

Justification and Condemnation: Media Framing of Violence in the Israel-Palestine Conflict

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Abstract:

The Israel-Palestine conflict reached a critical juncture with the horrible attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7, 2023, triggering a devastating invasion by Israel into the Gaza Strip. This escalation catapulted the conflict into a global focus, intensifying calls for a ceasefire amidst mounting Israeli violence. Against this backdrop, this paper aims to analyze media framing of violence in conflicts involving a state and non-state actor, using The New York Times coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict as a case study. The study is rooted in framing theory and critical terrorism theory. It operates on the premise that since 9/11, states have utilized a counter-terrorism narrative to legitimize violence against non-state actors. This paper examines the extent to which Western media contributes to perpetuating this counterterrorism frame thus assessing its persistence, and whether shifts in political discourse influence the use of the disproportionality frame in condemning state violence. The findings indicate that Western media consistently justifies state violence as counterterrorism, thereby reinforcing the state's narrative. However, a disproportionality frame that condemns state violence is utilized more frequently. Non-state violence is consistently condemned without exceptions for justification

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1. Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the world's longest-standing conflicts, with tensions heightening significantly when Hamas executed an attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 (CFA, 2023.). This attack has been called one of the most lethal terrorist incidents, ranking as the third-deadliest in terms of the number of fatalities (CSIS, 2023). Following the attack, the Israeli government declared war on Hamas and targeted the densely populated Gaza Strip, controlled by Hamas (Robinson, 2023; Stack, 2023). As of May 2024, the Palestinian death toll has exceeded 34,000, thus making the daily death rate higher than any other 21st-century conflict (OCHA, 2024; Oxfam, 2024).

This conflict has gained the entire world's attention, and there has been substantial media coverage of the development of the crisis. Recognizing the media's role as a stakeholder in geopolitics and conflicts is crucial, as it shapes public opinion and can contribute to the canonization of specific perspectives (Aday, 2016:107; Davis Epkins, 2016:255; Robinson, Seib, Fröhlic, 2016:1). Western media has since 9/11 often framed international conflicts using the counter-terrorism narrative, which justifies state violence under the guise of counter-terrorism (Jackson, et al., 2011:223-224). Over 1,500 journalists have criticized Western media for dehumanizing rhetoric and spreading misinformation in their coverage of Israel's actions in Gaza (A statement by journalists, 2023). This underscores the need for a critical assessment of Western media portrayals of violence.

1.1. Aim & RS Q

This paper aims to uncover how Western media portrays the use of violence in a conflict between a state and a non-state actor, and how Western media employs the counter-terrorism frame to justify state-based violence and condemnation of non-state violence. These phenomena will be researched through a case study of the New York Times coverage of violence in the Israel-Palestine conflict during the period October 7, 2023, till March 31, 2024, by employing a qualitative content analysis. The research questions guiding this paper are:

- **RQ1:** *How does Western media portray the use of violence in a conflict between a state and a non-state actor?*
- **RQ2:** *How does Western media construct and employ the counter-terrorism frame to justify the use of state-based violence, and how persistent is this frame?*

This paper seeks to advance the research on Western media representation and contribute to terrorism- and media studies. It aims to deepen our understanding of how Western media represents violence in conflicts involving a state and a non-state actor, and better comprehend the mechanisms used to justify state-based violence and condemn non-state violence. Additionally, it will reveal how the media uses the counter-terrorism narrative to justify state violence, thus allowing us to understand the strength of the counter-terrorism frame. Western media tend to be biased in their coverage of this conflict, see section 2, so this study's importance is further elevated by the need to audit and assess dominant Western media portals to uncover any harmful biases in representation.

2. Background

2.1. Historical Context

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is highly polarized, with competing narratives and vested interests on both sides. Due to the ongoing nature of the conflict and the lack of a universally accepted historical narrative, this review does not claim to offer a definitive background to

the conflict. The events emphasized in this section may not necessarily match each individual's interpretation of the conflict's history or current state.

It is a common myth that this conflict stems from religious differences. It is rather a longstanding conflict over the rightful possession of land. Due to escalating tensions and a surge in Jewish migration to Palestine following the Holocaust, the UK, which held a British mandate over Palestine, transferred control to the UN in 1947 (Bickerton et al., 2024). The UN proposed partitioning Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states. Zionists welcomed the plan but Palestinians opposed partition (Bickerton et al., 2024). Conflict erupted, and Israel declared independence in 1948 (Bickerton et al., 2024). By 1949, 720,000 Palestinians were forced out of their homes, displaced, and became refugees (Khalidi, 2020: 66-67). Consequently, Israel controlled 78% of the former Mandatory Palestine (Khalidi, 2020: 66-67). In 1967, Israel won the Six-Day War, gaining control over East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip (Bickerton et al., 2024). This led to another wave of Palestinian displacement, with over 250,000 being made refugees (Bickerton et al., 2024). Thus, the 3,000,000 Israelis came to rule some 1,200,000 Palestinians (Bickerton, et al., 2024). The years to follow brought about more conflict and uprisings, and as of 2006 Israel has imposed a blockade on the Gaza Strip (Bickerton et al., 2024).

2.2 Media's Importance

Whether through news reports, commentary, or social media, the narratives the media presents significantly influence our perception of our surroundings (O'Neil & Kendall-Taylor, 2018: 54). It is paramount to understand the media's active role as a stakeholder in international conflicts. (Aday, 2016:107; Davis Epkins, 2016:255; Robinson, Seib, Fröhlic, 2016:1). The media also guides and molds policymaking. The way conflicts are framed and discussed shapes the political agenda and affects the decisions made by policymakers (Aday, 2016: 108). Furthermore, as the media has the power to escalate or alleviate tensions in conflicts (Davis Epkins, 2016: 255-256), an understanding of the media's portrayal of the Israeli war on Hamas is vital, as scholars increasingly highlight the media's potential to mitigate issues labeled as terrorism (David Epkins, 2016:254).

As media often represents its state's politics (see Section 4), Western media diffuses narratives that reflect Western interests. Western nations have played significant roles in the history and politics of the Israel-Palestine conflict, and as Western media outlets often have a global reach and significant influence, their coverage shapes perceptions internationally. Thereby, it is vital to gain an understanding of how Western media represents Israel's war on Hamas, as it can help uncover which narratives and perspectives the Western media canonizes, and how the counter-terrorist narrative is constructed through their coverage.

2.3. Contextualizing the Political Discourse

There appears to have been a notable shift in the international political discourse surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict during the progression of the conflict, from previously being quite pro-Israel to progressively starting to criticize Israeli actions (see Fig. 1. below for a timeline of the conflict). Previously criticized for its lack of engagement in advocating for peace, the EU has as of late March 2024 called for an immediate ceasefire (Gwyn Jones, 2024; Konecny, 2024; The Guardian, 2024). On the 14th of March, US Senate leader Chuck Schumer criticized Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, casting him as one of the main obstacles to peace in the Gaza Strip and calling for new elections in Israel (Al-Jazeera, 2024a; Senate Democrats, 2024). This critique from the US marks a significant event in US-Israeli relations (Collinson, 2024). On 25 March, the UN finally called for a ceasefire, after months of negotiations, and on the 26th of March, a UN report was published, finding Israel guilty of committing genocide in the Gaza Strip. According to the report, conducted by a UN special rapporteur, Israel is found guilty of violating three out of five laws of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (ReliefWeb, 2024; UN News, 2024a, 2024b). This shift in the international political community provides a crucial perspective, prompting the question of whether political opinions influence the portrayal of violence in the conflict. Such changes could significantly influence media reports of the conflict, potentially altering previously biased coverage that heavily favored Israel (see Section 3).

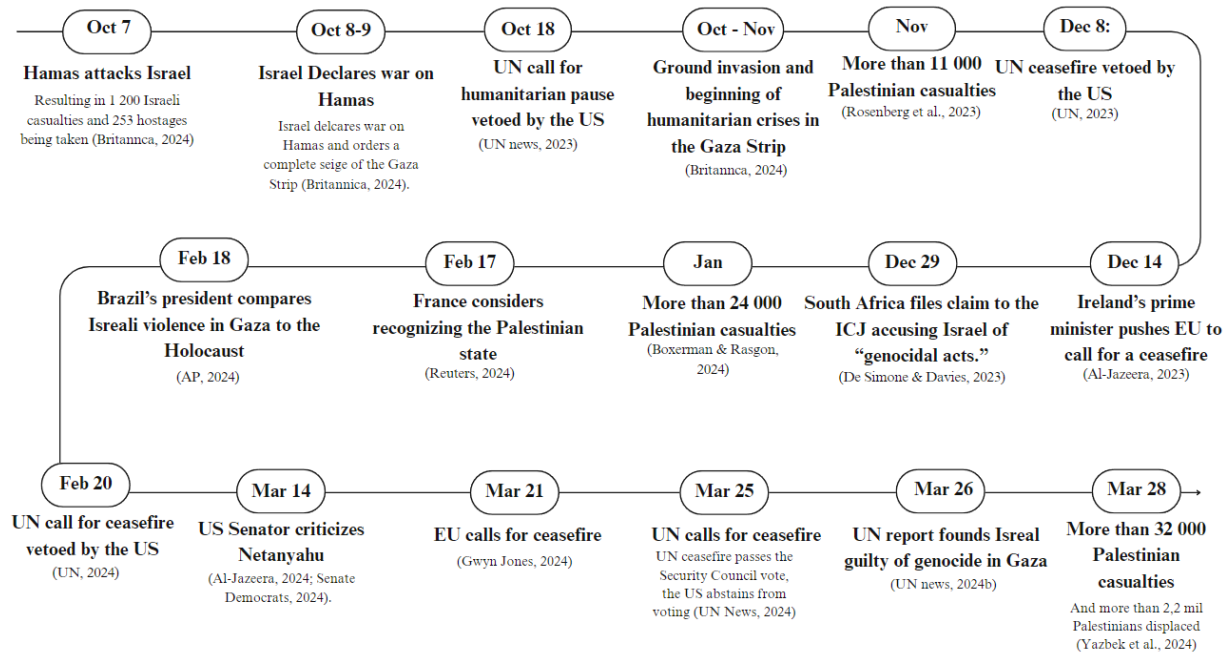


Fig. 1. Timeline of the Israeli War on Hamas

3. Literature Review

The following section will review research on previous Western media coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict from the First Intifada in 1987 until the 2021 Gaza War.

3.1. The First Intifada and the Oslo Accords, 1987-1993

Noakes & Wilkins (2002) found that Palestinians were less likely to be depicted as terrorists during the First Intifada, compared to previous coverage. Jackson's (2023) study of NYT coverage found that violent language was used more frequently for Palestinians than Israelis, framing Palestinians as disorganized and illegal. Moreover, a "disproportionate" use of passive voice was used when referring to violent actions where Palestinians were the victims (Jackson, 2023).

Moving the scope towards Europe, Depez and Raeymaeckers's (2011) study of the Flemish Press often depicted the Israelis as the occupying power during the First Intifada. As Israelis were insinuated to be provoking Palestinians to action (Depez & Raeymaeckers, 2011). Furthermore, they found that historical context was severely lacking and that the press did not

provide sufficient information for the readers to fully understand the motives of either actor during the conflict (Deprez & Raeymaeckers, 2011).

During the Oslo Accords in 1993, the NYT's coverage showed an Israeli bias that emphasized Israeli perspectives on security while marginalizing the Palestinians (Tiripelli's (2022: 235). The coverage oversimplified the peace process, neglecting its complex historical context and motives behind the intifada (Tiripelli, 2022: 254). Noakes and Wilkins (2002) found that, compared to the First Intifada, the NYT increased its use of Palestinian sources and portrayed the PLO as a legitimate representative of Palestinians.

3.2. The Second Intifada, 2000-2005

Ackerman (2001) observed a significant decrease in references to "occupied land.", compared to the first intifada, even though the occupation of land only had increased. Research revealed a pronounced imbalance in the coverage, with a heavy emphasis on Israeli grievances, portraying Palestinians as provocateurs (Ackerman. 2001). Findings revealed a disproportionate focus on Israeli casualties while Palestinian casualties were scarcely acknowledged (Ackerman, 2001). Gaisbauer (2012) found a disproportionate focus on Israeli victimization, with Palestinian casualties rarely mentioned. Furthermore, Palestinians were often characterized as terrorists and US media framed the conflict to legitimize Israeli actions and justify Israeli violence, whilst delegitimizing Palestinian violence (Elmasry, 2009; Ismail, 2008).

Deprez and Raeymackers' (2011) study showed how Israeli perspectives were favored over Palestinian ones. In a similar vein, Visser's (2003) comparative study of media coverage during both intifadas revealed a distinct bias in favor of Israelis over Palestinians, particularly in NYT. The NYT was found to be prominently biased towards Israel, exhibiting a more pronounced Israel bias compared to an Israeli newspaper (Slater, 2007; Ross, 2003).

If Americans Knew has conducted multiple reports on American media coverage of the Second Intifada. Their findings reveal a troubling pattern of distortion, where Israeli death rates were exaggerated and Palestinian death rates were downplayed (IAK, n.d.-a,n.d.-b, n.d.-c). British news channels predominantly represented Israeli perspectives, as Palestinians

were portrayed as instigators while Israelis were depicted as defenders against terrorism (Philo & Berry, 2004:260-268). This narrative stays consistent through the end of the Second Intifada, US and Canadian media outlets consistently favor Israeli actions over Palestinian efforts for peace (Baltodano et. al., 2007).

3.3. The First Gaza War, 2008-2009

Handley & Ismail's (2010) study showed that regardless of Hamas's legitimate democratic victory in the 2006 election, they were consistently depicted as illegitimate and oppressive. Kaposi's (2016) study found that, despite The Times' presumed pro-Israeli stance, it extensively covered Israel's use of white phosphorus against Palestinians, thus criticizing Israel.

Gaisbauer (2012) observed that Palestinians were portrayed as aggressors in both the Second Intifada and the First Gaza War, though less so in the latter, and that the emphasis on Israeli responsibility increased over time. Roy (2012) found that Palestinians were consistently depicted as leveraging victimhood to advance their agenda in NYT coverage, suggesting the NYT omits the idea that Palestinians use their refugee status to stir anti-Israel sentiment.

Moreover, Philo and Berry (2011:338) observed a lack of contextual information provided for Palestinian actions in contrast to detailed explanations for Israeli actions. Furthermore, they concluded that the coverage was not proportionate to the harm inflicted considering that the number of Palestinian casualties was approximately 100 times greater than Israeli casualties, (Philo & Berry, 2011:346). Amer (2017) found that Israel was consistently portrayed as actively working towards a ceasefire, and Palestinians were portrayed as obstructing peace initiatives. Consequently, the blame for the conflict was placed on Hamas, absolving Israel of any responsibility (Amer, 2017).

3.4. 2010 - The 2021 Gaza War

During the 2010s and into the 2021 Gaza War, pro-Israeli narratives continued. Tasseron and Lawson, (2022) found that media coverage led to an elevated perception of the threat the Palestinians posed to the Israelis. Whereas Israeli attacks were described vaguely, thereby

obscuring their responsibility (Tasseron & Lawson, 2022). Fahmy & Eakin (2014) found an immense lack of historical context provided for the reader. The findings of Timotijevic's (2022) study show that Israel receives preferential treatment compared to Palestine in the press. Attar & King (2023) found that British, American, Canadian, and Australian coverage lacked historical context, with a clear lack of representation of Palestinian narratives. The dominant discourse defended and justified Israeli actions (Attar & King, 2023). Furthermore, Al-Sarraj & Lubbad (2018) found a strong pro-Israel bias in various Canadian, British, and American news coverage of the 2014 conflict escalation. These findings suggest an overarching information asymmetry, resulting in skewed conclusions drawn from the coverage due to insufficient information available to the public.

3.5. Literature Gaps

These studies have examined the representation of Palestine/Palestinians versus Israel/Israelis, but few have specifically analyzed how the counter-terrorism frame justifies Israeli violence or the overall portrayal of violence. While violence has been a component of previous studies, it has not been the primary focus. This essay aims to address these gaps by focusing on these aspects. Additionally, it seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding and ongoing mapping of Western media portrayal of this longstanding and significant conflict. By examining coverage in the New York Times, it will research whether the newspaper maintains its pro-Israeli bias or deviates from a four-decade-long trend. Exploring such deviations will shed light on what factors influence the NYT's departure from its consistent reporting approach.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1. Framing Theory

Framing theory serves as the theoretical framework for this paper. Goffman (1974) developed the idea of framing theory as a concept that describes that individuals understand their surroundings through their primary framework, which is constructed through a person's cultural perspective, and they frame their surroundings accordingly (Goffman, 1986: 21-24).

Since Goffman's (1974) publication, the concept of frames and frame analysis have been adjusted and adapted by media and communication studies, elevating it from the individual level to the broader societal level, often represented by the media.

According to Entman (1993), frames operate by highlighting bits of information that the entity constructing the frame views as important. Frames work by highlighting certain aspects and diverting attention from others (Entman, 1993). Therefore it is important to notice elements that are left out in the framing of a certain aspect when analyzing the frames (Entman, 1991; Entman 1993; Gamson, 1989). Gamson (1989) states that "facts have no intrinsic meaning", arguing that meaning is applied through the process of framing. Gamson (1989) believes that the frames assigned to describe a story are crafted through shared cultural narratives and myths, elaborating on Goffman's (1974) principles. D'Angelo further emphasizes that news production involves processing discourse, as news stories are essentially reconstructions of existing discussions within society (D'Angelo, 2018: xxiv).

According to Entman (1993), frames greatly impact our perceptions of our reality as frames communicate information and construct the narratives we consume. This is how a communicated text exerts its power, by emphasizing certain perspectives, making moral judgments, crafting certain narratives, and omitting other perspectives that are not deemed noteworthy or details that the entity broadcasting the communicated text wants the reader to neglect or remain unaware about (Entman, 1993).

Although media framing has been popular for a long time within academia, there still is no coherent typology or agreement on how to apply it as a research tool, and it lacks a clear methodology (Scheufele, 2004; Shaw & Giles, 2009). Thereby, framing research can be perceived as somewhat controversial, as it lacks this clear and consistent methodological approach, and since the process tends to vary a lot from study to study, making it difficult to create or reuse a dataset from a previous study to perform a new frame analysis (Elmasry et. al., 2013).

De Vreese (2005) offers some clarity through his typology of media framing, by differentiating between *general frames* and *issue-specific frames*. Where *general frames* are

frames that transcend thematic boundaries and can be identified within different topics. Other frames are bound to specific events or subjects, making them *issue-specific frames* (De Vreese, 2005). Furthermore, De Vreese (2005) asserts a difference between research dedicated to *frame-building* and *frame-setting* (see Fig. 2.). De Vreese (2005) describes *frame-building* as the factors that influence the structural qualities of frames, where factors both internal and external to journalism determine the frames employed by journalists. The frames seen in news stories are the result of *frame-building* processes (De Vreese, 2005). Therefore, *frame-setting* research focuses on how these constructed frames affect the public (De Vreese, 2005).

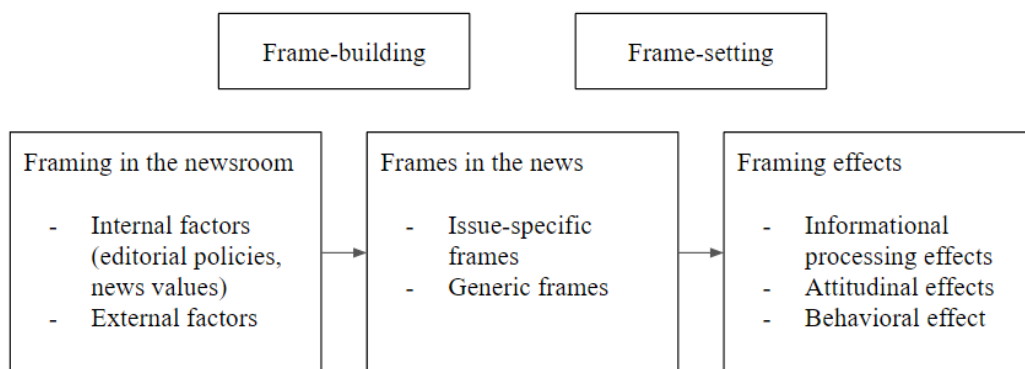


Fig. 2. De Vreese's integrated process model of framing (De Vreese, 2005: 52).

Norris et al. (2003:17) have developed a model specifically for how the media constructs their coverage of terror events (see Fig. 3.)

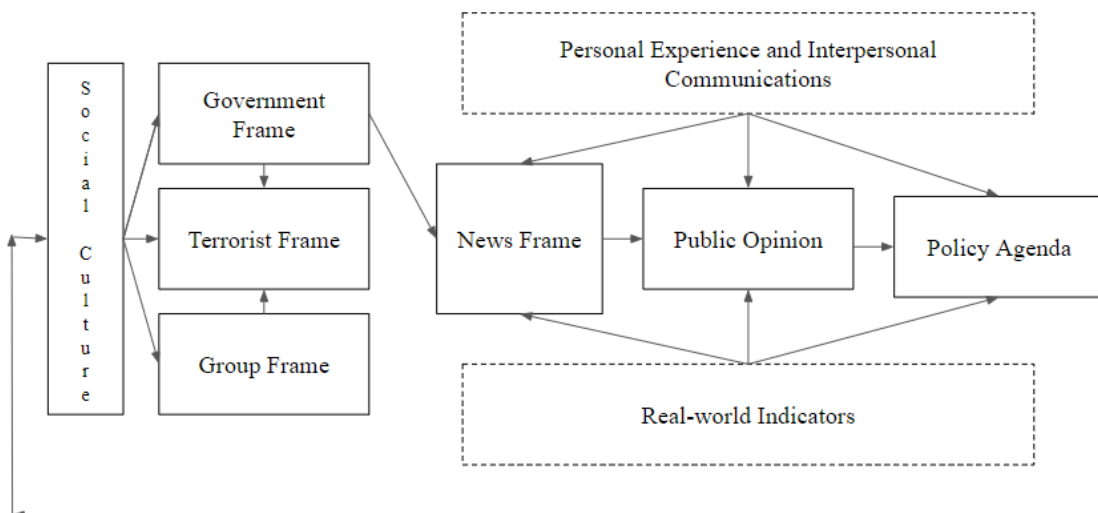


Fig. 3. Norris et al.'s model for framing terrorist events (Norris et al., 2003: 17)

According to this model (Fig. 3.) the news frame in a society is shaped by three main factors: the basic facts of the event, interpretations from official sources, and communications from groups expressing grievances or demands (Norris et al., 2003: 18). These factors influence how the event is understood (Norris et al., 2003: 18). The news frame influences public opinion and policy responses, especially if the coverage is one-sided (Norris et al., 2003: 18). While other factors also affect public opinion, the news frame plays a significant role, particularly when there is consensus among leaders and within the broader culture (Norris et al., 2003: 18-19). Furthermore, they argue that in one-sided contexts, i.e. when multiple broadcasters' coverages consist of the same frames, these frames become regarded as facts and the uncontested truth, to the extent that we are no longer aware of the fact that frames are used to construct this "truth" (Norris et al., 2003:19).

4.2. Critical Terrorism Studies

Within terrorism studies, it is notoriously difficult to reach a general definition of terrorism (Caruso & Locatelli, 2014:3; Naudé, 2012: 14, Wolfendale, 2016: 174; Townshend, 2018: 4; Coady, 2021: 11). According to Critical terrorism studies (CTS), terrorism is a fundamentally social fact, rather than a brute fact, as which actors that get described as terrorist acts are dependent on the context, circumstances, the intent of violence, and who it is that makes the judgment (Jackson et al., 2011: 35, Jackson, 2016: 94).

From a CTS perspective, the terrorism narrative is often manipulated by powerful states to discredit their opponents while solidifying their own legitimacy and control (Franks, 2016: 76-77; Coady, 2021: 12; Townshend, 2018:4; Naudé, 2021:12). By branding certain entities as terrorists, state-based violence is legitimized and states can avoid addressing the root-causes of terrorism (Franks, 2016: 76-77; Jackson et al, 2011: 114). This approach maintains the state's monopoly on violence and obscures the pursuit of long-term solutions (Franks, 2016: 76-77; Lindahl, 2016:215; Jarvis, 2016: 30). Instead, a counter-terrorism narrative is curated, by framing terrorism as a kind of war (Jackson et al., 2011: 223). Since 9/11 the use of the counter-terrorism frame has dominated Western media coverage of international conflicts between state and non-state actors. The counter-terrorism narrative

allows states to use the threat of terrorism to crack down on non-state actors opposing state actions (Jackson et al., 2011:26).

According to CTS scholar Franks (2016: 77), Israel strategically utilizes this narrative to justify crackdowns on Palestinians. By framing Palestinians as "terrorists" and Israelis as "innocents," Israel automatically condemns the Palestinian cause without delving into the underlying reasons for Palestinian actions (Franks, 2016: 77). It functions as a rhetorical strategy to publicly delegitimize and demonize the Palestinian cause while ensuring that counter-terrorist measures are perceived as justified (Franks, 2016: 78-79; Schotten, 2024). Thereby, it is argued Israel leveraging the counter-terrorism narrative to discredit Palestinian grievances and avoid perspectives challenging its authority or actions (Franks, 2016: 78; Schotten, 2024).

4.3. Preliminary Framing Model

This research will aim to identify *issue-specific frames*. As this research aim is to understand the frames employed by the NYT, this research will mainly be dedicated to the *frame-building* component of the framing process.

The argument presented here is that media framing of violence occurs through a process of legitimization and/or delegitimation (Elmasry, 2009). Media will often frame the use of violence by resorting to either legitimizing it by implicitly or explicitly justifying it, or it will frame the use of violence as delegitimizing by condemning it (Elmasry,2009). It is based on this assumption, CTS scholarship, and Framing theory that the following preliminary framing model has been deductively developed:

	State-based violence	Non-state violence
Justification	Counter-terrorism	
Condemnation	Disproportionality	Terrorism

Fig. 4. Preliminary Framing Model

Fames justifying violence are assumed to only be used to legitimize state-based violence, as non-state violence is by default viewed as delegitimate (see section 3.2). Therefore the box for justifying non-state violence is left empty in the framing model (see Fig. 4.). Drawing upon CTS scholarship and the actors involved in this conflict, it is proposed that the main frame used to justify state-based violence in the media coverage of the counter-terrorism frame. In addition to this, it is presumed that the media will use the terrorist frame to condemn the use of violence by the non-state actor (see Fig. 4.).

Media framing that condemns state-based use of violence is likely to occur through the use of a disproportionality frame (see Fig. 4.). This assumption is made based on the logic that states do have the right to defend themselves. In combination with assuming that the international community may regard the use of force employed by the state as disproportionate in relation to the conflict. It is believed that this will be the case in this conflict, as the political discourse has shifted surrounding this conflict (see section 2.4).

Based on this logic and this preliminary framing model, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- **H1:** *The media will use counter-terrorism frames to justify state-based violence, and these frames will be utilized to a greater extent than frames that condemn state-based violence.*
- **H2:** *The use of frames that justify state-based violence will be less prominent in relation to a growing disagreement about the state-based use of violence amongst the international community.*

The paper aims to test these hypotheses with the framing model as a base for the content analysis, and then let any other frames that either justify or condemn the use of violence, get inductively generated.

5. Methodology

5.1. Research Design and Research Method

To conceptualize the Western media's framing of violence in conflicts between a state and a non-state actor, the New York Times coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict, from 7th October 2023 to 31 March 2024, was chosen as a case study, on which a qualitative content analysis was employed. As there are multiple ways of carrying out a content analysis, this paper will follow the framework put forth by Schreier (2012). A qualitative content analysis was selected for its ability to systematically describe the meaning of qualitative material, and for its ability to focus on selected aspects of the material, which was useful in this context where the framing of violence is the focus (Schreier, 2012:1,3,4). As qualitative content analysis is context-specific in the sense that one has to take context into consideration when analyzing the results, it is deemed a good fit for this study as context also plays an important role in the construction of frames (see Section 4.1, Schreier, 2012: 31). Furthermore, Entman (1993) highlights the advantage of combining framing theory and content analysis in order to understand the textual meaning of the content analyzed accurately.

5.2 Data Selection

The New York Times's coverage of the conflict was selected as the source for this case study due to multiple reasons. The first one is its iconic status as a news provider, with a total of 10,36 million subscribers as of February 2024, whereas 9.7 million are online subscribers (Robertson, 2024). The NYT is a canonized news provider in Western countries with over 1 million international readers as of 2021 (NYT, 2021). Thereby manifesting the NYT as a news source with high status that can serve as a good representation of the Western media landscape. Furthermore, previous research has shown that the NYT has shown a significant pro-Israel bias in previous reporting, sometimes showing more support for Israel than Israel's own media (see section 3.2). Therefore, it would be interesting to investigate whether this trend persists. A shift in framing would signify a change in a 40-year tradition of pro-Israel biased coverage.

5.3. Data Collection

The data was collected and retrieved using ProQuest's U.S. News Stream platform. The search filter was configured to exclusively access the archives of The New York Times, with the keyword used to identify articles being "Israel," "Palestine," or "Hamis." Five online articles mentioning violence were chosen per month within the timeframe from October 7, 2023, to March 31, 2024, resulting in a total sample size of 30 articles (n=30) (see Appendix 1.)

5.4. Delimits

The primary delimit lies in the exclusive examination of one news organization's coverage, as discussed and motivated in the preceding section. Thereby, it imposes a geographic boundary restricted to the United States. Nevertheless, considering the U.S.'s considerable influence on the Western world's agenda, this restriction is deemed appropriate for the scope of this paper. Furthermore, a temporal boundary was set for the analysis, spanning a six-month period. This choice was motivated by the attacks on Israelis by Hamas on the 7th of October. The subsequent six months allow for tracking the evolution of the conflict and by extension the framing of violence in tandem with the changing political discourse surrounding the conflict

(see Section X). Naturally, a longer tracking of the media framing would have been interesting, however, this temporal delimit was necessary for the scope of this paper.

5.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis will follow Schreiner's (2012) framework for content analysis, which starts with constructing a coding frame (Schreiner, 2012:59). The first step of the QCA is to construct a simple coding frame that can differentiate between relevant and irrelevant material in your data (Schreiner, 2012:82), however only articles that mentions violence were in the data collection, this step was not necessary.

The analysis continued by constructing a primary coding frame, this primary coding frame was partially developed deductively, through a concept-driven way which relates to the frames mentioned in section 3.2 (Schreiner, 2012: 60, see XX). As it is unusual to have a strictly concept-driven coding frame, as that could impose bias and risk missing out on important material, the coding frame was open to be altered according to how the different subcategories related to the actual material, through the method of subsumption (Schreiner, 2012: 89, 116). Subsumption, a strategy for generating subcategories for an already existing main category, is straightforward in its adaptation as one simply creates a new subcategory for relevant material if the material does not fit into an already existing subcategory (Schreiner, 2012: 120).

After the primary coding frame was constructed, the segmentation process followed and the trial coding round was initiated (Schreiner, 2012: 130-131, 146). The coding was carried out by utilizing Nvivo, and following the trial coding the coding frame was evaluated and reformulated. The main coding round was initiated, and the coding frame was reevaluated again as new codes were inductively developed through subsumption (see Appendix 2. for the final coding frame).

5.6. Ethical Considerations

When considering ethical aspects, the primary focus revolves around approaching the subject with care and respect, recognizing that it involves a highly sensitive ongoing conflict with continuous loss of lives. Researching an ongoing conflict presents inherent limitations, as the

situation is dynamic and subject to change. This includes being mindful of potential harm that the research may inadvertently contribute to, as well as respecting the sensitivities and vulnerabilities of those directly affected.

There is a risk of bias in the research process, making it crucial to maintain balance and address diverse perspectives on the conflict. The utmost attention will be given to presenting a fair and comprehensive view, avoiding the perpetuation of stereotypes or contributing to the marginalization of specific groups. When analyzing or criticizing acts of violence, it is crucial to distinguish between the actions of individuals or specific groups and the broader population or community they are associated with. This paper aims to avoid unjustly attributing the actions of a few to an entire group. Thereby, a key ethical consideration involves differentiating between Hamas and the broader Palestinian population. While Hamas governs the Gaza Strip, it is essential to recognize that the group does not represent the entirety of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, when criticisms are directed towards Israeli military policies, it is essential to recognize that such critiques are about the policies and actions of the Israeli state or government, not an attack on Jewish people or anti-Semitism.

6. Results & Analysis

Following the content analysis of the 30 NYT articles, the preliminary framing model was found to be incapable of capturing all of the frames used by the media to justify or condemn the use of violence. Instead, a new framing model emerged as a result of the content analysis (Fig. 5.).

	State-based violence	Non-state violence
Justification	Counter-terrorism Neutralising language Contextualisation Questioning credibility	
Condemnation	Disproportionality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brutality - Emphasizing the consequences - Questioning credibility - Warfare does not achieve results Obscuring peace alternatives International community disagrees	Terrorism Brutality Emphasizing the consequences Humanization of victims Obscuring peace alternatives

Fig. 5. Framing model for portraying state-based vs. non-state violence.

See Appendix 3. for an overview of the prevalence of the frames.

6.1. Justifying State-based Violence

The main frames identified used for justifying state-based violence were the following:

1. Counter-terrorism
2. Questioning credibility
3. Contextualization
4. Neutralizing language

6.1.1. Counter-terrorism

The most prominent frame justifying state-based violence was the counter-terrorism frame. The counter-terrorism frame was present in 28 out of 30 articles, with Articles 2 and 22 being the only ones the frame did not appear in (see Appendix 1.) and used in 177 paragraphs.

Whenever Israel states that they are targeting Hamas, the counter-terrorism frame is triggered. This occurs because the EU, the USA, and Israel themselves categorize Hamas as a terrorist organization and because the portrayal of Hamas as a terrorist organization has been

widely disseminated through media narratives (see Section 3) (European Council, 2024; UD Department of State, n.d.). As a result, the notion that Hamas is a terrorist organization has become ingrained in Western social culture.

The counter-terrorism frame is triggered when Israeli spokesmen refer to Hamas as terrorists, emphasizing that by fighting Hamas they are fighting terrorists.

Article 1: "Israel's chief military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, declared on Monday that the army had regained control of border communities, though "there may still be terrorists in the area." (Kershner et al., 2023).

The frame is used to justify attacks on hospitals where civilians are killed and injured, by claiming that the objective was to destroy Hamas headquarters or target Hamas members believed to be located underneath the hospital. By citing Israeli actors, the media reproduces the counter-terrorism narrative that Israel sends out.

Article 8: "The militants, Israeli security officials say, have spent the better part of 16 years building a vast command complex under the hospital, and setting up similar bases underneath other medical facilities in the enclave. American officials agree, citing their own intelligence." (Rosenberg et al., 2023)

The frame emphasizes the Israeli claim that Hamas deliberately chooses hospitals and civilian spaces as bases for their operations to endanger civilians. Therefore, it is insinuated that it is not the Israeli army's fault when Palestinians die in strikes on hospitals; it is Hamas's fault for choosing those sites for their operations.

Article 8: "By Israel's account, Al Shifa — the name of the hospital — has become shorthand for Hamas' willingness to turn its own people into human shields and sacrifice them as cannon fodder in the fight for global sympathy." (Rosenberg et al, 2023).

And lastly, retaliation is a part of the counter-terrorism frame. As violence is justified by emphasizing that it occurred as retaliation for the attack on the 7th of October. Either by stating that the violence used by Israel was a counterattack or by reminding the reader of the attack of October 7.

Article 1: "Israel ordered a "complete siege" of the Gaza Strip on Monday as it retaliated for the largest and deadliest incursion into its territory in decades, while Hamas threatened to respond to the

Israeli bombing campaign by executing civilians its fighters took hostage in Israel.” (Kershner et al., 2023).

6.1.2. Contextualisation

State-based violence is justified by providing context for the rationale behind the violent actions or by contextualizing the consequences in a way that downplays its significance. In this frame, counter-terrorism as a rationale for the violence is excluded, as that is a part of the counter-terrorism frame. This frame was used in 11 articles (Articles 1,5,6, 8, 10, 12, 18, 24, 27, 28), and is apparent in 18 paragraphs. Thus making it less frequent in the coverage compared to the counter-terrorism frame.

One article where this contextualization is apparent is in Article 28, where the Israeli violence is initially condemned by implying that the International Court of Justice is against it. However, the violence is then somewhat justified by emphasizing that the ICJ did not demand that Israel stop attacking Gaza altogether. The implication is that Israel can still use violence as long as they are careful enough not to commit genocide.

“Article 28: “The International Court of Justice in late January ordered Israel to ensure that its actions would not lead to genocide, and to increase humanitarian aid to Gaza. But the court did not order a halt to fighting in the Gaza Strip.” (Yazbek, 2024).”

In Article 12, the violence is justified by providing context that emphasizes how the Israelis have been trying their best to ensure that civilians are not caught in the crossfire.

Article 12: “Asked about staggering numbers of civilian deaths, General Ibrahim defended the Israeli military. He said that Israel had tried to clear the battlefield of civilians, giving them time to leave, dropping fliers, broadcasting on speakers and calling their cellphones to leave the area.” (Goldman, 2023).

6.1.3. Questioning Credibility

State-based violence is justified by questioning the credibility of perspectives or information that is not in favor of Israeli violence. The frame is used in 5 articles (Articles 8, 10, 20, 28, 30). In November 2023, the NYT referred to authorities as “ Hamas-run ” or emphasized Hamas control over Palestinian health authorities' territory. This implied distrust due to association with terrorists.

Article 10: "Since war began, more than 11,000 people have been killed in Gaza, including more than 4,000 children, according to health officials in the Hamas-run territory." (Yee et al., 2023).

This only occurs in Articles 8 and 10; otherwise, they are referred to as Gazan health authorities. Or as in January (Article 20), they are referred to as Palestinian health officials.

Furthermore, the NYT sustains this frame by emphasizing that witness accounts that are giving statements on the Israeli violence cannot be independently verified.

Article 28: "He said people he knew went to the hospital thinking the raid was over, but "they were wrong," and people were shot and wounded. His account could not be independently verified." (Yazbek, 2024).

It is a bit strange to include statements from witnesses in the area and then immediately emphasize that the claims could not be verified when they criticize the Israeli violence. This skepticism is absent when interviewing Israeli witnesses. This suggests that the NYT may be undermining the Palestinian perspective.

6.1.4. Neutralizing Language

Israeli violence is justified by using neutralizing language to describe their actions. This involves using terms like "hits" or "strikes" instead of more negatively charged descriptions like "deadly raid" "attacks" or "destroys."

Article 11: "The Israeli military said it had launched 200 strikes since the resumption of fighting (...)" (Kingsley et al., 2023).

Article 5: "Israel hits a densely populated neighborhood in Gaza." (NYTc, 2023).

By employing such language, violence is justified as it is not portrayed as highly destructive. This only occurred on three occasions (Articles, 5, 11 & 26) without employing the counterterrorism frame in the same paragraph. Otherwise, neutralizing language was still used to justify Israeli violence, but in tandem with the counter-terrorism frame.

6.2. Condemning State-based Violence

The frames identified in the NYT articles for condemning state-based violence were the following:

1. Disproportionality
 - a. Brutality
 - b. Emphasizing the consequences
 - c. Humanizing the victims
 - d. Questioning the credibility
 - e. Warfare does not achieve results
2. Obscuring peace alternatives
3. Questioning the rationale

6.2.1. Disproportionality

The main frame used to condemn state-based violence in this conflict is found to be disproportionality, i.e., that the Israeli use of force is disproportionate to the nature of the conflict. This frame has been used in 28/30 articles, with articles 19 and 26 as the exceptions, and in a total of 215 paragraphs (see appendix X), the following section will discuss the subframes.

6.2.1.1 Brutality

The Israeli use of force is condemned by emphasizing the violence's brutality. The brutality frame was featured in 17 articles and 58 paragraphs (Articles: 1,2,3, 6-10, 16,17, 20, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29 & 30).

This frame comprises indicators that depict the violence as brutal, particularly by highlighting Israeli attacks on hospitals.

Article 24: "The Israeli military on Thursday raided the largest hospital still functioning in the Gaza Strip, in what it called a search for Hamas fighters and the bodies of hostages. Many people who had sought shelter there were forced to flee from combat once again." (Yee, 2024).

The brutality of Israeli actions is emphasized by media coverage that highlights the Israeli army's attacks on civilians, and instances where the army disguised themselves as civilians before attacking hospitals. The Israeli army's interception of humanitarian relief further strengthens the disproportionate brutality.

Article 28: “The Palestinian news agency also reported Israeli strikes in the northwest of Gaza City, the northern community of Beit Lahia and the southern city of Rafah, where it reported that a home where displaced families were living was struck, killing more than a dozen Palestinians and wounding dozens more.” (Yazbek, 2024).

Article 20: “Surveillance video released by the Palestinian Authority Health Ministry shows multiple gunmen in apparent civilian garb — including one dressed in a white medical coat and another in blue scrubs — walking through the hospital halls, brandishing weapons.” (Boxerman, 2024).

Article 25: “ With no accord in place, the Palestine Red Crescent Society said it had suspended emergency medical missions for two days in a part of Gaza where Israeli forces on Sunday intercepted a convoy evacuating patients from a hospital, interrogating and detaining workers on the suspicion that they were ferrying Hamas fighters.” (Boxerman et al., 2024).

6.2.1.2 Emphasizing the Consequences

State-based violence is condemned by focusing on its consequences by highlighting the extensive destruction, and the humanitarian crises it has caused, or by bringing attention to the casualties. This frame condemns the Israeli use of violence in 20 articles (Article 1, 3-5, 7-14, 16-18, 20, 24, 25, 27 & 30) and 49 paragraphs.

Article 18: “More than 24,000 people in Gaza have been killed since Hamas’s Oct. 7 attack on Israel sparked a full-blown war, according to Gazan health officials. Over 85 percent of Gaza’s residents have been displaced, and many are threatened by starvation and disease, according to the United Nations.” (Boxerman & Rasgon, 2024).

The interesting aspect here is that the Israeli side still maintains motivation for its actions, thereby allowing the counter-terrorism frame to coexist alongside the condemnation frame. Palestinian casualties have been mentioned 20 times, one time less compared to Israeli casualties. However, considering that the Palestinian death toll has been significantly larger throughout most of the war, this disproportionality is evident. Palestinian death tolls are often mentioned either after Israeli casualties or at the end of an article, thereby downplaying their presence in the coverage (for an example see Article 12 below). Moreover, Palestinian death tolls are frequently mentioned in the same paragraph as the October 7 attack, simultaneously condemning Israeli violence for its deadly consequences while reminding readers of the attack on Israel on October 7, thus reinforcing the counter-terrorism frame.

Article 12: “The Israeli Army launched a devastating counterattack after Hamas-led assailants killed about 1,200 people and took approximately 240 hostages, according to the Israeli authorities. In an effort to eliminate Hamas, the military has bombarded and invaded the enclave, in a war that has killed more than 15,000 Gazans, according to the health authorities in Gaza.” (Goldman, 2023).

6.2.1.3. Humanizing the Victims

State-based violence is further condemned by focusing on humanizing the victims. This approach is effective because it moves beyond merely mentioning casualties in passing; it emphasizes the humanity of the victims, making them more than just statistics. This frame was utilized in 18 articles (Articles 1, 3, 4 - 10, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20, 24, 25, 27 - 29), throughout the entire 6-month period, and it appeared in 52 paragraphs.

Article 27: “Ms. al-Kaas, 19, said that around the same time, she heard shots and the sound of tanks before Israeli soldiers, using loudspeakers, ordered people in the complex to stay inside and close the windows. She said Israeli forces told people that they would be moved to the Al-Mawasi area in southern Gaza, although it was not immediately clear when or how they would be moved. Israel has sought to create a humanitarian “safe zone” in Al-Mawasi, although civilians have found little shelter there.” (Zhuang et al., 2024).

6.2.1.4. Warfare Does Not Achieve Results

The framing of warfare as ineffective in achieving Israel's stated goals, such as ending Hamas and securing the release of hostages, further condemns state-based violence. This frame appeared in 9 articles (Article 1, 3, 7, 11, 13, 18, 19, 21 - 23 & 30), and in 27 paragraphs, it was more prevalent during the later half of the coverage analyzed, which indicates a growing lack of disapproval of the Israeli violence.

Article 30: “Military strategists and Western officials have not only called the Israeli conduct of the war unjustifiably destructive and deadly, but they have also questioned its effectiveness.” (Yazbek et al., 2024).

The frame also highlights the opinions of people in Israel who argue that continued use of force would prevent the hostages from being released alive.

Article 21: “I address you, Mr. Netanyahu, everything is in your hands. You are the one who can,” said Adina Moshe, 72, an Israeli hostage who was freed from Hamas captivity during the weeklong cease-fire. “I’m terribly afraid if you continue with this line of dismantling Hamas, no hostages will be left to release.” (Boxerman & Reiss, 2024).

6.2.1.5. Questioning Credibility

State-based violence is condemned by questioning the credibility of the motives behind the violence. By insinuating that the rationale is untrue, the violence appears even more condemned. This frame was used in 11 articles (Articles 6-10, 14, 16, 17, 24, 28, and 30) and 20 paragraphs. Notably, the frame did not occur during the first month of coverage but appeared in all the November articles that mentioned the Israeli attack on the Al-Shifa hospital.

This frame is indicated by coverage that questions the credibility of Israeli claims, or by sharing perspectives that contradict claims made by Israeli officials.

Article 24: “The Israeli military said Thursday that it had opened a “humanitarian corridor” for people leaving the hospital, but even then witnesses who fled said it was a harrowing and perilous experience.” (Yee, 2024).

Much of this frame is constructed by coverage that questions the credibility of the recurring Israeli claim that Hamas is operating in tunnels underneath hospitals.

Article 9: “On Wednesday, as the Israeli military began searching Al-Shifa Hospital, it presented as evidence of a Hamas military presence a video showing about a dozen guns, a grenade, protective vests and military uniforms that it said soldiers had found in an M.R.I. unit at the hospital. The Times could not verify the provenance of the weapons.” (Kingsley & Fuller, 2023).

However, when analyzing the prevalence in articles where this frame is used, most of them still give significant attention to the Israeli counter-terrorism frame.

6.2.2. Obscuring Peace Alternatives

This frame operates on the principle that peace is a universally desired outcome. Thus, by portraying an actor as working against peace or ignoring viable peace alternatives, their use of violence is condemned. This frame was used in six articles (Articles 21, 22, 25, and 28-30) and 21 paragraphs. Interestingly enough, this frame is that it is only used in the last two months of the analyzed coverage.

Article 22: The Israeli military pressed on with its bombardment of the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, signaling that the passing of a United Nations resolution calling for a cease-fire for the holy month of Ramadan the day before had not shaken Israel’s determination to keep fighting. (Reiss, 2024).

Although this frame condemns the Israeli use of violence for obscuring and ignoring peaceful alternatives, the Israeli motives for not wanting a ceasefire are still prominent. Thereby diminishes the strength of the condemnation.

6.2.3. International Community Disagrees

Highlighting the international community's disagreement with the state's use of violence condemns it for deviating from the status quo and facing general disapproval. In the coverage analyzed this frame is apparent in 18 articles (Articles 7-13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25 27-30) and a total of 36 paragraphs. The frame is absent from October coverage.

This frame emphasizes that respected international organizations condemn the use of violence, and /or stress the need for a ceasefire.

Article 11: "I deeply regret that military operations have started again in Gaza," the United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, said in a statement. "The return to hostilities only shows how important it is to have a true humanitarian cease-fire." (Kingsley et al., 2023).

The New York Times is quite persistent in ensuring that the reader understands that the general international community does not agree with the degree of violence being used in this conflict, and it is apparent throughout the coverage.

6.3. Condemning Non-state Violence

The frames identified in the NYT articles for condemning non-state violence were the following:

1. Brutality
2. Emphasizing the consequences
3. Terrorist
4. Humanization of victims
5. Obscuring peace alternatives

6.3.1. *Emphasizing the Consequences*

One frame used to condemn non-state violence emphasized the consequences of Hamas-inflicted violence on Israelis. This frame appeared in 15 of the articles (Articles 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11-15, 17, 18, 21, 24, and 27), with references in 34 paragraphs. The frame was utilized more frequently in the first half of the coverage analyzed and only appeared in one-third of the articles in 2024.

Article 1: “A new barrage of rockets fired into Israel from Gaza injured seven people on Monday, officials said, while sirens blared in Jerusalem and across central Israel. Schools remained closed and flights in and out of the country were curtailed.” (Kershner et al., 2023).

The most common indicator is the mention of Israeli casualties, often referring to the lives lost in the October 7 attack. Israeli casualties are mentioned in all 15 articles and in 21 paragraphs.

Article 1: “More than 900 people have been killed in Israel, the Israel Defense Forces said. More than 2,600 have been wounded since the incursion began early Saturday, and Hamas gunmen were holding about 150 hostages, the Israeli government said.” (Kershner et al., 2023).

6.3.2. *Humanization of Victims*

Another way to condemn Hamas' use of violence is by humanizing the victims. Here the same logic for the frame is applicable when it is used to condemn state-based violence (see section 5.2.1.3). This frame occurred in 5 articles (Articles, 1, 2, 9, 11 & 15) all from the first 3 months of the coverage analyzed and referred to in 20 paragraphs.

Article 2: “But when the army gathered all the survivors in a kindergarten after Saturday’s attack — which lasted at least eight hours — one resident, Irit Lahav, and her 22-year-old daughter, Lotus Lahav, noticed that many of the community’s residents were missing.” (NYT, 2023a).

However, this frame is not observed after December. This could be attributed to the fact that Hamas did not carry out violence of the same magnitude as the October 7 attack again.

6.3.3. *Brutality*

This frame is used to condemn Hamas’s violence by emphasizing its brutality, either by explicitly describing the gruesomeness of the violence or by using words like “massacre” and

“atrocities” to describe the violence. The frame appears in 15 articles (Articles 1,2,3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22 & 30) and 39 paragraphs.

Article 2: ““It’s not a war or a battlefield; it’s a massacre,” said Maj. Gen. Itai Veruv, an Israeli commander on the scene. “It’s something I never saw in my life, something more like a pogrom from our grandparents’ time.”(NYT, 2023a).

Article 3: “President Biden, speaking to reporters in Washington after meeting with Jewish leaders, appeared to back reports of a particularly gruesome atrocity — one that the Israeli authorities have not verified. “I never really thought that I would see it and have confirmed pictures of terrorists beheading children,” he said.” (Yazbek et al., 2023).

Biden's quote, citing terrorists beheading babies, initially suggests extreme gruesomeness. However, The New York Times later clarified that Biden had not seen videos firsthand but relied on secondary sources. Despite this clarification, the article maintains a focus on the violence's brutality, overshadowing the attempt to clarify Biden's statement.

The brutality frame condemns Hamas for taking hostages but also subtly reminds readers of this fact throughout the coverage, therefore strengthening the counter-terrorism frame.

Article 21: “The Israeli authorities have said 253 Israelis and foreign nationals were taken hostage on Oct. 7. More than 100 have been released, mostly during a weeklong cease-fire deal that began last November. Israeli officials say 136 remain in Gaza, including dozens who are believed to be dead.” (Boxerman & Reiss, 2024).

6.3.4. Terrorist

The terrorist frame operates by condemning Hamas for their violence by labeling them as terrorists or their violence as terrorism. This occurred in 7 paragraphs, in 5 articles (Articles 1, 2, 3, 12 & 15). Quotes where Israeli spokespersons label Hamas as terrorists or refer to their attacks as terrorist attacks are not included in this frame, as it is clear that it is the Israeli state making these labels. The references included in this frame are when the NYT itself labels Hamas as terrorists, refers to their attacks as terrorist attacks, when US officials refer to Hamas as a terrorist group, or when other states declare their actions as terrorism.

The NYT condemns Hamas violence by utilizing the terrorist frame in October, and December. However, they only label Hamas as terrorists in October. In December, the

October 7 attack was described as a “terrorist attack”, and they emphasized that the US considers Hamas a terrorist organization.

Article 3: “The terrorists rampaged through towns, kibbutzim and a music festival, among other locations, killing indiscriminately and taking hostages, in an incursion felt far beyond Israel.” (Yazbek et al., 2023).

Article 13: “The United States has designated Hamas a terrorist organization (...)”. (Martinez, 2023).

Article 15: Since Hamas led a terrorist attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7 (...)”. (Gavrielov, 2023).

After December, Hamas is not explicitly labeled as a terrorist organization by the NYT. This change is quite surprising and suggests a turning point in the coverage.

6.3.5. Obscuring Peace Alternatives

The obscuring peace frame was used to condemn Hamas's use of violence, although only in three articles (Articles 11, 25 & 29), and 7 paragraphs.

Article 25: “But he added, “Ultimately, some of this comes down to Hamas and whether Hamas is willing to agree to a deal that would provide significant benefits to the Palestinian people that they claim to represent.”. (Boxerman et al., 2024).

The obscuring peace alternatives frame is infrequent, appearing in only 3 out of 30 articles. This is surprising because it contrasts with earlier research where Palestinians and Hamas are often depicted as obstructing peace and Israel as striving for it (see section 3.1). This shift may be due to Hamas's multiple offers for a permanent ceasefire and agreement to release all hostages, which Israel has declined, stating the deals are insufficient (see section 5.2.2 XX and Articles 21, 22, 25, and 28-30.) (Nakhoul, 2024, Al-Jazeera, 2024b). This finding is interesting as it suggests a view of Hamas as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, indicating they are an actor one can negotiate with and potentially reach an agreement, with rather than solely an entity to be destroyed.

7. Discussion

The present study sought to investigate how Western media portrays the use of violence in conflicts between a state and a non-state actor, and how the counter-terrorism frame has been used in this context. The first question the paper aims to answer is:

- **RQ1:** *How does Western media portray the use of violence in a conflict between a state and a non-state actor?*

As shown in Section 6., the Western media employs several frames that either frame the use of violence as justified or as condemned, which contributes to the process of either legitimizing or delegitimizing the use of violence (See Fig. 5.).

The counter-terrorism frame was frequently used to justify state-based violence, which refers us back to the second research question:

- **RQ2:** *How does Western media construct and employ the counter-terrorism frame to justify the use of state-based violence, and how persistent is this frame?*

The counterterrorism frame was found to be very persistent, appearing in 28 of the articles (See Appendix 3.) This frame spanned the entire six-month coverage period. Thereby, it was found that the NYT reproduced Israel's counter-terrorism narrative, through this frame. The counterterrorism frame was invoked every time Hamas was mentioned, as Hamas is already established as a terrorist organization witing Western culture. It was constructed by justifying state-based violence as targeting Hamas or its members, rather than civilians. Attacks on hospitals were justified by stating that Hamas had bases underneath these hospitals. The counterterrorism frame was emphasized even when other frames were employed. This leads us to the first hypothesis of the paper:

- **H1:** *The media will use counter-terrorism frames to justify state-based violence, and these frames will be utilized to a greater extent than frames that condemn state-based violence.*

The findings reveal a significant use of the counter-terrorism frame by the media to justify state-based violence, partially confirming the initial hypothesis (H1). The disproportionality frame, which condemns state violence, appeared more frequently than the counter-terrorism frame. Both frames were in 28 articles, but the disproportionality frame appeared in 215

paragraphs, compared to 177 for the counter-terrorism frame. Thus proving that the second part of H1 is incorrect. Although, the mere frequency of references is not the sole indicator of a frame's strength or impact. The counter-terrorism frame demonstrated greater persistence and strength compared to the disproportionality frame.

This conclusion is based on several observations. First, when Palestinian casualties were mentioned, Israeli casualties were often highlighted simultaneously. This served as a reminder of the October 7 attack and invoked the counter-terrorism frame, thereby justifying the Israeli violence as retaliation. The framing of Hamas's violence as brutal included detailed and gruesome descriptions. In contrast, Israeli violence was not described with the same level of brutality. The focus was on the sites of attacks, rather than the violence. The brutality of Israeli actions was often framed alongside the counter-terrorism narrative, thereby omitting the brutality. Hamas' violence was never framed with any justification. When condemning Israeli violence as disproportionate, the coverage still included reasons for Israeli actions, thus mitigating the effect. This suggests that frames often work in tandem. By condemning non-state violence, the justification of state-based violence is strengthened, and vice versa. Therefore, the counter-terrorism frame is reinforced whenever non-state violence is condemned.

The relationship between these frames can be visualized as follows: the justification of state-based violence is squeezed between the condemnation of state and non-state violence. When state-based violence is condemned, the justification is pushed down. When non-state violence is emphasized, the justification is pushed up and strengthened, making the condemnation of state-based violence appear weaker and less impactful. This interplay underscores the complexity of media framing in conflicts and highlights how condemnation and justification frames can reinforce each other, especially when counter-terrorism is used to justify state-based violence.

Moving on to the second hypothesis of the paper:

- **H2:** *The use of frames that justify state-based violence will be less prominent in relation to a growing disagreement about the state-based use of violence amongst the international community.*

Initially, the absence of frames highlighting international disagreement with state-based violence in the first month of coverage suggests a potential but modest correlation. The emergence of the obscuring peace alternatives frame in February and March may indicate an impact of international political discourse on media coverage. With increasing calls from international organizations for a ceasefire, this frame likely reflects growing frustration with Israel's refusal to heed these calls, as the UN has issued calls for a ceasefire since December (see Fig. 1).

A deviation from past portrayals arises after December, wherein Hamas is no longer labeled as a terrorist organization by the NYT. This unexpected shift indicates a potential turning point in coverage and presents a shift from previous research on Palestinian and Hamas portrayals (see Section 3). This may be due to the disproportionate violence by Israel and a shift in political discourse, with increased support for a ceasefire where Hamas is seen as a negotiable entity. This suggests a basic recognition of Hamas as a representative of Palestine, rather than entirely delegitimizing them as a terrorist organization. However, there are no findings strong enough, apart from the obscuring peace frame, to support the second hypothesis, as the disproportionality frame that condemns state-based violence has been used throughout the entire period of coverage analyzed, and it has not been more prominent during the later months of coverage when the international political climate shifted the most.

The study's scope focused on a relatively small sample of articles spanning six months, and a more extensive dataset, covering a longer period, could offer a deeper understanding of how media framing evolves over time. Additionally, the dynamic nature of the conflict implies that new developments and events may shape media narratives differently beyond the study's timeframe. Therefore, while the findings provide valuable insights, they may not fully capture the complexity and nuances of media representation. To mitigate these limitations, future research could explore a broader range of media sources or extend the analysis period.

By doing so, researchers can obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how media portrays violence and how the counter-terrorism frame operates.

8. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine and understand the way Western media portrays the use of violence in a conflict between a state and a non-state actor, where the coverage by the NYT of the ongoing Israel-Hamas war was selected as a case study. The main findings of this study were that the NYTs consistently utilized a counter-terrorism frame to justify state-based violence, thereby reproducing Israel's counter-terrorism narrative. The counter-terrorism frame not only persisted but also worked in tandem with other frames, which strengthened its impact. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the most prominent frame used to condemn state-based violence was the disproportionality frame, and that non-state violence was always condemned by the media, never justified.

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<http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-s-military-says-hamas-had-returned-gaza/docview/2958153753/se-2?accountid=12187> [Accessed 2024-05-21]

10. Appendix:

Appendix 1:

Table 1. List of articles selected from The New York Times.

Article nr:	Title:	Publication Date:	Link:
Article 1	Israel Orders 'Complete Siege' of Gaza and Hamas Threatens to Kill Hostages	Oct 9, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-orders-complete-siege-gaza-hamas-threatens/docview/2874548001/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 2	Hamas Leaves Trail of Terror in Israel	Oct 10, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/hamas-leaves-trail-terror-israel/docview/2875166145/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 3	Israel Forms Unity Government and Bombs Gaza in the Wake of Hamas Attack	Oct 11, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-forms-unity-government-bombs-gaza-wake/docview/2875510929/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 4	Israel-Hamas War Briefing: Gaza is	Oct 25, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-hamas-war-briefing-gaza-is-running-out/docview/2881494015/se-2?accountid=12187

	running out of fuel		
Article 5	Israel-Hamas War Briefing: Israel strikes a Gaza neighborhood	Oct 31, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-hamas-war-briefing-strikes-gaza/docview/2884353504/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 6	Israel accuses Hamas of operating out of 2 more Gaza hospitals	Nov 5, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-accuses-hamas-operating-out-2-more-gaza/docview/2886120747/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 7	Israel Says It Has Split Gaza Strip in Two in Drive to Isolate Hamas's	Nov 6, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-says-has-split-gaza-strip-two-drive/docview/288645448/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 8	Israeli Forces Near a Struggling Hospital They Say Covers a Hamas Complex	Nov 12, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israeli-forces-near-struggling-hospital-they-say/docview/288902295/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 9	Pressure Mounts as Israel Combs Through Gaza Hospital for Hamas's Presence	Nov 16, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/pressure-mounts-as-israel-combs-through-gaza/docview/2890464063/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 10	Infants Moved From 'Death Zone' Hospital That Israel Says Was Hamas Hideout	Nov 19, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/infants-moved-death-zone-hospital-that-israel/docview/2891531826/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 11	Israel Resumes Offensive in Gaza Strip After Truce With Hamas Ends	Dec 1, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-resumes-offensive-gaza-strip-after-truce/docview/2895849397/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 12	How Israel Is Using Real-Time Battlefield Intelligence to Target Hamas	Dec 7, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/how-israel-is-using-real-time-battlefield/docview/2898982738/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 13	Israel says it will continue to search for Hamas's leader.	Dec 11, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-says-will-continue-search-hamas-leader/docview/2900137935/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 14	Israel says it has uncovered tunnels leading to Hamas's 'center of power' in Gaza.	Dec 20, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-says-has-uncovered-tunnels-leading-hamas-center/docview/2903953604/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 15	Hamas and Other Militant Groups Are Firing Rockets Into Israel Every Day	Dec 27, 2023	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/hamas-other-militant-groups-are-firing-rockets/docview/2906272474/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 16	Hamas Used Gaza Hospital as a Command Center, U.S. Intelligence Says	Jan 2, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/hamas-used-gaza-hospital-as-command-center-u-s/docview/2908867499/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 17	Israel says it dismantled a Hamas-built tunnel under a Gaza hospital.	Jan 3, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-says-dismantled-hamas-built-tunnel-under/docview/2909189143/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 18	Hamas Rocket Barrage Stirs Debate in Israel Over Direction of War	Jan 16, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/hamas-rocket-barrage-stirs-debate-israel-over/docview/2915139233/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 19	Where Is Hamas Getting Its Weapons? Increasingly, From Israel.	Jan 28, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/where-is-hamas-getting-weapons-increasingly/docview/2918858692/se-2?accountid=12187

Article 20	Israeli Forces Kill a Hamas Commander Inside a West Bank Hospital, Military Says	Jan 30, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israeli-forces-kill-hamas-commander-inside-west/docview/29197568/65/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 21	Netanyahu dismisses a Hamas counteroffer on a cease-fire.	Feb 7, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/netanyahu-dismisses-hamas-counteroffer-on-cessa/docview/29230166/17/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 22	Some Hostages' Families Say Israel Should Keep Fighting Hamas	Feb 8, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/some-hostages-families-say-israel-should-keep/docview/292325966/1/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 23	U.S. intelligence officials tell Congress that Israel is not close to eliminating Hamas.	Feb 8, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/us-intelligence-officials-tell-congress-that/docview/2923428072/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 24	Palestinians Flee as Israeli Forces Raid a Major Hospital in Gaza	Feb 15, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/palestinians-flee-as-israeli-forces-raid-major/docview/2926788848/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 25	Hamas Rejects Cease-Fire Proposal, Dashing Biden's Hopes of Near-Term Deal	Feb 27, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/hamas-rejects-cessa-fire-proposal-dashing-biden-s/docview/2932274434/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 26	Israel Says It Targeted Marwan Issa, a Top Hamas Leader in Gaza	Mar 11, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-says-targeted-marwan-issa-top-hamas-leader/docview/2954927650/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 27	Israel's military says Hamas had returned to Gaza's largest hospital.	Mar 18, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-s-military-says-hamas-had-returnd-gaza/docview/2958153753/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 28	Israel Presses On With Strikes in Gaza After U.N. Cease-Fire Resolution	Mar 26, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/israel-presses-on-with-strikes-gaza-after-u-n/docview/2985700647/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 29	Two days after the U.N. call for a cease-fire, Israeli strikes on Gaza haven't let up.	Mar 27, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/two-days-after-u-n-call-cessa-fire-israeli/docview/2987220264/se-2?accountid=12187
Article 30	Fighting Rages Around Two Gaza Hospitals as Pressure on Israel Rises	Mar 28, 2024	http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/fighting-rages-around-two-gaza-hospitals-as/docview/3011638696/se-2?accountid=12187

Appendix 2:

The coding scheme used for the final round of analysis

Name:	Description:
Hamas:	Category for codes concerning non-state violence

Condemning	Overarching code
Brutality	Main code
<i>Deadliest assault</i>	Subcode within the main code Brutality
<i>Gruesome violence</i>	Subcode within the main code Brutality
<i>Taking hostages</i>	Subcode within the main code Brutality
Emphasizing the consequences	Main code
<i>Casualties count</i>	Subcode within the main code Emphasizing the consequences
Humanization of victims	Main code
Obscuring peace alternatives	Main code
Terrorist	Main code
Israel:	Category for codes concerning state-based violence
Condemning:	Overarching code
Disproportionality	Main code
<i>Brutality</i>	Subcode within Disproportionality

<i>Emphasizing the consequences</i>	Subcode within Disproportionality
<i>Palestinian casualties count</i>	Code within the subcode Emphasizing the consequences
<i>Humanizing victims</i>	Subcode within Disproportionality
<i>Questioning credibility</i>	Subcode within Disproportionality
<i>Warfare does not achieve results</i>	Subcode within Disproportionality
International community disagrees	Main code
Obscuring peace alternatives	Main code
<i>Ignoring calls for a ceasefire</i>	Subcode within the main code Obscuring peace alternatives
<i>Israel does not want a ceasefire</i>	Subcode within the main code Obscuring peace alternatives
<i>Israel is breaking a ceasefire</i>	Subcode within the main code Obscuring peace alternatives
Justification	Overarching code
Contextualization	Main code

Counter-terrorism	Main code
<i>Hamas is a big threat</i>	Subcode within the main code Counter-terrorism
<i>Is more important than hostage relief</i>	Subcode within the main code Counter-terrorism
<i>USA agrees</i>	Subcode within the main code Counter-terrorism
Neutralizing language	Main code
Questioning credibility	Main code

Appendix 3.

Table 2. The occurrence of frames used by the NYT to portray the use of violence.

Frames:	Nr of articles the frame occurred in:	Nr of paragraphs frame occurred in:
Frames for condemning non-state violence	20	85
Brutality	15	39
Emphasizing the consequences	15	33
Humanization of victims	5	20
Obscuring peace alternatives	3	7
Terrorist	5	7
Frames for condemning state-based violence:	28	255
Disproportionality	28	215
Brutality	17	58

Frames:	Nr of articles the frame occurred in:	Nr of paragraphs frame occurred in:
Emphasizing the consequences	20	49
Humanizing victims	18	51
Questioning credibility	11	20
Warfare does not achieve results	9	27
International community disagrees	18	36
Obscuring peace alternatives	6	21
Frames justifying state-based violence:	28	202
Counter-terrorism	28	177
Neutralizing language	3	3
Questioning credibility	5	8
Contextualization	11	18