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HOW DOES THE MEDIA COVER THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT DURING LAST YEAR?

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Annotation: The mass media play a huge role in today's political events, and the discussion of this dilemma deserves study, research, and disclosure. The Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as events related to it, have become one of the most important topics on the agenda of the world media. The article examines the media coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict in recent years of directly conflicting parties, as well as world news agencies.

Keywords: Arab-Israeli conflict, the mass media, the Middle East crisis, informational war.

The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the few unresolved conflicts today in the world, which study is relevant and requires careful research due to its long duration and numerous complicated aspects. As the Arab-Israeli issue remains one of the main problems on the global agenda, the mass media do not lag behind the latest sensations. However, covering this conflict, a variation in the provision of information began to be created depending on news agencies. And the mass media is already taking control of the public's reaction to the conflict. Unfortunately, the media frequently write biased, pursuing completely different goals or intentionally protecting only one participant in the conflict. It is worth looking at the problem from different sides, in particular, both Israel and Palestine in order not to become a victim of propaganda, incorrect content, and as a result, have a wrong idea of the situation. This should be done for several simple reasons – for creating a rational public opinion, enlightening people about the actual events of the conflict, and to show a disinformation flow that the media creates.

In history, the land of Palestine has always been a significant territory both politically and economically for many foreign states. The country once again finds itself in the spotlight with an unstable political situation on the world stage. On the border of the 20th century, the land of Palestine, then still under the mandate of the British Empire, was perceived by many international Jewish circles as a territory rightfully belonging to the Jewish state. The Jews, who drew ideas from the ideological movement of "Zionism", took persistent steps to achieve their main goal - to unite the entire Jewish people in their historical homeland – Eretz-Israel. The starting point of the conflict was the UN resolution on November 27, 1947, on the division of Palestine into two states: Jewish and Arab, with which the entire Arab world, including the people of Palestine, categorically disagreed[2]. This decision was one of the significant reasons for the formation of the Middle East as an arena of bloody wars[1].

The confrontation has been going on for so long that many countries and people have formed their views about the causes and ways of solving this crisis. Undoubtedly, the Arab-Israeli conflict has become one of the most important topics on the agenda of the world media. Today the activity of the media has become not just auxiliary as it was before, at the moment of the development of the information era, it can be identified as a full-fledged participant and a powerful influencer on the process and the future fate of any political event. So, the way different sources cover this issue ultimately affects many significant phenomena, such as, for example, public opinion, the reputation of governments on the world stage, support for one side or another, etc. Unfortunately, it is not always possible for the media to monitor, describe, write about events without depending on secondary factors, and most importantly, without pursuing the interests of other conflict subjects and giving them an objective assessment. It is often possible to notice different media coverage of the same event.

First, the local media of the countries that are parties to the conflict will be considered. Hundreds of announcements have been made by both sides, a huge number of articles have been written, and many reports have been taken from the scene of incidents in the past years. Reflecting on the events of the conflict, both Israeli and Palestinian media openly use accusations against each other not only about political confrontations, but there are also debates about the quality of media work.

Considering the unstable situation and development of Palestine, the mass media still gained momentum in the light of the evolution of the information war between Israel and Palestine. The Palestinian media plays a crucial role in expressing the position of Palestine and resisting the Israeli occupation. Touching on the topic of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian media, point to the oppression by the State of Israel, its colonial policy, discrimination against Palestinian Arabs. Using such headlines of news articles as "Palestine needs freedom", "Palestine will be free" Palestinian journalists often raise the topic of independence and sovereignty of their homeland. Pro-Palestinian news agencies are actively talking about human rights and freedoms, which, in fact, can be enjoyed by everyone, including Palestinians, but, unfortunately, they are violated concerning their people.

Covering the losses because of the collisions, the Palestinian media write in detail about the deaths of people, especially if they are Palestinian children or teenagers. Not to say that Palestinian journalists apply psychological pressure, trying to influence public opinion, indeed, statistics show that the number of victims of Palestinian citizens significantly exceeds the number of victims of Israelis.

The Palestinian media criticize Israeli news agencies for misinformation of readers, distorted facts, and pressure on pity, with small losses compared to Palestine. In the Arab-Israeli crisis, they also accuse Israel of cooperation with the United States, namely, cooperation in terms of reflecting events on the land of Palestine and Israel.

Along with the local Palestinian media, the Arab media do not stand aside and always cover the latest events from Palestine. It is not only the cultural, religious, and national similarities of the countries that play a role here but also human compassion and solidarity towards the Palestinians. Based on this fact, the Arab media, as well as the Arab people, actively support the side of Palestine. In general, the appeals of the Arab States should be interpreted as a desire to resolve the long-standing conflict in the Middle East.

Israel is distinguished by the abundance and diversity of printed and electronic mass media, which fully reflect the diversity of languages, political views, and religion in the country. As for the coverage of the confrontation by news agencies which officially registered in Israel, it is inherent in them to openly accuse the Gaza Strip of terrorist acts, which, according to them, are a threat not only to the State of Israel but also to the whole world. Often using this term, the media "cover up" and justify their colonial actions against the civilians of the Gaza Strip. At the same time, the Israeli media describe their military actions as a defensive reaction to the shelling and attack of terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip. According to The Times of Israel, an English-language online publishing house published since 2012, the shots fired in September 2021 were terrorist acts of Hamas, while the Israeli defense only intercepted them and retaliated against Hamas targets. Again, the Israeli media only describe facts, without any reasons or prerequisites, they do not mention the Palestinian losses and the situation there as a whole. Israeli journalists focus on terrorist groups, their danger, extremely aggressive military policy, radical views, and not on ordinary people living in the land of Palestine, who need help and shelter. Regarding its military actions against Palestine, the media is trying to point out that Israel adheres to the correct policy and does not start aggression first, all rocket attacks or other military actions are always a subsequent reaction after the so-called terrorist threats, and are only defensive.

In a BBC television news study, the Glasgow Media Group documented differences in the language that journalists use for Israelis and Palestinians. The study found that terms such as "atrocities," "brutal murder," "mass murder," "brutal cold-blooded murder," "lynching" and "massacre" were used to describe the death of Israelis, but not the death of Palestinians. The word "terrorist" has often been used to describe Palestinians. However, in reports of an Israeli group's attempt to blow up a Palestinian school, members of the Israeli group were called "extremists" or "vigilantes", but not "terrorists"[4].

While the Israeli and Palestinian media are pouring mutual accusations, the international media are trying to maintain neutrality. Usually, the Palestinian point of view is defended by the media of Muslim countries, often liberal Western media. In some cases, as the death of civilians, especially children, conservative news agencies of the USA, Britain, and other European countries join them.

The conservative media of the United States, which in turn have a mass audience, support the position of Israel - these are, in most cases, reactions to the attacks of Hamas. Some other countries also treat the state with tolerance. Based on the fact that the United States has been assisting Israel since the beginning of the conflict, this happens similarly in the so-called information war. Major American media outlets such as Fox News are announcing news related to the clashes between the Gaza Strip and Israel, already aiming to protect the position of Israel and accuse the Palestinian one: "*Hamas terrorists intend to kill as many Israelis as possible*". (Fox News)[5]; "*Hamas launched at least 45 rockets at Jerusalem*". "*A barrage of rockets fired from Gaza lit up the Israeli sky*". (PBS)[6].

As already mentioned, many world news agencies show neutrality in their articles and reports. An example is the British public information TV channel BBC: "*We hear deeply divisive stories from both sides*"[7]. As for the Russian media, they, in turn, strive to cover the problem in a more neutral language.

It cannot be argued that only Arab news agencies talk about the conflict from the Gaza side. Many media outlets in other countries are considering the conflict, such broadcasts include the statement of German new agency "DW": "*Israeli airstrikes illuminate the night sky, causing another sleepless night in the Gaza Strip*"[8]. Canadian news department called "Global News": "*Israel claims it has many more targets in Gaza*". This is how the Turkish news portal "Fox Haber" reacted to the 2021 conflict situation: "*Israel's war crimes do not stop, the picture from Gaza is getting scarier every day. Israel ignores the international community's call to stop the disproportionate use of force*"[9].

In recent years, the world's media have been using propaganda methods to disseminate information, some of them openly defend the aggressive side, others describe the situation of the victims with compassion. The involvement of the world's media in the conflict outrages the dissenting audience, but neutral language can also lead to disagreement.

Advocacy groups, governments, and individuals are using the Internet, new media, and social media to try to influence public perceptions of both sides in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Jerusalem Post writer Megan Jacobs wrote: "The war in the Middle East is being waged not only on earth but also in cyberspace". In general, since the emergence of the State of Israel, the authorities have tried in every way to control the traditional media in reflecting the situation in the Middle East. So, the Palestinian question usually remained disclosed, unsaid, or overlooked by people. But with the gradual increase in popularity of social networks and other online platforms, stories were "going into a logical puzzle". "Social networks are not only another logic of content consumption, but it is also a convenience for the user, who is becoming more mobile. Today, not only the media interact with social networks, but also social networks with the media"[3].

They affect:
- content;
- audience;
- services;
- usability (usability).

However, this easy way of spreading news has a huge problem, which creates a lack of high-quality information. In social networks, the process of information dissemination does not go the traditional way, as it usually happens - not from top to bottom, but from bottom to top. The main feature of social networks is that absolutely anyone with a registered account can distribute information. On the other hand, such free participation of people on the Internet significantly reduces the quality of content, its integrity, and reliability. In addition, someone's published statement on the Internet can cause a stir among the people, mislead other people, or provoke a conflict on religious, ethnic, racial grounds.

Today the Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the most covered conflicts in the media and discussed on the Internet in the 21st century. After the recent crisis in 2021, people began to actively post events and publicize the Arab-Israeli problem through social networks worldwide. In one of the most famous servers in the world "Instagram", covering almost 1 billion people, users at the time of the conflict in 2021 massively published events that took place on the territory of Palestine and Israel. It is worth emphasizing that in the so-called war on cyberspace, in recent years, Israel has begun to lose, and the public, at least on the Internet, increasingly supports the Palestinian position. In support of Palestine, about 3.2 million hashtags with the slogan #*freepalestine* and approximately a million with the phrase #*SaveSheikhJarrah* were used in various publications. In connection with a loud collision in the spring of 2021, photos and videos from the scene were widely distributed on the network. Video material that shocked Muslims in the holy month of Ramadan was the invasion of Israeli policemen into the al-Aqsa mosque and their violation of the order in this territory. Another short video clip recorded the offender's actions of the Israeli military, who threw explosives under the feet of Muslims reciting a prayer. And such inhumane behavior

and obscene actions on the part of Israel are increasingly going viral and getting into people's eyes. Instagram also has official donations for people affected by the conflict, mostly the accumulated amount of money goes to Palestinian victims. An example of this is the Instagram account *@theimeu* with approximately 350 thousand followers, which collected donations for the Palestinian people at the time of conflict.

Celebrities played a separate role in covering this conflict. Many actors, models, singers, sportsmen, and other popular people, who have an audience of tens of millions, have been posting events on Instagram for several days in a row, taking place in a hot spot in 2021. From the published posts, the support of the Palestinian side is visible. But, at the same time, most of the people did it neutrally, that is, without supporting anyone's side, they expressed more compassion for people who suffer from the wrong policies of states.

The rapid dissemination of information about the situation in Palestine on social networks not only, but also quickly gave its reaction. In 2021, after the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East, people from all over the world protested in support of Palestine in countries such as the USA, Canada, Turkey, Jordan, and the United Kingdom.

The problem in covering the Arab-Israeli conflict has existed since its inception and continues today. Due to incorrect reflection, the presentation of information in the mass media, there is also a wrong perception of people as a whole. Thus, the Arab-Israeli conflict is considered one of the few events that should be taken into account rather cautiously through the prism of mass media. Over the past five years, the situation in the region has been covered by many media outlets, as well as international mediators, which influence is much greater. While there are still information attacks from the two conflicting sides, international news agencies, when disclosing the events taking place between Israel and Palestine can be divided into three groups: those adhering to neutrality, pro-Israel, or those defending the position of Palestine. And such a different presentation of information misleads the public, forming a biased attitude among people. Social networks also do not guarantee verified messages, but there is more open access for people. Here, people themselves select the necessary data, while the media provide ready-made information under the guise of being valid and accurate.

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