



A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF HUMANITARIAN AND POLITICAL LEGITIMIZATION IN MEDIA COVERAGE ON GAZA CONFLICT

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Abstract

This study applied critical discourse analysis to analyze the humanitarian discourse and legitimization of Gaza crisis in the coverage of western and Arab print media. The paper was conducted discourse analysis to explore the socio-political and historical context of the issue and the way the stories are used to represent the politics of power. The sociocognitive theory by Van Dijk and postcolonial theory by Said (1978) were applied as theoretical framework. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used to examine language patterns, lexical, syntactic, metaphorical, and framing that tended to uphold narratives and assess ideological position as expressed in these newspapers. The research methodology was qualitative, which focused on news headlines in The New York Times, The Guardian, Al Jazeera Arabic, and Asharq Al Awsat throughout the Gaza crisis in 2021. The manifestation of headlines was specifically selected by referring to various sources in order to provide various points of view. The paper has investigated the connection between the language and power and how these two interrelated factors affect the formation of the audience response. The study revealed that the Israeli military activities tend to be securitized by the western media, which uses institutional sources and justifies the methods which align with geopolitical alliances or the dominant discourses. Palestinian terrorists and irrationality is promoted by Western media whereas Arab media focuses on injustice, suffering, and resistance through cultural and historical contradictions. This study giving an informed approach on how media discourses can either support or challenge global power relations in wars.

Keywords: Gaza conflict, Critical Discourse Analysis, postcolonial theory, media narratives, legitimization, humanitarianism, Western media, Arab media, sociocognitive framework, ideological framing

1. Introduction

The Gaza conflict, as the extension of the territories' disputes, military rule and occupation, and humanitarian issues, has remained in the international focus for years. The higher toll on noncombatants, the tight cycles of fighting, besieging, and fleeing have made Gaza symbolic for both resistance and human suffering. Media reporting of the conflict tends to be ideologically aligned, where Western reportage tends to reflect the Israeli security agenda, while much Arab coverage focuses on Palestinian resistance and suffering (Said, 1978; Philo & Berry, 2011). The Gaza conflict is probably one of the most-covered stories in media, both Western and Arab; however, they are likely to tell a different story. Ignorance on how this particular conflict has been presented in print media not only creates an ethnocentric view of the conflict but also gives the green light to some specific political, military, or humanitarian actions. Humanitarianism as an idiom is most commonly used to mobilize people, legitimize interventions, or mask power relations. At the same time, legitimization strategies step into the stage to explain the violence, define the resistance, and provide permissive grounds for the intervention. This dissertation focuses on a critical analysis of constructivist accounts of humanitarian and legitimization discourses in Western and Arab print media regarding the

Gaza conflict. With the guidance of CDA, this study aims at identifying the ideological messages and relations of power realized in these narratives.

Media as a discursive form does not give the events; it creates realities (Fairclough, 1995). Determining the characteristics of the language use, the major methods of the argumentation, the allusions to other texts, CDA proves the social regimentation of the discourse concealed. This study examines the perpetuation or transformation of frames by the Western and Arab media on the Gaza problem. The findings contribute to the research on how media influence international imaginaries, international aid practices, and political activities. Humanitarianism is a powerful instrument of argumentation when it comes to describing conflicts, whether it is the victims who are treated as people who deserve compassion or the intervention by a state and non-state actors are justified. Nevertheless, humanitarian discourses do not necessarily only transfer informative information. Scholars have categorized humanitarianism as a humanitarian aura to cover a self-interested motive and look through military action or inaction (Fassin, 2012). Indicatively, Gaza is portrayed by Western media as a safe haven of terrorism in which the human suffering serves merely as the continuation of security discourse and sensitive to the political matters (Douai and Lauricella 2014). Conversely, Arab media have the tendency to frame Gaza as a victim of suffering and rebellion and comment on the suffering as a protest against the west/Israel policies (Elmasry et al., 2013).

In this way, the legitimation is those processes of defining and discussing phenomena in such a way that either justifies, makes natural or gives reasons of particular actions or particular ways of perceiving the world. Most western media apply legitimation models to support the work of the Israeli army to retaliate or counterterrorism (Liebes, 1992). Arab media, on the other hand, justify such acts in their coverage refusing them any breach of international law or human rights (Abdelkader, 2020). These two accounts stick together to become socio-political landscapes that reflect relations of power and supposed political positions. The construction and portrayal of Gaza by media may be described best as a combination of media ideology and power. These outlets will quote the official sources and reproduce the official discourse or state ideology as opposed to the Arab media which will report a story starting at the bottom and question the dominant discourses (Hall, 1980). These discursive variations affect not only the attitude of the masses, but also the course of the policy and the humanitarian intervention and also the attitude of the world to this war (Chouliaraki, 2006).

1.1 Scope of the Study

The study unveils the concealed systems of beliefs and relations inscribed in Western and Arab media discourses on the Gaza conflict and leads to the current debate on media bias, humanitarianism, and legitimization in war reporting. The latter are not only disclosed but tend to be created and reinforced, by media texts, which, however, are not merely informative and persuasive means but serve more generally to shape the people opinion, not only to make a political decision, but to provide moral and social justifications of actions in the referent global politics power structure (Chouliaraki, 2006; Fairclough, 1995). The purpose of the paper is to examine the discursive construction of humanitarianism as a positive justification or discourse to justify or subject to marginalization of actions using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Western media represent the Gaza Strip in terms of security and countering the terrorism along with the hegemonic geopolitical interest (Douai and Lauricella, 2014), and Arab media are more concentrated on the humanitarian situation as the criticism of the first (Elmasry et al., 2013). The present study is applicable to the modern society as the conflicts are extremely mediated, and the stories are spread rapidly on the Internet. The conclusions will enhance the knowledge base on the reproduction or critique of the hegemonic messages through media talk



to offer suggestions to the scholars, journalists and policymakers on the moral imperatives of media conflict coverage.

1.2 Problem Statement

The Gaza issue continues to be one of the longest-standing and most highly sensitive in modern world history, characterized by the highest level of human suffering and political division. But what has emerged is the nature of this conflict within the western and Arab media, comparing goals and framing, ideological inclinations, as well as the employment of humanitarian discourse. Western media typically rationalize military interventions in terms of security and counter-terrorism, sometimes ignoring humanitarian catastrophes or reinterpreting them in a way that serves the latter (Douai and Lauricella 2014; Liebes 1992). On the other hand, Arab media focus on human suffering and the fight; the conflict is a metaphor for other conflicts regarding occupation and oppression (Elmasry et al., 2013). Therefore, these two constructs significantly impact public perception, international policy formulation, conflict resolution, and the distribution of humanitarian aid. Ironically, while we heavily rely on the narratives of prime ministers and opposition leaders, there has been a lack of rigorous comparative investigation to scrutinize and assess the construction and endorsement of these narratives in the print media. This study fills this gap by using CDA to analyze the deployment of humanitarianism and legitimization strategies in Western and Arab press, and by identifying the ideological work and power relations that underpin the examined representations.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1) What linguistic strategies are used Western and Arab print media construct humanitarian and legitimization narratives in their reporting of the Gaza conflict?
- 2) In what ways do Western media narratives normalize and legitimize Israeli military actions, and how do Arab media counter these narratives by emphasizing humanitarian crises and resistance?
- 3) How do the socio-political and historical contexts of Western and Arab media influence their representations of victims, aggressors, and international actors in the Gaza conflict, and how do these narratives reflect broader postcolonial power dynamics?

2. Literature Review

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been found to be the most feasible means of analyzing the political aspect of the media discourses. Another issue of CDA is the connection between language and power as well as how language reproduces or challenges predominant relations of dominance (Van Dijk, 2008). The politics of media, the presence of bias and power relations have been introduced in the recent research on CDA analysis of conflicts. In an illustration, Yaqin and Ibrahim (2021) have used CDA to make sense of the activities, which the western media does to dehumanize and securitize the Muslim minorities. Similarly, Gerges (2019) used CDA to understand the Arab media interpretation of the Syrian war and pointed out that the discourse was used to establish solidarity in the region.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

CDA is the theoretical framework of this research and it serves as the primary theoretical approach supported by the postcolonial theory. The two theoretical frameworks provide good theoretical back-ground concerning the strategic development of humanitarian and legitimization frames by the western and Arab print media in their approach to the Gaza conflict. The subsequent framework is a critical analysis of language and ideology, which takes specific attention to the role of power in media discourses.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Ideology and power relations may be disaggregated with the systematic approach of CDA. It assumes that the language does not simply reflect the social world but it constitutes an active force in the process of creating the relations of dominance (Fairclough, 1995). An approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Mda (2008:73) also known as the sociocognitive approach by Van Dijk is advantageous to this study because it explores the impact of mediated texts on the mental models of the population and how these texts affect the construction of the policy. Rather than offering a critical examination of the totality of the media discourse, CDA operationalizes legitimation, polarization and framing to demonstrate the ideologies of media texts. Indicatively, CDA of conflict reporting has been found to decipher how the western media frame their coverage of conflict in relation to security as a mode of defending the military interventions whereas the Arab media counterparts frame their coverage of the said conflicts in relation to human suffering as a mode of condemning the interventions.

2.3 Van Dijk's Sociocognitive Approach

The sociocognitive CDA of van Dijk pays a lot of attention to the power relation construction and interpretation, ideologies, and various relations between various groups in the discourse. It is particularly relevant to the study of media texts because it integrates three dimensions of analysis the sociocognitive dimension examined the role and power of mental models and social semiotics and the reciprocal relation in discourse.

Discourse Structure

The dimension is about the media reporting structure and comprises all elements of the structure, like the lexical choice and syntax, applying the metaphorical expression and framing. Using the example of the Western media, the terminology on self-defense or a terrorist group will be selected, and on the Arab media, the terminology on resistance, or oppressed civilians, respectively.

Cognition

The western media discourses are in accord with the dominant hegemonic discourse, which is inclined to rationalize Israeli activities whereas Arab media provides a counter-discursive meaning of the resistance and humanitarianism. This dimension pays attention to how these media establish the conflict score of the Gaza war in the minds of the population.

Societal Context

According to Van Dijk, discourse is contextual in social, political, and historical standpoints. The narratives about the media are not random results of the relationships of power, alliances, and cultural practices of discursiveness that are established among countries. As an example, the Western discourse of Gaza may be pro-Israel, whereas the Arab discourse would be decolonialization moment and fraternity in the region with the Palestinians.

2.4 Postcolonial theory

The postcolonial theory applied to analyze how the media constructs colonial processes and power and dominance imbalance. It can be stated, basing on the Hegelian approach, as provided by Said (1978) in the book *Orientalism*, that the West is discursively constructing the Other as the other in the state of subordination or threatening. This theoretical paradigm is important to discuss the way the Western media portrays Gaza within the context of security/SECU, and the way the Palestinians are always mentioned as dangerous or helpless victims (Douai, 2014). On the other hand, the resistant Arab media and the postcolonial theories-led ones quite often support the specified hegemonic visions and insist on the help of Palestinians (Massad, 2006). The Van Dijk framework studies the construction of humanitarian discourses in order to arouse specific emotions or generate a policy stagnation. The information about the political agenda

of these representations would help to explain the depiction of Palestinians as a helpless creature in need or struggling against the occupation in the media texts. Some of the legitimization strategies used according to Van Dijk include authorization, moral judgment and rationalization. It is with these strategies that the research will provide an insight into what legitimizes or delegitimizes image acts of the Gaza war in either the western or Arab world media. In order to qualify the Western media within the sociocognitive model suggested by Van Dijk, one will have to take into account the discourse-complete legitimation of the military action based on the concept of security and counter-terrorism. Arab media so provide reports of sufferings and plight. Both media approve or reject the hegemonic discourse by showing the victims and aggressors, as well as global players. The introduction of CDA and the use of postcolonial theory in the present study will determine thorough analysis. CDA is useful to locate specific patterns of linguistic and discursive features, and framing theory describes how the field of narration is constructed and dominated. The postcolonial theory puts these narratives in historical and ideological power and agency practices of media production. The multi-dimensional approach would assist us to research the usage of the humanitarianism and legitimization discourses in both the western media and Arab media, which condition the international perception, programs and humanitarian actions.

2.5 Media Framing of Conflict

Media framing is the central process through which conflicts are defined as well as perceived by the public and policymakers. Several studies have suggested that framing is not a neutral political process, but always occurs within specific sociopolitical and ideological paradigms (Entman, 1993). Media frames serve as these lenses, highlighting certain aspects of an event while keeping others in the background (Kurzman and Ritter 53). For instance, Van Gorp (2010) identified that conflict frames rely on a variety of cultural diagrams, including the victim-aggressor frame. Frames that depict self-defense, resistance, or even humanitarianism in war reporting likely reflect the channel's ideological perspective, thereby reproducing or contesting hegemonic power relations (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005).

Media framing theory broadens the scope of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by examining how the inclusion or emphasis on specific aspects of a story influences the coverage (Entman, 1993). They are heuristics that help audiences navigate what to think about and how to decipher various situations. Tankard (2001) notes that in war reporting, for example, what passes as frames like 'self-defense,' 'terrorism,' or 'humanitarian crises are inherently ideological stances. In this context, the study utilizes framing theory to analyze the coverage of the Gaza conflict by both Western and Arab media, with a particular focus on framing humanitarianism as a moral frame and legitimization as a strategic frame. Locally produced studies in the last few years' show that Western media tends to select material congruent with geopolitical affiliations while Arab media focuses on resistance and human rights narratives (Bayoumi, 2022; Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2017).

2.6 Humanitarian Discourses in Media

In other cases, humanitarianism is used in media to appeal for emotions such as sympathy to justify an action or lack of one. Barnett and Weiss (2011) suggest that humanitarianism has become a normative instrument of a new kind and one where the objectives of powerful actors play a crucial role. In conflict reporting, humanitarian narratives may simultaneously erase structural sources of violence and let categorizations of crises as instances of suffering persist (Ticktin, 2014). Studies on the Syrian crisis, for instance, demonstrate that not only Western actors in the media representations construct refugees as victims but also the media's portrayal downplays geopolitical roles (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017). In terms of analyzing

humanitarian narratives like those produced by Al Jazeera, this study has shown that, despite the network's lack of official political or national allegiance, its stories are not ideologically unbiased and are influenced by the context.

2.7 Legitimization Strategies in Conflict Reporting

Thus, it is a discursive practice where individuals attempt to defend or justify specific actions or ideas. By drawing on the work of Van Leeuwen (2007), we can define three primary strategies of legitimation that include authorization, moral evaluation, and rationalization. These strategies apply in war contexts to legitimize war, minimize the effects of invasions, and deny the right to resistance. For instance, Eroukhmanoff (2015) demonstrates how the Western media's conditional repertoire, which constructed drone strikes as just actions against terrorism, restores violence through calls for security and ethicality. On the other hand, the non-Western media system is likely to subvert these narratives by reporting on human losses, issues of concern, and violations of international law (Galtung & Ruge, 1965).

2.8 Western and Arab Media Perspectives on Gaza

Al Jazeera operates within the ideological framework of media reporting on the Gaza conflict. Israeli media shares some similarities with human security and counterterrorism discourses, portraying Hamas as a threat and dramatizing the human suffering in Gaza (Kumar, 2014). Media portrays Gaza as a threat and a natural enemy, often by enumerating the losses incurred in attacks and criticizing Palestinian policies (Weiss, 2010), Arab media, as El-Nawawy and Powers (2008) argue, construe Gaza as a fighting Palestinian cause, highlighting human suffering and Israeli misconduct. Recent literature has noted that two other techniques, selective sourcing and imagery, are employed to support these narratives. For instance, For instance, his-and-hers comparison of Oriental and Arab news reporting of the 2021 Gaza conflict revealed that the Oriental news provided preferential coverage of the Israeli high authority, while the Arab news focused on the voices of Palestinian citizens on the ground (Bayoumi, 2022).

A vast amount of literature on the role of media framing, humanitarianism, and legitimization, there is limited research that compares qualitatively Western and Arab samples of framing on the Gaza conflict using CDA. In culture and geopolitical context, previous scholarship lacks systematic examination of ideological tendencies, most often considering particular conflicts or particular media sources (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2021). This study addresses this gap by employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to scrutinize the discursive shaping and negotiation of humanitarianism and legitimization strategies in Western and Arab dailies. Owning these narratives within their specific ideologies and geopolitical contexts, the study helps fill the existing gap in knowledge on how and why media frames the Gaza conflict.

3. Methodology

The present research will adopt qualitative research method and adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its main analytical framework for assessing how Western and Arab print media frame humanitarian and legitimization discourses in reporting the Gaza conflict. Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach serves as a theoretical model for analysis, orienting the paradigm towards discourse, cognition, and the social environment. Therefore, the quantitative analysis of textual data will allow the exploration of the ideologies and relations of power that inform media texts.

3.1 Data Collection

The data for this study collected headlines from renowned Western and Arab newspapers for a comparative focus. For expanding the coverage and including only Western newspapers, the New York Times (USA) and the Guardian (UK) were selected, while for the Arab perspective

and another framing of the Gaza conflict, Al Jazeera Arabic (Qatar) and Asharq Al Awsat (Saudi Arabia) were chosen. The articles were gathered in a certain period of time, with emphasis during critical days, such as during the 2021 escalation in Gaza, and the article samples were taken at the time when media activity is high. Texts were systematically chosen to achieve a proportionate distribution of headlines across groups, with variations in themes, views, and the style of writing; 30 articles were selected from each category.

3.2 Data Analysis Technique

According to the sociocognitive approach of CDA by Van Dijk, this paper has classified the obtained headlines and subjected them to the discourse structure, cognition, and sociocultural context dimensions to establish the way in which the media discursively constructs the narratives on the conflict in Gaza. Lexical orientations, metaphors, and framing devices were some of the features of the Discourse Structure part that were used to expose the existence of ideological points of views. The Western media justifies the actions of the state as justified and legal whereas the Arab media uses language of resistance and oppressed to reflect the systematic character of the Israeli action. The cognitive aspect explained the existence of shared ingroup identity, which exposed how the western media reproduces dominant discourses that justify Israeli actions, and how the Arab media reproduces oppositional discourses that make Palestinians more powerful and emphasize victimhood of civilians. The dimension of the societal context places these stories in the context of the geopolitical, cultural and historical context which shows how the geopolitical affiliations of the West and influence of colonization are linked to the emphasis of the Western media on the issue of Jewish security as compared to the anti-colonial struggle and regional unity as emphasized in Arab media. The combination of these dimensions contributes to understanding the ways in which language, ideology, and power relations have influenced the conflicting by giving us frameworks to understand global conflict.

4. Data Analysis

This section of data analysis will adopt Van Dijk approach to Sociocognitive Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to deeply analyze the headlines of the two media, both in the west and in the Arab world, discussing the role of the language, ideology, and power in framing the Gaza conflict narratives. Thus, three dimensions of analysis, which are Discourse Structure, Cognition, and Societal Context, serve as the conceptual basis of the analysis. Such dimensions refer to the linguistic options, mental frames and socio-political possibilities of media sources. Comparing the headlines of The New York Times, The Guardian, Al Jazeera Arabic, and Asharq Al-Awsat, we may observe the normalization of the Israeli actions and the Arab world through the prism of securitized and institutional framing of the events by the former, focusing on oppression, resistance, and humanitarian disasters. This part explains the contribution of lexical options, metaphors, and syntactic structures, geopolitical and historical backgrounds to the extremeness of victims, perpetrators, and global actors, as ideological methods of representation of the discourse of the media.

Table 1

The New York Times Headlines Analysis

Analytical Dimension	Category	Example from Headlines	Analysis
Discourse Structure	Lexical Choices	"Israeli Police Storm al-Aqsa Mosque Ahead of Jerusalem Day March"	The use of "storm" conveys aggression, framing Israeli actions as hostile.



			The choice of "Aqsa Mosque" emphasizes the cultural and religious significance of the site.
	Syntactic Structures	"Israeli Airstrikes Wiped Out the Family of Gaza's Leading Doctor. Only His Teenage Son Survived."	Active phrasing assigns direct responsibility to Israeli actions, highlighting the impact on civilians and invoking empathy for the surviving son.
	Metaphors and Symbolism	"Dreams in the Rubble: An Israeli Airstrike and the 22 Lives Lost"	The metaphor "Dreams in the Rubble" evokes a sense of tragedy and destruction, framing the event as a humanitarian catastrophe rather than a strategic military action.
	Headline Framing	"Mediators Push to Restore Cease-Fire in Gaza After Overnight Strikes"	Framing focuses on diplomacy and mediation, downplaying the violence by emphasizing efforts to de-escalate.
	Source Attribution	"Israeli Court Delays Expulsion of Palestinian Families in East Jerusalem"	Legal framing legitimizes Israeli actions while omitting broader critiques, reflecting reliance on institutional sources.
Cognition	Mental Models	"Israeli Police Enter Jerusalem's Temple Mount to Confiscate Palestinian Flags"	Reflects a mental model where Israeli actions are depicted as enforcing control, while Palestinian actions are symbolically defiant.



	Ideological Polarization	" Hamas's Forever War Against Israel Has a Glitch, and It Isn't Iron Dome"	Creates a dichotomy, framing Hamas as persistent aggressors and Israel as technologically advanced and defensive.
	Emotion and Empathy	" We Need Food: Palestinians Displaced in Gaza Call for Supplies"	Evokes empathy by focusing on displaced Palestinians and their basic needs, reinforcing the narrative of a humanitarian crisis.
Societal Context	Power Dynamics	" Israel's Military Inflicted a Heavy Toll. But Did It Achieve Its Aim?"	Questions the proportionality and effectiveness of Israeli military actions, suggesting a critique of power dynamics.
	Legitimization Strategies	" Israeli Police Detain Palestinian Activist Twins from East Jerusalem"	Frames the arrests as lawful and procedural, aligning with a narrative of state legitimacy.
	Humanitarian Narratives	" UN: There Is No 'Safe Place' in Gaza, 72,000 People Displaced"	Highlights the severity of the humanitarian crisis, portraying Palestinians as victims of systemic failures and violence.
	Cultural and Historical Context	" Israeli Police Step Up Crackdown on Palestinian Protesters"	Reflects ongoing tensions between cultural and historical claims over Jerusalem, contextualizing the conflict within broader struggles for identity and rights.
Global and Local Structures	Overarching Themes	" Life Under Occupation: The	Frames the conflict as a systemic issue



	Misery at the Heart of the Conflict"	tied to occupation and ongoing suffering, emphasizing resistance and inequality.
Intertextuality	"Israel Destroys Gaza Tower Housing AP and Al Jazeera Offices"	References the destruction of media offices to highlight broader issues of press freedom and accountability during the conflict.
Narrative Structure	"As Israel-Hamas Cease-Fire Holds, Gazans Survey Wreckage"	Highlights the aftermath of conflict, focusing on civilian recovery and the destruction left behind.

In this table discussing the headlines from The New York Times, the four key concepts are illustrated on how the conflict of Gaza is constructed through discourse structures, cognitive dimensions, and the societal context in terms of ideologies and humanitarianism. They use vocabularies that signal hostility, such as ‘storm. They employ language that conveys a sense of responsibility when portraying Israeli airstrikes against civilians. Regimes such as ‘Dreams in the Rubble’ associate events with tragedy, implying that events are human suffering rather than stratagems. The construction of headlines primarily concentrates on diplomacy or legal framing, occasionally extending Israel's actions by citing institutions. Cognitive dimensions depict Hamas as aggressors, while positive dimensions portray Palestinians as victims of negligence. Headlines also engage sympathy by focusing on internally displaced persons and the invocation of the honor of global citizenship through calls for chief executive accountability, humanitarian disasters, and freedom of the media. Machismo and First Nations power struggles form the subtext to the theme of occupation and division, further promoting the explication of the power of language and rhetoric inherent to the conflict.

Table 2

The Guardian Headlines Analysis

Analytical Dimension	Category	Example from Headlines	Analysis
Discourse Structure	Lexical Choices	"Israeli police storm al-Aqsa mosque ahead of Jerusalem Day march"	The use of "storm" conveys aggression, emphasizing Israeli actions as forceful and invasive.
	Syntactic Structures	"Dozens killed as Israel-Gaza violence escalates"	Passive voice downplays the agents of violence, leaving



			responsibility ambiguous.
	Metaphors and Symbolism	"Israel destroys Gaza tower housing media organizations"	The destruction of a media tower symbolizes a broader suppression of information and press freedom.
	Headline Framing	Biden expresses support for Israel's right to defend itself amid Gaza conflict"	Frames Israeli actions as legitimate self-defense, aligning with a pro-Israel narrative.
	Source Attribution	"Israel's military says air and ground forces are attacking Gaza"	Highlights reliance on official Israeli military statements, potentially limiting alternative perspectives.
Cognition	Mental Models	"UN warns Israel and Palestinians are heading for 'uncontainable' crisis"	Reflects a mental model emphasizing escalating tensions and the potential for humanitarian catastrophe.
	Ideological Polarization	"Israel and Hamas trade fire as tensions escalate over Jerusalem clashes"	Depicts a reciprocal conflict dynamic, emphasizing the dichotomy between Israeli and Palestinian forces.
	Emotion and Empathy	"Gaza conflict: children among those killed in Israeli airstrikes"	Evokes strong emotional reactions by focusing on child casualties, emphasizing the humanitarian cost of the conflict.
Societal Context	Power Dynamics	"Gaza conflict: UN calls for immediate ceasefire to prevent humanitarian disaster"	Highlights the UN's role as a mediator and the asymmetry of power between conflicting parties.
	Legitimization Strategies	"Israeli airstrikes target Hamas sites in Gaza after	Justifies Israeli actions as retaliatory and necessary for



		incendiary balloons launched"	security, aligning with legitimization strategies.
	Humanitarian Narratives	"Palestinians in Gaza face humanitarian crisis amid ongoing blockade"	Frames Palestinians as victims of systemic conditions, emphasizing the humanitarian toll of the blockade.
	Cultural and Historical Context	"Israeli police storm al-Aqsa mosque ahead of Jerusalem Day march"	Reflects the symbolic significance of Al-Aqsa Mosque, situating the event within a broader historical and cultural struggle.
Global and Local Structures	Overarching Themes	"Gaza conflict: international community urges de-escalation as death toll rises"	Frames the conflict as an international concern, emphasizing the need for diplomatic intervention and de-escalation.
	Intertextuality	"Israeli airstrike destroys Gaza's tallest building amid ongoing conflict"	Connects the destruction of infrastructure to broader discussions on war tactics and civilian impact.
	Narrative Structure	"Israel and Hamas agree to ceasefire after 11 days of fighting"	Highlights resolution and diplomacy, framing the ceasefire as a significant milestone in the conflict.

The headlines explored in the newspaper show that The Guardian does not irrationalize the Gaza conflict but rather emphasizes aggression, humanitarian crises, and international diplomacy. Sentences like "storm" portray Israelis as invaders, while "Dozens killed" portrays Israelis as aggressors. The phrase "Escalates: Dozens killed as Israel-Gaza violence escalates" uses a passive voice to conceal responsibility. The destruction of media towers serves as a metaphor for the suppression of information and press freedom, aligning with prevailing power discourses. This encompasses headlines that frequently depict Israeli actions as responses to aggression, and news articles that fully implement legitimization strategies, such as an over-reliance on official sources. Schematically, the narratives emphasize the increasing strain and humanitarian crises, evoking an emotional response through the depiction of suffering children.

The present findings, which explore conflict through societal structure, power dynamics, and international intervention, underscore the intricate role of the UN in mediating the conflict, as well as the cultural and religious values, such as the Al-Aqsa Mosque, that define and contextualize the conflict. International politics in the setting of wars serves as the diplomatic interference section and the rescue section; intertextuality and the structural technique set the violent part against counterpart parts, such as a ceasefire, making up a mixture of ideological perspective and humanitarian narrative.

Table 3

The Al Jazeera Arabic Headlines Analysis

Analytical Dimension	Category	Example from Headlines	Analysis
Discourse Structure	Lexical Choices	"Israeli Airstrikes Target Residential Buildings in Gaza, Causing Civilian Casualties"	The use of "target" and "causing civilian casualties" emphasizes the deliberate and destructive nature of Israeli actions.
	Syntactic Structures	"Palestinian Families Mourn Losses After Israeli Bombardment"	Active phrasing attributes clear responsibility to Israeli actions, while focusing on the grief of Palestinian families
	Metaphors and Symbolism	"Gaza Under Siege: Humanitarian Crisis Deepens Amid Ongoing Blockade"	The metaphor "under siege" evokes images of entrapment and suffering, framing Gaza as a victim of systemic oppression.
	Headline Framing	"Protests Erupt Worldwide in Solidarity with Palestinians"	Frames global protests as a response to perceived injustice, emphasizing solidarity with Palestinians.
Cognition	Source Attribution	"UN Warns of Imminent Humanitarian Disaster in Gaza"	Attribution to the UN lends authority and urgency to the narrative of humanitarian crisis.
	Mental Models	" Hamas Leader: We Will Continue	Constructs a mental model of ongoing



		Resistance Until Occupation Ends"	conflict, portraying Hamas as committed to resistance against occupation.
	Ideological Polarization	"Palestinian Resistance Responds with Rocket Fire Towards Israeli Cities"	Frames the conflict as a reactive dynamic, emphasizing a tit-for-tat escalation between opposing sides.
	Emotion and Empathy	"Children Among Victims as Israeli Airstrikes Pound Gaza"	Focuses on child casualties to evoke empathy and highlight the disproportionate impact of the conflict on civilians.
Societal Context	Power Dynamics	"Israeli Settlers Storm Sheikh Jarrah, Forcing Palestinian Families Out"	Highlights the power imbalance and systemic issues of displacement, reflecting broader narratives of occupation and resistance.
	Legitimization Strategies	"Israeli Airstrikes Hit Gaza's Main COVID-19 Testing Lab"	Frames Israeli actions as detrimental to public health infrastructure, challenging the legitimacy of military strategies.
	Humanitarian Narratives	"Gaza's Hospitals Overwhelmed with Casualties Amid Ongoing Conflict"	Highlights systemic challenges faced by Gaza's healthcare system, portraying Palestinians as victims of broader structural failures.
	Cultural and Historical Context	"Israeli Forces Storm Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound, Injuring Worshippers"	Emphasizes the religious and cultural significance of Al-Aqsa Mosque, framing the conflict

Global and Local Structures	Overarching Themes	"Gaza's Infrastructure in Ruins Following Israeli Offensive"	as an assault on cultural identity. Frames the conflict as having long-term impacts on Gaza's physical and social infrastructure.
	Intertextuality	"Human Rights Organizations Accuse Israel of War Crimes in Gaza"	Links the conflict to broader discussions on international law and accountability.
	Narrative Structure	"Ceasefire Agreement Reached After 11 Days of Conflict"	Highlights resolution and diplomacy as key outcomes, while relegating the destruction and casualties to the background.

Through the analysis Al Jazeera Arabic headlines gives a revelation of its efforts to frame the suffering and injustice and place a civilian toll emphasis on the Gaza conflict. Certain terms like targeting and killing civilians show the motive of the actions of the Israeli side, whereas the metaphors of besiege describe the image of oppression and torture. The lack of engaged vocal formulations explicitly blame the Israeli military actions and therefore overemphasized the themes of powerlessness and suffering. The global protest and solidarity formulation is aimed at being united in combating perceived prejudice. Cognitive dimensions portray Hamas through an irreconcilable stand in opposition in addition to showing that the escalation of conflict is composed of reactive processes. The social situation is usually based upon the theme of displacement and oppression of the power position in some respects; the storming of sheikh Jarrah and the disagreement surrounding the Al-Aqsa Mosque form these themes in terms of cultures and histories. International and local frameworks concentrate on the long-term effects of the war on the infrastructure in Gaza and tie the conflict to such aspects of accountability as the reports of war crimes. The Al Jazeera lens gives us an image of a place where resistance and violence are the order of the day and Othello, in contrast to the directness of the conflicts achieved, attained an achievement; securing ceasefires and matches.

Table 4

The Asharq Al-Awsat the Headlines Analysis

Analytical Dimension	Category	Example from Headlines	Analysis
Discourse Structure	Lexical Choices	"Gaza in Crisis: Death Looms Everywhere"	The phrase "death looms everywhere" dramatizes the severity of the conflict, framing Gaza as a space of pervasive suffering and loss.



	Syntactic Structures	"Children Among Victims as Israeli Airstrikes Pound Gaza"	Active phrasing ("pound Gaza") assigns direct responsibility to Israeli actions, while highlighting the humanitarian impact by focusing on child victims.
	Metaphors and Symbolism	"2021 Notebook: The War in Gaza and the Razing of AP's Office"	The use of "razing" symbolizes destruction, suggesting an intentional act targeting institutions like the media.
	Headline Framing	"Turkey Condemns Israeli Aggression, Calls for United Muslim Response"	Frames Israel as the aggressor and highlights solidarity among Muslim nations, reinforcing narratives of opposition and unity.
	Source Attribution	"Oxfam: Only 12 Trucks Delivered Food, Water in North Gaza Governorate in October"	Attribution to Oxfam emphasizes the severity of the humanitarian crisis by using a credible humanitarian organization as a source.
Cognition	Mental Models	"Gaza Conflict Forged New Sense of Palestinian Unity"	Constructs a mental model of collective resistance, emphasizing solidarity among Palestinians in the face of conflict.
	Ideological Polarization	" Hamas Launches Rockets into Israel Amid Escalating Tensions"	Frames Hamas as an active aggressor and Israel as reactive, reflecting a binary perspective on the conflict dynamics.



	Emotion and Empathy	"Displaced Gazans Seek Shelter Amid Escalating Violence"	Evokes empathy by highlighting the plight of displaced individuals seeking safety, focusing on the human cost of violence.
Societal Context	Power Dynamics	"Israeli Forces Storm Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound, Injuring Worshippers"	Highlights the power imbalance between Israeli forces and Palestinian worshippers, framing the event within broader struggles over control and access.
	Legitimization Strategies	"Israeli Airstrikes Target Hamas Positions in Gaza"	Frames Israeli military actions as targeting legitimate threats, aligning with security narratives.
	Humanitarian Narratives	"Gaza's Health System on the Brink Amid Continuous Airstrikes"	Highlights systemic failures exacerbated by conflict, emphasizing the human cost and urgency for intervention.
	Cultural and Historical Context	"Israeli Settlers Storm Sheikh Jarrah, Forcing Palestinian Families Out"	Reflects historical tensions over land rights and displacement, situating the conflict within a broader historical narrative of occupation.
Global and Local Structures	Overarching Themes	"Qatar Pledges \$500 Million for Gaza Reconstruction"	Highlights post-conflict recovery efforts, framing Qatar as a key actor in addressing the humanitarian aftermath.
	Intertextuality	"UN Chief Says Situation in Gaza"	References global humanitarian standards to



	'Appalling and Apocalyptic''	contextualize the severity of the Gaza conflict, emphasizing international responsibility.
Narrative Structure	"Ceasefire Agreement Reached After 11 Days of Conflict"	Frames the ceasefire as a resolution milestone, potentially downplaying the preceding destruction and casualties.

The Asharq Al-Awsat is concerned with headlines about the woes of people in Gaza, structural violence, and the issue of solidarity through the human rights and geopolitical paradigms. There is the example of the looming of death everywhere and the pound Gaza which operationalizes victim blame. Such words like raze highlight the selective destruction, and above all, institutions not to mention the media. Writing headlines makes Israel look like a besmirched aggressor, whereas regional support and world opprobrium look like opposing forces. The cognitive aspect of stories lies in the description of Palestinians as a single nation, which is fighting against Israel and Hamas as an aggressor. The society contexts pose a question of power relations, neglect of the patients, and displacement; they identify the struggle in land and cultural identity. World issues are addressed, e.g., financial resources donated within the framework of the current recovery, e.g. the promises of Qatar, or behavior in the form of the statements of the government in the United Nations. All features of this analysis fit the scope of Asharq Al-Awsat that represents humanitarian suffering as a combination of resistance and geopolitics.

5. Discussion

The western and Arab media use various patterns of semiotic in constructing humanitarian and legitimization discourses of the Gaza conflict, according to their political and cultural belief systems. The consideration of the details of the lexicon is also required: The New York Times and The Guardian use the violent tone of the words storm and pound to characterize the Israeli activity, frequently making it look like the retaliation in response to the threat. This is due to the fact that syntactic structures occasionally conceal agency like hiding responsibility with phrasing, say, and dozens killed. Dreams in the Rubble is a word that gives the feeling of mourning whereas a humanitarian crisis describes the loss of civilians. This opposition is striking against the legitimization processes that in their turn refer to the official discourse of the state such as Israel has the right to self-defense. Instead, Arab media do not disappoint Al Jazeera Arabic and Asharq Al-Awsat, which enjoy the favor of humanitarian crises and resistance. The use of such notions as their target and is causing civilian casualties puts the responsibility on Israel; the use of definers like under siege and death looms everywhere brings into play pathos. It is emphasized by intentional use of adjectives and adverbs, which accentuate the intentional acts, which helps to support the history of Palestinian suffering and endurance. Such locations like Al-Aqsa Mosque and Sheikh Jarrah center on the culture and history of struggle which establish trends of combat in tales of conquest and eviction. Global



issues, including unity and reaction to catastrophism are pointing to geographic and worldwide political issues, whereas Arab media still focus on resistance and suppression. The combination of the strategies creates the understanding of how language, ideology and power relations write the global image of the Gaza conflict.

The lexical repertoire of the Western media discourse justifies Israeli aggression by limiting the perception of conflict, concentrating on security threats and diplomacy, and providing references to official organs of state that only give the security paradigm. To illustrate, The New York Times and The Guardian frequently represent Israeli actions as self-defense and in their articles they state that Israel has the right to defend itself and attribute such statements to the Israeli military or the U.S. authorities. Sentences such as Dozens killed as Israel-Gaza violence escalates undermine the agency and refute the attribution of violence. Such isms as the word raze warrants the annihilation but often entrenches it securely in other discourses of security and/or warfare that obscures the cost to the civilian side. Regional sources such as Al Jazeera Arabic and Asharq Al-Awsat on the other hand provide these stories with humanitarian tragedies and repressed politics. The use of words and sentences such as 'target residential buildings' instantly attribute the blame of Israeli activities whereas words and sentences such as under siege emphasize the plight of Palestinians. Such outlets justify the killing of children, overstretched hospitals, and emigration, with specified civilian casualties in mind. Islamic framing is therefore concerned with the process of converting the Palestinian opposition to occupation into the narratives of unity and cohesion. Although they focus on cultural and historical accounts of the Palestinians such as the storming of Al-Aqsa mosque and Sheikh Jarrah, the Arab media present Palestine issue in accordance with the overall non/de-colonial struggle of liberation against settler colonialism that are often dwarfed or relegated in the Western logic of security. The two quotations below show the ideological divide in the media accounts of the Gaza conflict.

This research distinguishes between the Western and Arab media reproductions of the participants and the conflict, relating socio-political and historical factors, which reveal postcolonial discourses of power and violence but in different manifestations. Major newspapers such as The New York Times and The Guardian align themselves with geopolitical inclinations and support the current hegemon, portraying Israel as the sole legitimate state facing assault. These newspapers create discursive formations which support the legitimacy of Israeli military aggression by claiming that Israel has the right to self-defense and at other times using techniques such as framing, which creates the narratives of security threats. It also reinforces a strategy of limiting awareness and explanation of Israeli actions by reinventing through the diplomatic rhetoric, as seen in the headline of the Biden supports the Israeli inherent right to self-defense, which leaves no traces of systemic critique of the Israeli policies and their impacts on Palestinians.

This demonstrates collusion to postcolonialism where western media knowingly or unknowingly deliver narratives that are related to international relations and power maps. Arab media, including Al Jazeera Arabic, Asharq Al-Awsat, instead, construct their plots in postcolonial dispossession and institutionalize Palestinians as the colonized and Israel as the colonizer. The titles like Israeli Forces Storm Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound, Injuring Worshippers and Gaza under Siege: By identifying the political leaders involved in conflict and its impact through the articles Humanitarian Crisis Deepens Amid Ongoing Blockade demonstrate that power dynamics may be observed and the Palestinian conflict framed as the historical movement of colonial freedom. That is, Arab media sources fragment displacement, the site of civil infrastructure destruction, humanitarian disasters and invoke cultural and



historical affiliation to Palestine by talking of Al-Aqsa Mosque or Sheikh Jarrah and situate the conflict on the postcolonial context.

What is interesting about these narratives is the fact that they present the international players differently. Western media depicts them as negotiators or advocates of ceasefires, which endorses the political status quo and diplomacy whilst Arab media stresses on their unity with Palestinians by mentioning protests and hunger relief. Postcolonial interpretation of these two representations reveals all the socio-political alliances that the history is informed by and how the resultant power relations are enacted in the making of the victims and the violent other in the global society. This interaction of contexts demonstrates the role of the work media in reproducing or in subverting the historical power relations by their coverage and approach to the Gaza conflict. This study reveals that there is a distinct difference between Western and Arab interpretation of the conflict in Gaza and various forms of narratives that refer to local sociopolitical, cultural, and historical background of each media system.

The New York Times and the Guardian prefer using words and presenting Israeli activities in such a manner that they seem to be self-protecting and well-grounded, with consideration of security and diplomacy. The use of such fearful words as the right to defend itself and the recourse to the use of official sources to shape the story reinforce the perception of the state legitimacy concurrently eliminating the Palestinian agency. The Arab media on the other hand, which is made up of both Al Jazeera Arabic and Asharq Al-Awsat, cover more of the human suffering and the subservience of Palestinians to oppression. The proactive killing of people and cultural and infrastructural devastation are exaggerated with the help of headlines. The adjectives and verbs used e.g. besieged, are symbolically ingenious because they dramatize the suffering and struggle of the people. Both media houses use polarized mentalities; the western media houses describe the Palestinian side as either caught in the systemic shortcoming or villains whereas the Arab media houses focus on the resilience of the Palestinians in the face of occupation. In both media reproduce the principal configurations of power within the postcolonial world order in which, Western discourse endorses hegemonic frames of power and the Arab discourse tempos the controversy in anti-colonial efforts of gaining justice and the Arab discourse seeking an international reaction. These results present the nexus of language, ideology, and power relations that guide the construction of the conflict in Gaza as informed by imperialism.

The study's conclusion aligns with previous research on the ideological representations and discursive formations in both Western and Arab media regarding the Gaza conflict. Another paper, such as Elmasry (2017), has demonstrated how Western media exemplifies securitized reasoning by legitimizing Israeli actions as acts of 'self-defense' and using official sources to construct narratives that do not challenge systematic Israeli approaches. . In a similar vein, Said (1978), using the concept of postcolonial critique in Orientalism, reasons that Western media tend to depict Palestinians narrowly as either helpless subjects or as dangerous agents of disruption on the other hand, studies conducted in and about Arab media, such as Douai (2014), demonstrate a tendency to discuss resistance and humanitarian concerns, often employing shocking English language and cultural iconography to portray Palestinians as victims of persistent social injustice. This study supports these findings by identifying the use of literal perceiving schemes, which include metaphorical methods such as the 'under siege' feeling and a lexical reliance on power and struggles. Furthermore, this study's exploration of extreme mental models aligns well with Van Dijk's (2008) sociocognitive paradigm, which views media discourse as a product of social power relations.



Such findings add to the current body of knowledge because they help shed light on the correspondence of western discourse to geopolitical alignments, and how the Arab media still responds to the postcolonial critique, thus showing that colonial power still exists in media representation even today. The findings of the research align with the conceptual framework CDA- postcolonial theory. The paper is a post critical analysis of the way the Gaza conflict is represented by the Western and Arab media. The sociocognitive model of CDA introduced by Van Dijk is one of the prominent aspects of the research and it is realized in the discourse of the aspects of lexical orientations, syntactic organization, and conceptual metaphors. As an example, some legitimation strategies of the western media involve a constant use of strategy of right to self-defense by the Israelis and a constant application of institutions that underpin and support power structures, which are at par with the hegemonic epistemologies.

This supports Van Dijk's (2008) argument that media discourses influence mental models and serve to maintain the corresponding relations of power: Palestinians are represented in the deficient role of victims or aggressors on the other hand, Arab media utilizes counter-discourses rooted in resistance and humanitarianism. These depictions of 'speaking under siege' evoke a collective sense of oppression, thereby establishing a counter-hegemonic and cognitive aspect. Postcolonial theory, which situates the securitized portrayal of the other in western media within the colonial hierarchy, agrees with Said's assertion that these portrayals portray the other as inferior or dangerous. The Arab victims' insistence on cultural and historical battles, along with the Al-Aqsa Mosque, form part of a postcolonial narrative of resistance that challenges these orientalist representations and power dynamics. Therefore, CDA and post colonialism provide the critical framework through which, on the Western European front, Israeli maneuvers are justified by geopolitical affiliations; on the Arab side, media tailors Palestinian agency and postcolonial critique, reflecting global colonial and postcolonial power relations reflected in media practices.

6. Conclusion

This study has applied both the sociocognitive approach to CDA and postcolonial theory in the analysis of discursive representation of humanitarianism and legitimization to the Gaza conflict in the Western and Arab print media. The paper determined four major ideological distinctions that were the Western media and the Arab media and these ideological distinctions reflected the socio-political, historical and cultural differences between the Arthur world and the west. The power imbalances, the lexical choices, and the securitization often depict the Western outlets, including the New York Times and The Guardian, as presenting Israeli military actions as self-defense. On the other hand, Arabian news channels such as the Al Jazeera Arabic and Asharq Al Awsat that upheld objective journalism failed to address the issue of systemic oppression. They focused on humanitarian catastrophes and Palestinian resistance and used metonyms such as under siege, and active voice syntax to create the impression of blame and sympathy. This study confirms the theory of Van Dijk who argues that the language of the media replicates and reproduces the power relations that exist in society and also counters the power conflicts by the application of the counter-voice.

This divorce is more detailed in postcolonial theory. According to it, the western media supports the colonizing hierarchical relation by creating the Other Palestinian and not allowing them to be other than the oppressed other. Conversely, the Arab media alters such modes of depicting the conflict by referring to it as an anti-colonial struggle. It provided the twofold view to deconstruct the complex interrelations of language, ideology, and power in the media texts. The implications of such findings include international impressions and making of policies. The American media extends the Israeli actors to sustain the hegemonies of geopolitics of



power among the regional states, and the Arab media extends the discourse politics of resistance as well as solidarity to counter the colonial figurations of Palestinians. The two examples pose pertinent questions concerning media representations and demand an analysis of the degree of ideology written in these formats of media and to correct the practices of journalism. The study makes a contribution to critical research that has been conducted on media since it reveals how discursive procedures shape power relations in terms of how the Greek audience views the Gaza conflict. Further research may look into the degree to which social media networks support or disrupt such discourses and the impact of media representation on perception and policy-making in conflict areas. In this way, the given study adds to the conflict between CDA and postcolonial theory, as it provides the substantial basis of thinking about and handling media discourses in the realities of unequal globalization and colonial power.

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