

Application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in Cross-Cultural Media Reports: How Al-Jazeera English and CNN Reported Gaza-Israel Conflicts, 2023-2024

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Abstract

The conflicts between Gaza and Israel have intensified since Hama's attack on Israel in October, 2023. A series of mutual attacks have been triggered since then. The conflicts not only revealed the entrenched disputes between the two regions since establishing the State of Israel, but also reflected a rather complex global geopolitical landscape, particularly between the Middle East and the West. The study will conduct mixed-methods research, mainly applying Van Dijk's the structure of news to analyse headlines, subjects and topics, as well as models of reports from both media outlets [1, 2]. The keyword 'Gaza-Israel conflicts' was input into the search engine of the two outlets. The study chose the first 10 articles from each outlet as sample texts. The study has found that neither news outlets stay neutral regarding the conflicts. The sample texts have exhibited a stark contrast. In AJE's reports, Israel is mostly associated with negative and violent descriptions whereas CNN uses various reporting strategies to legitimise Israel's attack on Palestine in terms of military missions and civilian casualties. Future studies should research more about how ideologies such as 'Zionism', 'antisemitism' and 'islamophobia' have been inserted in reports to identify different stances in the conflicts, and how media could uphold journalist professionalism in such a complicated ideological and physical battle.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Media Discourse, Israel-Gaza Conflict, News Framing, Ideology, Cross-Cultural Communication, Geopolitics of Media.

Introduction

The Israel-Gaza conflict broke out on 7th October, 2023. Since then, multiple attacks from both Israel and HAMAS have intensified the conflict. Rounds of negotiations have achieved short periods of ceasefire in between, but the war still continues. On 16th October, Yahya Sinwar, who was the HAMAS leader in the Gaza Strip, died in Israeli attacks. However, it did not mark the end of the conflict. HAMAS confirmed its leader's death but said his 'banner will not fall'. 'Both Israel and HAMAS still hold hundreds of people as hostages and prisoners. Amid the desperation and chaos, global media has constantly reported news from the region to the world. The study selected two global media outlets— CNN and Al Jazeera English, to conduct quantitative and qualitative research on news reports of the Israel-Gaza conflict. Firstly, the study will review the cross-cultural communication in news reporting regarding the conflict, including the academ-

ic doubts towards globalisation of news and dilemmas that the Middle East has faced after 9/11. The research will also explore the diplomatic relations between the reporting and reported countries/regions, considering news reports might be affected by geopolitics among countries.

Cross Culture Communication in Reporting Stories in the Middle East

The concepts of cross-culture (or cross-border) communication, globalisation of news and the geopolitics of news are actually intertwined. The study has the intention to discuss their relations, especially in the context of news reports in the Middle East, which is Israel-GAZA conflict in this case.

Cross-border communications is defined very unsystematically in the globalization literature, sometimes as inter-and trans-

national and sometimes as inter-transcultural communication. “Cross-border” thus describes those processes of information exchange in the course of which system borders, of the nation-state or culture, are traversed [3]. Globalization also imposes great impact on cultures around the globe, that “globalization might be conceived as an aspect of the progressive ‘culturalization’ of social life proposed by theories of postmodernization” [4]. As globalisation increased in the 1980s and 1990s, Habermas called the “emerging global public sphere” a key development that may conceivably a harbinger of a “new universalist world order” [5]. Meanwhile, the global sphere of an assumed ‘public sphere’ can be considered as a multi-discursive political space, thus it is expected and inevitable that scholars urgently require to conduct media research from national to international scale [6, 7]. In this research, I have no ambition to review all views on globalization because some of them are irrelevant to the research. Only debates on globalization that are relevant to the emerging global news media and culture will be included in this chapter.

The first view, which is often called as ‘hyperglobalist/optimistic’ view, is that globalization ‘create(s) extensions of organizations and societies across space and time’ that ‘weaken the cultural hegemony of nation-states [7]. Similarly, for Tomlinson, globalization ‘dissolves the securities of locality, it offers new understandings of experience in wider - ultimately global- terms’ [8]. However, another increasingly dominating views expresses the doubts and concerns over such ‘global public sphere’, or global media at large. First of all, the concept of ‘globalization’ has been rebuked by some scholars. For Boyd-Barrett (1998: 3) or Sparks (1998: 122), globalization is ‘a flawed conceptual tool’, or the ‘global public sphere should be replaced by the term imperialist, private sphere’ [9]. As for global communication, Sparks (1998) and Gurevitch (1991) questioned the validity of a shared global information and pointed out the global media has actually been domesticated for national markets (Peter, Collin, 1991). Some other scholars even link global media as a practice of ‘cultural imperialism’ that the first world’s culture dominated the global mass media and threatens the existence of marginal culture mostly in the developing countries [10-13]. Since the post-World War II era, the U.S. government has been regularly active in establishing a global media market in order to seize its control over the international cultural industry. With the momentum of globalisation, America has managed to form a dominant flow of culture with absolute supremacy [14]. Apart from the downsides of globalisation mentioned above, reports on the Middle East have faced more dilemmas considering the cultural and religious stereotyping that the region has encountered in a global range, particularly from the West.

Dilemmas of Cross-Cultural Communication in the Middle East reports a globalised framing of the Islamic world after 9/11

As one American writer, agonized by the atrocities and the aftermath of 11 September 2001, put it: ‘Humanity is the subject of the global public sphere, not the United States’ [15]. As the international situation has shifted, CNN itself has been forced explicitly to confront this reality. In the aftermath of 11 September 2001, the network found itself under heavy criticism internationally for carrying too much US domestic coverage and responded by separating its US news agenda from that of its international broadcasts [16]. Noam Chomsky “cheerfully adopts the US Army’s definition of terrorism as ‘the calculated use of

violence to attain goals that are political, religious, or ideological in nature... Meanwhile, American media narratives on Muslim underwent a noticeable change [17]. Jackson (2005) pointed out that American media have framed a contra-narratives of “terrorism VS America” as “evil VS good” to demonize Muslims since 9/11. Except few American media, such as Foreign Affairs and Foreign Policy, who “condemn the ‘new imperial grand strategy’ of the Bush administration, most mainstream media, including FOX news and CNN backed up Bush administration with enthusiasm [18].

David Barsamian said this in an interview with Noam Chomsky: Juan Williams, who also doubles as a Fox News commentator, is a senior correspondent at National Public Radio. He interviewed George Bush on January 29. In one of his questions, he said to the president, “you know, people are praying for you... The American people want to be with you, Mr. President.” (ibid, 2007) Though people in America turned to British media for more unbiased news during 9/11 chaos and Iraq War, BBC also went along with mainstream American media. David Barsamian and Noam Chomsky both agreed that “most of the media are echo chambers for the war on Iraq”, (David, 2007), and Chomsky said “When the media had to go along, they went along [16]. So if you watched BBC or CNN when the war started, it was like cheerleading and continued that way.” (ibid., 2007, p52)

Apart from post 9/11 coverage and reports on Iraq War, Scholars in media and journalists have doubted the partiality of leading Western media to the Third World. Many scholars have debated distortions and inaccurate news reporting in leading Western media, especially British and American media. A journalist, Nick Davies, who has worked in leading American and British media, also pointed out that one of NBC’s executives meets every Friday with the Foreign Office to discuss storyline in the Middle East and North Africa (Davies, 2008). The Middle East was a particular target for Western broadcasters, given its geo-strategic importance as the source of the world’s largest supply of oil. The French, British and American broadcasters dominated the airwaves in the Arab world, while the Arabic service of Kol Israel (the Voice Israel) also played a key propaganda role in the Middle East [19].

As Altheide (2004) pointed out, mass media have contributed to changing the meaning of terrorism from a war strategy or event to a condition of the world. According to Passini et al (2012), the domination of the Western media has created a mainstream discourse about terrorism, which has deliberately linked terrorism with certain areas in the Islamic World and Arab military action. For example, People who have more trust in TV news information tend to evaluate Palestinian and Arab military actions as more terrorist (ibid., p339). As the studies on the culture and politics of fear have suggested, the influence of news in the construction of the terrorist prototype is relevant [20, 21]. The daily, incessant warnings provided by the media on the risk of terrorism and the chances of a culture clash between Western and Islamic societies, construct and sustain a climate of fear and uncertainty [22].

Game Changer: The Emergence of Al Jazeera

When there are many obstacles during the cross-cultural communication and reporting between the Middle East and the

world, Al Jazeera has emerged as a rather unique media outlet which intends to give the voice back to the Middle East. Most of Al Jazeera's original staff came from BBC Arabic, which was closed a few months before Al Jazeera's first broadcast in 1996. Therefore, its reporters and editors came from across the region and were committed to external journalistic standards [23]. The channel adapted successful Western media formats like live newscasts and political talk shows and took by surprise audiences and regimes alike. Not only did Al Jazeera pioneer televised political debate in the Arab world and so help to create the foundations of a pluralistic political culture, it also gave the region an internationally recognized voice and challenged the international dominance of Western media [24]. Al Jazeera did not shy away from reporting on sensitive topics or inviting controversial guests, and it was bombarded physically or politically by different governments including those in the Middle East and the West [25, 26].

Al Jazeera English (AJE)

The Al Jazeera Network's entry into international news sought to provide a "non-Western" perspective on World Affairs. This caused reactions. For example, what is immediately intriguing is its troubled history when it comes to its access to the English-speaking world. After the English website was hacked, in 2003, it re-launched Al Jazeera English (AJE) in 2006 [27]. It hired journalists who worked for the BBC, and, therefore, they brought the Western reporting skills and knowledge to AJE with another news agenda: to counter the mainstream Western information flow (ibid., see p119). Most of Al Jazeera's original staff came from BBC Arabic, which was closed a few months before Al Jazeera's first broadcast in 1996. Therefore, its reporters and editors came from across the region and were committed to external journalistic standards [28]. The channel adopted successful Western media formats like live newscasts and political talk shows, and took by surprise audiences and regimes alike [24]. Ultimately, the Qatari channel has been judged as the cornerstone of an emerging transnational public sphere—making the coherence of the region visible, inviting audiences to speak up, and forcing authoritarian regimes to take responsibility for their decisions (ibid.).

AJE did nothing short of declaring war on the Western global media outlets, CNN and BBC World ("Al Jazeera Launches English-Language Version" 2006) (ibid., p159). In the United States, AJE was received with hostility, functionally boycotted by every cable and satellite provider, and it was described as being "enemy media", whose intent was to "infiltrate our country" [29]. However, AJE embraces its role as a cultural ambassador between the Arab world and the West: "We do very much see ourselves as a bridge between cultures, offering that bridge of understanding" [27]. Its goal of reversing the flow of communication is symbolically aligned with the Arabic broadcaster whose origins lie in combating the dominant media discourse in the region (ibid., p162). However, it is widely believed that Al-Jazeera is a policy instrument to strengthen Qatar's position in regional power struggles [24]. Journalists working for the channel have repeatedly claimed that there is no editorial interference by the royal rulers, but it is striking that its news coverage never touches Qatari domestic and foreign politics [30]. Besides, Al Jazeera has also faced other accusations of distancing itself from the Middle East culture. According to Ahmed Mansour, one of

Al Jazeera Arabic's most famous on-air personalities, AJE has failed to meet its goal of reversing the flow of communication [27]. He argues, "the channel is currently managed by a Western mentality. They don't know the Middle East and the South, and they haven't studied it and they will not study it." (ibid., p165)

Literature Review

Due to its sensitivity and controversies, there has not been enough research about how different media reported the Israel-Gaza war in October 2023. Limited studies included previous researches focusing on the coverage on the conflicts from 2008 to 2019 [31-35], whereas the most recent media coverage comparisons on different media outlets only limited to preliminary studies [36-38]. Recent studies have showcased that there has been a trend to suppress Palestinians perspectives on social media and traditional media discourse. According to Alakklouk & Gülnar (2023), Palestinians posted warzone videos and posts to urge for basic human rights, but the favored approach for suppressing Palestinian content has been the suspension of accounts or coercing users to delete their posts on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook (ibid., p92). Other research (see Alashqar, 2024) pointed out that the American outlets Fox News and CNN manifested a discernible divergence in their negative portrayal of the Palestinian side when juxtaposed against British media outlets BBC and The Guardian, highlighting the inclination of American media to adopt the Israeli narrative (ibid., p1). When Israeli police killed Palestinian worshippers in Al-Aqsa Mosque in 2021, Wearing (2021) argued in an analysis of the CNN coverage of the war on Gaza, that 'Under the guise of objectivity, U.S. media outlets' choice to support its national ally Israel is reflected in the language they use to describe the occupation in debates and articles.' (ibid., p17). Certain reporting techniques, such as marking the Ministry of Health as ' Hamas-run', imply that the Ministry of Health in Palestine is a part of an 'opposing side' or 'threat' to Israel, which discredited the number of Palestinian casualties (ibid.). Shahzad et al (2023) also came to a similar conclusion that in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from July, 2019 to July 2022, Al-Jazeera gave more coverage to the Pro-Palestine frame whereas BBC and CNN more Pro-Israel Coverage on TV.

Such discrepancies in news between AJE and CNN have shown there has been a consistent geopolitical and ideological battle apart from the physical one happening in Gaza—different discourse in the Western media outlet and AJE reflects the deep-rooted conflicts since the establishment of the Israel state. Therefore, the study finds it necessary to review the relations between the U.S. and the Middle East parties (in this case Israel and Palestine), as well as with Qatar, considering the national policies from the reporting countries might have some influence on how the news is constructed. The United States has been long engaged in the battle between HAMAS, the PA, and Israel. The study will first list some involvement from the U.S. during Obama, Trump and Biden's terms.

The Obama Administration

Since Hamas positioned itself as the voice of rejectionism/opposing the existence of, recognition of, and negotiation with the state of Israel the U.S. has strongly opposed HAMAS and portrays it as a terrorist group (see Zuhur, 2008; Gunning 2023) [39]. After Hamas took power in 2007, the united front that iso-

lated Gaza included not only Israel and the United States but also Europe and leading Arab governments [40]. In 2007, the U.S. tried to make some efforts to channel Palestinian-Israeli peace talks. On March 27, Abbas, Olmert and Rice met again in Jerusalem and announced Israeli-Palestinian meetings to “build confidence” in negotiating the roadmap [41]. The U.S and Israel, for a period of time, seemed to have a rather amiable relationship with the P.A. after Palestinian president Abbas dissolved the unity government with HAMAS. President Abbas appointed Salam Fayyad prime minister. In subsequent weeks, American and European donors announced that they would resume support for the Palestinian Authority (ibid.).

America’s efforts to initiate peace talks between Palestine (represented by President Abbas) and Israel were quite active during the Obama administration. According to Adam Entous, an investigative reporter for the New York Times, ‘late in Obama’s second term, Secretary of State John Kerry brought to the White House a stack of maps of the West Bank that were prepared by the State Department and vetted by U.S. intelligence agencies.’ [42]. Obama held several rounds of peace talks between the PA and Israel, Kerry implemented a robust shuttle diplomacy visiting Israel and the West Bank five times and holding many meetings with the leaders in order to set a suitable environment for a restart of the final status talks (Goldenberg, 2015: p. 5). However, in a release, Hamas stated that negotiations with the “Zionist entity” would not bring anything new and such peace talks would not be useful for the Palestinian cause, but would prolong the divisions among the Palestinians (KUNA, June 2013). To Hamas, the peace initiative was only “a means for the occupation to look good to the international community” [43].

The Trump Administration

Despite the Trump administration being accused regularly of policy vacillation and opaqueness since assuming office in January 2017, it has been remarkably consistent when it comes to honouring its pledges to Israel [44]. In the end of 2017, President Trump officially recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This move led HAMAS and other factions in Gaza to fire rockets in Israel, and thousands of people from Gaza launched six weeks of Friday protests called the “Great March of Return” near the Gaza-Israel border in March 2018 [45, 46]. In May, the US moved its embassy to Jerusalem and protests made the peak. Upon this point, both HAMAS and Israel became more violent towards each other. By March 2019, 190 Palestinians had been killed and 28,000 had been injured by the Israeli forces [47-50].

The US exclusively blamed the violence on HAMAS [49]. Meanwhile, in September 2019, the Trump administration cut all aid to UNRWA—a U.N. organisation that supports Palestinian refugees. America’s critics of UNRWA argue that the organisation prevents peace between Palestinians and Israelis by artificially encouraging hopes that Palestinian refugees could someday return to the villages and towns they, or their descendants, had fled in 1948 [44]. In January 2020, President Trump expounded his long-awaited peace proposal, which is highly pro-Israel, with a joint press conference with Netanyahu [45]. According to the plan, just to list a few points, the Palestinian state would be non-militarized and there would be a strict Israeli security control in some areas including the sea. Moreover, the plan had stipulations for the Palestinians to be granted inde-

pendence such as a complete dismantling of Hamas. Jerusalem would be recognised as the undivided capital of Israel. Controversially, the plan rejected the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homes in Israel as a result, the Palestinians rejected the plan [50, 51]. Both the PA and HAMAS strongly opposed it. Abbas characterized the plan as conspiracy that would not pass, while Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhr described the document as worthless and said, “Palestine will prevail, and Trump and the deal will go to the dustbin of history [51].”

The Biden Administration

On October 7, 2023, the Palestinian Sunniv Islamist group Hamas (a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization, or FTO) led surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip by land, sea, and air [52]. Since October 7, the Biden Administration has expedited the provision of U.S. military and security assistance to Israel, including: (1) small-diameter bombs (250 pounds); (2) interceptors to replenish Israel’s Iron Dome (a U.S.-supported short-range anti-rocket, anti-mortar, and anti-artillery system); (3) Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs - a kit that converts unguided armaments into satellite-guided bombs); and (4) 155mm artillery shells. The Administration also is to provide Israel with two Iron Dome batteries previously purchased by the U.S. Army [52]. Meanwhile, President Biden announced \$100 million in U.S. humanitarian assistance for Gaza and the West Bank, to “help support over a million displaced and conflict-affected people with clean water, food, hygiene support, medical care, and other essential needs” via “trusted partners including UN agencies and international NGOs” despite some U.S. lawmakers called a halt for such humanitarian aid just in case the fund would be diverted to the use of HAMAS or any organisation affiliated³.

The Relationship Among Qatar, Palestine and Israel

The history of diplomatic relations between Qatar and Palestine started only in 1965 when was opened one of the first representative offices of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and the importance of Palestine was renewed in 1988 when Qatar was one of the first country to recognize the existence of Palestine with Jerusalem as capital, including the territories before the 1967 war (D’Acunto, 2016) [53]. For Qatar, the issue was ensuring the integration of Hamas into the Palestinian political system and establishing itself as the Palestinian Islamist movement’s undisputed political patron to further augment Doha’s influence and prevent the Islamist movement from joining the rival Iranian camp, in the process steering it in a more accommodationalist direction [54]. According to Rabbani, unlike the policies of Iran, who sought to strengthen the military muscles of HAMAS in the context of a proxy conflict with Israel, Qatar sought a peaceful talk among and between rival parties in order to further its own policies (ibid., p43). However, in some rounds of peace talks, Qatar didn’t balance its political agenda with both the PA and HAMAS. The division between the PA and HAMAS sometimes makes one another absent on some occasions. In 2009, Qatar held ‘Gaza Summit’ and invited the representative of HAMAS whereas President Abbas was absent; in 2012, truce talks in Cairo saw Hamas negotiating with Egypt, Turkey, Qatar, and (indirectly) Israel; Abbas was nowhere to be seen [55]. Khaled Meshal, who heads Hamas’ political wing, crowed that “for the first time a ceasefire was achieved on conditions set by Hamas, and in the presence of the Americans.’ [56]. Howev-

er, supporting for Palestinian course means that the relationship between Qatar and Israel has been tense. Admoni (2022) has accused the Qatari government and media of antisemitism. He points out that Qatar's objection to the founding of the Jewish State is an antisemitic view, which also comes from the populace in Qatar. However, during the Israel-Gaza conflict, Qatar tried to mediate between HAMAS and Israel [57]. They reached a temporary ceasefire and the exchange of more than 100 Israeli hostages for 240 Palestinian prisoners (see Al Jazeera, 23/11/2023; 27/11/2023; NPR, 3/12/2023; Reuters, 4/12/2023; the New York Times, 2/12/2023). However, in April 2024, Essa Al-Nassr, a brigadier general at the Emiri Guard and member of Qatar's legislative assembly stated that "There will be no peace nor negotiations with the Zionist entity for one reason: because their mentality does not recognize negotiations, but rather only... breaking promises and lying... They only recognize one thing, which is killings; since they are killers of prophets."

Research Questions

1. Is there any pattern in news stories in CNN and AJE regarding the Israel-Gaza conflict?
2. Are the diplomatic relations between the reporting countries and the reported countries in line with the attitudes of respective media outlets, in this case, CNN and AJE?

Theoretical Framework

From critical linguists in 70s, critical discourse analysis has gone through phases of changes and evolution. In the 1970s, critical linguists tried to combine a method of linguistic text analysis with a social theory of the language in political and ideological processes, upon the functionalist linguistic theory associated with Michael Halliday (1978, 1985) and known as 'systemic linguistics' [58]. Since then, CDA scholars have not singled out text analysis, but conducted such analysis on the political and social background. For example, Fairclough, in his *Media Discourse*, has pointed out the trend of the entertainment of newspaper language is largely due to its attempts to attract more advertisement sponsors, and Noam Chomsky analyses American news with the background of geopolitical battles between the US and other countries [18-59]. Many other scholars (see) have endeavoured to analyse texts on a broader social and political background, and this study is one of them. The method of this research is mostly inspired by Van Dijk's theoretical framework—the structure of news. It is mainly a framework that focuses on analysing ideologies in texts. Although it has been used mainly to critically review racism in the Western media, the study finds it highly relevant when different parties are reported as imbalanced, which potentially reflects certain ideologies and hegemonies in texts [60]. The imbalance of voice, as mentioned in the literature review, has been discerned in some media such as BBC, CNN and AJE. Apart from the findings from previous studies, the study will dig deeper into the structure of news by analysing headlines, subjects and topics (but make it qualitative)

and models (mental representation of events) of the Israel-Gaza conflict during 2023-2024.

Macrostructure of News

There are two structures of news according to van Dijk [60, 61]. They are macrostructure and microstructure. This study will focus on analysing macrostructure of the news from CNN and AJE. The concept of 'macrostructure' is central to the analysis of thematic structure: the macrostructure of a text is its overall organisation in terms of themes or topics. It is a hierarchical organisation, in the sense that we can identify the theme of a whole text, which can typically be spelt out in terms of a few rather less general themes [62]. According to van Dijk, these hierarchical relationships can be defined by macrorules, which represent what we intuitively understand by summarising. He points out those macrorules essentially reduce information by deletion, generalisation and construction [61]. The first rule, deletion, means we can simply delete all information that is no longer relevant in the rest of the texts, such as local details. Secondly, we can generalise the information by replacing a sequence of descriptions, or propositions with one generalisation. Thirdly, we can combine all the descriptions or propositions of an act or event as a whole act or event. For example, 'going to the airport, checking in, walking to the gate, etc' can be constructed as 'I took a plane to...' (ibid., p32). According to van Dijk, these summarising macrorules derive topics or themes from the meaning of a text, because they define the upshot, gist, most important information, and hence the theme or topic for each sequence of propositions of a text (ibid., 1988, p32).

Headline

Headlines in the Press have important textual and cognitive functions. Firstly, they are the most conspicuous part of a news report, and their main function is to summarise the most important information in the report. The headlines are arranged with a "hierarchy of importance": an arrangement from top to bottom of the page; based on various sizes of headlines and its font, and through news placements on the newspaper from front to back [63]. Secondly, headlines are usually grammatically incomplete, because articles or auxiliary verbs are often deleted. This may sometimes lead to vagueness or ambiguity, which may also have a special ideological function, for instance, when the responsibility for an action must be concealed [60]. Thirdly, headlines always contain ideology indications. Since they express the most important information about a news event, they may bias the understanding process: they summarize what, according to the journalist, is the most important aspect, and such a summary necessarily implies an opinion or a specific perspective on the events (ibid., 1991). Researches on headlines vary throughout all topics [64-66]. Regardless of various topics of researches, they all focus on analysing ideologies in headlines to detect the dominant power in texts.

²White House, "U.S. Announcement of Humanitarian Assistance to the Palestinian People," October 18, 2023. For examples of congressional support for humanitarian assistance, see text of October 18 letter from 33 Senators to Secretary Blinken at https://www.murphy.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/un_humanitarian_appeal.pdf; and text of October 20 letter from 130 Representatives to President Biden at https://connolly.house.gov/uploadedfiles/letter_to_president_biden_on_israel.pdf.
³Text of letter from 24 Representatives to U.S. Agency for International Development Director Samantha Power available at https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/24080806-23-10-23-letter-to-usaid-re-gaza-west-bank_funding-copy. Lawmakers in both chambers have introduced bills during the 118th Congress that would prohibit any U.S. funding for Palestinians in Gaza absent a presidential certification that (among other things) the assistance would not benefit Hamas or other terrorist organizations or affiliates. Senate version: S. 489; House version at <https://kustoff.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/kustoff.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/text-stop-taxpayer-funding-of-hamas-act.pdf>.

Models

Topics not only suggest what information is most important in the text, but also what is most important ‘in the world’. In our case, this means that topics influence the representation readers construct in their mind of specific ethnic events and situations. Such mental representations of events are called ‘models’ [67-70]. Models are mental structures of information which, besides the new information offered in a news report, feature information about such a situation as inferred from general knowledge scripts [60]. Besides, lower-level topics may sometimes be ‘upgraded’ and reach headline status, whereas topics that would usually make the headline may be ‘downgraded’ (ibid., p75). According to Van Dijk, news information could be constructed as less or more important topics to indicate certain ideology. The hierarchy of topics would influence the recall and uses the readers make of the information from the newspaper (ibid., p74.)

Data Collection

The study applies mixed methods of research. Quantitative method is used to categorise topics in headlines, and qualitative method in model analysis. For the quantitative research, the study used ‘Israel-Gaza war’ as a keyword and typed it in the search engines on news websites of CNN World News and Al Jazeera English. The first 140 articles (exclusive of editorials, comments or opinions) shown on the pages are the samples of the headline topics. The study thus will later analyse models of several sample data articles among the selected articles according to certain topics, to examine if headlines are downgraded, or sub-topics are upgraded to indicate certain knowledge or ideology.

Table 1.1: CNN Topics and Subjects of Headlines

topics/subjects	the US	Israel	Pales-tine	Hamas	Gaza hos-ta-ges	Un-known	the UK	others	Israeli Hos-ta-ges	the UN	Journal-ists
politics	16	36				7	2				
health		2								2	
sports			2								
counter-terrorism	2	2									
killed	4	2	2			2					
military operation(kill-ing)		4		4							
casualty/injury-in-volved	2	2				2					2
hostage-involved	2	4			2				8		
terrorism-involved								2			
victims of conflicts	2	8	3					2	2		
protests		8									
total	28	68	7	4	2	11	2	4	10	2	2

Table 1.2: AJE

topics/subjects	the US	Israel	Pales-tine	Hamas	Gaza hos-ta-ge	un-known	the UK	others	Israeli Hos-tag-es	the UN	Journal-ists
politics	8	6					2			4	
health			2								
sports			4								
counter-terrorism											
killed		2	10								
military operation(kill-ing)		35		8		15					
casualty/injury-in-volved		2	2			2					
hostage-involved	2	2				2		2			
terrorism-involved											
victims of conflicts			6			4					4
protests	4	8	2						2		
total	14	55	26	8		23	2	2	2	4	4


The study categorises 140 headlines for each outlet (280 in total) into different topics, with the subjects of those headlines listed. For example, in Israeli military says it killed Hamas commander and two other fighters in occupied West bank, the subject is “Israeli military”, and the topic is “military operation (killing)”. If the subject is omitted, such as “At least 21 killed in airstrike on Sudanese market as civil war rages”, the subject is ‘unknown’, and the topic is ‘killed’. As for the indirect statement, the subject is the accusative. For example, in ‘Netanyahu says he won’t change Israel’s policies in Gaza’, the subject is ‘he’ as in Netanyahu, and the topic is ‘politics’. According to Table 1.1 and 1.2, one of the major differences in texts is the content about Israel. Although both outlets have almost the same number of reports about Israel (CNN:68; AJE: 55), the topics of those headlines present different patterns. In CNN, 36 headlines are about ‘politics’, whereas only 4 are about ‘military operation’; Contrarily, in AJE, only 6 headlines are under ‘politics’ while 35 are about ‘military operation (killing)’. Regarding those headlines of CNN under the topic of ‘politics’, 26 mention or quote Netanya, while AJE only mentions or quotes Netanya 7 times. Another major difference is that CNN reports Israel as ‘victim of conflicts’ 8 times, but AJE has no related topic [71-73].

Furthermore, AJE has more news about Palestine than CNN does. AJE has 26 articles about topics of ‘sports’, ‘killed’, ‘health’, ‘casualty/injury involved’, ‘victims of conflicts’ and ‘protests’, whereas CNN only has 7 stories about ‘sports’, ‘killed’ and ‘victims of conflicts’. Furthermore, CNN has more news about the U.S., especially under the category of ‘politics’. The US parties including the US officials, CIA, Biden, American

**CNN:
The U.S.**

‘Israeli military says it killed Hamas commander and two other fighters in occupied West bank’

US-made munitions used in Israeli strike on Gaza school that killed 22, experts say



By [Abeer Salman](#), [Kareem Khadder](#), [Gianluca Mezzofiore](#), [Allegra Goodwin](#) and [Eyad Kourdi](#), CNN

[3 minute read](#)

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CNN —

Weapons experts have identified the remnants of two US-made munitions used in an [Israeli](#) missile strike Sunday on a school in central Gaza that according to local authorities killed at least 22 people.

Hundreds were taking refuge at the former school in Nuseirat when it was struck by two missiles.

CNN video from the scene Sunday showed an ambulance at the school, as people frantically searched through the rubble and destroyed makeshift shelters in the schoolyard.

A man interviewed by a CNN stringer at the scene said there had been no warning. “We are pulling a hand here and a leg there from under the rubble. Civilians who did nothing wrong.”

The man echoed what many in Gaza have said in recent days amid instructions from the Israeli military for civilians to leave certain zones in central and southern Gaza, saying: “We are displaced and we will stay here. If he wants to hit more, let him hit. We are staying, even if he wants to destroy all of Gaza and build a new one and call it Netanyahu’s Gaza, we are staying.”

media and some American hostages, are mentioned in sample headlines. Apart from that, topics such as ‘killed’, ‘casualty-injury involved’, ‘hostage-involved’ and ‘victims of conflicts’ are the topics when it comes to the US. However, AJE only has the US-related stories under ‘politics’, ‘hostage-involved’ and ‘protests’.

In conclusion, news about the conflict presents different focuses and patterns in the two media outlets. According to the subjects and topics of sample headlines, CNN has a more neutral or even sympathising attitude toward Israel, as most news about the country comes from reports of Netanya’s speeches or quotes, while a few others describe the nation as the victim of the conflict. However, AJE has a more accusing or condemning tone toward Israel. Most news about Israel is involved in the military killing operation, whereas none depicts it as the victim of the conflict. Apart from that, AJE has more news about Palestine, which covers a more varied category of topics, while CNN has fewer reports about the country. Lastly, AJE has comparatively less news (14) about the US, while CNN has twice (28) of that [75, 76].

Table 1.1 & 1.2 and the analysis shown above have revealed a rough picture of what 280 reports from the two media outlets concentrate on and the general news agendas for different countries and parties. Now the study will go into model analysis, which will show seven pieces of complete news reports from CNN and AJE, regarding the main three actors involved in the conflict: the U.S., Israel and HAMAS.

Abdul Kareem Al Assas, a resident of Nuseirat, voiced his despair. "Where should we go? You tell us where to go and we will. This is genocide. Why are the Arab countries silent? Don't give us food and water; we need safety... Are there resistance fighters here? There are only women, children, and elderly."



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Tayseer Al Kilani, whose family was also taking refuge at the school, said: "We all ran away. Then my son came carrying my grandson, who was injured and taken to Al Aqsa hospital. Then another missile hit. Netanyahu is targeting UNRWA schools."

In its statement on the strike, the IDF said that the Israeli Air Force struck "a number of terrorists who were operating in the area of UNRWA's Abu Oraiban School building in Nuseirat. This location served as a hideout and operational infrastructure from which attacks against IDF troops operating in the Gaza Strip were directed and carried out."

CNN is unable to verify independently whether Hamas operatives were present at the site.

Weapons researchers contacted by CNN were able to identify parts of the missiles used in the attack.

Patrick Senft, a research coordinator at Armament Research Services (ARES), cautioned that "Many pieces are too damaged to allow for a positive ID."

But one image, he said, featured "distinctive screw housings, fin slots, and the internal mechanism of a GBU-39's tail section." The GBU-39 is a 250lb small-diameter guided air-to-surface munition made by Boeing.

Trevor Ball, who was a senior explosive ordnance disposal team member in the US Army, agreed that the images likely showed part of the fin of a small-diameter bomb.

Ball told CNN there were also fragments of a US-made Hellfire missile at the site, including the top of the guidance system.

"It's likely there was a different munition involved as well, as there is minimal damage on the rooftop from the later strike from what pictures I saw."

1. Israel forces targeted UNRWA schools, where terrorists were operating in the area.

1.1 Hundreds were taking refuge at the former school in Nuseirat when two missiles struck it.

1.2 Israeli force instructed civilians to leave the zone

1.3 Civilians said they did nothing wrong and did not deserve such genocide.

2. ARES identified some weapons used in the action, and many are too dangerous to allow for a positive ID.

2.1 a US-made missile fragments were found at the site

2.2 other munition might be involved, as there is minimal damage on the rooftop.

As the model shows, headlines are downgraded as one of the sub-topics (2.1), whereas the main topic is 'Israeli force targeted

the school zone where terrorists were operating'(1). Such a mental model countered the first few paragraphs of civilians crying for safety. Although their voices and casualties are shown in the opening passage, the overall discourse is countered by the IDF claim that such attacks were to crack down on terrorists, which partly legitimises deeds from the Israeli military action. Furthermore, although the headline says 'US-made munitions used in Israeli strike on Gaza school that killed 22', the information is only mentioned at the end of the article, which is downgraded as one of the sub-topics. The finding of the US missiles is shown as less serious when a US official stated that 'there is minimal damage on the rooftop', indicating that even if the US missiles were found at the site, no serious damage was caused [77].

Strike could help deal, Netanyahu claims

Netanyahu told the Israeli Channel 14 network on Monday that it was still unclear whether the strike had killed Deif, but added that there were "interesting indications, I don't want to say something certainly before we receive more information."

Asked whether the strike could put at risk a potential hostage release and ceasefire deal, Netanyahu insisted it would actually promote a deal.

" Hamas is weak. The more you hit it, the more you push for a deal," he told the network.

Netanyahu said that for months Hamas "thought they were safe, [now] they see they're unsafe. The IDF forcefully entered the Philadelphi corridor [along the Egyptian border], conquered the Rafah crossing."

"This pressure, along with the fierce diplomatic standing of the political echelon and myself over the things we demand, gradually makes them change, surrender, or at least become more flexible. Now we need to increase the pressure. The more pressure we apply, we will get a deal that releases the maximum number of living hostages during the first phase, and gets us closer to our goal of destroying Hamas."

Netanyahu also said the IDF would remain along the Philadelphi corridor, which has been a contentious issue in the negotiations. "This has consequences, both diplomatic and security related advantages," he said.

Israeli intelligence services said this past week they killed a total of 25 Hamas operatives involved in the October 7 attacks.

Ronen Bar, the head of Israel's Shin Bet intelligence agency, announced the figure during a meeting with commanders from the IDF's Southern Command and 162 Division held in Rafah on Saturday. Bar commended the results of the Shin Bet's "intensified activity" within Gaza.

Meanwhile, a fresh Israeli airstrike that hit a UN agency school in a camp for displaced people in central Gaza on Sunday has killed at least 22 and injured more than 100 others, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza and officials at a nearby hospital.

Video from the scene in Al-Nuseirat camp shows bodies and injured people — some bleeding and covered in rubble — being rushed to ambulances.

A statement from the IDF on Sunday said the Israeli Air Force struck "a number of terrorists" who were operating in the area of the school in Nuseirat.

Model analysis

1. In Netanyahu's interview, he claims the strike could promote a hostage release and ceasefire deal;

1.1 " Hamas is weak. The more you hit it, the more you push for a deal."

1.2 "The more pressure we apply, we will get a deal that releases the maximum number of living hostages during the first phase, and gets us closer to our goal of destroying Hamas."

2. Israeli intelligence services said this past week they killed a total of 25 Hamas operatives involved in the October 7 attacks.

2.1 The IDF forcefully entered the Philadelphi corridor [along the Egyptian border], conquered the Rafah crossing.

3. a fresh Israeli airstrike that hit a UN agency school in a camp for displaced people in central Gaza on Sunday has killed at least 22 and injured more than 100 others.

3.1 A statement on IDF on Sunday said the Israeli Force struck "a number of terrorists" who were operating in the area of school

Hamas

in Nuseirat. In the news story, the lead "Strike could help deal, Netanyahu said" is the main topic. Topic 1 & 2 are very consistent. Netanyahu claimed that the strike could actually promote a deal for hostage release and ceasefire, therefore the IDF forcefully entered the Philadelphi corridor. Although the military force killed at least 22 and injured more than 100 in a UN agency school, the IDF claimed terrorists were operating in the area of school in Nuseirat. The overall storyline legitimises the attack of the IDF: they attacked to promote a ceasefire deal, and potential Hamas operations excuse casualties and injuries in schools [78-80]. The news does not give more details of the casualties in schools. Children were highly likely involved, but the news avoids mentioning if any casualty was a child. The overall model analysis is consistent with the findings of Table 1.1— CNN avoids blaming the killing operation of the Israeli force, and if it happened, the media outlet tends to legitimise the action.

Who is Mohammed Deif, the Hamas military chief targeted by Israel?



By Sophie Tanno, CNN
3 minute read · Updated 8:48 AM EDT, Sun July 14, 2024

(CNN) — Israel has targeted Hamas' military chief Mohammed Deif in a strike on a designated humanitarian zone in southern Gaza which killed at least 90 Palestinians. It is not clear yet if Deif was among the dead. But who is he?

An elusive and powerful figure, Deif is understood to be one of the masterminds behind the October 7 attacks. He has led the Palestinian militant group's armed wing for more than two decades.

If his death is confirmed, Deif would be the highest profile Hamas leader killed since the war in Gaza began nine months ago. Israel has been seeking to dismantle Hamas following the October 7 attacks but with fighting ongoing and senior Hamas figures at large, that goal has seemed distant.

Deif is thought to have been born in the 1960s in the Khan Younis refugee camp, one of a number of such camps established in Gaza at the end of the 1940s for displaced Palestinians denied the freedom to return to their homes by the newly-created state of Israel.

Born as Mohammad Diab Ibrahim al-Masri, he later became known as "El Deif" or "the Guest" due to his habit of staying in different houses every night for decades to avoid being tracked and killed by Israel.

Deif has been at the top of Israel's most wanted list for decades, with Israel holding him responsible for the deaths of dozens of its citizens. Both the US and the EU have him on terror blacklists.

He joined Hamas during the first Intifada, or Palestinian uprising, which began in 1987. He became a founding member of Hamas' armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, in the early 1990s. The military unit was established to support Hamas in its armed resistance against Israel and has since carried out numerous attacks, including suicide bombings.

From the beginning, Deif has been a key architect in Hamas's strategy against Israel. He was behind a wave of suicide attacks in 1996 that killed 65 people in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, as well as other acts intended to derail the Israel-Palestine peace process.

Deif rose through the ranks of the Qassam Brigades to be named its leader in 2002, after the previous commander was killed by Israel.

Considered a highly-skilled bomb maker, he has played a significant role in developing Hamas's network of tunnels and bomb-making expertise.

Over the years, Deif has survived numerous assassination attempts – a total of seven, according to Reuters. This includes a 2014 Israeli strike that killed his wife, his seven-month-old son and three-year-old daughter.

He was seriously injured in one of the assassination attempts, sustaining serious leg injuries and losing an eye.

Deif is understood to have played a role in orchestrating Hamas's brutal cross-border raids on October 7, which saw around 1,200 Israelis killed. Israel's campaign in Gaza has since killed more than 38,000 people.

Soon after the attacks, he called for a general uprising. "If you have a gun, get it out. This is the time to use it – get out with trucks, cars, axes, today the best and most honorable history starts," he said in a recorded message.

In May, the International Criminal Court (ICC) said it was seeking arrest warrants for Deif, as well as Yehiya Sinwar, Hamas's leader in Gaza, and Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas's political bureau head, saying they had "reasonable grounds" to believe they bore responsibility for the October 7 attacks.

Deif, a man who lives his life in the shadows, has managed to survive for decades while running Hamas's armed wing. This achievement has earned him the nickname "the Cat with Nine Lives." It remains to be seen, however, whether Deif has survived this latest attempt on his life.

Model analysis

- 1. An elusive and powerful figure, Deif is understood to be one of the masterminds behind the October 7 attacks.
- 1.1 Deif is understood to have played a role in orchestrating Hamas’s brutal cross-border raids on October 7, which saw around 1,200 Israelis killed. Israel’s campaign in Gaza has since killed more than 38,000 people.
- 1.2 Soon after the attacks, he called for a general uprising. “If you have a gun, get it out. This is the time to use it – get out with trucks, cars, axes, today the best and most honorable history starts.”
- 1.3 Deif is thought to have been born in the 1960s in the Khan Younis refugee camp,
- 1.4 He joined Hamas during the first Intifada, He became a founding member of Hamas’ armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, in the early 1990s. The military unit was established to support Hamas in its armed resistance against Israel and has since carried out numerous attacks, including suicide bombings [81-83].
- 1.5 Considered a highly-skilled bomb maker, he has played a significant role in developing Hamas’s network of tunnels and bomb-making expertise.
- 1.6 He has been staying in different houses to avoid being attacked and killed by Israel
- 1.7 Over the years, Deif has survived numerous assassination attempts – a total of seven, according to Reuters. This includes a 2014 Israeli strike that killed his wife, his seven-month-old son and three-year-old daughter.
- 1.8 He was seriously injured in one of the assassination attempts, sustaining serious leg injuries and losing an eye.
- 1.9 Deif has been at the top of Israel’s most wanted list for decades, with Israel holding him responsible for the deaths of doz-

- ens of its citizens. Both the US and the EU have him on terror blacklists.
- 2 If his death is confirmed, Deif would be the highest profile Hamas leader killed since the war in Gaza began nine months ago.
- 2.1 Israel has been seeking to dismantle Hamas following the October 7 attacks but with fighting ongoing and senior Hamas figures at large, that goal has seemed distant.
- 2.2 In May, the International Criminal Court (ICC) said it was seeking arrest warrants for Deif, as well as Yehiya Sinwar, Hamas’s leader in Gaza, and Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas’s political bureau head, saying they had “reasonable grounds” to believe they bore responsibility for the October 7 attacks [84].

According to CNN’s model analysis, Mohammad Deif is a dangerous figure who could be defined as a ‘terrorist’ (both the US and the EU have him on terror blacklists.). He is ‘highly-skilled’ bomb maker and one of the heads of HAMAS to develop suicide bombs and other major attacks, possibly including the one on October 7th. The report mentioned that HAMAS launched the attack on the date, and quoted rather violent words from Deif (‘if you have a gun, get it out. This is the time to use it...’) After the article mentioned that Israeli military killed his wife, son and daughter and he was seriously injured, the topic abruptly changed to ‘Deif is understood to have played a role in orchestrating Hamas’s brutal cross-border raids on October 7, which saw around 1,200 Israelis killed.’ Therefore, the image of Mohammad Deif is absolutely negative— a terrorist who sacrificed everything to launch terrorist attacks, who is legally and morally condemned by the US, EU and other international organisations, and rightfully targeted by the Israeli forces.

**AJE: different discourse
Israel**

The screenshot shows a news article from Al Jazeera. The header includes the Al Jazeera logo and navigation links for News, War on Gaza, US Elections, Opinion, Sport, and Video. The article title is "Israel recovers bodies of six captives held in Gaza". Below the title is a sub-headline: "Families of the Israeli captives have called on the government to sign a deal with Hamas to free about 100 people still in Gaza." The date is "1 Sep 2024". The main text states: "Israel’s military has announced that its troops have recovered the bodies of six captives, including a dual US national, from a tunnel in southern Gaza, as it continued its 11-month long, deadly assault on the Palestinian enclave." A second paragraph reads: "More than 40,000 Palestinians have been killed since Israel launched war on Gaza on October 7 following an attack led by Palestinian group Hamas that left more than 1,100 people dead. The Palestinian fighters took about 250 captives in the wake of the attack. The coastal enclave has since been turned into rubble amid non-stop bombardment as Israel has been accused of stalling a ceasefire deal to free the captives."

Model analysis

1. More than 40,000 Palestinians have been killed since Israel Launched war on Gaza
 - 1.1 the Palestinian fighters took about 250 captives in the wake of the attack
 - 1.2 Israeli military kept bombarding the area which stalled a ceasefire deal to free captives
2. Isreal's military has announced that it recovered the bodies of six captives
 - 2.1 families of the Israeli captives have called on the government to sign a deal with HAMAS to free about 100 people still in Gaza.

The analysis shows that the headline is downgraded to the second-tier topic, with the lead underneath it. The focus of the article is in the second paragraph, since more details, such as the numbers of casualties, are provided. According to the story, the cause of the series of captives' deaths is that more than 40,000 Palestinians have been killed since Israel launched the war on Gaza, and it was the Israeli military who kept attacking the area that led to the stalling of a ceasefire which might have freed the captives, therefore, it was the Israeli army who indirectly caused the deaths of those six people [85].

Similar model structure is shown in the sample article below.

The screenshot shows the Al Jazeera website header with navigation links for News, War on Gaza, US Elections, Opinion, Sport, and Video. The main headline reads: "Three Israelis killed in West Bank shooting amid deadly Jenin raids". A sub-headline below it states: "Three police officers were killed at a checkpoint shooting near Tarqumiyah, south of Hebron." The article is categorized under "News | Occupied West Bank".

The screenshot shows the main body text of the article, dated 1 Sep 2024. The first paragraph reads: "Three Israeli security personnel have been killed in a shooting at a checkpoint in Hebron, as Israel brought reinforcements in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin as part of its ongoing deadly raids." The second paragraph reads: "The shooting on Sunday took place as the Israeli army continued its [deadly assault on Jenin for a fifth consecutive day](#) killing at least 24 Palestinians. Israel has killed more than 500 people as it intensified operations in the West Bank since it launched war on Gaza on October 7. More than 40,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza in the past 11 months."

Model analysis

1. Israeli army has continued its deadly assault on Jenin for a fifth consecutive day.
 - 1.1 the army killed at least 24 Palestinians.
 - 1.2 the army has killed more than 500 people since it launched war on Gaza.
 - 1.3 more than 40,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza in the past 11 months.
2. Three Israeli security personnel have been killed in a shooting at a checkpoint in Hebron.

In this article, the headline has also been downgraded, while Israeli 'deadly assault' and 'intensified operations' are upgraded as major information on the news, considering the news provides more details and numbers of casualties that the Israeli military caused, which showcases a rather obvious condemning tone towards the Israeli military forces. From the two-sample news, it can be discerned that even if the headlines reported casualties of the Israeli force, the first-tier information tends to be that far more numbers of Palestinians were killed by the Israeli military operation, which resulted in the failure of a ceasefire deal and Israeli casualties [86-89].

The screenshot shows the Al Jazeera website with the article title "Despite UN appeal, US and UK don't fund 'critical lifeline' to Palestinians". The sub-headline reads: "Israel has tried for years to dismantle the UNRWA, which helps Palestinian refugees in Gaza and elsewhere." The article is dated 13 Jul 2024. The main text states: "The United Nations chief has led an internationally backed effort to support its agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) but has yet to persuade its biggest Western donors. The United States and the United Kingdom, key allies of Israel, have continued to financially block the main organisation delivering humanitarian aid to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere. Fourteen of the 16 donor nations resumed funding after suspending it in January, when Israel accused members of the organisation of having taken part in the October 7 Hamas-led attacks that killed more than 1,100 people in southern Israel. The US was the UNRWA's biggest donor, but Congress has banned any payments to the agency until March 25, 2025. An independent review in April found that Israel has not presented credible evidence for its claims. There is a separate investigation into the October attack itself, by the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a pledge conference in New York on Friday that the UNRWA faces 'a profound funding gap' and that without financial support to the organisation 'Palestinian refugees will lose a critical lifeline and the last ray of hope for a better future'. 'Let me be clear – there is no alternative to UNRWA,' he said, also warning that Israeli evacuation orders are forcing Palestinians 'to move like human pinballs across a landscape of destruction and death'."

Model analysis

- 1. Israel accused members of UNRWA of taking part in HAMAS-led attack on October 7th, and 14 donor nations suspended the funding for UNRWA
- 1.1 An independent review in April found that Israel has not presented credible evidence for its claims. There is a separate independent investigation going on.
- 1.2 Fourteen of the 16 donor nations resumed funding.
- 2. The US was the biggest donor, but Congress banned any financial support to UNRWA until 2025.

- 1.1 the US and the UK have continued to financially block the main organisation delivering humanitarian aid to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere
- 3. Palestinians will lose a critical lifeline without financial support to the organisation.

In this article, AJE has clearly shown its stance on the two major Western powers— the accusation of the US and the UK. It firstly presents the unreliable remarks of Israeli allegation that members of UNRWA have been involved in the HAMAS-led attacks,

, and then points out that the US and the UK have suspended the financial support mainly because they are 'key allies of Israel', which is hinted in texts. The suspension of such support will lead to a disastrous consequence on Palestinians' lives, as they are

moving around to hide from the war without supports from UN-RWA. In the news story, the US and the UK have rather negative images, who in this physical and geopolitical battle, favour the side of Israel and put the lives of Palestinians at risk [90].

Hamas

Who is Mohammed Deif, the Hamas military commander in Gaza?

Longtime leader of Qassam Brigades is among Israel's most wanted and has been targeted by air strikes multiple times.

Israel on Thursday claimed that its military had killed Mohammed Deif, the military commander of Hamas in Gaza, in a [July 13 air strike on al-Mawasi](#), west of Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip.

That attack had struck tents housing displaced Palestinians and a water distillation plant, killing at least 90 people and wounding 300 others. At the time, a senior official of Hamas had insisted in a statement that Deif had escaped and was doing "fine". Al-Mawasi is a designated humanitarian zone in Gaza.

"Commander Mohammed Deif is well and directly overseeing" the operations of the Hamas military wing, the official told AFP news agency.

However, Israel now claims it has evidence of Deif's death. Deif has long topped Israel's most wanted list.

So who is Mohammed Deif and why is he such a significant figure for Hamas, the Palestinian movement and Israel?

Who is Mohammed Deif?

Deif was one of the founders of Hamas's military wing, the [Qassam Brigades](#), in the 1990s and has led the force for more than 20 years. He is also said to be a key figure who planned suicide bombings leading to the deaths of dozens of Israelis.

Israel identified him and Hamas's Gaza leader, Yahya Sinwar, as the chief architects of the October 7 attack that killed at least 1,139 people in southern Israel and triggered its war on Gaza.

On the morning of October 7, Hamas had issued a rare voice recording of Deif announcing the "[Al-Aqsa Flood](#)" operation, signalling the attack was payback for Israeli raids at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest site.

Deif, 58, rarely speaks or appears in public. So when Hamas's TV channel announced he was to speak on October 7, Palestinians in Gaza knew something significant was afoot.

Speaking in a calm voice in the recording, Deif said Hamas had repeatedly warned Israel to stop its crimes against Palestinians, to release the prisoners, and to halt its expropriation of Palestinian land.

"Today the rage of Al-Aqsa, the rage of our people and nation is exploding. Our mujahideen [fighters], today is your day to make this criminal understand that his time has ended," Deif said.

'Folk hero' from Khan Younis

Born in 1965 in the Khan Younis refugee camp, set up after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Mohammad Masri became known as Mohammed Deif after joining Hamas during the first Intifada, or Palestinian uprising, in 1987.

Deif has a degree in sciences from the Islamic University in Gaza, where he studied physics, chemistry and biology. He headed the university's entertainment committee and often performed on stage.

In 1989, during the height of the first Palestinian Intifada, Deif was arrested by Israel and released after 16 months in detention. He became the head of the Qassam Brigades in 2002 after Israel killed his predecessor and founding leader, Salah Shehadeh.

Several attempts on his life were made after he succeeded Shehadeh.

Deif means "visitor" or "guest" in Arabic, and some say that is because the Hamas military commander is always on the move with Israeli hunters on his trail.

According to reports, Deif lost an eye and sustained serious injuries in one leg in one of Israel's assassination attempts. His survival while running Hamas's armed wing turned him into a "folk hero" among Palestinians.

Rising in the Hamas ranks over 30 years, Deif is believed to have developed the group's network of tunnels and its bomb-making expertise.

In August 2014, Deif's wife and seven-month-old son were [killed in an Israeli air strike](#) that targeted a house in Gaza where the family was staying.

In May, the International Criminal Court's prosecutor said he had requested arrest warrants for Deif, Sinwar and another Hamas figure over the October 7 attack. Warrants were also issued for [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) and his Defence Minister Yoav Gallant over Israel's response that so far has killed at least 39,480 people in what rights groups describe as an ongoing genocide.

Model analysis

1. Mohammed Deif, the military commander of Hamas in Gaza, has escaped another Israeli attempt to kill him and is doing "fine", a senior official of the Palestinian group says.

1.1 the attack that targeted Deif killed at least 90 Palestinians and wounded 300 others.

1.2 HAMAS said Deif 'was doing fine' whereas Israel's Chief of the General Staff said HAMAS was 'concealing the results'

2. Deif was one of the founders of Hamas's military wing, the Qassam Brigades, in the 1990s and has led the force for more than 20 years.

2.1 On the morning of October 7, Hamas had issued a rare voice recording of Deif announcing the "Al-Aqsa Flood" operation, signalling the attack was payback for Israeli raids at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest site.

2.2 Deif said Hamas had repeatedly warned Israel to stop its crimes against Palestinians, to release the prisoners, and to halt its expropriation of Palestinian land.

2.2.1 "Today the rage of Al-Aqsa, the rage of our people and nation is exploding. Our mujahedeen [fighters], today is your day to make this criminal understand that his time has ended," Deif said.

3. Deif is the 'folk hero' of Palestine

3.1 Deif has a degree in sciences from the Islamic University in Gaza, where he studied physics, chemistry and biology. He headed the university's entertainment committee and often performed on stage.

3.2 Mohammed Deif joined Hamas during the first Intifada, or Palestinian uprising, in 1987.

3.3 He became the head of the Qassam Brigades in 2002 after Israel killed his predecessor and founding leader, Salah Shehadeh.

3.4 Rising up the Hamas ranks over 30 years, Deif is believed to have developed the group's network of tunnels and its bomb-making expertise.

3.5 According to reports, Deif lost an eye and sustained serious injuries in one leg in one of Israel's assassination attempts. In August 2014, Deif's wife and seven-month-old son were killed in an Israeli air strike that targeted a house in Gaza where the family was staying.

3.6 In May, the International Criminal Court's prosecutor had requested the warrant for Deif over the October 7th attack, and also issued warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu his Defence Minister Yoav Gallant over Israel's response that so far has killed at least 38,584 people in what rights groups describe as an ongoing genocide [91].

AJE's report presents a different image compared to the previous report about HAMAS from CNN. Firstly, the report said that the reason for October 7th attack was mainly because Israeli forces attacked Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest site first. Meanwhile, Deif's quotation seems less impulsive and violent than the one in CNN. His words, which also mentioned Al-Aqsa, represent more of the rage of Palestine, rather than himself. Furthermore, Al Jazeera provides a more neutral or even positive image of Deif— he used to study at a university and headed the university's entertainment committee and often performed on stage. It says that Deif is a 'folk hero' among Palestinians, which offers a totally different portrayal of him. The nickname presents a more heroic image, compared to 'the Cat with Nine Lives' that CNN mentioned. Besides, the media outlet tends to give details of Deif's life and portray him as a down-to-earth figure that readers can relate— a person who used to go to a university and participate in the entertainment committee. The report also mentioned that Deif joined HAMAS and became an expert in the group. However, the description of HAMAS is quite neutral. The report uses 'the group' consistently instead of 'terrorist group'. The endings of the two reports about HAMAS from CNN and AJE are quite interesting. They both mentioned that ICC issued warrants for Deif and other HAMAS figures for

the October 7th attack, but Al Jazeera added that the organisation also requested warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and his defence minister for genocide, which has not been mentioned in CNN [92].

The result is actually consistent with a previous study (see Aguiar, 2009). According to Aguiar, CNN and Al Jazeera had different ways of reporting the death of a HAMAS leader. While Al-Jazeera gave him a human approach, stressing that he was killed along with his wife and three kids and other five people, CNN briefly reports that a Hamas leader was killed along with nine people, never mentioning the death of his wife and children (ibid., p13).

Conclusion and Indications

The study finds that there are different patterns of reporting of the Israel-Gaza conflict in both media outlets. Firstly, as for the portrayal of the U.S. and Israel, CNN tends to present a neutral image of both countries. As Table 1.1 presents, CNN scarcely portrays the Israeli force as an aggressive party. There are only 2 headlines that directly point out that the military force has operated killing missions. Most news about Israel is under the topic of 'politics', which is mostly quoted from Netanyahu's speeches and policies towards the conflict. A similar reporting pattern is applied to news about the U.S.— the most news about the country is quotes from U.S. officials, such as Biden, Harris, the U.S. prosecutors, the CIA, etc. Furthermore, several headlines indicate that the U.S. is also a victim of the conflict, and it has been trying to fight terrorism. More details have been analysed through model analysis of the two pieces of news [93]. As shown previously, although the headline reported that the U.S. missile was found on the site of the Israeli military operation, the news downgraded the headline and upgraded other information, such as terrorists operating in UNRWA schools.

Thus, the Israeli army had every reason to bombard the area, while the U.S. missile fragments caused only minimal damage. Therefore, the study concludes that CNN has given a neutral, sometimes positive image for the U.S. and Israel, and it tends to legitimise the military operation of the Israeli force, no matter whether it was in the war zone or schools. However, AJE has completely different patterns of reporting regarding the two countries. Most news about Israel is under the topic of 'military operation (killing)'. Blatant accusations are shown in some headlines, such as 'Israeli attacks kill over a dozen people as war on Gaza enters 12th month' and 'Israeli attacks in Gaza kill 35 people as polio vaccinations continue', when there is only 1 in CNN sample headlines ('Israeli strike kills at least four Palestinians leading aid convoy in Gaza'.) News about the U.S. in AJE is not the major focus of the news agenda. There are only 7 headlines concerning the U.S.. However, according to the model analysis, AJE has accused the U.S. and the U.K [94]. of financially blocking humanitarian aid to Palestinians, and the outlet stresses that the two Western countries are 'key allies of Israel'⁴.

The two outlets have significant distinctive methods to portray HAMAS and its members. CNN defines the group as 'terrorists', and the description of the HAMAS leader, Mohammad Deif, is absolutely negative and dehumanised, which resulted in a definite image of a terrorist. However, AJE has a different image of Mohammad Deif [95]. The outlet emphasised the human side

of the figure and pointed out that the attack on October 7th was payback for Israeli raids at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, which CNN did not mention in the sample news. Besides, AJE has an obvious frame of portraying Mohammad Deif as positive, considering it reported that he is the 'folk hero' of Palestine. As for news about Palestine, the two outlets also present different news agendas. Based on Table 1.1 and 1.2, CNN has far less news about Palestine, and the range of topics is limited to 'sports', 'killed', and 'victims of conflicts', whereas AJE reported the country under topics of 'health', 'sports', 'killed', 'casualty/injury-involved', and 'protests'.

Based on the findings listed above, the study has answered the research questions— CNN and AJE have different news agendas and patterns of reporting regarding the Israel-Gaza conflict, and such patterns, as concluded above, align with the diplomatic relations between the reporting and reported countries. Although both CNN and AJE adhere to journalist professionalism and enjoy certain degrees of independent news agenda from the government, the results showed that their attitudes towards Israel, Palestine and HAMAS are very much in line with their host countries, which are the U.S. and Qatar in this case. Therefore, cross-cultural communication among countries should be considered against the backdrop of geopolitics, and in this case, news reports seem never neutral.

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