

CAMERA's broken lens revisited

Media watchdog's response to The Electronic Intifada study doesn't withstand scrutiny

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For The Electronic Intifada

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In February 2008, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA) published a study titled, "On Nation's Op-ed Pages, Israel's Voice is Stifled." [1] The report claimed the existence of an overwhelming pro-Arab, anti-Israel agenda in *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The Los Angeles Times* in "guest op-eds" over a 19-month period. [2]

CAMERA claimed that out of 56 primary op-eds dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* from 1 January 2006 to 31 July 2007, 33 of the commentaries (59 percent) reflected an Arab perspective or contained more criticism of Israel, only 12 supported an Israeli perspective or criticized Arabs more (21 percent) and 11 op-eds were neutral (20 percent). [3]

The Electronic Intifada (EI) examined the guest commentaries from the same period and found that CAMERA's analysis of *The Washington Post* had excluded 27 relevant op-eds (15 primary, 12 tangential) and improperly classified others, while its analysis of *The New York Times* significantly downplayed pro-Israel op-eds by classifying them as neutral, tangential, or pro-Arab without regard to their own established criteria, but consistent with CAMERA's *raison d'être*. [4]

EI demonstrated that in fact 35 primary op-eds reflected an Israeli perspective or contained more criticism of Arabs (41 percent), 32 reflected an Arab viewpoint or contained more criticism of Israel (38 percent) and 18 guest commentaries were neutral (21 percent). [5] Far from a pro-Arab, anti-Israel agenda, EI showed that both Arab opinion and mainstream views on international human rights pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict were underrepresented on the "guest op-ed" pages of America's newspapers. [6]

CAMERA responded to the EI report by reaffirming most of its findings in a detailed report while seeking to malign both the author of the study and The Electronic Intifada with baseless claims of distortion and an "anti-Israel agenda" in its typical hatchet prose. [7] However, CAMERA's analysis fails once again to pass the credibility test.

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CAMERA's response to the EI report provides further evidence of the errors, flawed reasoning and apparent agenda behind its original guest op-ed study. First, CAMERA's analysis consistently fails to acknowledge Arab grievances widely recognized under international law and avoids any standard of accountability for the Israeli government. When it comes to evaluating the claims in the opinion pieces, CAMERA seems to filter its analysis through the positions of the Israeli government and even Israel's far right while dismissing mainstream international consensus positions on issues of human rights and international law. As a result, CAMERA classified many op-eds that contained more criticism of Arabs or supported Israeli policies as neutral, irrelevant, or even pro-Arab. In its revised report, CAMERA also attempts to dismiss widely shared Arab grievances from the evaluation process such as Israel's blockade of Gaza or respect for Lebanese sovereignty by broadly associating the recognition of those grievances with support for Hamas or Hizballah. Second, contrary to its own criteria, CAMERA argued on numerous occasions that what it believed to be "correct" or "factual" criticism of Arabs should not be considered when evaluating whether the op-ed favored one side of the other. And third, clear evidence of manipulation can be seen in CAMERA's comical attempt to recast op-eds on topics such as the Israel-Lebanon war, US Middle East policy, the Suez Canal crisis of 1956, Palestinian citizens of Israel, espionage, and in some cases the Palestinian-Israeli peace process itself as not primarily or tangentially dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

CAMERA claimed that EI's report wrongfully included commentary on the Israel-Lebanon war from *The New York Times* that did not qualify as full length op-eds but only shorter length commentary that was not tallied in CAMERA's results. [8] Three of those op-eds supported an Arab point of view or were more critical of Israel, one supported an Israeli point of view, and three were neutral. The impact of this consideration on the EI study would result in a net decrease of two primary pro-Arab op-eds and a slight increase in the percentage of overall pro-Israeli bias. In addition, CAMERA maintained that many tangential op-eds were included to make the overall result look more pro-Israel. [9] However, the removal of every single tangential op-ed from the EI study where there was a disagreement over its consideration still leaves a total of 39 pro-Israel op-eds (-11), 31 pro-Arab op-eds (-3), and 17 neutral op-eds (-3).

If CAMERA was truly interested in gauging the view of the editorial pages of the US's newspapers, the study could have included all editorials and staff op-eds during the relevant period. The staff op-eds and newspaper editorials are a far better indication of the definitive voice of the paper than invited guests – and guests are arguably invited to promote a diversity of viewpoints on the editorial pages. However, since CAMERA knew that these papers overwhelmingly feature one-sided, pro-Israel commentary with the likes of Fred Hiatt, Michael Gerson, Ethan Bronner, Charles Krauthammer, Jim Hoagland, Colbert I. King, David Brooks, William Kristol, Thomas Friedman, Sebastian Mallaby, Michael Kinsley, George Will, Jackson Diehl and Lally Weymouth (interviews), etc. – the study chose to focus on the questionable subgroup of "guest op-eds" instead. And even in this category, CAMERA could not make a credible case of "anti-Israel" bias without omitting numerous op-eds, misrepresenting the analysis of others, and employing its own criteria for evaluating the commentary regarding international law and human rights that has virtually no international standing.

CAMERA's analysis of *The Washington Post* revisited

CAMERA's original report claimed that only four pro-Israel op-eds appeared in *The Washington Post* in a 19-month period, while there were 17 pro-Arab primary op-eds and two that were neutral. [10] This would have been an extraordinarily small number of pro-Israel op-eds given that the period included the Israel-Lebanon war, Israel's proposed convergence plan, Palestinian elections, the international boycott of the elected Palestinian government following the Palestinian legislative elections and the unprecedented intra-Palestinian violence. [11] Upon further examination, EI found that the CAMERA report had failed to account for 27 op-eds (15 primary, 12 tangential) and had improperly classified others. EI identified a total of 17 primary op-eds supporting an Israeli view or more critical of Arabs, 16 supporting an Arab perspective or more critical of Israel and six neutral op-eds. [12]

CAMERA now acknowledges that three of the primary op-eds including Michael Oren, "Necessary Steps for Israel; Confronting State Sponsors of Terror is the Only Option;" David Rivkin and Lee Casey, "Israel is Within its Rights;" and Gershom Gorenberg, "Building Nowhereland") should have been included in the original study and were cut during the "editing process" – in the tabulation of the results, in the op-ed description section, and the body of their main report. [13] No credible explanation is provided for the exclusion of 12 primary op-eds (including two pro-Arab perspectives).

I. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not relevant to the Arab-Israeli conflict

4 June 2007, "The Specter of 'Hamastan'; More Must Be Done to Counter Islamist Gains in Gaza"

CAMERA: Omitted

EI: Pro-Israel, primary

Dennis Ross calls for Egypt, Israel and the Palestinian Authority to cut off the supply of weapons to Hamas in Gaza, and recommends re-branding of Fatah with donor aid in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Ross ignores US and Israeli involvement in provoking the intra-Palestinian violence, and fails to mention the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank or Israel's obligations under international law generally. According to CAMERA, Ross's analysis takes a "more clinical" than pro-Israel stance even though the op-ed clearly ignores Israel's legal obligations as an occupying power in the West Bank and Gaza. Nevertheless, CAMERA omitted the op-ed from the study altogether. CAMERA wrongly interprets its own criteria by claiming that an op-ed with a more critical focus on Arabs does not count as criticism of Arabs for the purpose of the study if it is "accurate," in its opinion.

15 February 2007, "The Art of the Possible Peace; Rice's First Task: A Viable Israeli-Palestinian Cease-Fire"
by Dennis Ross

CAMERA: Omitted

EI: Pro-Israel, primary

The author argues that a push for final status issues might threaten the intra-Palestinian unity government and calls ceasefire a more realistic goal. Dennis Ross discusses Palestinian "concessions"

such as giving up the right of return and parts of occupied East Jerusalem, while simply dismissing principles of international law and UN Security Council resolutions which speak directly to these issues. CAMERA acknowledges that the op-ed could be considered primary but not pro-Israel because Ross is providing an "even-handed" exploration of obstacles to a US mediated ceasefire. CAMERA, like Dennis Ross, wrongly dismisses Palestinian rights under international law and claims once again, "factual observations faulting or criticizing Arabs do not count as the part of the criteria for evaluating op-eds. [14]

II. US foreign policy is not relevant to the Arab-Israeli conflict

11 August 2006, "The Only Option is to Win" by Newt Gingrich

CAMERA: Omitted

EI: Pro-Israel, primary

The author maintains that US foreign policy goals include defeating terrorists, preventing weapons proliferation and defending Israel. CAMERA ignores the repeated references of support for Israel in the op-ed during the ongoing Lebanon war and the identification of US support for Israel as a main goal of US foreign policy. Instead, CAMERA maintains that Newt Gingrich simply focuses on "the need for a national dialogue on worldwide threats," ignoring the substantive content and immediate context of the op-ed. [15]

10 August 2006, "The Guns of August" by Richard Holbrooke

CAMERA: Omitted

EI: Pro-Israel, primary

The author maintains that containing the violence and finding a solution that protects Israel should be two of the main US priorities in Iraq and Lebanon. More than a paragraph is dedicated to Richard Holbrooke's justification of Israel's actions in Lebanon under international law, and he asserts that Washington should use its leverage in the region "in close consultation with Israel." CAMERA claims that the op-ed is about "general Middle East policy" which is not considered part of Arab-Israeli conflict. [16] General US policy could certainly be pro-Israel as in this primary op-ed.

23 August 2006, "The New Middle East Bush Is Resisting" by Saad Eddin Ibrahim

CAMERA: Omitted

EI: Pro-Arab, primary

The author discusses the resistance of the Bush administration to the rise of Islamic democrats in the Middle East and the impact of the Lebanon war on Hizballah's image in the region. The op-ed was written during the Lebanon war, discusses the Qana bombing, criticizes Israeli military actions and contains extensive discussion of the implications of US foreign policy on the conflict. CAMERA claims the "primary focus is not Arab-Israeli but Arab-US," again ignoring most of the substantive context and failing to recognize that the US is Israel's strongest ally and its actions in the region have a close relationship to protecting its perception of Israel's best interests. [17]

20 July 2006, "Why I'll Vote for Bolton" by George V. Voinovich

CAMERA: Omitted

El: Pro-Israel, tangential

Citing the Lebanon war and the need to defend Israel, among other factors, the senator explains why he would back UN Ambassador John Bolton if re-nominated to the position by President Bush. CAMERA claims the op-ed is "less than relevant" because it contained one sentence about Israel.

[18] In fact, there were there were at least five references to Israel and another five references to the Middle East with the wars in Lebanon and Gaza raging. George V. Voinovich also absolves Israel from any responsibility in the Lebanon conflict in the op-ed. If a book review on the conflict can qualify as a tangential op-ed, certainly an op-ed endorsing one of the most "pro-Israel" advocates of the Bush Administration for the position of UN ambassador is relevant to the analysis as well.

III. Lebanon is not relevant to the Arab-Israeli conflict

3 May 2007, "The Next Mideast War" by David Makovsky

CAMERA: Omitted

El: Pro-Israel, primary

The author calls for the enforcement of UN resolutions in Lebanon and in general, focuses only on the Arab side of the equation. This article overwhelmingly blames Syria, Hamas and Hizballah for the conflict; it discusses ceasefire violations, weapons smuggling and kidnappings. There is no criticism of Israel or recognition of Arab grievances, Israel's violation of UN Security Council resolutions, or human rights violations in Lebanon. CAMERA acknowledges the op-ed is "sympathetic to Israel" but again omits the op-ed altogether, claiming it is "not a primary example of a pro-Israeli or anti-Arab perspective." [19]

25 July 2006, "Air Power Won't Do It" by Philip H. Gordon

CAMERA: Omitted

El: Pro-Israel, primary

The author argues that air-bombing Lebanon will not defeat Hizballah and calls for a different approach that will involve a more proportional response, support for the Lebanese government and international pressure on Iran and Syria. The op-ed overwhelmingly focuses on the ongoing Lebanon war and Israel's military strategy. Gordon faults Syria and Iran for the conflict, overall. CAMERA acknowledges that the op-ed faults Hizballah as the aggressor. [20] The op-ed repeatedly apports blame to the Arab side without acknowledging a single Lebanese grievance. CAMERA also fails to recognize Arab grievances with Israel and omits the op-ed from the study altogether, claiming, "it is neither an Israeli perspective or primarily critical of Arabs." [21]

23 July 2006, "We Have to Talk to Bad Guys" by John McLaughlin

CAMERA: Omitted

El: Pro-Israel, primary

The author calls for improved and more open diplomacy to ongoing conflicts, places enormous

responsibility on Iran and Syria and praises the previous role of Dennis Ross in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The op-ed was written during the Lebanon and Gaza wars and provides a series of recommendations on diplomacy in order to deal with those conflicts. However, the op-ed solely apportions blame to the Arab side and fails to recognize Lebanese grievances with Israel. McLaughlin's "real politic" is one-sided and reflects more of an Israeli point of view. [22] CAMERA omitted the op-ed altogether, maintaining, "the Israel-Hizballah war is a news peg for McLaughlin's policy recommendations." [23]

19 August 2006, "Making Peace Stick in Lebanon" by Franklin D. Kramer

CAMERA: Omitted

EI: Pro-Israel, primary

The author makes recommendations for the success of the peacekeeping forces in Lebanon and in general focuses only on the Arab side of the equation. An op-ed solely focusing on the conduct of Lebanese in order to establish peace and ignoring Israeli actions is inherently not balanced. CAMERA maintains that the op-ed simply reflects a "viewpoint of US policymaking" and "does not qualify as an Israeli perspective or primarily critical of Arabs." [24] CAMERA's analysis of *The New York Times* included a primary op-ed about peacekeeping forces in Lebanon by Nancy Soderberg but here CAMERA chose to omit the commentary altogether.

17 July 2006, "Postcard from Lebanon" by Fawaz A. Gerges

CAMERA: Omitted

EI: Pro-Arab, primary

Fawaz A. Gerges discusses the impact of Israel's extensive bombing campaign in Lebanon from first-hand observation and historical perspective and calls for a UN-brokered ceasefire. CAMERA acknowledges that the op-ed calls for more pressure on "both sides, but particularly Israel" to stop punishing the Lebanese civilian population. However, CAMERA wrongly omits the op-ed from the study altogether as a "first-person human interest account of a vacation in Lebanon overtaken by war, not an 'Arab perspective/critical of Israel' policy prescription." [25] This is clearly a primary op-ed dealing with the conflict, focusing on Israel's bombing of Lebanon, providing a historical overview of the conflict and making policy recommendations.

28 July 2006, "A Time to Act" by Warren Christopher

CAMERA: Omitted

EI: Neutral, primary

The author blames Hizballah for repeatedly instigating violence with Israel and discusses the mediating role played by the US in the past. Christopher calls for an immediate cease fire in the Lebanon war with an eye toward longer term negotiations. CAMERA failed to include this op-ed in its report or provide any basis for excluding it.

30 July 2006, "Beyond Lebanon; This is the Time for a US-Led Comprehensive Settlement" by Brent Scowcroft

CAMERA: Omitted

EI: Neutral, primary

The author discusses the potential terms for a US led comprehensive settlement in the Middle East conflict and the Lebanon war. CAMERA failed to include this op-ed in its report or provide any basis for excluding it.

IV. "Factual" criticism of Arabs does not count as actual criticism of Arabs

24 January 2006, "The Palestinians' Crisis of Leadership" by Aaron David Miller

CAMERA: Primary, pro-Arab

EI: Pro-Israel, primary

CAMERA provided an accurate description of the op-ed in its original report, stating "Miller acknowledges irresponsible Palestinian leadership, and insists that leadership never had a coherent strategy." [26] However, CAMERA still claimed the op-ed was pro-Arab. The op-ed clearly contained more criticism of the Arab side, focusing on Palestinian leadership and its poor decision-making, at one point commenting:

"The Palestinians deserve a large share of the responsibility for their tragic predicament. Simply put, their leaders have failed to outline a coherent strategy, to devise effective tactics or to condition their public for a compromise. Instead, a political culture of grievance and avoidance of responsibility has been the Palestinians' operating software." [27]

In the revised critique, CAMERA argues the op-ed is pro-Arab because Miller argues that the Palestine Liberation Organization evolved in a more pragmatic direction over time and away from terror, which CAMERA does not agree with. [28] However, later on in the op-ed, Miller comes back to this same point and states that Yasser Arafat's real transgression was not Palestinian rejection at Camp David (which no Palestinian leader could have accepted, according to Miller) but his "willingness to allow his monopoly over the forces of violence in Palestinian society to dissipate and to acquiesce in, if not encourage terrorist attacks ..." [29]

CAMERA also argues that Palestinian rejection of the Camp David offer shows that Palestinians are not interested in a two-state solution. [30] Typical of its own rejectionist approach on international law and human rights for Palestinians, CAMERA fails to acknowledge that the offer at Camp David would have kept 80 percent of the illegal settlers in the West Bank and allowed Israel to retain parts of East Jerusalem, contrary to UN Security Council resolutions. The rejection of the offer at Camp David did not demonstrate that Palestinians opposed a two-state solution, but exposed how the US-led process allowed Israel to ignore its obligations under international law.

29 July 2006, "Don't Blame Democracy Promotion" by Steven A. Cook

CAMERA: Neutral, primary

EI: Pro-Israel, primary

Steven A. Cook criticizes Hamas and Hizballah for not embracing democratic values and provoking conflict with Israel and maintains that violence in Lebanon and Iraq and the Middle East conflict is not the result of the Bush Administration's push for democracy, but instead not pushing enough. The op-ed completely fails to account for any Lebanese grievances with Israel or the barriers posed to democracy promotion by Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, its violation of UN Security Council resolutions, movement restrictions, expropriation of land and water resources and human rights violations, which are routinely reported by human rights organizations. CAMERA agrees with the argument that more democracy promotion by the US might have prevented the Lebanon war, but fails to explain how one-sided criticism of the Arab side could constitute a neutral op-ed. The criterion asks to simply evaluate criticism of Arabs and Israelis, not to look for any basis to place the article in the neutral category.

V. Interfaith dialogue is inherently anti-Israel

9 May 2006, "Muslims and Jews: Common Ground" by Robert Eisen

CAMERA: Pro-Arab, primary

EI: Neutral, primary

The author discusses the Middle East conflict from Muslim and Jewish perspectives and calls for the role of the clergy in promoting dialogue. CAMERA goes out of its way to put this op-ed in the pro-Arab category but simply cannot make a credible case, even while trying its familiar hand at anti-Muslim stereotyping. CAMERA claims that the op-ed "skims over Jewish oppression by Muslims." [31] The op-ed states: "the Jewish people have been around for 3,000 years and for the majority of that period they have been ruled by foreign powers that have often persecuted them." [32] It adds, "In Muslim countries, Jews were treated much better ... But they were never equal to Muslims, and medieval literature often expresses feelings of humiliation because of Jews' lack of power in Muslim lands. And even there, Jews sometimes experienced violence." [33] CAMERA maintains that the op-ed "downplayed the irredentist nature of anti-Israel Arab nationalism and pan-Islamic movement," [34] where the op-ed states, "Muslims view the state of Israel as the most egregious example of Western colonialism and imperialism, a foreign body inserted into the Middle East for the purpose of furthering Western domination." [35] CAMERA even suggests that the author's basic recommendation of interfaith dialogue constitutes pro-Arab commentary because in its own view this is a time of "widespread influence of extremist mullahs and the predominance of anti-Jewish theological parties" in the world today, [36] so it would not be feasible to have interfaith dialogue with Muslims – clearly projecting a biased view of Muslims in general and exposing CAMERA's far right approach to the analysis.

CAMERA's analysis of *The New York Times* revisited

CAMERA's analysis of *The New York Times* found only eight primary op-eds supporting an Israeli perspective or criticizing Arab policies and twice as many criticizing Israel or supporting Arab policies over a 19-month period. [37] EI found the same number of primary op-eds supporting an Arab perspective or criticizing Israeli policies but 18 supporting an Israeli point of view or criticizing Arab policies. [38] The main difference between the two reports is that CAMERA downplayed or ignored op-eds that reflected Israeli perspective or criticized Arabs, and this is broken down into several different categories below. CAMERA also failed to account for numerous tangential op-eds supporting an Israeli point of view or which contained more criticism of Arabs.

I. Blaming the Arab side is neutral, irrelevant or pro-Arab

18 July 2006, "A Conflict That Will Stay Closer to Home" by Edward Luttawk

CAMERA: Neutral, primary

EI: Pro-Israel, primary

The author maintains that Iran and Syria are sponsoring and directing the fighting in the Lebanon war and the confrontation is not likely to further involve other countries. CAMERA claims that mere mention that Hizballah and Hamas being funded by Iran and Syria is enough for EI to push this op-ed into a pro-Israel category. CAMERA fails to understand that it is not the funding by Syria and Iran but the assignment of responsibility to one side of the conflict that puts the op-ed in the pro-Israel criteria, following CAMERA's own criteria. The op-ed states, "It is obvious by now that Israel's conflict with Hizballah and Iran is part of a larger conflict largely paid for and directed by Iran and Syria ... But all know that the Israelis are acting only incidentally against Lebanon and that the target is Hizballah, which deliberately started the fighting by crossing into Israel." [39] The op-ed contains no criticism of Israeli policies or assignment of responsibility for Israel's actions before or during the war when many human rights organizations raised the issue of proportionality as well as Israeli strikes on civilian targets. CAMERA accepts one-sided blame for the conflict on Syria and Lebanon, as neutral commentary.

2 August 2006, "Lebanon's Force for Good" by Adir Gurion Waldman

CAMERA: Neutral, primary

EI: Pro-Israel, primary

The author recommends the creation of an Israel-Lebanon monitoring group as part of a long-term diplomatic resolution of outstanding issues and a new mandate would focus on the disarmament of Hizballah. While the discussion of the monitoring group to resolve issues between the two sides could be considered neutral, the new mandate to focus on the disarmament of Hizballah, without acknowledging any substantive Lebanese grievances against Israel, would constitute a pro-Israeli focus. CAMERA claims that simply disarming Hizballah is a neutral issue for Lebanon and Israel – and arrives at this conclusion by simply claiming that a "majority" of Lebanese support disarmament of Hizballah (an

unsourced 50 percent). [40] However, a Gallup poll taken after the Israel-Lebanon war found that only 15 percent of Lebanese wanted to see Hizballah simply disarmed (only 24 percent of Christians and 11 percent of Sunnis). [41] There was greater support for the disarmament and integration of Hizballah fighting forces into the military (47 percent overall), but it is not necessarily a majority view in Lebanon. Among Shiite Muslims, the largest sect in Lebanon, 85 percent did not want to see Hizballah disarmed or integrated into the national army. [42] Furthermore, the implementation of the mandate would cause significant civil strife in Lebanon – while accomplishing a key foreign policy interest of Israel. In the meantime, the mandate would fail to address any Lebanese grievances such as the thousands of Israeli overflights over Lebanon, Israeli cluster munitions or minefields in Lebanon, Palestinian refugees, Shabaa Farms, Ghajar, or kidnapping of Lebanese civilians near the Israeli border. CAMERA ignores the one-sided focus and burden of the mandate, wrongly classifying the op-ed as neutral.

24 January 2007, "What if Israel and Syria Find Common Ground" by Michael Oren

CAMERA: Neutral, primary

El: Pro-Israel, primary

Michael Oren's op-ed discusses the requirements for an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement and full normalization of relations between Damascus and "Jerusalem," considering criticism of the Syrian government from both US and Israeli points of view. CAMERA claims the op-ed is simply "all about negotiating peace" and ignores most of the op-ed's actual content and critical focus on Syria, although CAMERA does acknowledge "some US criticism of Syria," [43] which is a major component of the op-ed along with Israel's security concerns. The op-ed also claims Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, where the international consensus position is that Gaza remains occupied territory. The op-ed is another example where more criticism of the Arab side was considered neutral.

19 July 2007, "Forced to Get Along" by Mark Helprin

CAMERA: Neutral, primary

El: Pro-Israel, primary

Mark Helprin endorses the West Bank-first strategy, isolation of Gaza and bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The op-ed maintains that "the 'quarantine' of Gaza will cast a bright light upon normalization of the West Bank" and encourages a "strategy of limited aims, concentrating on bilateral agreements." [44] Helprin's one-sided op-ed fails to consider how bilateral negotiations and a strategy of limited aims between Israel and the occupied West Bank would address critical Palestinian concerns such as Israeli compliance with UN Security Council resolutions on Jerusalem, illegal settlements, the right of return and an end to the Israeli occupation. CAMERA argues that since the op-ed simply "recommends peace," it is a neutral op-ed and that the continued isolation of Gaza constitutes a mainstream view in the Arab world. To the contrary, most human rights organizations and people of the Arab world consider the isolation and occupation of Gaza to be collective punishment and a violation of international law. CAMERA seems to accept the view of authoritarian governments in the region over the view of most the people who oppose occupation and oppression in any form.

21 July 2006, "Look What Democratic Reform Dragged In" by Ted Koppel

CAMERA: Neutral, tangential

El: Pro-Israel, primary

Ted Koppel primarily emphasizes the role of Iran in fueling the conflict in Gaza and Lebanon. The op-ed focuses on the role of Hizballah in the Lebanon war and the threat it poses to Israel. While most international observers and human rights organizations were asking about proportionality during Israel's bombing of Lebanon, Koppel asks, "Are the Israelis over-reacting in Lebanon? Perhaps they simply perceive their enemies' intentions with greater clarity than most." [45] Koppel oversimplifies the nature of the conflict between Israel and Lebanon by simply pointing the finger at Iran and Hizballah rather than looking at the specific grievances on both sides. CAMERA ignores the context of the ongoing wars in Gaza and Lebanon – without which the op-ed would not have been published – the substantive content of the op-ed which defends Israeli policies, and dismisses it as simply a neutral comment on "democratic reform."

11 May 2006, "Cold, Hard Cash" by Geoff Porter

CAMERA: Pro-Arab, primary

El: Pro-Israel, primary

Following the Palestinian elections and international boycott of the Palestinian government, Geoff Porter encourages Arab states to induce Hamas to moderate its views with financial incentives – before it falls further into the orbit of Iran. Financial incentives would be provided according to the op-ed so that Hamas would recognize Israel, renounce its charter and sign on to the 2002 Arab peace plan. While part of the op-ed reflects a softening of the demands on Arabs with regard to the financial inducements, it also endorses key demands of Israel and the international quartet. CAMERA looks narrowly at the financial aid component of the op-ed and ignores the basis for providing the incentives. Furthermore, it is problematic to suggest that a US- and Israeli-led boycott of the entire Palestinian government should serve as a baseline for evaluating whether there is a softening of demands toward Arabs; the boycott put conditions solely on an occupied population but none on the occupying power. Both sides of the conflict have obligations to fulfill under international law and should be measured against that standard. The op-ed did not ask Israel to change its behavior, remove settlements, recognize a Palestinian state, end the occupation, or sign on to the 2002 Arab peace plan – which it rejects categorically. Since the op-ed only considered the need for the Palestinian government to moderate its views and completely ignored any of Israel's obligations, the op-ed should be considered pro-Israel.

25 July 2006, "Another Man's Honor" by John Tierney

CAMERA: Tangential, pro-Israel

El: Primary, pro-Israel

John Tierney maintains the Arab world has a different honor culture than the West when it comes to the supporting democratic values, the justification for war and the value of human life. The op-ed begins by

discussing the targeting of civilians by Hizballah in the Lebanon war and then generalizes these “values” to the Arab world. CAMERA dismisses the op-ed as tangential, claiming the focus was simply a book, *Honor: A History* by James Bowman. However, the book was only used to illustrate the author’s own views about Arab culture and to account for the type of enemy faced by Israel and the West. The context of the ongoing wars in Gaza and Lebanon cannot be ignored either. While human rights groups raised many questions about Israeli conduct during the war as well, this point was lost on the author. CAMERA unsurprisingly misses the dehumanizing implications of the commentary but acknowledges the op-ed is pro-Israel.

17 December 2006, “If You Love Lebanon, Set It Free” by Robert Grenier

CAMERA: Pro-Arab, primary

EI: Neutral, primary

The author argues that further integrating of Hizballah into Lebanese politics will allow the Lebanese government to reign in Hizballah’s war-making capacity going a long way toward promoting stability in the region. The op-ed endorses Israel’s initial response to the Lebanon war and recognizes that the US should work to ensure Israel’s long-term security. Robert Grenier also calls for minimizing the involvement of outside powers in Lebanon, referring to Iran and Syria. CAMERA maintains that policies which seek to reign in Hizballah’s war-making capacity in Lebanon by addressing the underrepresentation of the Shia in government among other factors – barely acknowledging any Lebanese grievances with Israel – constitutes “appeasement” and a pro-Arab op-ed. [46] The Israeli government itself is likely to be guilty of “appeasement” in this scenario as well in CAMERA’s far right approach.

26 July 2006, “The Enemy of My Enemy Is Still My Enemy” by Bernard Haykel

CAMERA: Tangential, neutral

EI: Tangential, pro-Israel

The op-ed maintains that growing support for Hizballah in the Lebanon war by Sunnis and Shias is marginalizing al-Qaeda and may result in a more united Shia-Sunni front against US forces in Iraq. The op-ed relegates many of the more complicated factors underlying the Lebanon-Israel conflict to simply a question of jihadi struggle or a popularity contest among extremists groups. Furthermore, the likely policy recommendation that follows from the op-ed for Israel and “the West” is a more comprehensive campaign in Lebanon to ensure that Hizballah did not “simply remain standing,” effectively preventing the perception of a “major propaganda victory.” [47] Most of the international community and the Arab world was calling for an immediate ceasefire and raising questions about Israel’s disproportionate use of force. The op-ed reflects a tangential and pro-Israel point of view.

II. Palestinian citizens of Israel are not relevant to the Arab-Israeli conflict

30 March 2006, “You Say You Want a Constitution” by Stephen Mazie

CAMERA: Neutral, tangential

EI: Pro-Israel, primary

The article discusses concerns related to the drafting of a constitution for Israel, including the status of

Palestinian citizens of Israel but does not recommend that the constitution itself require equal rights for all Israeli citizens. Many Palestinian citizens of Israel would be fascinated to hear CAMERA's view that their status in Israel does not constitute part of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and no Palestinian citizen of Israel or any other country would accept unequal status as part and parcel of an opinion piece that contains "equal criticism" of both sides or neutral, according to CAMERA. CAMERA seems to promote a rejectionist view on civil and human rights when it comes to the Palestinians, no matter where they live.

III. Using the perceived allegiance of Arab authors

Series of shorter-length op-eds on the Lebanon war

In its original study, CAMERA analyzed a series of shorter-length op-eds that dealt with ongoing war in Lebanon, but did not include them in the statistical tally. The Electronic Intifada did include the op-eds in the tally since they appeared in the CAMERA study and in the interest of a comprehensive analysis that accounted for all op-eds during the 19-month period, which CAMERA failed to do. In the EI tally, only one of these articles reflected an Israeli view or contained more criticism of Arabs (Richard Pearle), three supported an Arab perspective or contained more criticism of Israel (Robert Malley, Judith Kipper, Rashid Khalidi) and the other three were neutral (Chibli Mallat, Paul Salem, Avishai Margalit). CAMERA appeared to typecast all Arab opinions in this section by the perceived Arab allegiance of the authors regardless of the actual policy recommendations, which resulted in a tally of one pro-Israel op-ed, one neutral and five pro-Arab pieces.

22 July 2006, "Resolve to Put Lebanon in Charge" by Chibli Mallat

CAMERA: Pro-Arab, non-existent category

EI: Neutral, primary

The author calls for a ceasefire in the Lebanon war, the disarmament of Hizballah, return of prisoners the end of outside intervention in Lebanon, and for the Lebanese government to assert authority throughout the country. The op-ed only indirectly criticizes Israel. CAMERA agrees the piece could possibly have been considered neutral, but in the original study determined it was pro-Arab. [48]

22 July 2006, "Stop Bombs, Start Talks" by Paul Salem

CAMERA: Pro-Arab, non-existent category

EI: Neutral, primary

The author calls for a ceasefire in the Lebanon war, the disarmament of Hizballah, return of prisoners and authority of the Lebanese government throughout the country. CAMERA ignores the substance of the comments and claims it considered the op-ed pro-Arab because of the word choice over the return of prisoners with the word "insist" for Israel being harsher than "induce" for Hizballah. [49]

IV. The Arab-Israeli conflict is not relevant to the Arab-Israeli conflict

9 January 2007, "Don't Play with Maps" by Dennis Ross

CAMERA: Tangential, pro-Israel

EI: Pro-Israel, primary

The author discusses former US President Jimmy Carter's book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, and the controversy over the maps used in the book. The op-ed contains a substantive discussion of the Camp David negotiations from a primary participant and continues to perpetuate in detail the "generous offer" discourse, which rejects principles of international law and the international consensus for resolving the conflict. CAMERA regards the op-ed as solely addressing the maps in Carter's book as if Dennis Ross was simply looking at copyright issues as a disinterested party. CAMERA claims the op-ed does not directly address the Arab-Israeli conflict, meaning it is unlikely that CAMERA read beyond the title of the op-ed in order to dismiss it as tangential but pro-Israel.

28 October 2006, "Stuck in the Canal" by David Fromkin

CAMERA: Omitted

EI: Primary, neutral

The Suez Canal crisis of 1956 is discussed in the op-ed from a historical perspective. CAMERA maintains that a war involving Israel and Egypt is not part of the Arab-Israeli conflict but "US and European relations." [50]

18 June 2007, "New Lyrics for Israel" by Adam Lebor

CAMERA: pro-Arab, primary

EI: Neutral, primary

The author maintains that the Israeli national anthem should be changed to become more inclusive of all of its citizens and calls for reciprocal gestures to bind Arab loyalty to the state. Changing the national anthem to be more inclusive of all of its citizens could be considered more of a pro-Arab point of view even though the op-ed is focusing on Israeli citizens, and given that Palestinian citizens of Israel represent nearly 20 percent of Israel's population. However, the question of full civic loyalty from Palestinian citizens of Israel is a more complicated one than simply changing the national anthem or endorsing "strategic solutions" to deal with inequality as it fails to account for Palestinian dispossession. Furthermore, CAMERA wrongly asserts that the op-ed seeks to "erase" Israel's Jewish identity, a distorted characterization of the op-ed that further reveals CAMERA's dismissive approach to analyzing differences of opinion. [51]

13 July 2007, "Who Killed Ashraf Marwan?" by Howard Blum

CAMERA: omitted

EI: Neutral, primary

The op-ed discusses the death of an Egyptian spy in the backdrop of the Arab-Israeli conflict. CAMERA claims that the article is "completely irrelevant to the Arab-Israeli conflict" – a surprisingly uninformed

view of the practice of espionage in the conflict for all parties – whether Arab, Israeli, the US, etc. A *60 Minutes* episode broadcast on 10 May 2009 regarded Ashraf Marwan as both “the greatest spy for Israel” according to high-ranking Israeli security officials and “a double agent for Egypt” by Egyptian officials. [52] The op-ed is clearly relevant and neutral.

V. US foreign policy is not relevant to the Arab-Israeli conflict

4 January 2007. “Getting the Middle East Back on Our Side” by Brent Scowcroft

CAMERA: Tangential, neutral

EI: Primary, neutral

The op-ed argues in favor of the major recommendation of the Iraq Study Group to link the resolution of the Iraq war to a regional effort addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict. The op-ed discusses the benefits of resolving the conflict on the region as a whole. Scowcroft claims that elements for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict were basically agreed upon as a result of the 2000 negotiations and the Road Map of 2002. However, those negotiations do not reflect internationally-recognized standards, so the article was considered primary and neutral. The op-ed also discusses the importance of a Syrian and Israeli peace deal. CAMERA maintains that the Arab-Israeli conflict was mentioned “only in passing” and considers the op-ed neutral but tangential. [53]

The chart below from the original EI report shows a summary of results for the primary op-eds only.

	<i>The Washington Post</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>	Total (WP & NYT)
Supporting Arab Perspective or Criticizing Israel	CAMERA 17 (74%) Actual 16 (41%)	CAMERA 16 (49%) Actual 16 (35%)	CAMERA 33 (59%) Actual 32 (38%)
Supporting Israeli Perspective or Criticizing Arabs	CAMERA 4 (17%) Actual 17 (44%) +13	CAMERA 8 (24%) Actual 18 (39%) +10	CAMERA 12 (21%) Actual 35 (41%) +23
Neutral	CAMERA 2 (9%) Actual 6 (15%)	CAMERA 9 (27%) Actual 12 (26%)	CAMERA 11 (20%) Actual 18 (21%)
Total	CAMERA 23 (100%) Actual 39 (100%)	CAMERA 33 (100%) Actual 46 (100%)	CAMERA 56 (100%) Actual 85 (100%)

Methodology

Both CAMERA's original study and the re-examination were based on Lexis Nexis searches of guest op-eds dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict between 1 January 2006 and 31 July 2007. Guest op-eds do not include newspaper editorials, staff op-eds, or nationally syndicated writers.

If an op-ed dealt primarily with the Arab-Israeli conflict, it could be placed into one of three categories:

1. Supporting Arab perspective/criticizing Israel:

- a) Defends Arab policies in the conflict
- b) Criticizes Israeli policies
- c) Criticizes US or UN role as too supportive of Israel or not supportive enough of Arabs

2. Supporting Israeli perspective/criticizing Arabs:

- a) Defends Israeli policies in the conflict
- b) Criticizes Arab policies
- c) Criticizes US or UN role as too supportive of Arabs or not supportive enough of Israel

3. Neutral:

- a) Containing criticism of both sides
- b) Does not take sides on policy issues
- c) Does not assign blame or criticize either side

If an op-ed did not deal primarily with the Arab-Israeli conflict, it was considered a "Tangential Op-ed" and tallied separately as either 1) supporting an Arab perspective/criticizing Israel; 2) supporting an Israeli perspective/criticizing Arabs or 3) Neutral. Iran-Israeli relations, book reviews and some of the commentaries about the Iraq Study Group fell into this category.

Endnotes

- [1] Ricki Hollander, Eric Rozenman, Tamar Sternthal, "Study: On Nation's Op-ed Pages, Israel's Voice is Stifled," CAMERA, 5 February 2008. CAMERA typically uses the term "pro-Israel" as synonymous with official Israeli government policy despite widespread opposition to many of these policies from Israelis and other supporters of Palestinian rights. CAMERA insists on the use of the term "disputed" territories in referring to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) which has been rejected by the International Court of Justice, UN Security Council resolutions, the UN General Assembly and human rights organizations among others who use the term "Occupied Palestinian Territories" in order to acknowledge the continuing legal and humanitarian obligations which stem from the Israeli occupation. The term "disputed" is still used by many news services including the Associated Press.
- [2] Ricki Hollander, Eric Rozenman, Tamar Sternthal, "Study: On Nation's Op-ed Pages, Israel's Voice is Stifled," CAMERA, 5 February 2008.
- [3] Hollander, Rozenman and Sternthal, p. 31.
- [4] Shervan Sardar, "CAMERA's broken lens: An evaluation of the media watchdog's problematic conclusion of 'pro-Arab' media bias," The Electronic Intifada, August 2008.
- [5] Ibid., p. 7.
- [6] Ibid., p. 6.
- [7] Ricki Hollander and Eric Rozenman, "Electronic Intifada 'Refutation' Disintegrates Under Scrutiny," CAMERA, 25 August 2008.
- [8] Ibid.
- [9] Ibid.
- [10] Sardar, p. 3
- [11] Ibid.
- [12] Ibid.
- [13] Hollander and Rozenman, p. 14.
- [14] Ibid., p. 12.
- [15] Ibid.
- [16] Ibid.
- [17] Ibid., p. 13
- [18] Ibid., p. 14
- [19] Ibid., p. 12
- [20] Ibid.
- [21] Ibid.
- [22] Ibid.
- [23] Ibid., p. 11
- [24] Ibid., p. 12
- [25] Ibid., p. 13
- [26] Eric Rozenman, "Study: Washington Post Op-Eds: A Wide Range of Commentary?" CAMERA, 5 February 2008, p. 4.

- [27] Aaron David Miller, "The Palestinians' Crisis of Leadership," *The Washington Post*, 24 January 2006.
- [28] Hollander and Rozenman, p. 13.
- [29] Miller.
- [30] Hollander and Rozenman, p.13.
- [31] Ibid.
- [32] Robert Eisen, "Muslims and Jews: Common Ground," *The Washington Post*, 9 May 2006.
- [33] Ibid.
- [34] Hollander and Rozenman, p. 13.
- [35] Eisen.
- [36] Hollander and Rozenman, p. 13.
- [37] Ricki Hollander, "Study: NY Times Op-eds: Forum for Contentious Issues or One Sided Advocacy," *CAMERA*, 5 February 2008, p. 1.
- [38] Sardar, p. 4.
- [39] Edward Luttwak, "A Conflict That Will Stay Closer to Home," *The New York Times*, 18 July 2006.
- [40] Hollander and Rozenman, p. 4.
- [41] Richard Burkholder, "Few Lebanese Want Hezbollah Militia Simply Disarmed," Gallup News Service, 20 November 2006.
- [42] Ibid.
- [43] Hollander and Rozenman, p. 4.
- [44] Mark Helprin, "Forced to Get Along," *The New York Times*, 19 July 2007.
- [45] Ted Koppel, "Look What Democratic Reform Dragged In," *The New York Times*, 21 July 2006.
- [46] Hollander and Rozenman, p. 8.
- [47] Bernard Haykel, "The Enemy of My Enemy Is Still My Enemy," *The New York Times*, 26 July 2006.
- [48] Hollander and Rozenman, p. 9.
- [49] Ibid., p. 10.
- [50] Ibid., p. 9.
- [51] Ibid.
- [52] "Who is Ashraf Marwan?" *60 Minutes*, 10 May 2009.
- [53] Hollander and Rozenman, p. 9.