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Uprising to Proxy War: How *Time* and *Newsweek* Framed the Syrian Conflict (2011-2016) from War versus Peace Journalism Perspectives

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Abstract

Based on the theoretical framework of Johan Galtung's war and peace journalism perspectives, this study examines framing of the Syrian conflict in *Time* and *Newsweek*. A total of 255 stories published during the five years of the conflict were analyzed for the dominant conflict frame (war versus peace frame), salient indicators of war and peace journalism and variations in framing during three significant stages of the conflict. A quantitative content analysis revealed war journalism dominated the news magazine coverage of the Syrian conflict in the United States. The analysis also shows significant differences in *Time* and *Newsweek's* coverage: *Time* magazine employed more war journalism indicators whereas *Newsweek* employed more peace journalism indicators. The study suggests that scholars should consider the type of news media and its associated characteristics such as the style of writing, space for coverage, and production time as factors that are likely to influence the preference of journalists to frame conflicts from a war over peace journalism perspective.

Keywords: Syrian war, Johan Galtung, content analysis, framing, magazine journalism

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Introduction

This study examines how news magazines in the United States covered the Syrian conflict from war and peace journalism perspectives. Conflict coverage has a high news value and is one of the more prominent media agendas. When a nation gets involved in a conflict, especially at a global level, the objectivity of its media is put to the test. At times, journalists—to support their nation's political stance—avoid reporting facts that portray the enemy in a positive manner.¹ Further, the media sensationalize conflicts through the scrutiny of clashes and death to make their coverage marketable.² This process, through which the media emphasize the violent aspects of a conflict, is termed war journalism. In contrast, when news reporters promote peaceful initiatives, it is called peace journalism. This study investigates the preferred journalism perspectives—war versus peace—that *Time* and *Newsweek* journalists chose to portray the Syrian conflict and if their frame choices varied during the prominent stages of the conflict. The period considered is from March 11, 2011 (anti-government protests began in Syria) to March 11, 2016 (marking five years of the conflict).

The Syrian conflict received immense international attention as peaceful protests for regime change turned into a civil war and progressed into the worst global humanitarian crisis since World War II. Between March 2011 and March 2016, more than 400,000 Syrians were killed, 13.5 million displaced and about 10 million needed.³ The mass migration of Syrians into neighboring nations and Europe aroused fears about terrorism, unemployment and economic strain among.⁴ A conflict of such high social and economic stakes and global consequence calls for the attention of mass communication scholars.

Recent studies examine conflicts from the theoretical framework of war versus peace journalism.⁵ Advocates of peace journalism praise Galtung's peace framework for its emphasis on developmental and interpretative journalism practices that ensure conflict coverage beyond everyday physical violence.⁶ On the contrary, a few scholars criticize the unbalanced approach of peace journalism that encourages bias towards peace frames. For instance, Hanitzsch⁷ states peace journalism expects reporters to be peacemakers, adhere to peace-centric conflict coverage and yet be objective in their coverage.

In modern day warfare, much of the battle takes place in the media.⁸ Framing is an integral part of conflict coverage because citizens depend largely on the media to make sense of the war.⁹ An emphasis on either war or peace journalism can systematically promote only an aspect of the conflict and change the manner in which citizens, including politicians, think about the conflict.¹⁰ Because media coverage can change the course of a conflict, it necessitates an examination of the way the media cover conflicts and if there are differences in such coverage among media outlets.

Given its ideological and political power, the United States has dominated the global perception of world events in the international arena. The U.S. media serve as news sources

for journalists and media outlets with limited revenues to sponsor foreign correspondents. Thus, this study confines its investigations to the American perspective. Additionally, the direct involvement of the United States in the Syrian conflict makes the issue salient for news magazines, namely the widely-read *Time* and *Newsweek*, in the United States. Syria has turned into a battleground for proxy wars with the United States' support for the rebels, who want to oust the authoritarian government, which is in turn backed by Russia.¹¹ Despite these complexities, this study neither intends to understand the political interests of the conflicting parties nor does it investigate the nature of the United States-Russian relationship.

Empirical analysis suggests there is growing literature on the media coverage of Syria, but these investigations are limited to either the initial period of the conflict¹² or to its visual representation.¹³ Additionally, these studies do not examine the conflict from war versus peace journalism perspectives. This study fills this gap in literature through a quantitative content analysis of magazine articles and investigates the salient indicators of war and peace journalism and differences in the *Time* magazine and *Newsweek* coverage. The reason for analyzing magazines is twofold: unlike newspapers, magazines provide a comprehensive and in-depth coverage of conflicts. Cruickshank¹⁴ equates news magazines to national leaders, who strive to inform and interpret events and stories for readers. Likewise, Abrahamson,¹⁵ who has regularly called for new directions in magazine scholarship, writes: "Magazines not only reflect or are a product of the social reality of the times, but they also serve a larger and more pro-active function that they can also be a catalyst, shaping the social reality of their sociocultural moment."¹⁶ Secondly, magazines have a niche audience, who tend to spend more time reading them to gratify their infotainment needs.¹⁷ The specific focus on *Time* and *Newsweek* serves to address the dearth of content analysis studies of news magazine content that scholars such as Greenwood and Jenkins¹⁸ and Riffe, Lacy and Drager¹⁹ have pointed out.

Syrian Conflict: From an Uprising to a Proxy War

A wave of protests called the Arab Uprising ignited in Tunisia in 2010 and spread to the Middle East and North Africa. It toppled authoritarian rule in a few nations but in Syria it started a civil war. Although initial protests in Syria were held on a low scale, in March 2011 the news about the torture of teenage boys for writing anti-regime slogans galvanized citizens to join the pro-democracy rallies in large numbers.²⁰ The protesters demanded President Bashar al Assad to resign and end the 48-year-old regime.²¹ The Assad government reciprocated with violence as crowds became uncontrollable. It deployed military forces, killed a hundred civilians daily, cut food and water supplies to rebel towns and through its intelligence apparatus cracked down on rebel leaders.²² During this time, a faction of the Syrian army, consisting mainly of Sunni soldiers, took up arms against the government.²³ This group, which called itself the Free Syrian Army (FSA), began to fight for the rebels. The

battle now pitted the Assad regime—consisting of Alawite, Shi'a Muslims and Christian minorities—against the FSA and Sunni-led rebel groups.

By 2012, pro-Assad groups volunteered to form the National Defense Force and were joined by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, a unit of Iran's armed forces. Later, Hezbollah, the Shi'a Islamic group from Lebanon, entered the conflict on Assad's side²⁴ whereas the Kurds, a minority group in northern Syria joined the rebels. As the conflict progressed within the Syrian border, foreign powers began to provide military, financial and technical support to the clashing parties. The United States trained the FSA, recruited new members, and also equipped them with weapons. With the help of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan, America provided military aid and weapons to the rebels through Turkey.²⁵ On the other hand, Assad and his forces received weapons and financial aid from Russia. While all the operations took place secretly, both the United States and Russia denied any assistance to either side.^{26 27}

In 2014, the militant group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which separated from Al Qaeda, added a new dimension to the sectarian conflict. Although ISIS aimed to oust Assad, it also fought the rebels, thereby indirectly helping Assad. During the same year, the United States declared that ISIS was a threat to its security and began air strikes in Syria to counter ISIS' growing presence. The conflict became more complex when Russia entered the war in 2015 to bomb ISIS militants. However, the U.S. officials claimed that Russian forces were instead striking U.S-trained rebels.²⁸ Thus, the peaceful protests that began with no allegiance to any group turned into a battleground for sectarian fights and proxy wars between world powers.

Along with death and destruction, the war worsened Iranian-Saudi relations, and relations between the West, Iran and many Arab countries.²⁹ Another consequence was the refugee crisis that resulted from millions entering illegally into the European Union to seek asylum, when most of Europe was still dealing with an economic crisis and was not prepared to handle the mass migration.³⁰

War versus Peace Journalism

Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung coined the term peace journalism as a practical concept to encourage journalists to cease the promotion of "war, violence, propaganda and causes promoted by elites and establishments and facile and polarized victory/defeat reality constructions."³¹ The conscious choices that journalists make to report on the non-violent aspects of a conflict rather than on its violent, sensational and newsworthy side are termed as peace journalism.³² When journalists pursue peace journalism their reports aim to tone down ethnic and religious differences and to promote conflict resolution, reconstruction and reconciliation.³³

War correspondents Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick promoted Galtung's cause among journalists, especially after the Gulf War in 1991.³⁴ They further broke down Galtung's war and peace journalism concept into "an arsenal of professional techniques."³⁵ Thus, according to Lynch & McGoldrick,³⁶ in war journalism, reporters emphasize violence, overlook peace initiatives, focus on official sources, explain conflict without a historical context and promote dehumanization, polarization and propaganda. Journalists were encouraged to "focus on solutions, report on long-term effects, orient the news on ordinary people, report on all sides, and use precise language."³⁷

Peace journalism is like health reporting, where the battle against a disease is explained with a thorough background on causes, cures and preventive measures. In contrast, war journalism is reporting about one team in a competitive game, playing with a zero-sum attitude.³⁸ According to Lynch, peace journalism thrives on conflict but it should not highlight violence.³⁹ In fact, Lynch argues that journalists should actively ignore events and differences among people who have the potential to start a war.⁴⁰ Similarly, Perez argues that conflict is necessary because it reflects development in society.⁴¹ A change is a conflict with the status quo and such a change brings about positive effects.⁴²

Criticism against peace journalism, as mentioned earlier, is focused on its departure from objective journalism and on the transfer of peacekeeping responsibilities from political and social elites to journalists. For instance, Hanitzsch⁴³ states, "Peace journalism draws epistemologically from a naive realism and is, according to mass communication theory, largely based on the assumption of powerful, causal and linear media effects."⁴⁴ At the same time, Hanitzsch⁴⁵ recognizes that peace journalism can lead to peaceful settlement of conflicts. Advocates of peace journalism such as Lee and Maslog,⁴⁶ McGoldrick⁴⁷ and Shinar⁴⁸ argue that peace journalism should be accepted as a new form of journalism that is developmental and that promotes a democratic understanding of conflicts. Moreover, adoption of peace journalism can help "delineate the potential global impact of conflicts; call public attention and opinion to such threats; indicate and hopefully satisfy demands for more balanced coverage; and stimulate alternative interpretations and critical reflection."⁴⁹

Media Framing of Conflicts

The perspective of war versus peace journalism has its foundations in the theoretical framework of framing. Frames are the architecture on which individuals construct meaning to understand social reality and decide their response to it. For Entman,⁵⁰ framing is to "select and make salient some aspects of reality in such a way as to promote a problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation."⁵¹ In journalism, frames are the words, exemplars, metaphors, phrases and visuals that reporters utilize to provide an interpretation of an event or an individual to their readers. These devices are a package that signifies the presence of frames and political positions.⁵² Framing in conflicts involves the clashing parties constructing these interpretative packages to make issues they perceive as salient.⁵³

Scholars have extensively employed war and peace frames to study media coverage of conflicts.⁵⁴ Although the consensus among these scholars is that conflicts are framed more from the war perspective than from the peace perspective, a few studies provide contradictory evidence. For instance, Fahmy and Eakin⁵⁵ found that despite the criticism of Israel for unethical killings at the international level, an Israeli newspaper employed more war journalism indicators in its coverage in comparison to non-Israeli newspapers. This finding contradicted that the media tends to forward the political narrative of their government.⁵⁶ At the same time, the scholars also found that the Israeli newspaper also used more peace journalism indicators than the non-Israeli newspapers. Fahmy and Eakin⁵⁷ argue that the outcome was due to the lack of clear distinctions between peace journalism and tenets of objective reporting. Hence, they advocate for a refined peace journalism perspective. Similarly, newspapers in Sri Lanka also framed the conflict with Tamil Tigers (LTTE) from a peace perspective.⁵⁸ Sri Lankan journalists confirmed an emphasis on peace journalism to fulfill their moralistic responsibility rather than to echo the shift of its government policies towards peace negotiations with LTTE.⁵⁹

Factors such as proximity to the war,⁶⁰ sources, religion and non-involvement in the conflict⁶¹ also influence the preference of journalists for peace frames. This suggests that it is not always the journalistic conscience that adopts peace journalism. Lacasse and Forster⁶² found that in comparison with news sources distant from the U.S.-Mexico border (*The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *The Plain Dealer*, *Chicago Sun-Times*), sources in close proximity to the conflict zone (*Houston Chronicle*, *The Arizona Republic*, *The San Diego Union-Tribune* and *The Los Angeles Times*) utilize more peace journalism frames, and present a less pessimistic and negative view of the fighting parties in the drug war in Mexico. In examining the war and peace framework in the context of the Iraq war, Maslog et al.⁶³ found that in spite of no involvement in the conflict, media in Muslim nations were less supportive of the war and of the British/American invasion of Iraq as compared to non-Muslim nations which were more supportive of Western powers and less supportive of Iraq. Moreover, foreign wire stories were more war journalism-oriented than locally sourced stories.

After the contextualization of Galtung's⁶⁴ war versus peace journalism tenets from a quantitative content analysis approach,⁶⁵ the framework received increased attention from scholars privileging conflict communication. Scholars investigated the war and peace journalism framework in the context of the Pakistan-India conflict over Kashmir in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*,⁶⁶ the Afghanistan and Israeli-Hezbollah wars⁶⁷ and the Lebanon war of 2006.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the growing literature on conflict studies reflects that the examination of war versus peace journalism is neglected in the context of the Syrian conflict.

Framing the Syrian conflict

A few recent studies that come close to analyzing the framing of the Syrian conflict show evidence that war journalism dominates the media coverage⁶⁹ but as stated earlier these studies do not provide a thorough and holistic portrayal of the Syrian conflict. For instance, Abdul-Nabi⁷⁰ found that the Qatar government and Gulf nations' foreign policies influenced the coverage of Syrian conflict in *Al Jazeera-Arabic* and *Al Jazeera-English*. However, this study examined only one week's coverage after the Al-Ghouta Chemical Weapons attack in Damascus.

Through an analysis of Russian, European and U.S. newspapers, Godefroidt⁷¹ found that framing of the Syrian conflict in these media aligned with the geopolitical role these nations play in the conflict. However, the study does not consider Galtung's war and peace framework nor does it consider articles published after November 2013. In the same vein, Lundgren-Jörum⁷² not only limits her examination of the conflict to the period between March 2011 and November 2011 but also overlooks media framing. Her analysis of press releases shows that the conflicting parties are engaged in a blame game, with the Syrian regime framing the conflict as a foreign conspiracy where terrorists kill civilians and security personnel; whereas the opposition terms the conflict as a domestic event initiated by locals. The above-mentioned studies contribute significantly to the literature on coverage of the Syrian conflict, but they do not investigate its framing in *Time* and *Newsweek*. A study by Greenwood and Jenkins⁷³ gets closest to the investigation of the Syrian conflict in *Time* and *Newsweek*, but the scholars account for coverage of only photographs, not text; and analyze only actor-related frames, not Galtung's⁷⁴ war versus peace framework. Hence, we consider the following research question:

RQ1: Between war and peace journalism, what was the dominant perspective in the U.S. news magazines' coverage of the Syrian conflict?

Scholars have extensively considered *Time* and *Newsweek* in content analyses and framing studies.⁷⁵ These magazines represent the dominant view of mainstream media⁷⁶ and explicate how readers regard conflicts across the United States and the world (Cruikshank, 2014). Their moderate political views resonate with the popular public opinion; neither of the magazines adheres to an ideological viewpoint of an organization.⁷⁷ "Their relatively leisurely deadlines usually allow them to canvass official sources (and other media) thoroughly, distilling the results in a narrative reflecting the principal themes in the news."⁷⁸

As discussed earlier, magazines cover issues at length, provide expert commentaries on social, economic and other real-world issues and make certain agendas salient for the public.⁷⁹ As compared to other media, audiences are more likely to read magazines during leisure time and for a longer time.⁸⁰ *Time* and *Newsweek* are among the highest read news magazines in the United States and have gained reputation for their coverage of issues among global audiences.⁸¹ Hence, we investigate how the two magazines differ in their framing of the Syrian conflict:

RQ2: What were the differences, if any, between the *Time* and *Newsweek*'s coverage of the Syrian conflict from the war and peace journalism perspectives?

RQ3: What are the differences, if any, in the salient indicators of war journalism and peace journalism manifest in the *Time* and *Newsweek*'s coverage of the Syrian conflict?

An examination of frames employed during different stages of a conflict is necessary to understand the choices journalists make to interpret the event for their readers.⁸² These interpretations are structured in ways that support the interests of the powerful.⁸³ Hence, media which are mouthpieces of a government will frame a conflict in a manner that supports the administration in power. Variations in media frames also provide knowledge about factors such as ideological differences or political leanings of journalists, organizational structures and journalistic routines that influence the framing process.⁸⁴ As previously discussed, in peace journalism journalists are expected to include peace frames routinely in their reports; we argue that an examination of frames during different conflict stages will provide insights into how journalists interpreted these events for the public.

As the Syrian conflict is ongoing and involves engagement of various groups at different stages, the conflict period was divided into three time intervals. Period I (March 11, 2011 to June 28, 2014) signified the beginning of the Syrian civil war with protests against Syrian President Assad's regime; period II (June 29, 2014 to September 29, 2015) included the period of United States opposing ISIS during which the terrorist organization declared a caliphate and U.S.-led allied forces began air strikes on Syria; and period III (September 30, 2015 to March 11, 2016) involved Russian intervention in the conflict and the Russian-U.S. ceasefire plan for Syria. Although air strikes on Syria have not ceased, each time interval represents a significant stage in the conflict. Based on the above discussion, we examine the following question:

RQ4. What were the differences, if any, in the U.S. news magazines' coverage of the Syrian conflict during the three periods in terms of the war versus peace journalism perspectives?

Through the examination of the above research questions, this study fills dearth in literature in a threefold manner: it examines magazine coverage, considers the framing of the whole five-year conflict period and applies the theoretical framework of war and peace journalism to the Syrian conflict.

Method

This study investigates how news magazines in the United States covered the Syrian conflict based on Johan Galtung's classification of peace and war journalism.⁸⁵ A total of 255 stories published in *Time* (n = 115) and *Newsweek* (n = 140) during the five-year war period from March 11, 2011 to March 11, 2016 were analyzed for variables such as dominant

frame (peace or war journalism), salient indicators of peace and war journalism, frequency of stories, date and story length. The objective was also to determine the extent to which the two news magazines, namely *Time* and *Newsweek*, varied in their employment of war versus peace journalism.

Time and *Newsweek* are two of the oldest weekly news magazines in the United States with digital and print subscriptions. Time Inc., which separated from its parent company Time Warner in 2014 to operate as a public company for revenue generation, owns *Time* magazine.⁸⁶ The Alliance for Audited Media reports show that *Time* had an overall circulation of 3.03 million in 2015 whereas *Newsweek* had a circulation of one million copies in the same year.⁸⁷ The drastic fall in the revenue of *Newsweek* prompted the owner The Washington Post Company to sell the publication to Sidney Harman, who purchased it to save the publication from closing.⁸⁸ In 2010, the magazine merged with website *The Daily Beast* and ceased its print publication on December 31, 2012 to launch itself into a digital format called *Newsweek Global*. However, when the IBT Media took over the ownership in 2013, *Newsweek* was re-launched in its original print edition format on March 7, 2014. It is important to note this transition for two reasons: digitalization gives more space to editors to introduce variations in frames⁸⁹ and this period of switch in publication is examined in this study. However, it should be noted that this study does not account for these changes because an examination of how media ownership influences conflict coverage is beyond the scope of this study.

Data Collection

All the articles published during the five-year period were analyzed. Sampling was not considered because conflict events are best analyzed through coding all the units in the corpus.⁹⁰ Articles from *Time* magazine were accessed from the Academic Search Complete database, whereas articles from *Newsweek* were obtained from LexisNexis database. Both databases provide access to print and digital issues of the two magazines. Two separate databases were used because LexisNexis does not archive *Time* magazine. Data was collected using the search term “Syria*” independently for each magazine. The year-end issues, editorial, commentaries, hard stories, photo features and feature stories were included. An initial search produced a total of 645 articles from the two magazines for the five-year period. However, articles less than 100 words and standalone photos that did not provide in-depth and comprehensive coverage, along with letters, obituaries, reviews of books and plays were excluded. Articles that focused on the war in Iraq and partially mentioned Syria (less than 100 words) were also excluded. Each story was assigned a unique number for identification. The unit of analysis was an individual article.

Coding Categories and Procedure

Categories were adopted from Lee and Maslog⁹¹ because these are used extensively in conflict studies based on war and peace journalism perspectives. The author tested the application of these categories on a set of data to ensure mutual exclusiveness and

exhaustiveness of the categories and to identify approaches and language that the two publications used. Attention was paid to the words, metaphors, adjectives, and tone the articles employed. Out of the 24 category-indicators suggested by Lee and Maslog,⁹² 18 were included: nine indicators for war journalism and nine indicators for peace journalism. The categories (indicators) were based on two themes: approach-based and language-based. Definitions for the categories are provided in Appendix 1.

For war journalism, the approach-based criteria included: (i) *Visibility of war* (ii) *Elite orientation* (iii) *Differences-oriented* (iv) *Focus on here and now* (v) *Dichotomous* (vi) *Partisan* and (vii) *Zero-sum orientation*. War journalism under the language-based criteria, included: (viii) *Demonizing* and (ix) *Victimizing*. For peace journalism frames, the approach-based criteria included: (i) *Invisibility of war* (ii) *People-oriented* (iii) *Agreement-oriented* (iv) *Causes and consequences* (v) *Non-dichotomous* (vi) *Non-partisan* and (vii) *Win-win orientation*. Under the language-based criteria, indicators for peace frame included: (viii) *Avoids victimizing language* and (ix) *Avoids demonizing language*.

When any of the above indicators for either war or peace journalism was found in a story, a score of 1 was marked; otherwise, a score of 0 was recorded for indicators that were not present. The frame with the highest score was considered dominant. For instance, if the number of indicators for war journalism was more than peace journalism, then the story was considered as war journalism and vice versa. In cases where scores for war and peace journalism were equal, the story was considered as 'neutral.' The index score for war journalism ranged from 0-9 and for peace journalism ranged from 0-9.

Inter-coder reliability

An engineering student and a media student were trained to code stories to attain a mutual understanding of the codebook. Inter-coder reliability was tested on 10% to 15% of the data randomly chosen from the population. Thus, 15 articles from *Time* and 15 from *Newsweek* were selected using a stratified random sampling method. Reliability was calculated using Scott's pi and for all categories reliability ranged from .76 to .93. Hence, overall reliability was satisfactory. For war journalism indicators, Scott's Pi was: visibility of war (.81); elite orientation (.93); differences-oriented (.84); here and now (.93); dichotomizing (.76); partisan (.77); zero-sum orientation (.89); victimizing (.93); demonizing (.91). For peace journalism indicators, Scott's Pi was: invisibility (.92); people-oriented (.86); agreement-oriented (.81); causes and consequences (.83); non-dichotomizing (.80); non-partisan (.81); avoids victimizing language (.93); avoids demonizing language (.91). Chi-squares, ANOVAs and t-tests were used to conduct the analysis.

Results

Overall out of the 255 stories examined, 45.1% were from *Time* ($n = 115$) and 54.90% were from *Newsweek* ($n = 140$). These stories were published during the five-year conflict period in Syria (March 11, 2011 to March 11, 2016; see *Figure 1*). The average

length of the stories across the total sample was 1,295.75 words with a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1,001.87 words. The average length for the stories published in *Time* was less than the total average, with 1,143.57 words and with an *SD* of 992.37. On the other hand, articles in *Newsweek* had a mean length of 1,420.76 words and an *SD* of 994.34 words. The difference between the length of articles in *Time* and *Newsweek* was significant at $t = (253) = -2.217$; $p = .02$.

RQ1 examined the dominant frame in the coverage of the Syrian conflict in both news magazines (see Table 1). Results show that war journalism dominated 147 stories (57.6%) as compared to 87 stories (34.1%), which were dominated by peace journalism; 21 stories (8.2%) were neutral, $\chi^2 (2, N = 255) = 3.72$, $p = 0.15$. Along with framing more stories from the war journalism perspective, the news magazines also used more war journalism indicators ($n = 1,176$) than peace journalism indicators ($n = 874$). The difference between the proportion of war journalism indicators ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 2.11$) and peace journalism indicators ($M = 3.43$; $SD = 1.94$) was significant, $t (254) = 4.95$, $p = 0.00$.

Table 1

Frequency of stories framed from war and peace journalism perspectives in the two news magazines

	<i>Time</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>	Total
War	73	74	147
Peace	32	55	87
Neutral	10	11	21
Total	115	140	255

Note: $\chi^2 (2, N = 255) = 3.72$, $p = 0.15$ (ns)

Figure 1

Figure 1. Number of stories that *Time* and *Newsweek* published about the Syrian conflict from March 2011 to March 2016

RQ2 investigated the differences between the coverage of the Syrian conflict in *Time* and *Newsweek* (see Table 1). In terms of war journalism, both magazines published about the same percentage of stories. *Time* published 73 stories (63%) whereas *Newsweek* published 74 stories (52.85%). Both magazines also published the same percentage of neutral stories (*Time* = 10; 8.69% and *Newsweek* = 11; 7.85%). However, between the two magazines, *Time* ($n = 32$ or 27.82%) published a small proportion of peace journalism stories as compared to *Newsweek*, which published 55 (39.28%) peace journalism stories

RQ3 examined the salient indicators of war and peace journalism in *Time* and *Newsweek's* coverage. *Time* ($M = 5.15$; $SD = 2.14$) used a higher proportion of war journalism indicators than *Newsweek* ($M = 4.16$; $SD = 1.98$). The two news magazines differed significantly in their overall use of war journalism indicators, $t(253) = 3.89$, $p = 0.00$.

Table 2 shows that across the sample, the Syrian conflict was majorly framed with war journalism indicators of visibility of war ($n = 175$), elite orientation ($n = 169$) and differences-oriented ($n = 158$). However, unlike previous studies such as Fahmy and Eakin (2013), and Lee and Maslog (2005), the war journalism indicator of 'here and now' was employed least frequently.

Table 2

Frequency and percentages of war journalism indicators used in the coverage of the Syrian conflict in *Time* and *Newsweek*

War indicators	<i>Time</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>	Total	Chi Sq. (p-value)
Visibility of war	79 (45.14)	96 (54.86)	175 (100)	.983
Elite orientation	83 (49.11)	86 (50.89)	169 (100)	.071
Differences-oriented	86 (54.43)	72 (45.57)	158 (100)	.000**
Here and Now	51 (60.71)	33 (39.29)	84 (100)	.000**
Dichotomizing	70 (51.47)	66 (48.53)	136 (100)	.029*
Partisan	70 (52.63)	63 (47.37)	133 (100)	.012*
Zero-sum oriented	49 (62.02)	30 (37.98)	79 (100)	.000**
Victimizing language	40 (38.83)	63 (61.17)	103 (100)	.098
Demonizing language	66 (47.48)	73 (52.52)	139 (100)	.402
Total	594 (50.51)	582 (49.49)	1,176 (100)	

Note: *p < .05; **p<0.001 Parenthesis includes percentage of salient indicators for war journalism indicators.

Between *Time* and *Newsweek*, the war journalism indicators of differences-oriented ($n = 158$), here and now ($n = 84$), dichotomizing ($n = 136$), partisan ($n = 133$) and zero-sum orientation ($n = 79$) differed significantly. Additionally, the coverage of *Time* magazine was more differences-oriented ($n = 86$), focused on the dissimilarities between the conflicting parties whereas *Newsweek* framed the conflict largely from the war journalism indicator of visibility of war ($n = 96$). Stories in both the magazines were elite-oriented (*Time* = 83; *Newsweek* = 86).

Table 3

Frequency and percentages of peace journalism indicators used in the coverage of the Syrian conflict in *Time* and *Newsweek*

Peace indicators	<i>Time</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>	Total	Chi Sq. (p-value)
Invisibility of war	44 (40.74)	64 (59.26)	108 (100)	.231
People-oriented	43 (34.67)	81 (65.33)	124 (100)	.001**
Agreement-oriented	15 (46.87)	17 (53.13)	32 (100)	.829
Causes and consequences	49 (40.83)	71 (51.17)	120 (100)	.197
Non-Dichotomizing	41 (39.05)	64 (60.95)	105 (100)	.104
Non-Partisan	33 (32.68)	68 (67.32)	101 (100)	.001**
Win-Win orientation	12 (63.15)	7 (36.85)	19 (100)	.100
Avoids Victimizing language	74 (50.34)	73 (49.66)	147 (100)	.040*
Avoids Demonizing language	51 (43.22)	67 (56.77)	118 (100)	.576
Total	362 (100)	512 (100)	874 (100)	

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < 0.01$ Parenthesis includes percentage of salient indicators for peace journalism indicators.

In terms of peace journalism indicators, *Newsweek* ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 2.02$) employed more peace journalism indicators in its coverage than *Time* ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.93$). Overall, the two magazines differed significantly in their use of peace journalism indicators, $t = (253) = -2.04$, $p = 0.042$. Table 3 shows that overall the top three most frequently used peace journalism indicators were: avoids victimizing language ($n = 147$), people-oriented ($n = 124$) and causes and consequences ($n = 120$). Peace journalism indicators of people-oriented ($p = .001$), non-partisan ($p = .001$) and the language-based approach of “avoids victimizing language” differ significantly across the two magazines. In its coverage, *Time* avoided using victimizing ($n = 74$) and demonizing language ($n = 51$). In comparison, *Newsweek* employed more peace journalism indicators and focused its coverage more on common people and included historical and background information about the war in its articles. The top three peace journalism indicators in *Newsweek* were people-oriented ($n = 81$), avoidance of victimizing language ($n = 73$) and focus on the causes and consequences of war ($n = 71$).

The last research question examined the differences in the coverage of the Syrian conflict during three periods. The five-year Syrian conflict was divided into three stages with

period I of 1,206 days marking the beginning of the war, violent clashes between the rebels (citizens) and the Syrian government. Period II of 458 days highlighted the peak of the Islamic State's (ISIS) fight against the United States and its allies and the refugee crisis in Europe. Period III of 164 days was marked by key events such as the Russian intervention in the conflict and Russia and the United States along with other parties' engagement in peace talks for Syria for a brief period.

Table 4

Frequency of stories framed from war and peace journalism perspectives during the three periods of the conflict in news magazines in the United States

	War	Peace	Neutral	Total
Period I	74	39	11	124
Period II	50	27	7	84
Period III	23	21	3	47
Total	147	87	21	255

Note: $\chi^2(4, N = 255) = 2.90, p = 0.57$.

Comparisons between the three periods show a higher proportion of stories published during period I with 124 stories (48.6%) as compared to period II, which published 84 stories (32.9%) and period III, which had 47 stories (18.4%) about the Syrian conflict. Table 4 shows that during period I ($n = 74$) the proportion of stories framed from a war journalism perspective was more than the stories published during period II ($n = 50$) and period III ($n = 23$). Likewise, the proportion of stories framed from a peace journalism perspective during period I ($n = 39$) was more than the stories published during period II ($n = 27$) and period III ($n = 21$). The relation between stories framed from the war and peace journalism perspectives during the three periods was not significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 255) = 2.90, p = 0.57$. Implications of these findings are discussed below.

Discussion

Based on the war and peace journalism framework of Johan Galtung,⁹³ this study investigated the Syrian conflict coverage in *Time* and *Newsweek*. Specifically, it analyzed how the two magazines framed the five-year-long conflict between March 11, 2011 and March 11, 2016, the salient indicators (war versus peace journalism) the magazines employed in their coverage and if these indicators varied during key stages of the conflict.

Considering the complexity of the Syrian conflict, the multi-party involvement, the on-going sectarian and proxy wars, alleged war crimes and the humanitarian crisis, this study furthers an understanding of how magazines in the United States frame a foreign conflict, specifically during periods of the United States' clandestine involvement and later direct intervention in the conflict.

The study also furthers the understanding of the Syrian conflict for political elites and journalists. It provides a basis for political actors to reconsider their foreign policies towards nations engaged in wars, especially towards Syria where an end to its regional conflict is unlikely without a political settlement. Politicians need to push for a peaceful settlement as a proxy war is likely to have long-term societal consequences and give rise to extremist factions. A stalemate may turn Syria into a post-Soviet Afghanistan where disillusioned individuals formed a non-government army called the Taliban. In case of the media, journalists are a window for citizens to the conflicts in the outside world. They serve as the main news source for citizens, who cannot directly access conflict sites and witness wars. The frames that journalists employ have the power to influence people's perceptions. Hence, the study emphasizes that when reporting on wars, journalists should equally represent all sides, focus on humanitarian causes and be involved in peace-building. This is particularly important in the case of magazines, which have more space as compared to newspapers, to build attributes around key events. Hence, the news slant that magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* take are specifically salient considering their reach to an international audience in the form of digital copies and overseas editions.

In taking a quantitative approach, this study also contributes to extending the war versus peace journalism literature that has been mainly anecdotal and normative in nature. Analyzing the conflict from a peace journalism perspective, we take forward Galtung's ideas of contributing to peacebuilding process and hope that the results can be a guide in the formulation of peace journalism training programs for war correspondents.

Overall, the findings suggest that the news magazines in the United States framed the Syrian conflict from a war journalism perspective. The salient war journalism indicators also predominantly outdid the number of peace journalism indicators that the magazines employed. The direct involvement of the United States in the conflict can be considered as a likely reason for the strong war framing. Perhaps, the magazines intended to support the government's intervention in Syria and focused on war causalities and displacement to justify the U.S. air strikes. Moreover, the war theme portrayed the United States in a positive light—in the role of a mediator, who resorts to military forces for protection of the unarmed. Previous research suggests that the media align their frames to support the narrative of its government.⁹⁴ This finding also supports previous studies examining Galtung's framework⁹⁵ such as Lee and Maslog,⁹⁶ and Fahmy and Eakin.⁹⁷

Despite the dominance of war journalism in the overall coverage of the Syrian conflict by news magazines in the United States, there were differences in the use of war and

peace journalism indicators between the two magazines. *Newsweek* framed more stories from a peace journalism perspective and used more peace journalism indicators than *Time*. Although the number of war journalism stories in the two magazines was almost the same, war journalism dominated the coverage in *Time*. Such contradictions in framing in media of the same country go against the earlier evidence that media adhere with the frames of its political elites. These findings align with Fahmy and Eakin,⁹⁸ who reason that such an occurrence is because the peace journalism indicators are mere extensions of tenets for objective journalism, that is, they report facts as they are. Galtung's peace pointers do not indicate a proactive role by journalists towards peacebuilding and conflict resolution.⁹⁹

Out of the total 18 salient indicators, the two most dominant indicators for war journalism were visibility of war and elite orientation. For peace journalism, the two most dominant indicators were 'avoids victimizing language' and 'people-oriented'. It was expected that visibility of war would emerge as a dominant indicator, because the Syrian conflict caused a humanitarian crisis with the deaths of more than 470, 000 people, and displacement of more than 10 million, including the destruction of hospitals, schools and administrative buildings. Stories in both the magazines contextualized their coverage, providing information in the form of statistical data such as "...at least 80,000 Syrians have died since the start of hostilities in 2011, and more than 4 million have been forced from their homes..."¹⁰⁰ Another example is a story about the city of Aleppo. The article states, "...estimates vary between 13,500 and 23,000 dead. The city is divided between the Syrian government and opposition..."¹⁰¹

The emergence of elite orientation as the second dominant indicator of war journalism suggests the over dependence of journalists on elites such as politicians and administrators for information about the war. Journalists view elites as the raw material for news. The relationship between the media and elites is attributed to the tenets of journalism, which require reporters to gather authoritative data and present it without introducing their own opinions.¹⁰² Hence, a journalist's "interpretation is limited to such things as crowd-size estimates, descriptions of settings, depictions of how people appeared, and what those people said."¹⁰³ Previous studies also suggest that journalists quote the elite in order to economize on efforts required for reporting.¹⁰⁴ In many cases, elites exploit journalistic dependence to legitimize their claims and influence public opinion in their favor.

In the case of *Time* and *Newsweek*, the emergence of elite orientation as the second dominant indicator can be attributed to four factors. First, the slow production time of magazines that allows magazine journalists to connect with elites. Second is the initial conflict coverage, where the focus was on speculations about Obama bombing Syria without the permission of Congress and on the portrayal of Assad as a tyrant ruler. Third is the rise in the kidnappings of foreign journalists in Syria halting the access of journalists to the common people in Syria. The kidnapping and later beheading of American journalists such as Steven Sotloff (freelancer for *Time*) and James Foley (freelancer for *Global Post* and *Agency France-Presse*) by the Islamic State (ISIS) is a likely reason for journalists to report

remotely and depend on elites for information. During wars, governments are likely to involve in media censorship and limit the number of war correspondents. Although there are no known statistics on the journalists embedded in Syria, a fourth factor posits that because the United States was fighting a proxy war, it embedded few reporters that led to an overdependence on elite sources and lack of in-depth reporting on the conflict.

For peace journalism, the emergence of ‘avoids victimizing language’ as a dominant indicator can be associated with objectivity in journalism¹⁰⁵ but the people-oriented indicator as the second dominant indicator can be attributed to stories on refugees during the European refugee crisis, the resettlement process and the survival tactics of a few Syrians still living in the war-torn zone. The settlement of Syrians into Europe and parts of Canada and the United States provided a safe ground for journalists to connect with the victims and reframe the conflict from a humanitarian perspective. Further, the lack of victimizing language in media narratives is relational to the increasing backlash against Syrians refugees and their categorization as terrorists.

An unexpected finding was that the salient indicator of ‘here and now’ was the least employed among war journalism indicators—a finding in conflict with previous studies—¹⁰⁶ which suggests that the ‘here and now’ indicator reflects a more acute and superficial manner of coverage, such as episodic framing suggest by scholar Shanto Iyengar.¹⁰⁷ Others suggest that a focus on ‘here and now’ is a common reporting style among journalists tied to newspapers.¹⁰⁸ An explanation for low employment of ‘here and now’ frame can be attributed to the nature of magazine journalism in terms of writing style of stories and a relatively slow production process compared to newspapers.¹⁰⁹ This usage suggests that a choice of war journalism indicators can be influenced by the nature of the medium and characteristics such as writing style and production time.

Although there were no significant differences in war and peace journalism indicators during the three periods of the conflict considered for analysis, the frequency of stories and of salient indicators of war and peace journalism were more in the first period which was marked by the beginning of war, violent clashes between the rebels (citizens) and the Assad regime, use of chemical weapons by Assad and failure of a peace plan drafted by the United Nations. In the context of the United States, this was a period when the Obama government was building a case to seek approval from Congress to begin air strikes against Syria. However, these inferences cannot be considered at their face value because the days considered under period I were more than those considered under period II and period III.

Conclusion

This study examined the framing of the Syrian conflict based on the classification of Johan Galtung’s war and peace journalism perspectives in the *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines. A total of 255 stories published in the two magazines during the five-year war

period from March 11, 2011 to March 11, 2016 were content analyzed. The news magazines in the United States framed the Syrian conflict from a war journalism perspective. The frequency of war journalism indicators was also more than peace journalism indicators. *Newsweek* had a high proportion of war as well as peace journalism indicators as compared to *Time*. Another finding was that there were no significant differences in war and peace journalism during the three periods of the conflict considered for analysis.

Future studies should examine why journalists largely frame stories from a war journalism perspective. The scope of this study is limited as it does not investigate whether public opinion or elite decisions were influenced by framing decisions of journalists or whether the effects were reciprocal. Further the investigation only considers news magazines in the United States; news magazines of nations fighting in the conflict or even a comparative analysis of newspapers and magazines can further help to understand if the differences in journalistic writing styles between two media and the availability of a large space for magazine journalists influences the decision to include a more balanced framing of conflicts.

Scholars should examine factors that influence the choices of journalists in preferring specific frames in their conflict coverage. Such contributions can aid in formulating training programs to motivate journalists to choose peace journalism over war journalism. Moreover, the effects of war and peace journalism perspectives on readers should be analyzed through an examination of news comments on websites and social media such as Twitter and Facebook. The evidence of media agenda setting in conflict coverage and the likely influence on public opinion will direct editors in their gatekeeping tasks and encourage them to emphasize on peace journalism to pacify the existing differences among conflicting parties.

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- ⁹⁷ Fahmy and Eakin, "High Drama on the High Seas: Peace Versus War Journalism Framing of an Israeli/Palestinian-Related Incident."
- ⁹⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹⁹ Lee and Maslog, "War or Peace Journalism? Asian Newspaper Coverage of Conflicts."
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- ¹⁰² Daniel A. Berkowitz, "Reporters and Their Sources," in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, eds. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009): 102-115; Mark Deuze, "What is Journalism? Professional Identity and Ideology of Journalists Reconsidered," *Journalism* 6, no. 4 (2005): 442-464; Lee and Maslog, "War or Peace Journalism? Asian Newspaper Coverage of Conflicts."
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- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁵ Fahmy and Eakin, "High Drama on the High Seas: Peace Versus War Journalism Framing of an Israeli/Palestinian-Related Incident"; Lee and Maslog, "War or Peace Journalism? Asian Newspaper Coverage of Conflicts"; Maslog, Lee and Kim, "Framing Analysis of a Conflict: How Newspapers in Five Asian Countries Covered the Iraq War."

¹⁰⁶ Fahmy and Eakin, “High Drama on the High Seas: Peace Versus War Journalism Framing of an Israeli/Palestinian-Related Incident” Lee and Maslog, “War or Peace Journalism? Asian Newspaper Coverage of Conflicts”; Maslog, Lee and Kim, “Framing Analysis of a Conflict: How Newspapers in Five Asian Countries Covered the Iraq War.”

¹⁰⁷ Fahmy and Eakin, “High Drama on the High Seas: Peace Versus War Journalism Framing of an Israeli/Palestinian-Related Incident.”

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¹⁰⁹ Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and US Foreign Policy*.

Appendix 1

War journalism indicators

- (i) *Visibility of war*: focuses on violence, war casualties such as air strikes in Syria, use of biological weapons by Assad; presents the dead, injured in numbers. For instance, “80,000 Syrians have died since the start of hostilities in 2011” (*Time*; June 17, 2013); “Syria's children, more than 300 of whom have been slaughtered so far...” (*Newsweek*, December 19, 2011).
- (ii) *Elite orientation*: focuses on leaders and elites; stories loaded with quotes from Assad, Obama, Putin, leaders in their administration are examples. For instance, “...Russian parliament approve ... of Syrian President Bashar Assad... Sergei Ivanov, Putin’s chief of staff, stressed that...” (*Time*; Oct 12, 2015); “Secretary of State John Kerry... On Wednesday, Menendez and Schumer, along with Mark Kirk, a Republican from Illinois...” (*Newsweek*, December 18, 2013).
- (iii) *Differences-oriented*: highlights differences in perspectives/ideologies of the conflicting parties such as the United States and Russian strategies towards Syria, differences between ethnic groups fighting in Syria. For instance, “...pitting Iran-backed Shi'ites allied with the regime against Sunni rebels backed by Saudi Arabia and Qatar” (*Time*, December 17, 2013). “...Russian warplanes bombed Syrian rebel-held...” (*Newsweek*, February 25, 2016).
- (iv) *Focus on here and now*: covers breaking news while giving a little background. “France launches air strikes on IS beginning 11.55 pm EST” (*Time*, December 12, 2013), “Bomb rains kills 26 in Aleppo” (*Newsweek*, February 22, 2014).
- (v) *Dichotomous*: portrays parties as good and bad such as Russia, Assad and ISIS are bad guys whereas France, the U.K and the Free Syrian Army good guys. For instance, “Assad’s strategies could destabilize neighbors Iraq and Jordan. Civil war could ignite sectarian conflict in Lebanon and Turkey” (*Time*, April 12, 2011); “...Syria have brought brutal government crackdown--and renewed paranoia among dissidents...” (*Newsweek*, April 11, 2011).
- (vi) *Partisan*: is biased towards one side. For instance, phrases such as “ISIS real danger to Syria” (*Time*, April 12, 2014); “Russian help to Assad will not bring peace” (*Newsweek*, March 15, 2016).
- (vii) *Zero-sum orientation*: presents any win for one party as a loss for the other. For instance, phrases such as “ISIS wins, U.S. loses” (*Time*, June 2, 2011); “...but the rebels are winning in another arena--with U.S. help” (*Newsweek*, February 22, 2014) were coded under this.
- (viii) *Demonizing*: uses evil words and phrases such as “Assad is a torturous dictator” (*Time*, September 16, 2013); “...a savage massacre, vicious reprisals: arrests, torture and killing...” (*Newsweek*, February 5, 2013) were coded under this.
- (ix) *Victimizing*: uses destitute, devastated, tragic words and phrases that tell only what has been done to people. For instance, “...the boy whose battered and castrated corpse was returned...” (*Time*, June 2, 2011); “...Syrian people tried vainly to count the dead” (*Newsweek*, March 28, 2014).
- (x)

Peace journalism indicators

- (i) *Invisibility of war*: focuses on long-term effects such as emotional trauma, damage to society and culture. "...Syrian children missing out on education... displacement from their culture and roots" (*Time*, September 3, 2015); "The Syrian Women" (*Newsweek*, December 6, 2013).
- (ii) *People-oriented*: focuses on civilians and includes their quotes in the story. For instance, "...residents of Syria's largest city use colorful sheets to shield their homes..." (*Time*, April 15, 2013); "The Syrian Women" (*Newsweek*, December 6, 2013).
- (iii) *Agreement-oriented*: focuses on areas of possible solutions. For instance, phrases such as, "Assad should hold elections and meet with all conflicting groups" (*Time*, May 18, 2013), "U.N. says the revival of Syria truce is possible, working on peace talks" (*Newsweek*, June 1, 2013).
- (iv) *Causes and consequences*: present a conflict with historical and background details. For instance, articles that answer questions such as "Why did the Syrian war start? Why are the ethnic groups fighting in Syria?" are examples.
- (v) *Non-dichotomous*: avoids representing the parties as good guys and bad guys; is it non-discriminating. For instance, "In Syria's sectarian conflict, fighters on both sides are committing gruesome atrocities" (*Time*, May 27, 2013); "Struggle between Shia and Sunnis explained" (*Newsweek*, December 14, 2014).
- (vi) *Non-partisan*: represents all the parties in the conflict and provides an unbiased coverage. For instance, ISIS and FSA are both represented equally. Coders need to examine the article in its entirety instead of focusing on selected phrases.
- (vii) *Win-win orientation*: implies that if the parties work together there can be peace. For instance, phrases such as, "Russia and U.S. plan peace deal for Syria" (*Time*, March 4, 2016), "Obama, Putin agree to continue peace talks for Syria" (*Newsweek*, March 2, 2016) were coded under this.
- (viii) *Avoids victimizing language*: uses sympathetic and compassionate language. Instances related to how are Syrian availing of food, medical facilities, dead, loss of loved ones were coded under this. Coders need to examine the article in its entirety instead of focusing on selected phrases.
- (ix) *Avoids demonizing language*: avoids using terms such as "terrorist"; "extremist"; "fanatic" or "fundamentalist" when describing the enemy. Instances where Assad was simply recognized as the president and not as a tyrant, refugees were portrayed as individuals rather than terrorists were coded under this. Coders need to examine the article in its entirety to ensure the absence of these phrases.