

Transforming Media Coverage of Violent Conflicts

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Transforming Media Coverage of Violent Conflicts

The New Face of War

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Acknowledgments

This book is the culmination of a decade of joint work on the subject of media coverage of violent conflicts. Our aim over the years was to identify changes in the ways of representing and framing war and terror in the media. The study of conflicts in the Israeli context provided us with a handful of case studies, an outcome of the ongoing involvement of the Israeli military and society in various struggles. In the last decade alone, Israel has been engaged in several military operations and three asymmetrical conflicts: the second Intifada (2000–2005), the second war in Lebanon (2006) and the war in Gaza (2008–2009). The term ‘second’ hints that the Israeli involvement in various types of conflicts did not begin in the 21st century and has a history in and of itself. Unfortunately, the long and changing relationship between the media and the political establishment in the context of war and terror has turned Israel into a laboratory for analyzing media practices during war. The findings, on which we elaborate in this book, are enriched by the experience of other Western nation-states that were, and still are, involved in armed conflicts during the last decade, mainly the US and the UK in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Our central argument is that Western nationwide media have somewhat moved away from the position of serving as the mouthpiece of the government at war, to a new position in which they have become more independent players. During this process, new, sometimes subversive, personae have been conferred a status that in the past was reserved for the national, elite figures. We owe the development of these ideas to the students who participated over the years in the course ‘Media, Democracy, and War’ in the Communication and Journalism Department at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. We also wish to thank our colleagues Elihu Katz, Paul Frosh, Shoshana Blum-Kulka, Menahem Blondheim, and Anat First, who contributed insightful observations, some of them critical, to the development of our arguments. This is not to say that these colleagues, or our students, agreed to all of our claims and observations; however, the disagreements were often the basis for developing what we see as our best ideas. We also wish to extend our gratitude to Nava Lowenheim, Ella Klik, Moran Avital, and Ulrik Plesner, who assisted us by collecting materials and reading through the text.

The first part of the book is partially based on a series of studies we conducted between 2003 and 2012, some of which were published in a variety of media and communication books and journals. We would like to thank Routledge and the journals *Communication Review*, *Political Communication* and *Journal of Asymmetrical Conflicts* for granting us the rights to republish parts of the chapters and articles.

The final word in this book was written at the end of 2012, one year following the killing of Osama bin Laden, the greatest enemy of the US in the first decade of the 21st century, in the midst of the continuing struggle of a number of Arab societies against the dictatorial, corrupt regimes that have ruled for decades, and on the verge of an unpredictable, threatening future in the Middle East (and probably the rest of the world). We can only hope that in the coming decade the number of case studies that served to illustrate our claims in this book will decline.