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Framing and Ideology in Global News Coverage of Armed Conflicts: CNN and BBC Reporting on Ukraine and Gaza

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Abstract

This research investigates the media coverage by the BBC and CNN of the escalation of violence in Ukraine and Gaza to reveal how ideologies influence media discourse across distinct geopolitical contexts. While existing literature often examines these conflicts in isolation, this study addresses the gap regarding the asymmetrical framing of global crises by providing a comparative, qualitative analysis that demonstrates how Fairclough's critical discourse framework reveals an ideological shift from humanized 'defence' in Ukraine to distanced 'attack' in Gaza. This study investigated how ideology influences media discourse via qualitative research and critical discourse analysis. Utilizing Fairclough's approach (2001) three-dimensional approach in the analysis process to reveal how the use of language in the media texts analysed manipulates power and ideology. The analysis of four representative articles identifies how linguistic choices manipulate power to frame social actors and create distance

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between conflicting sides. The results uncover significant disparities in reporting, identifying systemic bias in news discourse that aligns with broader ideological interests rather than universal journalistic objectivity, biasness was identified in the news discourse in terms of attack and defence.

Keywords: CDA, wars, conflicts, Ukraine, Gaza

التأطير والأيديولوجيا في التغطية الإخبارية العالمية للنزاعات المسلحة: تقارير شبكتي CNN و BBC حول أوكرانيا وغزة

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المستخلص

يتقصى هذا البحث التغطية الإعلامية لهيئة الإذاعة البريطانية (BBC) وشبكة (CNN) لتصادع العنف في أوكرانيا وغزة؛ للكشف عن كيفية تأثير الأيديولوجيات على الخطاب الإعلامي عبر سياقات جيوسياسية متباينة. وبينما تميل الدراسات الحالية إلى فحص هذه الصراعات بشكل منعزل، تأتي هذه الدراسة لتعالج الفجوة البحثية المتعلقة بالتأطير غير المتكافئ للآزمات العالمية، عبر تقديم تحليل نوعي مقارنة يوضح كيف يكشف إطار تحليل الخطاب النقدي لـ "فيركلوف" عن تحول أيديولوجي؛ من مفهوم "الدفاع" في أوكرانيا إلى "الهجوم" في غزة. بحثت الدراسة في كيفية تأثير الأيديولوجيا على الخطاب الإعلامي من خلال المنهج النوعي وتحليل الخطاب النقدي، مستخدمةً نظرية ثلاثي الأبعاد لـ "نورمان فيركلوف" (2001) في عملية التحليل للكشف عن كيفية تلاعب اللغة في النصوص الإعلامية المحللة بموازين القوة والأيديولوجيا. وقد حدد تحليل أربع مقالات تمثيلية كيف تعتمد الخيارات اللغوية إلى توظيف القوة لتأطير الفاعلين الاجتماعيين وخلق مسافة فاصلة بين أطراف النزاع. كما كشفت النتائج عن تفاوتات جوهرية في التقارير، وحددت انحيازاً جلياً في الخطاب الإخباري يتماشى مع المصالح الأيديولوجية الأوسع بدلاً من الموضوعية الصحفية العالمية؛ حيث تم رصد الانحياز في الخطاب الإخباري تحديداً من حيث مفاهيم "الهجوم" و"الدفاع".

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA)، الحروب، النزاعات، أوكرانيا، غزة

1. Introduction

Language and society are inseparable. According to Fowler (1979), linguistic meanings and ideology are indivisible, and they both depend on social structure. Therefore, linguistic analysis is a powerful tool for the study of ideological processes, which mediate the relationship of power and control (Fowler, 1979, p.188). Matheson (2005), however, argues that the violence of war is not what happens after negotiation ends, but rather is a direct result of language. Organized violence depends on language to organize it, from persuading to planning and executing. Language is used in wars to justify human actions through “ideology” which is the set of ideas involved in the ordaining of experience and making sense of the conflict (Fowler, 1979). Analysing language use provides an image of the ideological struggle over meaning in and between individual texts. At the same time analysing ideology indicates the struggle of its dominance in discourse.

The wars and conflicts in Ukraine and Palestine have attracted the interest of media around the world, because of the escalation of violence in these countries. The media has a considerable effect on public opinion and serves as a crucial means of communication between decision-makers and the general public (Al-qaysi & Singh, 2022). Moreover, it is clear that Western media show bias when reporting wars, conflicts and violence in Middle East and Muslim countries (Al-qaysi & Singh, 2024). CNN, an American cable news network, and BBC, a British cable news network, are chosen because of their extensive reporting on international news as well as their highest viewership ratings around the world. The selection of these two media outlets is also due to their pivotal roles as global agenda setters. Given their esteemed international reputation and their ability to vie with leading global news agencies, the narratives produced by BBC and CNN serve as salient benchmarks for global media discourse (Fisher, 2023). Understanding how media use language to construct news discourse to convey particular viewpoints and ideologies, as well as how language may be used to manipulate and influence the audience’s feelings, thoughts, and actions is critical (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1988). Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the Western media coverage of these wars and conflicts, and to identify the media ideologies involved in reporting these two cases.

That is, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is employed as a methodological approach to analyse the content of media articles to examine how language gains power through the use of media apparatuses makes of it (Bazzi, 2009, p. 19). CDA as referred by Wodak (2009) critically investigates social inequality, as it is expressed and legitimized by language use.

Within the paradigm of CDA, a number of significant studies have addressed the Russian-Ukrainian war (Mohammed & Razqallah, 2023; Ebim, 2022; Ebim, Nta & Tasen, 2022; Mohammed, 2023; Selvarjah & Fiorito 2023; Fisher, 2023; Obaidullah & Shaikh, 2024) and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts (Alkaabi, 2021; Amer, 2022; Abo Haashish, Ismail & AbuSaada, 2023; Alashqar, 2024; AR. Fikri, 2024) mostly with a focus on analysing Arab or Western media focus and representation. These studies have focused on each war or conflict separately, and no one has discussed the two actions in one media and compared the representations of these wars together. That is, this study aims to investigate the representation of these wars (as these wars refer to different countries, cultures and religions) in Western media to uncover the ideologies involved in reporting these two wars. The research aimed to identify relationships between language use in the media and ideology. The significance of this research is lies in the combination of media and conflict. This combination provides fertile ground for analysing the ideological function of language.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter, CDA) is an interdisciplinary field of discourse analysis that deals with different theories, methodologies as well as different research issues (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). CDA is a critical discourse study that initially focuses on how text and speech in social and political communication enact, perpetuate, and counteract social processes such as power abuse, domination, and inequality (van Dijk, 2001). According to al-Utbi (2019, p. 24), CDA is multidisciplinary in origin. Its roots are there in critical linguistics as well as in sociolinguistics, text linguistics, and applied linguistics. CDA is based on the idea that language is not neutral, rather reflects and shapes the worldviews of different groups of people (Vaugh et al., 2016). CDA primary aim is to examine how language is used to establish and reinforce social power relations and the significance of language in the production, maintenance, and change of

social relations (Fairclough, 1989). Thus, analysing the language to uncover the ideologies and values that are embedded in discourse (Weiss & Wodak, 2003; Dijk, 1998), and also shows how discourse is influenced by the historical, cultural, political, and social context in which it occurs (Wodak, 2001). In sum, CDA, as it seen in some points, it is rapidly developing area of language study, and it regards discourse as a form of social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

2.2 Ideology

Ideology can be defined as the set of ideas that constitute the goals and interests of a certain group in a society, ideologies can also be described as belief systems shared by social groups (Van Dijk, 1998). Ideologies are significant since they construct the core identity, self-image, actions, aims, values and norms of a social group (Van Dijk, 2006). Ideologies also determine the social groups' relations to other social groups. Thus, a deeper understanding of the ideology of a social group is crucial, as it may influence what is accepted as true or false. Ideologies have the epistemological sense and they form the basis of specific arguments or explanations or even influence specific understanding of the world in general (van Dijk, 1998). In order to understand the theory of ideology, Van Dijk (1998) states that one needs to understand the complex relationships between cognition, society and discourse. Ideologies, he argues, are based on ideas, and ideas can be considered psychological, social or political, ideology is therefore part of social structure and social cognition.

2.3 Political Ideologies

Ideology in discourse can serve various purposes, including shaping public opinion, legitimizing certain actions or policies, and mobilizing support for specific agendas. It provides a framework through which individuals and groups interpret events, issues, and societal norms (Eagleton, 2007). By appealing to shared beliefs and values, ideology can be employed to persuade, manipulate, or mobilize audiences, often by framing arguments in ways that align with a particular ideological perspective. Additionally, ideology can influence the language, symbols, and rhetoric used in communication, further reinforcing its impact on discourse (van Dijk, 1998). Politicians in the world construct the discourse base on their political agenda and ideologies that have certain ethical ideals, principles and doctrines (Baidoun, 2014). Politicians share common ideologies in order to explain how society and politics serve the interest of the party and maintain

its power (Mills, 1997). As mentioned earlier, an ideology is a collection of ideas. Political ideologies can contain economic systems such as the case of socialism or they can identify a position on the political spectrum as in the case of nationalism. Finally, some political ideologies can be based on a combination of religion and politics.

2.4 Media and Ideology:

In many instances, ideologies are understood, in a negative way, as systems of dominant ideas of the elite class in the society (Eyerman, 1981). The negative side of ideology is salient in Marx's term "false consciousness", which means the failure of the society to see things as they really are. Ideologies are described as hegemonic ideas and beliefs that are used by the dominant groups of the society to persuade the dominated groups of their position and power in the society (Eyerman, 1981). Bazzi (2009) adds that people can develop their own belief systems, but at the same time one cannot deny that individuals are, in many ways, victims of their own interpellation systems. Media can be a strong example, where people are daily exposed to massive inculcation of concepts (e.g. terrorism, martyrdom, resistance, freedom), which can influence the individual's beliefs and perceptions of a particular conflict (Bazzi, 2009).

Media discourse in times of conflict can be politically sensitive and composed by a particular interpellation system and ideological acknowledgment between the dominant and the dominated groups. This suggests that the context of media can be easily manipulated by ideological layers of representations; context and identity. And can easily produce ideological positions of in groups and out groups, but still can be seen rightful in the news (Bazzi, 2009). In most cases, media institutions in times of conflict tend to focus on the positioning of subjects by their own ideological state apparatus, where the media depending on its authority perform a particular interpellation system in the target situation. For example, the media tends to sympathize with the victims of its in groups while it dehumanizes the victims of the out groups – worthy versus unworthy victims (Bazzi, 2009). As a summary, Matheson (2005) assumes that the truth and knowledge around the world is partly constructed by each media member and institution. For that reason, media institutions should be recognized as members of society with subjective perceptions, and their views of events should be perceived as angles of reality rather than the absolute truth.

3. Methodology

Creswell (2017) emphasizes that a study approach is selected based on the research problem, its objectives, and questions. Thus, study is a qualitative approach. Qualitative is the basic method that deals with description of events, it is regarded as a subjective analysis as it is influenced by the writer's or speaker's feelings. This method is useful in CDA studies because it can reveal the hidden ideologies and power relation in discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Moreover, the present study is employing purposive sampling; the data will be gathered by the researcher from the most famous western media (BBC & CNN). These media are significant on a global scale, and they are the most popular, trustworthy, and frequently viewed by people all over the world (Hanan, 2017). The study sample consisted of (4) news discourse; (2) for each one. These news discourses were collected from the online version published on the media channels' official websites of the BBC and CNN. Then, they were kept as soft copies using CD in order to facilitate the process of analysis through categorizing them to the study objectives. The researcher used sources from a variety of channels to ensure a comprehensive analysis of Western media discourse on the conflicts in Gaza, and war of Ukraine. Table 3.1 below shows the details of selected news discourse.

Table 3.1 Selected news discourse from CNN &BBC

No	Channel	Case	Link	Date of retrieval
1	CNN	Ukraine	https://edition.cnn.com/2022/02/12/europe/russia-ukraine-invasion-paths-map-cmd-intl	2011212025
2	BBC	Ukraine	https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60503037	1811212025
3	CNN	Gaza	https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/09/middleeast/hamas-attack-strategy-israel-mime-intl	2211212025
4	BBC	Gaza	https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67041679	2411212025

Fairclough (2001) three-dimensional approach as a model of analysis, this study passed through three stages of analysis; text analysis, discursive practice and social practice. Text analysis (description) according to Fairclough (2001) is referring to the writer's use of language (linguistic features). While discursive practice (interpretation) entails analyzing the text in conjunction with its context. The final stage is social practice (explanation). Analysis of the texts in this level is focusing on two aspects; ideologies and social power embedded within them.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Textual Analysis (Description Level)

4.1.1 Reporting Ukraine War

4.1.1.1 CNN: “Russia has surrounded Ukraine on three sides. Here’s where an invasion could be launched.”

CNN in this report has adopted a military-framing strategy through the overwhelming use of spatial terminology (surrounded on three sides, military build-up, and potential invasion, launched). The lexical choices analysis emphasizes a tactical mapping of conflict. CNN is positioning Russia as the active agent and Ukraine as the vulnerable. The lexis is putting Russia as the clear aggressor while Ukraine as the passive, encircled victim. Frequent references to satellite images, troop numbers, and military hardware contribute to a visual and quantitative credibility. The tone is urgent, and modal verbs such as (could, might) are used to indicate possibility, yet implicitly foregrounding the inevitability of escalation. That is, a sense of imminent threat and a one-sided military action is appeared through the language of the CNN report.

Syntactically, grammatical structure in the term of using active and passive voice is clearly that CNN often place Russia in the subject position. Examples of active verbs are in the headline of the CNN report (Russia has amassed..., Russia could strike...) which explicitly reinforces an actor- action dynamic that attributes agency and responsibility. In contrast to this, Ukraine is appearing as recipient of the action, highlighting asymmetry. That clarify main fact which is CNN employed these grammatical structures and choices to show to the world that Russia is the responsible actor for these escalating tensions. The results are in line with Ebim & Okune’s (2022) study, they stated that lexical choice, syntax, topic turning, strategic feature and many other properties of different styles of writing are controlled by the context in which the text or event takes place.

Moreover, spatial and ballistic metaphors were employed in the article’s headline to describe a geopolitical situation. This fact reduces a complex international relations issue to a simple military attack, as well as to a physical assault or the launch of a projectile.

4.1.1.2 BBC: “Ukraine conflict: Russian forces attack from three sides”

It seems that BBC shares a similar to CNN headline structure of Ukraine’s report; through employing directional framing (from three sides) to spatially represent the invasion. The headline’s phrase is provides a tactical and military style description that distance the report reader from human impact of the violence. Lexically, the report used lexis such as (conflict, Russian forces, and attack) to emphasize aggression. Although the word "conflict" may seem more neutral than "invasion", the immediate attribution of the "attack" to "Russian forces" leaves no ambiguity about who is to blame. Ukraine as contrast to Russia in this report is described differently through using humanizing terms like (civil feeling, families separated) to evoke empathy.

The grammatical structure of the BBC report (Russia forces attack...) seems as like as CNN reports. Again, it makes Russia as an active, responsible agents and passive voice for Ukraine suffering. This maintains a strong moral polarity between aggressor and victim. These results are same with Mohammed’s study (2023). She found that BBC utilized numerous syntactic structures like activation and passivation, the activation has the highest frequency. Through employing this kind of language and structure choices, BBC integrates diplomatic voices from NATO and Western leaders. It is reinforcing a geopolitical framing that aligns with a Euro-Atlantic world view. In term of tenses, the use of present tense (attack) can be loaded politically. It avoids more definite terms like (war) or (invasion) that might have different legal and political implications. In sum, BBC categorizes the situation in Ukraine in this report as receptive of attack and violence.

That is, both CNN and BBC in their reports about the war in Ukraine are providing examples of framing the event as military action with a distinct aggression and victims

4.1.2 Reporting Gaza Conflict

4.1.2.1 CNN: “What is Hamas and why is it attacking Israel now?”

Framing is appeared clearly in this article, it is definitional and explanatory, resembling a background article. CNN uses the word (attacking) in its report’s title to show a neutral description of a violence act. Additionally, CNN connected violence with accurate key choice

(Hamas) in the same title to refer the responsible of the violence and who is starting it in the area. It can be assumed that the use of this word by CNN is to reduce the entire Palestinian struggle to a single militant group, thereby delegitimizing broader Palestinian grievances. Thus, CNN presupposes Hamas's aggression (attacking Israel now), also it prompts a cause-effect narrative. Lexical choices also used in this article such as (militant, designated as a terrorist organization), they are politically loaded aligning with US and Western media as well as governments discourse.

The grammatical structures of CNN report's title (Hamas is attacking Israel) establishes a clear subject-verb-object relationship. Structural choices assigns agency to Hamas, in contrast Israel appeared as the passive object of terror attack. The interrogative format "What is Hamas and why is it attacking Israel now?" presents the situation as a sudden, inexplicable event that requires clarification. Hamas's actions such as (rocket launches and incursions) are foregrounded and highlighted in this article, while the historical context of Israeli- Palestinian conflict is relegated to brief mentions. Through question-answer style, CNN organizes information in a way that may seem neutral, but surly it subtly directs the readers' attention to particular causal explanations. Passive voice occasionally obscures the Israel's actions (Gaza has been blocked) rather than (Israel imposed a blockade). That is, it de-emphasizes agency and responsibility

To conclude, this title is highly revealing in its framing of the conflict, particularly in its use of questions and agency.

4.1.2.2 BBC: "Hamas blindsides Israel with most serious attack in a generation"

BBC has adopted a dramatic narrative style in this report, with a powerful metaphor such as (blindsides) that implies a complete surprise, a lack of foresight as well on Israel part. Also, evaluative phrase (most serious attack in a generation) is employed to refer to dramatic superlative that escalates the perceived severity of the event. Additionally, it is generating a sense of shocking and urgency. Thus, it can be said that BBC employed lexical choices to show shock and disruption, portraying Israel as the unsuspecting victim while Hamas as stealth aggressor. Notice the use of "attack" as a noun. Nominalization can obscure the agents of an action. Moreover, BBC focuses in the report (with mention Hamas) on the event itself (attack) rather than the complex motivations and historical grievances behind it. In sum, there is a huge

similarity in reporting the event between BBC and CNN, employing the same narrative style. Alkaabi (2024) referred to the same findings, she stated that journalists of the BBC & CNN are allowed to use lexis such as “militant”, “islamist” and “insurgent” to be used only to describe Palestinians who fight against or resist the Israeli military occupation. Alkaabi (2024) referred to the same reporting style employed by the BBC and CNN in reporting the Gaza conflict.

BBC in this article depicted Hamas as highly organized and capable, yet framed primarily through its militant dimension, with less emphasis on underlying socio-political grievances.

4.2. Interpretation (Discursive Practice):

Analysis CNN and BBC reports in this part depends on intertextuality and production.

4.2.1 Reporting Ukraine War

Intertextuality: the two reports of CNN and BBC about Ukraine war show that they are fit into a long-standing narrative of Russian expansionism and hostility toward its neighbors. The narratives of these reports are western media view, official statements from NATO or US warning Russian troops’ movements. The two reports (intertextual) reinforce a discourse that has been building for years.

Production: although the CNN and BBC articles function is to inform, but also to frame. The influence of CNN institutional position and BBC institutional role (as a major western news outlet), was clearly in the production of these reports. It is believed that BBC institution is aligning with the geopolitical interest of the United States and its allies, the broader foreign policy and diplomatic stance of the British government, which is a key NATO ally. That is, the reports production and framing are influence by these two national contexts, presenting a perspective that is broadly consistent with western alliances. In sum, the choices that made by CNN and BBC are to focus on potential invasion rather than the diplomatic efforts or the complex history of the region is a discourse choice.

4.2.2 Reporting Gaza Conflict

Interpretation (Discursive Practice):

Intertextuality: the two reports are examples of interpretive journalism, drawing on and building upon initial reports to provide a more comprehensive (although still ideologically driven) account. For CNN it seems draw upon previous the channel reporting on (terrorism, military), framing Hamas within the specific intertextual chain. In BBC reports, it is found that BBC likely to reference earlier news flashes and official statements, synthesizing them into a coherent narrative. The fact that reached here is that the voices of Palestinian civilians or non-Hamas political groups are likely to be underrepresented or altogether absent. Thus, the both channels employed intertextual to frame the case of Gaza conflict and reporting it depends on the western media ideology.

Production: it is clear that these reports production is geared towards a western audience that may lack historical context. The producers of these reports may seek to provide a simplified, digestible explanation about the case. CNN and BCC are expected to maintain a semblance of neutrality, but this often translates to a kind of institutional objectivity that mirrors the hegemonic political consensus. The CNN reports focus on (what & why) of Hamas's actions, rather than (what & why) of the boarder Israel- Palestinian conflict. Although BBC articles' production is shaped by a desire to appear balanced, it is operating reports within a western geopolitical framework. That is, both channels are deliberating western ideology frame choice in presenting the case.

To summarize, there is extensive real time war reporting (in the Ukraine case) with an emphasis on immediacy, and military strategy as well as geographical data-hallmarks of crisis journalism. The discursive practices reproduce dominant Western understandings of Russia as a security threat and Ukraine as a democratic victim (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010).

In the Gaza coverage (for contrast), both media outlets' lexical are framing lean toward security discourse, particularly in headlines. The headlines foregrounded Hamas's aggression before providing contextual background. By employing this style, the channels aim to reflect an inverted-pyramid structure common in news writing, but with ideological consequences. It is well known that the initial frame often shapes reader interpretation more strongly than later paragraphs (Entman, 1993).

4.3 Explanation (Sociocultural Practice):

4.3.1 Ukraine War

Ideology: The reports reflect a dominant ideology of Western solidarity and the defense of democratic sovereignty against authoritarianism. These articles contribute to the construction of Russia as an enemy, justifying potential defensive or punitive actions. They reinforce the idea that Ukraine is a sovereign nation under attack, and that this attack is a violation of international norms. This framing aligns with a hegemonic Western perspective on international relations.

Power Relations: By portraying Russia as a threat, the article legitimizes the authority of NATO and other Western institutions to condemn, sanction, and potentially arm Ukraine. It frames the conflict as a struggle between good and evil, thereby simplifying complex historical and political grievances and solidifying a particular power dynamic.

4.3.2 Gaza Conflict

Ideology: both CNN and BBC operate in their reports within a framework that prioritizes the security of Israel while downplaying the suffering and historical context of Palestinians. The underlying ideology is one of "terrorism vs. self-defense." This framing aligns with a dominant Western narrative that positions certain non-state actors as terrorists and state actions as legitimate self-defense. That is, the focus on the "seriousness" of the attack on Israel subtly justifies a strong military response.

Power Relations: By framing the event as an act of being "blindsided," the reports can be seen as sympathetic to Israel, which is positioned as a powerful, but momentarily vulnerable, state. This framing maintains the established power dynamic where Israel's security is the central issue, and Palestinian actions are primarily viewed through the lens of a threat to that security.

From a socio-political perspective, to conclude, the reporting reflects hegemonic ideological positions consistent with Western foreign policy orientations. Fairclough (2001) emphasizes that discourse both reflects and shapes social reality. In these cases, the discourses contribute to reinforcing: Russia as a destabilizing global actor threatening the post-Cold War security order, in contrast, Hamas is a militant that threat the regional stability. With less sustained emphasis on structural conditions such as occupation and blockade.

These narratives align with broader geopolitical power relations in which Western media often naturalize the perspective of their governments and allied states (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). While some human-interest angles emerge, particularly in BBC's Ukraine coverage; they are embedded within an overarching military-strategic lens.

4.4 Comparison of Reporting the Two Cases in CNN and BBC

4.4.1 CNN: the 'Threat' vs. 'Terrorism' Framework

In reporting on Ukraine, CNN's discourse is overwhelmingly aligned with the hegemonic Western perspective. The coverage frames the conflict as a clear-cut case of an unprovoked invasion by a hostile, authoritarian power (Russia) against a sovereign, democratic nation (Ukraine). Ukraine war is a clear foreign policy issue where the U.S. and its allies are on the right side of history. In Gaza conflict, however, is a more nuanced, but still ideologically-driven, challenge. The reporting frames it in terms of security and terrorism, aligning with U.S. policy interests in supporting its key ally, Israel, while also acknowledging humanitarian concerns in a way that doesn't fundamentally challenge the existing power structure.

4.4.2 BBC: the 'Objectivity' of Institutional Alignment

The BBC's coverage of Ukraine, like CNN's, is firmly rooted in the Western anti-Russia narrative. As the UK's public broadcaster, the BBC's discourse is deeply embedded in the UK's and NATO's foreign policy positions. In Ukraine, this is straightforward: a clear aggressor and a clear victim. In Gaza, however, the situation is more complex, so their discursive strategies diverge slightly. The BBC's attempt at "impartiality" often results in a framing that appears more balanced but can still be ideologically loaded. This contrasts with CNN, which, while also having a pro-Western slant, is often more direct in its framing of the conflict in terms of terrorism and self-defense, a reflection of its more commercial, and more explicitly American, context.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Performance of Ideology in Western News Media

The comparative analysis of CNN and BBC reporting on the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts reveals a fundamental truth about contemporary Western news media: while these outlets often project an image of objectivity and impartiality. Their discourse is consistently shaped by and operates within a hegemonic Western geopolitical framework. This framework dictates not just what is reported, put how it is reported, particularly in conflicts where Western interests are at stake.

5.2 The Ukraine Conflict: A Story of Shared Ideology

In the case of Ukraine, both CNN and BBC coverage converges on a single dominant narrative. This narrative is one of a clear- cut confrontation between an aggressive, authoritarian Russian and a victimized, democratic Ukraine. The discursive choices, the use of militaristic lexis, the consistent attribution of agency to Russia as the “aggressor”, and the framing of the conflict as a violation of international law are almost identical across both channels. This consensus demonstrates that on an issue where Western political and security interests are in complete alignment. The major news institutions perform a shared ideological role. Their objectivity is defined by and reinforces this unified perspective.

5.3 The Gaza Conflict: Divergent Styles, Shared Outcomes

The reporting on the Gaza conflict, however, reveals a more nuanced picture. Here, the ideological framework is still present, but the discursive strategies used to maintain it are subtly different.

CNN, with its more commercial and overtly American context, tends to frame the conflict in a more straightforward “terrorism vs. self- defense” binary. This narrative is direct and serves to legitimize Israel’s actions as response to a non-state actor. This actor has labeled as terrorist organization. The focus is on the security of Israel, and the historical context of the occupation is often marginalized. The BBC, with its public service mandate, adopts a different strategy. It employs a discourse of “impartiality” and “both- sides” reporting. While this might more balanced, in practice, it often creates a false equivalence between a state military and non-state military armed group. This approach, while more linguistically cautious, ultimately achieves a similar ideological outcomes. It avoids a fundamental critique of the power imbalance and underlying conditions of the occupation, thus maintaining the status quo.

5.4 The Deeper Implication: The Limits of "Neutrality"

The key conclusion is the difference in the two channels' reporting on Gaza. It is not one ideology, but one style. Both channels, in their respective ways, produce a discourse that aligns with interest of Western foreign policy. In Ukraine, where the ideological lines are clear, their reporting is nearly identical. In Gaza, where the situation is more complex for the west, their style is different. CNN's direct framing and the BBC's cautious impartiality are employing different methods for achieving the same end; which is reinforcing a pro-Western, a pro-Israel narrative while appearing to be objective. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that Critical Discourse Analysis is not just about finding overt bias, but about revealing how seemingly neutral or different journalistic practices work in tandem to construct and legitimize specific geopolitical realities. The media, in these cases, is not merely reporting on events. But it is actively participating in the ideological construction of these conflicts

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