

FRAMING THE GAZA-ISRAEL WAR: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL MEDIA NARRATIVES (2023–2025 MARCH)

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18534138>

Keywords

Gaza-Israel War, Framing, Newspaper

Article History

Received: 07 December 2025

Accepted: 22 January 2026

Published: 09 February 2026

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Abstract

In October 2023, the Gaza-Israel violence received extensive reporting on international media organisations, with variability in coverage greatly depending on the region. This paper examines The Framing of the Conflict in The New York Times, The Dawn, and Gulf Times between October 2023 and March 2025 using Entman's Theory of Framing to discuss changes in how this problem is framed, its causes, and the moral evaluations and solutions suggested. First, the Western media, especially The New York Times, covered the Conflict. It was perceived to be a self-defence measure by Israel in response to the surprise attack of Hamas, and the emphasis was on the militarisation of the Conflict and the right to save the lives of its citizens. On the other hand, the Middle East and the Global South reports by the same media outlets, e.g., The Dawn, the Gulf Times, focused on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and criticised the military operations of Israel as disproportionate and on the suffering of the Palestinian people. The media coverage changed towards more human rights abuses, international responsibility, and the necessity of a ceasefire and a peace negotiation as the Conflict continued. The paper explains the various ways in which media presentation of the war between Gaza and Israel affected the overall understanding of the war, along with the flexibility of international diplomacy and a wider geopolitical division between the West and the Global South. The results highlight the central role that media plays in the Framing of conflicts and how these frames influence the discourse and interventions in international politics.

Introduction

The origin of the Gaza-Israel conflict lies in the complicated history of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict that has a long history stretching more than a century(Worth et al., 2009)Even though the triggering event of a new conflict between Hamas and Israel occurred in October 2023, the roots of this confrontation can be traced back to

the political, territorial, and religious antagonism between Israelis and Palestinians that started in the first half of the 20th century(Ceren, 2014)The Balfour Declaration of 1917, which advocated the creation of a Jewish nation in Palestine, was the start of the growing Conflict between Jews and Arabs in the area (Finkelstein, 2016). With the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the Arab-

Israeli wars, especially the Six-Day War of 1967, which led to the occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank by the Israelis, the beginnings of the continued animosity between Israel and Palestinian groupings, such as Hamas, were planted (Souza et al., 2024). These outbreaks of violence, such as instances of periodic outbursts, have taken place over decades, and the Gaza Strip has been the focus of these outbreaks of violence, especially following the rule of Hamas in 2007 (Ceren, 2014). The latest intensification started on 7 October 2023, as the Hamas group carried out a surprise attack on Israeli towns and cities, killing more than a thousand Israelis and wounding thousands of others. This Attack was then succeeded by an enormous Israeli military retaliation that consisted of airstrikes on Gaza, which took down the infrastructure of Hamas, but caused massive destruction of civilian infrastructure, leading to a humanitarian disaster in Gaza. By March 2025, the war had escalated into an international problem, and it had a serious toll on civilians in Gaza, and the political consequences of the war strongly influenced domestic and international opinion. Media outlets in different parts of the world have reported the escalating violence; however, the coverage of the Conflict has been framed differently depending on the media's political orientation and geographic location.

Problem Statement

Media framing of the Gaza-Israel conflict is a key determinant of how the world has been educated and how the international community has reacted to deal with the Conflict. Nevertheless, Framing differs greatly across media sources, as Western media tends to be more preoccupied with Israeli security issues and self-defense (El-Shewy et al., 2025). Quite on the contrary, the Middle East and Global South media focus on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Palestinian suffering. These contrasting frames add to the polarization of accounts of the Conflict affecting mass media opinion, foreign policy-making, and international diplomacy. The absence of a unified, balanced account of media coverage worldwide has made it

challenging to identify a permanent resolution to the peace issue. It is essential to examine the development of these frames and what they reveal about international reactions to determine the impact of media representation on diplomatic negotiations and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Research Objectives

To explore how The New York Times, The Dawn, and Gulf Times reported the war between Gaza and Israel in October 2023-March 2025, and how they defined the problem, attributed causes, provided moral judgements, and made treatment recommendations.

Research Questions

1. What is the reporting of the Gaza-Israel war by the international media between October 2023 and March 2025?
2. What are the differences between how Western media frames the situation and the Middle Eastern or Global South ones do?
3. What is the Change in Framing through the various stages of the Conflict?

Literature Review

Framing in the media is a key factor in shaping perceptions, interpretations, and actions regarding conflicts. In turn, the Framing Theory, developed by Robert Entman, posits that news media do not simply report events but rather select, highlight, and arrange specific sides of events in ways that influence how the audience perceives them (Entman, 1993). Within the context of war and armed Conflict, media frames describe the problem, establish cause-and-effect, provide moral judgment, and offer solutions or reactions. (Ceren, 2014) In one literature review of the media and political Conflict, it was determined that although much has been written on how the Western news media frames foreign conflicts, much less has been written about non-Western settings, and no frameworks have been constructed for Western democracies. (Worth et al., 2009)

Regarding the Gaza-Israel situation, past literature has recorded the opposition of the media frames.

As discussed in an earlier study of media coverage of previous Gaza wars (such as 2008-09, 2014), access controls, media censorship, and the application of real-time social and new media had a role in the narrative-building in both directions, i.e. choosing the humanitarian narrative in Gaza or using a security narrative in Israel, leading to a difference in how international actors react (Al-Jarf, 2024)

Such precinctal reporting has frequently taken the wrong path in defining the problem (Bdier et al., 2025). As they show the problem in the Framing as terrorist aggression against Israel, the other frame as an occupation-induced humanitarian disaster in Gaza, Causal attribution in both situations is also different: one frame seems to hold Hamas accountable because of its attacks, another because of its responses and blockade caused by Israel. (Yadlin et al., n.d.) Moral judgment is then split: some sources justify the retaliation of the military force as self-defence, and others criticise the unreasonable use of force as war atrocities. (Ahmed et al., 2014b) Treatment suggestions range from the importance of military victory to the provision of humanitarian corridors, ceasefires, and legal responsibility. (Maalej & Zibin, 2024) The other dimension, though, is the contribution of media prejudice and of presentation tools such as images, headlines, sources, and wording. A critical analysis has found that frames are tools of control and communication that actors in war situations use to influence public opinion. In coverage of Gaza, according to some observers, the inundation of

pictures from the frontlines on digital and social media imposed specific frames on the international agenda (Yadlin & Evental, 2024). However, that bias is very much present in the way the Palestinian victims are represented as undifferentiated masses and the Israeli victims as individualised human beings (Insights, n.d.). The applicability of Framing in international relations and the participation of citizens is also widely reported. (Mansour, 2009) To illustrate, media frames shape public discourse, which in turn may reinforce or constrain governmental policies and affect international actors. In the Gaza-Israel case, the mode in which the Palestinian suffering is framed, and genocide or war crimes are alleged, international legal action, sanctions, and a rethink of alliances have been called. (Hokayem, 2023). In the meantime, the security-focused frame justifies military intervention and proposes international law as a sanction against the state. Overall, the literature highlights that war coverage is not impartial; it is shaped by political, cultural, economic, and technological factors. (Ahmed et al., 2014a) There is consensus that global war journalism often privileges state narratives in the early phases, shifting later to humanitarian/human rights frames as civilian cost becomes evident (Vladislavljević, 2015; Ibrahim, 2010). In the Gaza-Israel context, earlier wars provide a comparative backdrop showing how framing outcomes influence international response, making this space especially apt for further study.

Table 1: Souce this study

The analysis is structured around five critical phases of the Conflict to trace frame evolution over time:

Phase	Description
Phase 1	Initial Attack (7 October-14 October 2023) - Hamas's surprise attack and Israeli retaliation
Phase 2	Israeli retaliation and Gaza Bombardment (15 Oct-Dec 2023) - Mass displacement, hospital bombings
Phase 3	International Pressure (Jan-Feb 2024) - UN debates, ICJ hearings, mass protests
Phase 4	Ceasefire Negotiations & Prolonged Conflict (Mar-Oct 2024)
Phase 5	Re-escalation and Shifting Narratives and Genocide Accusations (Nov 2024-Mar 2025)

Theoretical Framework

Entman's Framing Theory (1993)

Entman defines Framing as:

"To select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text,

in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation."

Framing Function	Coding Questions	Examples
Problem Definition	How is the Conflict introduced? What is described as the issue?	War between Hamas and Israel" vs. "Genocide in Gaza"
Causal Attribution	Who is portrayed as responsible for starting/escalating the Conflict?	Hamas, the Israeli government, and regional instability
Moral Evaluation	Are actions framed as justified, condemned, or neutral?	Self-defence" vs. "War crimes"
Treatment Recommendation	What solutions or actions are advocated or implied?	Ceasefire, military escalation, international intervention

Methodology

The qualitative content analysis of nine international news media's coverage of the Israel war has been analyzed. A coding sheet using nodes and sub-nodes is designed in NVivo. Qualitative content analysis using conventional methods is used, where predefined codes will be observed in the data(Hsieh & Shannon, 2005)

2. Gulf Times

3. Dawn

After selecting international newspaper coverage of the Gaza War in the first stage, the researcher selected news reports from the selected newspapers using alternative selection criteria, selecting one news report (by newspaper) on alternate days from 7 October 2023 to 31 March 2025 in five phases.

Sample

The researchers used multistage sampling to collect data from international newspapers. (Cresswell, 2014)In the first stage, list down the top nine international newspapers based on their top ranking. These are the following.

1. The New York Times,
2. The Guardian,
3. The Moscow Times,
4. Gulf Times
5. Jerusalem Post,
6. The Indian Times, China Daily
7. Dawn

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study is News Articles (online editions) from all newspaper outlets that are included in the sample. Headlines and story bodies are analyzed using Entman's Framing of Conflict. And the five phases of war are mentioned in the paper. *Table 1*

Findings

The Gaza-Israel conflict from October 2023 to March 2025 has been framed in the media across five main phases, each demonstrating the shifting dynamics of the Conflict. The coverage from The Dawn, The New York Times, and Gulf Times presents diverse perspectives, emphasising various elements such as military escalation, humanitarian concerns, international influence, and diplomatic initiatives. Using Entman's framing Theory, these outlets frame the situation by addressing the problem definition, causal attribution, moral

Sample News articles from Western newspapers, the Middle East, and South Asian regions. The researcher then selected three newspapers through a simple random sampling technique. The researcher found three newspapers. These are the following.

1. The New York Times,

evaluation, and treatment recommendation of each phase.

Phase	The New York Times	The Dawn	Gulf Times
Phase 1: Initial Attack and Military Retaliation	Israeli self-defense focuses on military escalation, casualties on both sides	Humanitarian crisis in Gaza, disproportionate Israeli airstrikes, and civilian toll emphasized	Humanitarian catastrophe, Israeli airstrikes, and siege, causing civilian suffering
Phase 2: Intensified Retaliation and Humanitarian Crisis	The growing humanitarian crisis, the collapse of Gaza's infrastructure, and military strikes continue.	Attacks on civilian infrastructure call for international intervention and accountability.	International condemnation, focus on Israel's actions, and the humanitarian toll
Phase 3: International Pressure and Calls for Ceasefire	Calls for a ceasefire, international law violations, and Israel's right to defend are emphasized	Humanitarian crisis exacerbated, Israel's military aggression condemned, calls for sanctions.	Emphasis on international intervention, diplomatic pressure, and humanitarian corridors
Phase 4: Prolonged Conflict and Diplomatic Stalemate	Humanitarian collapse, international calls for a ceasefire, and humanitarian aid	Focus on Palestinian suffering, global solidarity for Palestine, and condemnation of Israeli actions.	Increasing international pressure, Gaza's health system is collapsing, and there is a need for a ceasefire.
Phase 5: Genocide Accusations and Renewed Military Strikes	Genocide accusations, harsh criticism of Israeli actions, and increasing international pressure	International condemnation, Framing of Israel's actions as genocide, and the need for international courts.	Focus on genocide accusations, humanitarian disaster, call for global accountability, and sanctions.

Phase 1: Initial Attack and Military Retaliation (7 October – 14 October 2023)

The war started in the initial stage when Hamas ambushed the Israeli towns, and then Israel retaliated. The causal attribution during this stage instantly made the issue a humanitarian crisis based on the number of civilians killed by Israeli airstrikes and the breakdown of the healthcare infrastructure, which resulted in the escalation of violence. Nonetheless, not all moral judgments were like this. In contrast, Western media, such as The New York Times, defended Israeli retaliation by claiming it was a necessary self-defence; Middle Eastern media pointed to the disproportion of the airstrikes as Israeli attacks against civilian targets.

In contrast, Gulf Times portrayed this initial phase as the point at which a humanitarian disaster was unfolding. The problem definition of this outlet was quite focused on the civilian sufferings of Gaza and the role of Israel in heightening this crisis by imposing a full siege and severing of essential supplies. The calls of humanitarian intervention by international forces were becoming louder, and the Gulf Times was depicting the acts of Israel as war crimes.

The treatment advice in all the outlets, The Dawn included, the Gulf Times, echoed in favour of international intervention, humanitarian delivery, and demanded a ceasefire to reduce the increasing civilian casualty in Gaza.

Phase 2: Intensified Retaliation and the Growing Humanitarian Crisis (15 October – 31 December 2023)

With the intensification of the Conflict, the airstrikes and ground manoeuvres of the Israelis intensified, which led to significant civilian casualties. At this stage, the problem definition became more narrowly focused on the humanitarian disaster in Gaza. Reports on the human toll, which outlined the collapse of infrastructure, the devastation of hospitals, and the shortage of essential supplies, became a highlight in the New York Times. However, it still did not see the start of the Conflict, mainly due to the terrorist activities of Hamas, and stressed the significance of the military reaction of Israel.

Conversely, The Dawn described the problem mainly as a violation of the human rights issue, with Israel engaging in the intensive bombardment and the inactivity of the international community to stop it. The causality was evidently focused on the military actions in Israel, such as airstrikes and the blockade of Gaza, which were seen as a violation of human rights. According to moral judgments in the Middle Eastern press and Gulf Times, the actions of Israel were disproportional, involving war crimes and genocide, notably when the media reported about the Attack against civilian infrastructure.

At this stage, the pressure of the international community started to increase, especially that of regional players like Turkey and Qatar, which made strong statements against the activities of Israel (Gulf Times, 2023). These nations promoted accountability and sanctions against Israel, and this would later emerge as a constant recommendation within the media.

Phase 3: International Pressure and Calls for Ceasefire (1 January – 31 March 2024)

The more the deaths increased, and Israel was still doing its military operations without halting, the more the international community would pressure Israel. There were heightened diplomatic efforts, and countries like Turkey and South Africa accused Israel of committing genocide in Gaza. The Gulf Times characterised the problem as a

moral catastrophe with the ethical sins of Israeli military actions. The causal attribution also continued to be bombings and blockades by Israelis, which were considered to be major contributors to the humanitarian situation.

The New York Times, in its turn, has started to be more critical of Israel. Beginning as an Israeli effort of self-defence, it developed more humanitarian aspects of the Conflict, especially the vital state of civilian infrastructure in Gaza and the growing international pressure. The ethical judgement of this period shows that there was a substantial shift towards a more sceptical attitude towards the actions of Israel, especially its siege on Gaza, which hindered humanitarian aid.

The New York Times and the Gulf Times were among the newspapers that highlighted offers of treatment focused on international mediation, a truce, and increased humanitarian aid. Gulf Times also underlined the role played by Arab states, particularly Qatar, in supporting sanctions toward Israel and opening up humanitarian routes into Gaza.

Phase 4: Prolonged Conflict and Diplomatic Stalemate (April – September 2024)

By now, the humanitarian disaster in Gaza was so severe as never before. Gaza has virtually fallen apart as its health system, and most media outlets have been devoted to food shortages and starvation, as well as the killing of civilians. Despite international organisations like the United Nations urging Israel to stop its military operations, the current military operations of Israel have escalated the humanitarian crisis.

Both the New York Times and The Dawn continued to stress the role of Israel in committing human rights abuses in Gaza, as civilian deaths were also covered. The Framing was seriously interested in the blockades and the inability of international diplomacy to secure a lasting ceasefire. The humanitarian crisis definition in the Gulf Times was still on the humanitarian crisis, whereas the moral analysis was on the alleged Israeli war crimes. The treatment options emphasised international mediation to calm the situation, humanitarian provision, and the

responsibility of Israel's military acts before international courts.

Phase 5: Genocide Accusations and Renewed Military Strikes (October 2024 – March 2025)

In the last stage, the global community had become more divided in its opinions on how to resolve the current Conflict. The definition of the problem in both outlets is now highly based on the Israeli war crimes and genocide claims. It is interesting to note that other countries, such as South Africa and Turkey, kept accusing Israel of committing genocide in Gaza. Causal attribution was still pegged to the actions of Israel, especially the escalated bombings and the siege of Gaza.

The ethical highs came out especially critical, and the actions of Israel were condemned to a large extent. The New York Times and Gulf Times became more inclined to discuss the issue in the framework of human rights and focus on the necessity of international punishments and the further pressure on Israel to enable humanitarian interventions in Gaza.

During the five stages of the Gaza-Israel conflict, Framing of the war by The New York Times, The Dawn, and Gulf Times developed in reaction to the realities on the ground. Escalation of military, retaliation, and international pressure through ceasefires became the main themes mentioned by media in these outlets, and again, constant accentuation of how the military actions on the Israeli side were disastrous to the civil population of Gaza. The definitions of the problem, causation, moral judgments, and treatment proposals varied, yet all sources reached a common conclusion: the need to intervene internationally and provide humanitarian assistance. These outlets were all influenced by Entman through the prism of Framing, reflecting the universal perception of the Conflict and calling for accountability and immediate intervention to resolve the current humanitarian disaster.

Discussion

Such international media houses have presented the Gaza-Israel crisis differently, which is based on their political and cultural backgrounds. By

examining The New York Times, The Dawn, and Gulf Times, we will be able to explore the role of media framing and its evolution as the Conflict unfolds, shaped by various priorities, geopolitical partnerships, and the mood. The following three research questions guide this discussion:

What has been framed in the international media sources in relation to the war between Gaza and Israel since October 2023 to March 2025?

Various media across the world have presented the Gaza-Israel conflict from different perspectives, yet there has been a significant change in the coverage over time. During the initial period of the war (October 2023 to December 2023), the messages of the Western media, which include The New York Times, prioritised the issue of safety, portraying Israel as having the right to self-defence in the face of militant attacks by Hamas. (Masten, 2001) The Framing here reflected Israel's justification of the use of force, which can be conformed with the security-oriented frameworks of the news elsewhere in the West, by making the humanitarian disaster in Gaza a claimant of its place in the media framing. (Yadlin & Evental, 2024) Such an interpretation of the unfolding situation as a security issue enabled Israel to explain its activities as necessary and justified. The Dawn, one of the Pakistani media houses, presented the Conflict mainly in the humanitarian perspective, pointing to the Palestinian casualties, the excessive use of force by Israel, and the humanitarian crisis caused by the siege of Gaza (El-Shewy et al., 2025) This is in line with the fact that the Pakistani media houses focus on humanitarian issues, especially the displacement of civilians and the suffering of Palestinians when there is an escalation of military action (Miladi, 2025) Under this type of Framing, moral assessment of the Conflict is done, which requires accountability and international intervention.

In comparison, Western media, such as The New York Times, did not change its approach to a more humanitarian one until the number of Palestinian civilian deaths became more pronounced, which

put more international pressure on the humanitarian implications of Israeli actions. By 2025, The New York Times, The Dawn, and the Gulf Times had all accepted the humanitarian disaster in Gaza. (Zughbur, 2023) Nevertheless, they continued to be different in their frames, whereby the Western media still maintained its security in Israel. Meanwhile, the Middle Eastern and Global South media focused on the violations of international law and war crimes of Israel. This drift helps substantiate the claims put forth by Maslog et al. (2006), who argue that media frames may reflect the political circumstances of the outlet and the ideological leanings of its viewers. Gulf Times continued to contextualise the Conflict as a form of unfair military occupation. It demanded international responsibility, which is in line with the larger accusation of (Doufesh & Briel, 2021) about the Israeli army's methods and their historical background of colonialism and apartheid.

What Are the Differences between Framing by Western Media and Middle Eastern or Global South Media?

Framing dissimilarities between Western and Middle Eastern, or Global South, media houses are particularly evident in their coverage of military action and human rights. The New York Times, as a Western representative, expressed the Conflict between Gaza and Israel in the context of Israeli self-defence against a terror threat in the first place, and Hamas attacks became the motivation of the violence. This is similar to Seib's (2005) claim that the Western media frequently legitimise military action within the security prism, where military retaliation is seen as necessary to protect the country. According to Jones (2011), Western outlets often support narratives of the state, particularly when one of the parties concerned is a partner of Western states, such as Israel. By contrast, the media in the Middle East, such as The Dawn, presented the Conflict as a human rights matter, centering on the humanitarian cost and excessive Israeli measures. As Manor & Crilley (2018) put it, such Framing emphasises the right of the civilians having been

violated and the onus of the humanitarian crisis has been placed upon Israeli military strategies. The Dawn highlighted the blockade of Gaza, the demolition of the medical infrastructure, and the airstrikes of Israeli forces on civilian territories. In their reporting, Gulf Times put the Conflict into the context of a colonial struggle which demanded Palestinian self-determination and criticised the role of Israel in continuing the historical injustice. This Framing coincides with those who suggest that the Middle Eastern and Global South media concentrate on Palestinian resistance and the fight for justice in the world against those who focus on security, that is, the West. The Go South outlets, like the Gulf Times, tend to be more compliant with the media in the Middle East by highlighting the oppression of Palestinians and Israeli involvement in the current crisis. According to Günay (2025), this Framing is based on historical alliances with Palestine, focusing on self-determination and human rights. These are also media outlets that showcase the views of Arab countries, which have long been advocating for Palestinian statehood. This contrast highlights the geopolitical differences between the global North and the global South, as reflected in how the same events are portrayed and understood.

What is the Change in the Framing at various stages of the Conflict?

The communication of the war between Israel and Gaza also changed significantly during various stages of the Conflict, which is related to the military changes, the escalation of the humanitarian crisis, and the necessity to have a ceasefire and diplomatic measures of intervention of the international community. During the initial levels (October 2023 - December 2023), the Framing of the military escalation was aimed at the dominance of the concept of self-defence among the population of Israel, and the mainstream press showed that the situation in the Middle East is a human rights disaster. Later on (January 2024 - March 2024), with the war inflicting significant civilian casualties, Western media started to change their priorities to the humanitarian impact of the war. This Change of Framing was also

accompanied by increased condemnation internationally and international responsibility. Nevertheless, a human rights frame was already in place in Middle East and Global South outlets. They still dwelled on the destruction and misery in Gaza. They demanded foreign intervention and sanctions against Israel. The last stages involved an increasingly diplomatic failure in framing the war in both Western and Middle Eastern media, and a greater emphasis on international intervention and global responsibility. In this phase, all outlets began to align in their calls for humanitarian corridors, ceasefire agreements, and international peacekeeping to address the growing humanitarian disaster in Gaza.

Conclusion

To conclude, one can say that the Framing of the Gaza-Israel conflict by media sources in the West, the Middle East, and the Global South has been heavily influenced by geopolitics and editorial interests. The New York Times, as a representative of Western media, initially perceived the Conflict through the prism of security. At the same time, Middle Eastern media such as The Dawn and Gulf Times, which provided humanitarian coverage, took a more humanistic approach to the Israel incident. Nevertheless, the actions of Israel were unlawful and went against the principles of international law. Although the picture by all three channels shifted to the sphere of diplomatic talks during the Conflict, the humanitarian assistance, global responsibility, and the morals of military operations on the Israeli territory gained stress. Such Framing differences highlight the media's confusing role in shaping people's attitudes, foreign policy, and policy-making with respect to the Conflict. Since the situation is still in progress, media framing will remain instrumental in determining the global perception of the Conflict and the reactions of the international actors to the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Gaza.

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