Department of Public Policy

CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

FRAMING CONFLICT:

THE IMPACT OF SOURCE SELECTION ON MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ISRAEL

PALESTINE CONFLICT

By

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the impact of sourcing on the framing of Israel and Palestine in media coverage surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict. This study analyzed articles from the New York Times and The Guardian to establish the different frames and media portrayals between Israel and Palestine in the media. This study was guided by Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model particularly the third filter on sourcing and the concept of worthy and unworthy victims.

This paper employed a mixed methods approach, I used quantitative content analysis and qualitative critical discourse analysis to answer the question on how the media has covered the parties to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The qualitative portion established the frames such as use of emotive and biased language, use of official sources and amount of media coverage. The quantitative portion of my study analyzed this frame via R and across a large corpus of article data.

My thesis found that the media was overly reliant on elite and government officials for sources. This reliance on official government sources by the media has resulted in biased coverage as they report on what the elites say. The study shows that Israeli victims are treated as worthy victims and receive a lot of media coverage and portrayed in a more sympathetic tone while the media reserves loaded and emotive biased language for Palestinians highlighting their unworthy victim status. This biased coverage aligns with Herman and Chomsky's concept of worthy and unworthy victims.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Israel-Palestine conflict is a long-standing conflict tracing back to the mid 1900's. The most recent addition to the conflict was the invasion dubbed the Al Aqsa Flood Operations that happened on the 7th of October 2023 where armed Palestinian militant group Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on the south of Israel from the blockaded Gaza Strip. Hamas militants participated in ground incursions from as many as 22 locations, attacked military bases and massacred civilians and shot approximately 3000 rockets into Israel. The Israeli Defense Forces estimated three thousand militants invaded Israel. An article from France 24 detailed that the assault resulted in the deaths of 1400 people, 659 of whom were Israeli civilians and hundreds of hostages taken by Hamas marking this as one of the deadliest attacks ever experienced in Israel.

Following the attack, the Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instituted a state of emergency and declared Israel to be at war and the Israeli Army responded with a retaliatory campaign against Gaza. Ninety percent of Gaza's population was displaced because of the heavy bombardment by the Israeli army. In just 5 months, 12,300 Palestinian children were killed by the army. As it stands, the Palestinian death toll stands at 36284 because of heavy bombing from the Israel Defense Forces. As a result of the invasion, Gaza currently has no working and operable hospitals, mass amputationshappen daily in the strip with no anesthesia, or painkillers and entire family lines have been wiped from the registry. There are now talks of a man-made famine in Gaza as residents are unable to access food, water and medicine. The conflict is now in its eight month with no foreseeable end in sight.

The conflict has been chosen as the case study as it has received significant international

media coverage.

This study aims to look at how the media's reliance on official government sources,. influences the media coverage of the Israel Palestine

Media bias and propaganda in news coverage and particularly in times of conflict are well researched topics in the realm of media studies. I will use the propaganda model detailed in Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's book titled 'The Political Economy of the Mass Media' as the theoretical framework on which I build my research. This book posits that mass media protects the interests of the ruling class andis controlled by a small number of large and powerful profit-seeking corporations that share principles with the government and draw profits from advertising revenue (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). The propaganda model highlighted, argues that in democratic societies, the media serves the interests of the elite and powerful. It highlights five filters on which the media operate: ownership, advertisements, sourcing, 'flak' and anti-communism or creation of a common enemy. I will pay particular focus on the third chapter on sourcing as well as the concept of 'worthy and unworthy victims' explained in the same book.

This research study will investigate the coverage and portrayal of Israel and Palestine in The NewYork Times and The Guardian to determine what accounts for the biased coverage. The world has seen a rise in conflict and humanitarian crises in the past decade. A study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) showed that there were 50 armed conflicts in 2023. The media plays an important role in reporting international conflicts. Through breaking news, the media can provide continuous and up to date information as the conflict develops.

Research by Sahin and Karayianni, (2020) shows that the political elites leverage their political power to determine and influence news coverage on conflict by controlling what

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information is disseminated and the timing. This paper seeks to investigate the difference in portrayal in the New York Times and the Guardian between Israelis and Palestinians following the attack on Israel by Hamas. This study will aim to show that the media is a vessel of government to push forward foreign policy and geopolitical interests.

The subsequent chapters will be the literature review where I will further delve into the propaganda model created by Herman and Chomsky and pay particular attention to the third filter on sourcing and worthy and unworthy victims and highlight the role of framing in disseminating propaganda. The methodology section will follow which will detail the mixed methodology approach I am undertaking that combine qualitative critical discourse analysis and quantitative content analysis as well as the data collection and data analysis steps. I will present my findings in the discussion chapter and link it back to the relevant research. I will finalize with a conclusion section that summarizes my findings as well as highlight some of the limitations I experienced and situate my research within existing research.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to provide a literary background that I will use to answer the question on how the US and UK governments are influencing media coverage during times of conflict.

This chapter will start off with the role and obligations of the media in society before delving into the use of newspaper articles to distribute bias. I introduce three theoretical frameworks on which I base my research on Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model with a focus on the third filter on sourcing and the concept of 'worthy and unworthy victims' which is detailed in the same book and link the three concepts to answer the research question. I will conclude the chapter with the limitations and research gaps my researchaims to fill as well as necessitate its importance in society.

The media is an effective tool for disseminating information in democratic societies. The media promotes education by helping individuals broaden their horizons through offering valuable insights, reporting and analysis of several topics and current world events. The media are considered the fourth estate in democratic societies keeping the legislative, judicial and executivearms of the government in check. Their role is to act as an independent watchdog over political elites and holding institutions accountable and responsible and an integral component that enables them to perform this duty is their independence. The media also have a responsibility to provide accurate and impartial reporting that is free from bias, propaganda and manipulation andshould thus resist outside interference who may seek to push a particular agenda. They promote diversity and inclusiveness by providing a platform for different perspectives and opinions.

Propaganda Model

In their book *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Herman and Chomsky detail the 'propaganda model' which is an effective framework for analyzing how the media operates and gives insight into how news is structured. This is particularly useful in todays current political climate where several wars are taking place such as in Palestine, Yemen and Sudan.

According to Herman and Chomsky (1998), mass media protects the interests of the ruling class and is controlled by a small number of large and powerful profit-seeking corporations that share principles with the government and draw profits from advertising revenue. Through this model, Herman and Chomsky posit that the media operates to protect the economic, social and political interests of elite groups. Media outlets are committed to maximizing profit instead of providing quality news. They highlight five filters through which mainstream media operates to disseminate propaganda. The five filters highlighted in the book are 1. the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of dominant media; 2. Advertising as the primary source of income for mass media; 3. Reliance of the media on information provided by government, business and experts funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; 4. Disciplining the media through 'flak' and lastly 5. 'Anticommunism as a method of control (Herman and Chomsky, 1998).

The first filter highlighted by Herman and Chomsky (1998). in the propaganda model is ownership. This filter posits that the mass media are large corporations and outlets whose end game is profit. To protect the interests of the outlet and its owners, the media outlets advocate

for whatever is most profitable for them by filtering the information provided to the public through a process called 'self-censorship'. Information that could ruin the image of the company is filtered out and news that benefits the company is promoted.

The second filter is advertising, the success and expansion of the company are dependent on advertising income. Advertisements rake in more revenue than what they generate through subscriptions and purchase. The media can either raise the prices to meet the cost of productionor shut down operations. To survive in a cutthroat competition, raising the prices is not a viable route as consumers will migrate to the other cheaper available options. Therefore, media outlets must consider the economic, political and social preferences of the advertisers to avoid losing outon advertising revenue. (Herman and Chomsky, 1998).

The third filter and the filter on which I base my research is sourcing. New stories could emerge from anywhere, and media outlets cannot afford to station journalists worldwide. Journalists are instead stationed in places such as the Supreme Court, Pentagon and the Parliament where news stories are likely to happen. The media are thus "forced into a symbiotic relationship with multiple sources of knowledge" as they lack other options (Neel, 2019). These sources are considered credible, and any shroud of doubt results in the media losing access to them, which can often include commercial organizations and government spokespersons. As a result of this, the media avoids publishing stories that conflict with the interests of the informants and often runstories without verifying their sources veracity. (Herman and Chomsky, 1998).

The fourth filter is 'Flak'. This refers to negative responses of a media statement that can take the form of litigation, complaints, lawsuits and grievances causing harm to the outlet.

Governments, corporations and people may take such steps and the cost of defending oneself in court could be expensive and could run the risk of losing advertising revenue and face severe losses. (Herman and Chomsky, 1998).

The fifth and final filter is anti-communism. This filter is also called the 'fear of the enemy filter'. Artificial fears are generated for the public to corral public opinion. The media plays an active role in shaping public opinion on conflict through their reportage by utilizing different methods to report in a bid to influence and stimulate the audience. This can include the creationof an enemy through 'othering', demonization and dehumanization to justify the war. (Herman and Chomsky, 1998).

Governments construct a common enemy to garner the support of their opponents and as a means of social control. More recently the media has faced accusations of promoting public vigilantism. Facing stiff competition in today's climate, media houses eventually give in to some of these filters.

Sourcing

My research focuses on the third filter in the propaganda model on sourcing. In this case the stateacts as a media regulator and as an institution acting on the same turf as the media. Mass media outlets obtain their information for stories from the institutions they report, such as the government. A relationship of importance develops because of the media companies' dependenceon the government. Media companies require government licenses and are thus potentially subject to government control or harassment. The media protect themselves by lobbying, cultivating political relationships and 'care in policy'. The media also depend on the

governmentfor more general policy support. Newspaper sellers depend on diplomatic support for their rights to penetrate foreign markets with commercial messages of current affairs. This access is referred to as 'access journalism' and this filter shows how the media's interaction with these institutions influences their reporting, leading the media to advocate for the interests of the powerful and elite (Herman and Chomsky,1998).

The media are also warped into a mutual relationship with influential government sources of information driven by economic needs and shared interests. The media require a steady flow of information, and daily demands, hectic schedules and economic factors compel them to focus their attention on where major news frequently happens. It is convenient for them to rely on hubslike the White House, The Pentagon and the State Department for such news activity. Journalistsare thus dependent on officials for quotes and officials are reliant on the media for their platforms. This web of official statements, publications and political endeavors is often overlooked. According to Cook (1998), the news media and the government are coproduced.

Sources used by the media require credibility and anonymity and journalists must protect their sources' confidentiality whilst also conveying the credibility of the source to the audience. Thus,the media uses government officials as sources because they are credible and are regarded as authorized knowers in society and have no need for privacy. Journalists will treat government officials' assertion of knowledge as factual and credible. Additionally, to cement their position as sources of information, the government will ease the process for the media organizations. They will provide support in many forms, facilities to congregate, provide copies of speeches in advance and align their conferences to news deadlines. In essence, large bureaucratic institutionsof the powerful subsidize the media and secure privileged access by lowering the cost of gathering the raw materials and news production. According to McChesney (2004), U.S media have been shaped

by liberal and neoliberal policies resulting in the commercialization and consolidation of media.

The media are thus vessels transmitting to the audience what government officials and other eliteactors want covered. Previous researchers had explored media compliance with foreign policy orthe government position (Bennett, 1990; Entman, 2004). Political leaders use mass media to align public opinion with their foreign policy objectives (Morgenthau, 1978). By analyzing previous research and literature, we can observe that the media supports government policy in international crisis coverage (Reese & Lewis, 2009). CNN for example, covers conflictallied to the interests of the US and its politics and their framing of stories is biased toward the U.S power structure (Hawkins, 2011). Mainstream media gives more attention to issues where high levels of national, political economic and military interests are involved. An analysis by Ghiles (2023) examined the ways the media and foreign policy elites like the Congress influenceforeign policy and found that contemporary security and strategic considerations played an important role in the formulation of foreign policies.

A study conducted by the Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting titled 'Leading Papers Skewed Gaza Debate Toward Israeli and Government Perspective' found that coverage was skewed towards the Israeli and U.S Government perspectives. The study also found that US and foreign government officials were the go-to for guest perspectives on Gaza. Thirty-three percent of guestessays on Gaza were written by Israelis or those with ties to Israel, 27% were written by Palestinians and those with close ties to Palestine and the remaining 25% were written by US writers with no relation to Israel or Palestine. Twenty-three percent of these guest essays were written by US government officials.

Worthy and Unworthy victims

Additionally, in their book, Herman and Chomsky introduce the concept of 'worthy' and 'unworthy' victims. Chomsky (1998) mentions that 'a propaganda system will portray people abused in enemy states as worthy victims, whereas those treated with equal or greater severity by its own government, or clients will be unworthy'. Worthy victims receive detailed coverage and are humanized in the media and their plight sympathized with. Unworthy victims receive barely any media attention. Stories to be aired are selected based on the interests of the home country.

There are many ongoing conflicts that never make the headlines as western media deems some countries more newsworthy than others due to their economic and political power and geopolitical interests. Countries where significant strategic interests are involved are framed in a positive tone. Research by Noakes and Wilkins (2002) and Ozohu-Suleiman, (2014), reveal that western media favors the U.S ally Israel's perspective when reporting on the conflict between Israel and Palestine and the coverage paints Palestine and Palestinians in a negative light.

Worthy victims are victims of leaders on the U.S enemies list such as Bashar al-Assad and victims of the 9/11 attacks on the twin towers and unworthy victims are victims of U.S client state such as Israel and Saudi Arabia whose victims are the Yemenis and the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar (Pear, 2018). Mass media justified conflicts such as Libya, Iraq and Vietnam that were fought by the United States by misinforming the public and painting negative pictures of the opponents through a process referred to as securitization of the media (Gan, 2005). The US invasion of Iraq was made possible through media projecting stories of 'weapons of mass destruction' in Iraq thus laying the groundwork for intervention and justifying

an invasion under the guise of 'war on terror'.

Link between sourcing and 'worthy and unworthy victims.'

The media's reliance on elite and government sources results in the media perpetuating narratives that align with the interests of the powerful. This creates a disparity in how different victims are framed in the media coverage and influences how they are received by the audience.

In a bid to acquire financial and political advantage, the media most often takes the side of powerby aligning themselves with powerful actors (Hawkins, 2011; Sahin and Karayianni, 2020; Shinar, 2009). Political elites leverage their political power to determine and influence news coverage on conflict by controlling what information is disseminated and the timing (Sahin and Karayianni, 2020). The media over relies on corporate and official government sources and fails to factor in perspectives of local people affected by the conflict. Carruthers (2000) argues that reporters are unable to produce reliable news as their sources, organizations and the structures in which they are embedded invent reality by manufacturing news. As the media is dependent on other parts of the system, their coverage on conflict tends to reflect the perspectives of the center of power of the countries in which they operate in.

Media frames are the organizing idea for news content that supplies context and suggests what the issue is through selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration (Tankard, 1991). In news coverage, the creation and use of frames has relevant impact on the audiences that engage with them (De Vreese, 2005). Mainstream media plays a significant role in framing and creating images of foreign countries for their audiences (Saleem, 2007). Framing is a key organizing principle in understanding an event or issue and plays an important role in the distinction between worthy and unworthy victims through selective omission of information, emphasis of

certain events and the use of specific language and imagery to influence public opinion. It plays a hand in influencing which victims receive support and media attention and which ones don't, further perpetuating the disparity between worthy and unworthy victims.

Herman and Chomsky (2000), posit that media frames play a critical role in presenting, determining or demolishing the picture of an event of story. The media employs different tactics to frame the narrative, they can disseminate disinformation, shadow the perpetrator, participate indehumanization and demonization and justify an attack. In line with the third filter on sourcing, the images and frames created by mainstream media when reporting on other countries align with the national and geopolitical interests of the governing administration (Dorman and Farhang, 1987; Hawkins, 2011; Perez de Fransius, 2014; Şahin and Karayianni, 2020).

Mass media shapes and constructs the image of other nations, societies and people enabling us tomake up our national mind. This created image has an important influence on the relations between nations. In the media, the 'image of a country' can be analyzed through the language used such as loaded language and biased terms that support or oppose that country's policies. The media are willful participants in the creation and dissemination of enemyimages through the headlines, illustrations in a way that reveals who the enemy is even when the language used is neutral.

Events are also only considered important by their relation to the west and news media is often controlled bythe state in which news is produced. Galtung and Ruge (1965) suggest that an item is likely tobe covered on the news if it concerns elite nations or elite people or if it has negative repercussions.

McChensey also notes that U.S media supports foreign policies and interests by distortingthe coverage. Countries where significant strategic interests are involved are framed

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in a positive tone. The media frames countries that are aligned with the west's political and economic interests in a favorable tone (Bapat, 2011; Viser, 2003). According to research done by Bukhory (1989), U.S.press gave considerable coverage to Asian countries where the U.S. has political, economic andmilitary interests such as Korea and Japan.

Research by Noakes and Wilkins (2002) and Ozohu-Suleiman, (2014), reveal that western media favors the U.S ally Israel's perspective when reporting on the conflict between Israel and Palestine and the coverage paints Palestine and Palestinians in a negative light. In western media coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the historical context of the conflict was underreported, and Palestinians were more likely to be characterized as terrorists and Islamic militants (Noakes and Wilkins 2002; Ozohu-Suleiman, 2014). The media's decision to cover one or both sides in a conflict is shaped by organizationaland social institutional influence rather than individual journalist choices (Shinar, 2009).

On the other hand, there is very little media coverage where national interests are insignificant. Conflict in the developing countries are rarely reported unless the West has strategic interests inthe region. International media often forgets about humanitarian crises in failing states (Helm, 2002). Research performed by Giffard (1984), determined that media coverage of developing and third world countries was overwhelmingly biased, negative and marginalized and the mediatended to focus on negative aspects like famine and political unrest. International media also displays a double standard by reporting atrocities committed by enemystates of the west but ignores similar atrocities perpetuated by the west.

The media participates in selective reporting when the details of an international event conflicts with national interests, they are omitted from media coverage. Research shows that during crises and international conflict, the media works in line with a state's foreign policy

guidelines (Bennet, 1993; Reese & Lewis, 2009)). Foreign policy directives have an impact on media coverage and reporting. Previous researchers had explored media compliance with foreign policy or the government position (Bennett, 1990; Entman, 2004). Political leaders also use mass media to align public opinionwith their foreign policy objectives (Hill, 1996; Morgenthau, 1978). The images and frames created by mainstream media when reporting on other countries align with the national and geopolitical interests of the governing administration (Dorman and Farhang, 1987; Hawkins, 2011; Perez de Fransius, 2014; Şahin and Karayianni, 2020).

According to Gans (1979) the US media only focuses on stories that are relevant to American interests. Western mainstream media frames stories in ways that support western political interests. They support policies on foreign affairs by framing images of other countries in line with the government's interests. Government officials use press briefings and press conferences to manage and manipulate the media to achieve their goal (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991).

The media's reliance on government officials as a source emerges from their need for regular and easy access to legitimate sources of information. The media's reliance on official sources raises significant questions about the media's role as impartial political entities. By relying on government resources, the media curate their media coverage in line with the government's interests. Reporters use sources that are sympathetic to American interestswhich is why international reporting is always in line with US foreign policy (Paletz and Entman, 1981).

Relevance to the case studies

Historically, during times of conflict governments have used the media to influence public opinion and secure public support for their agenda. Political leaders exploit the media's role in linking individuals to their surroundings to their advantage and use these platforms to influence public opinion. Before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the media reported constantly on the existence of weapons of mass destruction (Regan, 2003). To justify the invasion of Iraq, the media frequently reported discoveries of weapons parroted by organizations and elite individualssuch as NPR, ABC News and Rush Limbaugh (Regan, 2003). During the 2003 Iraqi war, the Washington Post was instructed to omit articles that critiqued the military and the then Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (Regan, 2003).

Research on U.S. journalists use of sources found that official government sources dominated, and reporters relied on conventional channels to gather news such as press conferences and official proceedings (Kgosana, 2012). A study by Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting found thatwhen the US withdrew its troops from Afghanistan only thirty-one percent of the sources frommajor US media sites were Afghani or Aghan-American. The New York Times relied on anonymous officials from the Bush administration who reported that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

A study conducted by the Intercept titled *Coverage of Gaza war in the New York Times and other major newspapers heavily favored Israel, analysis shows* conducted research on several western media sites since the Oct 7th attack on Israel found that Israelis are referred to as 'killed' or 'massacred', but Palestinians are more likely to be referred to in passive terms such as 'dead' with no mention of the perpetrator committing the act. Israeli deaths were also disproportionally

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reported over those of Palestinians.

After the Holocaust, the United Nations coined the term genocide to mean a crime committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Herman and Chomsky define genocide as "an invidious word that officials apply readily to cases of victimization in (orcommitted by) enemy states, but rarely if ever to similar or worse cases of victimization by the United States itself or allied regimes." A child dies every 75 seconds in Yemen as a result of Saudi led and US backed blockade and starvation and 16,000 children have died so far becauseof US backed Israeli assault on Gaza yet mainstream media refuses to use the term genocide todescribe these situations. Mainstream media has however used the term genocide to describe Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Most people get their information about the outside world from mass media. Mass media shapespeople's understanding and misunderstanding of foreign lands (McNelly and Izcaray, 1986). Given the almost ten-year timeline since the Yemeni war started, the crisis has received little to no international media attention compared to other conflicts that on a comparable scale of humansuffering. The reason for this is the conflict does not hold the same appeal as other conflicts in the region like Iraq and Syria. Russia's invasion of Ukraine made international headlines and received sympathetic coverage, yet the war in Yemen has struggled to receive similar levels of media attention even at the conflicts peak. The media tend to focus on the victims of enemy states while ignoring those victimized by friendly nations. The victims of the Russian invasion of Ukraine have received more attention than the victims of the nine-year war in Yemen presumably because Russia is an enemy state of the west. The Yemeni are unworthy victims, andtheir plight is largely ignored as their suffering is a result of Saudi and US foreign policy.

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Media is thought to work independently but research shows that during crises and international conflict, the media works in line with a state's foreign policy guidelines Western mainstream mediaframes stories in ways that support western political interests. They support policies on foreign affairs by framing images of other countries in line with the government's interests. This study will aim to show that the media is a vessel of government to push forward foreign policy and geopolitical interests.

Research Gap

There exists a body of literature that analyses bias against Palestine in US media, however most are limited to basic statistics (Siddiqui and Zaheer, 2018, FAIR, 2002) and others are limited to specific events (Caballero, 2010; Aziz, 2007; Al Sarraj and Lubbad, 2018). The analysis on the existing literature is limited to the disparity in the number of death and attacks (Weir, 2005; Caballero, 2010) and does not factor how this biased reporting is done. My research goes beyondexisting literature by analyzing the recent Israel-Palestine conflict and analyzes the use of elite and government sources and their impact on the coverage of the conflict.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This section will outline the research design undertaken by the study followed by the case studyselection and justification of the case study, I will introduce the data collection methods and the data analysis and conclude with the data analysis method.

Research Design

This study employed a mixed methods approach by combining qualitative critical discourse analysis with quantitative content analysis on articles extracted from the New York Times andthe Guardian between the 7th of October in 2023 to the 7th of March in 2024. This combined methodology will determine the use ofelite, military and government sources in determining the framing and biased language in the coverage of the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict.

A qualitative research study was conducted as it has a comprehensive and descriptive approach. To identify messages within the media, textual analysis can be performed on written, visual or recorded text (Allen, 2017). It can reveal the types of frames that are present in media coverage and conveyed to the audience. A similar analysis was undertaken by Painter and Ferrucci (2019),to determine the frames in the underground GI press during the war in Vietnam. The critical discourse analysis was guided by Galtung's war journalism frames.

A quantitative content analysis was employed to answer the research question as it is a commonly used measurement tool in media and communication research (Krippendorf, 1989). Content analysis enables researchers to monitor the presence and absence of content in output

for a certain timeframe (Krippendorf, 2018). The quantitative content analysis will be done using R, a software environment for statistical computing and graphics (CRAN) and will employ the use of inbuilt statistical packages such as stringr, dplyr, httr, jsonlite and tibble to extract, analyze and visualize the content.

Content analysis enables researchers to analyze large quantities of material in an efficient manner (Grimmer and Stewart, 2013), when combined with qualitative critical discourse analysis, it will deepen and broaden my analysis on framing and biased coverage. I combine critical discourse analysis with content analysis as results borne from quantitative analysis mustbe backed up with statistics and qualitative measures to ensure accurate results (Grimmer and Stewart, 2013).

Case Studies

The recent Israel-Palestine conflict in Gaza was selected to investigate the research question as it isa recent addition to the long-standing conflict that has rocked Israel and Palestine. This case has been chosen as it has received widespread international coverage. The unit of analysis are articles covering Gaza from the New York Times and The Guardian collected between 7th October 2023 and 7th March 2024.

The New York Times was founded in 1851 in New York City and is renowned as a for its international coverage and its liberal policies and is regarded as the American prestige paper (Cohen, 1963). It is the most subscribed to digital media organization boasting nearly 2 billion readers in 2022. In 2023 the New York Times had 10 million subscribers, 9.41 million digital subscribers and 670,000 print subscribers. (New York Times, 2023). As of February 2024, the annual revenue collected from digital subscriptions stood at $1 Billion (New York Times, 2024).

A survey conducted by Rasmussen Reports found that 40% believe that the times has a liberal stance and 11% believed that it was conservative. The New York Times has been selected as it has been recently accused of biased reporting particularly on matters related to Israel and Palestine and are said to take a biased pro-Israeli stance.

The Guardian (formerly Manchester Guardian) was founded in 1821 and is one of Britain's most popular newspapers. Its audience is predominantly left-of-center in British politics (Basker, 2009). With an average of 22.4 million unique monthly visitors, the Guardian is the most read news brand in the UK and has a global reach of 81 million unique monthly visitors. The Guardian has an average of 5.5 million readers a day and a 14.2million average per week.

These two sites were selected because of their worldwide popularity and global outreach and their reputation as credible and influential sources on international news. These sites were also chosen as they are mainstream media companies under corporate umbrellas withvast resources enabling them to situate journalists all over and can provide more frequent and wide coverage on the Israel-Palestine conflict. They were also picked as they represent differingpolitical ideologies, the New York Times is liberal, and the Guardian is more left leaning. This study also focused on quality newspapers as elite publications mold the political agenda of other newspapers and shape the direction of media coverage in their respective countries. Elite newspapers have a significant impact on society even though they are not representative of all media (Benson & Hallin, 2005) as they establish the media framework for other media outlets (Chomsky, 1997).

Data Collection Methods

The study examined articles from two major international media outlets – American based NewYork times and United Kingdom based The Guardian to analyze the mainstream coverage and portrayal of the parties to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The search criteria yielded 5479 articles, 2010 from the New York Times and 3739 from The Guardian.

The population for this study included articles containing the word 'Gaza' in both the headlineand the article content of the selected media sites from the 8th of October 2023 to the 8th of March 2024. I chose 'Gaza' as the search term as this has been the epicenter of the conflict and is characterized by widespread media coverage.

The New York Times and the Guardian have API's that allow researchers to access their content using an API key. An API key is necessary to retrieve the fulltext of news articles. I retrieved articles through the New York Times API and the Guardian APIfor the time period of the 7th of October 2023 to the 7th of March 2024. To do this I made use of the parameters set in the API'S and set the term to Gaza which would retrieve articles that contained the word 'Gaza' and set thebegin and end date parameters. I defined a search period and set it to October 7th 2023 to March 7th 2024 which would make it five months of the conflict. To avoid extra noise all other variables such as author, tags and were excluded and only maintained the headline,date of publication and the article content.

Significant events within this time period include hostage negotiations and two ceasefires.

Data Analysis Method

According to Hollibaugh (2018, p.475), 'computational text analysis includes numerous steps starting from acquiring the text, processing the text, choosing an appropriate model based on the type of text in question as well as the substantive question, validating the model to ensure its usefulness, and substantive interpretation.'

The first step in my research was to acquire texts after determining the research question and what texts are important. I first employed critical discourse analysis to identify frames and themes that would differentiate between worthy and unworthy victims that I would then apply on the quantitative portion of my research. Qualitative textual techniques such as critical discourse analysis, provide in-depth explanations through observation and pattern recognition (Fairclough 1995, van Djik 1997). The objective of textual analysis is to understand the systematic connections between texts, discourse practices and socio-cultural practices (Fairclough, 1995). This study analyzed discourse which is defined by Wood and Kroger (2000) as 'all spoken and written forms of language use as social practice'. The frames identified should meet three criteria according to Capella and Jamieson (1997), the frames must have recognizable 'conceptual and linguistic characteristics', second, they should becommonly observed across journalistic attributes and lastly, they should be discernible from other frames. This analysis aims to amplify, enrich, verify and highlight the findings of the quantitative content analysis and is the bedrock of my quantitative analysis.

For the critical discourse analysis portion, I randomly sampled 21 articles over the six-month span of the conflict and tagged keywords describing the media portrayal of Israeli and Palestinian groups to analyze what terms, themes and frames are employed by the media when

reporting on Israelis and Palestinians. The chosen articles were skimmed over to identify frames by utilizing the framing definitions and theoretical framework applied in this research. I performed qualitative textual analysis on the articles and focused on which persons involved in the conflict are portrayed through ethos (Roksvold, 1989).

The process of organizing texts into categories is known as classification. I traditionally hand code and classify texts based on a variety of attributes of interest. I logged keywords that were indicative of loaded, biased language and tone and noted down the government officials mentioned and quoted in the article. A list of the words includes "hostage", "casualties", "soldiers", "civilians", "strike", "killed", "dead", "massacre", "terrorists", "attack", "bombing", "victims".

For elite and government officials I highlighted "Israeli military", "chief military spokesperson", "Palestinian health officials", "Benjamin Netanyahu", "Palestinian Civil defense", "Palestinian Red Crescent", "Israel's foreign minister", "Palestinian Health Ministry", "Washington", "Palestinian health official", "Israel Katz", "US State Department", "Mathew Miller", "Yoav Gallant", "Israel Defense Minister", "Pentagon", "Sabrina Singh", "Daniel Hagari", "John Kirby","Biden","Tzachi Hanegbi", "Israeli media", "Ismail Haniyeh", "Izzat el Reshiq", "Jon Finer", "White House", "Antony Blinken", "Osama Hamdan". I chose these entities as my unit of analysis as they represent their respective states in an elite or official capacity.

After applying critical discourse analysis to identify the frames and themes and the elite officials, I applied it on a much larger scale using R. I performed keyword extraction on the articles using the list I had prepared from the qualitative analysis portion. Keyword extraction enables me to extract specific and relevant information from unstructured textdata such as

newspaper articles. This method is used to extract important keywords from text data, summarize text data, find commonly noted attributes, and calculate sentiment of a particular topic.

Reliability and Validity

The mixed method approach of combining qualitative critical discourse analysis and quantitative content analysis should expand the reliability and validity of the findings. Additionally, to ensure validity, I will run a linear regression on the results of the keyword extraction to check how well the model explains the variability of the dependent variable (media coverage), a high r-squared will show that the model explains the variance in the media coverage. Low p-values of 0.05 and below will also indicate validity as they are statistically significant.

Limitations

The New York Times API only gives access to the abstract of the articles and has an API callrate limit of 2000 articles.

IV.   DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Research objectives

This study analyses how coverage on Israel-Palestine is biased due to the reliance of the media on official government sources through the New York Times and The Guardian coverage of the conflict. This study is based on the claims that the coverage of these newspapers is influenced by the interests of the governments, the military and the elite.

Summary of findings

A total of 5479 articles were published, 3739 from the Guardian and 2010 from the New York Times. The findings revealed that the media relied heavily on elite, military and government sources in their coverage, their coverage was skewed to the Israeli perspective and the authors employed loaded emotive language that distinguished Israelis as worthy victims and Palestinians as unworthy victims.

Sources used in the coverage

Qualitative findings

The qualitative research found that majority of the coverage favored the perspectives of the Israelis on the conflict and often quoted Israeli officials like the Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant. U.S. government officials and entities were mentioned frequently however this is owing to its nature as a U.S. based media company. Palestinians were rarely ever quoted and if interviewed the Palestinians

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interviewed were mostly civilians who hold no position of power or affiliation to the government. Journalists depend on official sources to frame the content of their stories (Mermin, 1997).

The below excerpts from the media sites exemplify this coverage. On the 16th of October, the New York Times published an article titled *Tracking Cellphone Data by Neighborhood, IsraelGauges Gaza Evacuation* detailed how Israel had warned Gazan living in the north to flee in preparation for the ground operation to oust Hamas. The article details how the Israeli Militaryallowed a New York Times journalist to view the data tracking system, hoping to show what itwas doing to minimize civilian casualties in Gaza. This is a clear example of 'embedded journalism' which refers to reporters accompanying troops to a conflict. Journalists often receive special perks from the governments and the military leading to biased media coverage in their favor. Joseph (2014), states that the media cannot be viewed in isolation rather within the wider context of the political, economic and socio-cultural institutions and circumstances of a given country. She further states that because of its reliance other parts of the system, the media tends to reflect the viewpoints of those in power.

On the 7th of October, Steven Erlanger of the New York Times published an article titled *An Attack from Gaza and an Israeli Declaration of War. Now What?* This article included quotes and mentions from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Natan Sachs the director of the Centre for Middle East Policy of the Brookings Institution, Mark Heller, a senior researcher at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies, Carl Bildt the former Swedish prime minister andforeign minister, Amberin Zaman, an analyst for Al-Monitor a Washington-based news website that covers the Middle East, the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia, Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Aaron David Miller, a former American diplomat. The article did not mention or quote asingle

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Palestinian or Gazan official further reinforcing Chomsky's third filter on sourcing where the media aligns itself with the elite leading to biased coverage that is skewed towards the perspectives of the elites. In a bid to acquire financial and political advantage, the media most often takes the side of powerby aligning themselves with powerful actors (Hawkins, 2011; Sahin and Karayianni, 2020; Shinar, 2009). Official government sources serve as the primary source of political news and often limit the scope of discussion present in the media (Bennett, 1990; Hallin, 1986, Gans, 1980). The media over relies on corporate and official government sources and fails to factor in perspectives of local people

An editor's note published by the New York Times on the 23rd of October recalled a recounted article of an explosion at a hospital in Gaza city that the New York Times initially reported to have been the result of an Israeli airstrike. Israel denied plausibility and American and international officials claimed the rocket came from Palestinian fighter positions. The New YorkTimes reported that the initial claim relied on Hamas sources and could not verify those claims. The language employed by the author casts doubton the source and insinuates that information from Hamas and other Palestinian officials.

In an article published by the Guardian titled *Israeli Forces enter new phase of war against Hamas with Gaza raid,* U.S. President Biden casts doubt on civilian casualty figures put forwardby the Palestinians claiming he has no confidence in the numbers. Reporting facts and figures as Hamas-run casts doubt on the verity of the claim as they are considered to be a terrorist group. McChensey (2002), notes that the skewed coverage of other countries and events are a result oflack of professional journalism, the dominance of major media by a small number of large and powerful profit-oriented corporations and ownership rules.

The analysis of coverage reveals the New York Times heavily relied on statements and

interviews from elite members of the Israeli and the U.S government and military personnel suchas Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, U.S President Joe Biden and the Head of Israels defense.

Quantitative finding

Figure 1 details the quantitative analysis on sourcing The New York Times published 2010 number of articles about Gaza in the five-month time period from the 7th of October to the 7th of March. The mentions of the Israeli figures are as follows; the Israeli military was mentioned 93 times followed closely by Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli media had 2 mentions. The U.S government officials and entities mentions are as follows; the White house had 33 mentions, Washington had 27 mentionsand the Pentagon had 18 mentions and the United States Secretary of State had one mention. ThePalestinians were the least represented with one mention of Osama Hamdan a Hamas spokesperson and three mentions of the Palestinian Health Ministry.
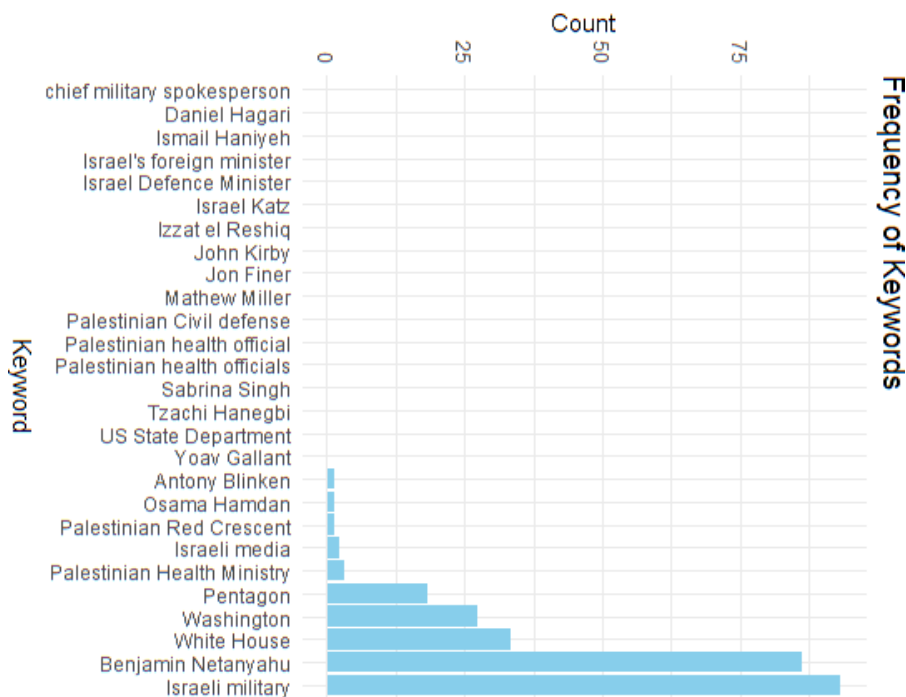
Figure 1

In the Guardian, the Israeli military were the most quoted entity with 2327, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu followed closely and was quoted 2,086 times, the White House and Washington representing the U.S was quoted 2,145 times and 1707 times respectively. Israeli and U.S. officials were the most represented groups in this analysis with the most quotes and Palestinians entities and officials were quoted the least with the highest Palestinian entity being the Palestinian Health Ministry quoted 282 times.

Figure 2 below presents a side-by-side comparison of the number of quotes per highlighted entity.
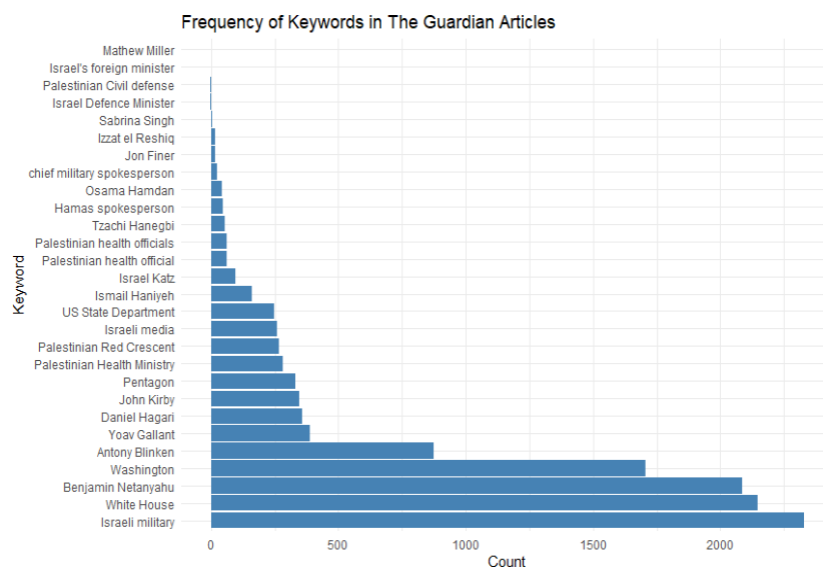
Frequency of Keywords in The Guardian Articles

Figure 2

Worthy and Unworthy victims

Qualitative finding

Throughout the five months, the media employed emotionally charged language in their coverage. When reporting on Palestinian death, they take on a passive tone of voice and make nomention of the aggressor or the perpetrator of the crime.

An article published by the Guardian titled details the death of Wael al-Dahdouh quoted as saying 'killed in what Al Jazeera said was an airstrike'. A similar article titled Several Family

Members of Al Jazeera's Gaza Bureau Chief Are Killed published by the New York Times on the 25th of October mentions the death of the wife, son, daughter and infant grandson of Wael al-Dahdouh, the Gaza bureau chief of Al Jazeera who were killed at the Nuseirat refugee camp. Thesame article mentions the death of Palestinian American Journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, an Al Jazeera reporter who was shot in the head and killed in the West Bank city of Jenin. The New York Times does not directly mention who the attacker was, rather they use the quote 'according to Al Jazeera'.

Another article *Israel Sticks to Call for Gaza Evacuation and Readies a Possible Invasion* by Aurelien Breeden published on the 18th of October mentions that fifteen French citizens were confirmed to have been killed in the attacks by Hamas. This finding is consistent with Chomsky's concept of worthy and unworthy victims by proving a double standard and biasedcoverage where only Israelis, and other westerners are accorded the privilege of having their attackers named.

Quantitative finding

An analysis of both the New York Times and the Guardian reveals that the words 'Israeli' and 'Israel' occur more times than 'Palestinian' even as the Palestinian death count rose beyond that of the Israelis. An analysis on the Guardian reveals, there are 3242 mentions of Israel, 2474 mentions of Israeli 1128 mentions of Palestine, 2502 mentions of Palestinians and 2612 mentions of Hamas.

Figure 3 below is a graph of the number of mentions across all the groups mentioned in the articles by the Guardian.
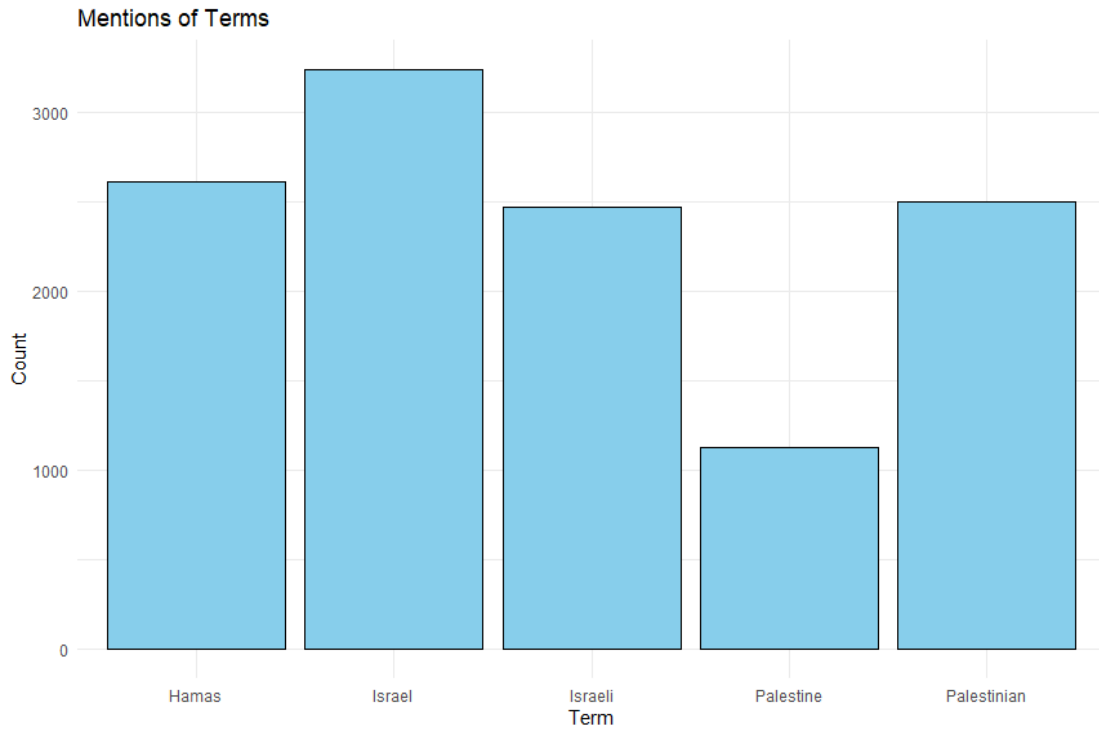
Mentions of Terms

Figure 3

An analysis of coverage by the New York Times reveals that the word Israel was mentioned 1271 times, Palestine was mentioned 23 times, Palestinian was mentioned 373 times and Hamas was mentioned 655 times. The reason for the New York Times having fewer mentions is as a result of their API set up that only allows access to the abstract of the articles and not the entire content unlike the Guardian. Figure 4 below is a graph depicting the number of group mentions across the articles by the New York Times.
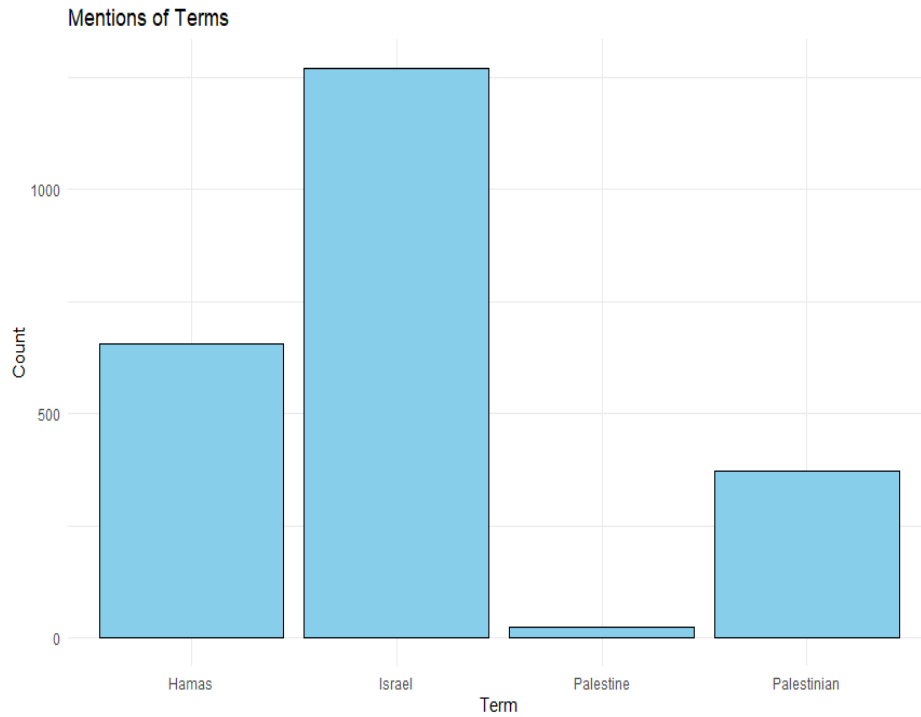
Mentions of Terms

Figure 4

Figure 5 below shows the key word counts by group across the New York Times. Israel is the most represented group across all categories indicating high Israeli victim coverage in line with Herman and Chomsky worthy and unworthy victim concept. The Israelis are worthy victims as evidenced by the high mention of Israel and Israeli in the media articles.
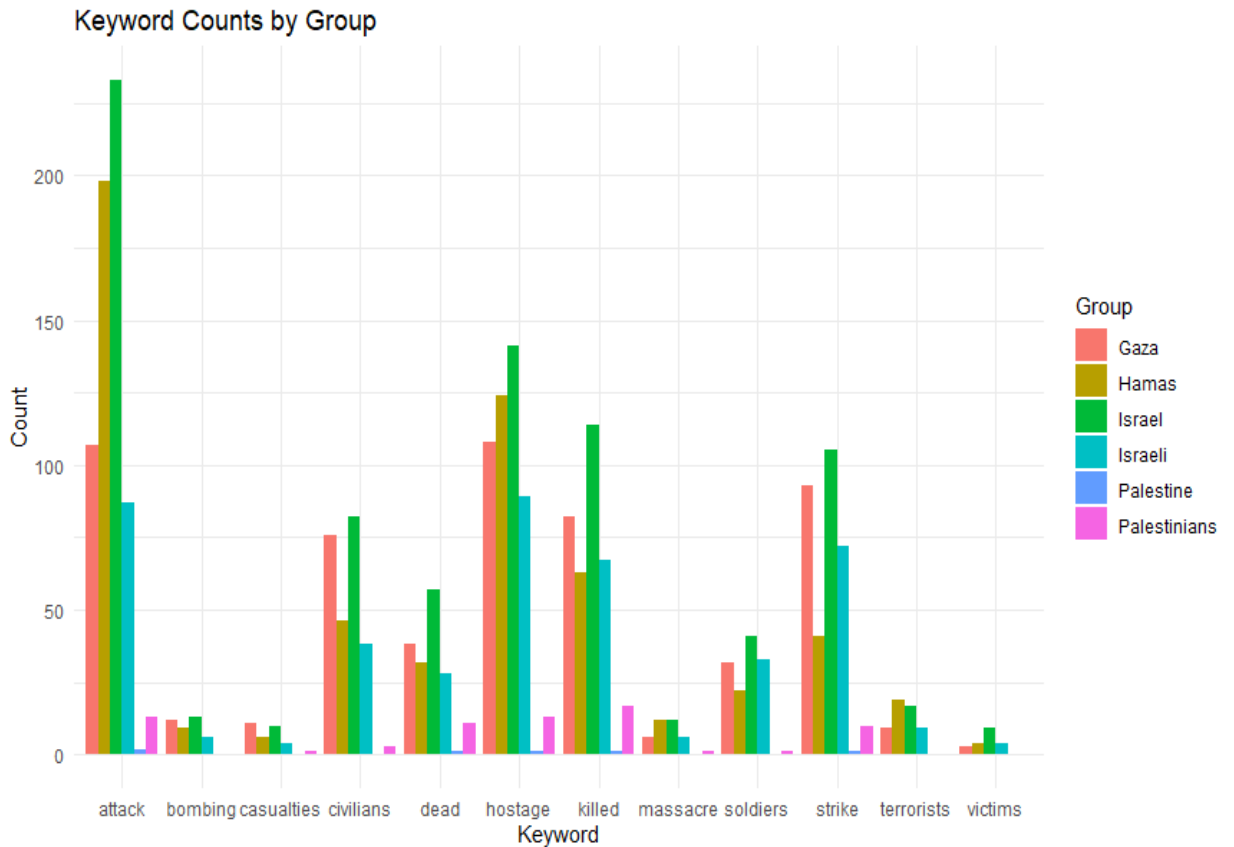
33

Keyword Counts by Group

Figure 5

An analysis of the emotive key word counts highlighted in the qualitative portion of the analysis revealed that Israel is more likely to be associated with the word 'massacre' at 12 words, Israeli with 6 and Palestinians with 1. At zero mentions, Palestinians are less likely to be considered victims unlike Israel with 9 mentions and Israeli with 4 mentions.

Figure 6 is an analysis of emotive key word counts across the Guardian's content. Unlike the New York times, the Guardian seems to have more variation in their group coverage. While mentions of Israel against the key word counts are still relatively high, they appear to cover the groups in nearly the same regard. A possible explanation for this is that the Guardian is

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traditionally left leaning while the New York Times takes on a more liberal stance.
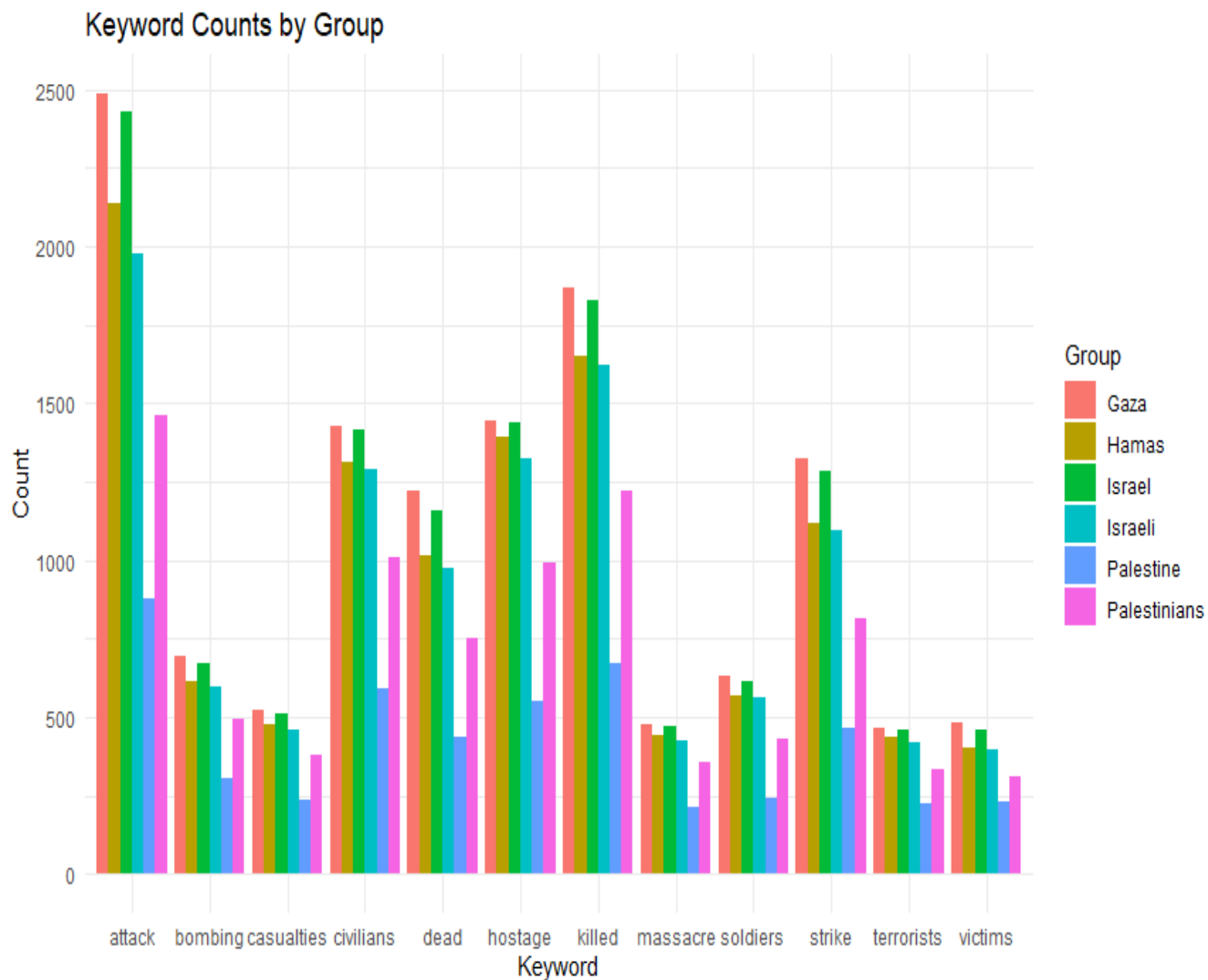

Figure 6

To ensure validity and to determine the efficacy of the model in determining key words, a linear regression on the key word counts of the Guardian articles. My dependent variable in my analysis is the count and the group is my independent variable and I my goal is to assess how my dependent variable (count) varies with my independent variable (groups).

```
------------------------------
                  Model 1
------------------------------
(Intercept)       1087.42 ***
                  (151.18)
GroupHamas        -123.50
                  (213.81)
GroupIsrael        -25.17
                  (213.81)
GroupIsraeli      -158.00
                  (213.81)
GroupPalestine    -666.42 **
                  (213.81)
GroupPalestinians -374.25
                  (213.81)
------------------------------
R^2                  0.18
Adj. R^2             0.11
Num. obs.           72
==============================
*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05
```

Figure 7

Figure 7 indicates the intercept is 1087 words when all other group variables are zero and is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.001. The groups Hamas, Israel, Israeli and Palestinians are not statistically significant, but the group Palestine is statistically significant and this suggests that the group Palestine is associated with a decrease in 666 word count. The R2 indicates that 18% of the variance in the key word count is explained by the model.

A linear regression was performed on the New York Times to assess the efficiency of the model. The results are as follows.

```
------------------------------
(Intercept)          48.08 ***
                    (12.39)
GroupHamas           -0.08
                    (17.53)
GroupIsrael          21.42
                    (17.53)
GroupIsraeli        -11.17
                    (17.53)
GroupPalestine      -47.58 **
                    (17.53)
GroupPalestinians   -42.25 *
                    (17.53)
------------------------------
R^2                   0.26
Adj. R^2              0.20
Num. obs.              72
==============================
```

Figure 8

The R2 of 0.26 indicates that 26% of the variability in the key word counts can be explained by the predictor variable. The average key word count is 48.08. Hamas, Israel and Israeli are not statistically significant, Palestine and Palestinians are statistically significant with Palestine being associated with a decrease of 47 key word counts and Palestinians being associated with a decrease of 42 key word counts.

V. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the extent to which the media relies on elite and government officials for sources and how this contributes to the portrayal of Israelis and Palestinians in the media coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The theoretical framework that guided my research is propaganda model created by Herman and Chomsky with a particular focus on the third filter on sourcing as well as the concept of worthy and unworthy victims. My research presupposes that media coverage on Israel-Palestine heavily relied on elite, military and government officials as sources who by acting on their own interest,influence the coverage of the conflict. This study highlights the symbiotic relationship between the media and the government where the media rely on the government for information out of economic constraints and how the elite and government officials take advantage of this relationship and reliance to disseminate self-serving interest in the form of bias.

This study employed a mixed methods approach by combining critical discourse analysis with quantitative content analysis to answer the research question. The qualitative critical discourse portion established themes and frames that highlighted the difference between worthy victims and unworthy victims such as tone of coverage, amount of coverage and the information source. The qualitative critical discourse analysis portion of the study revealed that the media was heavily reliant on official government sources such as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S President Joe Biden and other government entities like the White House and Pentagon who were regularly mentioned in the articles. Palestinian officials were rarely ever quoted or mentioned

The qualitative critical discourse analysis informed the quantitative portion of my research

where I applied the pre-established frames to perform content analysis using R. The quantitative portion of my study highlighted that coverage favored Israel and that media coverage was skewed to the Israeli side as they had the most mentions and coverage in the media with Palestine and Palestinians having significantly lower mentions in comparison. The results are in accordance with the Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model and the concept of worthy and unworthy victims.

The findings of this study point out a reliance on U.S. and Israeli sources in the media coverage.Media reliance on official government sources has resulted in biased coverage. The study showsthat Israeli victims are treated as worthy victims and receive a lot of media coverage and portrayed in a more sympathetic tone while the media reserves loaded and emotive biased language for Palestinians highlighting their unworthy victim status. This biased coverage aligns with Herman and Chomsky's concept of worthy and unworthy victims.

This biased rhetoric has vast implications on society and the media we consume. We assume the media to be independent and impartial and free from outside interference in order to provide true and factual information. However, according to the results of my study and many other researchers, the media is a puppet of the elite and government officials which brings the impartiality of the media to question. Previous researchers have discussed the medias role in shaping public opinion and conflict is a sensitive concern and biased coverage of one party results to a biased public opinion.

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