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Article Review: Media Representations of Hamas in Conflict Reporting

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Abstract

This paper examines the representation of Hamas in media reporting through a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, focusing on the terminological choices employed by various news outlets and their impact on public perception. By analyzing coverage from selected news outlets, the study reveals how terms like "militant group," "terrorist," and "Palestinian fighters" reflect underlying ideological and political beliefs. The findings highlight the significant role of media ownership and political context in shaping news narratives. Employing Martin and White's Appraisal System and Van Leeuwen's Social Actors Representation Theory, the study details how language and social actor representations influence public perceptions. The paper concludes that understanding these discursive strategies is essential for fostering a nuanced and informed public understanding of the conflict, emphasizing the need for balanced reporting practices to maintain journalistic integrity and mitigate the broader implications of biased media coverage.

1. Introduction

This study reviews the existing literature on media representation of Hamas within the context of conflict reporting and aims to analyse which aspects of Hamas are emphasized, by which media, and how this varies across different analyses. The Palestine-Israel conflict has always attracted the world's attention, allowing it to be extensively covered by the media in many countries. This is why research on the portrayal of this conflict and on the role of violence not only to achieve political goals, but to organize news has gained such significance. The representation of Hamas plays an important role in the way the conflict and Palestinian leadership are described. Hamas is a political actor and runs a large number of social and charity structures, but at the same time has participated in armed attacks, taken hostages, and killed innocent civilians. It is also elected to lead Palestine and run its ministries, and its extremism and "fundamentalism" are often used against those who elected it. The portrayals of Palestinians and Israelis on both "sides" of the conflict often reflect the views about Hamas. The significance of the U.S. and Israeli press in setting the political agenda is the reason why the representation of Hamas is crucial. Since its electoral victory at the beginning of this year, many feared that the rise of a party believed to be anti-Israel and anti-peace process would be reported as a national defeat of the Palestinian Authority as a whole and not as an expression of a vote against the corruption of its members. Even then, reviews of Hamas portrayals should consider them, as a picture of the representation can and indeed should be carried out in time, beyond monitoring the coverage of particular events and engaging content. For these reasons, monitoring and understanding media portrayals is studied at deeper levels of restructuring attitudes and opinions, serving as material for political discourse and foreign policy analysis, newsmakers' role performance, tasking, decision-making, and even the interpretation of economic assets of the damaged parties.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a discourse analysis that can involve various fields, sub-disciplines, and ideological approaches within the scope of language. Critical discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary branch of linguistics. In CDA, there will not be only one theory, namely language theory, but many fields that can be linked, such as social theory, political theory, etc. Critical discourse analysis also has a role in the social sphere. According to Van Dijk (2000), critical discourse analysis is not only a pattern used to dissect a problem in language, but critical discourse analysis is also a tool used to dissect a social ideology in a discourse. Critical discourse analysis can bring social context into discourse. According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), the main principle of CDA is addressing social problems, CDA does not only focus on language and language use but also on linguistic characteristics and social and cultural processes. CDA follows a critical approach to social issues to uncover non-existent power relations. The goal is that CDA will gain practical relevance in the social, political, cultural, and even economic context.

Following the previous explanation regarding CDA, CDA is a branch of interdisciplinary linguistics, in the study of CDA, all branches of knowledge can be analysed linguistically which includes power relations to ideologies. According to Wodak (1999), on CDA nowadays, the functions that can be taken are the notions of ideology, power, hierarchy and gender, and static sociological variables were all seen as relevant for an interpretation or explanation of the text. CDA can be applied to various departments, for example, on political, social and cultural aspects. CDA can give rise to a perspective for a person as a result of textual ideology, and textual ideology will create a dominant power and a representation in a discourse, for example, the discourse contained in a media. Van Dijk specifically turned to the development of media discourse, this theory was not purely patented by Van Dijk by using his own theory, but combining it with other theories to emerge an ideology in the mass media (Van Dijk 1995). One CDA theory that can reveal an ideology in the news is the theory proposed by Van Leeuwen, in this theory it is explained how readers can have their perspective on textual agents in the media as a result of the representations that appear in the analysis, in this case, ideology will appear in types of different news productions. This theory is known as Van Leeuwen's CDA model, namely Social Actor Representation, following the name of the theory, it examined the representation of social actors which will later lead to good or bad representations of textual media agents and raises the ideology of presenting news for certain actors which can give rise to their perspectives.

2. Historical and Contemporary Analyses

Recently, the Israeli army announced that it anticipates an outbreak of clashes between the Hamas organization in the Gaza Strip and the state of Israel will materialize in the short term. The Hamas organization, legally elected by a clear majority in a free democratic election in 2005, constitutes the first non-state organization considered a 'terror' organization by the Western world. The Hamas organization maintains both governmental responsibilities as the ruling government of the Gaza Strip and 'military' or 'terrorist wing' activities directly or indirectly. Today, Hamas presents a fundamental Islamic resistance movement more than the original movement of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. It is also an attempt to relate to its organizational principles, like the desire for a religious revolution from the grassroots, the translation of religious symbols to social-political practice, and the organization's control over a society's routine life.

Indeed, a growing research interest in the role of the media and its agenda-setting impact, as well as framing devices, has motivated the analysis of the presentation of non-state actors like Hamas. Media representations might thus not only affect wider public and policy discourses but also mold those and influence viewers' reception capacities. Importantly, one should not ignore, specifically in conflict-related issues, the basic ethical and professional perspectives that underpin the media's role as a 'fourth estate' which relays information in a fair and accurate way. Indeed, audiences tune in to media to get their 'facts right' and their 'facts fast.' The media can also frame events with reference to prior occurrences and audiences' inherent knowledge of the political, religious, and historical realms encompassing the conflict. These framing devices can influence audiences either implicitly and unconsciously or through more explicit mechanisms, and thus shape their perceptions and perspectives of ongoing events. Such framing can transmit hidden ideological values, influences, and interpretations of what is going on and thus inform audiences in a biased fashion.

Media coverage of the Palestine-Israel conflict has long been a subject of scholarly scrutiny due to its profound influence on public perception and policy. Studies consistently reveal an imbalance in reporting, with a tendency to favour Israeli narratives. For instance, Attar and King (2023) employed Media Framing Analysis (MFA) to investigate the "Intifada of the Knives" (IK) in prominent British, American, Canadian, and Australian newspapers. Their findings showed a dominant use of negative frames, portraying the IK primarily as a religious dispute. Israelis were depicted as victims, while Palestinians were often framed as terrorists or anti-Semitic. This representation aligns with broader Islamophobic narratives, reinforcing stereotypes that associate Muslim identities with violence and extremism. Furthermore, research by Jackson (2023) underscores the presence of bias in Western media coverage, particularly in influential outlets like The New York Times, where a persistent anti-Palestinian bias has been observed. Similarly, Rizova and Panayotova's (2021) study on international online

news media highlights variations in framing the conflict, with a predominant portrayal of the conflict as a "war" across different outlets. These findings underscore the significance of media representations in conflict reporting in shaping public perceptions and understanding of the conflict.

Furthermore, the conflation of terrorism with Islam has exacerbated Islamophobic sentiments globally, particularly in the post-9/11 era. This phenomenon is evident in media portrayals that frame Muslim actors within violent and extremist narratives. Azuma's (2024) study on Japanese media representation of the Israel-Hamas conflict highlighted that Japanese public, media, and government were exposed to a distorted view of Islam and Muslim countries. Azuma argued that news institutions play a significant role in shaping public understanding of the conflict, often perpetuating biases that obscure the complexities of the situation.

Historical analyses of media coverage during previous intifadas further underscore the persistence of bias. Jackson (2023) examined The New York Times' coverage of the First and Second Palestinian Intifadas, revealing a significant and persistent anti-Palestinian bias. The study employed natural language processing and a regression model to analyse over 33,000 articles, finding that the bias not only persisted but worsened over time. This bias is reflective of broader trends in Western media, where Palestinian perspectives are often marginalized. However, despite the dominant trend of biased reporting, some studies suggest variability in media coverage. Deprez and Raeymaeckers (2010) used content analysis and in-depth interviews with journalists to examine Flemish newspaper coverage of the First and Second Intifadas. They found a more balanced reporting approach, with some variables favouring the Israeli perspective and others reflecting Palestinian viewpoints. This variability highlights the potential for more equitable reporting practices and the importance of journalistic integrity.

3. Media Ownership and Geopolitical Affiliations

From another perspective, the influence of media ownership on news coverage is evident in studies examining the portrayal of the conflict by Arab satellite channels like Al Jazeera and Al-Arabiya. Taha's (2017) research reveals how political affiliations and ownership interests shape the representation of the conflict, with channels often aligning their narratives with the political agendas of their sponsors. This highlights the complex interplay between media ownership, political economy, and journalistic practices in shaping media representations of the conflict.

The existing body of literature highlights the significant role media plays in shaping public perceptions of the Palestine-Israel conflict. Studies consistently reveal a bias towards Israeli narratives, often portraying Palestinians, including groups like Hamas, through negative frames that align with broader Islamophobic stereotypes. This bias is particularly evident in influential Western media outlets and has been shown to persist and even worsen over time. Additionally, the political economy of media ownership, as seen in the differing narratives of Al Jazeera and Al-Arabiya, further complicates the landscape of media representation.

Several authors have attributed the media's inability to portray an accurate image of Hamas to economic or political influences. Political and financial pressure from domestic governments and external powers can influence the information presented to the public. Some of the systemic factors that lead to the distorted depiction of Hamas are inherent within the structure of the media. For instance, the ownership structure of a media outlet can affect its impartiality, as the competition of business interests may lead to the transmission of a specific or partisan line that serves the interests of the dominant factions. Political affiliation is also an influential factor in the news reporting process. The policies of successive governments that use the media for the execution of their policies can sometimes only be adequately presented through close adherence to government spokespersons (Roth et al.2020) (Van et al.2021) (Strömbäck et al.2020) (Van et al.2020) (McGregor & Molyneux, 2020) (Calvillo et al.2020) (Amazeen, 2020) (Tsfati et al.2020). A symbiotic relationship exists in some cases between media organizations and political groups; as a result, media coverage reflects the prevailing policies of the state. Journalists interested in particular stories may pursue such stories when they become of human interest, when the advertiser is interested, or when the proprietor wants a particular line articulated. For this reason, a media outlet may portray the news from a specific angle. Sometimes, the picture arising from media reports may be contradictory or insensitive. Therefore, to explore valid reasoning behind the media representation process, individuals must consider how the media is owned, managed, and funded. Debates surrounding the independence and accountability of certain media organizations concerning the government call into question the ethical nature of news transmission. Political interests and ownership diversity can affect development narratives, legitimacy, and portrayal of groups such as Hamas.

4. Terrorism vs. Resistance Narrative

Despite journalists' professional orientation to non-partisanship, reports about Hamas frequently diverge regarding the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the resistance narrative. In a terrorism narrative, the group's activities are regarded as criminal and absolutely illegitimate. In contrast, a resistance narrative sees Hamas's activities as analogous to the nationalist struggle that emerged during World War II against the occupations of fascist forces. Even terrorists frequently legitimize their own activities as good and justified. The Old Testament Jubilee,

recommended time and again by the prophets, was also a form of legitimate resistance against the property and dominance of power, expressly legitimizing terrorism as redistribution against unjust social systems. For this reason, "the term 'terrorist' is often an ideologically defined term." Justification or criminalization of Hamas influences the legitimacy of the group's struggle. Hamas can thus only legitimize its own strategy with reference to the illegitimate policies of the adversary. What is even more problematic is that Hamas's designation as a terrorist network obstructs, under international law, the legitimacy of the cause it defends. The policy discourse that follows mass media news, regarding lists of terrorist organizations or who is a legitimate interlocutor, follows the same guidelines. In general, mainstream media news contribute more to the legitimation of the conflict and the violence it produces. For example, an empirical examination on media reporting of Hamas from 2006 onwards discovered that "those media outlets tend to widely debate the means adopted by Hamas rather than the nationalist aim, especially after the cease-fire treaty has been broken. What was neglected are the reasons for Hamas's violent activities." This tendency to criminalize the actors instead of the grievances they fight for was repeated during the 2014 Oslo war. When Hamas is reported about, one finds either "a resistance narrative," "a terrorist narrative," or a combination of both. For example, government officials and statements almost always call Hamas a terrorist organization. In accordance with this, Hamas's Resistance Committees are labelled "terrorist groups within the Gaza Strip." In a news report published by a Hamas-run centre, the behaviour of the security forces in the West Bank that are subordinated to the Palestinian National Authority was labelled as "Israeli terrorism." In the news text, a distinction is made between state terrorism and resistance. This categorization is also found, albeit less often, in Western media. In a report from 2015, it emphasizes the crimes allegedly committed by Hamas. "The victims? More than 500 Israeli civilians," it says, "add to that the 32 Israeli soldiers killed in conflicts with Hamas. That's terrorism, pure and simple." In short, while European media coverage of Hamas tends to criminalize the group with reference to European-listed terrorist activities, Israeli and Hamas reporting does the same thing on the basis of competing political and historical narratives, i.e., a "terrorism narrative" and "resistance narrative." This categorization is also found, albeit less often, in Western media. In a report from 2015, it emphasizes the crimes allegedly committed by Hamas. "The victims? More than 500 Israeli civilians," it says, "add to that the 32 Israeli soldiers killed in conflicts with Hamas. That's terrorism, pure and simple."

5. Challenges and Biases in Reporting

Hamas poses a problem for the media to report on. It is a politically divisive group that, as a result, occupies a separate basket within the public's mind (Biggs, 2020; Moore, 2024; Schwabe, 2023). In conflict zones, the media has to satisfy oversimplified audience demands. They further need to convey in-depth, contentious, sensitive, and multifaceted aspects of the coverage on Hamas itself. Journalists are faced with practical difficulties in covering the various and shifting facets of Hamas in a conflict zone. In terms of salience, little can beat an exploding suicide bomber. Only the reporting of Hamas and suicide bombings together can establish the difference between war and peace, life and death. Lastly, adequate funding typically tends to come with a mandatory market rationale—journalists are rewarded for providing their outputs with the hype and novelty that much of the commercialized media develop a penchant for.

Not only can the viewpoint that journalists report on become biased, but also the information they collect in the field due to biased restrictions. Political affiliations, media ownership, and funding sources influence media narratives. The objectivity of journalists is also questioned when reporting on contentious group structures. In reporting on a long-standing conflict, they experience a political pressure that is impossible to ignore. Ethical problems are nothing new due to the media coverage of Hamas, one of which refers to terrorism coverage. Although the anti-Semitic bias traditionally has to do with the Jewish constituency, it is likely to influence the media's approach towards Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian radical factions. The media similarly might reflect a form of bias when they do not want to be accused of being pro-Semitic or Zionist.

Various forms of bias influence the media coverage of Hamas. Confirmation bias can lead individuals who have made up their minds to actively seek out information that confirms their assumptions—so-called seeking satisfaction. They simultaneously reject information that refutes or alters their established views. Impressions that come to dominate the minds of the public and policy would include, but are not limited to, the belief that the targeting of civilians is intrinsic to Hamas' ideological core. The selective perception of journalists can likewise be coloured by framing bias. The reported terrorist acts are understood and told according to internally or externally decided conventions, or frames. Typically, the judgments are made according to what has been included and what has been excluded from the depiction of a terrorist act (Amer, 2023; Austin, 2024; Brooks, 2022; Christensson, 2024; Kavrakis, 2023; Stenersen, 2020).

When journalists create a distorted picture of reality, eventual public reasoning becomes detached from the actors and factors that shape Hamas' views and options. Conflict events demand some simplification in terms of news narratives. If media were to avoid simplification, they would soothe their readers with the belief that much of the reality of the conflict is straightforward. Furthermore, without an enemy, media narratives on violent

protests do not make sense. Being devoid of a dramatis personae, they would be just clashes. Therefore, bias towards simplification is woven into the very act of creating narratives of violent events. Despite these multiple selection mechanisms of news making, it is imperative for journalists to make reality fit the existing news frames.

6. Theoretical Framework and Application

Media Representations, one of the most crucial topics and widely blamed areas of media research, is addressed within a number of diverse theoretical areas in the field of communication. Talking about representations binds theories like media agenda-setting or the evidence resting on media framing, which highlight the importance of media in people's participation and their functions in constructing messages and images. Media framing theory proposes a link between communication and audience reactions by integrating how information is structured within a text, while in media agenda-setting, what is considered is how some topics gain importance among the audience, partly because of the way the media choose to treat them. Theories such as these provide a useful point of departure in attempting to understand the existence and influence of these media representations. There is evidence to propose that the way in which the media frames events or places them on the news agenda is essential in educating and influencing public reaction towards the news.

Media intermediaries, through their news and political coverage, play a number of crucial functions in political communication and civic education. Arguably, the media's most important function is the frame-setting role it plays in defining and shaping public debate. At the same time, specific agenda-setting studies, genre studies, and impression management research highlighted the role of TV news producers in emphasizing, selecting, or even not presenting news found as a mirror reflection of the standards, ideas, and beliefs of the society where they live. Professional influences may be intrinsically linked to these global news values, although these may themselves be conditioned by wider orders of social discourses, such as the constructions of nations and the facts of social identity.

6.1 Media Framing Theory

The concept of framing is a significant and widely used theoretical approach that underpins systematic research of politics, social movements, and media culture. The idea of framing images is borrowed from the world of paintings; different framings and settings can highlight a different view of the scene before the observer's eyes. Applying this view to media reports, the acts of framing and reframing can shift understanding of any particular event. The process of media framing highlights certain aspects of reality and supports their salience, while possibly excluding other aspects. Language functions as a sign of worldviews and ideologies, contributing to the construction and entitlement of frames. Besides language, the imagery used and the structure of the narrative will also underpin the ideological and interpretative sides of frames. The frames carried out by journalists or by a participant inside the newsroom largely determine how events are processed, conveyed, and interpreted by news consumers. Frames affect the way readers, viewers, or listeners understand and interpret news and think about the facts presented. By delimiting a problem's characterization by key defining elements, they signal what type of response or possible solutions are legitimate for these key audiences. A conquering Hamas, splintered Hamas, or modest/restrained Hamas—each of these variations supports a different belief about the group and a different emotion. These frames direct the reader of newspapers, viewers of TV news, or listeners of radio news. Different aspects are mediated to give a prioritized understanding in the process.

An audience that is shaped by news frames will reproduce a cognitive format influenced by the discursive product of these frames. But framing is not elastic enough only to tackle cognitive structures; it also operates on emotions and beliefs. Thus, the use of words and images manipulating these cognitive-emotional links could produce a counterproductive effect, mitigating public empathy and involving the public in supporting the involvement of actors in some course of political action. This approach draws attention to the power of visual frames in constituting readers' minds. Such examples lend the best credence for the attention given to the topic of media framing, a topic distinguished by the examination of how language, visuals, and sound can suggest their version of social reality and a possible best-taken story. For many critics, the referential transparency of media, appealing to objective indication and proven facts, would have been replaced by fictional narratives full of over-interpreted assumptions. This theorizing goes hand in hand with an endogenous critique that fosters the reflexivity of media spectators. If a media frame has been delineated according to values, social norms, and situation, it is because the media audience may be willing to reflect upon these propositions.

6.2 Appraisal system

The use of appraisal system has been commonly employed in various studies related to news discourse. In a study titled "Attitude realization in news reports: An interpretation through an appraisal analysis," Asad et al. (2021) analysed the attitude stances presented in news reports from two Pakistani online newspapers, namely 'Dawn' and 'The News'. The study focused on two news reports regarding Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech at the 74th

United Nations session. The results demonstrate that both newspapers indirectly express attitudes by providing evaluative grounds, which are then explicitly explained in quoted text. Imran Khan is depicted as the primary social actor emphasizing Pakistan's current issues such as the Kashmir conflict between Pakistan and India, climate change, and the elimination of Islamophobia. The study contributes significantly to the literature by presenting a comparative analysis of attitude realization in Pakistani online alternative and mainstream newspapers. It highlights the role of language and ideology in news reporting and emphasizes the interplay between media and politics.

Puspita, D. & Pranoto, B. E. (2021) explores how Japanese newspapers portray disaster events, focusing on attitude features such as judgement, appreciation, and affect. The study reveals that Japanese newspapers tend to emphasize positive lexical strategies when reporting disasters, aligning with Japan's disaster management policy of 'Build Back Better'. Instead of portraying victims as helpless, newspapers highlight efforts of rehabilitation and mitigation, fostering optimism in their narrative. This research demonstrates the applicability and significance of the appraisal theory in analyzing how disaster news is framed and narrated in Japanese newspapers, with a suggestion for future researchers to consider collecting a larger corpus of disaster news data for comprehensive analysis.

Another study by Asad et al. (2021), explores on how news writers maintain reader engagement by conveying attitudes in news reports. The study focuses on the attitudinal stances of two Pakistani online newspapers, 'Dawn' and 'The News', regarding Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech at the 74th United Nations' session. Through Appraisal Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis, the newspapers' ideological stances and portrayal of Imran Khan as the 'Appraiser' are examined. The analysis reveals similarities and differences in the newspapers' attitudinal representations, highlighting the importance of the Kashmir conflict, climate change, and Islamophobia. The study emphasizes the newspapers' use of rhetorical markers and external resources to convey their viewpoints effectively.

On the other hand, Van Leeuwen's Social Actors Representation theory has been used previously in news discourse reporting to discover how actors were represented in the media. A study conducted by Hidayatus and Degaf (2020) examining the social actors' representation of the presidential election in Jakarta post has discovered that inclusion strategy (passivation) was used in order to marginalize agents in the text. It is discovered that the strategy was used as to get more sympathy from the community.

A comparative study between Jakarta Post and New York Times has been conducted by Evayani and Rido (2019). The study examined the social actors' representation of sex violence issues in both highly circulated newspapers in both countries. The study revealed that both media represent more victims as passive agents while perpetrators are described as active agents who actively take the situation to the victim by carrying out their sexual activities. The strategy will influence and direct sympathy to the victims while making less attention to the perpetrator of the sexual act. In this case, the representation of the social actors greatly influences the reader's establishment of ideology as well as stance towards the issue.

Khaldi (2022) conducted a study on Putin's decision to invade Ukraine from the viewpoint of critical discourse analysis. The findings revealed that Putin's discourse, spanning from 1999 to 2022, utilized a strategy to construct an "enemy" relationship between Russians and liberal Western values, as well as its advocates, including the current Ukrainian government. Putin argues that Western values are not suitable for Russians due to the lack of liberal values in Russia. Putin's strategy is based on convincing the Russian people that a powerful leader who represents Russian values and the Russian people is the best form of governance, which he claims is currently the case.

Another study conducted by Maenpaa (2022) analysed the report of Ukrainian refugees who fled the Russian invasion from a critical discourse perspective. The study discovered that, from the point of view of the critical discourse analysis, Ukrainian evacuees prioritize securitization as a means of safety and survival. Conversely, securitization is not present in Ukraine, which results in European countries providing assistance to refugees by providing security, food, medicine, clothing, and ensuring their safety.

The existing literature demonstrates the extensive application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in exploring how media discourse shapes public perception through various discursive strategies. Studies using Martin and White's Appraisal System (2005) have shown how language is employed to convey attitudes, emotions, and stances in news reporting, highlighting the role of evaluative language in framing narratives and influencing audience interpretations. Concurrently, Van Leeuwen's Social Actors Representation Theory (2008) provides a robust framework for analysing how individuals and groups are depicted within media texts, revealing patterns of inclusion, exclusion, and marginalization that shape ideological and social perceptions.

7. Future Directions for Research

As we move towards the future, it seems media will only provide new potentialities whereby texts can be constructed and new ways people construct the meaning of Hamas. One particular point of interest will be the continuation and development of how social media informs online conflict reporting. The dissemination and

consumption of images via this platform will likely form new parts of the narrative trajectory. Moreover, future research should engage in cross-cultural studies, particularly as the profound effect of nationalism or patriotism on reporting is rarely discussed in British journalism. Insights from this might go some way to help redress this. The normative points developed could see the theory of patriotism and conflict reporting produce likely discussion points. It would be interesting and timely to engage in the same debate from a media, ethics, and journalism standpoint, particularly rethinking the relationship between media theory and complex mapping approaches, especially those more favoured by early ethnography of media audiences. We suggest interdisciplinarity and cultural diversity in order to open up new routes to identifying and expanding our understanding of uncritical approaches in media studies.

Equally important is the necessity to pair media analysis with other forms of understanding, even subconsciously. Drawing on narrative theory and subliminal images, which are interpreted subconsciously, for example, can provide a more nuanced understanding of the influence of media culture on mediated reporting and its reception. Finally, our article begins to open up a three-point future research agenda. The first will seek to answer whether the continuing development of mass media and accompanying new narrative forms have an unusual and distinct impact upon how we respond to conflict. The second will endeavour to complete a global picture on the media representation of conflict and expand it to other areas of tension. The final future research question will deal with ongoing work that attempts to understand the growing intersection between political pressure and commercial considerations. The call for empirical studies and a greater level of detail and complexity in the reporting of how narratives are constructed and consumed is the cornerstone of the future media and conflict reporting agenda.

8. Emerging Technologies and Media Platforms

The landscape of war journalism and journalism as a whole has undergone significant transformation in the past decade, driven predominantly, though not solely, by advancements in technology that have redefined both media frameworks and public discourse. It is crucial to evaluate both the benefits and challenges associated with this evolution in communication. The proliferation of digital platforms has facilitated a wider array of voices to articulate perspectives on war and conflict, which may, at times, lead to misinformation. While digital media theoretically provides vast opportunities for enhancing the diversity and breadth of idea exchange across various cultures and regions, it also introduces significant hurdles for conflict reporting due to the unregulated nature of its content. Primarily, the digital realm, especially social media, is saturated with information of ambiguous authenticity; this content is often shared anonymously, pseudo-anonymously, or under fictitious identities. Lacking the editorial oversight typically found in traditional war reporting environments, digital channels possess an almost limitless capacity to spread intentional disinformation, urban myths, and propaganda, thus complicating the public's comprehension of conflict situations. The swift dissemination of information regarding the events, motivations, and objectives inherent in conflict contexts encourages immediate public evaluation rather than constructive engagement. This observation is not merely theoretical; it is substantiated by an empirical analysis indicating a shift in media value systems—transitioning from a focus on published content to one centred on visibility, a development made feasible through algorithmic implementations that favour specific types of content while marginalizing others. Although these new dynamics are frequently praised for enhancing individual participation in news creation processes, they have also faced valid criticism for the substandard information they often propagate. Engaging with contemporary shifts in media and communication necessitates a historical perspective to discern the factors that have contributed to the current state of affairs. A detailed discussion on social media's technical characteristics, tools, and features is essential to understand how these communication technologies evolve, disrupt traditional paradigms, and are reintegrated into a broader research context. Strategies pertaining to community media, indigenous media, and social media activism are outlined in this sub-section to highlight significant dialogues that have recently gained traction. In light of extensive coverage in various analytical publications, the discourse surrounding global media issues has notably expanded, as detailed in the sections that follow.

9. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of how different terminologies employed by news outlets to describe Hamas—such as "militant group," "terrorist," and "Palestinian fighters"—significantly shape public perception. The choice of terminology plays a crucial role in framing Hamas within the context of terrorism and extremism, particularly when referred to as a "terrorist" organization. This aligns with dominant Western narratives, thereby contributing to the marginalization and demonization of Hamas. In contrast, Al Jazeera's use of "Palestinian fighters" frames Hamas in a more sympathetic or legitimizing light, indicative of a different geopolitical stance. The power dynamics inherent in media portrayal are also noteworthy. Media outlets hold significant sway over public opinion by controlling the flow of information and the manner in which it is presented. When large, influential media corporations prioritize certain narratives, they contribute to the creation of

dominant discourses that overshadow alternative perspectives. In this context, the portrayal of Hamas is not just about representation; it is about the construction of a narrative that serves the interests of those in power. By framing Hamas primarily as a terrorist organization, Western media outlets can help legitimize military interventions and security policies that align with the interests of Western governments. On the other hand, media sympathetic to the Palestinian cause might frame Hamas's actions as part of a legitimate struggle, thus encouraging solidarity and support for Palestinian rights.

The findings underscore the substantial influence of media ownership and geopolitical affiliations in shaping news narratives. Western media outlets, influenced by their governments' classification of Hamas as a terrorist organization, tend to adopt more negative and charged terminologies. Conversely, outlets like Al Jazeera, operating within a different geopolitical context, use terminology that reflects a more nuanced or alternative perspective on Hamas and the Palestinian struggle. The analysis also underscores the importance of critical media literacy among the public. Consumers of news must recognize that media representations are not neutral; they are influenced by the socio-political environment, ownership, audience, and the ideological leanings of journalists and editors. As such, individuals should approach media reports critically, questioning the choice of language, sources, and framing. By doing so, they can develop a more balanced understanding of complex geopolitical conflicts and resist the oversimplified narratives that media outlets often promote.

Employing Martin and White's Appraisal System and Van Leeuwen's Social Actors Representation Theory, the studies offer detailed analysis of how language and social actor representations influence public perceptions. These frameworks reveal the evaluative language used to convey attitudes and the strategies employed to position Hamas within media discourse, highlighting the complexity and power dynamics inherent in media representations. Understanding the discursive strategies used in media representations of Hamas is essential for fostering a more nuanced and informed public understanding of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Recognizing the influence of media ownership, geopolitical context, and historical biases can aid in developing more balanced and equitable reporting practices. By being aware of the ideological underpinnings that shape these narratives, individuals and institutions can work towards a more informed and balanced discourse on the Israel-Palestine conflict, one that considers all perspectives and complexities. This is crucial not only for maintaining journalistic integrity but also for mitigating the broader political and social implications of biased media coverage.

10. Implications for Journalism and Media Ethics

Journalism's crucial function in democratic societies concerns the ethical consideration of what to report on and how. The findings suggest that popular Western news media often neglect their ethical duties of providing reliable knowledge to the public when they report on the militant group and the area of conflict in which it is politically active. Important criteria for ethical journalism would be to avoid biased coverage and advance inclusive representation of news subjects. The consistent findings from various countries and periods put the critical analysis of news production onto the research agenda. The insights provide valuable guidelines for news practitioners in their everyday journalistic work and the organizational routines and policies with which media houses and news agencies operate.

First of all, serious interaction with journalistic ethics is advisable in current societal discussions about media coverage in conflicts. Neither news production nor journalists are equally morally responsible for culturally, politically, economically, and intellectually produced bias and the potential harm in reflecting already biased social reality. Journalistic training and organizational routines and policies that address content bias in a perceived ethical vacuum increase the ethical risk in conflicts. Secondly, more serious reflection on the normative framework of objectivity and equality should be promoted by media organizations, journalists, and journalism associations to counter journalistic practices that treat journalism as objectivity. The findings confirm the urgency for a continuous reflection on how accurate and inclusive reporting criteria can be implemented into everyday journalistic work in a challenging field, such as news coverage in war zones and communication with violent actors. Instead of encouraging an approach to news coverage as an art, media production organizations should present "conflict-sensitive journalism" as a necessity for their own news reporting practice.

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Conflict of Interest

We declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of the paper.

Author Contribution

We confirm the contribution to the paper as follows: ***study conception and design:*** *Basar, A and Mohd Noor, SNF;* ***data collection:*** *Basar, A;* ***analysis and interpretation of results:*** *Basar, A and Mohd Noor, SNF;* ***draft manuscript preparation:*** *Basar, A and Mohd Noor, SNF. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.*

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