

Digital vs Mainstream Media: Mapping Coverage Bias During the Israel Palestine Escalation

June 2021

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Overview

As violence escalated between Israeli forces and Palestinians over the last three weeks, there has emerged a contentious debate over how this conflict has been reported over some of the most popular news outlets worldwide. This includes long-ranging issues over how the broader discourse related to the Israel-Palestinian problem has been framed particularly in terms of the biases inherent in certain media reports on such sensitive issues.

Objective:

Our study attempts to cover the entire duration from the start of the escalation (8th May) to its tail end (23rd May) when the ceasefire was announced, and its immediate aftermath.

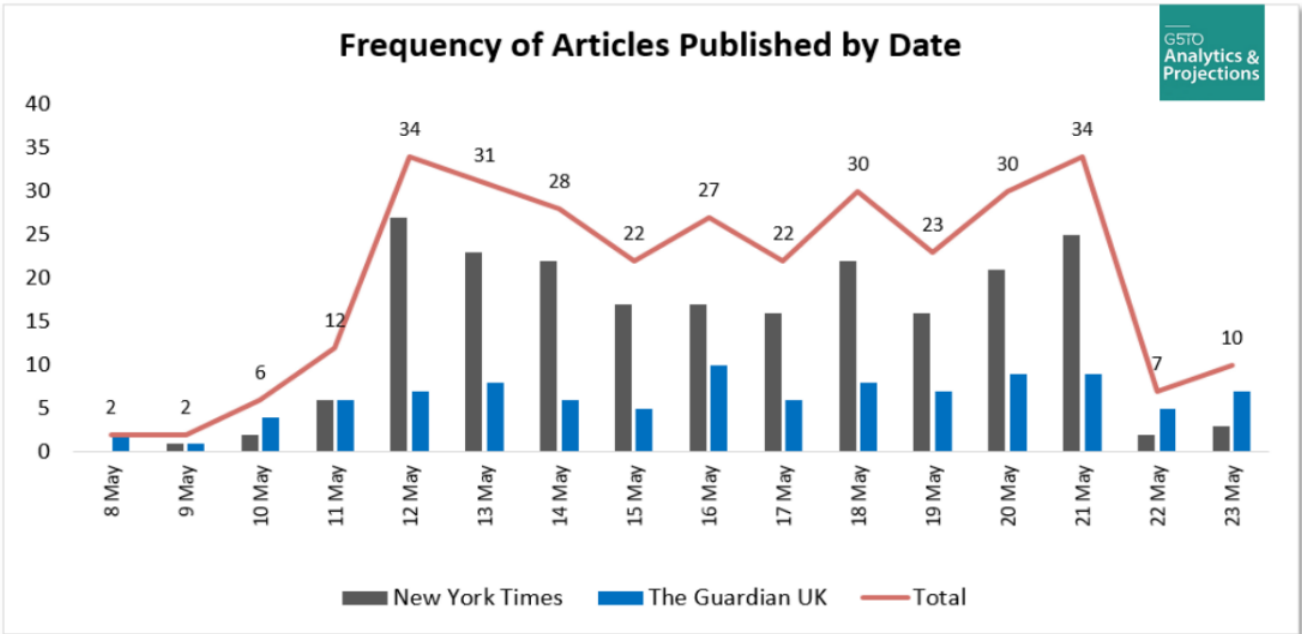
Data points:

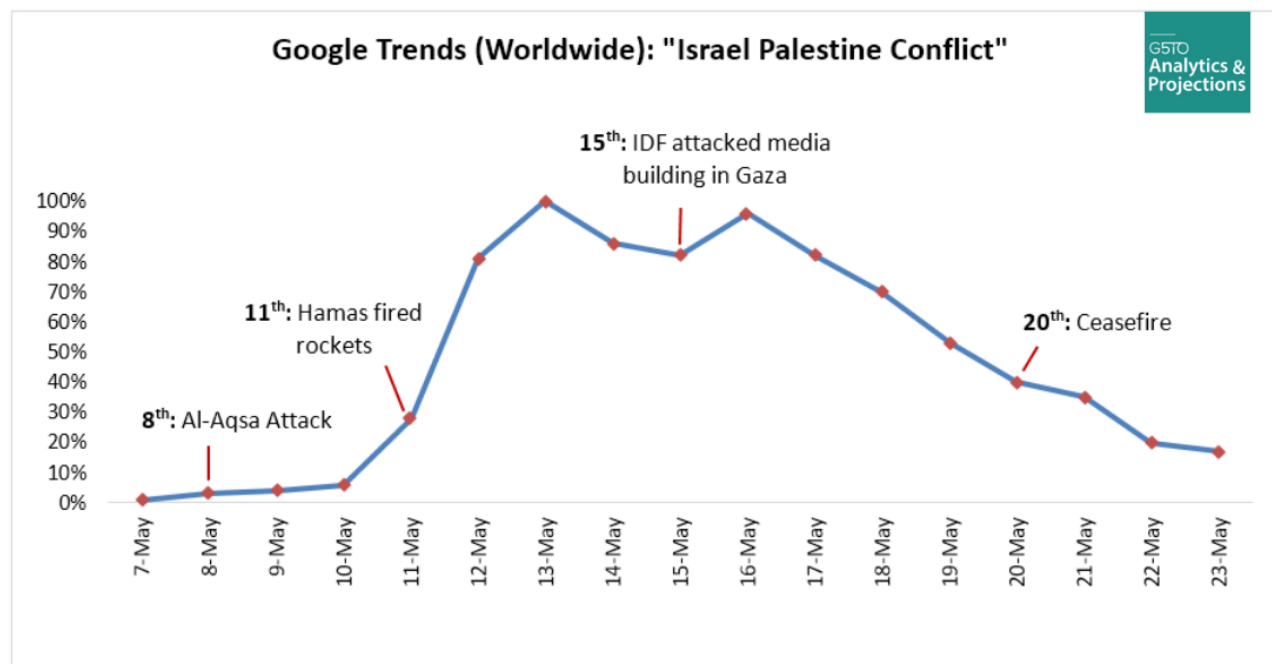
- a. Google Trends
- b. Twitter
- c. 320 Headlines from the New York Times and The Guardian (UK).

Date: 8th May to 23rd May '21

Findings/Analyses

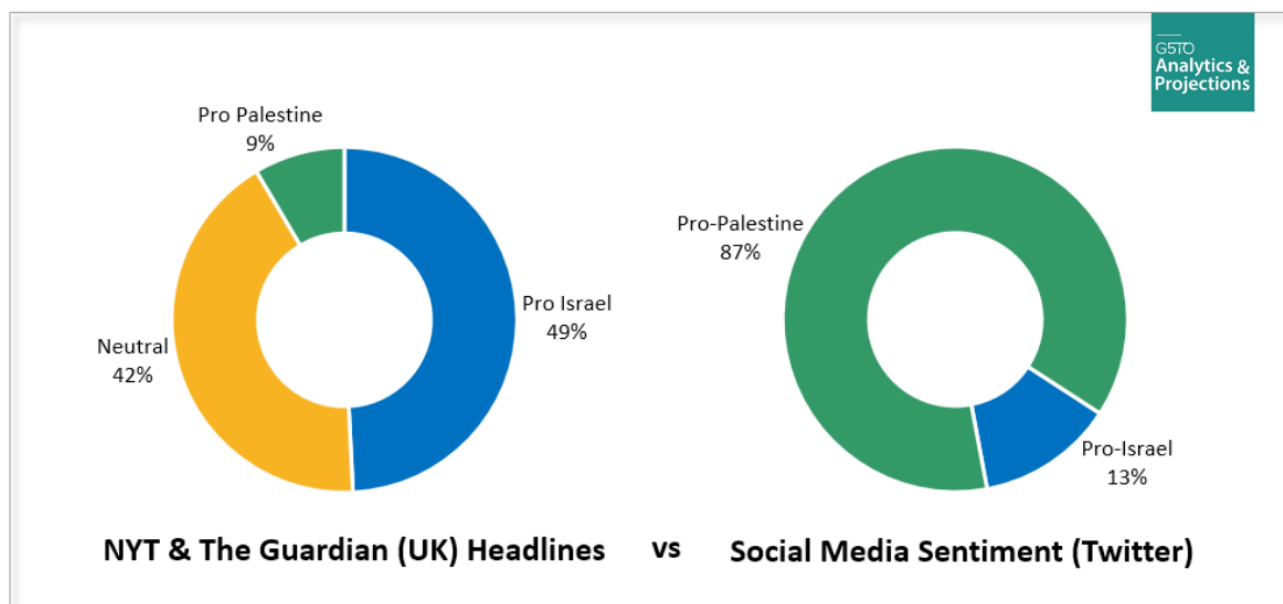
A total of 320 articles covering the Israel-Palestine issue were published in the New York Times and The Guardian (UK) over the course of two weeks, with frequency increasing as the issue escalated. Data from Google Trends, for the keyword “**Israel Palestine Conflict**”, follows a similar trajectory.





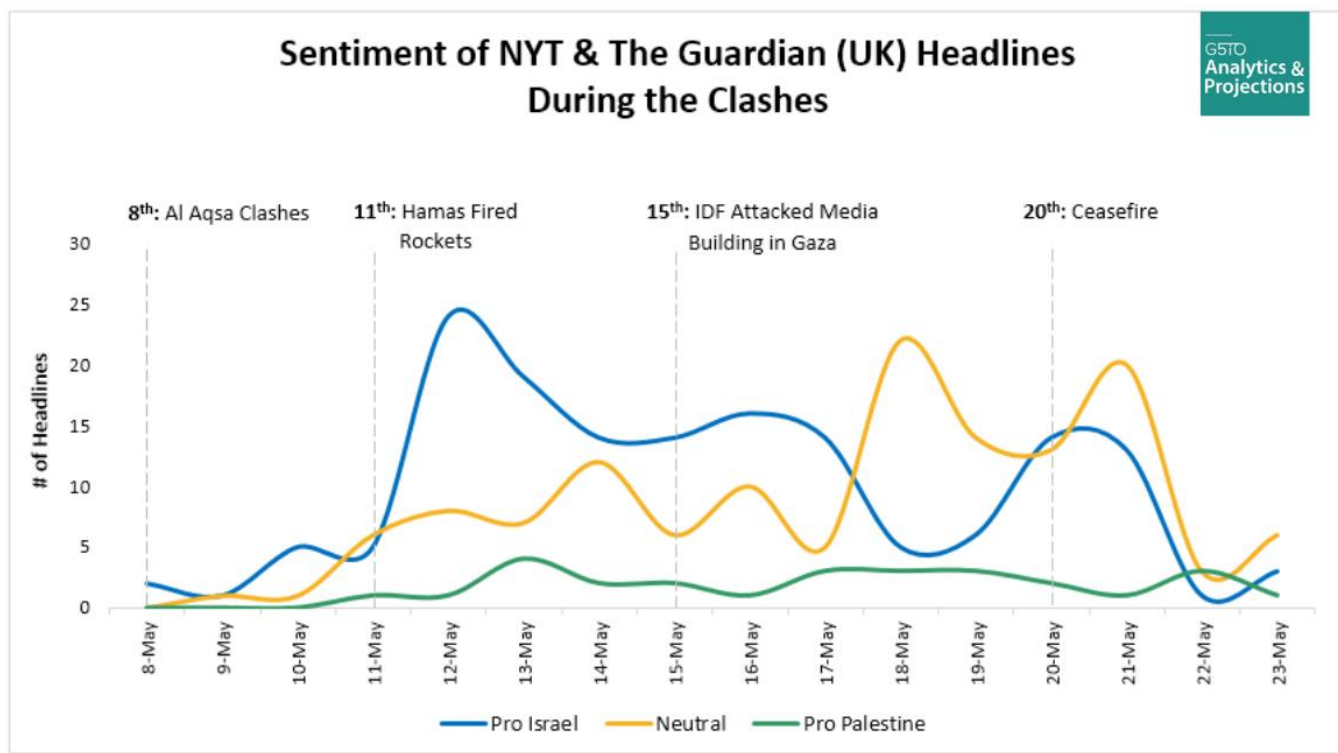
Insight #1:

- There was a clear divergence of reporting/coverage of the issue between mainstream and digital media, with Social Media Sentiment being overwhelmingly pro-Palestine.



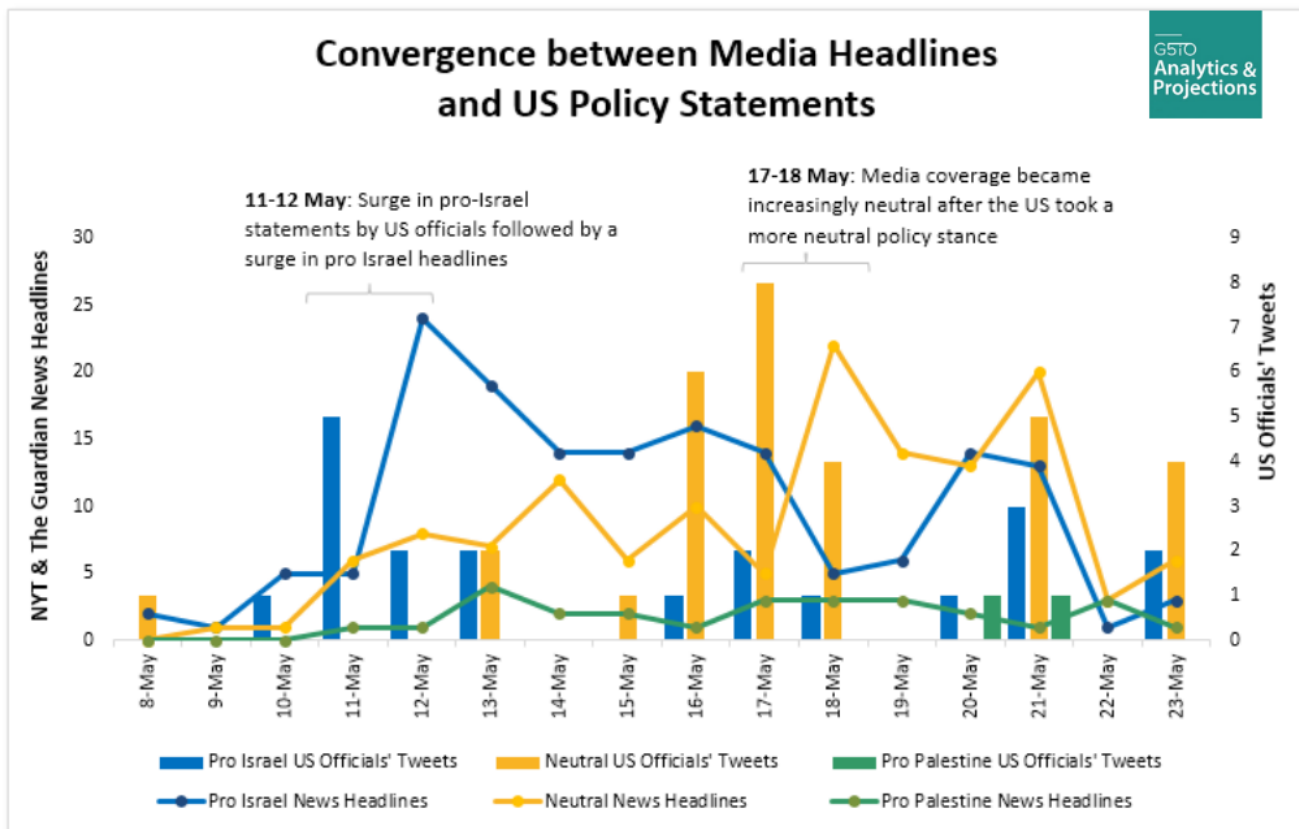
Insight #2:

- The NYT and The Guardian were more cautious in their reporting of the Palestinian suffering compared to the Israeli viewpoint that was more openly projected.
- Both the NYT and The Guardian demonstrated a pro-Israel bias, however not in terms of their support of Israel but in their reluctance in reporting criticism on Israel.



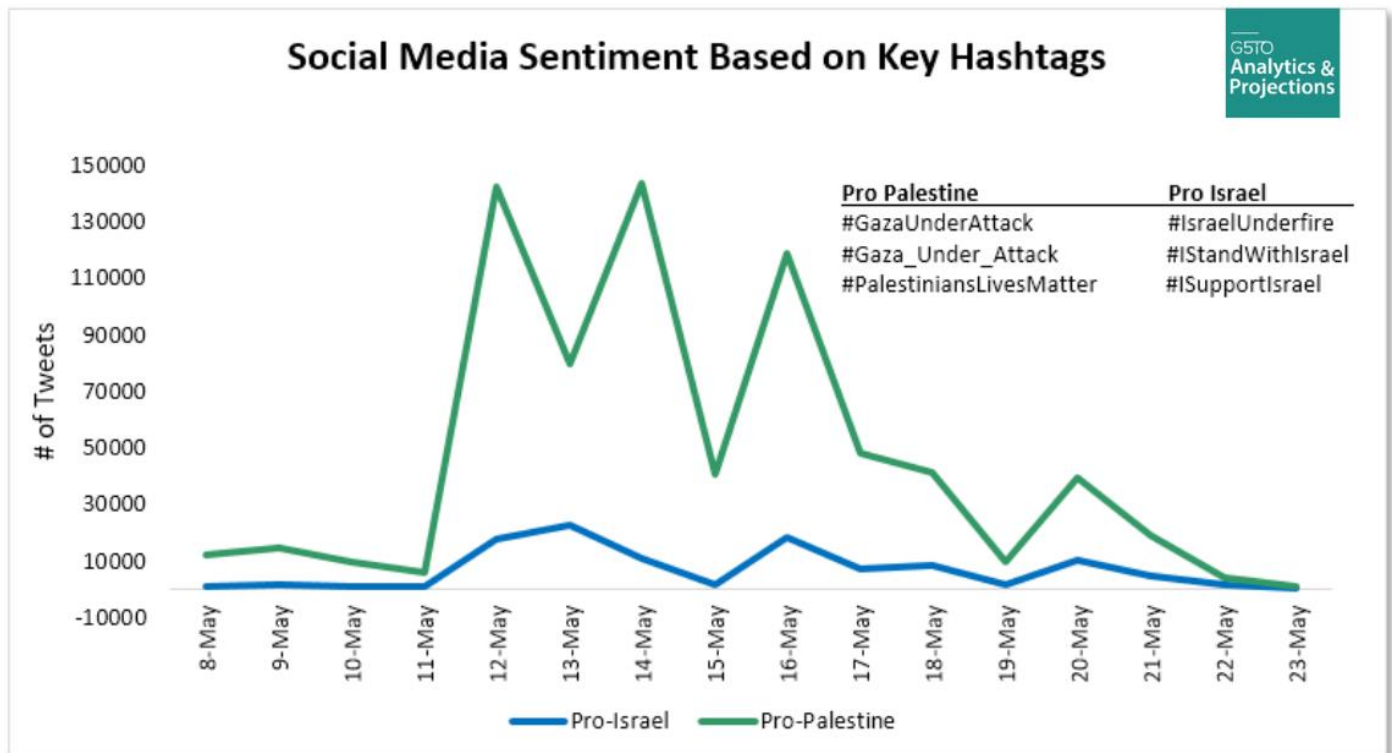
Insight #3:

- There is clear evidence of the NYT and The Guardian having closely pegged their reporting to the changing US national security policy posturing on this issue.
- The graph shows that mainstream media coverage of the issue closely followed the curve of changing US officials' statements.



Insight #4:

- Social Media demonstrated by and large a pro-Palestinian sympathy and viewpoint questioning the neutrality of mainstream media houses in their reporting bias



Conclusions:

1. There was a clear pro-Israeli bias in both US policy statements and Western Media coverage particularly during the first few days of the escalation.
2. As the US found it increasingly difficult to justify Israeli aggression, official policy statements and media coverage assumed a more neutral tone.
3. Coverage and interest in the issue declined rapidly after the ceasefire and purported de-escalation.