 31% ($N = 41$) of *Israel Hayom's* articles mentioned Palestinian oppression against Israelis. After normalization, however, only about 3% of the paper's articles mentioned the topic ($N = 1$). These differences were found to be statistically significant at the .05 level, $\chi^2(df = 1, N = 173) = 13.4, p < .001$. The results are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Coverage of Palestinian Oppression Against Israelis in Israel Hayom Newspaper.

Covered Palestinian oppression against Israelis	Before normalization <i>n</i> (%)	After normalization <i>n</i> (%)
Yes	41(30.8)	1 (2.5)
No	92 (69.2)	39 (97.5)
Total number of articles	133 (100)	40 (100)

$\chi^2(df = 1, N = 173) = 13.4, p < .001.$

H3b predicted that there would be less *Israel Hayom* coverage of Palestinian violence against Israelis after normalization than before. This subhypothesis was also supported. About 42% ($N = 56$) of *Israel Hayom*'s prenatalization articles covered Palestinian violence against Israelis. This compares with only about 3% ($N = 1$) after normalization. Results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Coverage of Palestinian Violence Against Israelis in Israel Hayom Newspaper.

Covered Palestinian violence against Israelis	Before normalization <i>n</i> (%)	After normalization <i>n</i> (%)
Yes	56 (42.1)	1 (2.5)
No	77 (57.9)	39 (97.5)
Total number of articles	133 (100)	40 (100)

$\chi^2(df = 1, N = 173) = 21.8, p < .001.$

H3c predicted that *Israel Hayom* would consistently frame Palestinian violence against Israelis as aggression, not self-defense, regardless of time period. However, Table 13 shows that 56 of 57 cases of Palestinian aggression articles were in the prenatalization period. Due to this lack of variation, the chi-square test was not significant, $\chi^2(df = 1, N = 57) = 0.018, p = .893$. Nevertheless, Table 13 shows that nearly every article discussing Palestinian violence against Israelis was framed as aggression (and not self-defense) by *Israel Hayom*.

Table 13. Framing of Palestinian Violence Against Israelis in Israel Hayom Newspaper.

Framing of Palestinian violence against Israelis	Before normalization <i>n</i> (%)	After normalization <i>n</i> (%)
Palestinian aggression	55 (98.2)	1 (100)
Palestinian self-defense	1 (1.8)	0 (0)
Total number of articles	56 (100)	1 (100)

$\chi^2(df = 1, N = 57) = 0.018, p = .893.$

H3d predicted that *Israel Hayom* would frame the Palestinians less negatively after normalization than before. This subhypothesis was supported. Before normalization, *Israel Hayom* framed Palestinians negatively about 64% of the time ($N = 85$), compared with just 3% ($N = 1$) after normalization. Differences were statistically significant, $\chi^2(df = 3, N = 173) = 38.3, p < .001$. Results are displayed in Table 14.

Table 14. Overall Framing of the Palestinian Side in Israel Hayom Newspaper.

Overall framing of Palestinian side	Before normalization <i>n</i> (%)	After normalization <i>n</i> (%)
Positive	8 (6)	1 (2.5)
Negative	85 (63.9)	5 (12.5)
Neutral	2 (1.5)	1 (2.5)
Not applicable	38 (28.6)	33 (82.5)
Total number of articles	133 (100)	40 (100)

$\chi^2(df = 3, N = 173) = 38.3, p < .001.$

H4 predicted that, regardless of newspaper, there would be more discussion of Israeli–Palestinian cooperation after normalization than before. H5, meanwhile, predicted that, regardless of newspaper, the Israeli–Palestinian relationship would be less likely to be framed as one “grounded in enmity” after normalization than before.

Table 15 displays two regression models showing support for both H4 and H5. Model 1 shows that there was more discussion of Israeli–Palestinian cooperation after normalization than before ($B = 1.05, p < .01$). Model 2 shows that the newspapers were less likely to frame the Israeli–Palestinian relationship as one grounded in enmity after normalization than before ($B = -3.46, p < .001$).

Table 15. Logistic Regression Models.

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Discuss cooperation between Israel and Palestine		Framing of Israel–Palestine relationship	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Al-Bayan</i> (ref: <i>Israel Hayom</i>)	-0.43	0.37	-1.64**	0.53
After normalization (ref: Before)	1.05**	0.39	-3.46***	0.55
Constant	-2.42	0.29	3.48	0.51
<i>N</i>	405		324	
Cox and Snell R^2	0.02		0.17	

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

This article’s only research question compared pre- and postnormalization sourcing patterns. Specifically, the question asked how the normalization agreement would impact sourcing, if at all. Table 16 shows that, after the normalization agreement, the two newspapers under examination deemphasized Palestinian sources, both civilian and official, and gave relatively greater importance to Israeli sources. Before normalization, Palestinian official sources were cited .64 times per article, on average, compared to just .21 times per article after normalization. A *t* test showed these differences to be statistically significant, $t(338) = 3.48, p < .001$. The same pattern was found for Palestinian civilian sources, who were, on average, cited .27 times per article before normalization and just .01 times per article after. These differences were also statistically significant, $t(338) = 3.24, p < .001$. The newspapers increased their reliance on official

Israeli sources from .68 citations per article (before normalization) to .79 citations per article (after normalization). These differences were not statistically significant, however, $t(338) = -.64, p = .51$. The results also show that the papers cited Israeli civilian sources more after normalization than before. Citations of Israeli civilian sources increased from .14 times per article before normalization to .31 times per article after normalization. A t test showed these differences to be statistically significant, $t(338) = -2.13, p < .05$.

Table 1. Mean Number of Times Israeli and Palestinian Sources Are Cited Before and After Normalization.

Sources cited	Before normalization			After normalization			<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>		
Official Israeli sources	0.68	1.27	338	0.79	1.05	67	-0.64	0.51
Official Palestinian sources	0.64	0.98	338	0.21	0.53	67	3.48**	0.001
Israeli civilian sources	0.14	0.55	338	0.31	0.74	67	-2.13*	0.03
Palestinian civilian sources	0.27	0.63	338	0.01	0.12	67	3.24**	0.001

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Tables 17 and 18 show the pre- and postnormalization sourcing results by newspaper. The data show that both newspapers cited Palestinian official sources significantly less following the normalization agreement. *Al-Bayan* cited Palestinian official sources .76 times per article before normalization and .30 times per article after normalization. *Israel Hayom*, meanwhile, cited Palestinian official sources .46 times per article before normalization and .15 times per article after normalization. More importantly, perhaps, the data show that decreases in citing Palestinian civilian sources were more dramatic and pronounced in *Al-Bayan* than *Israel Hayom*. Before normalization, *Al-Bayan* cited Palestinian civilian sources .41 times per article, compared with just .04 times per article after normalization. This represents a decrease of more than 10 times. *Israel Hayom's* sourcing of Palestinian civilians also decreased postnormalization, but not nearly as dramatically. The paper did not rely much on Palestinian sources to begin with—it cited .04 Palestinian civilians per article before normalization. After normalization, the paper did not cite a single Palestinian source ($M = .00$). As the tables show, neither newspaper significantly altered its sourcing pattern for official Israeli sources.

Table 17. Mean Number of Times Al-Bayan Cited Israeli and Palestinian Sources Before and After Normalization.

Sources cited	Before normalization			After normalization			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>		
Official Israeli sources	0.33	0.96	205	0.48	0.7	27	-0.77	0.43
Official Palestinian sources	0.76	1.03	205	0.30	0.66	27	2.26*	0.02
Israeli civilian sources	0.02	0.13	205	0.04	0.19	27	-0.58	0.55
Palestinian civilian sources	0.41	0.75	205	0.04	0.19	27	2.58*	0.01

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 18. Mean Number of Times Israel Hayom Cited Israeli and Palestinian Sources Before and After Normalization.

Sources cited	Before normalization			After normalization			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>		
Official Israeli sources	1.23	1.49	133	1.00	1.19	40	0.87	0.38
Official Palestinian sources	0.46	0.88	133	0.15	0.42	40	2.13*	0.03
Israeli civilian sources	0.34	0.83	133	0.50	0.90	40	-1.05	0.29
Palestinian civilian sources	0.04	0.22	133	0.00	0.00	40	1.04	0.29

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 19 presents four linear regression models for sources cited by newspaper and time period. Models 1 and 3 show that newspaper category has a statistically significant impact on citing official Israeli sources and civilian Israeli sources, respectively, even after the effect of time period is considered. Model 1 shows that *Al-Bayan* was .83 times less likely to cite Israeli official sources than *Israel Hayom*, regardless of time period ($p < .001$). Model 3 shows that *Al-Bayan* cited Israeli civilian sources .34 times less than *Israel Hayom*, regardless of time period ($p < .001$).

Models 2 and 4 present data on official Palestinian sources and civilian Palestinian sources, respectively. The models show that *Al-Bayan* was significantly more likely to cite official Palestinian sources ($B = .27, p < .01$) and civilian Palestinian sources ($B = .32, p < .001$) than *Israel Hayom*. The models also shows that time period created a statistically significant effect—after normalization, there was a significant decrease in the citing of both official Palestinian sources ($B = -0.37, p < .01$) and civilian Palestinian sources ($B = -.18, p < .05$).

Table 19. Linear Regression Models for Sources Cited.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Official Israeli		Official Palestinian		Civilian Israeli		Civilian Palestinian	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Al-Bayan</i> (ref: <i>Israel Hayom</i>)	-0.83***	0.12	0.27**	0.09	-0.34***	0.05	0.32***	0.05
After normalization (ref: before)	-0.06	0.15	-0.37**	0.12	0.09	0.07	-0.18*	0.07
Constant	1.18	0.09	0.47	0.07	0.35	0.04	0.07	0.04
<i>N</i>	405		405		405		405	
<i>R</i> ²	0.10		0.05		0.09		0.09	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

This content analysis sought to compare news framing of Israel–Palestine in one Emirati newspaper (*Al-Bayan*) and one Israeli newspaper (*Israel Hayom*) before and after the signing of a September 2020 normalization agreement.

Findings affirmed expectations that *Al-Bayan* would be more critical of Israel than *Israel Hayom*, and that it would include more coverage of Israeli oppression, violence, and aggression against the Palestinians, regardless of time period. These findings manifest journalistic routines that follow unwritten guidelines and ideological predispositions in the frame-building process (Scheufele, 1999). As mentioned in the Framing Theory section, journalists in the frame-building process often adopt predictable frames (Carpenter, 2007) that showcase their sensitivities to the cultural contexts in which they are functioning (Boesman, Berbers, d’Haenens, & Van Gorp, 2017). So, the findings in this case reflect a potential awareness on the part of the Emirati newspaper of overwhelming Arab public support for the Palestinian struggle. In this context, a recent survey of a random sample of respondents from 13 Arab countries showed that three quarters of Arabs consider the Palestinian cause to be a concern for all Arabs, not just the Palestinians (Arab Center Washington DC, 2020).

This study predicted drastic changes in the framing patterns of *Al-Bayan* and *Israel Hayom* after normalization. Findings reflected strong support for the hypotheses that both newspapers would feature more discussion of Israeli–Palestinian cooperation after normalization than before and that both newspapers would be more likely to frame the Israeli–Palestinian relationship as friendly after normalization than before. The postnormalization shift was also obvious in each individual paper’s framing patterns. The number of articles that alluded to Palestinian oppression and Palestinian violence in *Israel Hayom* went down drastically after normalization, and the paper included hardly any articles after normalization that referred to Palestinian aggression. Moreover, *Israel Hayom* had far fewer articles framing the Palestinians negatively after normalization.

However, the postnormalization shift in framing patterns was more dramatic in *Al-Bayan*. After normalization, *Al-Bayan* explicitly adopted pro-Israel framing, strongly reflected in the complete absence of any articles about Israeli oppression and violence. What is more, the paper's postnormalization coverage completely refrained from using the term "occupation" to describe the Israeli existence in Palestinian territories. Not a single postnormalization *Al-Bayan* article framed Israel negatively.

Al-Bayan's shift away from negative framing of Israel prenormalization and its adoption of an overt, unequivocal pro-Israel frame postnormalization can be explained through the lens of the UAE's attempts to bolster its signing of the normalization agreement. Jacobs and Meeusen (2021) argued that framing patterns are affected by sociopolitical developments on the ground and can change over time. Entman (1993) argued, however, that changing what seems to be a widely accepted news frame can be risky because it can lead to the communicator's loss of credibility. This risk may be applicable to *Al-Bayan*. A recent survey by the Arab Center Washington DC (2020) showed that 88% of Arabs would be opposed to their home countries normalizing relations with Israel.

Al-Bayan's postnormalization pro-Israel slant is not shocking given the UAE's recent attempts to align itself with Israel. In fact,

The UAE and Israel have had a working relationship for decades, spanning defense, technology and agriculture. [And] in October 2018, the UAE went a step further, allowing Israel's national anthem to be played at a judo tournament in [the Emirati capital city] Abu Dhabi. (Hatuqa, 2019, para. 10)

In 2020, an Emirati member of the royal family bought 50% of the shares of an Israeli soccer club that has an anti-Arab fan base (Rubin, 2020). The UAE considers Israel to be not only an ideal economic, trading, and technological partner, but also a key strategic ally that will defend its interests in the region. Israel, meanwhile, perceives the UAE as a potential booming market that could pave the way for joint economic projects and massive Israeli investments (Rivlin, 2020).

Not only did *Al-Bayan* strongly adopt a pro-Israel editorial line after normalization, but it also ignored the Palestinian side by deemphasizing both official and civilian Palestinian sources. Source selection is among the most effective drivers of news framing processes (Nacos, 2005).

While both *Al-Bayan* and *Israel Hayom* used fewer Palestinian civilian sources after normalization than before, the decrease was more pronounced in *Al-Bayan*, whose reliance on Palestinian civilian sources decreased by more than 10 times after normalization. Thus, Palestinians were rendered effectively voiceless in *Al-Bayan's* postnormalization coverage. It may be that *Al-Bayan* concluded that the only way to pull off positive Israeli framing would be to ignore Palestinians.

Al-Bayan's disregard for Palestinian civilians is in line with the UAE's recent history of opposing Arab and Muslim interests. The UAE played a critical role in countering popular revolts that culminated in the "Arab Spring." During the transformative Arab Spring period, the Emirates stood in the way of democratic transformation across the Arab world (Dorsey, 2014). The UAE's efforts to support the region's

autocratic regimes at the expense of their peoples' plights for freedom place it "at the helm of counter revolutionary forces throughout the Middle East and North Africa The UAE is seeking a cynical alliance, not benevolent peace, with Israel" (Bishara, 2020, paras. 29–30).

Findings from this quantitative content analysis point to critical implications for the intersection between politics and news framing, particularly in the context of the latest round of diplomatic normalization between several Arab countries and Israel. Although it is perhaps not surprising that *Al-Bayan* newspaper, whose editorial line can be considered both a reflection and extension of Emirati foreign policy, has adopted pro-Israel framing after normalization, it was still shocking to see the extent of the paper's pro-Israel, anti-Palestinian position. Interestingly, *Al-Bayan's* pro-Israel framing surpassed that of its Israeli counterpart. These findings call for further research comparing news coverage patterns pre- and postnormalization in other Arab media outlets. In addition, media analysis studies should be supplemented with audience analyses to measure public perceptions of news credibility in the postnormalization era.

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