



Selective Visibility of Western Media: A Critical Discourse Analysis of AI's Responses on the Palestine and Ukraine Conflicts

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Abstract

This study investigates how **artificial intelligence (AI)** discerns and reproduces the patterns of **selective visibility** in Western media coverage of two major global conflicts: **Palestine–Israel** and **Russia–Ukraine**. The primary aim is to examine how a **large language model (LLM)** interprets and evaluates Western media discourse through its generated responses. Employing a **qualitative textual analysis**, AI-generated outputs were treated as the primary data. A purposive set of prompts was submitted to the model, and the responses were analyzed using the theoretical framework of **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**. The analysis was guided by four central CDA concepts: **power and ideology**, **lexical choice and agency**, **silences and foregrounding**, and **recontextualization**. The findings demonstrate that AI is capable of identifying asymmetries in Western media representation. It exposes **double standards** in the framing of casualties, recognizes **silences surrounding occupation and blockade**, yet often mirrors **agent-erasing language** when describing Palestinian deaths, while employing more **emotive and agentive expressions** for Ukrainian and Israeli victims. Furthermore, its recontextualization of narratives frames the Palestinian struggle predominantly through **security discourse**, whereas Ukrainian resistance is depicted as a matter of **sovereignty and heroism**. The study concludes that while AI can critically engage with ideological patterns in media discourse, it simultaneously reflects the biases embedded within dominant Western epistemologies. Future research could extend this inquiry to **multilingual datasets**, **different model versions**, and **diverse geopolitical contexts** to assess the persistence and transformation of these discursive asymmetries.

Keywords:

AI, Western media, selective visibility, Palestine–Israel conflict, Russia–Ukraine War, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

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Introduction

How conflicts are narrated is never neutral. News coverage is a site where ideology and power relations are both produced and contested. Media discourse does not simply mirror reality. It actively shapes public perceptions of legitimacy, victimhood, and responsibility (Entman, 1993). By foregrounding certain actors while silencing others, media narratives influence not only how conflicts are understood but also how international audiences and policymakers respond (Richardson, 2007).

Situated in this broader discourse, the Russia–Ukraine and Palestine–Israel conflicts stand among the most intensively mediated global crises of the twenty-first century. A growing body of research documents striking double standards in Western media. For example, Amer (2017) argued that newspapers in the United States and the United Kingdom frequently frame Israelis as peace-seekers. However, these newspapers put Palestinian perspectives in the background. Similarly, Lafta (2025) claimed that Western media portrayed Ukrainian fighters as defenders of sovereignty. Nevertheless, the same media portrayed Palestinians in terms of a humanitarian crisis. These asymmetries highlight not only differences in lexical choice and agency but also the operation of silences, structural factors like occupation or NATO expansion that are backgrounded in media narratives. Extending this inquiry to artificial intelligence, AI offers a unique lens, since its outputs are trained on vast corpora of online text. Therefore, AI may or may not acknowledge these established patterns of representation.

The aim of this research is to examine how AI acknowledges the bias of the Western media in representations of the Palestine–Israel and Russia–Ukraine conflicts. This research addresses this gap by utilising AI outputs as data to critically analyse how AI reflects the bias of the Western media in the coverage of the Palestine–Israel and Russia–Ukraine conflicts. AI responses are then examined through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis.

Problem Statement

Western media have been widely criticised for biased reporting on their portrayals of the Palestine–Israel and Russia–Ukraine wars. Such biases are well documented. However, the gap lies in understanding how AI explicitly acknowledges these biases when analysing or summarising such conflicts. This research addresses this gap by examining AI's responses to see if, and how, it recognises the presence of selective visibility and asymmetrical framing in Western media coverage.

Research Questions

- How does AI evaluate Western media discourses on the Palestine–Israel and Russia–Ukraine conflicts?
- In what ways does AI expose bias through lexical choice, agency, silences, and recontextualization?

Literature Review

Scholarship on media representations of conflict demonstrates that news discourse plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of legitimacy, victimhood, and aggression. Across studies of the Palestine–Israel conflict and the Russia–Ukraine war, researchers identified consistent asymmetries in Western reporting that foreground certain narratives but obscure others.

Framing theory has been central in analysing these dynamics. Borgström and Pettersson (2024) argued that Western media framed Ukraine primarily as a sovereign state under existential threat, but Gaza was represented largely in humanitarian terms, emphasising civilian suffering. Similarly, Sarwar and Qasim (2025) utilized Systemic Functional Linguistics and Appraisal Theory in their research and claimed that Western headlines often attributed agency to Israel to legitimising its defensive stance. However, they argued that Eastern media foregrounded Palestinian suffering.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is widely used to explore the ideological mechanisms behind framing. Kareem and Najm (2024) utilised Van Dijk's "ideological square" and found that Western media often depicted Palestinians as aggressors and Israelis as defenders. They argued that such a representation reinforces pro-Israel bias. Mäenpää (2022) examined discourse on Ukrainian refugees and identified Eurocentric patterns of othering that portrayed Ukrainians as culturally close and deserving, unlike refugees from the Global South.

Recent research also explores epistemic injustice in war reporting. Kotišová (2024) pointed out that local journalists in Ukraine and Palestine tend to receive less credibility than foreign correspondents. It reveals deep-rooted biases in global news. Western journalism favours distance and objectivity, but local reporters' emotional closeness offers more nuanced and ethically meaningful

insights. Despite this, their knowledge is often dismissed because of bias assumptions, sustaining epistemic hierarchies in international coverage.

Digital media and disinformation complicate how conflicts are portrayed. Hameleers (2025) demonstrated that visual disinformation, often through “cheapfakes” and out-of-context images, influenced partisan perceptions during the Ukraine and Israel–Palestine conflicts. These visuals reinforced in-group perspectives and discredited opposing views, thereby heightening polarisation. Similarly, Elmasry et al. (2021) observed that TikTok became a contested space for contrasting visual narratives during the 2021 Gaza conflict, with viral images used to challenge mainstream silence.

Media coverage analysis shows how Western outlets often reflect broader geopolitical interests. Maulana (2024) pointed out that the U.S., U.K., and EU adopted distinct approaches to Ukraine and Palestine, shaped by historical alliances and strategic motives. Munir (2024) observed that CNN and BBC mainly emphasised political and military issues in Ukraine, downplaying humanitarian concerns regarding Palestine. In contrast, Al Jazeera highlighted war crimes and civilian casualties. This selective framing reveals the ideological biases of Western media and their role in sustaining unequal global narratives.

Extensive research has examined Western media bias in covering the Palestine–Israel and Russia–Ukraine conflicts. However, little focus has been placed on whether AI replicates this bias. This study addresses that gap by analysing AI outputs to evaluate if and how they reflect Western media biases in these conflicts.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach and applies McKee’s (2003) textual analysis as its method. The theoretical basis hinges on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), guided by four core concepts: power and ideology, lexical choice and agency, silences and foregrounding, and recontextualization.

Sampling Technique

This research used a sample of texts generated by ChatGPT 5 in response to a specifically chosen set of prompts. A purposive sampling method was employed, where a predefined set of prompts related to the Palestine–Israel and Russia–Ukraine conflicts was given to ChatGPT 5. The outputs from these prompts formed the data for analysis. This textual data was then examined manually using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research is CDA to investigate how AI recognises the selective visibility patterns that characterise Western media representations of the Palestine–Israel and Russia–Ukraine conflicts. In other words, the research examines whether ChatGPT acknowledges the bias of the Western media in the representations of the Palestine–Israel and Russia–Ukraine conflicts. Given CDA’s breadth, this research narrows its focus to four interrelated concepts of CDA: power and ideology, word choice and agency, silences and foregrounding, and recontextualization. Together, these concepts provide a focused framework for analysing how discourse legitimises or delegitimises actors and events.

First, the concept of power, ideology, and language are the core components of critical discourse analysis. CDA treats language as a form of social practice inseparably tied to ideology and power. Fairclough (2003) emphasized that “language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, so that social analysis and research always has to take account of language” (p. 2). Later, Fairclough (2010) elaborated that “critical discourse analysis aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices, events and texts, and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes” (p. 93). This underscores discourse’s central role in shaping social reality. On the other hand, Van Dijk (2008) demonstrates how media texts sustain dominant worldviews.

Second, word choice and agency are crucial for understanding how responsibility and legitimacy are distributed. Fairclough (2003) highlighted the ideological significance of vocabulary. On the other hand, Van Leeuwen’s (2008) social actor theory shows how agency is allocated through activation, passivation, inclusion, or exclusion. Similarly, Gee (2011) argued that “saying things in language never goes without also doing things and being things” (p. 2), highlighting how language enacts roles, relationships, and identities.

Third, silences and foregrounds emphasise the ideological weight of what is omitted or downplayed. Machin and Mayr (2012) argued that absences are as consequential as explicit statements. On the other hand, Slemon (2025) and Taylor (2013) highlighted how selective visibility sustains dominant narratives. As Taylor (2013) observed, “discourse analysis has the potential to highlight issues of power and the creation and contestation of meaning” (p. viii).

Fourth, Van Leeuwen’s (2008) concept of recontextualization describes how social practices are transformed when represented in discourse. Van Leeuwen (2008) described discourse as recontextualization, observing that “all discourses recontextualize social practices, and all knowledge is, therefore, ultimately grounded in practice, however slender that link may seem at times” (p. 6). Such processes may foreground, transform, or erase actors and actions, exposing discourse’s ideological work.

Data Analysis

This section analyses the data.

Prompt 1: “How is Western media accused of bias in covering the Palestine conflict vs the Ukraine conflict? Give three bullet points for each.”

AI’s Response: AI acknowledged contrasting framings in Western media discourse. In the case of Palestine, Palestinian deaths are often described with passive or neutral terms such as “casualties” or “died.” Asymmetries are downplayed by presenting events as a “conflict” between two sides. Palestinian resistance is frequently delegitimised through the label of “terrorism.” At the same time, Israeli actions are framed as “self-defence.” On the other hand, Ukraine is framed through an apparent victim–aggressor narrative, where Ukraine appears as the innocent victim of unprovoked Russian aggression. Ukrainian civilians are personalised and humanised, while resistance is celebrated as “heroic” and “patriotic.”

Power and Ideology

The response highlights how discourse serves ideological functions. For Palestine, media frames obscure the power asymmetry of occupation, casting the situation as a symmetrical conflict. This legitimises Israeli state violence by reclassifying it as “self-defence.” However, for Ukraine, ideology operates in the opposite direction. The victim–aggressor binary is unambiguous, foregrounding Russian culpability and Ukrainian legitimacy. Fairclough (2010) emphasises that discourse naturalises power by embedding asymmetries in linguistic representation.

Word Choice and Agency

Word choice plays a key role in shaping contrasting realities. In discussions about Palestine, passive words like “died” or “casualties” hide Israeli responsibility. In contrast, emotive verbs such as “murdered” or “slaughtered” are used exclusively for Israeli victims. Terms like “terrorism” further delegitimise the Palestinian struggle. On the other hand, Ukraine is described with powerful words like “heroic” and “patriotic,” which glorify resistance, while the label “aggressor” consistently attributes blame to Russia. This demonstrates Van Leeuwen’s (2008) concept of role allocation, where agency is assigned or denied based on ideological stance.

Silences and Foregrounding

Discursive silences reveal how narratives are ideologically shaped. In the case of Palestine, occupation, blockade, and asymmetry are routinely backgrounded. On the other hand, Israeli insecurity is foregrounded. For Ukraine, NATO involvement is silenced, but Russian aggression and Ukrainian victimhood are emphasised. This pattern reflects Taylor’s (2013) argument that discourse sustains ideology by privileging certain narratives but suppressing others.

Recontextualization

Palestinian resistance is recontextualised into the global “terrorism” discourse. The Western media links local struggles to broader Western fears of extremism. Israeli actions are recontextualised into the security/self-defence discourse to normalise state violence. Nevertheless, Ukrainian resistance is recontextualised into heroic nationalist discourse. Russia’s actions constitute criminal aggression under international law. These divergent recontextualizations produce starkly different ideological outcomes: delegitimation versus valorisation.

Prompt 2: “What words are commonly used in Western media to describe Palestinian deaths vs Ukrainian deaths? List 3 examples for each.”

AI’s Response: AI acknowledged that the media frames deaths differently in the two conflicts. Palestinian deaths are described in the media with neutral or passive terms such as “clashes,”

“casualties,” or “died,” which obscure agency. However, Ukrainian deaths are represented with active and evaluative language such as “killed,” “massacre,” and “victims,” which highlight culpability and elicit empathy.

Power and Ideology

The lexical choices illustrate how discourse embodies ideological positioning. For Palestinians, words such as “clashes” and “casualties” neutralise power relations. It implies mutual violence or accidental harm. Therefore, it obscures Israeli agency. This reflects how language, as Fairclough (2010) argued, does ideological work by structuring causal and responsibility relations. Nevertheless, in the Ukrainian context, lexical items like “massacre” and “victims” overtly condemn Russian actions and highlight Ukrainian suffering, aligning discourse with Western geopolitical stances.

Word Choice and Agency

The Palestinian framing leans heavily on passive constructions (“Palestinians died”), which erase the actor responsible for the deaths. Van Leeuwen (2008) describes this as the erasure of social actors in recontextualization. In contrast, the Ukrainian case is framed with active agency (“Russia killed civilians”), explicitly naming the perpetrator. This differential distribution of agency reflects unequal assignment of blame and accountability.

Silences and Foregrounding

In the Palestinian case, the silence lies in the absence of the agent. Israel is rarely named as the direct cause of death. The emphasis is instead on abstract events (“clashes,” “casualties”). For Ukraine, agency and brutality are foregrounded. Russia is consistently named, and evaluative terms (“massacre”) emphasise intentional cruelty. This aligns with Taylor’s (2013) observation that discourse selectively highlights and suppresses meaning to reinforce ideological positions.

Recontextualization

The use of “clashes” in Palestinian reporting recontextualises asymmetric violence into a frame of mutual conflict. Therefore, it transforms acts of aggression into what appears as a balanced confrontation. On the other hand, the Ukrainian case is recontextualised into clear aggression, where Russia is positioned as an unambiguous perpetrator of atrocities. These recontextualizations illustrate how discursive practices reshape social practices into narratives of legitimacy or illegitimacy.

Prompt 3: “What words are commonly used in Western media to describe Israeli deaths vs Russian deaths? List 3 examples for each.”

AI’s Response: AI’s output shows variation in how Israeli and Russian deaths are framed in the Western media. Israeli deaths are described with emotive and moralising terms such as “murdered,” “slaughtered,” and “victims of terrorism.” Nevertheless, Russian deaths are presented in neutral and military language such as “soldiers killed,” “losses,” and “casualties.”

Power and Ideology

The lexical choices highlight how discourse reflects ideological stances. Israeli casualties are described using terms that evoke criminal violence and global outrage (“murdered,” “slaughtered,” “victims of terrorism”). These terms associate Israeli deaths with the Western ‘war on terror’ narrative, portraying Israel as a victim on the frontlines of terrorism. Conversely, Russian fatalities are mainly presented with military or statistical language (“losses,” “casualties”), which diminishes their moral significance. This supports Fairclough’s (2010) assertion that discourse does not simply report events objectively but also shapes perceptions of legitimacy and illegitimacy through ideological influence.

Word Choice and Agency

The language used for Israeli deaths, like “murdered” and “slaughtered,” emphasises the agency and brutality of the perpetrator, framing Palestinians as savage aggressors and highlighting responsibility and violence. In contrast, descriptions of Russian deaths use neutral, depersonalised terms such as “losses” and “casualties,” often ignoring the responsible party. Van Leeuwen (2008) describes this as backgrounding social actors, where deaths are reported without specifying perpetrators, thereby diminishing their prominence in discourse.

Silences and Foregrounding

In reports of Israeli deaths, emphasis is placed on innocence and victimhood, with terms like “murdered” or “slaughtered” that evoke strong emotional and moral responses. However, there is a noticeable silence regarding Palestinian victimhood, which is rarely described with similar emotional language. Conversely, reports on Russian casualties tend to highlight the military aspect, using phrases like “soldiers killed” or “losses,” which de-emphasise civilians and portray deaths as an unavoidable

part of war. The absence here is of empathetic humanisation for Russian victims, contrasting with the language used for Ukrainian casualties.

Recontextualization

Israeli deaths are recontextualised into the global narrative of terrorism (“victims of terrorism”), situating them not only in the local conflict but within a transnational ideological struggle. This strengthens Israel’s symbolic position as part of a broader Western identity coalition. Russian deaths, however, are recontextualised into technical or military discourse (“losses,” “casualties”), making them appear routine, impersonal, and even expected. As Van Leeuwen (2008) noted, recontextualization can transform social practices into ideological narratives, here normalising Russian deaths while amplifying Israeli victimhood.

Prompt 4:

“What aspects of the Palestine conflict are often left out or minimised in international media coverage? Give 3 points.”

AI’s Response: AI’s response reveals silences around structural realities in Palestine. Coverage often starts with recent violence, erasing the history of occupation and displacement. The conflict is framed as between “two equal sides,” downplaying power asymmetries. However, everyday hardships such as checkpoints, demolitions, and resource restrictions are rarely foregrounded.

Power and Ideology

The omissions identified reflect ideological silences in media discourse. By erasing historical occupation and systemic displacement, news coverage constructs violence as episodic rather than structural. This aligns with Fairclough’s (2010) claim that discourse can obscure causal relations by disconnecting events from their broader socio-political contexts. Similarly, framing the conflict as a clash of “two sides” imposes an illusion of symmetry, which conceals the vast disparities in power and agency. This ideological move effectively legitimises dominant narratives but marginalises Palestinian perspectives.

Word Choice and Agency

Although the prompt focused on omissions, the response highlights how existing word choices, phrases such as “conflict between two sides,” misrepresent agency and responsibility. By flattening asymmetries, discourse constructs Palestinians and Israelis as equal actors. However, in reality, power is unequally distributed. This linguistic move exemplifies what Van Leeuwen (2008) terms the transformation of social practices through recontextualization, where the power imbalance is linguistically erased.

Silences and Foregrounding

The most significant finding here is the role of discursive silence. Historical occupation, systemic blockade, and everyday hardships are consistently backgrounded, but immediate outbreaks of violence are foregrounded. This silence produces a narrative where Palestinian responses appear spontaneous and unprovoked, detached from decades of structural oppression. Taylor (2013) noted that discourse gains ideological power precisely through such acts of selective visibility, where certain realities are rendered invisible.

Recontextualization

The omission of occupation history recontextualises the conflict into a series of isolated violent events rather than a continuum of structural domination. The discourse of “two sides” further recontextualises asymmetrical relations into a fiction of balance, which normalises Israeli power and diminishes Palestinian victimhood. Likewise, the absence of everyday restrictions recontextualises Palestinian existence as defined only by moments of violence, erasing their lived reality under siege. This aligns with Van Leeuwen’s (2008) observation that discourse can transform, erase, or naturalise social practices.

Prompt 5:

“How is the Palestine conflict most often framed in the media: as a political dispute, humanitarian crisis, or security issue? Answer in one sentence.”

AI’s Response: “The conflict is most often framed as a security issue, centering Israeli safety and counterterrorism, while downplaying political and humanitarian aspects.”

Power and Ideology

The framing of Palestine as a “security issue” positions Israel as the primary referent object of security, legitimising militarised responses and delegitimising Palestinian claims to political rights or humanitarian relief. This reflects Fairclough’s (2010) argument that discourse is ideologically loaded. By privileging one interpretive frame (security), the language reproduces dominant power relations.

Word Choice and Agency

The emphasis on “Israeli safety” and “counterterrorism” embeds a lexical field of threat and protection. Palestinians, in this frame, appear as potential aggressors rather than as victims of structural violence. Their political agency is erased, as their struggle is not framed as a legitimate political dispute but as a threat to be neutralised. Leeuwen’s (2008) notion of actor representation is evident here. Israeli lives are foregrounded as securitised subjects, but Palestinian lives are backgrounded or reduced to objects of suspicion.

Silences and Foregrounding

In Palestine coverage, political roots such as occupation and statehood claims are muted, and structural suffering under siege and resource denial is minimised. Instead, Israeli security concerns dominate the narrative, illustrating Taylor’s (2013) point that discourse sustains power by rendering some meanings visible while obscuring others.

Recontextualization

By framing the conflict as “counterterrorism,” the media recontextualises Palestinian conflict into the global “war on terror” discourse, stripping it of political legitimacy and linking it to transnational threats. This transforms a settler-colonial struggle into a securitised problem, effectively shifting focus away from occupation and toward immediate military responses. This aligns with Leeuwen’s (2008) argument that discourse transforms practices by embedding them within broader ideological frameworks.

Prompt 6:

“How is the Ukraine conflict most often framed in the Western media: as a political dispute, humanitarian crisis, or war of aggression? Answer in one sentence.”

AI’s Response: “The conflict is most often framed as a war of aggression, with Russia positioned as the aggressor and Ukraine as the victim defending its sovereignty.”

Power and Ideology

The framing of the Ukraine war as a “war of aggression” produces a binary moral narrative. Russia is unequivocally villainised as the aggressor, while Ukraine is elevated as a legitimate victim. This aligns with Fairclough’s (2003, 2010) point that discourse naturalises ideological positions by presenting complex conflicts in simplified, morally charged categories. Such framing legitimises Western political and military support for Ukraine and embeds the conflict in broader ideological structures of international law and sovereignty.

Word Choice and Agency

The lexical choice of “aggressor” explicitly assigns agency and culpability to Russia. Unlike Palestinian deaths (often framed passively), here Russia is consistently foregrounded as the active perpetrator. Ukraine, by contrast, is linguistically represented as the defending actor, its agency framed as legitimate and necessary. This reflects Leeuwen’s (2008) concept of actor inclusion and role allocation: the aggressor/victim binary is constructed through selective assignment of roles.

Silences and Foregrounding

In Ukraine coverage, Russian aggression and Ukrainian sovereignty are foregrounded, but NATO expansion and Western strategic roles are minimised. These omissions sustain a morally unambiguous frame, exemplifying Taylor’s (2013) notion of selective visibility, where meaning is shaped as much by what is unsaid as by what is emphasised.

Recontextualization

By framing the war as “aggression,” the Western media recontextualises the conflict into international law and morality discourse, where Russia, unlike Israel, is positioned as a violator of sovereignty and global norms. Ukraine is recontextualised into the role of the “innocent defender,” embedded within a broader narrative of Western values (democracy, sovereignty, human rights). This ideological move shifts the conflict from a regional political dispute to a global struggle between order and lawlessness.

Prompt 7:

“Who is blamed for the suffering in the Palestine conflict vs the Ukraine conflict? Give three bullet points for each.”

AI's Response: AI's responses show contrasting blame attribution. In Palestine, responsibility is placed on Hamas as a “terrorist group,” on divided Palestinian leadership, or on “both sides,” which obscures Israeli state actions. In Ukraine, blame is directed squarely at Russia, Putin, and the Russian military for atrocities, but Ukraine's responsibility is minimised and treated as secondary.

Power and Ideology

The allocation of blame reflects ideological asymmetries. In Palestine, responsibility is dispersed and deflected away from Israeli state actions and onto Palestinian actors (Hamas, political leadership) or even onto “both sides.” This framing sustains an ideology where Israel's role is minimised and Palestinians are constructed as self-destructive agents of their own suffering. In Ukraine, blame is concentrated and personalised: Russia and Putin are unequivocally portrayed as aggressors. This dichotomy reflects Fairclough's (2010) claim that discourse ideologically structures causality, legitimising one side while obscuring accountability for the other.

Word Choice and Agency

In Palestine, the frequent labelling of Hamas as a “terrorist group” encodes moral illegitimacy. Similarly, describing Palestinian leadership as “corrupt or divided” highlights internal dysfunction rather than external oppression. The “both sides” framing erases agency by mutualising blame, which obscures Israeli state power. By contrast, in Ukraine, words like “atrocities” and “war crimes” explicitly attach culpable agency to the Russian state and military. This aligns with Leeuwen's (2008) point about inclusion/exclusion of social actors: Israeli agency is often excluded, while Russian agency is persistently foregrounded.

Silences and Foregrounding

In Palestine, discussions tend to downplay Israeli responsibility for occupation and root causes of suffering, focusing instead on Palestinian “terrorism” and internal issues. Conversely, in Ukraine, criticism of Ukrainian actions is minimised, with the focus mainly on Russian aggression. This selective emphasis aligns with Taylor's (2013) idea that discourse maintains power by highlighting comfortable narratives and silencing challenging ones.

Recontextualization

Palestinian suffering is recontextualised into a narrative of self-inflicted harm: through Hamas violence, corrupt leadership, or mutual blame. This transforms structural oppression into apparent internal dysfunction. Ukrainian suffering, by contrast, is recontextualised into a clear morality tale: Russian aggression as criminal, Ukrainian victimhood as legitimate. This demonstrates how discourse shapes events into contrasting ideological narratives, one ambiguous and delegitimising, the other morally unambiguous and legitimising.

Prompt 8:

“What has been the human cost of the Palestine conflict vs the Ukraine conflict? Summarise in 2 sentences for each.”

AI's Response: AI highlights heavy civilian tolls in both conflicts. In Gaza (2023–2025), over 60,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, were killed, alongside mass displacement, infrastructure destruction, and health system collapse. In Ukraine (since 2022), over 10,000 civilians have been killed, with tens of thousands injured, widespread displacement, and severe infrastructure damage.

Power and Ideology

The framing of casualties reflects ideological asymmetry. For Palestine, the numbers are extremely high (60,000+ deaths), but the source attribution (“Gaza Health Ministry”) may implicitly cast doubt, reflecting a discourse of contested legitimacy. On the other hand, Ukrainian figures are framed with UN verification, which confers authority and credibility. This differential sourcing reflects Fairclough's (2010) point that discourse embeds power by privileging certain institutions as legitimate truth-tellers.

Word Choice and Agency

In the Palestinian case, the focus is on “Palestinians killed” in passive form, without consistent attribution of perpetrators (Israel is absent). This erases agency and aligns with Leeuwen's (2008) concept of actor suppression, where social actors (Israeli military) are backgrounded or erased. In the

Ukrainian case, while the excerpt does not explicitly say “Russia killed,” the reliance on UN data and emphasis on “invasion” provides implicit agentive clarity: Russia as aggressor, Ukraine as victim.

Silences and Foregrounding

In the case of Palestine, the scale of destruction and humanitarian collapse is reported, but without explicit reference to Israeli military responsibility. The silence lies in the erasure of perpetrator accountability, which makes deaths appear as abstract outcomes rather than consequences of deliberate military actions.

However, in the case of Ukraine, the figures are lower, but the framing emphasises global verification and Russian aggression. It ensures that the blame is clear. These silences illustrate Taylor’s (2013) concept of selective visibility, where discourse foregrounds suffering in ways that align with dominant ideological narratives.

Recontextualization

The human cost in Palestine is recontextualised into a humanitarian catastrophe, collapsed healthcare, shortages, mass civilian casualties, but without embedding this catastrophe into the context of Israeli military aggression or occupation. This transforms systemic violence into a seemingly natural disaster. Nevertheless, in Ukraine, the human cost is recontextualised as the result of a war of aggression, embedded within international law discourse, which highlights Russia’s culpability and reinforces Ukraine’s victimhood. Van Leeuwen’s (2008) concept of transformation through recontextualization is evident. One conflict is framed as a humanitarian tragedy, the other as a moral crime.

Discussion

This research aimed to determine how AI recognises patterns of selective visibility characteristic of Western media coverage of the Palestine–Israel and Russia–Ukraine conflicts. The findings revealed that the model identifies asymmetries present in Western media, particularly through lexical choices that allocate agency asymmetrically, the foregrounding and backgrounding of structural causes, and the recontextualization of resistance into distinct ideological frames.

In response to the first research question, the findings showed that ChatGPT identified the bias of Western media in the coverage of the Palestine–Israel and Russia–Ukraine conflicts. When discussing Palestine, the model acknowledged that Western media used securitised and agent-erasing language, foregrounding Israeli security concerns while backgrounding structural causes such as occupation and blockade. AI consistently highlighted double standards in Western reporting. For instance, Palestinian deaths are often described through neutral, passive, or agent-erasing terms. Nevertheless, Israeli and Ukrainian deaths are foregrounded with emotive and agentive words such as “murdered,” “slaughtered,” or “massacred.” Similarly, Western media were described as framing the Palestine–Israel conflict largely through a security discourse that foregrounds Israeli safety. However, the Ukraine war was framed through a sovereignty discourse that elevates Ukrainian resistance. These findings aligned with the findings of Philo and Berry (2011) and Friel and Falk (2007), who noted that Western outlets frequently depoliticise Palestinian suffering and obscure Israeli responsibility through lexical and narrative framing.

In response to the second research question, the findings revealed that ChatGPT identified bias in four areas. Through lexical choice and agency, ChatGPT showed that Palestinians are often stripped of agency. However, Russia is consistently assigned culpability. Through silences and foregrounding, it identified the erasure of structural factors in Palestine (occupation, blockade, displacement) and the downplaying of NATO expansion in Ukraine, but amplifying Israeli and Ukrainian victimhood. Through recontextualization, ChatGPT traced how Palestinian struggle is subsumed into global “terrorism” discourse, whereas Ukrainian resistance is reframed as “heroism” or “sovereignty.” The findings aligned with Zubair et al.’s (2025) observation that beggars strategically manipulate language through indirect speech acts to achieve their goals. Just as beggars mobilise discourse to persuade audiences, ChatGPT illustrated that Western media similarly manipulates linguistic framing to shape public perception. Finally, with regard to power and ideology, ChatGPT exposed that these discursive patterns naturalise unequal relations, legitimising some forms of violence while obscuring others.

Conclusion

This research revealed the double standards in Western media coverage of the Palestine–Israel and Russia–Ukraine conflicts. Using a targeted prompt set, the findings showed that AI detects many

of the asymmetries present in Western reporting. It highlighted inconsistencies in lexical choices and agency, uncovers silences regarding structural factors, and demonstrates divergent recontextualizations that delegitimise Palestinian struggles but elevate Ukrainian resistance.

ChatGPT identified agent-erasing or passive constructions in Western media coverage when describing Palestinian deaths. It also highlighted the tendency to use more agentive and emotive language for Israeli and Ukrainian victims. Additionally, the model correctly pointed out how Western media typically frame Palestine through a security and terrorism perspective. However, it portrays Ukraine through themes of sovereignty and heroism. AI emphasises mechanisms of bias, such as lexical choices, selective silences, and recontextualization. Building on these findings, future research could examine multiple languages and different model versions to assess whether these patterns remain consistent.

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