

Attack When the World Is Not Watching? US News and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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Politicians may strategically time unpopular measures to coincide with newsworthy events that distract the media and the public. We test this hypothesis in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We find that Israeli attacks are more likely to occur when US news on the following day is dominated by important predictable events. Strategic timing applies to attacks that bear risk of civilian casualties and are not too costly to postpone. Content analysis suggests that Israel's strategy aims at minimizing next-day coverage, which is especially charged with negative emotional content. Palestinian attacks do not appear to be timed to US news.

I. Introduction

Governments are accountable to the extent that the public is informed about their policies. In turn, mass media ensure accountability by informing citizens about government conduct (e.g., Besley and Prat 2006; Sny-

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der and Stromberg 2010). Yet the extent to which mass media can effectively inform the public depends, among other things, on the presence of other newsworthy events that may crowd out news coverage of government actions (Eisensee and Stromberg 2007). To minimize negative publicity, policy makers may strategically manipulate the timing of their unpopular actions to coincide with other important events that distract the mass media and the public.

On November 19, 1989, the *Jerusalem Post* accused Binyamin Netanyahu, then Israel's deputy foreign minister, of expressing regret, in a speech given at Bar-Ilan University, for the government's failure to exploit the politically favorable situation created by the Tiananmen Square protests, which captured the world's attention, to carry out large-scale expulsions of Arabs from the Occupied Territories.¹ Similar real-world examples of unpopular policies that coincided with other newsworthy events include military offenses (e.g., the launch of Israel's Operation Protective Edge in Gaza in 2014 on the same day as the FIFA World Cup semifinal or the entry of Russian troops into Georgia on the opening day of the 2008 Summer Olympics) and the adoption of unpopular measures in times of peace (e.g., Silvio Berlusconi's emergency decree aimed at freeing imprisoned corrupt politicians adopted on the same day Italy qualified for the 1994 FIFA World Cup final); furthermore, it is a well-known practice

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¹ Netanyahu denied this, claiming he had only called for the expulsion of nine individuals already designated for deportation. The *Jerusalem Post* opposed Netanyahu's denial, claiming to have a recording of his speech. The following quote is attributed to Netanyahu: "Israel should have taken advantage of the suppression of the demonstrations in China [Tiananmen Square], when the world's attention was focused on what was happening in that country, to carry out mass expulsions among the Arabs of the Territories. . . . However, to my regret, they did not support that policy that I proposed, and which I still propose should be implemented." It was published on November 28, 1989, in *Hotam* (a supplement to the newspaper *Al Hamishmar*) in Hebrew (Y. Lazar, "Mihad Gisa Vemeidah" [On the one hand and on the other]) and reprinted in English by Al-Jazeera in 2009 (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2009/03/2009325171634815939.html>) and by Corrigan (2016, 234).

among political spin doctors to release potentially harmful news in tandem with other important events.²

To investigate empirically whether politicians choose the timing of their unpopular policies strategically to minimize their news coverage, this paper focuses on the timing of military operations during an ongoing conflict that attracts considerable media attention: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israelis and Palestinians care about international public opinion and recognize the importance of media in shaping it. Since the 1970s, the Israeli government has made a considerable effort to project a positive image of Israel and the Israeli army abroad, a policy known as *hasbara*, Hebrew for “explanation.” This policy encompasses public diplomacy, the Israeli government’s work with international journalists in Israel, and the presence of Israeli advocates on social media. Arguably, nothing has a stronger negative impact on international public opinion than civilian victims that result from one’s own military actions. Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu gave an example in an interview with CNN on July 20, 2014, in response to a question about the heart-wrenching images of civilian Palestinian victims in Gaza, saying, “[Hamas] wants to pile up as many civilian dead as they can. . . . They use telegenically dead Palestinians for their cause.”³

News media are important to both sides of the conflict, but could media considerations actually influence the planning of military operations? A statement on June 4, 2002, by Major General Moshe Ya’alon, then the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) chief of staff designate and later defense minister of Israel, strongly suggests this is the case. Ya’alon stated, “This is first and foremost a war of ideology, and as such the media factor, the psychological impact of our actions, is critical. If we understand that a photograph of a tank speaks against us on CNN, we can take this into account in our decision as to whether or not to send in the tank.”⁴

This paper sheds light on how media considerations affect military decisions by testing whether Israeli authorities or Palestinian militants choose the timing of their attacks strategically to coincide with other newsworthy events so as to minimize the negative impact of their actions on US public

² This strategy is exemplified by a notorious statement from the former UK Labour Party’s spin doctor, Jo Moore, who, in a leaked memo sent to her superiors on the afternoon of 9/11, said that it was “a very good day to get out anything we want to bury [i.e., bad news]” (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1358985/Sept-11-a-good-day-to-bury-bad-news.html> and <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2001/oct/10/uk.Whitehall>).

³ <http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2014/07/20/netanyahu-to-cnns-wolf-blitzer-i-support-taking-whatever-action-is-necessary-to-stop-this-insane-situation/>.

⁴ The statement was issued in the context of a symposium, “The IDF and the Press during Hostilities,” held at the Israel Democracy Institute (Nevo and Shur 2003, 84–85). In Sec. II.B, we give examples of several other statements of military officials from this symposium.

opinion. Our hypothesis is that Israeli authorities want to avoid US media coverage of their military operations especially when they might lead to civilian casualties.⁵ In contrast, the incentives of Palestinian terrorist groups are less clear-cut because of the countervailing effects of publicity on terrorist activity. On the one hand, news coverage of Palestinian terrorist attacks sways US public opinion in favor of Israel, which serves against the Palestinian cause. On the other hand, increased coverage of the attacks against Israel may foster popular support for terrorist organizations across the Middle East and make it easier to attract new recruits and financing from extremists globally. Thus, in the case of the Palestinians, the hypothesis is a priori ambiguous.

To test the strategic timing hypothesis, we use daily time-series data on the occurrence and severity of both Israeli military operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and attacks by Palestinian militant groups on the Israeli territory between 2000 and 2011. These data, which were compiled by two independent human rights organizations, include information on the number of attacks (and the resulting number of casualties) carried out by each side on each day. We combine these data with a measure of the presence of other newsworthy events in US media. In particular, we use the direct analogue of the *news pressure* variable first proposed by Eisensee and Stromberg (2007). We compute news pressure as the time devoted to the top three stories, not related to either Israel or Palestine, featured in the evening news in three US television networks: NBC, ABC, and CBS. News pressure aims at capturing the presence of important news stories that may crowd out coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on any given day. We also compile a list of important political and sports events with predetermined timing that dominate US news and are completely unrelated to international affairs. We use the timing of these events both as an instrument for news pressure and as a measure of the ex ante expectation for whether US media are likely to cover important events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We start by examining whether the timing of Israeli and Palestinian attacks is associated with daily news pressure. We consider two main alternative measures of news pressure: the actual length of the first three stories unrelated to conflict and the length of the first three stories unrelated to

⁵ News about civilian casualties resulting from Israeli operations often triggers severe criticism in the United States. For example, as reported by the *Herald* on April 5, 2002, "George W. Bush, the U.S. president, performed a historic U-turn on the Middle East crisis last night by dropping his unqualified support for Israel's military action, declaring: 'The storms of violence cannot go on. Enough is enough'" (<https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-23504962.html>). In the online appendix, we provide a list of links to articles in the international press that cover other examples of the official US reactions to Israeli military actions against Palestinians. These examples illustrate that, despite the overall US support for Israel, US public officials consistently express deep concern with Israeli actions that lead to civilian casualties.

conflict adjusted to the total length of non-conflict-related content. The first measure has, by construction, a negative mechanical relationship with the presence of news about the conflict on TV; therefore, it is negatively associated with the conflict events themselves. The second measure does not suffer from such systematic mechanical bias. By relating the occurrence and intensity of deadly attacks by each side on a given day to the two measures of news pressure recorded on each day around the attack, we find that the likelihood of deadly military attacks by Israeli forces against Palestinians, as well as the number of casualties they cause, is positively and significantly related to the level of news pressure on the day after the attack is carried out. In contrast, we find no evidence that attacks by Palestinian militant groups are timed to US news pressure. The difference in the effect of news pressure on attacks by Israelis and Palestinians is statistically significant. We examine the robustness of the positive association between the timing of the Israeli attacks and US news pressure with a battery of sensitivity checks—including those for model selection, sample, the list of covariates, specific assumptions about the variance-covariance matrix, alternative measures of key variables—and we find that this relationship is very robust. These results suggest that Israeli authorities may strategically choose the timing of their attacks to minimize negative publicity in the United States.

News pressure could, however, be endogenous to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because important domestic US news and Israeli military actions may be jointly determined by unobserved factors, such as important events in the Middle East (e.g., the war in Iraq). Furthermore, many of the news stories on which the news pressure measure is based refer to unpredictable events to which attacks could not possibly be timed. To address both issues, we compile a list of events from forward-looking US political and sports calendars and create a dummy for predictable events that are unrelated to foreign policy and are significantly related to news pressure. Consistent with the view that Israel times its operations to other newsworthy events, we find that the Israeli attacks are significantly more likely to occur during these events. Our estimates imply that Israeli decision makers are willing to cancel a marginal attack on a given day if they expect that coverage of this attack (had it occurred) would have been in the top 20 percent of the distribution of the length of conflict news following an attack. There is no relationship between these events and the timing of Palestinian attacks. As a placebo exercise, we verify that Israeli attacks are not significantly related to news pressure driven by the unpredictable onset of natural disasters. Again, the differences in these effects are statistically significant.

If the relationship between Israeli attacks and US news pressure is, indeed, driven by strategic timing considerations on the part of Israeli authorities, several additional testable implications arise. First, some military

operations are very costly to postpone. We find no statistically significant relationship between the timing of urgent targeted-killing IDF operations and news pressure. Second, one should expect military operations to be timed to news pressure only when they are likely to generate negative publicity. We test this prediction using three alternative measures of whether an attack has an *ex ante* higher risk of civilian casualties. We find that the relationship between occurrence and severity of attacks and news pressure is significant only for (1) operations that result in fatalities, (2) operations that involve the use of heavy weapons, and (3) operations that are carried out in densely populated areas. The differences between the effects of news pressure on the timing of the targeted versus nontargeted attacks and attacks with heavy versus light weapons are statistically significant. These findings are consistent with the prediction that only operations that are less costly to move in time and are more likely to generate negative publicity due to higher risk of civilian casualties are strategically timed to minimize media coverage.

Finally, we examine the mechanism behind the strategic timing effect. In particular, we test alternative explanations for why Israel should time its attacks to news pressure on the following day rather than on the same day. First, we show that Israeli attacks are covered by the news both on the same day and on the day after the attack. Second, to investigate differences between same-day and next-day coverage, we coded the content of all news reports related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on NBC and CNN between 2000 and 2011. We find that the type of coverage of Israeli attacks differs substantially (and statistically significantly) between same-day and next-day reports. In particular, while the same-day and next-day news stories are equally likely to report information on the number of victims, news stories that appear on the day after the attack are much more likely to present personal stories on the civilian victims and include interviews with their relatives or friends. Furthermore, next-day coverage is significantly more likely to include emotionally charged visuals of burial processions and scenes of mourning. As established by the literature in cognitive and social psychology, both the type of content (statistics vs. personal stories) and the form in which it is presented (narrative vs. visual) affect viewers.⁶ Our findings suggest that Israeli authorities take these factors into account in their decision making.

Our research contributes to several strands of literature. First, our study contributes to the literature on political accountability and mass media (see, e.g., surveys by Prat and Stromberg [2013] and Sobbrino

⁶ People react more strongly to personal stories than to statistics and facts (e.g., Borgida and Nisbett 1977; Martin and Powers 1982; Wilkins 1983), and information transmitted only through words is less likely to be retained than information accompanied by images (e.g., Houghton and Willows 1987; Mandl and Levin 1989; Houts et al. 2006).

[2014]). To the best of our knowledge, our paper is the first to provide systematic, empirical evidence that policy makers act strategically to minimize the negative impact of media by manipulating the timing of their actions. We also document the importance of qualitative aspects of news coverage, which most previous studies have overlooked. Second, our paper contributes to a growing body of work on the role of mass media in conflicts. While economists have largely focused on testing the role of mass media in fueling conflict (DellaVigna et al. 2014; Yanagizawa-Drott 2014; Adena et al. 2015), historians, political scientists, and international relations scholars have directly addressed the issue of how the media constrain behavior in a conflict environment and, more generally, influence foreign policy. For example, Mueller (1973), Sobel (2001), Baum (2004), and Canes-Wrone (2006) argue that, by shaping the public's views about military campaigns, mass media put pressure on politicians and constrain military decisions. As a consequence, managing information that reaches the media has become a crucial part of military campaigns (Jensen 2011). The military increasingly attempts to plan its strategy in anticipation of how audiences will react to media coverage of conflict (Adamson 1997; Hjarvard 2004, 2008; Silverstone 2005; Maltby 2012) and to control journalists' access to firsthand information by restricting access to conflict zones and using embedded reporters (e.g., Seethaler et al. 2013). Our paper is the first to provide systematic empirical evidence in support of these arguments. Third, our paper contributes to the literature on strategic behavior in conflicts in general (Jackson and Morelli 2009; Blattman and Miguel 2010) and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular (e.g., Jaeger and Paserman 2006, 2008, 2009; Berrebi and Klor 2008; Gould and Klor 2010; Jaeger et al. 2010). Fourth, our findings are related to the finance literature on rational inattention and the strategic release of information, which investigates whether private companies release negative earnings reports in periods of low market attention (e.g., Patell and Wolfson 1982; Damodaran 1989; DellaVigna and Pollet 2009; Doyle and Magilke 2009; deHaan, Shevlin, and Thornock 2015).

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section II provides background information on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Section III describes the data. Section IV presents the results on the relationship between the timing of attacks and other newsworthy events, and Section V provides evidence on the mechanism. Section VI presents conclusions.

II. Background

A. *Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is ongoing and long-lasting. Fighting between Israelis and Palestinians, who at times have allied with Arab states,

has continued with varying intensity since 1947.⁷ Three major military campaigns—the 1948 War, the 1967 War (also known as the Six-Day War), and the 1973 War (also known as the Yom Kippur War)—shaped the frontiers between the State of Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories. In recent decades, the confrontations within the existing borders have occurred between the IDF and a number of Palestinian militant groups, among which the biggest are the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (the military wing of Fatah), Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

The conflict has resulted in a large number of fatalities. During our observation period alone—from September 29, 2000, to November 24, 2011—the conflict resulted in 7,690 fatalities recorded, of whom 6,401 were Palestinians and 1,289 Israelis.⁸ Conflict intensity has varied considerably over time. In our sample period, intense fighting took place during Operation Cast Lead—a 3-week assault launched by the Israelis on December 27, 2008, in response to Hamas rocket attacks on southern Israel—which resulted in the death of 1,349 Palestinians and 19 Israelis (21.6 percent of all fatalities during our 11-year sample period). Intense fighting also took place in March 2002, when Israelis launched Operation Defensive Shield, a response to a Palestinian suicide bombing during Passover; 275 Palestinians and 70 Israelis were killed in this 3-week period. Figure 1 presents the monthly fatalities on both sides of the conflict for the entire sample period (panel A) and excluding the Gaza War (panel B), with shaded areas indicating the two operations noted above. Once we exclude the Gaza War from the sample, it is evident that our sample period covers two distinct phases of the conflict characterized by very different conflict intensity: the Second Intifada (from the beginning of the sample period to February 8, 2005) and the post-Intifada period (from February 9, 2005, onward).⁹ This difference is highlighted by the horizontal lines representing the average monthly number of fatalities on both sides of the conflict separately for the two periods; the death toll is much higher during the Second Intifada.¹⁰

Two characteristics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are especially important for our story. First, the conflict resulted in a relatively high number of civilian victims, particularly children: 47 percent of all Palestinian casualties and 68 percent of all Israeli casualties were civilians; 21 percent of Palestinian casualties and 11 percent of Israeli casualties were children.

⁷ Smith (2007) and Tessler (2009) provide comprehensive historical accounts of the conflict.

⁸ The fatalities data exclude the suicide bombers involved in terrorist attacks.

⁹ The Second Intifada ended with an agreement signed by Mahmoud Abbas and Ariel Sharon at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit.

¹⁰ We exclude the Gaza War period (as an outlier) from our baseline sample and verify that the main results are robust to using the full sample with the Gaza War. The results are presented in the online appendix.

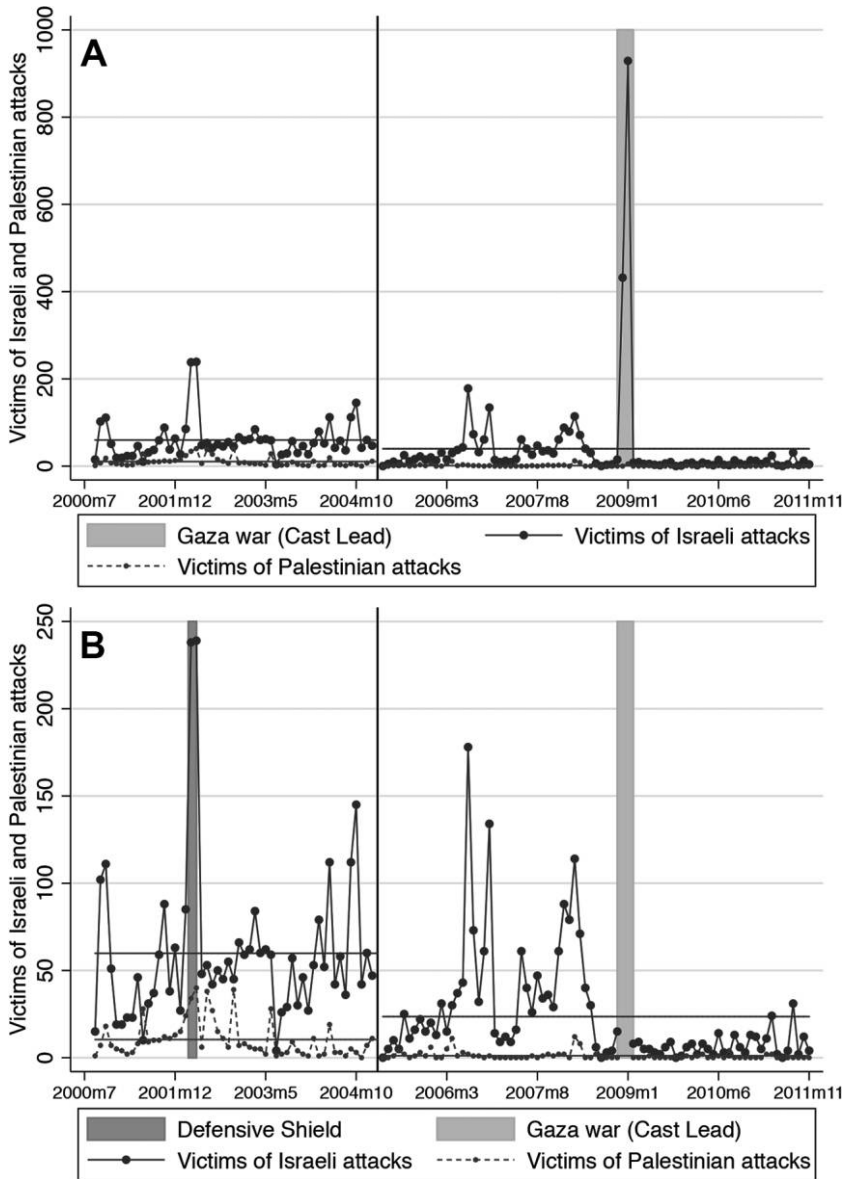


FIG. 1.—Israeli and Palestinian fatalities by month. Panel A: Entire sample period. Panel B: Excluding the Gaza War (December 27, 2008–January 18, 2009). The figure reports the monthly number of fatalities caused by Israeli and Palestinian attacks. The shaded areas indicate the periods of the Gaza War, that is, Operation Cast Lead (on both graphs) and Operation Defensive Shield (on the lower graph). The vertical line marks the end of the Second Intifada. The horizontal lines indicate the average monthly number of fatalities separately for the Second Intifada and post-Intifada periods. Color version available as an online enhancement.

Second, the conflict has traditionally attracted significant attention from international media and, especially, from US media both in absolute terms and relative to the number of victims (Hawkins 2008). Over our observation period, on average, 21.5 minutes per month were devoted to the conflict during the evening news on NBC, ABC, and CBS (which is 1.3 percent of the evening news time on the three networks).

B. Media Considerations of Israeli Military

The proceedings of the symposium “The IDF and the Press during Hostilities” held in 2002 at the Israeli Democracy Institute (Nevo and Shur 2003) are an important source of anecdotal evidence on the relations between the IDF and the media. At this event IDF officials at the highest level openly shared their views in discussions with expert military analysts, scholars, and media practitioners.

In the introduction, we quoted a short excerpt from a statement of Major General Moshe Ya’alon—then IDF chief of staff designate and later Israel’s defense minister. We present a fuller quote of his statement in the online appendix. The importance of media for the Israeli military is further emphasized by Major General Rafael Vardi, former head of IDF’s Manpower Directorate, who stated that “[IDF] must make media considerations part of every evaluation preceding an operation, and they must be recognized at every level of command. Moreover, the decision to give a green light on an operation must include the media factor. Throughout the duration of every battle and/or operation we must constantly reassess media impact” (64). The discussions at the symposium suggest that media considerations influence IDF’s choice of targets and weapons, especially when fighting in densely populated areas. In the words of Major General Dan Harel, then IDF’s Head of Operation Directorate, “today’s media . . . influences our designation of targets; we delayed entering Bethlehem several times because of the connections associated with Bethlehem and Jenin. It influences the manner of fighting—our decision whether to go in with tanks or to endanger our soldiers by leaving it to the infantry. Our insistence on our not wishing to conquer Bethlehem lacks credibility when anyone who turns on their TV sees a tank flattening everything in its path” (62–63). IDF’s particular concern with US public opinion, and its possible impact on the logistics of Israeli attacks, is evident from the following statement by Harel: “the time difference between Israel and the United States has influenced on more than one occasion the timing of an operation, duration of stay in a particular place, etc.” (63). A statement of Brigadier General Ruth Yaron, then IDF spokesperson designate, suggests that media considerations also matter for determining the timing of Israeli operations:

Part of planning a military operation includes deciding whether to delay the military response in order to retain control of the media. When a terrorist attack has taken place the pictures on the screen are of that attack. The story changes completely the moment the F-16 is in the air; at that moment our window of opportunity slams shut. The reason for our action is no longer of the slightest interest. We must decide to concentrate our efforts and to extend this window of opportunity, thus ensuring that our target audiences will be receptive to our side of the story. (79)

The public statements of IDF officials reported above, though indicative, are not per se a proof that media considerations influence IDF's military strategy in a systematic fashion.¹¹ It is possible that, pressured by the critical inquiries of an expert audience regarding the possible (in)effectiveness of Israel's public diplomacy efforts, IDF representatives at the symposium may have attempted to exaggerate IDF's sophistication vis-à-vis the media and to portray IDF's policy as what it should have been rather than what it actually was. With this caveat in mind, the accounts of the top IDF officials—and the wealth of details that accompany them—are suggestive of the great concern of the Israeli military for international media and for their impact on how the conflict is perceived abroad. Whether and how media considerations affect Israeli military actions is an empirical question that we examine in what follows.

III. Data Sources and Main Variables

In our empirical analysis, we use daily data on (1) all attacks carried out by both sides of the conflict, including the date, the number of victims, and various characteristics of the attacks; (2) all stories that appeared on evening US TV news, including information on their order, length, and topic, and, for all conflict-related stories, information on various qualitative attributes of the news reports based on detailed video content analysis; (3) the timing of events from the forward-looking political calendar in the United States and the timing of important sports events; (4) the volume of Google searches about the conflict; and (5) the occurrence of natural and human-induced disasters. Summary statistics for all variables used in the analysis are presented in table A.1 (tables A.1–A.20 are available in the online appendix).

¹¹ In the online appendix, we provide additional relevant quotes from Israeli military officials, scholars, and experts.

A. *Data on Attacks*

Data on attacks by Israelis and Palestinians come from two sources: the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights, B'Tselem (<http://www.btselem.org/>), and the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UNOCHA (<http://www.ochaopt.org/>).

The B'Tselem data set covers the period between September 29, 2000, and November 24, 2011. It contains information on every attack by the IDF or Palestinian militants that resulted in fatalities. For each attack the data include information on the day of the attack, whether it was conducted by Palestinian militants or the IDF, the number of fatalities, and some information about the victims. For attacks by the Israeli military, there is information on whether the attack was a special targeted-killing operation against a specific top-level Palestinian terrorist. Additional information regarding the location of the attack, the type of weapon used, and whether the victim participated in the hostilities is available only for a subset of observations.

The UNOCHA data set covers the period between January 3, 2005, and November 24, 2011, almost entirely during the post-Intifada period. It covers only attacks by Israeli forces, including those that resulted in nonfatal casualties, and includes comprehensive information on the location of each attack and the type of the weapon used.

We aggregate the data from each of these two sources by date and attacker. Hence, we construct daily time series for the following variables: (1) the occurrence of attacks by each side of the conflict, (2) the number of fatal and nonfatal casualties caused by each side's attacks, (3) the occurrence of attacks involving the use of heavy versus light weapons, and (4) the location of the attacks in areas with population density above and below the sample median. The information on occurrence and severity of deadly attacks is available for the entire period (between 2000 and 2011). Other variables are defined for the shorter period (between 2005 and 2011).¹²

B. *Data on US News and the Measurement of News Pressure*

1. News Coverage of the Conflict

We compute various measures of daily news coverage of conflict events. Daily data on evening TV news broadcasts on the top four US networks—

¹² To differentiate attacks by the type of weapon used, we define the following weapons as heavy weapons: all types of missiles (airplane missile, helicopter missile, surface-to-surface rocket), sound bombs, explosives, tank shells, and shock grenades. We define the following weapons as light weapons: live ammunition, physical assaults, rubber-coated metal bullets, and tear gas.

NBC, ABC, CBS, and CNN—are available from the Vanderbilt Television News Archive for the 2000–2011 period.¹³ We identify all stories devoted to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and construct the following variables: a dummy for whether at least one conflict-related story appears on NBC, ABC, or CBS and the total length of conflict-related news stories appearing on these three networks on a given day, as well as a dummy for and the length of conflict-related news on all four networks, including CNN.

2. News Pressure Measures

For each day and each network, the following information is available for every story featured on the evening news: the order of appearance, the length in seconds, and a summary of the topic. We use this information to construct a measure of the presence of other important newsworthy events that are not related to any Israeli or Palestinian actions and that may crowd out news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In contrast to CNN, which features news around the clock, NBC, ABC, and CBS have a well-defined, 30-minute time slot allocated to evening news. As Eisensee and Stromberg (2007) point out, the fact that this time slot is limited to 30 minutes allows us to measure the importance of newsworthy events featured on the broadcasts: more important stories appear before less important stories, and they are longer. Following Eisensee and Stromberg, we define “news pressure” for a given network as the time (in minutes/10) devoted to the top three news stories that are unrelated to Israel or Palestine in the evening newscast on NBC, ABC, and CBS, the three networks with 30-minute evening editions.

We construct two alternative measures of news pressure: (1) the “uncorrected news pressure” and (2) the “corrected news pressure” (or, simply, “news pressure”). For each day and each network, we identify the news stories that refer to Israel or Palestine, that is, stories whose summaries contain the words *Israel*, *Palestine*, *Gaza*, *West Bank*, or *Hamas*, or any words with related roots. When no story in a given newscast refers to Israel or Palestine, both news pressure measures are equal to the time devoted to the top three stories, that is, the first three presented stories. When one or more stories refer to Israel or Palestine during the broadcast, the uncorrected news pressure is equal to the time devoted to the first three presented stories that are not related to Israel or Palestine.¹⁴ When one or more stories refer to Israel or Palestine, the corrected news pressure is equal to the time devoted to the top three non-Israel-or-Palestine-related stories,

¹³ Data on Fox News are available for a much shorter period of time.

¹⁴ The list of news stories about Israel or Palestine is substantially larger than the list of news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, because the former includes any news on politics, culture, tourism, and so on. We exclude all stories in any way related to Israel or Palestine from the measures of news pressure to avoid reverse causality.

divided by the time allocated to all non-Israel-or-Palestine-related stories, and multiplied by the total length of the newscast. Even though the evening news broadcasts are limited to 30 minutes, the actual length of time devoted to the news varies and the weather forecast fills the rest of the time. Our results are unaffected by whether we adjust the length of the top three news stories by the actual length of the news that day minus the time devoted to Israel-Palestine stories or by the median length of time devoted to news on the particular network, again, minus the time devoted to Israel-Palestine stories (as reported in the online appendix).¹⁵

Table A.2 illustrates how we computed both measures of daily news pressure for a specific network when Israel-or-Palestine-related content is present and absent from the newscast. To aggregate information across networks, we compute the median of the network-specific news pressure measures on that day.

As reported in table A.1, the daily (corrected) news pressure ranges from 2.2 to 29.3 minutes and the uncorrected news pressure ranges from 0.2 to 29.3 minutes. The correlation coefficient between the two measures is .968. Figure A.1 (figs. A.1–A.4 are available in the online appendix) shows that the distribution of both news pressure measures is substantially skewed to the right. The distance between the median and the 90th percentile is almost twice as large as between the median and the 10th percentile of the distribution.

3. The Relationship between News Pressure Measures and News on Conflict

As our aim is to estimate how the timing of the attacks is related to the presence of other newsworthy events proxied by news pressure, we need to understand whether and how the presence of conflict-related news affects the news pressure measures. This is important because any mechanical relationship between news pressure and the presence of news on conflict would bias our estimation.

To study the relationship between the presence of conflict-related news and the two news pressure measures, we develop a simple theoretical framework. Suppose, for simplicity, that there is only one TV network. When the conflict is not featured on the newscast, let us denote the time (in minutes) allocated to the top three news stories by x and the time allocated to the re-

¹⁵ Data on the news content are missing for 68 days over our sample period. To avoid gaps in the sample, we assign the predicted values to each news pressure measure on these days from a regression of news pressure on its 20 lags and day-of-week, month, and year fixed effects, estimated on the entire sample with nonmissing values. All results in the paper are robust to excluding from the sample the days for which original news data are not available. We present these results in the online appendix.

maining (non-top three) stories by y . When a conflict-related story is on the news, we denote the time of the conflict-related story by c , the time of the top three stories unrelated to conflict by \tilde{x} , and the time of the non-top three stories unrelated to conflict by \tilde{y} . The total length of the newscast is 30 minutes. We define the “uncorrected news pressure” to be equal to the length of the top three nonconflict stories and denote it by P^U . The “corrected news pressure” by definition is equal to the length of the top three nonconflict stories divided by the time allocated to all nonconflict stories and multiplied by the total time of the newscast; we denote it by P . When there is no news on conflict, that is, $x + y = 30$, the two news pressure measures are equal: $P^U = P = x$. In contrast, when conflict-related news is featured in the broadcast, that is, $\tilde{x} + \tilde{y} + c = 30$, the two news pressure measures take on different values: $P^U = \tilde{x}$ and $P = 30\tilde{x}/(\tilde{x} + \tilde{y})$.

Suppose a conflict story, worthy of c minutes, arrives in the newsroom and everything else is held constant. To fit this story into the newscast, the editor needs to adjust the time of other news stories. We assume that $\tilde{x} \leq x$ and $\tilde{y} \leq y$; that is, in response to the arrival of a conflict story, the time allocated to each other story is either unchanged or reduced; some stories can be dropped altogether. The following proposition states what the arrival of conflict news implies for the magnitude of P^U and P .

PROPOSITION 1. Editorial policy determines whether and how the news pressure measures are affected by the arrival of news about conflict.

1. The corrected news pressure may decrease, stay the same, or increase with an arrival of news about conflict depending on which other stories the editor decides to cut, that is, whether the time allocated to the top three non-conflict-related news stories is reduced more or less proportionally to the time allocated to the non-top three non-conflict-related news stories. The same holds for an incremental increase in the length of conflict news c :

$$\frac{dP}{dc} < 0 \text{ iff } \frac{\tilde{x}}{x} < \frac{\tilde{y}}{y}; \quad \frac{dP}{dc} = 0 \text{ iff } \frac{\tilde{x}}{x} = \frac{\tilde{y}}{y}; \quad \frac{dP}{dc} > 0 \text{ iff } \frac{\tilde{x}}{x} > \frac{\tilde{y}}{y}.$$

2. The uncorrected news pressure can only decrease or stay the same with an arrival of conflict news. It is unaffected if and only if the editor reduces only the time allocated to non-top three non-conflict-related stories. The same holds for an incremental increase in the length of conflict news c :

$$\frac{dP^U}{dc} \leq 0; \quad \frac{dP^U}{dc} = 0 \text{ iff } x = \tilde{x}.$$

We provide the proof and numerical examples to illustrate each of the considered cases in the online appendix.

Proposition 1 shows that, depending on the editorial policy, if conflict news arrives and nothing else changes, the corrected news pressure P could change in both directions, whereas the uncorrected news pressure P^U could only go down or remain constant. Thus, one should expect the estimated relationship between attacks and the uncorrected news pressure to be biased downward. The sign of the bias in the estimation of the relationship between attacks and the corrected news pressure, in contrast, depends on the editorial policy. We can test for the direction of this bias under the assumption that the editorial policy is constant over time as we can establish the sign of the derivative dP/dc by estimating causally how the length of news about conflict c affects the corrected news pressure P . We use the two episodes of the highest intensity of conflict, namely, the Gaza War and Operation Defensive Shield, and the difference in the intensity of conflict between the Second Intifada and the post-Intifada period as a source of exogenous variation in the length of conflict-related news. This variation is exogenous because an increase in the intensity of fighting during these episodes was orthogonal to other newsworthy events in the world. Our instrument for the length of conflict-related news takes a value of two during Operation Defensive Shield and Operation Cast Lead (i.e., the Gaza War), a value of one during the Second Intifada (outside the days of the Operations Defensive Shield), and a value of zero on all other days. Using this instrument, we estimate two-stage least squares (2SLS) regressions with P and P^U as dependent variables and c as the main explanatory variable.

Table 1 presents the results. We find that, on average, $dP/dc = 0$ and confirm that $dP^U/dc < 0$. Panel A considers the whole sample, and panel B considers the subsample of days with an attack on the same or the previous day. Column 1 presents the first stage: we find that, during the periods of intense fighting, news stories about conflict were significantly longer, and the instrument is a strong predictor of c in both samples. Columns 2 and 3 present the second stages, which causally estimate the derivatives of P and P^U with respect to c . We find zero effect for the corrected news pressure and a negative and significant effect for uncorrected news pressure in both samples. We conclude that, on average, upon the arrival of conflict-related news, the editor reduces the time allocated to all other stories proportionally to their length. This implies a significant mechanical downward bias for the uncorrected news pressure and no mechanical bias for corrected news pressure in estimating the relationship between attacks on both sides of the conflict and newsworthy events, measured by news pressure.

To provide further evidence on the size and the direction of a mechanical bias in construction of the news pressure measures, we exploit the fact that natural disasters are covered by the news and the timing of their onset is exogenous, which implies that any correlation between the onset of a disaster today and disaster-free news pressure tomorrow must reflect

TABLE 1
NEWS PRESSURE AND THE LENGTH OF CONFLICT-RELATED NEWS

	DEPENDENT VARIABLE		
	Length of Conflict News (1)	Corrected News Pressure (2)	Uncorrected News Pressure (3)
Model	2SLS 1st stage	2SLS 2nd stage	2SLS 2nd stage
A. Full Sample			
Intifada, Defensive Shield, and Cast Lead	5.046*** (1.330)		
Length of conflict news (minutes)		.002 (.006)	-.017*** (.005)
Fixed effects (year, month, day of week)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,003	4,003	4,003
R ²	.288	.096	.144
Fstatistic, excluded instruments	14.40		
B. Sample of Days with an Attack on the Same Day or the Previous Day			
Intifada, Defensive Shield, and Cast Lead	5.291*** (1.235)		
Length of conflict news (minutes)		-.00001 (.006)	-.018*** (.005)
Fixed effects (year, month, day of week)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,331	2,331	2,331
R ²	.295	.133	.200
Fstatistic, excluded instruments	18.35		

NOTE.—The table presents 2SLS regressions with news pressure measures as dependent variables and the length of conflict news as the main endogenous regressor. Column 1 presents the first stage. Columns 2 and 3 present the second stages of the 2SLS regressions with the two measures of news pressure as dependent variables and length of conflict news as the main explanatory variable. Panel A uses the full sample; panel B uses the sample of days with an attack on the same or on the previous day. All regressions include year, calendar-month, and day-of-the-week fixed effects. Standard errors clustered by month × year are reported in parentheses.

- * $p < .1$.
- ** $p < .05$.
- *** $p < .01$.

the mechanics of the news pressure variable. In particular, we collect data on the timing of all natural and man-made disasters in the United States over our sample period (we describe the source of these data below in Sec. III.D). For each disaster we identify all related news stories featured on the main US TV networks on the day of the disaster’s outbreak and on the following 30 days. We then construct daily measures of the presence and the length of disaster-related news and the two measures of disaster-free news pressure (uncorrected and corrected) that are direct analogues of the Israel-and-Palestine-free news pressure measures, that is, the time devoted to the top three non-disaster-related stories both uncorrected and corrected to account for the reduction in the total

length of the newscast due to the elimination of disaster-related stories. Panel A of table A.3 confirms that US-based disasters are covered by US news: news about disasters are significantly more likely to appear and are significantly longer on the day of the disaster's outbreak and on the following day. Panel B shows that the timing of the onset of disasters is not related to the level of corrected news pressure on the same or on the following day and is negatively related to the uncorrected news pressure, confirming no bias in the corrected news pressure measure and a negative bias in the uncorrected news pressure measure.¹⁶ Henceforth, we refer to corrected news pressure simply as news pressure, as we consider it our baseline measure. We report results of our main specifications using uncorrected news pressure as well. As a robustness exercise, we also report results using news pressure calculated with the three longest stories rather than the first three stories.

4. Content Analysis of Conflict-Related Videos

To test for the mechanism behind the relationship between news pressure and the timing of attacks, we collected data on the actual content of all conflict-related news stories for two networks, CNN and NBC, from the Vanderbilt Television News Archive. We first identified all 755 news stories on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict featured during our observation period. We then asked independent analysts to code the content of each of these videos by completing a 23-question questionnaire. The aim of the questionnaire was to evaluate several dimensions of each conflict-related video: (1) whether it describes a particular attack and, if so, whether it reports specific facts about the attack (i.e., location, weapon used, number of victims, including civilians); (2) whether it features personal information about the victims, interviews with their relatives or friends, and interviews with witnesses; (3) whether it includes footage of the aftermath of the attack, images of the victims' burials, and scenes of mourning; and (4) whether it reports official reactions by Israeli or Palestinian authorities. Table A.4 contains the full list of questions and the summary statistics of the responses. Of the 755 videos, 428 are related to specific attacks that occurred on the same day or the previous day. We use these data to analyze the differences in content of news stories appearing on the day of the attacks and on the following day.

C. *Data on Political and Sports Events*

To analyze how the timing of the attacks is related to predictable newsworthy events, we compile a list of important political and sports events.

¹⁶ These results are robust to the exclusion of Hurricane Katrina, the most deadly and newsworthy disaster in the sample as shown in cols. 5–8 of table A.3.

First, we use the dates of all key US political events that were announced in a forward-looking US political calendar (<http://www.politics1.com/calendar.htm>; accessed October 30, 2015). To get information for the past years, we use historical snapshots of a forward-looking political calendar stored in the Wayback Machine (<https://archive.org/web/>; accessed October 30, 2015). The list covers the following types of political events: presidential inaugurations, general elections, presidential primaries, presidential caucuses, national party conventions, State of the Union addresses, start-of-Congress sessions, special congressional and Senate elections, gubernatorial elections, statewide elections, and state primaries. To understand which of these events create news pressure, we regress daily news pressure on the dummy for each event type, controlling for day-of-the-week, calendar-month, and year fixed effects. Column 1 of table A.5 presents the results. We find that news pressure increases substantially (though not necessarily statistically significantly) on the days of presidential inaugurations, general elections, national party conventions, State of the Union addresses, Iowa caucuses, other presidential caucuses, New Hampshire presidential primaries, and Super Tuesdays, but not on other presidential caucuses. Other events from the list do not meaningfully affect news pressure.

As the next step, out of this list, we single out the exogenous political events that could affect the timing of the attacks in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict only through their effect on news pressure. Events that involved US politicians commenting on US foreign policy and, in particular, on the relationship between the United States and Israel or Palestine violate this exclusion restriction. Ten of 11 State of the Union addresses in our sample included commentary on foreign policy and six explicitly mentioned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During all six national party conventions, politicians gave speeches on foreign policy; during all but one, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was discussed. Other events from this list seem to have no relation to the conflict; therefore, we keep them in the list of exogenous newsworthy events.

Next, we explore whether lags and leads of exogenous political events are also an important source of news pressure (col. 2 of table A.5). For example, during election coverage, we expect the media to discuss campaigns before elections and results after elections. We find that general elections create news pressure during 5 days around the event, that New Hampshire presidential primaries and Super Tuesdays create news pressure during 3 days around the event, but that presidential inaugurations and presidential caucuses are newsworthy only on the day they occur.

We also collected dates of major US and world sports events. As in our strategy for political events, we regress news pressure on the dummy for days of each important sports event, controlling for day-of-the-week, calendar-month, and year fixed effects. Column 3 of table A.5 shows that only the FIFA World Cup has a significant positive effect on news pres-

sure, after controlling for seasonality. As a result, we create a single dummy for the major political and sports events, combining the important lags and leads of exogenous political events with the days of the FIFA World Cup. The major events dummy is switched on during 159 days over our sample period. The last column of table A.5 presents the relationship between the major events dummy and the news pressure.

D. Data on Disasters

To verify that attacks do not coincide with unpredictable news, we also use data on the occurrence of disasters in the United States. A comprehensive list of disasters, both natural and man-made, for the period of interest is available from the EM-DAT database (<http://www.emdat.be/database>), also known as the International Disasters Dataset, compiled by the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters at the Catholic University of Louvain. We focus on disasters occurring in the United States that resulted in a relatively high number of victims. We focus on US disasters for two reasons: they are more likely to be covered by US news media, and they are unrelated to terrorism activity in the Middle East (Berrebi and Ostwald 2011). For each disaster, we use the following information: the starting date, the type of disaster, and the number of fatalities. We compile a list of all US disasters that fall into the top 50 percent of the distribution of the number of fatalities among disasters of the same type. In all, 106 such disasters occurred from 2000 to 2011.

E. Data on Google Searches

To construct a daily measure of the US public's interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we collect data on the daily volume of conflict-related searches on Google. Google Trends provides high-frequency data on the volume of Google searches for specific queries from 2004 to the present. We focus on all searches on the search topic "Israeli-Palestinian conflict" as defined by Google. When measuring the volume of searches for any particular search topic, Google algorithms count many different search queries (i.e., search terms or expressions) that relate to the same search topic. Google Trends reports a measure of the daily volume of searches for each search topic normalized by the highest search volume recorded over a maximum 3-month interval of interest. No data are available on the absolute number of searches. Hence, comparing daily search volumes for the same topic in different 3-month periods requires rescaling of the data using a common scale defined over the global time frame. We used a single data series for the search volume at a weekly (rather than daily) frequency for the entire 7-year period, which is available in Google Trends, to bring the 32 separate daily 3-month-long series to the same scale. As a result, we

were able to construct a daily measure of the search volume for the search topic Israeli-Palestinian conflict for the period between January 2004 and November 2011.

IV. Are Attacks Timed to News Pressure?

A. *News about the Conflict on US TV*

Before testing our main hypothesis, we provide suggestive evidence in favor of its main premises. In particular, we verify that US TV news media cover important attacks of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that news pressure is associated with less coverage of the conflict, and that conflict-related TV news is associated with higher public attention to the conflict.

The first two columns of table 2 confirm that the attacks get coverage on US evening newscasts. We estimate time-series regressions in which we relate the dummy for any news on the conflict and the number of minutes devoted to the conflict daily to whether an Israeli or Palestinian deadly attack occurred on the same day or on the previous day, controlling for year, calendar-month, and day-of-the-week fixed effects. When the dependent variable is the dummy, we estimate an ordinary least squares (OLS) model (col. 1), and when the dependent variable is the length of conflict-related news, we estimate a maximum likelihood (ML) negative binomial model (col. 2), as the count data exhibit overdispersion. We find that, on average, fatal attacks by the IDF and fatal attacks by Palestinians against Israelis have a 10 percent and an 11 percent chance to appear in the news, respectively. Fatal Israeli attacks increase the length of these stories by a factor of 2.6 compared to days with no Israeli attacks when, on average, 0.2 minute is devoted to the conflict. Fatal Palestinian attacks are associated with a 97 percent increase in the length of these stories (from a baseline of 0.5 minute). Panel A of figure 2 illustrates these findings by showing how the predicted length of news stories about conflict is affected by lags and leads of Israeli and Palestinian casualties.¹⁷

¹⁷ Israeli attacks are more frequent and more deadly. During our observation period, the number of Israeli military attacks against Palestinians is 5.7 times larger than the number of Palestinian attacks against Israelis. On average, an Israeli attack causes four fatal casualties and a Palestinian attack causes 2.3 casualties. The fact that US news media cover Palestinian attacks more in terms of length of coverage (1 minute, on average, compared to half a minute) is consistent with several explanations. It could be related to the difference in the frequency of the attacks between the two sides, as the overall time allocated to all Israeli attacks on evening news is substantially greater than that for all Palestinian attacks: 18.9 vs. 8.8 minutes per month, on average, over our observation period and 40.3 vs. 21.0 minutes per month during the Second Intifada. As we discuss below, it could also be related to Israel's effort to inform international journalists about the Palestinian terrorist attacks and to create favorable conditions, in terms of both access and security, for the journalists to film the aftermath of these attacks (Nevo and Shur 2003). Finally, it could also be related to a pro-Israeli bias of US media.

TABLE 2
COVERAGE OF CONFLICT, NEWS PRESSURE, AND GOOGLE SEARCHES

Model	DEPENDENT VARIABLE					
	Any News on Conflict (1)	Length of Conflict News (2)	Any News on Conflict (3)	Length of Conflict News (4)	Log Daily Volume of Google Searches for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (5)	Log Daily Volume of Google Searches for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (6)
Sample	OLS All days 2000–2011	ML Neg. Bin. All days 2000–2011	OLS Attack at t or $t - 1$ 2000–2011	ML Neg. Bin. Attack at t or $t - 1$ 2000–2011	OLS All days 2004–11	OLS All days 2004–11
Israeli attack (t or $t - 1$)	.100*** (.020)	.969*** (.183)				
Palestinian attack (t or $t - 1$)	.112*** (.032)	.680*** (.140)				
News pressure (t)			-.078* (.042)	-.692*** (.267)		
Ln (victims Israeli attacks + 1) (t or $t - 1$)			.169*** (.016)	.802*** (.089)	.130*** (.043)	.053* (.028)
Ln (victims Palestinian attacks + 1) (t or $t - 1$)			.134*** (.024)	.572*** (.099)	.042 (.062)	.005 (.057)
Length of conflict news (t or $t - 1$)						-.137*** (.016)
Fixed effects (year, month, day of week)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Linear time trend	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,005	4,005	2,331	2,331	2,741	2,741
(Pseudo) R^2	.228	.101	.292	.121	.330	.376

NOTE.—In cols. 1 and 2, we regress measures of news coverage of conflict-related stories on US media on dummies for the occurrence of Israeli and Palestinian attacks on the same or previous day. In cols. 3 and 4, we restrict the sample to day, such that an Israeli or a Palestinian attack occurred on the same day or on the previous day, and regress the measures of conflict-related news coverage on the same-day news pressure, controlling for the intensity of the attack, measured by the log of the number of victims ($+ 1$). In cols. 5 and 6, the log of volume of Google searches for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is regressed on the severity of attacks and the length of conflict news. All regressions include year, calendar-month, and day-of-the-week fixed effects. Regressions for Google searches also control for the linear trend within each year. The R^2 is reported in cols. 1 and 4 and the pseudo R^2 in all others. Standard errors clustered by month \times year are reported in parentheses.

* $p < .1$.

*** $p < .05$.

**** $p < .01$.

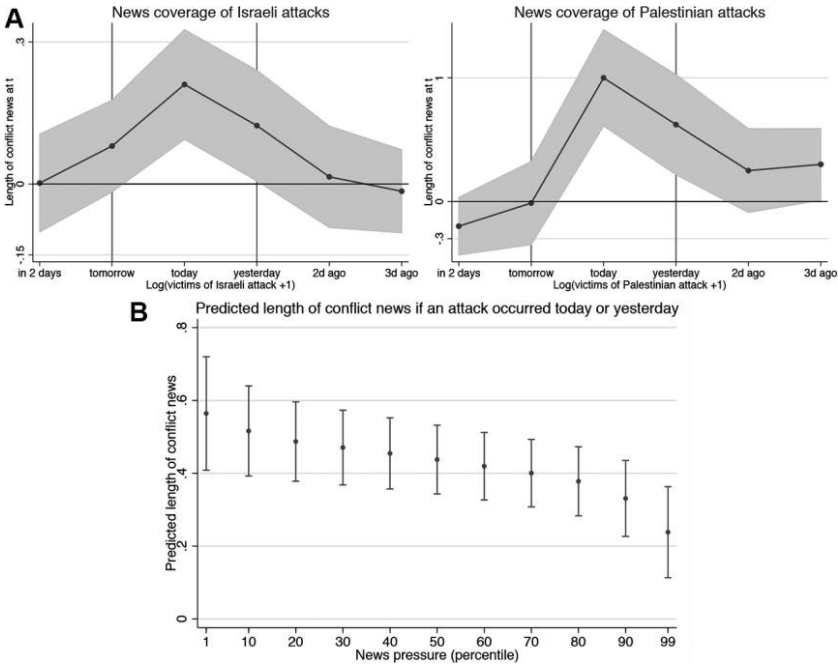


FIG. 2.—Coverage of conflict in US news. Panel A: News about conflict and attacks. Panel B: News about attacks and news pressure. Panel A plots show the level of conflict news around the days of Israeli and Palestinian attacks. Both plots in panel A come from a single regression with length of conflict news as the dependent variable and the lags and leads of log victims on both sides of the conflict with day-of-the-week, month, and year fixed effects restricting the sample to days outside the two periods of most intense fighting: Gaza War and Operation Defensive Shield. The plot in panel B presents the marginal effects of changes in news pressure on the probability of conflict coverage; it comes from the estimation presented in column 4 of table 2. Color version available as an online enhancement.

In columns 3 and 4 of table 2, we illustrate that, conditional on the severity of the attacks, news pressure has a negative significant association with the conflict coverage. We focus on those days when an attack by either side occurred on the same day or the previous day and regress our measures of conflict-related coverage on daily news pressure, controlling for the $\log(1+)$ of the number of victims, and the three sets of fixed effects described above. We find that an increase in news pressure by 4 minutes (equivalent to a shift in the distribution of news pressure from the median to the 90th percentile or to a shift from the 75th to the 95th percentile) is associated with a decrease in the probability of any news on conflict being reported of 3.1 percentage points (roughly a 31 percent decrease relative to the baseline probability estimated in col. 1) and a decrease in the length of conflict-related stories by 24 percent. Panel B

of figure 2 illustrates how the length of conflict coverage is related to news pressure during days with an attack on that day or the day before.

In columns 5 and 6 of table 2 we present evidence that the US public is interested in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and that the coverage of the conflict on US TV news is associated with an increase in the interest of the US public in the conflict. The daily volume of Google searches in the United States for the search topic Israeli-Palestinian conflict is significantly higher when the severity of Israeli attacks increases (col. 5). The search volume is also significantly higher when news on conflict appears on US TV conditional on the severity of attacks on both sides of the conflict (col. 6). Five minutes worth of conflict-related stories is associated with a twofold increase in the volume of Google searches. This association, however, is likely to be driven by unobserved characteristics of the conflict events that affect both the interest of the public and the extent of media attention.

B. Testing the Main Hypothesis

1. Attacks and News Pressure

As a first test of the effect of news pressure on attack timing, we regress daily measures of the occurrence and severity of the attacks by each side of the conflict on lags and leads of US news pressure, controlling for seasonality, overall conflict intensity, and the presence of a retaliation motive (Jaeger and Paserman 2008, 2009). In particular, we estimate equations of the following general form:

$$A_{it} = \alpha_0 P_t + \beta_0 P_{t+1} + \sum_{\tau=1}^7 \alpha_\tau P_{t-\tau} + \sum_{\tau=2}^7 \beta_\tau P_{t+\tau} + \gamma_1 A_{j,t-1} + \gamma_2 A_{j,w-1} + \gamma_3 A_{j,w-2} + \eta_{dt} + \psi_m + \vartheta_y + \varepsilon_{it}. \quad (1)$$

The term A_{it} is a measure of the occurrence or the intensity of an attack by side i (either IDF or Palestinian militants) against the opposing side j on day t ; P_t is one of our alternative measures of news pressure on day t . We focus on the effect of same-day and next-day news pressure with and without controls for a series of its lags and leads. The variables $A_{j,t-1}$, $A_{j,w-1}$, and $A_{j,w-2}$ are dummies for the occurrence of attacks by side j 1 day before day t , 1 week before (i.e., between 2 and 7 days before day t), and 2 weeks before (i.e., between 8 and 14 days before day t), respectively. The terms η_{dt} , ψ_m , and ϑ_y denote fixed effects for each day of the week, each calendar month, and each year, respectively. As both attacks and news pressure are serially correlated, we estimate standard errors with the Newey-West estimator. We estimate all regressions on the sample of all days in our observation period, excluding September 11, 2001, for which news pressure is undefined because evening newscasts on that day

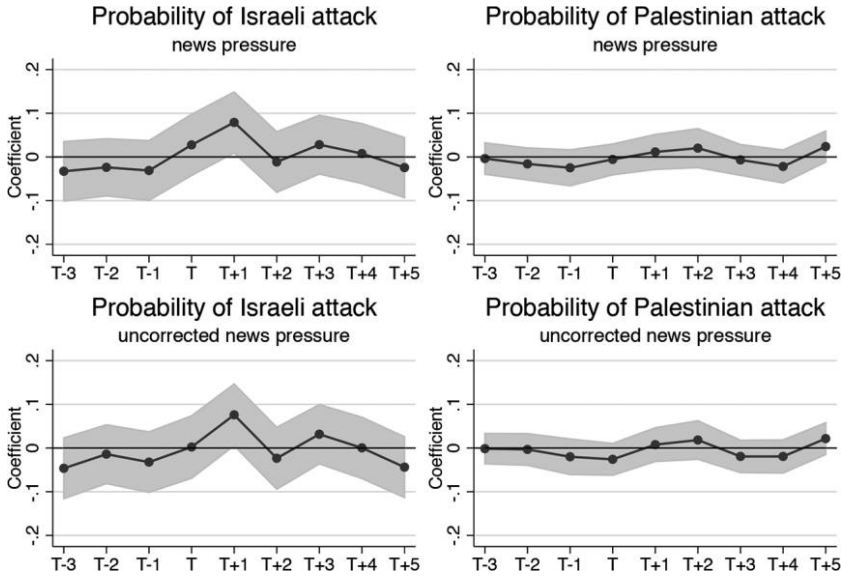


FIG. 3.—Israeli and Palestinian attacks and US news pressure. The figure reports the estimated coefficients (and respective 95 percent confidence intervals for Newey-West standard errors) from the regressions of occurrence of Israeli and Palestinian attacks on news pressure between 3 days before and 5 days after the event from the estimation of equation (1) with the full set of seven lags and seven leads of news pressure as covariates. The two upper plots use the baseline (corrected) news pressure measure, while the two lower plots use the uncorrected news pressure. The list of covariates also includes year, calendar-month, and day-of-the-week fixed effects and controls for the occurrence of the attacks by the opposing side 1 day, 1 week, and 2 weeks before. Days of the Gaza War and 9/11/2001 are excluded from the sample. Color version available as an online enhancement.

far exceeded 30 minutes, and the 3 weeks of the extraordinarily intense fighting during Operation Cast Lead (the Gaza War, December 27, 2008–January 18, 2009).

Figure 3 plots the coefficients on the lags and leads of news pressure around $t + 1$ from estimating equation (1). It shows that at $t + 1$ the estimated effect of both measures of news pressure on the probability of an Israeli attack is positive and statistically significant and the coefficients for Palestinian attacks are precisely estimated zeros.¹⁸

Tables 3 and 4 present the results formally. Table 3 focuses on Israeli attacks against Palestinians. Panel A presents the results for the baseline measure of news pressure. In columns 1–3, we estimate a linear probability model with the dummy for occurrence of a fatal Israeli attack on a given

¹⁸ Figure A.2 presents similar plots based on regressions in which lags and leads of the measures of news pressure are included in the regressions one by one instead of simultaneously.

TABLE 3
ISRAELI ATTACKS AND NEWS PRESSURE

Model	DEPENDENT VARIABLE						
	Occurrence (1)	Occurrence (2)	Occurrence (3)	Ln(1 + Victims) (4)	Ln(1 + Victims) (5)	Ln(1 + Victims) (6)	Number of Victims (7)
	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	ML Neg. Bin.
	A. News Pressure						
News pressure t	.074** (.032)	.030 (.034)	.026 (.035)	.130** (.052)	.058 (.050)	.028 (.047)	.034 (.142)
News pressure $t + 1$		.084** (.034)	.078** (.035)		.138*** (.047)	.121** (.049)	.481*** (.159)
News pressure $t - 1$			-.026 (.035)			-.035 (.046)	-.209 (.156)
Palestinian attacks (previous day)			.104*** (.030)			.220*** (.057)	.434*** (.101)
Palestinian attacks (previous week)			.086*** (.021)			.168*** (.036)	.403*** (.089)
Palestinian attacks (week before previous)			.098*** (.022)			.141*** (.036)	.301*** (.086)
7 lags of P	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Fixed effects (year, month, day of week)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,048	4,045	4,024	4,048	4,045	4,024	4,024
(Pseudo) R^2	.181	.183	.196	.175	.177	.195	.069

		B. Uncorrected News Pressure					
Uncorrected news pressure t	.027 (.034)	-.007 (.034)	-.003 (.036)	.021 (.065)	-.023 (.054)	-.037 (.049)	-.203 (.155)
Uncorrected news pressure $t + 1$		.063* (.034)	.063* (.035)		.080* (.048)	.076 (.049)	.341** (.164)
Uncorrected news pressure $t - 1$			-.030 (.035)			-.031 (.046)	-.145 (.155)
Palestinian attacks (previous day)			.105*** (.030)			.221*** (.057)	.425*** (.100)
Palestinian attacks (previous week)			.086*** (.022)			.168*** (.036)	.408*** (.091)
Palestinian attacks (week before previous)			.099*** (.022)			.144*** (.036)	.308*** (.087)
7 lags of uncorrected P	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Fixed effects (year, month, day of week)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,048	4,045	4,024	4,048	4,045	4,024	4,024
(Pseudo) R^2	.180	.181	.194	.173	.174	.192	.068

NOTE.—The dependent variables are the occurrence of Israeli attacks (cols. 1–3), the log of the number of fatalities of Israeli attacks + 1 (cols. 4–6), and the number of fatalities of Israeli attacks (col. 7). OLS regressions are presented in cols. 1–6 and an ML negative binomial regression in col. 7. All regressions include year, calendar-month, and day-of-the-week fixed effects. Standard errors clustered by month \times year are reported in parentheses in cols. 1 and 4; Newey-West standard errors are reported in parentheses in all other columns. Panel A uses the baseline news pressure measure and panel B uncorrected news pressure.

* $p < .1$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

TABLE 4
PALESTINIAN ATTACKS AND NEWS PRESSURE

	DEPENDENT VARIABLE						
	Occurrence (1)	Occurrence (2)	Occurrence (3)	Ln(1 + Victims) (4)	Ln(1 + Victims) (5)	Ln(1 + Victims) (6)	Number of Victims (7)
Model	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	ML neg. bin.
News pressure t	-.008 (.013)	-.015 (.015)	-.004 (.018)	-.014 (.016)	-.023 (.018)	-.016 (.022)	-.196 (.464)
News pressure $t + 1$		.013 (.018)	.021 (.018)		-.017 (.019)	.023 (.019)	.154 (.346)
News pressure $t - 1$			-.023 (.021)			-.027 (.024)	-.557 (.470)
Israeli attacks (previous day)			.013 (.009)			.021** (.010)	.281* (.165)
Israeli attacks (previous week)			.013** (.006)			.012** (.006)	.707* (.391)
Israeli attacks (week before previous)			.006 (.006)			.003 (.006)	.310 (.405)
7 lags of P	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Fixed effects (year, month, day of week)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,048	4,045	4,024	4,048	4,045	4,024	4,024
(Pseudo) R^2	.088	.088	.089	.085	.085	.088	.108
p -value: $\beta^{iv} = \beta^{ai}$	...	.048**	.107	...	.014**	.029***	...

NOTE.—The dependent variables are the occurrence of Palestinian attacks (cols. 1–3), the log of the number of fatalities of Palestinian attacks + 1 (cols. 4–6), and the number of fatalities of Palestinian attacks (col. 7). OLS regressions are presented in cols. 1–6 and an ML negative binomial regression in col. 7. All regressions include year, calendar-month, and day-of-the-week fixed effects. Standard errors clustered by month \times year are reported in parentheses in cols. 1 and 4; Newey-West standard errors are reported in parentheses in all other columns. The last row presents the p -values of the test for equality between the effects of news pressure for Israeli and Palestinian attacks (presented in panel A of table 3) calculated using seemingly unrelated regressions.

* $p < .1$.
 ** $p < .05$.
 *** $p < .01$.

day as the dependent variable. In columns 4–7, we focus on the severity of Israeli attacks: columns 4–6 present results of the OLS estimation using the $\log(1+)$ of the number of fatalities of Israeli attacks on a given day as the dependent variable. In column 7, we use the number of fatalities and estimate the ML negative binomial regression.

Columns 1 and 4 present the contemporaneous relationship between Israeli attacks and news pressure conditional only on day-of-the-week, calendar-month, and year fixed effects. The results indicate that both the timing and the intensity of Israeli attacks are positively correlated with the baseline measure of news pressure on the same day. However, the effect of contemporaneous news pressure on Israeli attacks on the same day almost completely disappears if we include the news pressure on the following day in the list of covariates; in contrast, the coefficient on tomorrow's news pressure on today's attacks is positive and statistically significant. We present these results in columns 2 and 5. The pairwise correlation between news pressure and its lag is .56. The inclusion of seven lags eliminates the residual autocorrelation entirely. Thus, in columns 3 and 6, we include seven lags of news pressure; in addition, we add controls for a retaliation motive. The effect of news pressure at $t + 1$ on the occurrence and severity of Israeli attacks on day t remains positive and statistically significant with the inclusion of these controls. This effect is robust to including six additional leads of news pressure, as shown in figure 3. All the lags and leads of news pressure taken together are jointly significant at the 10 percent level, and all the leads beyond the news pressure at $t + 1$ are jointly insignificant.¹⁹

Panel B of table 3 presents the same regressions, but with uncorrected news pressure. Despite the downward bias that we document above, we find no effect of uncorrected news pressure on the day of the attack (t) and a positive effect on the day following the attack ($t + 1$). The latter is statistically significant in all but one specification, which considers the log number of victims and includes all lags (col. 6). As one would expect because of the negative bias, the magnitudes of the coefficients both on the same day and on the next day for the uncorrected news pressure are substantially smaller, whereas the standard errors are of similar magnitude.

Regarding the magnitude of the effect, holding everything else constant, a 4-minute increase in the baseline measure of news pressure increases the probability of an Israeli attack on the previous day by 3 percentage points (equal to 8 percent of the probability of an attack on an average day) and increases the death toll of Israeli attacks by 21 percent

¹⁹ In the specification with the occurrence of Israeli attacks as the dependent variable and controls for the seven lags of news pressure, the coefficient on the fourth lag of news pressure is positive and significant at the 10 percent level. However, this is not robust to using any of the measures of severity of Israeli attacks: the $\log(\text{number of fatalities} + 1)$ with OLS or the number of victims with ML negative binomial estimation.

from a base level of 1.25 fatalities per day (according to the estimates in cols. 3 and 7 of panel A).

Table 4 has exactly the same structure as panel A of table 3, but it presents results for the attacks by Palestinian militants against Israelis. We find no evidence of any relationship between the timing of the fatal Palestinian attacks and the baseline measure of news pressure. The coefficients on the news pressure on the day of the attack or on the following day are statistically insignificant individually as well as jointly with other lags and/or leads of news pressure. Some of the coefficients on lags or leads occasionally reach statistical significance, but these effects are not robust to changes in the set of covariates or the choice of dependent variable and estimation model, in contrast to the robust effect for Israeli attacks. Simultaneous estimation of equations for Israeli and Palestinian attacks using seemingly unrelated regressions yields that the difference between the point estimates of β_0 in the two equations is statistically significant in all specifications with one exception. Table A.6 shows that, consistent with a negative mechanical bias in estimating the coefficients of interest with uncorrected news pressure, the estimated same-day effect of uncorrected news pressure is negative and in specifications without lags as additional controls statistically significant.

2. Robustness of the Relationship between Israeli Attacks and News Pressure

The relationship between the timing of Israeli attacks and the next-day news pressure is not driven by the choice of the functional form or the list of covariates. Figure A.3 presents a bivariate nonparametric relationship between the occurrence of Israeli attacks or their severity and news pressure on the following day. The vertical lines on each plot indicate the median of news pressure (8.3 minutes) and the 99th percentile of its distribution (17 minutes). The picture shows that the unconditional relationship is positive for the larger part of the distribution. This is corroborated by figure A.4, which plots the frequency and severity of the Israeli attacks by quintiles of the distribution of next-day news pressure.

In table A.7, we show that the results presented in panel A of table 3 are robust to controlling for the seven lags of the dependent variable (as attacks themselves are serially correlated), using the whole sample including the Gaza War, excluding contemporaneous news pressure and its lags, including additional leads of news pressure, clustering error term by month \times year instead of using Newey-West standard errors, excluding days with no original news data, and correcting news pressure using the median length of newscasts. Furthermore, table A.8 replicates table 3, controlling for 24 additional dummies for various Muslim and Jewish holidays; table A.9 establishes robustness to using corrected news pressure based on the three longest news stories rather than the first three news

stories. Tables A.10 and A.11 show that the effect of next-day news pressure is not driven by any one of the four Israeli administrations or three American administrations in power during our observation period: the effect was significantly higher during the Ehud Barak and Bill Clinton administrations, but it is statistically significant excluding them; there are no other significant differences between administrations. Finally, in table A.12, we show that there is no significant difference between the effects of next-day news pressure between the Second Intifada and the post-Intifada period. In this table we also examine whether the effect of the next-day news pressure is significantly different during peace talks and peace processes. We find no significant differences, with the exception of a significantly lower β_0 during peace processes for the number of victims of Israeli attacks; however, this is not robust to using occurrence of Israeli attacks as a dependent variable.

3. The Timing of Attacks and Other Newsworthy Events

The main result established in the previous two subsections, namely, a robust association between news pressure and the timing of Israeli attacks and no association between news pressure and Palestinian attacks, is subject to classical measurement error bias due to an unpredictable component of news pressure. It could also be biased because of endogeneity: both news pressure and important events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may be driven by a third unobserved variable. For instance, important events in the Iraq War may have affected Israeli strategy through a change in geopolitical equilibrium in the Middle East, and they directly affected news pressure in the United States. To address these (potential) biases, we use the exogenous variation in news pressure stemming from news coverage of important political and sports events, as described in Section III.C. In figure 4, we summarize the frequency of attacks by each side of the conflict separately for the subsamples of days that do and do not coincide with newsworthy political and sports events. The frequency of Israeli attacks is 14.5 percentage points (37.4 percent) higher, on average, on the days that coincide with important political and sports events compared to the baseline frequency of 38.7 percent on the days that do not coincide with major political and sports events. The frequency of Palestinian attacks does not differ between the two groups of days. More formally, we estimate the following equation with 2SLS:

$$A_{it} = \beta_0^{IV} P_{t+1} + \gamma_1 A_{j-1} + \gamma_2 A_{j-7} + \gamma_3 A_{j-14} + \eta_d + \psi_m + \vartheta_y + \varepsilon_{it}, \quad (2)$$

where the next-day news pressure P_{t+1} is instrumented by the first lead of a dummy for major political and sports events. We use a more parsimonious specification in the instrumental variable (IV) analysis, because we

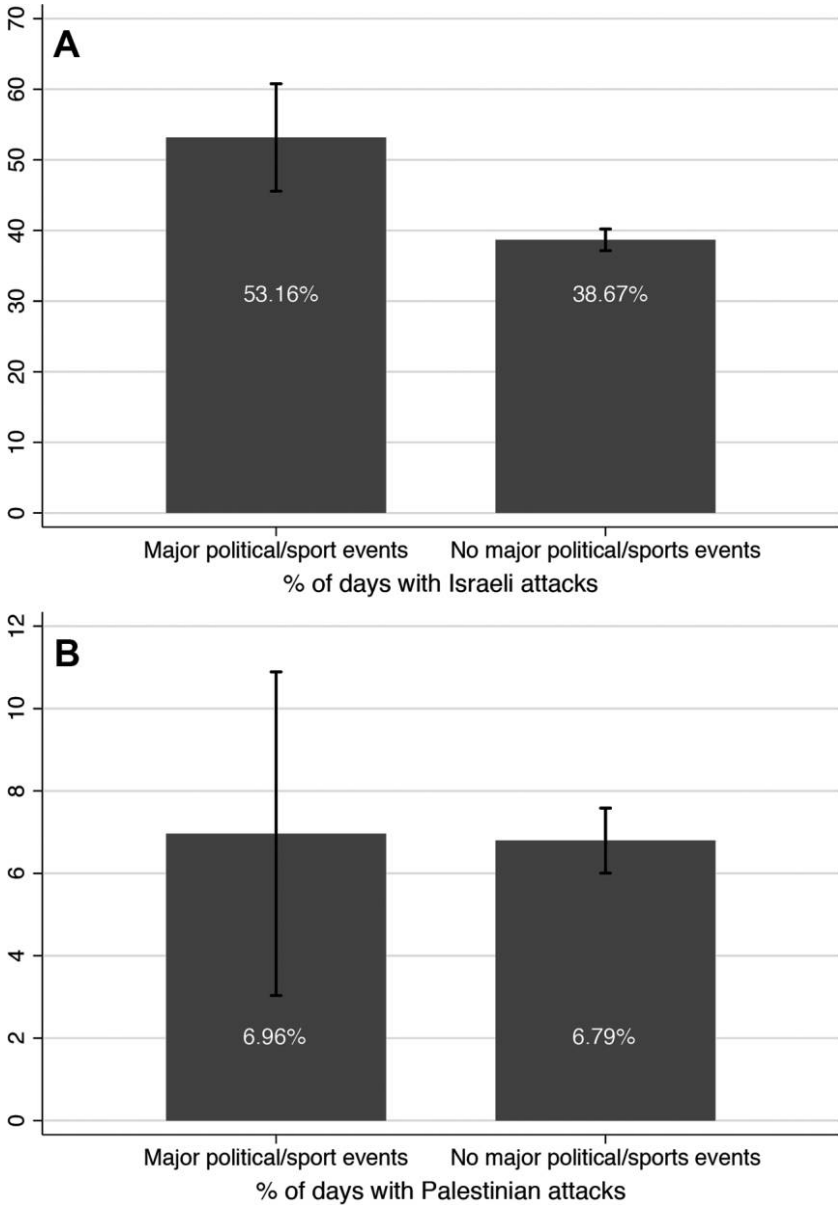


FIG. 4.—Israeli and Palestinian attacks and other predictable and exogenous newsworthy events in the United States. Panel A: Israeli attacks and newsworthy events. Panel B: Palestinian attacks and newsworthy events. The figure reports the share of days with attacks by Israelis (panel A) and Palestinians (panel B) during important US political and sports events (with 1 day forward) and during all other days, with the corresponding 95 percent confidence intervals. Color version available as an online enhancement.

have no independent instruments for the contemporaneous news pressure and its lead. Consistent with the unconditional relationship presented in figure 4, we find a very strong positive relationship for Israeli attacks and no relationship for Palestinian attacks.

Table 5 presents the results: panel A for Israeli attacks and panel B for Palestinian attacks. Columns 1 and 2 present the first-stage relationships for the two measures of news pressure (baseline and uncorrected). The instrument is a very strong predictor of news pressure: news pressure is, on average, 1.8 minutes higher during days that coincide with the political and sports events that we consider. Columns 3, 4, 6, and 7 report the results of the second stage for the occurrence and the severity of the attacks. We find a strong positive and significant effect of both corrected and uncorrected news pressure measures instrumented by important political and sports events on the timing and severity of Israeli attacks and no significant effect on Palestinian attacks. Columns 5 and 8 present the results of the reduced form, in which we regress the attacks on both sides of the conflict and their severity on the dummy for days that coincide with important political and sports events. The results are similar to the second stage. We also estimate a simultaneous system of equations for Israeli and Palestinian attacks using generalized method of moments (GMM), which allows us to compare the point estimates of β^{IV} for Israeli and Palestinian attacks. We find that they are statistically different (we report p -values for the test of equality of these coefficients on the bottom row of panel B of table 5). The magnitude of the effect for Israeli attacks is large. A 4-minute increase in the next-day news pressure due to predictable newsworthy events leads to an increase in the probability of an Israeli fatal attack on a given day of 24.6 percentage points (63 percent) and an increase in a death toll by a factor of 2.7. The point estimates are five to six times larger in the IV specification than in the corresponding OLS (reported in col. 5 of table A.7); this is consistent with a severe measurement error bias in the OLS estimates. If one assumes a uniform effect of news on attacks, that is, that the measurement error is the only driver of the difference between OLS and IV estimates, the difference in point estimates would imply that 15.4 percent of the total variation in news pressure is predictable.²⁰ It is likely, however, that a part of the difference between OLS and IV estimates is explained by the

²⁰ This figure is the ratio of the point estimates of the coefficients on the news pressure from col. 5 of table A.7 and col. 3 of panel A of table 5: $0.095/0.615 = 0.154$. This follows from the classical errors-in-variables result that

$$p \lim(\hat{\beta}) = \beta \left(\frac{\sigma_{P^*}^2}{\sigma_{P^*}^2 + \sigma_{ME_e}^2} \right),$$

where $\hat{\beta}$ is the OLS estimate of a true parameter β ; $\sigma_{ME_e}^2$ is the variance of the measurement error of the explanatory variable P ; and $\sigma_{P^*}^2$ is the variance of the unobserved correctly measured explanatory variable P^* .

TABLE 5
 ATTACKS AND NEXT-DAY NEWS PRESSURE DRIVEN BY PREDICTABLE POLITICAL AND SPORTS EVENTS

	DEPENDENT VARIABLE							
	P_{t+1} (1)	Uncorrected P_{t+1} (2)	Occurrence (3)	Occurrence (4)	Occurrence (5)	Number of Victims (6)	Number of Victims (7)	Number of Victims (8)
Model	2SLS 1st stage	2SLS 1st stage	2SLS 2nd stage	2SLS 2nd stage	OLS Reduced form	ML neg. bin. IV 2nd stage	ML neg. bin. IV 2nd stage	ML neg. bin. Reduced form
Political/sports events $t + 1$	.177*** (.035)	.190*** (.034)			.109*** (.041)			.413** (.171)
News pressure $t + 1$			.615** (.246)			2.493*** (.877)		
Uncorrected news pressure $t + 1$				.574*** (.220)			2.325*** (.792)	
Fixed effects (year, month, day of week)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prior Palestinian attacks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,049	4,046	4,046	4,049
(Pseudo) R^2	.117	.133	.128	.126	.195	...	...	.068
F-statistic, excluded instruments.	25.04	31.68	25.04	31.68	...	25.04	31.68	...
	B. Palestinian Attacks and Predictable Newsworthy Events							
Political/sports events $t + 1$	.139*** (.040)	.152*** (.040)			-.018 (.014)			-.017 (.331)
News pressure $t + 1$			-.132 (.102)			.798 (2.222)		
Uncorrected news pressure $t + 1$				-.121 (.089)			.732 (2.031)	

C. Placebo: Israeli Attacks and Unpredictable Newsworthy Events									
Fixed effects (year, day of week)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prior Israeli attacks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,049
(Pseudo) R^2	.096	.108	.064	.070	.085	.085	.085	.085	.097
F -statistic excluded instruments	11.90	14.73	11.90	14.73	11.90	14.73	11.90	14.73	11.90
p -value: $\beta_0^{\text{stiv}} = \beta_0^{\text{stiv}}$	.003***	.003***	.003***	.003***	.002***	.002***	.019***	.017***	.002***
Disaster onset $t + 1$	.082*** (.025)	.078*** (.026)			-.023 (.045)				-.131 (.162)
News pressure $t + 1$			-.278 (.571)				-1.081 (2.047)		
Uncorrected news pressure $t + 1$									
Fixed effects (year, month, day of week)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prior Palestinian attacks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,046	4,049
(Pseudo) R^2	.104	.119	.161	.163	.193	.193	.193	.193	.068
F -statistic, excluded instruments	10.710	9.112	10.710	9.112	10.710	9.112	10.710	9.112	10.710
p -value: $\beta_0 = \beta_0^{\text{stiv, unpred}}$			.119	.140	.034**	.034**	.191	.227	.095*

NOTE.—The table presents IV regressions with the dummy for major sports and political events used as an instrument for news pressure in panels A and B and the dummy for onset of a US-based disaster in panel C. Robust standard errors adjusted for clusters by month \times year are in parentheses. All tests for the equality of β^{stiv} coefficients for the occurrence of attacks come from the estimation of the system of the corresponding equations with GMM. All tests for the equality of β^{stiv} coefficients for the severity of attacks come from the GMM estimation of the system of log-linear equations with log (number of victims + 1) as a dependent variable rather than the ML negative binomial. To compare the reduced-form estimates for Israeli and Palestinian attacks, we use a system of seemingly unrelated regressions. To compare the estimates for the reduced-form estimates for the Israeli attacks between the baseline and the placebo, we estimate a single equation, in which the Israeli attacks (or the log of their victims) are regressed simultaneously on the dummies for the disaster onset and for the important predictable events.

* $p < .1$.
 ** $p < .05$.
 *** $p < .01$.

heterogeneity of the effects for attacks that are more and that are less costly to postpone. In the case of the heterogeneous effects, the IV estimate reflects the local average treatment effect on the subset of marginal attacks, for which strategic media considerations potentially could be important, whereas the OLS estimate reflects the average effect across all the attacks. Estimates presented in column 4 of table 2 and column 3 of table 5 imply that a unit increase in news pressure reduces the length of conflict coverage by 0.692 minute and increases the probability of a marginal attack by 61.5 percentage points. Thus, implicitly, Israeli decision makers are willing to cancel a marginal attack on a given day if they expect that the coverage of the attack (had it happened) would have been above 1.13 minutes in length, that is, in the top 20 percent of the distribution of the length of conflict news following an attack.²¹

To make sure that the difference between the OLS and IV estimates is driven by the predictability of events that push news pressure up, we conduct a placebo experiment, which uses the onset of US disasters as a driver of news pressure. We estimate equation (2) instrumenting news pressure by the onset of natural and human-caused disasters in the United States. The results are presented in panel C of table 5. This panel has exactly the same structure as the other two panels of this table. In columns 1 and 2 we show that a US-based disaster significantly raises both of our measures of news pressure. In columns 3, 4, 6, and 7, we show that news pressure driven by unpredictable disasters has no effect on the timing of Israeli attacks or their severity. In columns 5 and 8, we present the reduced form, where we also find no significant relationship. In the bottom row of panel C, we present p -values from the test of equality of coefficients between the placebo test (reported in panel C) and the baseline IV estimation for the Israeli attacks (reported in panel A). Despite the fact that placebo effects tend to be less precisely estimated, we find significant differences for the reduced-form specifications.

4. The Types of Israeli Attacks and News Pressure

So far, we have presented evidence that the timing of Israeli attacks is significantly related to predictable newsworthy events and is unrelated to unpredictable events in the United States. We hypothesize that this relationship is a result of strategic behavior by Israeli authorities aimed at minimizing the impact of their operations on US public opinion. This hypothesis has two important implications, which we test in this subsec-

²¹ In the online appendix, we show that the IV results are robust to controlling for dummies for Muslim and Jewish holidays (table A.13), to using a news pressure measure based on the three longest stories rather than the first three stories (table A.14), and to using the full sample including the Gaza War and to excluding from the sample the days with no original news data (table A.15).

tion. First, the attacks that are less costly to move in time should be more subject to strategic timing than attacks that are harder (more costly) to postpone. Second, attacks that are likely to generate high negative publicity should be more subject to strategic timing than attacks that are less likely to generate negative publicity.

The B'tselem data contain information on the special targeted-killing operations by the IDF, as declared by Israeli authorities. Targeted killing took place on 3.6 percent of days in our sample (this is a small subset of all Israeli attacks). These targeted killings are usually considered more urgent than other operations because their goal is to eliminate terrorist leaders and avert imminent terrorist attacks. These opportunities are rare and cannot be missed. In this case, the potential public relations costs associated with possible collateral damage are outweighed by the security benefits. The data support this prediction.

Columns 1a and 1b of panel A of table 6 present the results of a multinomial logit regression with three potential mutually exclusive outcomes: a day with at least one Israeli attack classified as a targeted killing (col. 1a), a day with Israeli attacks not classified as a targeted killing (col. 1b), and a day with no Israeli attack (which is the comparison group). We relate the probability of each of these outcomes to the level of news pressure on the following day conditional on lags of news pressure, prior Palestinian attacks, and day-of-the-week, calendar-month, and year fixed effects. In line with our hypothesis, we find that the timing of the targeted-killing operations is not significantly affected by next-day news pressure: the marginal effect on the probability of the targeted-killing outcome is positive but small and statistically insignificant in contrast to the marginal effect for all other attacks, which, despite having military aims, were not acknowledged to have targeted specific Palestinian terrorists. The point estimates imply that a 4-minute increase in news pressure tomorrow is associated with a 3.9 percentage point increase in the probability of a nontargeted attack and a 0.2 percentage point increase in the probability of a targeted killing. The difference in these effects is statistically significant. Columns 2 and 3 present the results of ML negative binomial regressions, in which we consider the number of victims of the targeted killings and nontargeted attacks separately as outcomes. The results are consistent: we find a significant effect only for the victims of nontargeted killings.

As negative publicity for Israeli attacks presumably is associated mainly with the news coverage of the civilian victims, strategic timing should apply only to attacks that bear a risk of civilian casualties. Comprehensive data on whether the victims of each Israeli attack were civilians, militants, or terrorists are not available. However, the UNOCHA data set, which covers all Israeli attacks, including those that did not result in fatalities, contains detailed information on the location of each attack and the weapon used. Using these data, covering the period between 2005 and

TABLE 6
THE URGENCY OF ATTACKS AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

	MULTINOMIAL LOGIT MODEL: DAILY OUTCOME RELATIVE TO DAYS WITH NO ATTACK			ML NEG. BIN. MODEL (2)	ML NEG. BIN. MODEL (3)
	(1a)	(1b)			
	A. Targeted vs. Nontargeted Attacks, Sample: 2001–11				
	Days with Targeted Attacks	Days with Nontargeted Attacks	Victims of Targeted Killings	Victims of Nontargeted Attacks	
News pressure $t + 1$	.006 (.010)	.097*** (.042)	.193 (.408)	.514*** (.158)	
Share of days Observations	3.6	35.3	4,025	4,025	
β -value for 1a = 1b		.036***			
	B. Fatal vs. Nonfatal Attacks, Sample: 2005–11				
	Days with Nonfatal Attacks	Days with Fatal Attacks	Injuries	Fatalities	
News pressure $t + 1$	-.047 (.052)	.083* (.047)	-.047 (.177)	.711*** (.242)	
Share of days Observations	48.6	27.0	1,825	2,485	
β -value for 1a = 1b		.147			

C. Attacks in Less vs. More Densely Populated Areas (LDP vs. MDP), Sample: 2005–11				
	Days with Attacks, LDP Areas	Days with Attacks, MDP Areas	Victims, LDP Areas	Victims, MDP Areas
News pressure $t + 1$	-.054 (.052)	.087* (.048)	-.004 (.153)	.606** (.243)
Share of days	30.3	45.4		
Observations	2,483		2,483	2,483
β -value for 1a = 1b	.123			

D. Attacks with Light Weapons (LW) vs. Heavy Weapons (HW), Sample: 2005–11				
	Days with Attacks Using LW Only	Days with Attacks Using HW	Victims with LWs	Victims with HWs
News pressure $t + 1$	-.038 (.046)	.080** (.036)	-.137 (.168)	.789** (.356)
Share of days	55.2	20.1		
Observations		2,449	1,962	2,449
β -value for 1a = 1b		.092*		
News pressure (lags)	Yes		Yes	Yes
Prior Palestinian attacks	Yes		Yes	Yes
Fixed effects (year, month, day of week)	Yes		Yes	Yes

NOTE.—Column 1 reports results of multinomial logit regressions with three outcomes, with days without attacks the baseline (comparison) outcome. Marginal effects on the probability are reported in col. 1. Columns 2 and 3 report results of ML negative binomial regressions. Robust standard errors adjusted for clusters by month \times year are in parentheses in col. 1, and Newey-West standard errors are reported in parentheses in cols. 2 and 3.

* $p < .1$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

2011, we construct three alternative (imperfect) proxies for the ex ante probability that each particular Israeli attack affected civilians: (1) whether this attack resulted in fatal casualties; (2) whether it involved the use of heavy weapons (such as missiles, rockets, sound bombs, explosives, tank shells, artillery, or shock grenades) or light weapons (such as live ammunition, rubber-coated metal bullets, or tear gas); and (3) whether the attack was carried out in areas of the Palestinian territories (governorates) with higher or lower population density. Attacks with heavy weapons and in densely populated areas are substantially more likely to result in fatalities: 68 percent and 49.6 percent, respectively, compared to 34.4 percent for an average attack.

To compare the effect of news pressure on the timing of the attacks that are more and that are less likely to result in civilian casualties, we estimate three multinomial logit regressions with three outcomes in each. The baseline outcome is always a day without an Israeli attack, and the other two outcomes are as follows: The first regression considers days with only nonfatal attacks versus days when at least one attack is fatal; the second regression considers days only with attacks in areas with relatively low population density (below the median) versus days with at least one attack in areas with above-median population density; and the third regression considers days with attacks using light ammunition versus days with at least one attack using heavy weapons. We present the results in the first column (and remaining panels) of table 6. We find that news pressure on a given day significantly affects the probability of attacks that result in fatal casualties, are executed in high-population-density areas, and are carried out with heavy weaponry. In contrast, news pressure does not significantly affect the probability of nondeadly attacks, attacks in areas with low population density, or attacks with light weapons. This is consistent with our prediction that only the attacks likely to result in civilian deaths are subject to strategic timing considerations. However, the test for equality of marginal effects between the two types of attacks rejects equality of coefficients at the 10 percent significance level only for attacks with light versus heavy weapons (panel D). Figure 5 shows the effect of lags and leads of news pressure by type of attacks and illustrates the results of the multinomial logit regressions by presenting the point estimates on next-day news pressure estimating the effect on the probability of an Israeli attack of each type. Similarly to panel A, in columns 2 and 3 of panels B, C, and D of table 6 we report the results of ML negative binomial regressions for the number of casualties of Israeli attacks of each type. We find that the number of casualties of Israeli attacks that result in fatalities, that are executed in densely populated areas, and that involve the use of heavy weapons are significantly related to news pressure on the following day, in contrast to the number injured and the casualties of attacks with light weapons and in areas with low population density. In regressions for population density, we look at all days in the sample but restrict attention

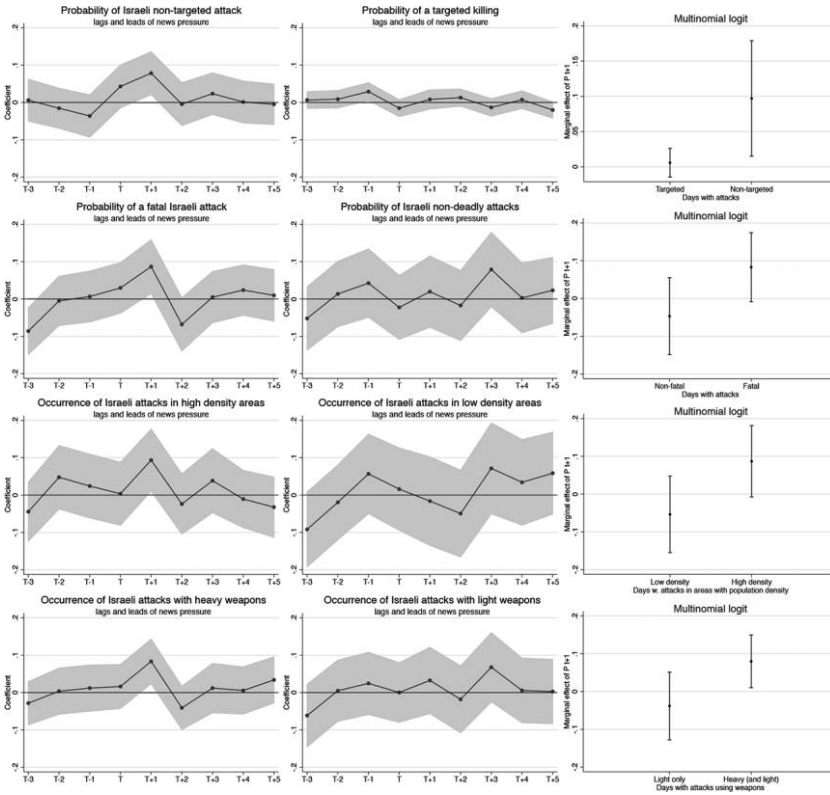


FIG. 5.—Types of attacks and news pressure. The plots in the first two columns report the relationship between Israeli attacks of different types and the lags and leads of news pressure (along with respective 90 percent confidence intervals). Column 3 presents the estimated marginal effects (along with their 95 percent confidence intervals) of a change in news pressure on the probability of an Israeli attack of a certain type from the multinomial logit specification presented in column 1 of table 6. Color version available as an online enhancement.

to Palestinian governorates with population density above and below the median. Note that for attacks that involve injuries and no fatalities, we restrict the sample to days without fatal attacks and attacks with light weapons; we restrict the sample to days with no attacks with heavy weapons in order to have a reasonable comparison group.²²

²² The results of the regressions for the number of injured and the number of victims of attacks with light weapons should be interpreted with caution because the sample selection in these regressions is done on the basis of the dependent variable (as the most severe attacks are dropped from the sample). Note also that all regressions in table 6 do not include contemporaneous news pressure as a control. When news pressure at t is included in the list of covariates, the results are both quantitatively and qualitatively very similar, but the equality of the marginal effects of the news pressure at $t + 1$ for different types of attacks is not rejected be-

Overall, we find that targeted killings (which presumably are harder to move in time than nontargeted attacks) and attacks with light weapons (which presumably are less likely to result in civilian casualties than attacks with heavy weapons) are not timed to news pressure in contrast to nontargeted attacks and attacks with heavy weapons.

V. Mechanism: The Coverage of Conflict on the Same Day versus Next Day

In this section, we explore the mechanism behind the effect. In particular, we shed light on why Israel times its attacks to the predicted news pressure on the following day rather than on the same day. The most obvious possible explanation is that it takes time for reporters to prepare a story. If news about important events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict appeared in the media only 1 day after their occurrence, it would not have been surprising that Israel timed its attacks to predictable newsworthy events scheduled for the following day. We test and reject this hypothesis. The top left panel of figure 6 illustrates our results. (The corresponding regression output is presented in table A.17.) First, we find that an Israeli attack is 31 percent more likely (14.5 vs. 11.1 percentage points) to be covered on the same day than on the next day.²³ Second, we find that, provided that a particular attack gets news coverage, the same-day coverage has the same length, on average, as other news stories on conflict that are unrelated to Israeli attacks, whereas the next-day coverage is 0.4 minute longer than the average conflict-related story. These findings suggest that the next-day stories include a longer, more in-depth account of the events.

As a next step, we examine the differences between the content of conflict-related news reports on the same day and the content of conflict-related reports on the next day. As we discussed in the data section, the content of conflict-related videos was coded for two networks: CNN and NBC. Out of all 755 newscasts devoted to the conflict on these networks during our observation period, 384 focused on a particular Israeli attack against Palestinians, of which 243 did not mention any Palestinian attack. Of these 243 newscasts focusing on particular Israeli attacks and no Palestinian attacks, 192 were aired on the day of the attack, 34 were aired on the following day, six covered specific attacks that took place both on the same and on the following day, and only 11 covered attacks that occurred on other days. A total of 177 videos were fully devoted to Palestinian attacks against Israelis, speaking about specific attacks or a threat of attacks, in general. Further, 170 conflict-related videos did not cover attacks at all

cause of the loss of power. The p -value for targeted vs. nontargeted attacks is .106 and for light vs. heavy weapons -.133. The results are reported in table A.16.

²³ See point estimates in col. 3 of table A.17.

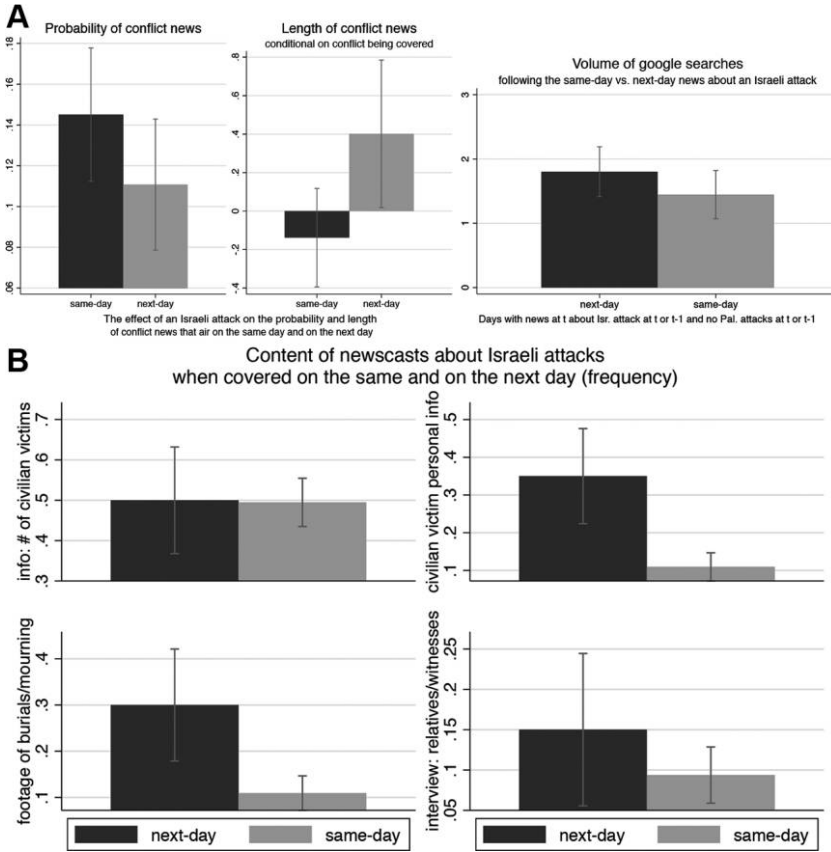


FIG. 6.—Differences between news coverage of attacks on the same and on the next day. Panel A: Probability and length of conflict news. Panel B: Content of conflict news. The left plot on panel A presents the estimated coefficients on the occurrence of the Israeli attack at t and $t - 1$ (along with their 95 percent confidence intervals) in the regressions that relate the incidence of conflict news and the length of conflict news provided that the conflict is covered on the Israeli attacks on the same day and on the previous day, controlling for seasonality, incidence of Palestinian attacks, and news pressure. We report these specifications in columns 3 and 5 of table A.17. Plots on panel B present the differences in content between the same-day and next-day coverage of Israeli attacks. In particular, the plots show the frequencies (along with their 95 percent confidence intervals) of the following aspects of news coverage of Israeli attacks on US news separately for news stories that aired on the same day as the attack and on the day after the attack: information on the number of civilian victims, personal information about the victims, footage of burials or mourning, and interviews with friends, relatives, or witnesses. The corresponding regression output is presented in panel A and with controls added in panel B of table A.18. The right plot on panel A reports the mean log daily volume of Google searches following the same-day and next-day news coverage of an Israeli attack when there were no Palestinian attacks either on the same or on the previous day. Color version available as an online enhancement.

but focused on other related issues, such as peace negotiations. Overall, 428 videos were devoted to a specific attack on either side of the conflict that occurred on the same day or on the previous day.

We present the results of the content analysis in table A.18 and illustrate the main findings in panel B of figure 6. As far as the factual content is concerned, dry facts about the attack, such as the number of victims (total or just civilian), are as likely to be reported on the same day as on the next day.²⁴ In contrast, next-day newscasts are significantly more likely to report personal information about the civilian victims, such as their names and family stories. This difference is substantial: 37.9 percent of the next-day stories include personal information about civilian victims against only 12 percent of the same-day news stories. Burials and scenes of mourning are also significantly more likely to appear on the next-day newscast. This highly emotional content appears in 30.4 percent of the next-day newscasts compared to 11.6 percent of the same-day newscasts. Similarly, interviews with family members and friends of the victims and witnesses appear in 16 percent of the next-day newscasts compared to only 9.6 percent of the same-day newscasts.

These results provide a clear rationale for why Israel should be more concerned about next-day news coverage of its attacks on US media: next-day coverage is more damaging for Israel's image abroad because it is more emotionally charged than same-day coverage. The reason is that the next-day newscasts feature personal stories about civilian victims, rather than simply reporting dry facts, and rely more heavily on visuals rather than just a narrative. As is well known in cognitive and social psychology (e.g., Borgida and Nisbett 1977; Martin and Powers 1982; Wilkins 1983), personal stories are more powerful at conveying information than dry numbers, as they help listeners, readers, and viewers relate to the story. Also, imagery conveys information more effectively than words (e.g., Houghton and Willows 1987, vols. 1, 2; Mandl and Levin 1989; Houts et al. 2006), as stories appear more real when told with images that evoke strong emotions: funerals, mourning, and suffering. Overall, these findings support the hypothesis that Israeli authorities—to mitigate damage from emotionally charged news coverage of civilian Palestinian victims—time their most severe attacks to coincide with US news pressure.

Why do such marked differences exist between the content of same-day and next-day coverage of Israeli attacks, whereas the same pattern does not hold for coverage of Palestinian attacks? It is hard for reporters to gather footage and collect personal details about the victims on the day of an attack

²⁴ The only difference between the facts reported on the same-day and next-day coverage of Israeli attacks is that the next-day newscasts are 28 percentage points more likely to report information on the exact location of the attack (72 percent vs. 44 percent of the newscasts).

because being in the vicinity of the site of the attack is dangerous for reporters and (potential) witnesses because of the risk of follow-up strikes.²⁵ Conditions are more favorable for journalists on the day after an attack. Local traditions call for burying of victims 1 day after death. The burial ceremony takes place in open air and is attended by the local population in large numbers. These funerals are a safe opportunity for reporters to collect personal information about the victims and to capture emotionally charged visuals of mourning.²⁶

Finally, we examine whether there is a difference in how news about the attacks is associated with the volume of Google searches about the conflict depending on whether the news appears on the same day as the attack or on the following day. If, as we argue above, next-day broadcasts are more emotional, one might expect that people pay more attention to the conflict after next-day broadcasts. The data are consistent with this hypothesis. We split daily news on conflict into three categories: conflict news that appears on the same day as an Israeli attack, conflict news that appears 1 day after an Israeli attack, and all other news on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During the sample period with available Google data, there are 140, 134, and 59 days with such broadcasts, respectively. In columns 1 and 3 of table 7, we regress the log volume of Google searches on the incidence and the length of conflict news separately for each of these types of news stories, controlling for the occurrence and severity of the attacks on both sides of the conflict at t and $t - 1$. We find that the volume of Google searches on the conflict is significantly associated with conflict-related news items and their length when these news items cover an Israeli attack 1 day before and are unrelated to the news on conflict when these news items cover an Israeli attack that occurred on the same day. The difference between the effects of the same-day news and the next-day news is statistically significant irrespective of specification (p -values are reported at the bottom of the table).²⁷ As Google searches are associated with conflict news both on the same day and on the day before, we add (in cols. 2 and 4) the incidence

²⁵ See, e.g., the CNN interview with *New York Times* photojournalist Tyler Hicks about the attack on July 16, 2014, which aired the same day; it is available on the Vanderbilt Television News Archive.

²⁶ The reason why news coverage of Palestinian attacks on Israel is more similar between the same day and the next day as reported in panel B of table A.18 may relate to Israel's strategic behavior. The IDF creates favorable conditions for international reporters by giving them prompt access to the site of Palestinian attacks right after they occur, allowing them to film the site, interview witnesses, and produce videos of the damage and the victims. As discussed in Nevo and Shur (2003), this policy is motivated by Israel's understanding of the effects of international news coverage on public opinion.

²⁷ The right chart in panel A of fig. 6 summarizes the data: it shows the average log daily volume of Google searches on the days when news about Israeli attacks appears separately for days with news about the Israeli attacks that occurred on the same day and that occurred a day before and there were no Palestinian attacks either today or yesterday.

TABLE 7
GOOGLE SEARCH VOLUME, CONFLICT-RELATED NEWS, AND TIMING OF ATTACKS

	DEPENDENT VARIABLE: LOG DAILY VOLUME OF GOOGLE SEARCHES FOR ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT			
	OLS (1)	OLS (2)	OLS (3)	OLS (4)
Any conflict news, $t \times$ Israeli attack, same day	.014 (.114)	-.058 (.127)		
Any conflict news, $t \times$ Israeli attack, previous day	.368*** (.101)	.295** (.127)		
Any conflict news, $t - 1 \times$ Israeli attack, same day		.047 (.143)		
Any conflict news, $t - 1 \times$ Israeli attack, previous day		.329*** (.119)		
Length of conflict news, $t \times$ Israeli attack, same day			-.003 (.034)	-.044 (.040)
Length of conflict news, $t \times$ Israeli attack, previous day			.109*** (.030)	.108*** (.039)
Length of conflict news, $t - 1 \times$ Israeli attack, same day				-.034 (.044)
Length of conflict news, $t - 1 \times$ Israeli attack, previous day				.114*** (.039)
Occurrence dummies and log victims of attacks on both sides, t and $t - 1$	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occurrence dummies and log victims of attacks on both sides, $t - 2$	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fixed effects (day of week and month); linear time trend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Respective conflict news measure, $t \times$ no Israeli attack, t or $t - 1$	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Respective conflict news measure, $t - 1 \times$ no Israeli attack, $t - 1$ or $t - 2$	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	2,773	2,741	2,773	2,741
R^2	.307	.326	.323	.345
p -value: same-day coverage vs. previous-day coverage, t	.053*	.133	.073*	.052*
p -value: same-day coverage vs. previous-day coverage, $t - 1$	...	.249	...	.072*
p -value: same-day coverage vs. previous-day coverage, $(t - 1) + t$	...	.170	...	.053*

NOTE.—Dependent variable is the log volume of Google searches for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The main explanatory variables are the news coverage of attacks on the same and on the previous day. Fixed effects for the day of week and calendar month as well as linear time trend and controls for the occurrence and severity of the attacks are included in all equations. Standard errors clustered by month \times year are reported in parentheses.

* $p < .1$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

and the length of conflict news 1 day before, separately for each type of conflict news. In these regressions, we add controls for the occurrence and severity of conflict at $t - 2$. As above, we find that Google searches are significantly positively associated with the previous day's news on attacks that occurred 1 day before, but not with the previous day's news that covers attacks that occurred on the same day. The difference in the magnitude of the coefficients on the same-day versus the next-day broadcasts at $t - 1$ is significant for the length of the broadcast.

VI. Conclusions

We present systematic evidence that policy makers behave strategically in timing unpopular actions to coincide with other newsworthy events that distract the public's attention so as to minimize negative publicity. We focus on the relationship between the timing of attacks in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the presence of important events on US TV news.

Israeli authorities appear to time their attacks to minimize their coverage in next-day newscasts, which are more likely than same-day newscasts to feature personal stories of civilian victims and emotionally charged videos of burials and mourning. This strategy is consistent with a goal of reducing the negative impact of Israeli attacks on the perception of Israel's image by US public opinion. This goal has been discussed explicitly in public statements by Israeli officials.

Evidence of strategic timing is present only for predictable newsworthy events and only for military actions that are likely to generate negative publicity (i.e., attacks with heavy weapons, for which the risk of having civilians affected is particularly high). Strategic timing is not applied to targeted killings, which are extremely urgent. There is no effect of US news on Palestinian terrorist attacks.

Our results suggest that policy makers' strategic behavior may undermine the effectiveness of mass media as a watchdog, thus reducing citizens' ability to keep public officials accountable.

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