National Higher School of Political Sciences

Department of International Relations

Media diplomacy during international conflicts: a Comparative study of the BBC Coverage of Ukraine (2O22) and Gaza conflicts (2023)

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in International Relations

Submitted by:

Hadil bouguenoune

Supervised by:

Dr. Tassadit Messiheddine

Jury Board

Dr. Mustapha Khouas	***President***
Dr. Tassadit Massiheddine	***Supervisor***
Dr. Amel Hadja	***Examiner***

University Year

2025 / 2026

Dedication

This Thesis is dedicated to my parents, for their unwavering support, patience, and encouragement throughout my academic journey.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Tassadit Massiheddine, for her guidance and academic supervision throughout this research work.

I would also like to thank the jury members for taking the time to evaluate this work and for their valuable remarks and recommendations.

Abstract

This Research seeks to highlight the role of BBC as a major international broadcaster in constructing differentiated representations of armed conflicts, focusing on the asymmetries in its coverage of the war in Ukraine (2022) and the escalation of violence in Gaza (2023). Situated within the broader dynamics of international communication, media diplomacy, and global information politics, it investigates how a structurally dominant broadcaster shapes conflict narratives, distributes visibility unevenly across comparable crises, and produces geopolitical meaning in the contemporary global sphere.

This study employs comparative content analysis combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, drawn from a carefully constructed corpus of the BBC English-language online articles covering both conflicts, the war in Ukraine (February–April 2022) and the Gaza conflict (October–December 2023). The analysis encompasses journalistic genre, publication length, multimedia framing, dominant narrative frames, representation of actors and victims, attribution of responsibility, evaluative orientation, and source hierarchy to capture coverage patterns and underlying discursive logics.

The study has revealed that the BBC coverage of Ukraine centred on a coherent geopolitical narrative with clear moral attribution and western alignment, while Gaza coverage emphasized humanitarian framing that dispersed political accountability through neutralized structures. These asymmetries across all analytical dimensions reflect deeper geopolitical, institutional, and ideological conditions beyond editorial routine. It also demonstrates that international broadcasters like the BBC actively construct international reality, their representational choices inseparable from global structures of power, legitimacy, and symbolic authority.

Key words: BBC coverage, Media Diplomacy, Ukraine war (2022), Gaza conflict (2023), differentiated media representations.

الملخص

يسعى هذا البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على دور هيئة الإذاعة البريطانية (BBC) بوصفها مؤسسة إعلامية عالمية رئيسية في صياغة تمثلات متباينة للنزاعات الدولية المسلحة , مع التركيز على الاختلالات الواضحة في تغطيتها للحرب في أوكرانيا سنة 2022 و تصاعد العنف في غزة سنة 2023. و تنطلق الدراسة من ديناميات الاتصال الدولي , الدبلوماسية الإعلامية و سياسات المعلومات العالمية , بهدف استكشاف الكيفية التي تسهم بها مؤسسة إعلامية مهيمنة في بناء سرديات النزاع , و إعادة توزيع الاهتمام و الظهور الإعلامي بصورة غير متكافئة بين أزمات متشابهة , فضلا عن إنتاج دلالات و معاني جيوسياسية داخل الفضاء العام العالمي المعاصر .

و تعتمد هذه الدراسة على تحليل المضمون المقارن الذي يجمع بين المقاربتين الكمية والنوعية, استنادا إلى عينة مدروسة من المقالات الإلكترونية الناطقة بالإنجليزية المنشورة على موقع هيئة الإذاعة البريطانية حول الحرب في أوكرانيا (فيفري– أفريل 2022) والنزاع في غزة (أكتوبر–ديسمبر 2023) يشمل التحليل دراسة النوع الصحفي , حجم المواد المنشورة , التوظيف متعدد الوسائط , الأطر السردية المهيمنة , تمثيل الفاعلين و الضحايا , إسناد المسؤوليات و الاتجاه التقييمي , إلى جانب هرمية المصادر و ذلك من أجل الكشف عن أنماط التغطية و المنطق الخطابي الكامن ورائها.

و قد كشفت الدراسة أن تغطية الحرب في أوكرانيا بنيت حول سردية جيوسياسية متماسكة ذات حمولة أخلاقية واضحة و انسجام ملحوظ مع التصورات الغربية, في حين ارتكزت تغطية غزة على إطار إنساني أدى إلى تمييع المسؤولية السياسية داخل بنى تمثيلية تبدو محايدة ظاهريا. و تعكس هذه الإختلالات التي ظهرت عبر مختلف مستويات التحليل , تأثير محددات جيوسياسية و مؤسساتية و إيديولوجية عميقة تتجاوز حدود الممارسة التحريرية العادية. كما تؤكد الدراسة أن مؤسسات إعلامية دولية مثل هيئة الإذاعة البريطانية لا تقتصر وظيفتها على نقل الأخبار بل تضطلع بدور فاعل في بناء الواقع الدولي من خلال ارتباط خياراتها التمثيلية ببنى القوة و الشرعية و الرمزية على المستوى العالمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية : تغطية هيئة الإذاعة البريطانية, الدبلوماسية الإعلامية , الحرب في أوكرانيا(2022) ,صراع غزة (2023) , التمثلات الإعلامية المتباينة.

Cette étude vise à mettre en lumière le rôle de la BBC, principal acteur médiatique international, dans la construction de représentations différenciées des conflits armés, en se concentrant sur les déséquilibres de sa couverture de la guerre en Ukraine (2022) et de l'escalade de violence à Gaza (2023). Ancrée dans les dynamiques de la communication internationale, de la diplomatie médiatique et des politiques informationnelles globales, elle explore comment un broadcaster dominant structure les récits de conflit, répartit inégalement la visibilité entre crises comparables et forge du sens géopolitique dans l'espace public mondial contemporain.

L'analyse comparative de contenu, mêlant approches quantitatives et qualitatives, s'appuie sur un corpus rigoureusement constitué d'articles en ligne anglophone de la BBC, la guerre en Ukraine (Février–Avril 2022) et le conflit à Gaza (Octobre–Décembre 2023). Elle examine genre journalistique, longueur des publications, cadrage multimédia, cadres narratifs dominants, représentation des acteurs et victimes, attribution des responsabilités, orientation évaluative et hiérarchie des sources pour saisir les schémas de couverture et leurs logiques discursives sous-jacentes.

L'étude montre que la couverture ukrainienne s'articule autour d'un récit géopolitique cohérent avec une moralisation claire et un alignement occidental marqué, tandis que la couverture de Gaza privilégie un cadrage humanitaire diluant la responsabilité politique dans des structures représentationnelles neutralisées. Ces déséquilibres, transversaux à toutes les dimensions analysées, traduisent des conditionnements géopolitiques profonds. Elle démontre également que des institutions comme la BBC ne se contentent pas de relayer d'information : elles construisent activement la réalité internationale, intimement liées aux structures globales de pouvoir, de légitimité et d'autorité symbolique.

Mots-clés : Couverture de la BBC, Diplomatie Médiatique, Guerre en Ukraine(2022), Conflit de Gaza(2023), Représentations Médiatiques différenciées.

Table of Contents

Dedication 2

Acknowledgements 3

Abstract 4

Table of Contents 7

LIST of Figures 9

List of tables 10

Introduction 11

Chapter one: Historical, Theoretical and conceptual framework

Section One: Understanding Media in IR: Historical and Conceptual Foundations

Subsection one: the Historical Evolution of International Media 35

Subsection Two: Definitional and Conceptual Approaches of Media and International communication. 42

Subsection Three: Theoretical Framework: Power, Hegemony, and Strategic Communication 44

Section Two: Media Diplomacy, Soft Power, and International Broadcasting

Subsection One: Conceptualizing Media Diplomacy 50

Subsection Two: The Three Phases of Media Diplomacy 51

Subsection Three: Soft Power Dynamics and Stratified Narratives 53

- ***Results and Findings of the First Part*** ***59***

Chapter two: Media, Conflict, and the BBC: Theoretical Approaches and Contextual Background

Section one: Media during conflict situations

Subsection One: Framing and Agenda-Setting Theories 63

Subsection Two: Media, Conflict, and Ethical Responsibility 68

Section Two: The BBC as an international broadcaster and its role in conflict coverage

Subsection One: The BBC: Institutional Evolution and Global Role 75

Subsection Three: Historical Context of the studied Conflicts 84

- ***Results and Findings of the second Part*** ***92***

Chapter three: Empirical Study-Comparative Content Analysis

Section One: Quantitative Analysis of BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts

Subsection One: Form-Related Categories 94

Subsection Two: Content-Related Categories 98

Section Two: Qualitative Analysis of BBC Conflict Coverage

Subsection One: Form construction of News discourse (Form dimensions) 109

Subsection Two: Discursive Framing of Conflict 113

Subsection Three: Representation structures 114

Subsection Four: Production of Voice, Credibility, and Power 125

Section Three: Discussion of findings

Subsection One: Synthesis of Comparative Findings 131

Subsection Two: Theoretical Implications 135

Subsection Three: Media Diplomacy and Power Relations 137

Subsection Four: Ethical and Normative Implications 139

- *Conclusion 142*
- *List of References 145*
- *Appendices 150*

LIST of Figures

Figure 1.1: *Lasswell's model of communication* 44
Figure1.2: *The propaganda Model.* 46
Figure1.3: *The three-element Model of political Communication.* 47
Figure1.4 : *Integrated process model of Framing* 63
Figure3.1: *Comparative distribution of journalistic genres in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts (Bar Chart).* 95
Figure3.2: *Comparative distribution of Publication length categories in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts (Bar Chart).* 96
Figure3.3: *Comparative distribution of visual / Multimedia framing categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.* 97
Figure3.4: *Comparative distribution of Nature of the topic categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.* 98
Figure3.5: *Comparative distribution of Dominant Frame categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts*..... 99
Figure3.6: *Comparative distribution of Actors representation in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.* 100
Figure3.7: *Comparative distribution of Victims representations in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.* 101
Figure3.8: *Distribution of responsibility attribution in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.* 102
Figure3.9: *Comparative Distribution of Evaluative Orientation in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.* 103
Figure3.10: *Comparative Distribution of Sources and Voices in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.* 104
Figure3.11: *Comparative Distribution of News Priority Category in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.* 105
Figure3.12: *Comparative Distribution of Diplomatic Purpose of Coverage in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.* 106
Figure3.13: *Comparative Distribution of Media and Information Environment Category in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.* 107

List of tables

Table M.1: *Corpus of BBC Articles Selected for Analysis (Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts)*..... 24

Table3.1: *Distribution of journalistic genres in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts (based on a sample of 24 items).* 94

Table3.2: *Distribution of publication length categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.* 95

Table3.3: *Distribution of visual / Multimedia categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.* 96

Table3.4: *Distribution of Nature of the topic categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts*. 98

Table3.5: *Distribution of Dominant Frame Categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts*..... 99

Table 3.6: *Distribution of Actors representation in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.* 100

Table3.7: *Distribution of Victims representations in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.* 101

Table3.8: *Distribution of responsibility attribution in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.* 102

Table3.9*: Distribution of Evaluative Orientation in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts* 103

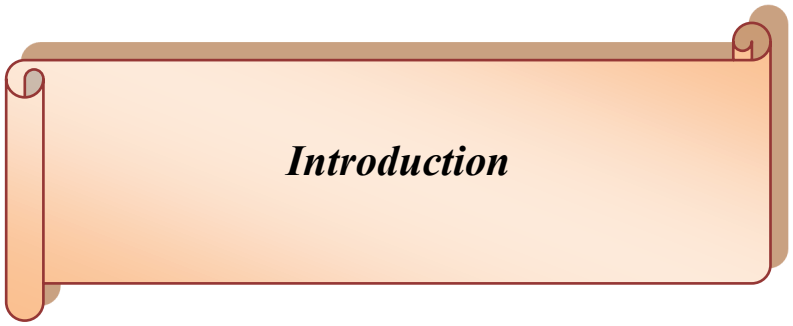
Table3.10: *Distribution of Sources and Voices in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts* 104

Table3.11: *Distribution of News Priority Category in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.* 105

Table3.12: *Distribution of Diplomatic Purpose of Coverage in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.* 106

Table3.13: *Distribution of Media and Information Environment Category in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.* 107

Table3.14: *Comparative Synthesis of BBC Editorial framework — Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts (2022–2023)* 132


Introduction

Contextual Overview :

At the heart of contemporary international relations lies the growing centrality of information, through which media institutions exert a decisive influence over the construction of global perceptions. In this configuration, information can no longer be understood as a neutral component of international interactions; rather, it constitutes a strategic resource embedded within broader dynamics of power and influence.

The expansion of global communication networks has significantly reinforced the capacity of media actors to select, prioritize, and render visible specific events, thereby shaping the contours of international reality as it is perceived by global audiences. Far from being a mere channel of transmission, media occupies a structuring position in the processes through which international events are rendered intelligible and endowed with political significance, beyond their apparent factual neutrality.

This transformation reflects major analytical perspectives in international relations and political communication that emphasize the constructed nature of social and political reality. From this standpoint, the perception of international events is not immediate or transparent, but is instead mediated through interpretive frameworks that organize meaning and guide understanding. Media institutions actively participate in this process by determining the angles through which events are presented, the categories used to interpret them, and the hierarchies of relevance that guide public attention. The visibility of conflicts, the identification of victims, and the attribution of responsibility are all shaped through representational processes that contribute to the stabilization of particular interpretations of international situations.

Within this analytical framework, international communication intersects with diplomatic practices, where information functions as a resource within asymmetrical global structures. Media institutions are not limited to intermediating between events and audiences; they also participate in the circulation of narratives that shape international legitimacy and political interpretation. In this dynamic, contemporary conflicts transcend material confrontations and become discursive arenas in which meaning itself is contested. This logic gives rise to the notion of media diplomacy, in which the representation of international developments is embedded within geopolitical and institutional structures. However, the distribution of visibility across global crises remains uneven. Certain

conflicts are subject to sustained amplification, while others receive limited attention within international media flows. This differential treatment reveals an asymmetry in the representation of international events, structured by political priorities, strategic interests, and institutional hierarchies.

At the empirical level, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) constitutes a central case for examining the role of international media institutions in the production of global narratives. As a transnational news organization, it occupies a significant position within global information flows and contributes to the interpretation and circulation of international developments across diverse audiences.

This study undertakes a comparative content analysis of the BBC's coverage of two major contemporary crises: the war in Ukraine (2022) and the escalation of violence in Gaza (2023). Although both cases are addressed within the same institutional and editorial framework, they emerge from distinct geopolitical contexts, making them particularly relevant for examining variations in media representation and narrative construction. The selection of these cases is justified by their comparable intensity as international crises, as well as their differentiated positioning within the broader structure of international relations. In this respect, the comparative approach adopted in this study provides a structured means of analyzing how similar events may be framed differently within a single media institution, thereby shedding light on the underlying logics that shape international media discourse. The relevance of this study lies in its effort to examine the mechanisms through which international media participate in the construction of conflict narratives, and to explore how variations in representation shape the perception and interpretation of international crises within the global public sphere.

Significance of the study

This study examines how international media shape conflict narratives within a context of geopolitical tensions and asymmetrical global crises, highlighting the role of media in influencing global perceptions of international events. Its significance is twofold:

Scientifically, it contributes to international relations and media studies by analyzing how media institutions construct conflict narratives through framing, selection, and prioritization. It also explores asymmetries in media representation across different crises within the same institution and applies a comparative approach that advances understanding of media diplomacy and narrative construction in unequal global structures.

Practically, the study provides analytical tools for researchers and practitioners to better understand how media discourse is structured and how it shapes the interpretation of international events, supporting more critical and informed analyses of global news coverage.

Factors influencing topic selection

The selection of this topic is motivated by both personal and academic considerations.

On a personal level, it stems from a strong interest in international relations and global media systems, particularly the role of international broadcasters in shaping representations of global events. It also reflects a desire to understand media as an instrument of foreign policy and to develop stronger analytical and comparative research skills in political communication.

On an academic level, the topic is justified by the growing influence of international media in constructing conflict narratives, especially in cases such as Ukraine and Gaza. It also responds to a gap in comparative research on media representation within the same broadcaster across different geopolitical crises, with particular attention to asymmetries in visibility, framing, and narrative emphasis.

Literature Review:

In order to highlight the significance of this research, it is important to refer to some of the major scholarly works

- ***Framing : Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm***

In his seminal article, Robert Entman (1993) examines media framing as a process through which certain aspects of reality are selected and made more salient in order to construct specific interpretations of political and international events. He defines framing as involving problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and solution framing. This work demonstrates that media coverage is not a neutral reflection of reality but a structured process of meaning construction that shapes how international crises are understood by audiences.

Theoretical Gap: Despite its analytical strength, Entman's framework remains largely conceptual and does not provide a comparative empirical application to analyze how the same media institution constructs different frames across distinct geopolitical conflicts such as the Ukraine war (2022) and the Gaza conflict (2023). This study addresses this limitation by applying a comparative analysis of the BBC's coverage of these two conflicts in order to examine variations in media framing within a single institutional context.

- ***The Power of Framing: Examining BBC's Representation of the Ukraine War***

In his research paper, Hermilania analyzes how the BBC framed the Russia-Ukraine war in its early coverage in 2022. The study applies framing theory to examine how journalistic discourse constructs meaning in international conflict reporting. It finds that BBC coverage predominantly emphasized humanitarian narratives, portraying Ukrainian civilians as primary victims while consistently framing Russia as the principal aggressor. It also highlights the role of moral evaluation and responsibility attribution in shaping audience perception of the conflict.

Empirical Gap: Although this study provides a focused analysis of the BBC framing practices in the Ukraine War, it remains limited to a single conflict. It does not examine how the same media institution constructs alternative frames when reporting on different geopolitical crises such as the Gaza Conflict (2023). This study addresses this limitation

by conducting a comparative analysis of BBC coverage across two distinct conflicts in order to identify variations in framing within a single institution setting.

- ***Content Analysis of Media Coverage on Gaza and Ukraine Conflicts***

In their researcher paper, Hamid Tarad and Latifa Omairi analyse international media coverage of both the Ukraine war (2022) and the Gaza conflict (2023), including reporting by major global news organizations such as the BBC. The study examines differences in terminology, framing strategies, and narrative emphasis across the two conflicts. The findings reveal systematic variations in the representation of victims, perpetrators, and humanitarian consequences, suggesting that geopolitical context significantly influences journalistic framing choices even within the same media environment.

Empirical Gap: While this study offers a valuable comparative perspective on media representation across two conflicts, its analysis is not restricted to a single broadcaster and does not isolate internal editorial logics within one media organization. This study seeks this limitation through a comparative examination of the BBC's coverage of the Ukraine war and Gaza conflict, with the aim of identifying how narrative construction varies within the same institutional environment across different geopolitical settings.

Objectives of the Study

Given the analytical focus of this research, the study aims to achieve the following objectives

- To examine the role of the BBC as an international broadcaster in shaping the representation of contemporary conflicts.
- To analyze how media diplomacy operates in practice through the BBC's coverage of international crises, with particular attention to narrative construction and information selection.
- To investigate the use of framing and agenda-setting mechanisms in the BBC's reporting of the Ukraine War (2022) and the Gaza conflict (2023).
- To compare the similarities and differences in the BBC's representation of these conflicts, focusing on the portrayal of actors, victims, and attribution of responsibility.

Statement of the problem

The representation of international conflicts in global media constitutes a central issue in the study of international relations and communication. International broadcasters play a significant role in shaping how conflicts are understood through the selection of events, the framing of narratives, and the representation of actors. In this context, the BBC occupies a prominent position in the global information landscape. While it is associated with principles of objectivity and editorial independence, its coverage of contemporary conflicts has raised questions regarding narrative construction and potential variations in representation.

Differences in the coverage of major conflicts, such as the Ukraine war (2022) and the Gaza conflict (2023), suggest that similar events may be framed differently within the same media institution. These variations may influence how actors, victims, and responsibilities are presented, thereby shaping broader interpretations of international conflicts. Based on this, the problematic can be stated as follows:

Main problem:

To what extent does the BBC construct differentiated representations of international conflicts through its coverage of the Ukraine war (2022) compared to Gaza conflict (2023)?

Subordinate Questions:

- What are the main framing patterns used in the BBC coverage of the Ukraine War (2022) and Gaza conflict (2023)?
- How are key actors, victims, and responsibilities represented in each case?
- In what ways does the selection and prioritization of information vary between the two conflicts?
- How can these variations be interpreted within the broader context of media diplomacy and international communication?

Hypotheses

Main hypothesis

Variations in framing and narrative construction in the coverage of international conflicts by the BBC are shaped by differences in informational prioritization and contextual interpretation across geopolitical contexts.

Subordinate hypotheses

- BBC conflict coverage relies on distinct framing logics that prioritize different interpretative lenses depending on the geopolitical context of the event.
- The representation of actors, victims, and responsibility in BBC reporting is structured by hierarchies of visibility that differ across international conflicts.
- Patterns of information selection and news prioritization reflect editorial and contextual factors that shape the construction of conflict narratives.
- These narrative configurations contribute to broader processes of media diplomacy and influence the formation of international perceptions of conflicts.

Areas of the Study:

The methodological design of this study requires a clearly defined scope of analysis structured along spatial and temporal boundaries.

1. Spatial Scope

This study focuses on the BBC as an international broadcaster and its role in the production and dissemination of global news narratives. The BBC is selected due to its global reach and its institutional role in reporting major international events. The empirical analysis is limited to two case studies: the Ukraine war (2022) and the Gaza conflict (2023). These cases are chosen because they represent major contemporary international crises that received extensive global media coverage, allowing for a comparative analysis of narrative construction within the same institutional framework.

The spatial scope is further restricted to BBC English-language online written content, specifically news articles and analytical reports published on its official website. This ensures a coherent and systematically analyzable corpus.

2. Temporal Scope

The temporal scope is limited to the initial phases of both conflicts: February–April 2022 for the Ukraine war and October–December 2023 for the Gaza conflict. These periods are selected because the early stages of conflicts are typically characterized by high media intensity and rapid narrative formation, where framing processes are most visible.

This delimitation ensures a manageable and comparable dataset while preserving analytical relevance, as early media representations significantly shape public understanding and international perceptions of unfolding events.

Methodological Framework

The methodological framework of this research is grounded in a qualitative research design integrating descriptive, analytical, comparative, and content analysis approaches. It examines the construction of international conflict narratives in media coverage, with particular reference to the coverage produced by the BBC. The analysis focuses on framing processes, representational strategies, and narrative structures across different geopolitical conflict contexts.

The descriptive-analytical approach:

This approach was used to identify and interpret patterns of media representation in conflict reporting. It allows for a systematic description of how the BBC constructs narratives surrounding the Ukraine war (February-April 2022) and the Gaza Conflict (October-December 2023), followed by an analysis of the underlying framing mechanisms. This approach is applied to examine key dimensions such as actor representation, victim portrayal, attribution of responsibility, and issue salience. It also helps interpret how editorial choices contribute to the construction of meaning in international news discourse.

Comparative approach:

The comparative approach was used to identify similarities and differences in the BBC's coverage of the selected conflicts. It allows for a structured comparison of framing patterns between the Ukraine war and the Gaza conflict within the same institutional and editorial framework. This approach highlights how similar media structures can produce different narrative logics depending on geopolitical context, issue sensitivity, and international

political environments. The comparison is not intended to evaluate accuracy, but rather to examine variations in representation and discourse construction.

Content Analysis Method:

Content analysis is widely regarded as one of the most important research methods in the social sciences, and is often considered a cornerstone of scientific inquiry due to its systematic, transparent, and replicable nature. It is extensively used across multiple disciplines, including political science, where it is applied to the analysis of political speeches, policy documents, and institutional discourse. However, it's most prominent application remains within media and communication studies, particularly in the examination of news texts and public discourse.

Conceptual Foundations and Definitions

Several authoritative definitions of content analysis highlight its core methodological principles, particularly objectivity, systematicity, and replicability. Berelson (1952) defines it as a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication [1]. Holsti (1968) emphasizes its inferential function, describing it as any technique for making inferences through the systematic and objective identification of message characteristics[2]. Similarly, Krippendorff (2018) defines it as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts through systematic and objective analysis of specified features[3]. In contrast, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) stress the interpretive dimension, defining it as a method for subjective interpretation through systematic coding and thematic identification[4].

Together, these definitions reflect the dual nature of content analysis, combining both

quantitative measurement and qualitative interpretation depending on the research design.

[1]Bernard Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952), p. 18.
[2] Ole R. Holsti, "Content Analysis," in *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, ed. Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1968), p. 601.
[3] Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2019), p. 24.
[4] Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis," *Qualitative Health Research* 15, no. 9 (2005), p. 1278.

Types of Content Analysis

Content analysis is generally classified into two main approaches: quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative Content Analysis

Quantitative content analysis focuses on the measurement of textual elements such as frequency, presence, and distribution of specific categories, themes, or linguistic units. It uses predefined coding schemes to generate numerical data that can be statistically analyzed[1]. This approach is concerned with questions such as “how much,” “how often,” or “to what extent,” and is particularly useful for identifying patterns across large datasets and enabling systematic comparison.

Employing predefined coding schemes, this approach addresses questions of "how much," "how often," or "how many," enabling objective pattern identification and comparison across large datasets.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis, by contrast, adopts an interpretive approach aimed at uncovering latent meanings, contextual nuances, and thematic structures within texts. It relies on iterative coding processes to explore how and why meanings are constructed[2]. This approach is particularly suited to analyzing framing processes, discourse structures, and narrative strategies in media texts, where meaning is embedded in context rather than frequency alone.

Although often presented as distinct, the boundary between quantitative and qualitative content analysis is not rigid. In many contemporary research designs, both approaches are combined to provide a more comprehensive understanding of communication phenomena, integrating measurable patterns with interpretive depth.

[1]Krippendorff, *Op. cit.*, p. 21.
[2] Hsieh and Shannon, *Op. cit.*, p. 1279.

Methodological Characteristics of Content Analysis

Content analysis is defined by a set of methodological principles that ensure scientific rigor and reliability:

- **Objectivity:** Ensures that analysis is guided by explicit rules and minimizes researcher bias through standardized coding procedures.
- **Systematicity:** Guarantees that all relevant data is analyzed consistently and comprehensively, avoiding selective interpretation.
- **Reliability:** Refers to the stability and consistency of coding results, often assessed through inter-coder reliability measures such as Holsti's coefficient or Cohen's kappa.
- **Validity:** Concerns the extent to which coding categories accurately capture the theoretical concepts being studied.
- **Quantifiability:** Involves transforming textual data into structured categories or numerical formats that allow comparison while preserving meaning.
- **Flexibility:** As emphasized by Krippendorff, content analysis is adaptable and can integrate both quantitative and qualitative dimensions depending on research objectives.

These characteristics collectively ensure that content analysis remains both methodologically rigorous and analytically adaptable[1].

Steps of Content Analysis:

In the present study, the general methodological stages were operationalized through a structured analytical design applied to the selected BBC corpus, as detailed in the following sections:

Research Population

The research population of this study comprises all BBC English-language online written articles and analytical reports addressing two selected conflict cases: the war in Ukraine (February–April 2022) and the Gaza conflict (October–December 2023). This population represents the complete set of journalistic outputs produced by the BBC within the defined temporal and thematic scope of the study.

[1] Krippendorff, *Op. cit.*, pp. 22–23.

The rationale for focusing on a single international broadcaster lies in the need to maintain institutional consistency, allowing variations in framing and narrative construction to be examined across different geopolitical contexts under comparable editorial conditions.

Sampling Strategy and Justification

This study adopts a purposive sampling strategy, which prioritizes analytical relevance over statistical representativeness. The aim is to construct a corpus that is theoretically meaningful for examining framing processes rather than exhaustive of all available content.

The sample is restricted to the first two months of each conflict. This period corresponds to the initial phase of escalation, when media attention is at its peak and dominant interpretative frameworks are first established. From a framing perspective, this stage is particularly significant because it is during early reporting that narrative structures tend to stabilize and set the tone for subsequent coverage.

Using equivalent temporal windows across both cases ensures methodological comparability, as it aligns the analysis with similar stages of conflict development. This controls for variation in reporting intensity over time and allows differences in media representation to be attributed to framing choices rather than temporal disparities.

Sample of the Study (Corpus Description)

The final corpus consists of 24 BBC articles drawn from the two selected conflict cases. The dataset is evenly distributed, comprising 12 articles from the Ukraine case and 12 articles from the Gaza case.

The selected articles form the empirical basis of the analysis and were chosen for their relevance to conflict developments and their capacity to reflect key framing patterns in BBC coverage during the selected periods. The corpus is presented in the table below, which provides an overview of the selected material and ensures transparency in the construction of the dataset.

Table M.1: *Corpus of BBC Articles Selected for Analysis (Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts)*

Article ID	***Title***	***Date***	***Case***	***Type***
U1	Ukraine conflict: British man Scott Sibley killed	28/04/2022	Ukraine	News article
U2	Ukrainian power grid 'lucky' to withstand Russian cyber-attack	29/04/2022	Ukraine	News article
U3	Gerard Depardieu: Kremlin responds to actor's Putin criticism	30/04/2022	Ukraine	News article
U4	Ukraine war: Bucha street littered with burned-out tanks and corpses	01/05/2022	Ukraine	Analytical report
U5	Ukraine war: Germany's conundrum over its ties with Russia	02/05/2022	Ukraine	Analytical report
U6	Ukraine crisis: Vladimir Putin address fact-checked	03/05/2022	Ukraine	Editorial/ Fact-check article
U7	Ukraine war latest: Battles in Donbas will look like World War Two, says Ukraine	04/05/2022	Ukraine	Live coverage
U8	US boosts military aid as Zelensky pleads for weapons	05/05/2022	Ukraine	Live coverage
U9	Railway strikes targeted arms supply routes - Russia	06/05/2022	Ukraine	Live coverage
U10	Ukraine invasion: UK troops will not fight against Russia says Wallace	07/05/2022	Ukraine	News article
U11	Ukraine invasion: How the war is being waged online	08/05/2022	Ukraine	Analytical report
U12	Ukraine conflict: What we know about the invasion	09/05/2022	Ukraine	Analytical report
G1	How Hamas built a force to attack Israel on 7 October	27/11/2023	Gaza	Analytical report
G2	Israel Gaza: US rejects calls for ceasefire	31/10/2023	Gaza	News article
G3	Anguished UK Palestinians grieve for loved ones in Gaza	31/10/2023	Gaza	Analytical report
G4	Gaza situation dire, UN says, as Israeli military admits security failures	12/10/2023	Gaza	Live coverage
G5	What happens in Gaza when the war ends? We answer your questions on the Israel-Gaza war	16/10/2023	Gaza	Live coverage
G6	Civilians flee northern Gaza as US says it is talking to Israel about 'safe areas'	13/10/2023	Gaza	Live coverage
G7	Israel says ground operations expanding as it intensifies Gaza bombing - BBC News	27/10/2023	Gaza	Live coverage
G8	Hundreds feared dead at Gaza hospital as Israel denies strike	16/10/2023	Gaza	Live coverage
G9	Israel to continue Gaza war with or without international support, FM says	13/12/2023	Gaza	News article
G10	Israel says 12 more hostages released by Hamas have left Gaza	27/11/2023	Gaza	Live coverage

G11	Hamas attack shocks Israel, but what comes next?	07/10/2023	Gaza	Live coverage
G12	Israel Gaza war: Hamas-run health ministry says Gaza death toll passes 10,000	06/10/2023	Gaza	News article

Data Collection Tools:

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study is the complete BBC online news article, including the headline, lead paragraph, main body, and all embedded visual or multimedia elements. This holistic approach allows the analysis to capture framing as a multidimensional process that operates across textual structure, narrative organisation, and visual representation.

Each article is treated as a single analytical unit and coded once per category, ensuring consistency in comparison across both conflict cases.

Coding Scheme and Analytical Categories

The coding scheme developed for this study operationalized the analytical framework of the research by translating abstract theoretical concepts into observable and systematically classifiable indicators. It is designed to enable a structured comparison of BBC news coverage across the two selected conflict cases (Ukraine, 2022, and Gaza, 2023), with particular attention to framing patterns, actor representation, attribution processes, and evaluative orientations.

The coding system is organised into two interrelated dimensions: form-related categories and content-related categories. This distinction reflects the analytical separation between how conflict is represented and what meanings are constructed within that representation.

- ***Form-related categories (How the content is presented)***

The first dimension captures the structural and editorial characteristics of BBC reporting. It includes three categories:

I.)Journalistic genre: which identifies the editorial format of the article (e.g., standard news report, analytical report, live coverage, interview-based content, or editorial/fact-check material) this category reflects how journalistic form shapes the production of meaning.

II.) Publication length: This classifies articles according to their textual depth (short, medium, long). This indicator is used as a proxy for editorial emphasis and informational density.

III.) Visual and multimedia framing: This accounts for the presence and combination of non-textual elements such as photographs, embedded videos, and mixed multimedia

formats. This category captures the role of visual representation in reinforcing or structuring narrative meaning.

- ***Content-related categories (What is being said)***

The second dimension addresses the substantive and interpretive dimensions of conflict reporting. It is structured around several analytical axes:

IV.) Nature of the topic: This identifies the primary thematic focus of the article, distinguishing between military developments, humanitarian conditions, and political or diplomatic issues.

V.) Dominant frame: which captures the interpretive lens through which events are constructed, including humanitarian, military/security, political/diplomatic, and geopolitical/strategic framing patterns?

VI.) Representation of actors: This examines the visibility and narrative positioning of key participants in the conflict, including principal conflict actors, international actors, and civilians or non-state actors.

VII.) Representation of victims: This assesses how victimhood is constructed, whether primarily civilian, mixed, or marginal/absent within the narrative structure.

VIII.) Attribution of responsibility: which analyses how causal responsibility for escalation or consequences is distributed across actors, whether attributed to a specific side, shared among multiple actors, or left ambiguous.

IX.) Evaluative orientation: which captures the implicit or explicit normative positioning of the article, ranging from sympathetic portrayals of one actor to neutral or balanced framing?

X.) Sources and voices: This identifies the types of epistemic authority used in the construction of news narratives, including official sources, eyewitness accounts, or mixed sourcing patterns.

XI.) News priority: This reflects the informational emphasis of the article, distinguishing between urgent developments, contextual/background reporting, humanitarian focus, or international reactions.

XII.) Diplomatic purpose of coverage: This examines whether the article contributes to legitimisation narratives, highlights mediation and negotiation efforts, or lacks any explicit diplomatic framing.

XIII.) Media and information environment: This situates the reporting within broader communicative conditions, including references to propaganda dynamics, digital circulation of information, or traditional reporting structures.

Analytical role of the coding scheme

These categories function as an integrated analytical instrument enabling both systematic classification and comparative interpretation. The coding scheme does not merely describe content but operationalized key dimensions of media framing and media diplomacy, allowing for the identification of recurring narrative structures across different geopolitical contexts.

By applying this framework consistently across the two case studies, the research ensures methodological comparability and analytical coherence, thereby enabling a structured examination of how international media constructs differentiated representations of armed conflicts.

Inter-coder Reliability

To ensure methodological consistency and reduce subjective bias in the coding process, the reliability of the content analysis instrument was assessed through inter-coder reliability testing using Holsti's coefficient. The coding process involved three coders:

- Dr. Hicham Daoud El Ghandja (A)
- Dr. Djallel Aimer (B)
- The researcher Hadil Bouguenoune (C)

A total of 52 coding indicators were evaluated across the analytical categories included in the coding scheme. The level of agreement between coders was calculated through pair wise comparison as follows:

- Between coders (A) and (B): 49/52 = 0.94
- Between coders (A) and (C): 48/52 = 0.92
- Between coders (B) and (C): 46/52 = 0.88

Based on these results, the average inter-coder agreement reached 0.913.

Accordingly, the final reliability coefficient calculated using Holsti's formula reached 0.91, indicating a high level of coding consistency and methodological reliability. This value exceeds the minimum threshold generally considered acceptable in content analysis research. As noted by Klaus Krippendorff, reliability coefficients above 0.80 are generally considered indicative of satisfactory reliability, while coefficients approaching 0.90 reflect strong consistency in the operationalisation and application of analytical categories.

The obtained reliability level therefore confirms the internal consistency of the coding instrument and supports its suitability for systematic comparative analysis across the two conflict cases examined in this study.

Theoretical framework

This study draws on a set of complementary theories from international relations and media studies to explain how international conflict narratives are constructed within media discourse. This interdisciplinary approach is justified by the complexity of the research object, which involves the interaction between communication processes, political power, and global perception. The study focuses on the role of the BBC in shaping representations of international conflicts, specifically the Ukraine war (2022) and the Gaza conflict (2023).

Normative Theory of Media

Normative media theory provides the foundational framework for understanding the ethical and professional standards that guide journalistic practice. It is concerned with principles such as objectivity, neutrality, public interest, and accountability, particularly within public service broadcasting systems.

In the case of the BBC, these normative expectations are central to its institutional identity as a public service broadcaster. Within this study, normative theory is used to examine the tension between idealized standards of impartial reporting and the practical realities of covering politically sensitive international conflicts. It also serves as a reference point for assessing how journalistic norms are operationalized in the construction of conflict narratives and whether these norms are consistently applied across different geopolitical contexts.

Joseph Nye's Soft Power Theory

Soft power theory, developed by Joseph Nye, explains how influence in international relations can be exercised through attraction rather than coercion. It emphasizes the role of culture, communication, and legitimacy in shaping global perceptions and political preferences.

In this research, soft power theory is used to analyze how international media institutions, such as the BBC, contribute to shaping international understanding of conflicts through credibility, narrative authority, and symbolic influence. Media discourse is therefore understood as part of broader processes of international influence that operate beyond

traditional diplomatic channels, where legitimacy and persuasion become central mechanisms of power projection.

Neo-Gramscian Theory

Emerging from the work of Antonio Gramsci and later developed in international relations by scholars such as Robert Cox, Neo-Gramscian theory emphasizes the role of ideology, hegemony, and consent in sustaining global power structures. It argues that dominance is maintained not only through material capabilities but also through the production of ideas and discourses that define what is considered legitimate, normal, or acceptable.

Within this study, the Neo-Gramscian perspective is used as a critical lens to examine how media narratives may reproduce or challenge dominant global power relations. It is particularly useful for analyzing how representations of victimhood, responsibility, and legitimacy in conflict reporting may reflect broader geopolitical hierarchies embedded within international media discourse.

Framing Theory

Framing theory is central to media analysis and examines how information is selected, structured, and presented in ways that influence interpretation. By emphasizing certain aspects of reality while marginalizing others, media discourse constructs specific meanings around events.

Originating in the work of Erving Goffman and further developed by Robert Entman, framing theory highlights processes such as problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. In this study, it is applied to analyze how the BBC constructs conflict narratives through linguistic choices, actor categorization, thematic emphasis, and attribution of responsibility. It is particularly useful for identifying differences in representation between the Ukraine and Gaza cases.

Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory is a foundational concept in communication studies that highlights the ability of media to influence public perception by determining which issues receive

attention and which remain marginal. Rather than shaping opinions directly, media shape what audiences perceive as important.

Developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, this theory demonstrates how media prioritization structures the public agenda. In the context of conflict reporting, agenda-setting is reflected in the differential emphasis placed on events, actors, and themes, thereby shaping issue salience and directing international attention.

Research terminology

Concepts used throughout the analysis.

Media diplomacy:

Media diplomacy refers to the role of media institutions in shaping, circulating, and structuring narratives that influence how political events and conflicts are understood globally. In contemporary international communication, media are no longer limited to information transmission but actively participate in constructing interpretive frameworks through which international events are understood.

This concept reflects the transformation of diplomacy, which increasingly extends beyond state-to-state communication toward engagement with global publics. As emphasized by Philip Seib, media can function as diplomatic actors by influencing international opinion and contributing to the formation of political narratives outside formal diplomatic channels. Media diplomacy thus highlights the growing role of media institutions in global perception-building and international communication.

Soft power

Soft power refers to forms of influence that operate through attraction, credibility, and persuasion rather than coercion. It reflects a shift from material capabilities to symbolic and communicative dimensions of power based on ideas, values, and representation.

As defined by Joseph Nye, soft power is the ability to achieve desired outcomes through attraction rather than force. In media analysis, it provides a framework for understanding how narrative authority and credibility contribute to international influence.

Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy refers to the processes through which states and institutions engage foreign publics to shape perceptions and influence international understanding. It extends traditional diplomacy beyond state-to-state relations toward broader communication with global audiences.

It relies on instruments such as international broadcasting, strategic messaging, and cultural engagement, all of which play a role in shaping how political actors and events are perceived internationally.

Framing

Framing refers to the process by which media select and structure information in ways that highlight certain aspects of reality while downplaying others, thereby guiding interpretation.

Originating in the work of Erving Goffman and developed by Robert Entman, framing involves defining problems, identifying causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies. It is a key tool for analyzing how meaning is constructed in conflict reporting.

Agenda-setting

Agenda-setting refers to the media's ability to influence the salience of issues by determining which topics receive attention and how prominently they are presented.

Developed by McCombs and Shaw, this concept demonstrates that media shape not what people think, but what people think about. In conflict reporting, agenda-setting is reflected in the prioritization of events and actors within news coverage.

Conflict Representation and Narrative Construction

Conflict representation refers to the ways in which media depict actors, events, and relationships within contexts of violence and political tension. These depictions are structured through narratives that organize complex realities into coherent interpretive frameworks.

Narrative construction highlights the non-neutral nature of media reporting, emphasizing that meaning is actively produced through selection, emphasis, and interpretation. This process shapes public understanding of conflicts, including responsibility attribution and legitimacy construction.

Study structure:

This study is organized into three main parts, moving from theoretical foundations to institutional analysis and finally to empirical investigation, in order to ensure a coherent analytical progression aligned with the research problem, questions, and hypotheses.

The first part establishes the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. It traces the evolution of international media within global communication systems and examines the growing role of media institutions as actors in international relations. It also defines the key analytical concepts guiding the research, including media diplomacy, soft power, public diplomacy, framing, and agenda-setting, while situating media within broader debates on power, ideology, and global journalism.

The second part focuses on the BBC as an international broadcaster. It explores its institutional development, governance structure, funding model, and editorial principles, highlighting how these factors shape its global news production. This section also examines the BBC's conflict reporting practices and situates its role within the framework of media diplomacy and global communication.

The third part presents the empirical analysis of BBC coverage of the Ukraine war (2022) and the Gaza conflict (2023). Using a comparative content analysis approach, it examines framing processes, representational strategies, and narrative structures across both cases, with particular attention to actor representation, victim portrayal, and attribution of responsibility. This comparative design allows for the identification of patterns of convergence and divergence in media discourse within the same institutional framework.

Chapter one: Historical, Theoretical and conceptual framework

In contemporary international relations, media occupies a central position within global communication structures, contributing to the circulation of information and to the ways international events are represented and interpreted within political environments. Its importance lies in its interconnection with historical developments, institutional arrangements, and evolving technological conditions that shape global information flows.

This chapter provides the analytical foundations for examining media in international affairs. It traces the historical evolution of international media systems, from early broadcasting and state propaganda to the emergence of digital, transnational 24/7 news cycles. It establishes the main conceptual and working definitions that define the study of international communication, and subsequently interrogates the structural role of media as a political actor embedded within global power configurations and foreign-policy environments. Finally, it outlines the intersecting theoretical frameworks of media diplomacy, soft power, framing, and agenda-setting, concluding with an exploration of the ethical and normative dilemmas inherent to conflict journalism, focusing on the institutional practices of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

Section One: Understanding Media in IR: Historical and Conceptual Foundations

To analyze the role of media in global politics, it is first necessary to evaluate how international communication systems evolved alongside changes in the international system itself. This section contextualizes the transition of international broadcasting from a state-centric instrument of geopolitical warfare to an integrated, digitized global marketplace, before establishing the precise operational definitions utilized throughout this study.

Subsection one: the Historical Evolution of International Media

The historical development of international media can be understood through several interrelated phases shaped by technological innovation, political change, and shifting geopolitical configurations. From the emergence of early state-controlled broadcasting systems to the expansion of transnational media networks and the rise of digital, real-time communication environments, international media have progressively transformed their function, scope, and influence within global affairs.

I- Early International Broadcasting and Interwar Propaganda:

The historical evolution of international broadcasting was initially framed by a dialectical tension between idealistic visions and geopolitical realities. Early conceptions of the wireless ether as a limitless and egalitarian space were quickly overtaken by a system structured by national hierarchies and institutional divisions. From its beginnings, international broadcasting functioned as a strategic projection of state power, where only wealthier nations possessed the substantial budgets required to sustain long-distance infrastructure. This structural imbalance reproduced existing imperial power relations within the wireless domain and contributed to the emergence of regulatory and political frameworks that continued to shape global media throughout the twentieth century[1]. A clear illustration of this strategic use can be found in British policy during the 1930s, when international broadcasting began to assume explicit political purposes with the creation of the BBC Empire Service in 1932. Although its original purpose was to serve overseas British audiences, the service gradually evolved into an instrument of cultural diplomacy and the projection of British influence. Over time, a broad consensus emerged around the role of media in supporting foreign policy objectives, allowing news agendas to align more closely with state priorities. Through key institutions such as the BBC World Service and Reuters, Britain was able to maintain an international presence by relying on soft power as a compensatory mechanism for its declining military and economic capabilities in the post-war period [2] .

However, the political use of international broadcasting extended beyond Britain and formed part of a wider international competition commonly referred to as the "global radio war". In this context, radio served as a tool of political warfare for both authoritarian regimes and Western states before, during, and after the Second World War. By the 1930s, radio propaganda had become an established instrument of state influence, with fascist Italy and Nazi Germany developing broadcasting strategies to promote expansionist and nationalist ambitions. In response, the BBC expanded its foreign-language services to promote pro-British perspectives, drawing on imperial and colonial communication

[1] Simon J. Potter, "Out of the Ether: The Wireless World and New Histories of International Radio Broadcasting," in *The Wireless World: Global Histories of International Radio Broadcasting*, ed. Simon J. Potter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 1–32.
For more details see also: Vincent Kuitenbrouwer, "Radio Wars: Histories of Cross-Border Radio Propaganda," in *The Wireless World: Global Histories of International Radio Broadcasting*, ed. Simon J. Potter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 104–122.
[2]John Jenks, *British Propaganda and News Media in the Cold War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 27–42.

networks that played a central role in the broader struggles for influence during the interwar period. The interwar "radio wars" established the foundations that would guide the ideological battles of the cold war, during which international broadcasting evolved from a supplementary role into a central instrument of global propaganda[1].

II- ***Media as an Ideological Battlefield in the Cold War:***

The Cold War is widely understood as a struggle over ideas and ideologies, often described as a battle for "the soul of mankind"[2] , and within this context radio emerged as one of the most significant instruments of ideological competition. During this period, radio assumed an increasingly strategic role, moving beyond its earlier function as a means of external broadcasting to become a central instrument of psychological and ideological confrontation. Its ability to penetrate the Iron Curtain enabled Western broadcasters to bypass physical and political barriers, reach audiences within the communist bloc directly, and provide alternative sources of information that could undermine regime legitimacy. This dynamic formed a core component of the cultural Cold War, where competition over public opinion and belief systems became as important as military or diplomatic rivalry .For institutions such as the BBC, radio served a dual purpose: it functioned as an offensive tool in the ideological contest with rival powers, while also reinforcing morale and supporting the logic of containment among domestic and allied audiences[3]. Within this broader environment, British international broadcasting developed a distinct approach. The BBC, in particular, sought to distinguish itself from more openly ideological stations by cultivating a reputation for accuracy, restraint, and reliability. Rather than relying on explicit political messaging, it emphasized credibility, presenting news in a tone that suggested independence from government control. This orientation reflected a deliberate effort to build long-term trust with overseas audiences[4]. The impact of such broadcasts cannot be measured solely through audience figures; their significance lay in how they were received and interpreted by listeners. By prioritizing human-centred reporting and everyday experiences over heavily statistical or doctrinal material, the British model aimed to foster familiarity and confidence, thereby reinforcing democratic values through

[1] Kuitenbrouwer, "Radio Wars," *Op. cit.*, pp. 104–133.
[2] Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), pp. 25–45.
[3] Linda Risso, "Radio Wars: Broadcasting in the Cold War," *Cold War History* 13, no. 2 (2013), pp. 145–152.
[4] Jenks, *Op. cit.*, pp. 27–42.

consistency rather than confrontation[1].In practical terms, the ability of western broadcasts to cross the Iron Curtain placed radio at the centre of the Cold War information contest. Despite systematic jamming efforts and strict censorship within communist states, signals from the BBC and other Western stations continued to reach listeners across Eastern Europe. Information received privately often circulated further through informal discussions among family members, colleagues, and trusted acquaintances. In this way, radio contributed to conversations that extended beyond official channels and complicated efforts by authorities to maintain full control over public discourse. Given its geopolitical position between the two blocs, radio became one of the principal arenas of the propaganda competition. Although listening could involve personal risk, Western broadcasts remained sufficiently accessible to introduce alternative interpretations of events into Eastern Bloc societies. Over time, this contributed to weakening the effectiveness of state-controlled information systems[2]. More broadly, Cold War broadcasting produced effects that went beyond its immediate political objectives. By widening access to alternative perspectives and encouraging informal discussion, radio helped reshape expectations surrounding public communication. This evolution became more visible in the transformation of global media after 1991.

III- *The Post-Cold War Transition: Privatization and Socialization*

The end of the Cold war marked a shift in how global influence was exercised. Power was no longer expressed primarily through direct or visible forms of coercion. Instead, leading states increasingly relied on indirect means, seeking to shape the preferences and outlooks of others through processes of socialization. Hegemonic orders tend to remain stable when subordinate states gradually come to accept, and eventually internalize, the norms promoted by dominant powers. Such forms of persuasion are particularly effective during periods of political uncertainty, which clearly defined the years that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. During this period, influence was directed not only toward broader publics but also toward political and intellectual Elites, whose alignment with prevailing norms contributed to the consolidation of the emerging international order[3].These

[1] Graham Mytton, "Audience research at the BBC External Services during the Cold War," cited in Linda Risso, "Radio Wars: Broadcasting in the Cold War," *Cold War History* 13, no. 2 (2013), p. 149.
[2] Patrick Major, "Listening behind the Curtain: BBC Broadcasting to East Germany and Its Cold War Echo," *Cold War History* 14, no. 4 (2014), pp. 585–586.
[3] G. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan, "Socialization and Hegemonic Power," *International Organization* 44, no. 3 (1990), pp. 284–294.

transformations in influence were closely tied to structural changes in the communication sector. The privatization of telecommunications and the liberalization of media markets played a decisive role in reshaping global information flows. The rise of a global media marketplace was not simply an economic development; it created the material conditions for a communication infrastructure that extended far beyond national borders[1]. A key dimension of this shift was the increasing privatization of satellite communication. Systems that had once been largely controlled by states gradually moved into the hands of private corporations. Reforms affecting organizations such as Intelsat reduced governmental control and opened the field to commercial actors. In turn, information began to circulate across borders with fewer political constraints than before. Within this evolving environment, global media conglomerates, most notably Murdoch's News Corporation, emerged as influential actors in international communication. While state-directed propaganda did not disappear entirely, it was gradually overshadowed by commercially driven media networks operating on a transnational scale. In this way, the logic of socialization was reinforced by an economic and technological restructuring of global media systems[2].The Post- Cold War media order should not be understood as a simple withdrawal of the state from the sphere of communication, but rather as a process of institutional adaptation to an increasingly globalized environment. Cold war institutions did not vanish with the end of bipolar rivalry; they were reoriented to serve new forms of public diplomacy and strategic communication. This continuity indicates that the shift from ideological confrontation to global media integration was gradual and embedded in existing institutional frameworks. At the same time, the consolidation of transnational media networks was driven by technological change. The rise of digital communication and continuous, 24-hour news production would soon reshape both information and the dynamics of global political communication[3].

VI- ***Digital Transformation and the 24/7 Global News Cycle:***

The digital transformation of the Post-Cold War era significantly altered the temporal structure of news. Information was no longer organized around fixed broadcast appointments, but evolved into a continuous round- the clock- flow. This transition

[1] Daya Kishan Thussu, *International Communication: Continuity and Change*, 3rd edn (London: Sage, 2018), pp. 82–84.
[2] *Ibid.,* pp. 90–99.
[3] Linda Risso, *Propaganda and Intelligence in the Cold War: The NATO Information Service* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 251–255.

challenged the conventions of traditional journalism by replacing scheduled bulletins with an ongoing stream of updates, reshaping the audience's relationship with political time[1]. News ceased to be tied to specific moments and instead became a constant presence. Central to this evolution is the growing emphasis on live reporting, where immediacy functions as a key marker of credibility and authority. The value of a news organization increasingly depends on its ability to capture events as they unfold[2], reinforcing a breaking news culture structured around immediacy. This prioritization of speed introduced a competitive logic in which the pressure to be first may at times outweigh the obligation to fully verify information[3], drawing both journalists and political actors into cycles of rapid response that may precede careful evaluation. The effects of this speed culture extend beyond journalistic practice. As information circulates in real time, it contributes to the erosion of national boundaries in the communicative sphere, often moving faster than traditional diplomatic or bureaucratic channels. Technological developments were central to this shift. The expansion of satellite communication, combined with earlier liberalization processes, facilitated the transition from state monopolies to private networks, reducing exclusive governmental control over transnational information flows. Innovations such as direct-to-home broadcasting enabled content to bypass established systems of censorship and regulation, contributing to a more decentralized global communication structure[4]. The 24/7 news cycle did more than increase the volume of available information; It helped produce a new international political environment in which the rapid circulation of images and narratives can influence public debate and diplomatic agendas. The digital era thus intensified the mediatisation of politics, reshaping how power is exercised and perceived beyond the national boundaries. A prominent illustration of this mediatised environment is the so-called CNN Effect. Coverage of the 1991 Gulf War demonstrated how real-time television images could influence the tempo of political decision-making, encouraging leaders to respond to events as they appeared on screen. Continuous live reporting did not

[1] Stephen Cushion and Justin Lewis, "Introduction: What Is 24-Hour News Television?" in *The Rise of 24-Hour News Television: Global Perspectives*, ed. Stephen Cushion and Justin Lewis (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 1–28.
[2] Chris Paterson, "The Hidden Role of Television News Agencies: Going Live," in *The Rise of 24-Hour News Television: Global Perspectives*, ed. Stephen Cushion and Justin Lewis (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), pp.99-116.
[3] Laura Juntunen, "Explaining the Need for Speed: Competition & Ethics," in The Rise of 24-Hour News Television: Global Perspectives, ed. Stephen Cushion and Justin Lewis (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 167–182.
[4] Nalin Mehta, "India Live: Satellites, Politics and the 24-Hour News Cycle," in *The Rise of 24-Hour News Television: Global Perspectives*, ed. Stephen Cushion and Justin Lewis (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 319–336.

simply inform audiences but also shaped the conditions under which foreign policy was debated and conducted. Global news networks became active participants in the framing of international crises, contributing to a mediated global reality that often aligned with the strategic and communicative priorities of dominant powers. The expansion of transnational news networks further weakened the informational sovereignty of smaller states, limiting their capacities to control narratives about their own political situations[1]. This imbalance is reinforced by the structural organization of global television markets. The international circulation of media content does not operate as a neutral exchange; but reflects asymmetries in production, ownership, and distribution that resemble a core-periphery model. Even in the digital era, global television continues to reproduce Western editorial standards and commercial priorities, contributing to a relatively uniform global news aesthetic[2].

[1] Thussu, *Op. cit.*, pp. 150–155.
[2] Chris Barker, *Global Television: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 40–45.
For more details see also: Timothy Havens, *Global Television Marketplace* (London: British Film Institute, 2006), pp. 10–15.

Subsection Two: Definitional and Conceptual Approaches of Media and International communication.

Methodological clarity requires distinguishing between Lexical definitions and working definitions. The former describe how a term is commonly used in everyday language, while the latter assign a precise meaning for analytical and theoretical purposes. This subsection adopts this distinction to situate the concepts of media and international communication within both general usage and their specific academic context. The aim is thus to Move beyond standard dictionary definitions to establish analytical boundaries.

I- *Lexical definition*:

Standard dictionaries generally agree on the basic meaning of media and communication The Oxford English Dictionary defines" media " as the main means of mass communication collectively, such as newspapers, television, and radio, highlighting its role in sharing information[1]. Although the Oxford English Dictionary does not yet define "international communication ", scholars describe it as the exchange of information, ideas, and messages across national boundaries through media systems and technology[2].

These definitions point to three key aspects: media as a channel for transmitting messages, a mass or widespread audience, and the flow of information across borders .These features help explain how media enables the sharing of information globally.

II- Working and Operational Definitions:

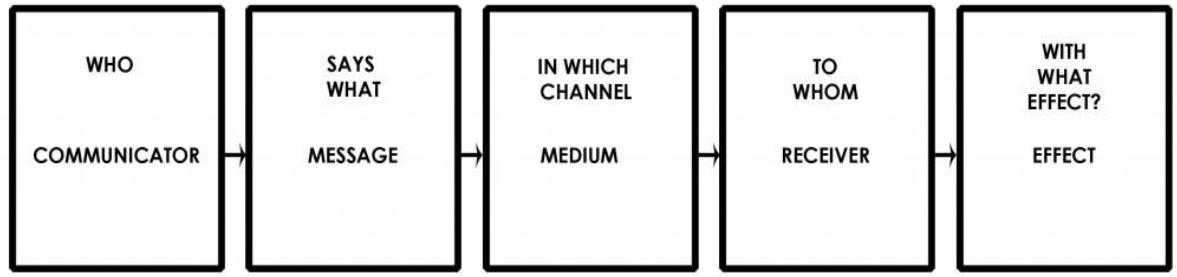
To analyze communication in international and political contexts, it is necessary to move beyond basic lexical meaning and adopt conceptual definitions that are analytically useful for this research.

One foundational approach to defining communication in political and media studies is the model proposed by Harold D. Lasswell (1948) .Instead of focusing solely on language, Lasswell conceptualized communication as a structured process that can be described with five key questions: Who says what, in which channel, to whom, and with what effect? This framework highlights distinct elements of the communication process; the communicator,

[1] *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), consulted February 17, 2026.
[2] StudySmarter, "International Communication: Definition & Importance," *StudySmarter*, October 11, 2024, consulted February 18, 2026.

the message, the medium, the audience, and the effects of the message and underscores that political communication involves not just transmission but also influence and interpretation. Such an analytical orientation is especially relevant when examining how media coverage functions during international conflicts[1].

Figure 1.1: *Lasswell's model of communication*



Source: Based on Lasswell's Model (1948), Visualized by Wikimedia Commons

Following Lasswell's process-oriented model, other scholars have contributed to shaping how communication is understood in international and global contexts. Daya Kishan Thussu, a leading voice in international communication studies, emphasizes that communication across national boundaries cannot be separated from the structures and power relations that shape global media flows. From this perspective, international communication involves not only the transmission of messages but also the economic, political, and cultural forces that influence how information is produced, distributed, and received on global scale[2] . In addition to structural perspectives on international communication, John Tomlinson approaches the subject from a cultural standpoint. He argues that communication should not be understood as a neutral transmission of information, but as a process through which meanings are shaped by cultural contexts. From this view, global media interactions are influenced by the social and interpretive frameworks within which audiences understand and evaluate messages[3].

At a general level, international communication in this study is understood as the exchange of information and meanings across national boundaries, shaped by political, economic,

[1] Harold D. Lasswell, "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society," in *The Communication of Ideas*, ed. Lyman Bryson (New York: The Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1948), pp. 84–99.
[2] Thussu, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.
[3] John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p. 21.

and cultural contexts and mediated through organized media systems. Within this framework, media refer to institutionalized systems of mass communication that disseminate news and political content to diverse audiences, while communication denotes the process through which such content is produced, circulated, and interpreted in international settings. This conceptual grounding establishes the theoretical basis for analyzing media diplomacy during periods of international conflicts.

For the purposes of this research, *international communication* is operationally defined as the organized dissemination of politically relevant information across national boundaries through institutional media platforms. In the context of international conflict, such communication is approached not simply as the transmission of information, but as a process that can shape public perception, diplomatic positioning, and broader narrative framing. Accordingly, this study examines media content in terms of message construction, framing patterns, source selection, and discursive emphasis to evaluate its potential diplomatic significance.

Subsection Three: Theoretical Framework: Power, Hegemony, and Strategic Communication

The role of media in political life extends far beyond functioning as a neutral conduit for data; rather, it functions as an autonomous actor operating within complex political structures and power relations. This section utilizes a structural and institutional approach to assess how media organizations participate in shaping political discourse, manufacturing consent, and modulating foreign-policy environments.

I- Media as a Political Actor:

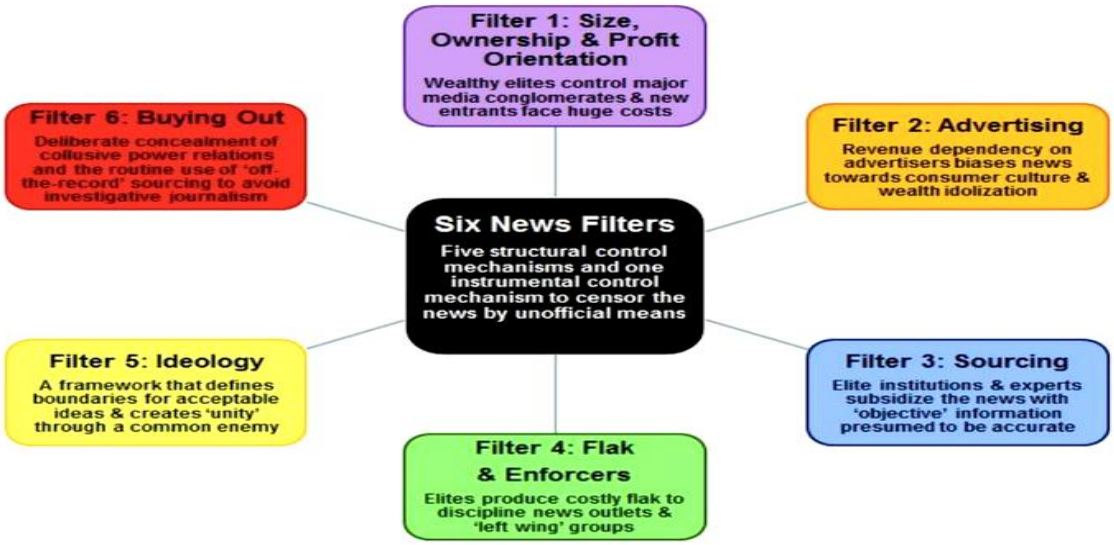
The role of media in political life has been understood as more than a channel for transmitting information, but as an actor operating within political structures and power relations. As opposed to functioning as a neutral intermediary between institutions and citizens, media organizations participate in shaping political discourse, influencing public understanding and framing the parameters within which political debate unfolds.

1- Structural and Institutional Interdependence

A foundational contribution explains the political role of the media through a structural analysis of news production, emphasizing how factors such as ownership patterns,

advertising dependence, sourcing practices, and ideological filters shape media output in liberal democracies. This approach, popularized by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky's Propaganda Model, does not claim that journalists consciously fabricate information; rather, it suggests that institutional constraints and systemic pressures tend to align media output with dominant political and economic interests. In this way, media can function as crucial participants in the maintenance of hegemonic narratives.[1]

Figure1.2: *The propaganda Model.*

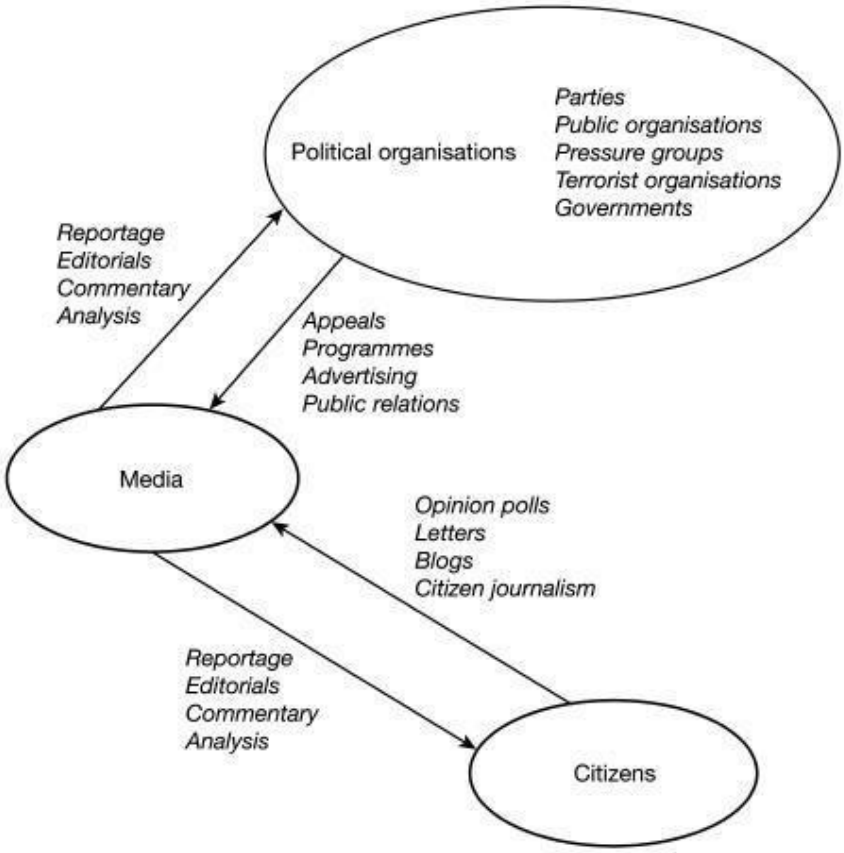


Source: **The author,** ***(Adapted from Herman and Chomsky, 1988)***

While structural approaches foreground systemic and power relations, a more institutional and interactional perspective focuses on how the political arena is shaped the continuous interaction between three principal actors: political institutions , media organizations , and citizens .Within this framework , the media cannot be viewed as passive conduits of information , nor as autonomous forces acting independently of political structures . Instead, they function as intermediaries that interpret , select , and prioritize political messages within specific institutional contexts .This perspective underscores the dynamic and relational nature of the communicative process in modern democracies .This relationship can be visually represented through a three-element model illustrating the interaction between political institutions, media organization , and citizens[2].

[1] Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), p. 2.
[2] Brian McNair, *An Introduction to Political Communication*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 3–15.

Figure1.3: *The three-element Model of political Communication.*



Source: *the author, adapted from McNair, 2003.*

Further extending this institutional perspective, political realities can be understood as increasingly shaped within media environments. Political actors adjust their communication strategies to what is often described as "media logic", while journalists tend to rely on official sources and established framing practices. This interaction produces a structured interdependence between media institutions and political actors. Rather than attributing media influence to deliberate manipulation, their analysis points to the significance of professional routines, institutional norms, and structural relationships are shaping political discourse[1].

These approaches position the media as an actor embedded within political and institutional structures, whose role becomes particularly significant in contexts of international conflict,

[1] W. Lance Bennett and Robert M. Entman, *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 1.

where media narratives can influence diplomatic positioning, public attitudes, and the broader environment of foreign policy decision-making.

2- Media, Power, and Hegemony:

Any discussion of media as a political actor inevitably raises a fundamental question which is: how should we understand the relationship between media, power, and hegemony? From an International Relations perspective, hegemony reflects the way in which consent is structured within society, not simply through coercion or direct control but through the gradual normalization of specific worldviews, values, and interpretations that come to be accepted as common sense. Media institutions assume a central role in the circulation and stabilization of such meanings .By selecting certain issues, privileging particular sources, and framing events in specific ways, media organization participate in shaping the horizons within which political debates unfold. Hegemony, therefore, does not rely on manipulation but emerges from the subtle consolidation of dominant narratives that shape perceptions of reality[1]. Beyond this cultural dimension, media power is determined by structural and organizational factors. Ownership patterns, commercial pressures, and regulatory frameworks influence the functioning of media systems[2], creating conditions that both enable and constrain action[3]. Historical development of the press show how ownership concentration and political alliances have shaped, which voices gain prominence and which remain peripheral. These cultural and institutional forces illustrate that media power, operates simultaneously across societal and organizational levels, shaping both the perception and the structural possibilities of political communication.

3- Public opinion and consent formation:

Public opinion does not simply mirror reality; rather, it emerges through the representations that individuals construct to interpret complex events. People respond less to events themselves than to the simplified pictures and narratives provided by the media[4], which frame and filter reality. In this process, perception precedes judgments, as understanding is shaped by mediated constructs rather than immediate experience. Media contribute to this dynamic not by deliberate distortion, but by operating under practical constraints such

[1] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), pp. 131, 630.
[2] James Curran, *Media and Power* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 55–78.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 217.
[4] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Free Press, 1997), pp. 3–20.

as deadlines, limited space, and reliance on institutional sources, which make complete representation impossible. In effect, news signals, events without fully explaining them, create a gap between what is reported and what actually occurs. Within such a context consent is neither entirely imposed nor wholly spontaneous; it develops through the organization of private interests into shared symbols capable of mobilizing agreement[1]. Media shape not only perception but also the social construction of collective will. Individuals also continuously gauge the prevailing opinions within their social environment, adjusting their public expression according to what appears acceptable or dominant. Fear of social isolation encourages people to withhold minority views, reinforcing the visibility of mainstream positions[2]. Through selective coverage and framing, the media indicate which perspectives are widespread, marginal, or legitimate, generating a perceived climate of opinion that may diverge from private beliefs. This phenomenon, often described as a "dual climate", reflects the gap between what individuals privately think and what they believe others think. Under this dynamic, less represented viewpoints become silent, generating a self-reinforcing spiral in which consent appears stronger and more uniform than it truly is[3]. Media influence not only how reality is interpreted, but also which opinions can safely be expressed within the public sphere.

4- Media and foreign policy environments:

Foreign policy decisions are shaped by particular political settings in which the media are closely intertwined with that environment .The debate commonly associated with the "CNN Effect "raised the question of whether real-time global news coverage can influence or accelerate foreign policy decisions [4].While early discussions sometimes overstated this influence, later research showed that media impact varies from one case to another. Rather than presenting the media as either decisive actors or simple instruments of power , scholarship has distinguished between a media influence perspective and elite-driven perspective , suggesting that media may shape policy debates in certain circumstances while primarily reflecting elite positions in others[5]. A key contribution of this literature is

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 193.
[2] Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion—Our Social Skin*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp.37–60.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 157–172.
[4] Piers Robinson, *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 1.
[5] Piers Robinson, "Media and Foreign Policy," in *Routledge Handbook of Media, Conflict and Security*, ed. Philip Seib and Romy Fröhlich (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 1.

the argument that media influence varies according to political conditions .When government act with clear policy objectives and strong elite agreement, media influence tends to remain limited; however, in periods marked by uncertainty or elite disagreement, media coverage can become more prominent in shaping debate. Media are embedded within the broader foreign policy environment, and their influence is therefore dependent on political context rather than guaranteed in every case[1].

[1] Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 116–133.

Section Two: Media Diplomacy, Soft Power, and International Broadcasting

This section explores the important role of media in international relations; it examines how states and institutions use media to extend influence, support diplomacy, and shape perceptions abroad .The discussion covers media diplomacy, soft power, and international broadcasting, as well as framing and agenda-setting theories to analyze media's impact on conflicts and global narratives.

Subsection One: Conceptualizing Media Diplomacy

The concept of media diplomacy developed as scholars began examining how mass communication starts to influence diplomatic practice in the late twentieth century. A major theoretical contribution comes from Eytan Gilboa[1], who distinguishes media diplomacy from other forms of media involvement in foreign policy. He defines media diplomacy as the use of mass media by political leaders and governments to conduct negotiations, signal intentions, build confidence, or exert pressure in international affairs.[2]Unlike traditional diplomacy, which is usually conducted through closed and confidential channels between state representatives, media diplomacy unfolds in a public arena. Political leaders often use televised interviews, press conferences, or mediated statements in order to influence adversaries, allies, or broader audience's .Therefore, the media do not function merely as neutral transmitters of information but as actors that shape the timing, framing, and impact of diplomatic messages.

This understanding situates media diplomacy as a bridge between traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy. Traditional diplomacy is generally conducted through closed governmental channels, whereas public diplomacy seeks to engage foreign societies and build long-term reputation. Media diplomacy stands somewhere between these two practices, it brings together political leaders, media institutions, and public opinion within a structured process of communication, where information circulates strategically among these actors to manage international political communication. Seen in this light, media diplomacy goes beyond simple media coverage of foreign policy, it represents a deliberate diplomatic practice carried out through media institutions[3] .

[1] Eytan Gilboa, "Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12, no. 2 (2001), p. 28.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 3–9.
[3] Young Joon Lim, "Conceptual Models of Media Diplomacy: For the Resolution of International Communication Conflict," *International Journal of Communication Research* 7, no. 1 (2017), p. 15.

An earlier institutional perspective appears in the work of Yoel Cohen, who describes media diplomacy as the management of information by foreign offices in the age of mass communication[1]. He argues that the expansion of global news systems compelled diplomatic institutions to reconsider how they handled information. Diplomacy could no longer remain shielded from public scrutiny.

Subsection Two: The Three Phases of Media Diplomacy

The historical evolution of media diplomacy can be conceptualized through three distinct institutional phases:

I- From Elite Secrecy to media Awareness:

Historically, diplomacy was an exclusive practice conducted by political elites behind closed doors. This configuration identifies a turning point when governments recognized that the expansion of mass media made complete secrecy increasingly unrealistic. A dual revolution took place, one in communication technologies and another in diplomatic mentality[2]. Rather than avoiding media exposure, diplomatic institutions progressively integrated media management into their strategic considerations, marking an early stage in evolution of media diplomacy. Alongside these developments, changes in communication technology altered the structure of power in international relations. The growth of satellite broadcasting and global news networks created new forms of visibility and accountability. Public opinion became a structural factor that governments could not ignore diplomacy began to move from an elite-centred process toward what might be described as mass-based diplomacy, in which domestic and international audiences played an indirect yet significant role[3] .

II- The era of instant diplomacy:

The emergence of 24-hour news channels intensified this transformation, highlighting how real-time broadcasting shortened the temporal space within which diplomatic decisions were made. What is described as “instant diplomacy “reflects the increasing pressure on leaders to respond quickly to events unfolding on global screens. Media exposure became

[1] Yoel Cohen, *Media Diplomacy: The Foreign Office in the Mass Communication Age* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), pp. 1–11.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[3] Munam Khan, "Role of Media in Diplomacy," *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities* (Mumbai, India) 4, no. 3 (2021), pp. 3462–3463.

intertwined with negotiation processes, sometimes reinforcing official strategies and at other times constraining them. The so-called CNN effect symbolized this period, during which media coverage appeared capable of accelerating diplomatic action. The extent of this shift was widely acknowledged at the time[1]. As one commentator observed, "indeed, only the foolish foreign leader can any longer afford to underestimate the power of TV news "[2]. This remark reflects how television had become an integral element in diplomatic calculation. During this phase, the media were no longer external observers; they became embedded in diplomatic dynamics, influencing not only public perception but also the strategic calculations of policymakers.

III- The digital transformation and Mediatisation:

The most recent stage is linked to digital communication and the logic of mediatisation. Contemporary leaders increasingly bypass traditional journalistic intermediaries and communicate directly with foreign governments and publics through digital platforms. This shift has intensified the speed and reach of diplomatic communication. Media diplomacy has thus evolved from mediated press conferences to direct, real-time digital engagement[3]. This transformation reflects a broader process in which diplomatic practice adapts to media logic immediacy, emotional resonance, and visual impact. Communication is no longer supplementary to diplomacy; it is integrated into its core operations. In this sense, media diplomacy has moved from being an auxiliary practice to becoming an embedded dimension of foreign policy.

In fact, the significance of media diplomacy becomes clearer when examining how it operates in practice. Contemporary foreign policy is conducted in a media-saturated environment where communication is immediate and highly visible[4]. Under such conditions, the media is not simply a neutral transmitter of information; it functions as a platform through which intentions are articulated, negotiating positions are framed, and signals are directed simultaneously to governments and wider publics.

---

[1] Gilboa, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.
[2]Marvin Kalb, "Foreword," in *The Media and Foreign Policy*, ed. Simon Serfaty (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. 14.
[3] Hasan Saliu, "Rethinking Media Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy: Towards a New Concept: Digital Media Diplomacy," *Online Journal Modelling the New Europe*, no. 39 (2022), pp. 11–12.
[4] Andrew Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*, 2nd ed., Oxford Studies in Digital Politics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 10–27.

During negotiations or crises, public statements may shape expectations, influence perceptions of credibility, and affect the political room for manoeuvre available to decision makers. Timing, framing, and visibility therefore become integral to diplomatic strategy, not secondary to it[1].This development has important implications for how diplomacy itself is understood[2] .When communication enters the public arena in real time; diplomacy can no longer be reduced to confidential exchanges between state representatives. It unfolds under observation, and sometimes under pressure, from domestic and international audiences. Media diplomacy does more than accompany public diplomacy; it reshapes the conditions under which diplomatic interaction takes place. Communication becomes part of the negotiation process rather than a simple report about it[3].

Overall, the evolution of media diplomacy can be understood as a gradual transition: from secret elite diplomacy, to strategic engagement with mass media, to instantaneous global communication, and finally to digitally mediate diplomatic interaction shaped by the norms of contemporary media systems.

Subsection Three: Soft Power Dynamics and Stratified Narratives

Media diplomacy should be approached as a functional component of public diplomacy rather than as a separate practice. If public diplomacy is concerned with how a state is perceived beyond its borders, then media diplomacy represents one of the concrete ways in which that objective is pursued[4]. It translates the normative ambitions of public diplomacy into communicative action. This connection is rooted in Joseph Nye's concept of *soft power*, which denotes the capacity of a political actor to shape the preferences of others through attraction rather than coercion or economic inducements.

I- Joseph Nye's soft power theory:

Soft power was introduced to challenge the traditional understanding of influence in international politics, which long emphasized military strength and economic leverage. It refers to a form of power based on attraction rather than coercion or material inducement. Instead of forcing others to change their behaviour through threats or payments, a state may

[1] Philip Seib, *Real-Time Diplomacy: Politics and Power in the Social Media Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 1.
[2] Nicholas J. Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), p. 12.
[3] Gilboa, *Op. cit.*, p. 1; Seib, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.
[4]Cull, *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

achieve its objective when others willingly align themselves with its preferences[1]. In this sense, influence depends on shaping perceptions and establishing legitimacy around policies and values.

The main sources of this form of power lay in culture, political ideals, and the perceived legitimacy of foreign policy. Cultural products and practices can contribute to a country's appeal when they resonate with external audiences. Political values become influential when they are consistently practiced and viewed as credible rather than simply proclaimed. Likewise, foreign policy can reinforce attraction when it is regarded as morally grounded and internationally responsible. Soft power therefore rests not only on communication, but on the alignment between discourse and practice[2] .

As the global information environment has changed, the dynamics of soft power have also evolved. The diffusion of communication technologies and the growing importance of transnational networks have intensified competition over narratives and visibility[3]. Influence increasingly relies on the effective circulation of ideas within a crowded and decentralized media environment[4]. In this context, attraction is largely shaped by agenda-setting capacity and the credibility of the messages conveyed. At the same time, the concept has generated debate. Critics have questioned whether attraction is ever entirely voluntary, arguing that discursive practices and normative pressures can constrain actors in subtle ways. Influence exercised through language, legitimacy claims, and shared norms may still operate as a form of structured pressure rather than pure consent. These critiques blur the line between coercion and attraction, suggesting that soft power is embedded in broader relations of meaning and authority[5].

II- Culture, values, and narrative power:

If soft power is based on attraction, then it becomes necessary to understand how attraction is produced and interpreted. Influence in this sense functions not only through material

[1] Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), p. 25.
[2] Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), pp. 5–6.
[3] Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), p. 76.
[4] Manisha Kumari, "The Role of Soft Power in International Diplomacy," *International Journal of Political Science and Governance* 7, no. 5 (2025), pp. 213–214.
[5] Janice Bially Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005), p. 584.

resources, but through the construction of meaning, identity, and narrative coherence[1]. Political influence often takes shape through the stories that societies tell about themselves and about others. Public messages, diplomatic speeches, and media representations rarely rely only on factual information or formal arguments.

Instead, they tend to present political realities in narrative form, organizing events through coherent storylines that make sense to audiences. What makes such narratives persuasive is not only how well the story holds together, but also their ability to resonate with the cultural experiences and expectations of those who receive them .When a narrative appears credible and familiar, audiences are more likely to accept the values and interpretations expressed through it. For this reason, persuasion in international communication frequently depends on the ability to craft narratives that feel meaningful rather than purely logical[2].

Narratives also shape the way political events themselves are understood. Facts and events do not possess a fixed meaning on their own; they acquire significance once they are organized into narratives that present certain actors as heroes, victims, or challengers. Through this process, political discourse transforms isolated events into broader interpretations about legitimacy, justice, or progress. Different narratives can therefore present the same situation in contrasting ways, emphasizing success, crisis, or moral responsibility. Narrative influence stems from this ability to organize reality and guide interpretation, allowing political actors to present international developments in ways that support particular values and political objectives[3].

Culture becomes important in this process because it provides the common cultural references that make narratives understandable. Collective identities are not something fixed or naturally given; they are recreated over time through shared stories, cultural practices, and communication networks. Through repeated narratives about history, traditions, and common experiences, communities develop a sense of belonging that links individuals to a broader collective identity.

[1] Alexander L. Vuving, *The Logic of Attraction: Outline of a Theory of Soft Power* (Honolulu: Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2019), p. 2

[2] Meriwether Ball, "Width and Breadth of the Narrative Paradigm Over a Quarter Century" (preprint, School of Communication and the Arts, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA, December 2022), pp. 3–5.

[3] Hossin Abdul Moula, "Hayden White's Theory of History as Narrative in the Light of New Historicism," *Eurasian Journal of English Language and Literature* 5, no. 1 (2023), pp. 27–38.

Communication systems , including literature , journalism , and modern media platforms, help spread these shared narratives by allowing individuals who never meet each other to imagine themselves as part of the same community. Cultural influence therefore becomes an important source of international attraction, as external audiences may identify with certain values, lifestyles, or ideals conveyed through these narratives[1]. Understanding attraction also requires identifying the qualities that make a political actor appealing to others. Attraction tends to emerge when an actor is perceived as having good intentions, being competent, or committed to widely admired principles.

Acts that signal goodwill such as humanitarian assistance or cooperative initiatives can create a perception of supportiveness that encourages trust. Demonstrations of competence and success in fields such as technology, education, or governance can generate admiration and respect. At the same time, consistent commitment to values that resonate with broader audiences can reinforce the credibility of these signals. When such qualities are effectively communicated and recognized, they contribute to a form of influence that operates through voluntary alignment rather than coercion[2].

These dynamics illustrate how culture, values and narrative construction shape the mechanisms of attraction in international politics. Soft power does not function only through the possession of cultural resources, but through the capacity to present those resources within narratives that audiences find meaningful and credible[3]. The ability to frame political realities, connect with shared cultural references, and communicate valued qualities becomes central to how influence is generated and sustained in the contemporary international environment.

III- International broadcasters as soft power instruments:

International broadcasting functions as a way for states to communicate across borders, aiming to influence how people abroad see events, politics, and ideas. Unlike traditional diplomatic communication which is directed at governments and policymakers, international broadcasters target broader publics by transmitting news, cultural

[1] Craig Calhoun, "The Importance of Imagined Communities – and Benedict Anderson," *Debats: Journal on Culture, Power and Society* 1 (December 2016), pp. 1–6.
[2] Vuving, *Op. cit.*, p. 17.
[3] Ball, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

programming, and strategic messaging across borders[1]. In this way, these media outlets serve as instruments of influence that extend beyond formal diplomacy, enabling states to engage directly with audiences in diverse political environments[2]. The role of broadcasting in shaping external audiences has changed over time .Although early manifestations of cross-broader transmission were closely linked with propaganda; the contemporary practice has shifted toward a more complex interplay between credibility, information, and influence.

During the twentieth century, especially in the Cold war era, state supported stations communicated ideological perspectives to distinct populations in ways that sought both to inform and to influence. In the present global information environment, broadcasters face the dual challenge of maintaining professional legitimacy while communicating narratives aligned with national communication objectives; success depends increasingly on how newsroom pressures foreign audiences perceive and trust media sources[3].

Furthermore, technological developments have made international broadcasting more far-reaching and effective. Satellite, digital platforms, and internet content have made it possible to interact with audiences around the world as events happen, allowing states to transmit messages that are immediate, interactive, and adopted to local cultures. In contrast to earlier models of one way transmission, modern international broadcasters compete in a crowded media space [4]where competing outlets strive to attract attention, retain credibility, and influence interpretive frameworks in favour of particular political values or understanding of global events. In this competitive environment, audience loyalty and trust become strategic resources that states cultivate through consistent messaging and narrative coherence.

As instruments of public diplomacy, international broadcasters provide governments with channels to explain policies, present cultural values, and respond to global crises or criticism. By presenting carefully constructed narratives, these broadcasters contribute to

[1]Gary D. Rawnsley, "Introduction to 'International Broadcasting and Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century'," *Media and Communication* (Lisbon, Portugal) 4, no. 2 (2016), p. 43.
[2]Monroe E. Price, "Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of International Broadcasting," *Cardozo Arts & Entertainment Law Journal* 21, no. 1 (2003), p. 53.
[3] Philip Arceneaux and Shawn Powers, "International Broadcasting: Public Diplomacy as a Game in a Marketplace of Loyalties," in *The Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, 2nd ed., ed. Nancy Snow and Nicholas J. Cull (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 52.
[4] Monroe E. Price, *Media and Sovereignty: The Global Information Revolution and Its Challenge to State Power* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), p. 1.

the shaping of international opinion and the framing of political issues in ways favourable to their sponsors. The effectiveness of these efforts does not rest simply on sending out the information; it also relies on building trust and credibility with audiences abroad, who evaluate media outputs against alternative sources. In this way, international broadcasting serves as a soft power instrument by embedding national perspectives within persuasive communication that seeks not to coerce but to attract, resonate, and sustain engagement among external publics[1].

[1] Price, *Media and Sovereignty*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 245–246.

Results and Findings of the First Part

To summarize this section, the analysis has yielded the following findings:

- Media in international relations has evolved from a state-controlled instrument of propaganda, particularly in early radio broadcasting and Cold war communication, into a central actor in global politics, where information flows continuously and influences decision-making processes.
- Contemporary media systems operate not only as channels of information but as mechanisms of power and influence, contributing to the construction of narratives, the dissemination of values, and shaping the public opinion.
- Despite the expansion of private media and digital openness dominant actors especially western institutions continue to exert significant influence over global information structures, reflecting broader dynamics of hegemony and strategic communication.
- .Media does not merely reflect reality but actively constructs it by selecting, prioritizing, and interpreting events. Communication becomes a political process that shape perceptions, diplomatic positions, and international legitimacy. This is further reinforced through the practice of media diplomacy, which has evolved across three institutional phases into an embedded dimension of foreign policy, and through soft power mechanisms whereby international broadcasters serve as instruments of attraction, projecting national narratives and values to foreign publics beyond the reach of traditional diplomacy.

Chapter two: Media, Conflict, and the BBC: Theoretical Approaches and Contextual Background

Armed conflict represents one of the most demanding environments in which media operate, transforming the role of journalism from the transmission of information into an active process of narrative construction, political framing, and symbolic contestation. The way conflicts are reported shapes not only public understanding but also diplomatic positioning, international legitimacy, and the broader conditions under which political decisions are made.

This chapter examines the relationship between media and conflict across its analytical, institutional, and historical dimensions. It explores how framing and agenda-setting dynamics operate in conflict situations, and interrogates the ethical and normative challenges that define journalistic practice under conditions of violence and uncertainty. It then situates the BBC within this framework, tracing its institutional foundations, the evolution of its global broadcasting role, and its editorial conduct in conflict coverage. The chapter concludes by establishing the historical and structural background of the two conflicts central to this study, the Russian-Ukrainian war and the Zionist war on Gaza, providing the analytical grounding necessary for examining how international media narratives are constructed around them.

Section one: Media during conflict situations

Although media diplomacy is typically embedded within broader public diplomacy efforts, its role takes on a different character when foreign policy unfolds under conditions of open conflict. In such situations, diplomacy no longer operates according to the slower rhythms of stable periods. In more stable contexts, diplomatic exchanges tend to unfold gradually and often away from public scrutiny. By contrast, conflict disrupts this rhythm and compresses time, pushing communication into a highly visible arena. Communication accelerates and becomes harder to manage[1]. Leaders are not only engaging their counterparts behind closed doors; they must also respond to rapidly circulating narratives that shape interpretations at both domestic and international levels. Under these circumstances, diplomacy cannot remain insulated from media pressures. It occurs in an atmosphere of urgency and uncertainty, where even hesitation may be perceived as

[1] Steven Livingston, "Clarifying the CNN Effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention" (research paper, Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1997), p. 2.

weakness. In this regard, conflict thrusts diplomacy into the public arena and redefines the conditions under which strategic decisions are made[1].

Within this environment, media diplomacy acquires on a clear strategic role. Communication becomes a part of how states manage escalation and signal their intentions in uncertain situations[2]. Public statements, press briefings, and official addresses serve to clarify positions, outline limits, and reduce the risk of misinterpretation. Instead of focusing mainly on reputation purposes, these messages operate as instruments of crisis stabilization. Government may rely on them to deter opponents, reassure allies, or maintain a degree of ambiguity.

Thus, timing and tone become especially important, statements delivered too early or framed too rigidly can heighten tensions or restrict future diplomatic options. In periods of acute conflict, communication is not simply a complement to diplomacy; it becomes one of the means through which escalation is controlled[3].Moreover, the growing visibility of diplomacy during conflict changes the political pressures leaders operate under. When negotiations take place in front of cameras and commentators, decision makers must think beyond their immediate opponents. Domestic audiences and international observers become part of the equation. Public commitments, once made, can make compromise more difficult and increase its political cost. Visibility can therefore reduce flexibility. Yet, it also offers governments an opportunity to justify their actions and present themselves as acting within legal or international norms. In this way, media diplomacy becomes a public space where credibility, authority, and strategic influence are constantly shaped and redefined[4].

Nowadays, the reconfiguration of narrative authority is particularly evident in contemporary global conflict. The transition to a digital, 24/7 news environment has altered not only how conflicts are reported, but also how they are experienced and interpreted globally. Warfare is no longer mediated exclusively through centralized broadcasting institutions; instead, images, testimonies, and commentary circulate across multiple digital platforms, reshaping the communicative structure of war itself. Within this media ecology,

[1]Eytan Gilboa, "The CNN Effect: The Search for a Communication Theory of International Relations," *Political Communication* 22, no. 1 (2005), pp. 31–32, 34.
[2]Gilboa, *Op. cit.*, pp. 4, 11, 13.
[3] Seib, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.
[4] Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 1–23.

the conventional boundaries of the battlefield are less clearly defined. Conflicts are no longer presented solely through embedded correspondents but are also documented by civilians, soldiers, and activists equipped with smart phones and connected to social media networks.

The infrastructure of reporting has become widely distributed, producing a continuous and fragmented flow of visual and textual material that complicates official efforts to control narratives. The diffusion of communicative power does not eliminate power asymmetries. Rather, it relocates them within a more fragmented and competitive media environment where multiple and often conflicting interpretation compete for visibility in real time. The reach of these narratives remains shaped by platform algorithms, geopolitical influence and existing media infrastructures[1]. Narrative authority is less centralized than in earlier periods, yet still shaped by unequal access to amplification, credibility and global reach.

Subsection One: Framing and Agenda-Setting Theories

Media influence concerns not only what information reaches audiences but also how events are presented and understood. In communication studies, this influence is explored through the twin theoretical perspectives of framing and agenda-setting.

I- Framing Theory and Salience Direction:

Framing theory examines how media narratives organize and present information in ways that shape how audiences interpret political events and public issues. News coverage does not transmit facts; it structures reality by highlighting certain aspects of an issue while leaving others in the background. Through this process of selection and emphasis, media narratives guide the way audiences understand the meaning, causes, and possible responses to political developments.

At the centre of this perspective lies the idea that communication involves selecting particular elements of a perceived reality and making them more prominent within a message. This prominence, described as salience, increases the likelihood that specific aspects of an event will attract attention and influence interpretation. The same event can generate different understanding depending on which elements are emphasized. A political

[1] Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin, *War and Media: The Emergence of Diffused War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), pp. 3–23.

crisis, for instance, may be presented as a humanitarian tragedy, a matter of national security threat, or diplomatic dispute, each perspective directing audiences toward a different interpretation of the situation.

Within political communication, frames structure narratives in ways that shape how problems are understood and debated. Media coverage may identify the central issue that requires attention, attribute responsibility to particular actors, and implicitly evaluate the situation from a moral standpoint. In many cases, these narratives also suggest possible responses or solutions, thereby shaping the way audiences think about appropriate actions or policies. Through this mechanism, framing operates not only as a descriptive device, but also as an important element in the construction of political meaning[1].The influence of framing can be understood across several levels of communication. Interpretive choices begin with the communicator, whose decisions determine which elements of an event receive emphasis. These choices become visible within the media text itself through language, images, and narrative structure. When audiences encounter these representations, their interpretation interacts with prior knowledge, personal experiences, and cultural assumption[2]. Meaning therefore emerges from the interaction between mediated narratives and the interpretive frameworks through which individuals make sense of the world around them.

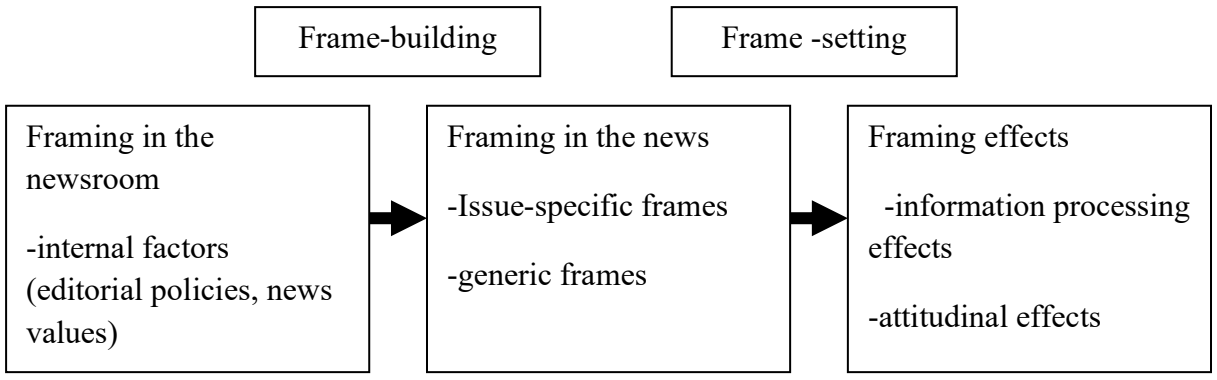
From a sociological perspective, framing is closely related to the ways individuals organize their everyday experiences. Social reality is not encountered as a fixed and uniform structure, but as a set of situations interpreted through cognitive frameworks. These frameworks act as organizing principles that help individuals identify what is happening in a particular situation. Contextual cues play an important role in this process, as they signal how an event should be understood. An activity that resembles conflict, for instance, may be interpreted as a play, rehearsal, or ritual depending on the interpretive frame applied by participants. Such examples illustrate how meaning emerges through shared conventions that structure social understanding[3].

[1] Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993), pp. 52-54.
[2] Claes H. de Vreese, "News Framing: Theory and Typology," *Information Design Journal* 13, no. 1 (2005), p. 52.
[3]Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), pp. 21-44.

Beyond the structure of media narratives, framing also involves the ways audiences interpret these representations. News coverage provides symbolic elements through language, metaphors, and visual imagery, yet audiences do not interpret these elements in a passive manner. Instead, they combine them with personal experience and commonly shared cultural knowledge. Public interpretations of political issues therefore develop through the encounter between mediated representations and the cognitive frameworks individuals bring to the process of interpretation. In political debates, frames often appear as part of broader interpretive packages that organize the discussion of public issues[1]. These packages may include recurring metaphors, familiar narratives, and symbolic language that suggest how a particular problem should be understood. When such narratives resonate with existing social experiences, they can influence attitudes toward political actors and policies, and in some circumstances encourage collective engagement around specific causes[2].

Recent research has approached framing as a dynamic process that unfolds across several stages of communication. The construction of frames begins during the production of news, where journalistic routines, editorial decisions, and interactions with political actors influence how issues are presented. Once these frames circulate through media texts, they interact with the beliefs and background knowledge of audiences, shaping interpretation and public debate. The effect of this process may appear at different levels, influencing individual perceptions while also contributing to broader patterns of political discussion.

Figure1.4: *Integrated process model of Framing*



Source: by the author, adapted from: Claes H.de Vreese" *News Framing: Theory and typology*", Information Design Journal, 13, no.1 (2005), p.51.

[1]William A. Gamson, Talking Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 2-4.
[2] Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 7.

The integrated process model illustrates how framing operates throughout the communication process. It shows how frames emerge during the production of news, influenced by professional practices and interactions between journalists and political actors. These frames are then transmitted through media content and interpreted by audiences, whose prior beliefs and experiences shape the way messages are understood. The model demonstrates that framing does not occur at a single moment but develops through the interaction between message production, media texts, and audience interpretation, generating effects that can influence both individual attitudes and wider public debates[1].

Understanding framing is essential for analyzing the political significance of media narratives. By structuring the way events are presented and interpreted, frames contribute to shaping public debate and influencing how political problems are defined. In contexts where information circulates rapidly and audiences depend heavily on mediated communication, the organization of narratives becomes a central element in the construction of political reality.

II - Agenda-Setting and the Transfer of Salience:

Agenda-setting theory focuses on how media influence the relative importance audiences attribute to political issues. Rather than determining the positions individuals adopt, media coverage contributes to shaping the list of topics that people consider significant in public life[2]. When certain issues receive sustained visibility in news reporting, they become more prominent in public discussions and political debates. This process is commonly described as the transfer of salience, whereby the priority given to topics in the media agenda gradually influences the priorities of the public agenda.

The literature on agenda-setting has also distinguished between different levels of influence. At a basic level, media attention affects the perceived importance of particular issues by directing public attention toward them. At a more specific level, coverage may emphasize certain attributes or aspects of those issues, guiding how audiences think about them and which characteristics appear most relevant[3]. In this sense, agenda-setting extends

[1] De Vreese, Op. cit., pp. 51-52.
[2]Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972), p. 177.
[3] Maxwell McCombs, "Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion," in International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, ed. Gustavo Mesch (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2008), pp. 2-3.

beyond the basic presence of issues in news to the ways in which their defining elements are made visible.

Within broader research on media effects, agenda-setting is discussed alongside related perspectives such as priming and framing. These approaches share the assumption that the prominence of information in the media environment influences how individuals evaluate political actors or events. While agenda-setting focuses on the relative importance assigned to issues, framing addresses the interpretive perspectives through which those issues are presented[1]. These approaches contribute to understanding how news coverage shapes public attention and political perception.

III- Application to conflict reporting:

In situations of armed conflict, the dynamics identified in framing and agenda-setting theories become especially evident. Continuous news coverage, live broadcasting, and the circulation of striking images can quickly elevate specific crises within the hierarchy of international concerns. When certain conflicts dominate the news agenda, they tend to gain greater political visibility and become subjects of public debate. This dynamic is frequently associated with the notion of the CNN effect, which refers to the capacity of real-time media coverage to accelerate political attention and place pressure on decision-makers to respond to unfolding humanitarian or security crises[2].

At the same time, the influence of media coverage on conflict policy does not operate in the same way across all military contexts. Its impact varies according to the nature of the intervention and the strategic environment in which decisions are made. Operations that depend on secrecy are particularly sensitive to media exposure, while broader military missions tend to be affected through the visibility of humanitarian suffering or the reporting of casualties. Images of civilian distress may intensify demands for international involvement, whereas coverage of military losses can weaken domestic support for sustained intervention[3]. Media reporting interacts with policy processes by shaping the public and political climate surrounding a conflict rather than determining decisions directly[4].

[1] Dietram A. Scheufele and David Tewksbury, "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models," Journal of Communication 57, no. 1 (2007), pp. 11-12.
[2] Gilboa, *Op. cit.*, p. 28.
[3]Livingston, Op. cit., pp. 2-13.
[4] Gilboa, *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

Conflict reporting also tends to create selective visibility. News attention frequently concentrates on crises that generate dramatic visual material, such as large refugee movements or scenes of acute humanitarian distress. Conflicts that lack these elements may receive far less international attention despite their severity. From this perspective, agenda-setting dynamics influence which situations become widely recognized international crises and which remain largely absent from global debate. The visibility created through media narratives and imagery therefore contributes to shaping how conflicts enter international political discussion and how urgently they are perceived[1].

Subsection Two: Media, Conflict, and Ethical Responsibility

Media coverage of armed conflicts raises important questions about representation, responsibility, and professional norms. Beyond the transmission of information, news reporting participates in shaping how conflicts are perceived and interpreted by audiences. These issues are often explored through debates on neutrality, bias, and the ethical role of journalism in situations of violence. This chapter addresses these dimensions by examining media representations of conflict, the challenges of objectivity, and the normative frameworks that guide journalistic practice.

I-Media Representation of Armed Conflicts:

Media representation is closely linked to how armed conflicts are understood by audiences. Through the selection of narratives, the portrayal of victims, and the emphasis placed on particular aspects of events, news coverage participates in constructing specific interpretations of conflict situations.

1- War narratives and victim representation:

War reporting does not simply recount events but organize them into narratives structures that shape the interpretation of conflict[2]. Coverage tends to present certain actors as central while reducing others to the background, producing a selective account of suffering and responsibility. Within these narratives, victims are not portrayed equally: some are individualized, named, and emotionally framed, while others appear as distant figures or

[1] Piers Robinson, "The CNN Effect Revisited," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, no. 4 (2005), p. 344.
[2] Nebojsa Vladisavljevic, "Media Framing of Political Conflict: A Review of the Literature" (working paper, MeCoDEM Working Papers, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK, 2015), p. 2

statistics. This uneven visibility reflects broader editorial choices, political alignments, and news values that influence which lives are treated as urgent and relatable.

Patterns of representation often privilege those perceived as innocent, vulnerable, and culturally familiar, reinforcing implicit hierarchies of victimhood. Language also plays a role, as stylistic choices can either assign clear responsibility or obscure it, affecting how audiences interpret harm and accountability[1]. The framing of conflict is deeply tied to political context, as media narratives frequently align with dominant positions and limit alternative perspectives, especially in moments of crisis[2]. Such dynamics contribute not only to shaping public perception but also to structuring the boundaries within which conflicts are discussed and evaluated.

2- Attribution of responsibility and blame:

Attribution of responsibility is a key dimension of conflict reporting, as media coverage directs attention toward who is held accountable for violence and its consequences. Rather than presenting events as neutral sequences, news narratives foreground certain actors while marginalizing others, producing uneven patterns of blame[3]. These attributions reflect political alignments and partisan perspectives, which shape how responsibility is distributed among those involved[4]. Responsibility framing also tends to intersect with conflict-oriented coverage, where emphasis on disagreement and tension reinforces negative evaluations. The assignment of blame becomes embedded within the narrative structure of reporting, contributing to how accountability is defined in conflict situations.

3- Humanitarian Framing and its Limitations:

This form of coverage focuses on the human consequences of conflict, particularly the experiences of civilians, displacement, and emergency conditions. Yet attention to these situations is not distributed equally, as some crises receive sustained coverage while others remain largely absent from the news, regardless of their scale. Forms of reporting often follow geopolitical relevance and editorial priorities, shaping how different populations are

[1] Johannes Scherling, *Representations of Victimhood in Media Reporting of Armed Conflicts* (Basel: MDPI, 2026), pp. 1–2.
[2] Vladisavljevic, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.
[3]Ali Asker Guenduez, Kuno Schedler, and Dumitru Ciocan, "Generic Frames and Tonality: Mapping a Polarizing Issue in a Multifaceted Context," *European Journal of Communication* 31, no. 5 (2016), p. 585.
[4] Talha Oz and Halil Bisgin, "Attribution of Responsibility and Blame Regarding a Man-Made Disaster: #FlintWaterCrisis," in *CIKM-SWDM '16: Proceedings of the Joint Workshop on Social Web for Disaster Management* (Indianapolis, IN: ACM, 2016), pp. 1-2.

portrayed and valued. The preference for striking images and immediate developments further directs coverage toward moments of acute crisis over long-term conditions. At the same time, this type of reporting can simplify complex situations by concentrating on suffering while leaving aside underlying causes. Over time, continued exposure to such narratives may also lead to declining attention, as both audiences and media shift their focus toward more visible or recent events[1].

III- Neutrality, Objectivity, and Bias:

The analysis of media coverage in conflict settings raises questions related to neutrality, objectivity, and bias. These concerns are linked both to the professional standards of journalism and to the conditions under which news are produced.

1- Normative theory of the media:

To understand how ideology and power shape communication, it is valuable to examine the ethical and normative dimensions of media, including the principles that guide its conduct and the moral responsibilities of international reporting.

According to this theory Media perform a range of functions that extend beyond simply transmitting information, involving different roles that shape how societies understand and engage with public life[2]. Contemporary approaches to normative theory depart from earlier models by proposing a more complex framework in which media performance is examined through the interaction of normative traditions, democratic expectations, and journalistic roles. Within this perspective, journalism may act as a source of information, a space for public debate, a means of challenging established power or, in certain contexts, a partner in supporting collective interests.

These roles do not always align and may come into tension, reflecting the difficulty of reconciling competing expectations within media systems[3]. Furthermore, the expansion of digital communication has transformed how these roles are practiced, as wider participation and new forms of content production complicate questions of responsibility

[1] Marius Dragomir, *Humanitarian Crisis Coverage Report*, Media Content Analysis Series (Santiago de Compostela: Media and Journalism Research Center, 2025), pp. 2–7.
[2] Omoloa Oluwasola, "The Normative Theories of the Press in the Digital Age: A Need for Revision," *IMSU Journal of Communication Studies* 4, no. 2 (2020), p. 27.
[3] Benson Rodney, "Book Review: Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies," *Journalism* 12, no. 7 (2011), p. 924.

and accountability[1]. In addition, the assumptions underlying these frameworks, grounded in western contexts, do not always fully capture the diversity of media environments across different regions.

2- Norms of neutrality in journalism:

The principle of neutrality in journalism is framed as a professional idea based on distinguishing facts from opinions, with reporting expected to present events in a balanced and impartial manner. This ideal did not arise spontaneously from practice but took shape over time as journalism developed into an organized profession, gradually becoming a standard used to define credible reporting. Its consolidation reflects ethical concerns, but also the need for shared rules within newsrooms, where coherence, credibility, and oversight became increasingly important[2].

In practice, neutrality appears less as an absolute condition than as a set of routines used to navigate the pressures of news production. The use of quotations, and the inclusion of opposing viewpoints, and the structured arrangement of information serve as practical tools that signal adherence to professional expectations. These ways help to create a sense of distance between the journalist and the content, even though full detachment is not always possible. They also provide a form of protection, allowing journalists to justify their work in the face of criticism or institutional pressure[3].

However, neutrality remains tied to broader professional values, particularly the commitment to truth, verification, and independence. It does not imply the absence of perspective, but rather an effort to anchor reporting in reliable information while limiting the influence of external pressures. Yet this ideal faces increasing scrutiny, as changes in the media environment and shifting audience expectations have encouraged a greater focus on transparency and accountability as alternative ways to maintain public trust.[4].

3- Structural limits and journalistic autonomy: A Gramscianism perspective

[1] Jean Claude Habimana, "Application and Critiques of the Four Normative Theories of the Press in New Media" (Master's thesis, University of Rwanda, Huye, Rwanda, 2024), p. 2.
[2]Michael Schudson, "The Objectivity Norm in American Journalism," *Journalism* 2, no. 2 (2001), pp. 149–50.
[3] Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity," *The American Journal of Sociology* 77, no. 4 (1972), pp. 660–665.
[4] Ada Sonia Peter and Nnamdi T. Ekeanyanwu, "Book Review: The Elements of Journalism Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel," *Covenant Journal of Communication* 1, no. 2 (2013), p. 200.

From a Neo-Gramscian perspective, power is not sustained mainly by force, but develops through the formation of consent shaped by cultural and communication practices[1]. Media play a central role in this process by circulating ideas and representations that make particular values and social arrangements appear normal and widely accepted[2]. Through repeated narratives and symbolic frameworks, dominant perspectives can come to be perceived as common sense, influencing how individuals understand their social reality and position within it[3]. This process is not limited to direct control, but operates through institutions and ordinary communicative practices, where meanings are continuously produced and reinforced. A long side this, this form of influence remains dynamic, as audiences interpret media content in different ways and alternative viewpoints may emerge, even if they often remain within the limits of prevailing structures[4]. This underscores the complexity of hegemony as an ongoing and negotiated process, rather than a stable or consistently imposed form of domination[5].

Thus, in conflicts the role of media extends beyond representation to direct strategic use. The information sphere has become an arena in which influence is exercised alongside, and sometimes prior to, conventional military action. Within a 24/7 communication environment, information is not simply transmitted but actively weapon-zed as part of what is often described as hybrid warfare, where media platforms serve as instruments for shaping perception, destabilizing adversaries, and influencing international opinion without immediate resort to large-scale force.

Shaping how a conflict is understood has become essential to the way it is fought. Media management is no longer just a simple communication tool or task; it is now a central part of strategy[6].This strategic dimension is closely linked to the visual presentation of war. Contemporary conflicts are often framed through what can be described as the " Marketing of War", where military action is presented as technologically sophisticated and precision-

[1]Chukwumerije Okereke, "Neo-Gramscianism," in *Edward Elgar Encyclopaedia for Global Environmental Governance and Politics*, ed. Philipp H. Pattberg and Fariborz Zelli (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015), p. 127.
[2] Gabriel Caballero, Ellyn Matta, Maike Fiedler, and Ana Vukmirovic, "Role of Media in Hegemony and Subcultures" (research report, World Heritage Studies Programme, Cottbus, Germany, 2014), pp. 1–2.
[3] Janice D. Roman, "Critical Theories of Communication and Media" (doctoral research paper, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines, 2022), pp. 1–3.
[4] Lee Artz, "Media Hegemony," in *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*, ed. Angharad N. Valdivia (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), pp. 1–3.
[5] David L. Altheide, "Media Hegemony: A Failure of Perspective," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1984), p. 477.
[6] Mark Galeotti, *The Weaponisation of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022), pp. 95–102.

driven. Media coverage frequently emphasizes advanced weaponry and targeted strikes, employing visual logics that resemble the interfaces of video games. Such representations can distance audiences from the human costs of violence by foregrounding technical efficiency over civilian suffering .The outcome is not necessarily propaganda but a mediated environment in which warfare appears more abstract, normalized, and manageable[1].

Media also plays a crucial role in the justification of conflict. Within continuous global news flows, military action may be framed as necessary humanitarian interventions grounded in the protection of universal norms. Through the selective circulation of images and the emphasis on particular forms of suffering, media narratives can generate moral urgency and shape international debate. This process structures how events are interpreted rather than fabricating them, allowing strategic interests to be articulated through humanitarian language and intervention to be presented as moral responsibility rather than a geopolitical calculation[2].

The relationship between journalism and political power introduces limits that shape what becomes visible in news coverage. Reporting stays within the boundaries of official debate, where the range of perspectives tends to follow disagreements among political elites. When those elites are aligned, alternative viewpoints receive far less attention, narrowing the space for wider public expression. What appears in the news is directed to what is recognized as legitimate within institutional discourse[3]. These constraints are reinforced by the way the media environment is organized. News production is shaped by editorial practices, competition, and the need to maintain both audience interest and credibility.

Different outlets position themselves differently within the space, some leaning toward market demands while others place greater emphasis on reputation, professional recognition, and credibility. Journalistic autonomy is not fixed but constantly adjusted in relation to political influence and organizational priorities[4].

[1]Robin Andersen, *A Century of Media, a Century of War* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 240–245.
[2] Thussu, *Op. cit.*, pp. 160–70.
[3] W. Lance Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the United States," *Journalism of Communication* 40, no. 2 (1990), pp. 103–106.
[4] Rodney Benson, "News Media as a Journalistic Field: What Bourdieu Adds to New Institutionalism, and Vice Versa," *Political Communication* 23, no. 2 (2006), pp. 187–188.

In reality, discussions on media bias in international conflicts revolve around the difficulty of separating professional norms from the environments in which journalists operate. Reporting across borders is shaped by different understandings of what journalism should do, ranging from a detached approach focused on transmitting information to more engaged roles that question power or support social change. These variations influence how conflicts are narrated, as the same event may be framed differently depending on the expectations placed on journalists by their own media culture. The tension becomes more visible when reporting on foreign contexts, where critical coverage of a host country can be perceived as partial, while still reflecting norms considered legitimate within their national media environment[1].

At a broader level, these differences are reinforced by the structure of media systems. In some contexts, journalism seeks to maintain balance within a single outlet, while in others, political alignment is more visibly expressed across competing outlets, each reflecting distinct positions. This creates contrasting ways of presenting international conflicts, either through attempts at internal balance or through a diversity of clearly positioned narratives. The debate over bias is therefore not limited to individual choices, but reflects deeper variations in how media systems are organized and how journalism relates to political power, making neutrality a contested and context-dependent ideal[2].

In sum, the moral responsibility of international media cannot be reduced to formal ethical principles alone, but must be understood in relation to the conditions in which journalism is practiced. While values such as accuracy, impartiality, and accountability remain essential, their application is shaped by newsroom pressures, institutional environments, and the pace of reporting. Under such conditions, a gap may emerge between ethical judgments and professional practice, especially when urgency limits careful verification and balanced representation[3]. The expansion of digital communication further intensifies these challenges, as the rapid circulation of information increases exposure to misinformation and weakens trust if not carefully managed[4]. Moral responsibility encompasses the consequences of reporting, particularly in how coverage represents and

[1] Yuan Zeng, "Detached Disseminator, Populist Watchdog and Facilitative Change Agent: The Professional Role of Perception of Foreign Correspondents in China," *Journalism* 18, no. 10 (2017), pp. 1–5.
[2] Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*, Communication, Society and Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 67.
[3] Angela M. Lee, Renita Coleman, and Logan Molyneux, "From Thinking to Doing: Effects of Different Social Norms on Ethical Behavior in Journalism," *Journal of Media Ethics* 31, no. 2 (2016), pp. 73–74.
[4] Cüneyt Telsaç, "Media Ethics," in *Mass Communication* (Niš: Facta Universitatis, 2022), pp. 92–93.

affects vulnerable populations[1]. In this sense, responsible journalism relies not only on established norms, but also on the capacity of media professionals to apply them with care in demanding and constraints environment.

Section Two: The BBC as an international broadcaster and its role in conflict coverage

In the context of a rapidly evolving global media environment, international broadcasting has become a central instrument in shaping how events are perceived and interpreted across borders. Among the most influential actors in this field, the British Broadcasting Corporation occupies a distinctive position due to its dual nature as a national public service broadcaster and a global communication platform. Its role extends beyond the mere transformation of news, as it operates within complex political environments where narratives of conflict are continuously constructed and contested. This part seeks to explore the BBC's institutional foundations and its involvement in international communication and conflict reporting, in order to understand how it functions simultaneously as a journalistic organization and as a significant actor in global media dynamics.

Subsection One: The BBC: Institutional Evolution and Global Role

The BBC represents a major public service broadcaster whose institutional development and international expansion have positioned it as both a national and global media actor. Its structure and evolution reflect broader transformations in the role of media within international communication systems.

I- Origins, Mission, and Public Service Foundations:

The emergence of the BBC in the early 1920s marked a decisive moment in the development of modern broadcasting in the United Kingdom. Initially established in 1922 as a company formed by wireless manufacturers, its early purpose was closely tied to the expansion of radio technology and the promotion of receiver sales[2]. However, this commercial origin quickly gave way to a broader institutional vision shaped by the fast growth of radio transmission and the need to reach a national audience. Early broadcasting developments, including the establishment of multiple regional stations and the

[1] Samir H. Ljajić, "Media, Ethical Norms and Media Literacy Education," *Facta Universitatis: Series Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education* 4, no. 2 (2020), pp. 185–186.
[2]David Hendy, *The BBC: A People's History* (London: Profile Books, 2022), p. 23.

improvement of transmission infrastructure, enabled the creation of a unified communication system capable of connecting diverse regions[1]. Within this context, the transformation of the BBC into a public corporation in 1927 reflected a deliberate shift toward serving the public interest, positioning broadcasting as a national service rather than a purely commercial enterprise[2].

This transformation was accompanied by the formulation of a distinct public service philosophy that defined the BBC's mission and institutional identity. Broadcasting was conceived as a means of contributing to social cohesion and cultural development, guided by the principle that it should inform, educate, and entertain[3]. These objectives were not understood as separate functions but as interconnected responsibilities aimed at fostering an informed and engaged public[4]. The absence of a profit motive, ensured through the licence fee system, allowed programming to prioritize quality and public value over commercial appeal[5]. Alongside this, the commitment to universality and accessibility reflected the ambition to reach all segments of society, while maintaining editorial standards grounded in impartiality and credibility. This framework established broadcasting as both a cultural and civic institution, operating at the intersection of public responsibility and national identity.

Beyond its domestic role, the BBC gradually extended this mission into the international sphere, particularly through the development of overseas broadcasting services. The launch of the Empire service in 1932 marked the beginning of a broader effort to connect audiences beyond the United Kingdom, initially targeting British communities abroad before expanding to wider global publics[6]. Advances in transmission technology, especially shortwave radio, made it possible to reach distant regions and diverse audiences. In the course of its development, the introduction of foreign language services reflected an increasing engagement with complex political and cultural environment, where

[1] Paul Groves, "History of Radio Transmission in the UK," *Frequency Finder UK* (London, April 2024), p. 1.
[2] Jamie Medhurst, "The BBC and the Origins and Development of the Notion of Public Service Broadcasting," in *The BBC and Public Service Broadcasting in the Twentieth Century* (Paris: CRECIB, 2021), p. 26.
[3] Huub Wijfjes, "A British Broadcasting Centenary and Media History," *TMG Journal of Media History* 26, no. 1 (2023), p. 2.
[4] Lucie De Carvalho et al., "Introduction: Changing Perspectives on the History of the BBC," *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 26, no. 1 (2021), p. 2.
[5] Hendy, *Op. cit.*, p. 68.
[6] Gordon Johnston and Emma Robertson, *BBC World Service: Overseas Broadcasting, 1932–2018* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 24.

broadcasting also intersected with diplomatic considerations[1]. In light of this, the BBC's educational and informational mandate took on an international dimension, designed not only to disseminate knowledge but also to shape perceptions and foster cultural understanding across different societies.

II- The BBC World Service: expansion and international function

The development of the BBC World Service reflects a progressive reorientation from a primarily imperial communication framework toward a globally oriented broadcasting system. The introduction of foreign-language services marked a pivotal shift toward engaging non-English-speaking populations, reflecting broader geopolitical and communicative ambitions[2]. Expansion unfolded across several dimensions, including the multiplication of languages, the widening of geographical coverage, and a steady increase in audience reach, which today extends to hundreds of millions worldwide[3]. Technological change played a defining role in this trajectory, as shortwave transmission was progressively complemented and later overtaken by satellite, television, and digital platforms. As the institution evolved, this process became not simply a matter of scale, but a strategic adaptation to a competitive and rapidly transforming global media environment[4].

Beyond structural transformations, the World Service saw a substantial redefinition of its target audiences. While early broadcasts mainly address imperial and expatriate listeners, its focus progressively expanded toward broader global publics, notably in regions where access to independent media remained limited[5]. Audience engagement came to reflect a differentiated approach, distinguishing between contexts characterized by restrict information environments and those marked by pluralistic yet competitive media systems.

---

[1] Massoumeh Torfeh and Annabelle Sreberny, "Broadcasting to Afghanistan: A History of the BBC Pashto Service," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 3, no. 2 (2010), p. 195.
[2] Fatima El Issawi and Gerd Baumann, "The BBC Arabic Service: Changing Political Mediascapes," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 3, no. 2 (2010), p. 137.
For more details see also: Eylem Yanardağoğlu, "Changing Practices in International Broadcasting: The BBC World Service Example," *Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences*, no. 48 (2015), p. 11.
[3] British Broadcasting Corporation, *BBC World Service Performance Review 2016-2020* (London: BBC, 2020), p. 12.
[4] Alban Webb et al., *BBC World Service and the Political Economy of Cultural Value in Historical Context* (research report, The Open University/AHRC Cultural Value Project, Milton Keynes, UK, 2014), p. 3.
[5] Abdullahi Tasiu Abubakar, "British Public Diplomacy: A Case Study of the BBC Hausa Service," in *Britain's International Broadcasting*, ed. R. Mirchandani and A. Abubakar, CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy (Los Angeles, CA: Figueroa Press, 2014), p. 32.

Within this framework, content production is tailored to specific linguistic, cultural, and political settings, enabling the broadcaster to resonate with local expectations while maintaining a global outlook[1]. Such selectivity indicates that audience targeting is not neutral, but rather structured around strategic considerations related to relevance, accessibility, and influence.

At a broader level, The BBC operates as a key instrument of international communication, contributing to the circulation of information across borders and the formation of global public discourse. Its role extends beyond news provision, encompassing the capacity to shape perceptions, frame international issues, and foster dialogue within and across societies[2]. Although formally committed to editorial independence, its activities intersect with broader dynamics of public diplomacy, as credibility and trust enhance its capacity to influence foreign audiences. In this regard, its effectiveness lies less in overt persuasion than in its reputation for reliability, which enables it to function as a reference point in environment affected by censorship or misinformation. The World Service can be understood as an influential actor in the global media sphere, operating at the intersection of journalism, communication, and international influence[3].

III- Funding, Governance, and Editorial Independence

The Financial organization of the BBC World Service relies on a hybrid structure that combines public financing with elements of governmental support, reflecting both its domestic anchoring and international mission. Its resources are mainly derived from the licence fee, supplemented by targeted government contributions[4], as well as limited commercial activities that remain carefully regulated. This configuration emerged from a significant institutional shift, whereby direct government funding was replaced by licence fee financing, redefining the relationship between the broadcaster and the state[5]. Despite this adjustment, financial dependence has not been entirely eliminated, as strategic priorities and external funding arrangements continue to shape operational capacity. Meanwhile, budgetary constraints and efficiency programmes have imposed reductions in

[1] Marie Gillespie, "BBC Arabic, Social Media and Citizen Production: An Experiment in Digital Democracy before the Arab Spring," *Theory, Culture & Society* 30, no. 4 (2013), p. 92.
[2] British Broadcasting Corporation, *Performance Review*, *Op. cit.*, p. 44.
[3] British Broadcasting Corporation, *BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25* (London: BBC, 2025), p. 6.
[4] National Audit Office, *The BBC World Service's Savings Programmes*, HC 1382 (London: NAO, 2025), p. 11.
[5] Grahame Danby and Gavin Thompson, *BBC World Service*, SN/HA/5969 (London: House of Commons Library, 2011), p. 1.

services and restructuring measures[1], illustrating how financial pressures can influence the scope and the direction of international broadcasting. The funding model reflects a delicate balance between sustainability, public accountability, and political sensitivity[2].

Alongside its financial framework, the BBC World Service operates under a set of institutional safeguards designed to preserve editorial autonomy and ensure credibility. Editorial independence is institutionally embedded within governance structures and reinforced by detailed internal guidelines that regulate content production, decision-making processes, and professional conduct[3]. These structures establish clear boundaries against external interference, requiring that editorial judgments remain insulated from political or financial influence[4]. In effect, this autonomy is maintained through structured oversight procedures, including internal review systems that address complex or sensitive issues[5]. Nonetheless, independence is not absolute, as it remains linked to the conditions under which funding is secured and managed. The relationship between financial arrangements and editorial authority highlights an inherent tension, where the preservation of impartiality depends on maintaining sufficient distance from those who provide resources, while still fulfilling broader institutional objectives.

The interaction between governance and funding inevitably situates the BBC World Service within a broader environment shaped by political expectations and strategic interests. As an internationally recognised broadcaster, it occupies a position that intersects with national influence and global communication, which exposes it to various forms of pressure, both direct and indirect[6]. Government priorities, diplomatic considerations, and debates surrounding public expenditure contribute to an ongoing negotiation over its role and orientation. In certain contexts, its activities align with wider efforts to project national presence abroad, reinforcing its function as a vector of soft power while simultaneously

[1] British Broadcasting Corporation, *BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24* (London: BBC, 2024), p. 12.
[2] International Broadcasting Trust, *Submission from the International Broadcasting Trust to the Future Funding of the BBC World Service* (London: IBT, 2024), p. 2.
[3] British Broadcasting Corporation, *The BBC's Editorial Standards* (London: BBC, 2019) , pp. 1–12.
[4] BBC Trust, *Protecting and Enhancing the BBC's Independence in the Next Charter: BBC Trust Proposals* (London: BBC Trust, 2016), p. 2.
[5] Phil Ramsey, "BBC Radio and Public Value: The Governance of Public Service Radio in the United Kingdom," *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 15, no. 1 (2017), p. 91.
[6] Giles Winn, *Global Reach, National Impact: The Soft Power Impact of the BBC World Service to the UK* (London: Institute for Global Prosperity, University College London, 2025), p. 4.

raising questions about neutrality[1]. Financial oversight mechanisms and performance evaluations further reinforce this dynamic, as decisions concerning resource allocation can indirectly affect editorial priorities. As such, the notion of independence must be understood as contingent rather than fixed, shaped by a continuous interplay between institutional safeguards, financial realities, and political environments[2].

Subsection Two: The BBC and Conflict Reporting

The coverage of armed conflicts represents a central and particularly demanding dimension of the BBC's journalistic activity. Reporting in such contexts requires the application of established editorial standards while responding to complex political, ethical, and operational constraints[3]. This section examines how these challenges are reflected in the BBC's editorial practices, its evolution over time, and its broader role in the international media landscape.

1- Editorial Policies and Professional norms

Accuracy is widely regarded as the cornerstone of journalistic practice, yet its application becomes especially complex in conflict circumstances where access to reliable information is often restricted. Reports frequently operate with limited verification channels, relying on sources that may be partial, strategic, or difficult to corroborate[4]. Under such conditions, balance cannot be reduced to an equal distribution of viewpoints; instead, it involves assigning appropriate weight to competing claims based on available evidence. Coverage of the Arab spring, for instance, revealed how certain contexts received disproportionate attention while others remained marginal, illustrating the difficulty of maintaining both factual precision and representational diversity[5]. These constraints inevitably shape how events are framed, as editorial choices about inclusion, emphasis, and narrative structure influence audience interpretation. Thus, accuracy and balance remain fundamental ideals,

[1] Martin Scott, Kate Wright, and Mel Bunce, *The State of Humanitarian Journalism* (Norwich, UK: University of East Anglia, 2018), p. 12.
[2] Ramsey, *Op. cit.*, pp. 89–90.
[3] Oliver Boyd-Barrett, "Judith Miller, the New York Times, and the Propaganda for War in Iraq," in Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime, ed. Stuart Allan and Barbie Zelizer (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.1-39.
[4] Edward Mortimer, *A BBC Trust Report on the Impartiality and Accuracy of the BBC's Coverage of the Events Known as the "Arab Spring"* (London: BBC Trust, 2012), p. 86.
[5] Loughborough University Communication Research Centre, *A BBC Trust Report on the Impartiality and Accuracy of the BBC's Coverage of the Events Known as the "Arab Spring": Content Analysis*, Content Analysis Report (Loughborough: Loughborough University, 2012), pp. 37–38.

but their realization depends on continuous editorial judgment in place of fixed procedures[1].

Impartiality constitutes another central pillar of editorial practice, especially within institutions that emphasize independence from political and external pressures. Rather, than implying strict neutrality, it is generally understood as a commitment to reasoned and evidence-based reporting, where perspectives are evaluated according to their credibility and relevance. This approach often described as"dual impartiality", acknowledges that not all viewpoints carry equal validity[2]. Nonetheless, maintaining such a standard has become increasingly challenging in highly polarized environments, where competing narratives seek validation and audiences scrutinize perceived bias more rigorously. The expansion of digital platforms has further complicated this landscape, as journalistic authority is now negotiated within interactive and fragmented public spheres. Editorial decisions, from selecting contributors to shaping debates, play a significant role in constructing what appears as balanced coverage[3]. Impartiality continues to serve as a guiding norm; its application depends on the specific context and remains open to ongoing debate. Conflict reporting also unfolds, under a distinct set of practical and ethical constraints that directly influence editorial conduct. Journalists commonly face security risks, restricted mobility, and environments saturated with propaganda or misinformation, all of which limit their capacity to provide comprehensive accounts[4]. Within such circumstances, professional responsibility extends beyond information delivery to include minimizing harm, avoiding the reproduction of inflammatory narratives, and exercising caution in the use of language[5]. Editorial guidelines encourage distancing reporting from the terminology of conflict actors in order to reduce the risk of amplification or alignment. Meanwhile, decisions about depicting violence and human suffering require careful consideration, balancing the need to inform with respect for the dignity of those affected. These constraints underscore that

[1]Karin Wahl-Jorgensen et al., "Rethinking Balance and Impartiality in Journalism? How the BBC Attempted and Failed to Change the Paradigm," *Journalism* 18, no. 7 (2017), pp. 781–782.
[2]Matt Walsh, "Constructing Impartiality in a Polarised News Environment: An Analysis of BBC Question Time Contributors 2014-2024," *Journalism* (London), advance online publication (2024), pp. 1–2
[3] Valérie Bélair-Gagnon, "Revisiting Impartiality: Social Media and Journalism at the BBC," *Symbolic Interaction* (Yale Law School) 36, no. 4 (2013), p. 1.
[4] Peter Cole-Adams, "Reporting War and Conflict," *Asia Pacific Media Educator* (Wollongong, Australia), no. 7 (1999), pp. 103–106.
[5]Peter Du Toit, *Handbook: A Conflict Sensitive Approach to Reporting on Conflict and Violent Extremism* (Makhanda, South Africa: Internews / Rhodes University, 2019), p. 77.

neutrality in its pure form is difficult to sustain, making editorial discretion and ethical awareness essential components of journalistic practice in conflict zones[1].

2- Historical Evolution of Conflict Coverage

The early development of conflict reporting was shaped by established journalistic conventions emphasizing objectivity, neutrality, and reliance on authoritative sources. News coverage of wars tended to privilege official narratives, with journalists frequently drawing on governmental and military perspectives as primary sources of information[2]. This orientation contributed to a structured and institutionalized form of reporting in which accuracy and balance were understood as core professional obligations[3]. Even so, such practices often restricted the diversity of perspectives presented in the media, reinforcing a narrow interpretation of events aligned with dominant actors. As demonstrated in studies of traditional war journalism, this model prioritized factual transmission while paying comparatively less attention to alternative viewpoints. In light of this consideration, early conflict coverage reflected both the professionalization of journalism and its integration within existing political and institutional structures.

Subsequent critiques have challenged the assumption that such reporting practices achieve genuine neutrality, revealing the persistence of structural biases and the influence of dominant political frameworks. Analysis of media institutions, including the BBC, indicate that coverage has regularly unfolded within what has been described as a ‘consensus ‘model, where the boundaries of debate remain firmly aligned with elite perspectives. Research on programmes such as Panorama demonstrates how conflict narratives have historically reflected prevailing governmental positions, thereby constraining the variety of viewpoints presented to audiences. This has led scholars to question whether the ideal of impartiality can be fully realized in practice, given the interplay among media organizations and broader political environments. Furthermore, the relationship between journalism and state interests has evolved from open censorship toward more subtle forms of media management, in which guidance and access shape reporting practices without

[1]Philip Biver, "Journalism in Times of War and Crisis: What Does It Take to Be a War Correspondent?" (Dissertation, Lycée Ermesinde, Mersch, Luxembourg, 2022), pp. 1–43.
[2] Jad Melki, "The Interplay of Politics, Economics and Culture in Foreign News Coverage," *Media, War & Conflict* (London) 7, no. 2 (2014), p. 167.
[3] Track Changes, ed., *Violence and Conflict Reporting: The Media Debates Its Role*, Proceedings of the Regional Conference of Senior Editors (New Delhi: Zubaan Books, 2015), p. 9.

explicit restriction[1]. These critiques underscore the contested nature of objectivity and the ongoing tensions inherent in conflict reporting. Emerging patterns reveal a shift toward progressively interpretative and strategically oriented forms of conflict coverage. Rather than limiting their role to the transmission of information, media organizations now participate more actively in the construction of narratives, shaping how conflicts are perceived by global audiences. The emergence of framing analysis has highlighted the ways in which journalists select and emphasize particular aspects of events, which in turn influencing perceptions of responsibility, victimhood, and legitimacy[2]. In parallel, the distinction between war journalism and peace journalism has become a central analytical framework, revealing the continued predominance of conflict oriented narratives despite normative calls for more context sensitive reporting. Alongside these transformations, the expansion of digital platforms has introduced new dynamics, enabling a wider circulation of information while also intensifying concerns related to misinformation and strategic communication[3]. In contemporary environment, media function not simply as observers but also as actors within the informational dimension of conflict, contributing to broader processes of influence and persuasion[4].

3-The BBC as an Actor of Media Diplomacy

Far from being a neutral channel of information, the BBC operates as a deliberate architect of international narratives, shaping the ways in which events are interpreted and understood. Coverage is not an objective reflection of reality but involves processes of selection, emphasis, and contextualization that influence how conflicts are perceived[5]. By prioritizing certain perspectives, voices, and explanatory frameworks, international broadcasting participates in structuring public discourse. Such practices are intrinsically tied to agenda-setting dynamics, where media outlets guide attention toward particular

[1] David Adrian McQueen, "BBC TV's Panorama, Conflict Coverage and the 'Westminster Consensus'" (PhD diss., Bournemouth University, Bournemouth, UK, 2010), p. 119.
[2] Avneet Kaur and Arnav Arora, "Beyond the Battlefield: Framing Analysis of Media Coverage in Conflict Reporting," *arXiv Preprint* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2025), p. 1.
[3] Daniel Pak, "Conflict Framing: Content Analysis of Peace and War Journalism in Coverage of the Russia-Ukraine War," *American Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* (Chicago, IL) 10, no. 1 (2024), p. 95.
[4] Marija Milasinovic, "Media and Military from the First Conflict to the 'War on Terror'," in *Security Challenges of Modern Society: Dilemmas and Implications*, ed. Dejan Dasic (Belgrade: University 'Union-Nikola Tesla', 2022), p. 182.
[5] Ramazn Safa and Mohamed Barati, "CNN and BBC Shaping the Opinions in Different Countries: A Multi-Dimensional Descriptive Commentary Related to Security, Military and Diplomacy," *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences* (Varanasi, India) 9, no. 6 (2024), p. 261.

issues while framing their meaning within broader political and cultural assumptions[1]. The influence of the BBC on international audiences relies not only on its global reach but also on the credibility it has cultivated across different regions[2]. Its reputation for reliability and editorial independence strengthens audience trust, allowing its content to circulate widely and resonate with diverse publics. This connection is further reinforced by its engagement in multiple languages and its ability to adapt content to varied cultural contexts, fostering a sense of familiarity and accessibility. These characteristics position the broadcaster as more than a source of news, enabling it to function as a conduit of cultural exchange that subtly shapes perceptions while maintaining an appearance of neutrality.

Within the broader field of international relations, the BBC can be regarded as an actor in media diplomacy, contributing to the projection of national values and perspectives beyond formal diplomatic channels. Its activities align with wider transformations in public diplomacy, where communication platforms play a central role in influencing global opinion and reinforcing a country image abroad[3]. By presenting events through particular interpretative lenses and sustaining a consistent presence in global information flows, it participates in shaping how international developments are perceived[4]. This role reflects a shift toward more indirect forms of influence, where credibility, cultural resonance, and sustained engagement become key instruments in the construction of global perceptions[5].

Subsection Three: Historical Context of the studied Conflicts

Media coverage does not come out of nowhere. To understand how international broadcasters frame violence, assign responsibility, or construct victimhood, it is necessary to engage with the historical depth of the conflicts they report on. The two cases examined in this study, the Russian–Ukrainian war and the Gaza conflict, share a common feature that any rigorous media analysis cannot ignore: neither began when the cameras arrived. Both reflect structural tensions built up over decades, shaped by unresolved territorial

[1] Filiz Coban, "The Role of the Media in International Relations: From the CNN Effect to the Al-Jazeera Effect," *Journal of International Relations and Foreign Policy* (Madison, WI) 4, no. 2 (2016), pp. 45–46.
[2]Marie Gillespie et al., *Understanding the Changing Cultural Value of the BBC World Service and the British Council*, UK Cultural Value Project (Swindon, UK: Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2014), p. 5.
[3] James Pamment, *New Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century: A Comparative Study of Policy and Practice*, Routledge New Diplomacy Studies (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 1.
[4] Gary D. Rawnsley, "Introduction to 'International Broadcasting and Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century'," *Media and Communication* (Lisbon) 4, no. 2 (2016), p. 42.
[5] Nicholas J. Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past*, CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy (Los Angeles, CA: Figueroa Press, 2009), p. 16.

disputes, colonial legacies, and competing geopolitical interests that long predate their respective escalations. Tracing these historical trajectories is not just a preliminary step in providing context, but an essential analytical requirement. Without this grounding, the framing choices made by broadcasters such as the BBC can appear arbitrary, when in reality they are shaped by the weight of history itself.

I- *Russia-Ukraine War: Historical Background*

To speak of the Russia-Ukraine War as a conflict born in 2014, or even in the dramatic weeks of February 2022, is to mistake the eruption for the volcano. The violence that has come to define contemporary European security did not emerge from a historical vacuum; it was quietly assembled over decades, through the unresolved tensions of imperial dissolution, the contested promises of a post-Cold War order, and the gradual hardening of a geopolitical fault line that runs across the heart of Eastern Europe[1]. What the World witnessed in 2022 was not the beginning of a crisis but the most violent chapter in a much longer story. Ukraine has long occupied the precarious position of a "borderland"[2]. Understanding the BBC's framing of the 2022 invasion requires that we first trace this conflict back to its structural origins, identifying the precise moments where political friction hardened into armed confrontation and where regional instability escalated into a global security emergency.

1- Post-Soviet Legacies and Geopolitical Fault Lines:

The roots of the contemporary conflict are inseparable from the "unbalanced" conclusion of the Cold War and the subsequent failure to establish settled inclusive security architecture across the European continent. Following Ukraine independence in 1991, the newly sovereign state emerged not as a stable nation-state with clearly defined allegiances, but as a contested borderland caught between two divergent normative and strategic orders: the expanding Euro-Atlantic framework of NATO and the EU on one side, and the Russian Federation's perception of its post-Soviet sphere of strategic interest on the other. Domestically, this external geopolitical split found its mirror image in a persistent internal cleavage between what Richard Sakwa identifies as "monist" visions of a centralized,

[1]Loredana Maria Simionov, "BOOK REVIEW: Andrew Wilson, Ukraine Crisis – What It Means for the West," *Eastern Journal of European Studies* (Iași, Romania) 6, no. 2 (2015), p. 189.
[2] Peter Rutland, 'Book Review: Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands by Richard Sakwa', *LSE Book Review*, 2015, p. 1.

unitary national identity and "pluralist" models that advocated recognition of the country's regional, linguistic, and cultural diversity, especially in the eastern and southern regions[1].

From a realist standpoint, John Mearsheimer argues that the "triple package" of western policies, NATO enlargement, EU expansion, and sustained democracy promotion, compounded these internal tensions by systematically ignoring Russia's fundamental perception of Ukraine as a vital strategic buffer state whose orientation toward the West constituted an existential threat to Russian security. The crisis is not a sudden rupture in European stability; it is the systemic manifestation of long-term structural contradictions, where the logic of liberal institutionalism fundamentally collided with the enduring imperatives of balance-of-power politics[2].

2- The 2014 Escalation and the Transformation of Political Tensions into Armed conflict:

The year of 2014 constitutes the critical juncture at which decades of accumulated structural tension finally crystallized into large-scale political violence and armed confrontation. The immediate catalyst was President Viktor Yankovych's decision in November 2013 to suspend negotiations over an Association Agreement with the EU, a reversal widely interpreted as the product of Russian pressure, which ignited the Euro-maiden protests in Kyiv[3]. The subsequent violent collapse of the Yankovych government in February 2014 exposed the profound interpretative divide that would be come to define the entire conflict: Western governments framed the transition as a popular democratic revolution, while Moscow characterized it as an illegal coup orchestrated with Western complicity, a reading that provided the political justification for its immediate military response[4]. Russia'' annexation of Crimea and its support for the separatist insurgence in Donetsk and Luhansk, where pro-Russian factions proclaimed the independent Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DNR and LNR), marked the definitive transformation of political tension into Kinetic warfare. While dominant Western narratives attributed the insurgency primarily to direct Russian military involvement, a more forensically grounded interpretation maintains that the Donbas conflict possessed significant local roots,

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 4, 7.
[2] John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs* 93 (October 2014), pp. 1, 11.
[3] Simionov, *Op. cit.*, p. 190.
[4] Mearsheimer, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

reflecting genuine regional pro-Russian sympathies that predated 2014 before later receiving substantial and decisive external Russian support[1]. This period inaugurated the "hybrid war" paradigm, introduced an era of international sanctions, and established a frozen frontline that would simmer for eight years until the negotiated settlements of the Minsk Agreements ultimately proved insufficient to contain the underlying structural pressures[2].

3- The 2022 Escalation: From Containment Collapse to Global Framing Transformation

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 represents the definitive collapse of the post-2014 containment framework and the transition of the conflict from a localized separatist struggle in eastern Ukraine to a systemic regional war with profound implications for the international order[3]. Where the 2014 crisis had unfolded within a destabilization, the 2022 invasion dispensed with strategic ambiguity entirely, confronting the international community with a conventional military assault on a sovereign European state. The consequences for global media coverage were immediate and transformative: what had previously been a geopolitically complex and narratively contested conflict was reframed almost universally as an act of imperial aggression, shifting the dominant discourse from discussions of Ukrainian internal pluralism and regional secessionism to a broader register of existential threat, humanitarian catastrophe, and civilisational confrontation. It is precisely this discursive transformation that renders the first two months of the 2022 invasion the most analytical productive window for examining media representation. This period, marked by the initial shock of the invasion, the rapid internationalization of the conflict, and an unprecedented mobilization of Western media framing, constitutes the empirical core of the present study. Analysing the BBC's coverage during this window offers a privileged lens through which to examine how a broadcaster of global reach and institutional authority navigated the representational challenges posed by a conflict that had, in matter of days, moved from the European periphery to the very center of global security consciousness.

[1] Ivan Katchanovski, "The Separatist Conflict in Donbas: A Violent Break-Up of Ukraine?" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, October 16, 2014), p. 2.
[2] Rutland, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.
[3]Simionov, *Op. cit.*, p. 192.

II- The Zionist War on *Gaza*

To understand the catastrophic escalation of October 2023, one must resist the temptation to treat it as a sudden rupture. The fighting that engulfed Gaza, and reverberated across the globe, did not emerge from isolation. It surfaced from the depths of a colonial wound that had been accumulating for over a century, through successive waves of dispossession, political obstruction, and deliberate economic suffocation. What the world witnessed in the autumn of 2023 was not the beginning of a conflict, but the latest and most devastating chapter in a protected struggle whose origins lie in the early twentieth century. Any scholarly inquiry into media framing, humanitarian representation, or the international politics of the war on Gaza must instead begin not with the moment the cameras turned on, but with the structural and historical conditions that made such a moment all but inevitable.

1- Historical and Structural foundations:

The contemporary situation in Gaza is inseparable from a century-long trajectory of settler-colonial expansion and the progressive dispossession of the indigenous Palestinian populations. Rashid Khalidi frames this arc not as an ordinary national rivalry between comparable adversaries, but as a sequence of deliberate" declarations of war" by external powers, namely imperial patrons that repeatedly subordinated Palestinian aspirations to foreign strategic calculations. From the Balfour Declaration of 1917 through to the military operations of the twenty-first century, Palestinian claims to end colonization were consistently defined the legitimacy granted to other national movements; theirs was, structurally, a people denied the right to narrate their own political existence[1]. What results from this analysis are not only territorial disputes, but a foundational asymmetry embedded in the international architecture since the era of the British mandate, and an asymmetry whose unresolved legacy constitutes the structural substratum beneath every subsequent phase of the conflict.

2- The 2007 Rupture Blockade and Deliberate Stagnation:

A decisive inflection point arrived in 2007, when Hamas consolidated governing authority over the Gaza Strip following a violent political rupture with Fatah movement, prompting Israel and Egypt to impose a sweeping closure regime by land, sea, and air. The economic

[1] Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017* (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2020), pp. 374–375.

consequences of this encirclement were not incidental but architecturally deliberate. The concept of "de-development" captures a phenomenon qualitatively distinct from ordinary underdevelopment: not a failure to grow, but an active dismantling of the productive foundations, namely land, capital, labour and infrastructure that an economy would otherwise mobilise for internal regeneration. Under this framework, Gaza's economy was not merely stalled; it was methodically reduced to a condition of permanent dependency on humanitarian transfers and external remittances[1]. The territory became, in the analytical vocabulary of multiple observers, an "open-air prison", in which the closure mechanism operated as a form of collective punishment imposed on an entire civilian population. The cumulative effect was a society pushed to the outer limits of viability, a state of chronic institutional collapse from which was structurally precluded[2].

Between the imposition of the blockade in 2007 and the large-scale escalation of October2023, Gaza underwent successive cycles of military confrontation, most notably during the wars of 2008-2009, 2014, and the escalation of 2021. These recurrent offensives resulted in extensive civilian casualties, widespread infrastructural destruction, and repeated interruptions of reconstruction processes, further deepening the enclave's humanitarian and economic fragility. Rather than constituting isolated episodes of violence, these successive wars progressively consolidated a condition of structural containment and permanent crisis, in which destruction and reconstruction became cyclical realities. In this context, several scholars have argued that Gaza evolved into a highly controlled and enclosed space shaped by mechanisms of blockade, surveillance, and restricted mobility, transforming the territory into a highly enclosed and controlled space characterized by severe restrictions on mobility, sovereignty, and economic autonomy, frequently described in critical scholarship as "the biggest prison on earth"[3]. These cumulative dynamics not only intensified the humanitarian deterioration of Gaza but also contributed to the growing internationalization and mediatisation of the Palestinian question long before the events of October 2023.

[1] Sara Roy, "The Gaza Strip: A Case of Economic De-Development," *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Berkeley, CA) 17, no. 1 (1987), pp. 56–57.
[2] Norman G. Finkelstein, *Gaza: An Inquest Into Its Martyrdom* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2018), p. 14.
[3] Ilan Pappé, *The Biggest Prison on Earth: A History of the Occupied Territories* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2017), pp. 1–32.

3- Geopolitical Regionalisation and the Multiplication of Fronts:

Beyond its territorial boundaries, the Gaza Strip gradually evolved into the epicentre of a far broader regional confrontation, a node within an interlocking network of armed actors and competing strategic projects. The emergence of what has been termed an "axis of resistance", stretching from Tehran through Damascus, Beirut, and Sana'a, is mapped as a configuration for whom the Palestinian cause served simultaneously as a legitimising narrative and an operational pretext for power projection. The chronic volatility of the enclave meant that any significant escalation risked activating this wider architecture, drawing in Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hothi forces in Yemen, and various militias across Iraq and Syria. The diplomatic implications were no less consequential: the persistent absence of a credible pathway toward Palestinian statehood allowed the conflict to become progressively internationalized; transforming what might have remained a localised territorial contest into a theatre where the competing strategic imperatives of Iran, Israel, and the United States converged and clashed[1]. Gaza ceased to be simply a humanitarian emergency and became a geopolitical centre of tension.

4- Systematic Escalation and the Intensification of Global Attention after October 2023:

The events of 7 October 2023 constituted something fundamentally different from earlier cycles of violence. The Hamas operation exposed major failures in Israel's deterrence posture and security architecture, forcing a wholesale reassessment of strategic doctrine. Yet the reverberations extended far beyond the military dimension. The scale of the ensuring humanitarian catastrophe, combined with the activation of multi-front hostilities, precipitated a global diplomatic crisis and an unprecedented intensification of international media scrutiny[2]. The conflict ceased to be a regional affair managed at the margins of global attention and became a central axis of world politics, reshaping alliances, fracturing international institutions, and progressively foreclosing the prospects for a negotiated settlement[3]. It is precisely this moment, this convergence of systemic military collapse, humanitarian crisis, and global narrative explosion that the present study selects as its analytical lens. Examining the BBC's coverage in the immediate aftermath of October

[1] Julien Barnes-Dacey, Cinzia Bianco, and Hugh Lovatt, *The Gaza Crisis: Mapping the Middle East's Shifting Battle Lines*, Policy Brief / Special Report (Berlin: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2024), pp. 1–15.
[2] Yaron Katz, "Regional Dynamics and Global Implications of the War in Gaza," *European Academic Research* (Bucharest, Romania) 13, no. 2 (2025), p. 142.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

2023 offers a uniquely revealing aperture into how major international broadcasters negotiate the representation of suffering, assign or deflect responsibility, and construct meaning in conditions of acute geopolitical volatility.

Results and Findings of the second Part:

To summarize this section, the analysis has yielded the following findings:

- In conflict situations, media communication shifts from information transmission to strategic narrative construction, where framing and agenda-setting dynamics actively shape public understanding, political visibility, and the conditions under which diplomatic decisions are made.
- Framing and agenda-setting operate as structurally unequal processes in conflict reporting, determining which events receive international attention, how responsibility is attributed, and whose suffering is rendered visible or marginal.
- Neutrality and objectivity function as professional conventions rather than achievable conditions, as structural pressures, political alignments, and institutional environments impose limits on journalistic autonomy that cannot be fully overcome through editorial guidelines alone.
- The BBC operates as a hybrid institution combining public service broadcasting with global media influence, whose credibility and reach enable it to shape international perceptions of conflict while remaining embedded within broader UK public diplomacy interests.
- Both conflicts under study carry deep structural and historical roots that long predate their respective media escalations, and any analysis of their coverage must account for this historical depth to avoid treating framing choices as arbitrary rather than structurally conditioned.

Chapter three: Empirical Study- Comparative Content Analysis

Section One: Quantitative Analysis of BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts

This study adopts a mixed categorical content analysis design, combining quantitative coding with qualitative interpretative analysis. The quantitative phase operationalized a structured coding framework covering two main dimensions. The first is form-related categories, which include journalistic genre, publication length, and visual/multimedia framing. The second is content-related categories, encompassing nature of topics, dominant framing, representation of actors and victims, attribution of responsibility, evaluative orientation, sources and voices, news priority, diplomatic purpose, and the broader media and information environment.

Building on these results, the qualitative phase moves beyond frequency-based interpretation to examine the relational and structural dimensions of media discourse; Rather than analyzing each category in isolation, the study adopts an integrated and comparative approach in order to identify patterns of meaning construction across the two conflict cases. This approach allows for the examination of how different dimensions of discourse interaction of producing specific representational outcomes.

Subsection One: Form-Related Categories

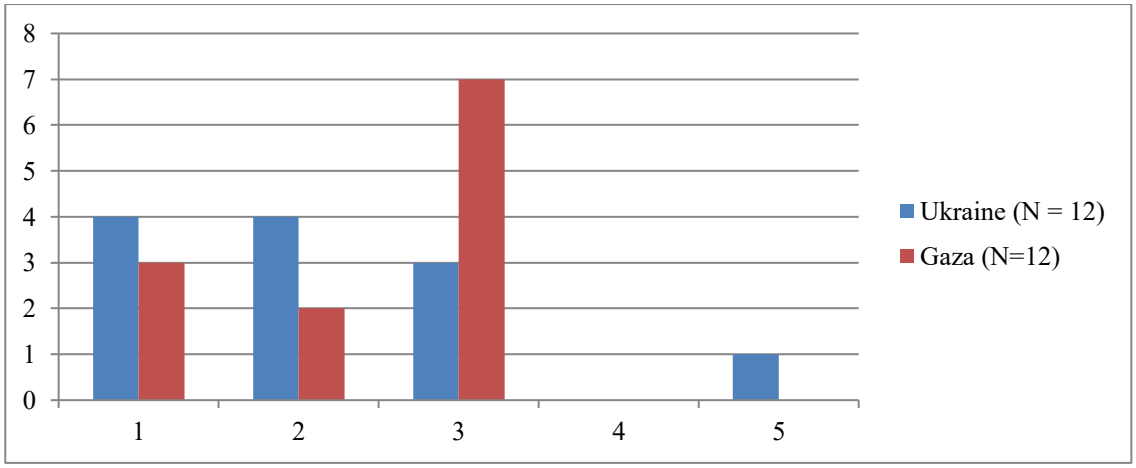
1) Journalistic genre category:

Table3.1: *Distribution of journalistic genres in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts (based on a sample of 24 items).*

Journalistic Genre	**Ukraine** (n = 12)	**Ukraine (%)**	**Gaza** (n=12)	**Gaza(%)**
News article	4	33.3%	3	25%
Analytical report	4	33.3%	2	16.7%
Live coverage	3	25%	7	58.3%
Interview / statement	0	0%	0	0%
Editorial / fact-check	1	8.3%	0	0%
Total	12	100%	12	100%

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.1: Distribution of Journalistic Genres in BBC Coverage: A Comparative Analysis of the Ukraine (2022) and Gaza (2023) Samples.



Reading of the Table 3.1:

Table 3.1 presents the distribution of journalistic genres used in BBC coverage of both the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts, based on a sample of 12 articles for each case. The results show that in the Ukraine case, Genre 1 and Genre 2 are equally dominant, each accounting for 33.3% of the sample, indicating a relatively balanced use of different journalistic formats, mainly between news articles and statement-based reporting. In contrast, the Gaza coverage is dominated by Genre 3, which represents 58.3% of the sample, suggesting a stronger reliance on analytical or extended reporting formats compared to the Ukraine case. Other genres appear with significantly lower frequencies, while Genre 4 is absent in both cases. Genre 5 appears only in the Ukraine sample (8.3%) and is completely absent in the Gaza coverage.

II). Publication Length Category

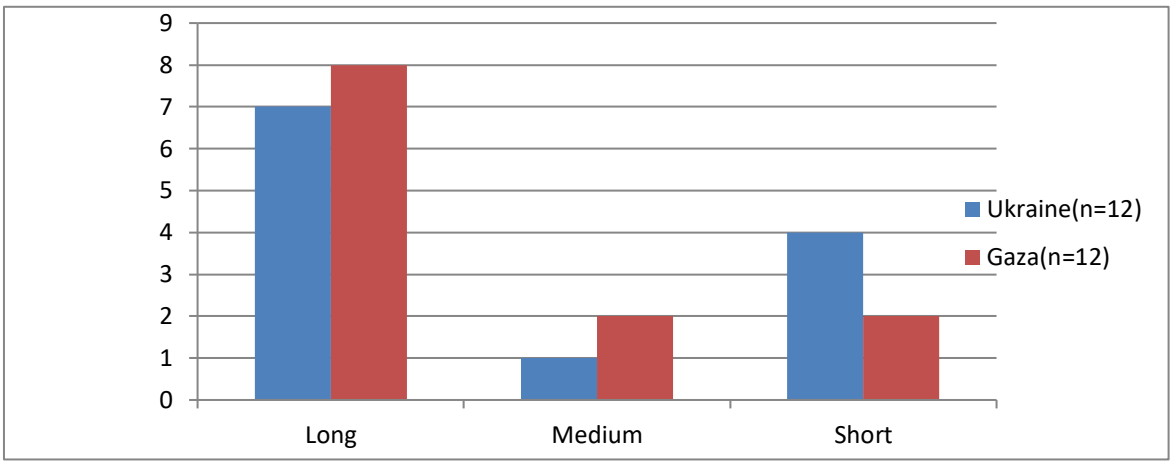
Table3.2: *Distribution of publication length categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.*

Length category	Ukraine (n=12)	Ukraine(%)	Gaza (n=12)	Gaza(%)
Long	7	58.3%	8	66.7%

Medium	1	8.3%	2	16.7%
Short	4	33.3%	2	16.7%
Total	12	100%	12	100%

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.2: *Comparative distribution of Publication length categories in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts (Bar Chart).*



Reading of the Table 3.2:

The table 3.2 shows the distribution of publication length categories in BBC coverage of both the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. The results show that the long-length category (Code 6) is the most dominant in both cases, accounting for 58.3% of the Ukraine sample and 66.7% of the Gaza sample. This indicates a general editorial preference for moderately detailed reporting across both conflict contexts. By comparison, the medium-length category (Code 7) appears with a relatively low frequency, particularly in the Ukraine sample (8.3%), while it is slightly more present in the Gaza coverage (16.7%). The short-length category (Code 8) shows a noticeable difference between the two cases, with a higher presence in the Ukraine coverage (33.3%) compared to Gaza (16.7%).

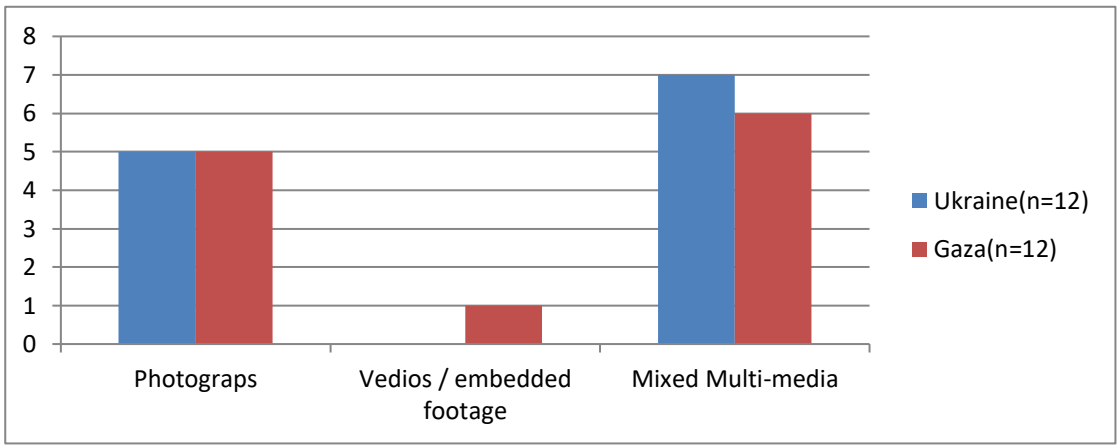
III). Visual / Multimedia framing Categories

Table3.3: *Distribution of visual / Multimedia categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.*

Visual/ MultiMedia category	Ukraine (n=12)	Ukraine(%)	Gaza (n=12)	Gaza(%)
Phtographs	**5**	**41.7%**	**5**	**41.7%**
Vedios / Embedded footage	**0**	**0%**	**1**	**8.3%**
Mixed MultiMedia	**7**	**58.3¨%**	**6**	**50%**
Total	**12**	**100%**	**12**	**100%**

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.3: *Comparative distribution of visual / Multimedia framing categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.*



Reading of the Table 3.3:

An examination of Table 3.3 shows a largely similar pattern in the distribution of visual / multimedia categories across BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. The use of photographs is identical in both samples, representing 41.7% of the total coverage in each case. Mixed multi-media appear as the most frequent category, accounting for 58.3% in the Ukraine coverage and 50% in the Gaza coverage. Videos / embedded footage are recorded only in the Gaza sample with 8.3%, while they are absent from the Ukraine coverage.

Subsection Two: Content-Related Categories

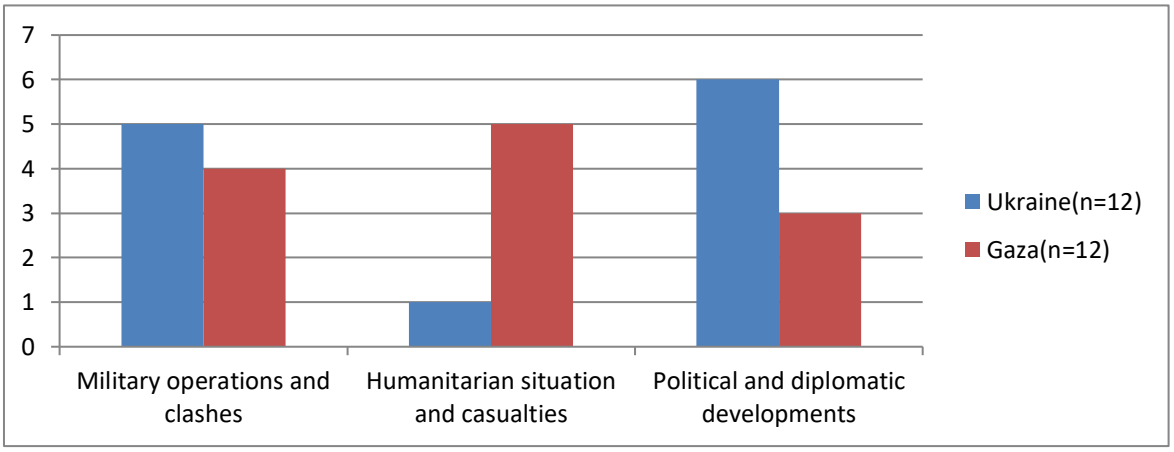
IV). Nature of the topic

Table3.4: *Distribution of Nature of the topic categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts*.

Nature of the topic category	**Ukraine (n=12)**	**Ukraine(%)**	**Gaza (n=12)**	**Gaza(%)**
Military operations and clashes	5	41.7%	4	33.3%
Humanitarian situation and casualties	1	8.3%	5	41.7%
Political and diplomatic developments	6	50%	3	25%
Total	12	100%	12	100%

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.4: *Comparative distribution of Nature of the topic categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.*



Reading of the Table 3.4:

The distribution of the Nature of the Topic Categories in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts shows clear differences in thematic emphasis across the two samples. In the Ukraine coverage, Political and diplomatic developments represent the most frequent category (50%), followed by Military operations and clashes (41.7%), while Humanitarian situation and casualties remain relatively limited (8.3%). In contrast, the Gaza coverage is

more oriented towards Humanitarian situation and casualties (41.7%), followed by Military operations and clashes (33.3%), whereas Political and diplomatic developments account for a smaller proportion (25%).

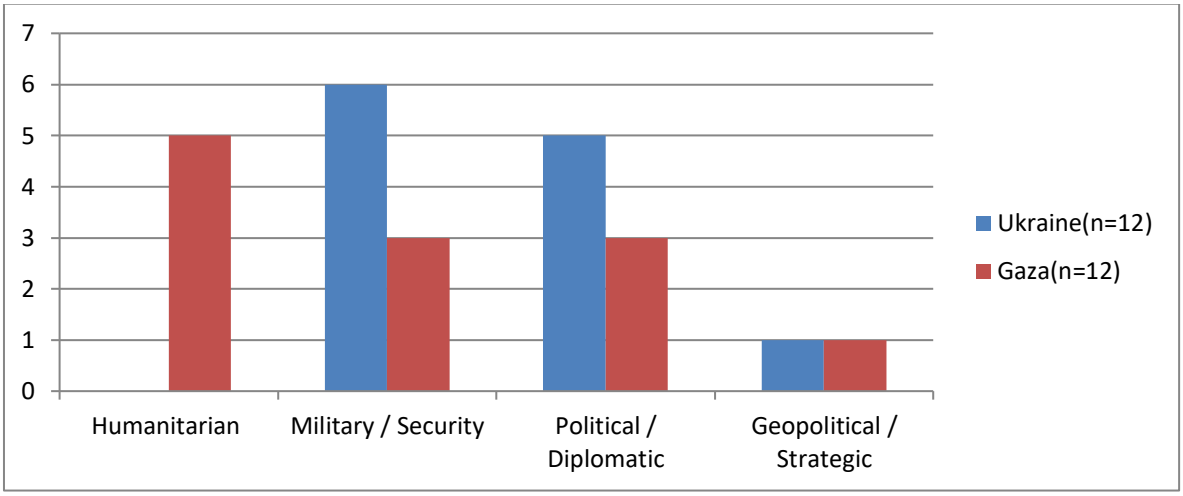
V). Dominant Frame Category

Table3.5: *Distribution of Dominant Frame Categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.*

Dominant Frame Category	Ukraine (n=12)	Ukraine(%)	Gaza (n=12)	Gaza(%)
Humanitarian	0	0%	5	41.7%
Military / Security	6	50%	3	25%
Political / Diplomatic	5	41.7%	3	25%
Geopolitical / Strategic	1	8.3%	1	8.3%
Total	12	100%	12	100%

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.5: *Comparative distribution of Dominant Frame categories in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.*



Reading of the Table 3.5:

Table 3.5 represents the distribution of dominant frame categories in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. In the Ukraine coverage, the Military / Security frame accounts for 50%, followed by the Political / Diplomatic frame at 41.7%, while the Geopolitical /

Strategic frame represents 8.3%. The Humanitarian frame is not present (0%). In the Gaza coverage, the Humanitarian frame accounts for 41.7%, followed by both the Military / Security and Political / Diplomatic frames at 25% each, while the Geopolitical / Strategic frame represents 8.3%.

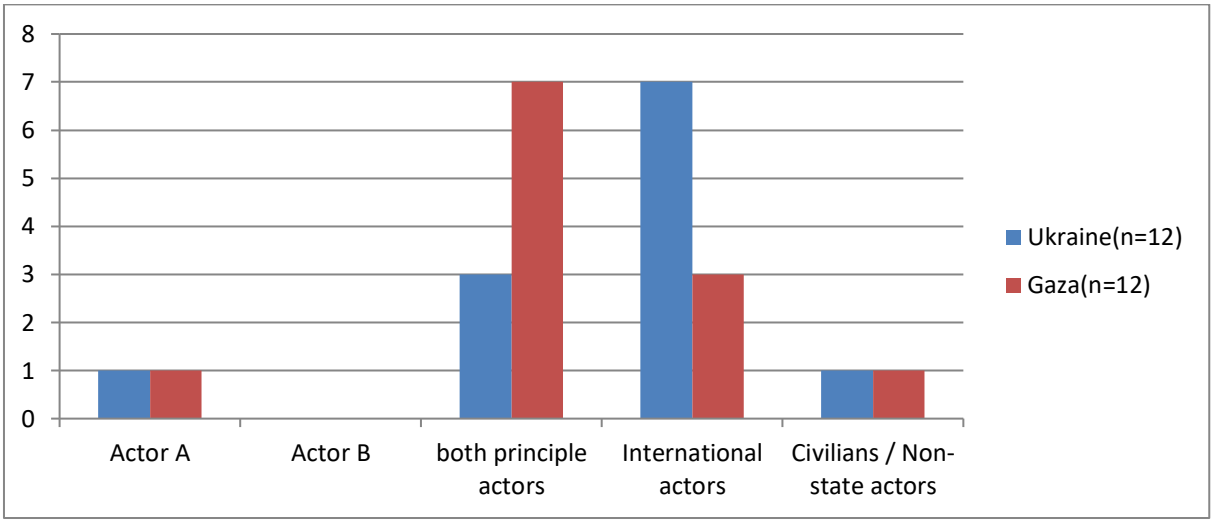
VI). Representation of Actors

Table 3.6: *Distribution of Actors representation in BBC's coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.*

Representation of Actors category	**Ukraine (n=12)**	**Ukraine(%)**	**Gaza (n=12)**	**Gaza(%)**
Actor A	1	8.3%	1	8.3%
Actor B	0	0%	0	0%
Both principle actors	3	25%	7	58.3%
International actors	7	58.3%	3	25%
Civilians / Non-state actors	1	8.3%	1	8.3%
Total	12	100%	12	100%

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.6: *Comparative distribution of Actors representation in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.*



Reading of the Table 3.6:

Table 3.6 demonstrates the distribution of actor representation in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. In the Ukraine coverage, International actors account for

58.3%, followed by both principal actors at 25%, while Actor A and Civilians / Non-state actors each represent 8.3%. Actor B is absent (0%). In the Gaza coverage, both principal actors account for 58.3%, followed by International actors at 25%, while Actor A and Civilians / Non-state actors each represent 8.3%. Actor B is also absent (0%).

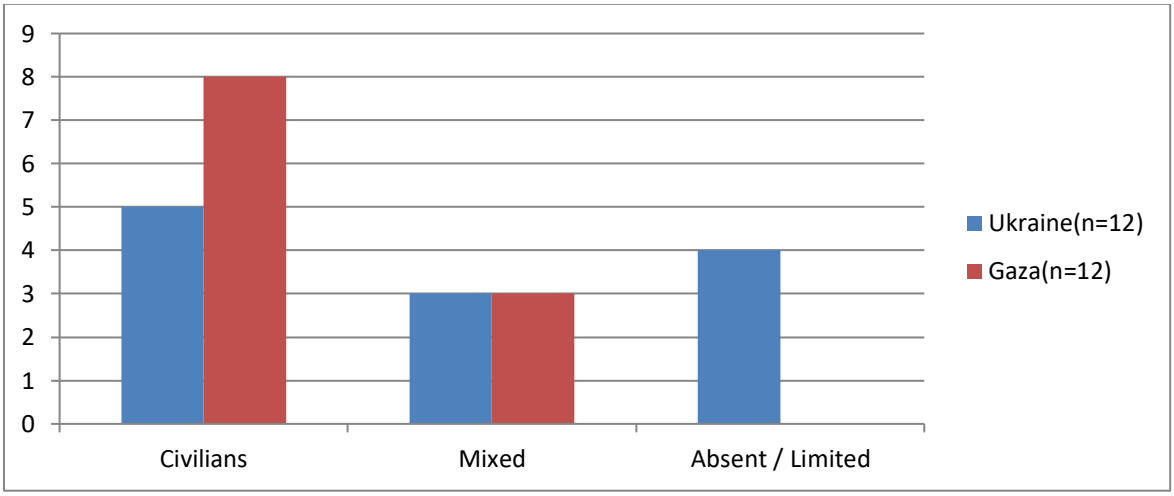
VII) Representations of Victims

Table3.7: *Distribution of Victims representations in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.*

Representations of Victims category	**Ukraine (n=12)**	**Ukraine(%)**	**Gaza (n=12)**	**Gaza(%)**
Civilians	5	41.7%	8	66.7%
Mixed	3	25%	3	25%
Absent / Limited	4	33.3%	0	0%
Total	12	100%	12	100%

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.7: *Comparative distribution of Victims representations in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.*



Reading of the Table 3.7:

Table 3.7 indicates the distribution of victims' representation in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. In the Ukraine coverage, Civilians account for 41.7%, followed by absent / Limited representation at 33.3%, while mixed (civilians + military)

represents 25%. In the Gaza coverage, Civilians represent 66.7%, followed by Mixed (civilians + military) at 25%, while Absent / Limited representation is not recorded (0%).

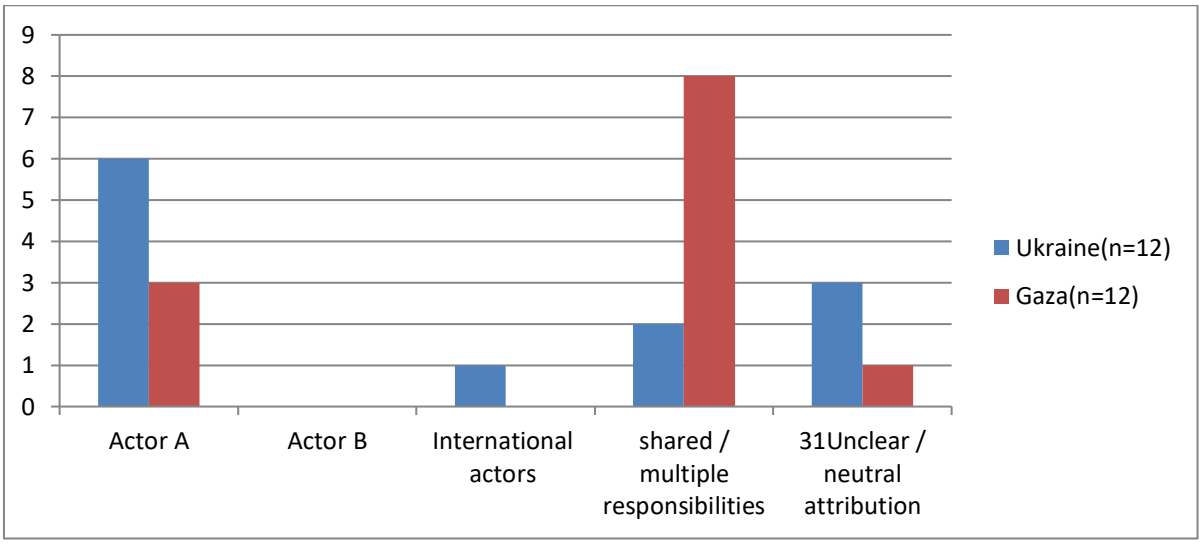
VIII). Attribution of Responsibility

Table3.8: *Distribution of responsibility attribution in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.*

Attribution of Responsibility category	**Ukraine (n=12)**	**Ukraine(%)**	**Gaza (n=12)**	**Gaza(%)**
Actor A	6	50%	3	25%
Actor B	0	0%	0	0%
International actors	1	8.3%	0	0%
shared / multiple responsibilities	2	16.7%	8	66.7%
31Unclear / neutral attribution	3	25%	1	8.3%
Total	12	100%	12	100%

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.8: *Distribution of responsibility attribution in BBC coverage of Ukraine and Gaza conflicts.*



Reading of the Table 3.8:

Table 3.8 presents the distribution of responsibility attribution in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. In the Ukraine case, responsibility attributed to Actor A accounts for 50% of the sample, followed by unclear or neutral attribution at 25%. Shared

or multiple responsibility represents 16.7%, while international actors account for 8.3%. No instances of responsibility attributed to Actor B are recorded.

In the Gaza case, shared or multiple responsibilities dominates, accounting for 66.7% of the sample. This is followed by attribution to Actor A at 25%, while unclear or neutral attribution represents 8.3%. No instances of responsibility attributed to Actor B or to international actors are observed.

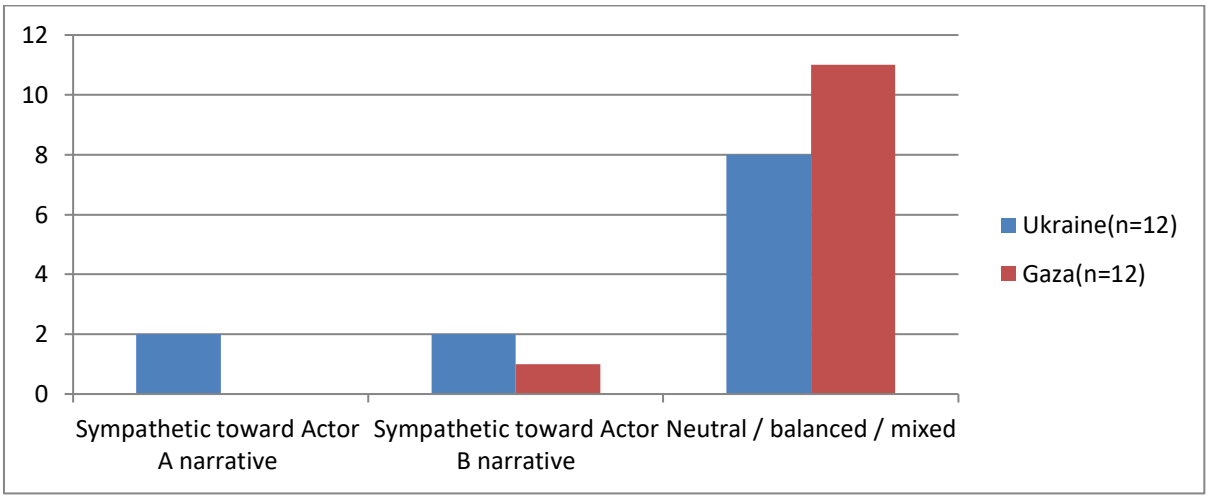
IX). Evaluative Orientation

Table3.9*: Distribution of Evaluative Orientation in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts*

Evaluative Orientation category	Ukraine (n=12)	Ukraine(%)	Gaza (n=12)	Gaza(%)
Sympathetic toward Actor A narrative	2	16.7%	0	0%
Sympathetic toward Actor B narrative	2	16.7%	1	8.3%
Neutral / balanced / mixed	8	66.7%	11	91.7%
Total	12	100%	12	100%

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.9: *Comparative Distribution of Evaluative Orientation in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.*



Reading of the Table 3.9:

Table 3.9 presents the distribution of evaluative orientation in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. In the Ukraine coverage, Neutral / balanced / mixed accounts for 66.7%, while Sympathetic toward Actor A narrative and Sympathetic toward Actor B narrative each represent 16.7%. In the Gaza coverage, Neutral / balanced / mixed accounts for 91.7%, while Sympathetic toward Actor B narrative represents 8.3%. Sympathetic toward Actor A narrative is not recorded (0%).

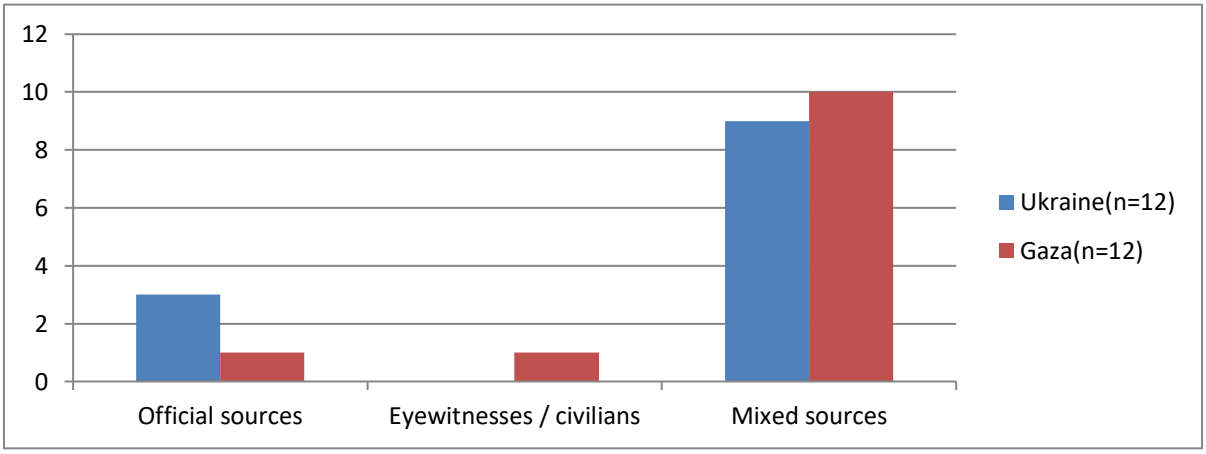
X). Sources and Voices

Table3.10: *Distribution of Sources and Voices in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts*

Sources and Voices category	Ukraine (n=12)	Ukraine(%)	Gaza (n=12)	Gaza(%)
Official sources	3	25%	1	8.3%
Eyewitnesses / civilians	0	0%	1	8.3%
Mixed sources	9	75%	10	83.3%
Total	12	100%	12	100%

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.10: *Comparative Distribution of Sources and Voices in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.*



Reading of the Table 3.10:

Table 3.10 illustrates the distribution of sources and voices in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. In the Ukraine coverage, Mixed / multiple voices account for 75%, followed by Official sources at 25%, while Eyewitnesses / civilians are not recorded (0%). In the Gaza coverage, Mixed / multiple voices represent 83.3%, while Official sources and Eyewitnesses / civilians each account for 8.3%.

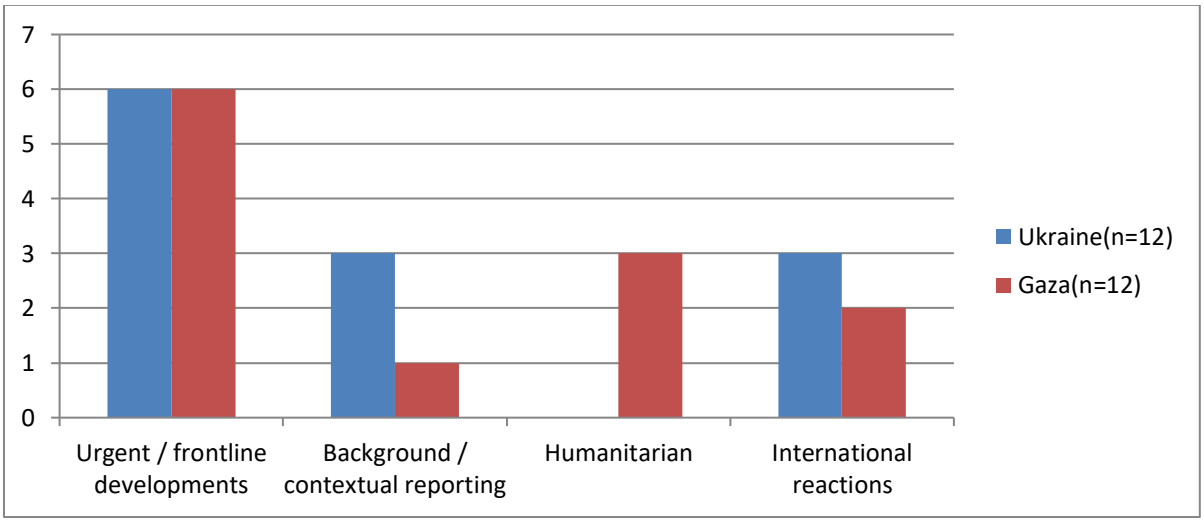
XI). News Priority Category

Table3.11: *Distribution of News Priority Category in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.*

News Priority Category	Ukraine (n=12)	Ukraine (%)	Gaza (n=12)	Gaza (%)
Urgent / frontline developments	6	50%	6	50%
Background / contextual reporting	3	25%	1	8.3%
Humanitarian	0	0%	3	25%
International reactions	3	25%	2	16.7%
Total	12	100%	12	100%

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.11: *Comparative Distribution of News Priority Category in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.*



Reading of the Table 3.11:

Table 3.11 shows the distribution of news priority categories in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. In the Ukraine case, Urgent / frontline developments account for 50%, followed by Background / contextual reporting and International reactions at 25% each, while Humanitarian is not recorded (0%). In the Gaza case, Urgent / frontline developments also account for 50%, followed by Humanitarian at 25%, International reactions at 16.7%, and Background / contextual reporting at 8.3%.

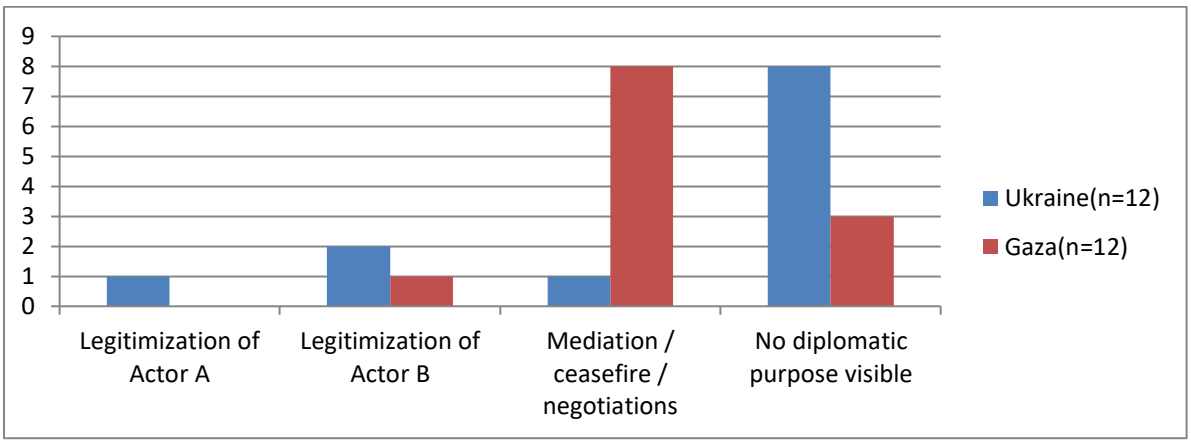
XII) Diplomatic purpose of coverage

Table3.12: *Distribution of Diplomatic Purpose of Coverage in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.*

Diplomatic purpose of coverage category	**Ukraine (n=12)**	**Ukraine(%)**	**Gaza (n=12)**	**Gaza(%)**
Legitimization of Actor A	1	8.3%	0	0%
Legitimization of Actor B	2	16.7%	1	8.3%
Mediation / ceasefire / negotiations	1	8.3%	8	66.7%
No diplomatic purpose visible	8	66.7%	3	25%
Total	12	100%	12	100%

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.12: *Comparative Distribution of Diplomatic Purpose of Coverage in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.*



Reading of the Table 3.12:

Table 3.12 illustrates the distribution of diplomatic purposes in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. In the Ukraine case, the absence of any visible diplomatic purpose is the dominant category, accounting for 66.7% of the sample. This is followed by the legitimization of Actor B (16.7%), while both the legitimization of Actor A and references to mediation, ceasefire, or negotiations each represent 8.3%.

In contrast, the Gaza coverage is predominantly oriented toward mediation, ceasefire, and negotiation efforts, which account for 66.7% of the sample. This is followed by the absence of a visible diplomatic purpose (25%), while the legitimization of Actor B represents 8.3%. No instances of legitimization of Actor A are recorded.

These findings suggest a divergence in the diplomatic framing of the two conflicts, with Ukraine coverage being more descriptive and less diplomatically oriented, while Gaza coverage places greater emphasis on conflict resolution and diplomatic engagement.

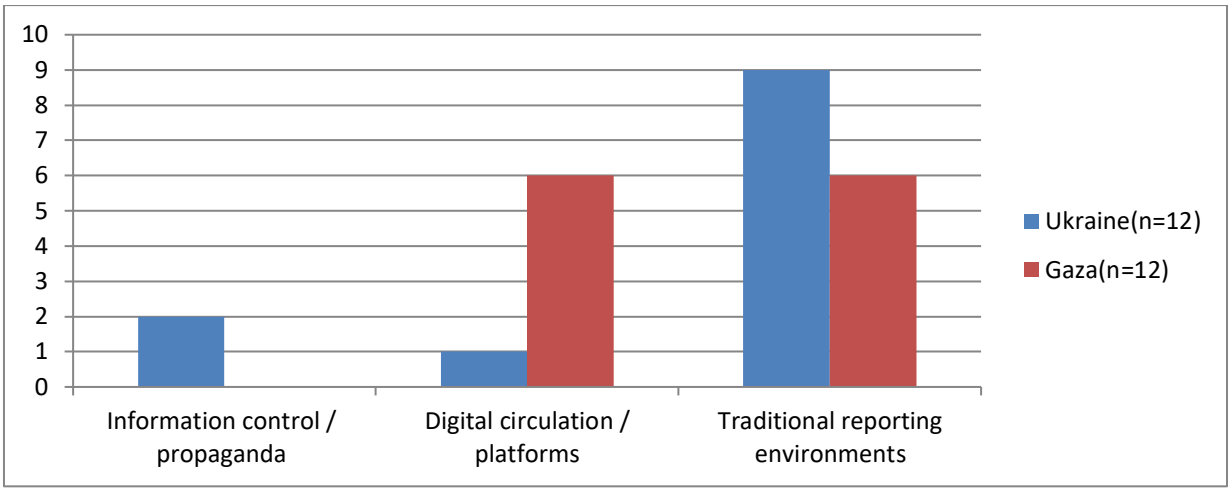
XIII). Media and information environment category

Table3.13: *Distribution of Media and Information Environment Category in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.*

Media and information environment category	**Ukraine (n=12)**	**Ukraine(%)**	**Gaza (n=12)**	**Gaza(%)**
Information control / propaganda	2	16.7%	0	0%
Digital circulation / platforms	1	8.3%	6	50%
Traditional reporting environments	9	75%	6	50%
Total	12	100%	12	100%

Source: Generated by the researcher based on the dissertation's content analysis dataset.

Figure3.13: *Comparative Distribution of Media and Information Environment Category in BBC Coverage of Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts.*



Reading of the Table 3.13:

Table 3.13 demonstrate the distribution of media and information environment categories in BBC coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. In the Ukraine coverage, Traditional reporting environments account for 75%, followed by Information control / propaganda at 16.7%, while Digital circulation / platforms represent 8.3%. In the Gaza coverage, Digital circulation / platforms and Traditional reporting environments each account for 50%, while Information control / propaganda is not recorded (0%).

Section Two: Qualitative Analysis of BBC Conflict Coverage

After presenting the quantitative results derived from the coding scheme applied to BBC news coverage, this section introduces the qualitative component of the research, which forms the interpretative core of the study. The analysis focuses on systematically examining how media representations of international conflicts are constructed through discourse, with specific attention to the comparative coverage of the war in Ukraine (2022) and the Gaza conflict (2023).

This study adopts a mixed categorical content analysis design, combining quantitative coding with qualitative interpretative analysis. The quantitative phase operationalized a structured coding framework covering two main dimensions. The first is form-related categories, which include journalistic genre, publication length, and visual/multimedia framing. The second is content-related categories, encompassing nature of topics, dominant framing, representation of actors and victims, attribution of responsibility, evaluative orientation, sources and voices, news priority, diplomatic purpose, and the broader media and information environment.

Building on these results, the qualitative phase moves beyond frequency-based interpretation to examine the relational and structural dimensions of media discourse; Rather than analyzing each category in isolation, the study adopts an integrated and comparative approach in order to identify patterns of meaning construction across the two conflict cases. This approach allows for the examination of how different dimensions of discourse interaction of producing specific representational outcomes.

The analytical framework is organized into three interrelated levels. The first level focuses on form of mediation, examining how journalistic genre, publication length, and visual framing shape the presentation of each conflict. The second level addresses discursive construction, focusing on dominant framing strategies, topic selection, evaluative orientation, news priority, and diplomatic purpose in shaping the meaning of events. The third level examines representational structures, including the portrayal of actors and victims, attribution of responsibility, sourcing practices, and the media and information environment within which coverage is produced.

This multi-level structure enables a systematic comparison of BBC coverage across the two conflict contexts. The objective is not only to describe differences in reporting patterns, but also to explain how these patterns contribute to the construction of differentiated representations of international conflicts. Media coverage is treated as a process of meaning production shaped by editorial choices, institutional norms, and broader informational and geopolitical environments, rather than as a neutral reflection of events.

Subsection One: Form construction of News discourse (Form dimensions)

1) . Journalistic genre analysis

After examining the quantitative results related to the journalistic genre category across the 24-article sample for both cases, a clear divergence in editorial structuring emerges between the BBC's coverage of the war in Ukraine (2022) and the Gaza conflict (2023). The findings indicate that, in the Ukraine case, journalistic genres are relatively balanced, with news articles, statement-based reporting, and analytical reports occupying comparable proportions of the sample. This configuration reflects a diversified but event-oriented reporting structure, in which factual updates and official statements coexist with interpretative pieces, allowing the conflict to be constructed as a continuous sequence of developments as opposed to a highly interpretative narrative.

Whereas, in the Case of Gaza is defined by a marked concentration on analytical reports, which constitute the dominant genre within the sample, while other journalistic forms appear with significantly lower frequencies. This pronounced contrast highlights a stronger reliance on interpretative and contextual reporting when covering Gaza, where events are less presented as immediate developments and more as issues requiring explanation, back grounding, and extended framing.

This variation in genre distribution marks a clear transformation in the mode of information construction across the two cases. In the case of Ukraine, the balance between genres supports a more linear and event-driven narrative logic, where news updates and official statements reinforce immediacy and chronological clarity. While in the Case of Gaza the dominance of analytical reporting signals a movement toward explanatory journalism, where the conflict is increasingly mediated through interpretation, contextualization, and evaluative framing rather than direct event narration.

A central interpretative question therefore arises: ***why does the BBC privilege different journalistic genres across these two contexts? And what does this reveal about the underlying logics of conflict representation?*** This divergence can be understood in relation to the nature of the two conflicts and their geopolitical positioning. The Ukraine war, occurring in a highly institutionalized international agenda with continuous official updates, lends itself to structured news reporting and statement-driven coverage. On the contrary, the Gaza conflict, marked by restricted access, fragmented information flows, and contested narratives, thus appears to require greater reliance on analytical framing to construct coherence and interpretability for audiences.

From a theoretical standpoint, this pattern can be linked to framing theory and agenda-setting logic, which emphasize that media do not simply transmit events but organize them through selected interpretative structures. In this sense, genre choice operates as a framing device: news and statements emphasize immediacy and institutional legitimacy, while analytical reports expand interpretative depth and guide audience understanding in contexts of informational uncertainty.

These findings, in concert, indicate that genre distribution is far more than formal editorial choice, but a structural indicator of how the BBC differentially constructs conflict intelligibility. While the Ukraine sample prioritizes an event-based informational flow, the

Gaza coverage leans toward interpretative mediation, exposing distinct modes of conflict representation across the two cases.

II). Publication length Analysis:

The dominance of long-format reporting (Code 6) across both conflict samples establishes a baseline editorial preference for substantive, contextualized engagement, yet the meaningful divergence in short-format usage (Code 8) reveals distinct narrative logics at play. A central interpretative question arises:

Why does the BBC privilege varied scales of informational depth, and what does this signify regarding the strategic construction of each conflict? Analyzing this through the lens of news production theory, we observe that form transcends stylistic variations, operating instead as an artifact of access gradients and temporal pressure. Regarding Ukraine, the prevalence of short-form updates establishes a "volatility-responsive" architecture[1].

This model leverages an abundance of reliable, real-time inputs to produce a hybrid narrative, effectively interspersing deep-dive analysis with rapid alerts to sustain audience immersion. This strategy enables the BBC to leverage its institutional resources to map the conflict as a continuous, escalating sequence, employing the short format as a tool for chronological dominance. In the Gaza context, however, the contraction into more monolithic, long-form reporting signifies an "interpretative consolidation"[2], a defensive posture necessitated by structural constraints, including restricted field access, persistent infrastructural disruption, and heightened verification risks. Where the immediacy of breaking news is hindered by these environmental barriers, the BBC appears to funnel its limited informational throughput into higher-density, self-contained dispatches.

By favouring analytical weight over informational speed, the BBC mitigates the risks of verification errors that often plague fast-moving crises.

The variation in publication length therefore acts as a proxy for the BBC's institutional agency; it illustrates how production conditions dictate the narrative density and perceived "know-ability" of these two conflict zone. Ukraine is framed through a serial, event-driven pulse that prioritizes chronological continuity, whereas Gaza is constructed through an

[1] Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*, 25th anniversary ed., ed. David Abrahamson (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), p. 158.
[2] Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978), p. 87.

analytical lens that underscores the moral and legal weight of the situation. This editorial output constitutes not a neutral reflection of event frequency, but a calculated calibration of narrative form in response to the operational realities of the battlefield.

*III).**Visual / Multimedia framing Analysis***

The distribution of visual and multimedia elements, anchored by a significant reliance on "mixed-media" formats and a stable, identical deployment of static photography suggests an institutional baseline for visual storytelling across both theatres. A central interpretative question arises: ***how do these visual configurations calibrate the affective intensity of each conflict, and what does this reveal about the BBC's mediated construction of war?***

Observing the data, we see that the heavy concentration of mixed-media acts as an informational consolidation tool; positioning the viewer within a framework of authoritative totality that diminishes the perceived distance between the viewer and the reality of the frontlines. In the context of the Ukraine war, this configuration supports a " stable-visual" logic, where high-quality graphics and maps reinforce the chronological clarity of the conflict's progression, serving the BBC's institutional goal of maintaining narrative dominance. In a notable deviation, the Gaza sample displays a distinct departure through the inclusion of embedded video footage, a format absent in the Ukraine coverage. In the reality of the Gaza conflict, where restricted field access and infrastructural collapse define the production environment, such footage functions as an "evidence-machine"[1], acting as a tactical substitute for the physically restricted reporter. This visual shift is not incidental; it is an adaptation to informational scarcity, where the BBC deploys high-affect video content to sustain narrative visibility when standard reporting avenues are shuttered.

This divergent visual strategy can be theoretically explained by bridging Framing Theory with the Neo-Gramscian lens of hegemonic control[2], as established in the theoretical framework of the study. In Ukraine, the visual framing is calibrated to support a normative, state-sanctioned narrative of an orderly, linear conflict, where visuals serve as contextual anchors to stabilize meaning. In Gaza, however, the visual frame is forced into an emergency-responsive mode; the reliance on disparate video fragments signals a struggle

[1] Stuart Allan, *Citizen Witnessing: Revisioning Journalism in Times of Crisis* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), **p.** 99.

[2] Lilie Chouliaraki and Tijana Stolic, "Rethinking Media Responsibility in the Refugee 'Crisis': A Visual Typology of European News," *Media, Culture & Society* 39, no. 8 (2017), p. 1165.

against the fragmentation of information. Viewed through the lens of Soft Power, these visual choices reveal that the BBC does not stop at informing; it actively curates an affective geography. The stable visual flow of Ukraine projects institutional legitimacy and order, while the jagged, video-reliant visuality of Gaza highlights the struggle for witness in a confined space.

These multimedia strategies demonstrate that the BBC's visual output is a calculated engineering of focus: while Ukraine's visuals invite the reader to participate in a big-picture geopolitical saga, Gaza's visuals are designed to force a confrontation with the immediate horror of the present, revealing that visual form is as much a weapon of framing as the written word.

Subsection Two: Discursive Framing of Conflict

The BBC's coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts is structured by a coherent discursive logic that links the thematic focus of the stories, the interpretative lens through which they are narrated, and the hierarchical ordering of news priorities. This framing logic is not a neutral reflection of the events; it is a productive practice that constructs different war narratives for Ukraine and Gaza, each shaped by distinct patterns of topic choice, framing, and prioritization.

In Ukraine, the BBC's thematic focus is dominated by Political and Diplomatic Developments, followed by Military Operations and Clashes, while Humanitarian Situation and Casualties remains a secondary presence. This pattern in topic choice reflects the structured, interstate character of the war, where the conflict is framed as a strategic confrontation between Russia and Ukraine, embedded in the Western geopolitical order and the alliance system of NATO and the European Union. The interpretative lens in Ukraine is consistently oriented toward military-security and political-Diplomatic frames; the war is explained as a contest over territorial integrity, international law, sanctions, and political alliances, not as a primarily humanitarian emergency. This framing elevates the war's strategic salience on the global agenda and aligns with the Western narrative of defending the rules-based order. The hierarchical ordering of news priorities further reinforces this configuration; the BBC privileges Urgent / frontline developments, treating them as the operational expression of the political and military logic, while Humanitarian coverage is relegated to the background. This pattern positions Western audiences to read

the Ukraine war as a geopolitical contest centred on sovereignty, deterrence, and strategic balance, as opposed to a narrative centred on civilian suffering.

In Gaza, the three patterns assume a radically different configuration. The BBC's thematic focus is oriented around Humanitarian Situation and Casualties, which clearly surpasses Military Operations and Clashes, Political and Diplomatic Developments in relative prominence. This pattern in topic choice reflects the asymmetrical, crisis-driven nature of the Gaza conflict, where the war is not framed as a classical interstate war, but as a profound emergency affecting civilians, infrastructure, and basic survival. The interpretative lens in Gaza mirrors this thematic reconfiguration as the Humanitarian frame becomes the central lens, presenting the conflict as a humanitarian catastrophe whose narratives centres on civilian suffering, displacement, and blocked aid instead of a balanced military-strategic contest. "As Martin Griffiths, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, warned in a BBC News interview, Palestinians in Gaza were suffering an 'assault that is unparalleled in its intensity, brutality and scope,' with over a million people in Rafah 'staring death in the face' due to restricted aid access and nowhere safe to go"[1]. A statement that underscores how the BBC's framing of Gaza concentrates on access to life saving's essentials and the deprivation of civilian needs instead of a neutral, strategic balance. This framing elevates the war's moral urgency and positions it as a crisis of civilian needs, not a strategic contest. The hierarchical ordering of news priorities consolidates this configuration: the BBC alternates between Urgent / frontline developments and Humanitarian coverage, treating the deprivation of civilian needs and the collapse of essential services as equally urgent as military escalations. This pattern reflects the fragmented information environment, the safety constraints for journalists, and the high political sensitivity around questions of attribution and legitimacy, which push the BBC's framing toward crisis-oriented reporting and humanitarian emergency.

Subsection Three: Representation structures:

The representational choices embedded in conflict journalism constitute the most politically consequential layer of media practice. While thematic framing delimits the conceptual territory within which a conflict is made intelligible, it is through the specific architecture of representation that these frames acquire their moral and political force. The

[1] "Israel Gaza: UN Warns of 'slaughter' If Israel Launches Ground Assault on Rafah," BBC News, February 13, 2024, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68287513 (accessed May 6, 2026).

following analysis decomposes the mechanisms of actor's visibility, visibility, victim portrayal, causal attribution, and evaluative tone through which abstract narratives are rendered as concrete moral-political worlds.

At the level of the actor representation, the distribution discloses a structural divergence between the two conflicts that carries significant interpretive weight. In the Ukraine coverage, International actors constitute the dominant category at 58.3 percent, with the main parties to the conflict collectively accounting for 25 percent, Civilians and non-state actors registering at 8.3 percent, and Actor B entirely absent from the dataset. In the Gaza coverage, both principal actors jointly occupy the foreground at 58.3 percent, while external state and institutional presences recede to a secondary position at 25 percent, Civilians and non-state actors again register at 8.3 percent, and Actor B is similarly unrecorded. These patterns already intimate two fundamentally different narrative architectures: one that positions the conflict primarily as a geopolitical and institutional event whose meaning is produced by external powers and multilateral bodies, and one that constructs it as a bilateral confrontation between two discursively equivalent parties, without anchoring the account in a stable moral or political centre.

The prevalence of International actors in the Ukraine coverage cannot be adequately explained as a neutral editorial preference for geopolitical perspective. It reflects a concrete and immediately operative political reality: the Russian full-scale invasion of February 2022 transformed the United Kingdom into a direct and publicly committed participant in the Western coalition response within days of its commencement. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's visits to Kyiv were staged as acts of conspicuous solidarity with Ukrainian sovereignty, the British government was among the earliest European states to authorise the delivery of heavy weapons, and the UK's diplomatic posture aligned closely and visibly with NATO and EU frameworks throughout the initial phase of the war. For the BBC, a broadcaster whose institutional independence is structurally entangled with periodic governmental review, Royal Charter renewal, and publicly funded legitimacy, covering the Ukraine war through the register of Western institutional actors was not a purely voluntary editorial orientation. It was, in significant measure, a reflection of the gravitational pull that operates when a broadcaster's home state is itself a leading actor in the geopolitical response to the conflict in it is reporting. Russia and Ukraine appeared in this configuration less as autonomous subjects of their own narrative than as figures within a larger

institutional story being told about them by the Western alliance, because from the BBC's structural vantage point, the most immediately relevant dimension of events was what NATO, the European Union, the United States, and the British government were deliberating, declaring, and doing.

A further structural explanation concerns the asymmetry of media production conditions. President Zelensky's government invested with remarkable strategic sophistication in Western media communication: daily video addresses delivered in multiple European languages, regular English-language briefings calibrated to Western news cycles, and a deliberately open access policy for foreign journalists embedded with Ukrainian forces. This created a continuous and highly manageable stream of quotable, filmable, institutionally legible material that aligned structurally with the BBC's production norms and formats. The dominance of International and state-level actors in the Ukraine coverage is therefore a reflection of who was most effectively manufacturing communicable content for major Western broadcasters, and in what forms that content arrived.

The symmetrical dual-actor configuration in Gaza presents an analytically more uncomfortable challenge. Israel imposed a near-total exclusion of independent Western journalists from the Gaza Strip for much of the conflict's most acute phase, a media access policy whose consequences for the structure of BBC reporting were determinative, not incidental. Deprived of the independent verification and field access it would ordinarily deploy in a major conflict zone, the BBC was largely reliant on two profoundly asymmetric sources: footage and testimony produced by Palestinian journalists operating inside Gaza under continuous bombardment, a significant number of whom were killed during the conflict, and official Israeli military briefings and communiqués delivered from secure locations outside the affected territory. The apparent symmetry between the two principal actors in the Gaza coverage conceals this fundamental inequality in the conditions under which each party's narrative was accessed and produced. Israeli positions arrived through polished institutional channels with predictable cadence; Palestinian testimony arrived through the fragmented and precarious output of a besieged local press corps. To present these two sources of narrative material as producing comparable discursive visibility is to accept a journalistic fiction of balance that the underlying conditions of production do not support.

At the linguistic level, these structural differences are reinforced through the BBC's contrasting conventions of naming and attribution. In the Ukraine coverage, actors are identified with directness and consistency: Russia is named as the invading power, Ukraine as the defending state, and Western actors as the custodians and enforcers of the rules-based international order. In the Gaza coverage, the vocabulary of parity predominates: formulations such as 'both parties,' 'each side,' and 'the two actors' recur throughout the reporting, constructing a symmetry of reference that avoids anchoring moral judgment in any single party. The decision of how to denominate conflict actors is never politically inert[1]. Naming Russia as aggressor terminates interpretive ambiguity, while framing Gaza as a 'both sides' confrontation actively propagates it, distributing explanatory weight in ways that resist political commitment and defer moral accountability. The BBC's linguistic caution in the Gaza coverage is not, from this perspective, simply a manifestation of journalistic professionalism; it is a discursive strategy whose cumulative effect includes the normalisation of a structural imbalance that the vocabulary of symmetry conceals rather than interrogates.

Turning to the representation of victims, a second major divergence emerges across the two conflicts. In the Ukraine coverage, Civilians account for 41.7 percent of the distribution, while absent or Limited representation registers at a substantial 33.3 percent and a mixed civilian-military portrayal at 25 percent. In the Gaza coverage, Civilians dominate at 66.7 percent, a combined civilian-military framing accounts for 25 percent, and absent or Limited representation records zero occurrences throughout the entire sample. The significance of that final figure warrants emphasis: across the totality of Gaza articles examined, there is not a single instance in which civilian suffering is omitted, peripheralised, or treated as a marginal element of the narrative. In Ukraine, by contrast, one in three articles produces coverage in which victims are structurally absent or mentioned only in passing, subordinated to the strategic, military, or institutional dimensions of the story being told.

The episodic visibility of civilian victims in Ukraine cannot be attributed to any insufficiency of documented harm. The war produced mass atrocities whose scale and severity were internationally verified, including the Bucha massacre of March 2022, in which the discovery of hundreds of civilian bodies following the Russian withdrawal from

[1] Teun A. van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: SAGE Publications, 1998), p. 204.

Kyiv's northern suburbs generated global revulsion and triggered investigations by the International Criminal Court. The displacement of over eight million Ukrainians within the first months of the conflict, the systematic targeting of civilian infrastructure in major cities, and the documented use of prohibited weapons in residential areas all constituted a record of human cost whose gravity was not in question. The analytical challenge, therefore, is not to establish whether civilian suffering existed, but to account for why the BBC's representational apparatus did not install it as the consistent moral centre of the coverage.

The answer lies in the dominant interpretive framework within which the Ukraine war was constructed from its earliest days. Both Western governments and major media organisations, the BBC among them, rapidly converged on a narrative architecture that positioned the conflict as a civilisational confrontation over the survival of the rules-based international order, pitting a revisionist authoritarian power against a sovereign democracy asserting its right to self-determination and Western integration. Within this frame, civilian suffering performs a specific and bounded narrative function: it appears when it furnishes evidence of Russian violations of international humanitarian law, as Bucha did with particular force, but it recedes when the narrative logic turns to battlefield developments, alliance solidarity, sanctions policy, or military aid decisions. Victims in the Ukraine coverage emerge when they are instrumentally useful to the geopolitical account and disappear when that account no longer requires them, a pattern that the 33.3 percent of Absent or Limited representation makes structurally legible.

A subtler dynamic reinforces this tendency. The BBC's predominantly Western audience arrived at the Ukraine conflict equipped with a pre-existing cognitive and affective architecture for interpreting Russian military aggression, accumulated through decades of post-Cold War framing of Russia as a strategic threat to European order. This shared interpretive preparation meant that the moral-political positioning of Ukraine as victim and Russia as perpetrator required relatively little affective scaffolding from the BBC's own reporting. The structural narrative was already doing the emotional work that personalised victim representation might otherwise perform, and the BBC could treat civilian suffering episodically in Ukraine because the dominant frame had already installed the audience's sympathies in advance of any given article's specific representational choices.

The systematic foregrounding of civilian suffering in Gaza operates according to a logic that is, in certain respects, more revealing about the BBC's institutional situation than about its humanitarian convictions. Unlike Ukraine, the Gaza conflict was genuinely and irresolvable contested at the level of Western institutional politics in ways that precluded the adoption of an equivalent moral-political framework. The British government's formal and repeatedly restated position, conveyed through statements by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Foreign Secretary David Cameron during the conflict's early weeks, maintained that Israel retained the right to defend itself against the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023, a framing that constructed Israeli military operations as legitimate self-defence even as the volume of documented civilian casualties mounted. In the absence of any clear institutional moral compass to anchor editorial orientation, the BBC's consistent and detailed foregrounding of civilian suffering became a discursive strategy for maintaining narrative gravity in an editorially paralysed environment. The suffering of non-combatants was the one dimension of the Gaza story that generated no institutional controversy, because it did not require the broadcaster to adjudicate between the competing political positions that divided its most powerful stakeholders.

This observation does not diminish the genuine seriousness with which the BBC covered civilian harm in Gaza, nor does it render that coverage insincere. It does, however, complicate the interpretive picture: what presents itself as humanitarian journalism is simultaneously, at the level of institutional logic, a retreat into the only register of the story that carries no political cost. There is, finally, a dimension that resists reduction to institutional calculation: the scale of harm documented in Gaza, encompassing tens of thousands of verified civilian casualties, the collapse of hospital infrastructure, the systematic destruction of residential neighbourhoods, and the obstruction of humanitarian aid delivery, eventually exceeded any threshold at which responsible editorial practice could marginalise or periodically omit it without producing coverage that was demonstrably at odds with the publicly available factual record.

The linguistic register through which victims are described in each conflict further illuminates the moral-political work that representation performs. In the Ukraine coverage, the vocabulary of victimhood tends toward abstraction and quantification: formulations such as 'civilians have been killed,' 'hundreds of casualties are believed to have occurred,' and 'civilian areas have been struck' acknowledge harm without individuating or personalising it, maintaining the epistemic distance appropriate to a narrative whose

primary orientation is strategic. In the Gaza coverage, the register shifts markedly toward concreteness and affective immediacy: references to named families, photographed children, identified neighbourhoods, and described injuries proliferate across the reporting, drawing the audience into proximity with individual suffering as opposed to aggregate loss. The degree to which suffering is individuated is itself a primary mechanism through which editorial choices constructs different moral relationships between audiences and distant victims. The BBC's differential deployment of these mechanisms across two conflicts of comparable severity discloses a representational logic in which the moral weight assigned to victimhood is calibrated not according to the scale of documented harm, but according to the political terrain within which that harm must be narrated.

With regard to attribution of responsibility, it occupies a singular position within the representational architecture of conflict journalism, because it is through the structures of blame, causal explanation, and moral accountability that a conflict acquires its political grammar: its hierarchy of innocence and culpability, its logic of justification and condemnation, its implicit answer to the question of who has made this happen and why. The distributional results across the two conflicts reveal a contrast of considerable analytical weight. In the Ukraine coverage, Actor A responsibility, directed toward Russia, accounts for 50 percent of the distribution; Unclear or Neutral attribution registers at 25 percent; Shared or Multiple responsibilities at 16.7 percent; and International actors at 8.3 percent, while Actor B carries zero attributed responsibility throughout the entire sample. In the Gaza coverage, Shared or multiple responsibilities dominate at 66.7 percent, Actor A responsibility appears at 25 percent, Unclear or Neutral attribution at 8.3 percent, and Actor B responsibility records no occurrences whatsoever.

The clarity of attribution in the Ukraine coverage reflects a convergence of factors that rendered this editorial posture not only defensible but institutionally safe. Russia's military campaign violated the United Nations Charter in terms that were neither technically contested nor diplomatically ambiguous: the General Assembly's emergency special session of March 2022 produced a condemnatory resolution supported by 141 member states, a breadth of cross-regional consensus with few precedents in the organisation's recent history. The International Criminal Court subsequently issued an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin in March 2023 in connection with the deportation of Ukrainian children, a legal development that further consolidated the international attribution framework within which the BBC was operating. To assign primary causal responsibility

to Russia in this context was, for the BBC, an act of alignment with international law, the formal position of the British government, the conclusions of multilateral institutions, and the editorial consensus of virtually every major Western news organisation. Attribution here required no institutional courage because it carried no institutional risk.

Putin's own public communication compounded this effect. His speeches justifying the invasion through claims about NATO encirclement, the denazification of Ukrainian society, and the historical illegitimacy of Ukrainian statehood were broadcast widely and repudiated just as widely. The BBC could assign responsibility to Russia while formally quoting Russia's stated rationale, producing a narrative structure in which the attribution was clear and the aggressor's perspective was procedurally represented, satisfying the formal requirements of impartiality without introducing any genuine moral ambiguity. The 25 percent of Unclear or Neutral attribution and the 16.7 percent of Shared or Multiple responsibilities do not meaningfully dilute this dominant structure; they introduce measured procedural qualification at the periphery without redistributing the central burden of causal accountability that the coverage consistently places on Moscow.

The attribution architecture in Gaza is where the BBC's representational politics become most visibly shaped by institutional pressure, and where the analytical distance between what the BBC presents as balanced journalism and what the available factual record might support is most consequential. The predominance of Shared or Multiple responsibilities at 66.7 percent, combined with the complete absence of attribution to Actor B and only marginal attribution to Actor A, does not simply reflect a journalistic commitment to representing the complexity of an ambiguous situation. It reflects a specific and identifiable set of institutional constraints that structured the boundaries of the editorially possible.

The United Kingdom's diplomatic relationship with Israel operates as the most significant of these constraints. Israel's right to self-defence was asserted by senior British ministers as a matter of official governmental policy from the earliest days of the post-October 7 military campaign, a framing that positioned Israeli military operations as a legitimate response to the Hamas attacks rather than as actions subject to the scrutiny that international humanitarian law applies to all parties to an armed conflict. For the BBC to have attributed clear and primary causal responsibility to Israel, even as organisations including Medicines Sans Frontiers, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and multiple United Nations special reporters were doing precisely that in relation to documented violations of the laws

of war, would have placed the broadcaster in explicit tension with the formal position of the British state. This is not a theoretical or speculative institutional pressure; it is a structural feature of the BBC's existence as a publicly funded body whose editorial independence is real but bounded by its accountability to political authorities with regulatory and financial leverage over its operations.

The Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023, introduced a further complicating dimension without an equivalent in the Ukraine conflict. The deliberate massacre of civilians at the Nova music festival, the killing of families in kibbutzim along the Gaza border, and the seizure of hostages constituted acts characterised by virtually every credible international authority as war crimes. Hamas's formal designation as a proscribed terrorist organisation by the British government meant that the BBC was institutionally constrained from treating it as a legitimate political interlocutor. Any editorial move toward clearer attribution of responsibility to Israel thus risked being contested on the grounds that it failed to register the gravity of October 7 as the immediate trigger of the military campaign. The BBC's retreat into dispersed, shared attribution was partly a defensive response to this genuine complexity, but one that it applied with a consistency and breadth that went considerably beyond what the complexity of the situation alone would have required.

The most structurally decisive explanation, however, concerns the epistemic conditions under which attribution is possible at all. Israel's exclusion of independent Western journalists from Gaza was not simply a media management inconvenience; it was a deliberate policy whose effect was to deny the BBC and its peers the independent verification capacity upon which credible, sourced, specific attribution of responsibility depends. The linguistic markers of epistemic caution that saturate the Gaza attribution coverage, formulations including 'reportedly,' 'according to sources,' 'it is alleged,' and 'the figures could not be independently verified,' are not exclusively a discursive strategy; they are, in many instances, an accurate reflection of the informational constraints imposed by systematic access denial. Attribution requires verification, verification requires access, and access was deliberately withheld by one of the parties most consequentially implicated in the events being reported. The BBC's hedged and dispersed attribution language records this informational reality, even as that reality was itself produced by the deliberate media management of a conflict party.

The evaluative orientation of the BBC's coverage constitutes the final and, in certain respects, most revealing stratum of the representational architecture, because it is at the level of affective tone that abstract discursive configurations are translated into the moral-emotional register within which audiences experience and make sense of distant violence. Tone calibrates whether a conflict is felt as a morally legible contest between clearly positioned parties or as an irreducibly entangled emergency resistant to clear political judgment, and this affective calibration shapes, in ways that are less visible than explicit statement but no less consequential, the conditions under which audiences can form opinions, apportion accountability, and respond politically to what they witness.

The distributional results reveal a pattern whose significance is compounded by the direction of its variation. In the Ukraine coverage, Neutral or Balanced evaluation accounts for 66.7 percent of the sample, while a measured degree of sympathy toward Actor A, Russia, and toward Actor B, Ukraine, each register at 16.7 percent, producing a near-symmetrical bilateral distribution of moderate evaluative warmth within a general framework of procedural objectivity. In the Gaza coverage, Neutral or Balanced evaluation rises to 91.7 percent, a marginal sympathy toward Actor B appears at 8.3 percent and sympathy toward Actor A records no occurrences in any article across the entire dataset. The contrast between a conflict in which the BBC extends moderate evaluative recognition to both parties, including the party it simultaneously identifies as carrying primary causal responsibility, and a conflict in which it withdraws into near-absolute affective neutrality while foregrounding mass civilian suffering, demands an explanation that goes beyond the formal language of editorial balance.

The presence of discernible sympathy for both Russia and Ukraine in the evaluative distribution of the Ukraine coverage is, counter intuitively, a reflection of narrative security rather than moral complexity. Because the conflict's dominant moral-political architecture was so firmly established, Russia as aggressor, Ukraine as defending sovereign state, and the Western alliance as the institutional guarantor of the rules-based order, the BBC could afford occasional gestures of humanising nuance toward either party without producing any confusion in the audience's moral map. A reference to the anxieties of Russian civilians about their sons conscripted into a war they did not choose, or an acknowledgment of the psychological cost of sustained warfare on Ukrainian communities, could be incorporated into the coverage precisely because the structural frame was stable enough to absorb these moments without destabilising the overall attribution framework. Evaluative latitude in

Ukraine is a dividend of narrative security: the moral-political ground was so firmly settled that the BBC could afford to range across it without risk of losing its bearings.

The near-absolute neutrality of the Gaza evaluative orientation is not the counterpart virtue of this security; it is its precise opposite. The BBC found itself covering a conflict in which any evaluative movement in any direction generated severe, asymmetric, and institutionally consequential risk. To allow any measurable degree of sympathy toward Israel risked alienating Muslim communities in the United Kingdom, progressive political constituencies confronting visual evidence of mass civilian harm, and international observers were including United Nations officials and international legal scholars who had begun describing Israeli military conduct in terms of potential violations of international humanitarian law. To permit any evaluative warmth toward Hamas risked accusations of legitimising a proscribed terrorist organisation, political backlash from the government and powerful lobby organisations with established influence over the BBC's political environment, and the evocation of anti-Semitism at a moment of acute public sensitivity. To register explicit critical distance toward Zionist conduct risked consequences of the kind that the BBC's senior leadership had historical reason to regard as institutionally threatening.

The marginal 8.3 percent sympathy toward Actor B in the Gaza coverage repays close analytical attention precisely because of its specificity. This residual evaluative gesture appeared most consistently in coverage organised around Israel's security context, the gravity of the October 7 attacks, and the defensive justifications articulated by Zionist officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, and Israeli Defence Forces spokespersons. Its appearance at the periphery of an otherwise affectively evacuated evaluative landscape is analytically significant: it discloses that the BBC's neutrality was not a perfectly symmetrical absence of judgment but a managed minimisation of evaluation that retained the faint trace of an institutional lean. That lean aligned, as it did across the actor and attribution dimensions, with the formal posture of British foreign policy and the governmental framing of the conflict that the BBC, as a state-funded broadcaster, was structurally disinclined to contest.

Subsection Four: Production of Voice, Credibility, and Power

The production of voice and credibility in the BBC's coverage unfolds across three key dimensions: sources and voices, media and information environment, and diplomatic purpose.

The first and most foundational of these dimensions concerns the sourcing logic of the coverage: the selection, combination, and ordering of voices that the BBC deploys to construct the authoritative account of each conflict. In the Ukraine coverage, the dominant configuration brings together multiple institutional and expert voices without any recorded presence of eyewitnesses or directly affected civilians. In the Gaza coverage, the sourcing framework is broadly comparable in its institutional orientation, but registers a marginal and analytically significant inclusion of civilian and eyewitness testimony alongside official sources, producing a configuration that remains institutionally anchored while no longer being entirely closed to experiential knowledge.

Who is authorised to speak each conflict into journalistic reality, and what does the complete exclusion of civilian testimony in Ukraine and its only marginal presence in Gaza reveal about how the BBC distributes epistemic authority across the two cases?

The total absence of eyewitness and civilian voices in the Ukraine coverage is not a contingent omission traceable to any specific editorial decision. It reflects a structural feature of the epistemological model through which the BBC constructed the Ukraine war during its initial phase, where credibility is grounded in institutional authority and verified official sources instead of lived experience and direct testimony. This configuration reflects what might be described as a state-centric ontology of war, an inherited journalistic disposition in which armed conflict between sovereign states is most reliably narrated through the institutions of statehood: governments, military commands, alliance frameworks, and the expert commentators who interpret their decisions. Within this disposition, civilians who have survived bombardment, witnessed atrocities, or fled displacement do not count as primary sources of authoritative knowledge. They supply, at most, illustrative colour for a narrative whose explanatory core is already being furnished by institutional actors. The consequence of this sourcing logic is that the Ukraine war, across the examined period, was constructed as an epistemically ordered conflict: one where knowledge is stable, verifiable, and institutionally guaranteed, leaving little room

for the affective, contradictory, or politically inconvenient testimony of affected populations to disrupt the dominant explanatory framework.

This observation connects directly to Robert Entman's framing theory, as discussed in the theoretical framework, where frames select certain aspects of a perceived reality while excluding others. The exclusion of civilian voices from Ukraine's sourcing structure exemplifies this selective emphasis: by limiting evidence to institutional registers, the BBC frames the Ukraine conflict as a domain of strategic and geopolitical reasoning rather than of human suffering, and in doing so positions itself as an authoritative interpreter of a rules-based interstate confrontation whose meaning is most reliably accessed through official channels. The deeper question this generates is whether the exclusion of Ukrainian civilian testimony reflects a broader Western journalistic assumption, rarely made explicit, that European state institutions carry inherent epistemic superiority over individual testimony, particularly in a conflict that was rapidly integrated into a pre-existing Western informational infrastructure of NATO briefings, governmental press conferences, and think-tank analyses. The evidence suggests that this assumption is operative. Within such an environment, civilian voices are structurally redundant, not because suffering is absent, but because the institutional apparatus is already produces the narrative, and civilian testimony would introduce affective complexity that the dominant strategic frame cannot accommodate.

The partial inclusion of civilian and eyewitness voices in the Gaza coverage introduces what might be described as a controlled affective register. This is a deliberate but bounded opening of the sourcing framework toward experiential knowledge that reflects the crisis-driven character of the conflict without surrendering editorial control over the overarching narrative. The emphasis here must fall on the word controlled. The civilian voices included in the Gaza coverage do not structurally challenge or reorder the institutional hierarchy of the reporting; they supplement it with experiential evidence whose function is to personalise and humanise a narrative whose factual and explanatory framework is still supplied by official and expert sources. Their presence signals the BBC's recognition that the Gaza's humanitarian dimension requires a degree of experiential grounding that the institutional model alone cannot provide. Yet their structural subordination reveals that this recognition is managed, not transformative. Viewed through the Neo-Gramscian perspective, the selective incorporation of civilian voices in Gaza constitutes a form of hegemonic accommodation; sufficient experiential testimony is integrated to sustain the

BBC's claim to humanitarian legitimacy, while the institutional ordering of authority remains intact and undisturbed. Voice, in both cases, is not simply present or absent; it is governed.

The second dimension of the analysis shifts the inquiry from who speaks to under what informational conditions speaking is rendered credible. The framing of a media and information environment is not purely a description of the journalistic context in which reporting takes place; it is itself an act of editorial positioning that determines what counts as reliable knowledge, whose communication strategies are treated as distortion, and how the BBC locates its own output within the contested information landscape of each conflict.

Why does the BBC frame Ukraine as a traditional, institutionally mediated information environment (despite acknowledging propaganda), while depicting Gaza as a hybrid digital-traditional space free of it? What do these contrasts reveal about the BBC's epistemic self-positioning?

The dominance of traditional reporting channels in the Ukraine coverage produces what can be analytically described as a closed credibility circuit: information flows through official channels, verification is institutional, and the authority of the BBC's account is anchored in its proximity to the formal structures of state and military communication. This setup reinforces the sourcing framework generating a cognitively stable and institutionally governed information field in which the BBC acts as a trusted relay in the Western informational order. The limited acknowledgment of information control and propaganda in the Ukraine coverage is, in this context, analytically revealing precisely because of how it is framed. Propaganda in Ukraine is registered as a feature of the conflict's information landscape, with references to Russian strategic communication, disinformation efforts, and the manipulation of public perception. Crucially, this acknowledgment does not destabilise the BBC's own epistemic authority. On the contrary, the identification of propaganda elsewhere reinforces the corporation's self-positioning as a reliable, institutionally grounded alternative to the contested information terrain. Propaganda is present but conceptually contained: framed as a secondary distortion emanating from the adversarial actor, not rather as a structural condition of the entire information environment, including the Western institutional channels through which the BBC itself is predominantly sourcing its coverage.

This raises a question of considerable analytical weight: why, in a conflict widely described by scholars and practitioners as one of the most intensive information warfare environments of recent decades, one in which both Russian and Western state actors invested substantially in narrative management and strategic communication, does the BBC's coverage during the initial phase register propaganda as only a marginal dimension of the information landscape? The most analytically honest response is that acknowledging information control as a dominant and structural feature of the coverage environment would have implicated the BBC's own institutional sources within the scope of that critique. The conceptual containment of propaganda as a Russian phenomenon, unlike as a condition of all state communication in conflict, is accordingly not a journalistic oversight but a discursive instrument that protects the intellectual legitimacy of the very channels through which the BBC is constructing its authoritative account. This logic connects directly to the normative theory of the media, which holds that major public broadcasters operate within institutional frameworks that simultaneously demand editorial independence and impose structural constraints on how far that independence can extend before it conflicts with the political and diplomatic environment in which the broadcaster is embedded.

The Gaza coverage presents a fundamentally different informational configuration, one whose character was shaped less by editorial preference than by the material conditions of journalistic access. The equal weight assigned to digital platforms and mainstream reporting channels in the Gaza coverage reflects a genuine transformation in the BBC's knowledge landscape: Israel's near-total exclusion of independent Western journalists from the Gaza Strip during the initial phase of the conflict meant that embedded journalism, the BBC's preferred mode of constructing institutionally grounded and independently verified accounts, was not available as the primary basis for coverage. Social media content, footage uploaded by Palestinian civilians and journalists, satellite imagery, and digital verification tools were not supplementary sources chosen for reasons of editorial breadth; they were, in many instances, the only available sources of visual and testimonial evidence about events unfolding on the ground. The equal weighting between digital and traditional environments in the Gaza coverage is consequently not evidence of a deliberate commitment to hybrid journalism so much as the trace of an access restriction whose structural effect was to render the BBC partially dependent on the very information channels that its institutional model is designed to treat with the greatest cognitive caution.

The complete absence of any acknowledgment of information control or propaganda in the Gaza reporting is, against this background, one of the most analytically significant findings in the entire dataset. Gaza was a conflict characterised by intense narrative management on multiple sides, systematic restrictions on independent verification, deeply contested casualty data, and a global media landscape in which the reliability of all parties was subject to continuous challenge. The BBC's decision not to register this informational contestation under the category of propaganda or information control, while simultaneously acknowledging its presence in Ukraine, points to an important editorial asymmetry in how the corporation portrays the knowledge conditions of the two conflicts. One analytically persuasive explanation is that labelling the digital content emerging from Gaza as contested or potentially manipulated would have undermined the humanitarian narrative that civilian testimony and visual records were being deployed to sustain, raising uncomfortable questions about the reliability of the very sources on which the Gaza reporting depended. The third dimension of the analysis concerns the diplomatic orientation of the coverage: not what the BBC explicitly states about diplomacy, but what the structure of its reporting implies about what each conflict's requirements and assigned resolution horizon. Diplomatic framing in this sense constitutes among the most normatively explicit dimensions of conflict journalism, because it encodes an editorial judgment not only about the conflict's nature but about its appropriate trajectory, about whether war is being narrated as a condition to be endured, a confrontation to be won, or a crisis to be immediately halted.

What does the near-total absence of diplomatic framing in Ukraine coverage, contrasted with mediation and ceasefire dominance in Gaza, reveal about the moral temporality the BBC assigns each conflict and what political interests does this serve?

The prevalence of coverage carrying no visible diplomatic purpose in Ukraine during the opening phase of the conflict is a finding whose full significance can only be assessed against the broader question of what it means when a war is reported without a sustained or consistent orientation toward resolution. In the absence of editorial pressure toward negotiation or de-escalation, the conflict is implicitly normalised as a condition of ongoing strategic confrontation, one that is politically structured, legally grounded in the right of collective self-defence, and temporally extended as a matter of geopolitical necessity. The Ukraine war, within this framing, it is not a crisis requiring immediate cessation; it is a legitimate and governable process of sovereign resistance whose continuity is presented as

both lawful and strategically rational. The limited affirmation of Russia's adversary that registers within the coverage reinforces this logic: Ukraine's defensive posture is occasionally endorsed, but this endorsement does not generate pressure toward diplomatic settlement. It generates pressure toward military sufficiency and sustained international support. The BBC's diplomatic orientation in Ukraine during the initial phase accordingly produces what might be described as a narrative of strategic endurance: a conflict whose appropriate horizon is the restoration of territorial integrity through sustained resistance, backed by Western institutional commitment, as opposed to the kind of urgent multilateral mediation that would imply a symmetrical confrontation requiring compromise from both parties.

This configuration is not editorially neutral. It aligns with the formal positions of the British government and the broader Western coalition during the opening weeks of the war, both of which consistently resisted framing the Ukraine conflict as one requiring immediate negotiated settlement, precisely because such a framing would have implied that Ukrainian territorial concessions might constitute a legitimate component of any resolution. The BBC's near-absence of diplomatic orientation in Ukraine is accordingly the trace of a governmental and institutional consensus that identified the conflict's appropriate resolution as military rather than diplomatic. To have fore grounded ceasefire and mediation framing consistently in the Ukraine coverage during this period would have placed the BBC in direct tension with the dominant Western strategic position, a position whose institutional legitimacy the corporation's sourcing framework was simultaneously reinforcing. From the media diplomacy perspective, the BBC's diplomatic framing in Ukraine functions not as a pressure toward resolution but as a reinforcement of the Western alliance's strategic narrative: the conflict is one of legitimate collective defence, its continuation is warranted, and the appropriate international response is support rather than negotiation.

The Gaza coverage inverts this logic with a structural completeness that is itself analytically significant. The dominance of mediation, ceasefire, and negotiation framing in the Gaza reporting constructs the conflict not as a war to be sustained but as a crisis to be resolved with urgency. This framing assigns the Gaza conflict a moral temporality of emergency, a sense that the conflict's continuation is itself the primary problem, that its appropriate horizon is immediate de-escalation rather than strategic conclusion, and that the international community's most pressing obligation is to intervene diplomatically rather

than to sustain the military capacity of either party. The divergence from Ukraine could not be more structurally explicit: one conflict is narrated as a war whose continuation is legitimate and necessary, the other as an emergency whose continuation is morally unacceptable and practically urgent to reverse.

Section Three: Discussion of findings

The preceding analysis demonstrates that the BBC's coverage of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts is structured by two distinct, integrated editorial architectures. Through the comparative lens of news form, discursive framing, representational structure, and the production of voice, it becomes clear that the broadcaster constructs fundamentally different moral and political worlds for each conflict. This discussion interprets the theoretical implications of these findings notably how framing, agenda-setting, and soft power mechanisms shape the conditions under which distant suffering is rendered intelligible to audiences in the Global North. By interrogating the intersection of media diplomacy and institutional necessity, the following sections address the ethical questions that arise when a globally authoritative broadcaster assigns radically different moral temporalities to conflicts of comparable severity.

Subsection One: Synthesis of Comparative Findings:

To make the comparative logic of this editorial divergence more transparent, the following table synthesizes the four core dimensions of the BBC's reporting. By mapping the Institutional Authority framework of the 2022 Ukraine coverage against the Humanitarian Urgency model of the 2023 Gaza coverage, this overview provides an analytical foundation for the discussion that follows.

Table3.14: *Comparative Synthesis of BBC Editorial framework — Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts (2022–2023)*

Cluster	***Dimensions***	***Ukraine Coverage (institutional Authority framework)***	***Gaza Coverage (Humanitarian Urgency framework)***
I. Form Construction of news discourse	***Genres, Length, Multimedia***	***Adaptive narrative system:*** Event-driven, linear, short-form updates, graphic-anchored; the conflict is narrated as a continuous, chronologically ordered and institutionally verifiable sequence of developments.	***Consolidated narrative model:*** Analytical depth, long-form structural anchor, high-affect video imagery; the conflict is mediated through interpretative consolidation in conditions of restricted access and fragmented information flows.
II. Discursive Framing of Conflict	***Topics, Frames, Priorities***	***Strategic Endurance*****:** Political-Diplomatic and Military focus, military-security framing, urgent frontline prioritisation; the conflict is constructed as a geopolitically grounded, rules-based contest demanding sustained institutional response.	***Crisis Management:*** Humanitarian-situation focus, humanitarian framing, dual urgent-frontline and humanitarian prioritisation; the conflict is constructed as a moral and humanitarian emergency demanding immediate de-escalation.
III. Representation structures	***Actors, Victims, Attribution, Orientation***	***Geopolitical Legibility:*** Concentrated causal responsibility, abstract and episodic victimhood, measured bilateral evaluative tone; the conflict is narrated within a stable moral-political framework anchored to the international rules-based order.	***Moral Ambiguity:*** Dispersed causal accountability, concrete and systematically fore-grounded victimhood, near-total affective withdrawal; the conflict is narrated within a framework of deliberate moral indeterminacy that decouples suffering from political accountability.
IV. Production of Voice, Credibility, and Power	***Voices, credibility, diplomatic purpose***	***Institutional Authority:*** Closed credibility circuit anchored to official and expert sources; traditional reporting channels; diplomatic horizon of strategic conclusion through military support and sustained Western coalition engagement.	***Humanitarian Urgency:*** Hybrid and managed credibility drawing on digital and experiential sources; mixed information environment; diplomatic horizon of urgent de-escalation through ceasefire and mediation framing.

Source: Constructed by the researcher on the basis of the quantitative and qualitative content analysis conducted in this study.

What this research set out to examine was whether the BBC's coverage of two major international conflicts occurring within a single year, the war in Ukraine beginning in February 2022 and the Gaza conflict beginning in October 2023, reveals a consistent and uniform journalistic approach or whether it discloses a pattern of differentiated representation shaped by institutional, geopolitical, and political factors. The evidence assembled across the four analytical clusters answers this question unambiguously: the BBC does not apply a single editorial logic to both conflicts. It constructs two fundamentally different regimes of meaning, each coherent and self-reinforcing within its own internal logic, but divergent in ways that cannot be explained by the nature of the conflicts alone.

In Ukraine, the BBC produced what the comparative framework identifies as an Institutional Authority framework. Across every analytical dimension, the coverage converged on a common organising principle: the conflict is a geopolitically legible contest between a clearly identified aggressor and a defending sovereign state, embedded in the institutional grammar of the rules-based international order. The form of reporting sustained this narrative through an adaptive architecture of short-form updates, high-quality graphics, and linear chronological sequencing. The discursive framing constructed it through a dominant political-diplomatic and military-security lens that elevated the war's strategic salience and aligned it with Western coalition priorities. The representational structures reinforced it through concentrated causal attribution, episodic and selectively victim visibility and a bilaterally balanced evaluative tone grounded in narrative security. The sourcing logic anchored it through a closed credibility circuit of official and expert voices, a traditional information environment, and a diplomatic horizon of strategic endurance rather than negotiated resolution. The cumulative effect of these four convergent dimensions is the construction of a conflict that is morally and politically legible, institutionally grounded, and strategically coherent from the perspective of the Western alliance within which the BBC is institutionally embedded.

In Gaza, the BBC produced what the comparative synthesis identifies as a Humanitarian Urgency framework. Across the same analytical dimensions, the coverage converged on an entirely different organising principle: the conflict is a humanitarian emergency of

documented civilian suffering that defies straightforward political adjudication and demands urgent diplomatic resolution.

The form of reporting sustained this through a consolidated model of long-form analytical depth and high-affect video imagery designed to compensate for systematic access restrictions. The discursive framing constructed it through a dominant humanitarian lens that fore-grounded civilian deprivation and urgency while back grounding the military and political dimensions that might require explicit attribution. The representational structures reinforced it through dispersed and irresolvable causal accountability, concrete and systematically fore-grounded victim visibility, and a near-total withdrawal of evaluative judgment. The sourcing logic anchored it through a hybrid credibility circuit combining institutional sources with controlled incorporation of experiential testimony, a mixed information environment shaped by access denial, and a diplomatic horizon of urgent de-escalation through ceasefire and mediation pressure.

The central finding of this research is that these two Editorial frameworks are not simply different journalistic responses to different conflicts. They are different constructions of what each conflict is permitted to mean within the BBC's institutional and editorial framework, and they are calibrated not by the scale of documented harm, not by the number of civilian casualties, and not by the applicability of international humanitarian law, but by the geopolitical proximity of each conflict to the institutional interests and political alignments of the BBC's home state. Ukraine, a conflict in which British institutional, governmental, and diplomatic interests are directly and publicly engaged, is narrated with moral clarity, concentrated accountability, and strategic coherence. Gaza, a conflict in which those same interests are internally contested and diplomatically sensitive, is narrated with moral ambiguity, dispersed accountability, and humanitarian urgency. This is the double standard that the comparative analysis makes structurally visible: not a deliberate conspiracy of editorial bias, but the systematic output of an institutional logic that constructs political intelligibility differentially according to the geopolitical terrain on which each conflict occurs.

This finding speaks directly to the central research problematic, which asked how the BBC's coverage of the two conflicts compares across the identified analytical dimensions and what this comparison reveals about the relationship between media representations and geopolitical power. The answer is that the BBC's coverage confirms the existence of a

differentiated representational logic that is coherent, structurally consistent across all four analytical clusters, and systematically correlated with the political interests of the Western alliance. The BBC does not just describe two wars; it situates them within separate registers of political reality, each governed by its own internal logic of credibility, sourcing, framing, and moral temporality.

Subsection Two: Theoretical Implications:

The comparative findings carry significant implications for the theoretical framework that have guided this research. Read through these analytical lenses developed in Chapter two of this study, the patterns identified across the two conflict cases do not simply describe how the BBC reports on war; they illuminate the structural logic through which globally authoritative media institutions selectively construct the moral and political intelligibility of international conflict.

From the perspective of framing theory, the findings confirm and extend the foundational proposition advanced by Robert Entman in his seminal article Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm, published in the Journal of Communication in 1993. Entman established that frames select certain aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient, in ways that promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. The comparative analysis demonstrates that the BBC's two coverage regimes are precisely this: two coherent and internally consistent frames that select, foreground, and organise different aspects of otherwise comparable conflict realities. In Ukraine, the selected problem is geopolitical aggression; the causal interpretation concentrates responsibility; the moral evaluation is anchored in the grammar of the rules-based order; and the treatment recommendation is sustained institutional resistance. In Gaza, the selected problem is humanitarian emergency; the causal interpretation disperses accountability; the moral evaluation is evacuated to near-zero; and the treatment recommendation is urgent diplomatic de-escalation. These are not two neutral descriptions of two different events. They are two politically consequential framings that construct different moral worlds for their audiences, with different implications for the formation of public opinion, the direction of political pressure, and the scope of democratic accountability.

Agenda-setting theory sharpens this picture considerably. The concept, as developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in their foundational study of the 1968 American presidential election campaign, The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media, published in the Public Opinion Quarterly in 1972, holds that media organisations do not simply reflect the world; they select and structure the issues that audiences consider important, and they calibrate the salience of those issues through the resources, prominence, and framing they deploy. Applied to the comparative case, the BBC's agenda-setting function produces a striking asymmetry: Ukraine is assigned the salience of a strategic global priority whose implications are presented as directly relevant to the security and values of Western liberal societies; Gaza is assigned the salience of a humanitarian emergency whose implications are contained within the register of crisis management and diplomatic urgency. The BBC accordingly shapes not only what audiences think about these conflicts, but how important they are judged to be, and in what political register they are permitted to matter.

Soft power theory adds another interpretive layer to these findings. Joseph Nye, in his influential work Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power published in 1990, and in his subsequent scholarship on the subject, defines soft power as the capacity to shape the preferences of others through attraction and persuasion, and not through coercion or inducement. Nye explicitly identifies international media organisations as key instruments of this capacity, capable of projecting a state's values, narratives, and worldview to global audiences. The comparative findings demonstrate that the BBC functions precisely as such an instrument, and does so differentially across the two cases. By constructing Ukraine as a domain of principled collective defence aligned with the values of sovereignty, democratic order, and international law, the BBC circulates a normative framework that legitimises the Western alliance's strategic response to Russian aggression. By constructing Gaza as a domain of humanitarian urgency and diplomatic management, the BBC depoliticises the conduct of a Western ally, containing the conflict within a register that preserves Western normative authority while deferring the political accountability that a more direct framing would require. These are not equivalent exercises of journalistic neutrality; they are differential exercises of communicative influence whose cumulative effect is the reproduction of a Western normative order in which allied conduct is rendered manageable and adversarial conduct is rendered condemnable.

What the Neo-Gramscian tradition brings to this analysis is the question of how power reproduces itself without announcing itself. Drawing on the intellectual tradition established by Antonio Gramsci in the Prison Notebooks and extended to media analysis by scholars including Stuart Hall, this perspective holds that dominant social orders reproduce themselves not primarily through coercion but through the manufacture of consent: the production of a cultural and ideological common sense that naturalises the interests of dominant groups as the universal interest. The BBC's differential construction of moral accountability across Ukraine and Gaza exemplifies this process at the level of international conflict journalism. The selective application of moral-legal standards, concentrating accountability where it aligns with Western interests and dispersing it where it does not, does not present itself as a political choice; it presents itself as the outcome of journalistic professionalism, impartiality, and editorial judgment. The ideological work is most effectively accomplished precisely when it is invisible, and the comparative methodology of this study is designed to make it visible.

Subsection Three: Media Diplomacy and Power Relations:

The findings of this study bear directly on one of the central propositions of media diplomacy scholarship: That powerful international broadcaster do not simply observe and report on the world of international relations, but actively participate in constructing the conditions under which that world operates. The BBC's differential coverage of Ukraine and Gaza confirms and deepens this proposition, revealing a form of what this study describes as differential media diplomacy, a practice in which the same institution assigns fundamentally different diplomatic functions to different conflicts according to the political and institutional interests at stake.

In Ukraine, the BBC's coverage functions as an instrument of coalition diplomacy. By anchoring its reporting in Western institutional sources, constructing the information environment as formally mediated and institutionally credible, concentrating causal responsibility in the adversarial actor, and assigning the conflict a temporal horizon of strategic endurance, the BBC produces coverage whose cumulative diplomatic effect is to sustain the political conditions under which Western publics accept the legitimacy of military and financial support to Ukraine, maintain the coherence of the Western alliance, and resist the pressure toward negotiated settlement that would require territorial compromise. This is not a marginal or incidental function; it is a central dimension of what international broadcasting does when its home state is a committed participant in a

geopolitical confrontation. The BBC does not simply report on the Western coalition's response to Russian aggression; it provides that response with the narrative coherence, institutional credibility, and moral legitimacy it requires to sustain domestic and international support.

In Gaza, the BBC's coverage functions as an instrument of diplomatic containment. By incorporating civilian testimony in a controlled and bounded way, deploying a hybrid information environment that acknowledges crisis without assigning clear accountability, dispersing causal responsibility across multiple parties, and assigning the conflict a temporal horizon of urgent de-escalation, the BBC produces coverage whose cumulative diplomatic effect is to provide Western governments with the discursive space to maintain their formal diplomatic support for Israel's security position while simultaneously expressing concern for civilian harm. This is precisely the governmental position that multiple Western administrations, including the British government of Rishi Sunak, sought to maintain during the acute phase of the conflict: a posture of humanitarian concern combined with political alignment with Israel's right to self-defence. The BBC's coverage does not challenge this posture; it reflects and reinforces it.

What this comparative analysis reveals, at the level of power relations, is a structural correlation between journalistic authority and geopolitical power that is not the product of deliberate editorial conspiracy but of the institutional logic through which international broadcasting operates. Whoever controls the information flow determines, to a significant degree, the dominant narrative and the conditions under which political accountability can be demanded, international legal scrutiny applied, and democratic publics can form morally informed judgments. The BBC's construction of Ukraine as geopolitically legible and Gaza as morally ambiguous does not merely describe two different conflicts; it determines the political terrain on which each conflict is publicly contested.

This finding connects directly to the conceptual framework developed in section 1.1.3 of this research, where the relationship between media, power, and hegemony was theorised. The evidence of the comparative content analysis confirms that the BBC, as a globally authoritative media institution, does not stand outside the power relations it reports on. It is embedded within them, and its editorial choices reflect, reproduce, and reinforce those relations in ways that have material consequences for the conditions under which international justice, accountability, and democratic deliberation can operate.

Subsection Four: Ethical and Normative Implications

The ethical and normative dimension of this study does not begin with an external standard imposed on the BBC from outside; it begins with the standards that journalism as a professional and institutional practice sets for itself. The theoretical framework developed in Part One of this research, drawing on the normative theory of the media, the traditions of professional journalism ethics, and the Neo-Gramscian critique of media power, established a set of principles against which the performance of international public broadcasting can be evaluated. Those principles include the impartial and consistent application of journalistic standards across comparable cases, the accurate and contextualised representation of civilian harm, the transparent attribution of causal responsibility, and the provision of the informational conditions under which democratic publics can form morally grounded political judgments. The question that the comparative analysis poses, with considerable force, is whether these principles are honoured consistently across the two conflict cases, or whether they function as rhetorical norms that yield to institutional and geopolitical pressures when the political cost of applying them is sufficiently high.

The evidence assembled across the four analytical clusters suggests, with a clarity that is analytically uncomfortable, that the latter is more accurately descriptive of the BBC's performance. The normative commitment to impartiality is applied asymmetrically: causal responsibility is attributed with clarity and consistency in Ukraine, and dispersed into irresolvable ambiguity in Gaza. The normative commitment to the accurate representation of civilian harm is applied asymmetrically: victim suffering is individuated and systematically fore-grounded in Gaza, and episodic and subordinated in Ukraine. The normative commitment to journalistic transparency is applied asymmetrically: the information environment is acknowledged as contested and propagandistic in Ukraine, and depicted as an open and authentic space of evidence in Gaza. These are not random variations in journalistic practice; they are systematic patterns whose direction correlates consistently with the political interests and diplomatic alignments of the BBC's home state.

Roger Silverstone, in his work Media and Morality: On the Rise of the Mediapolis, published in 2007, argues that the media's capacity to function as a moral space for the representation of the suffering of others is undermined by a neutrality that treats extreme harm and ordinary political difference as equivalent. Silverstone calls for what he describes

as proper distance: a mediated relationship with distant suffering that neither collapses the difference between the audience and the other, nor allows institutional caution to evacuate the moral significance of what is being witnessed[1]. The BBC's near-total evaluative withdrawal from Gaza, maintained in the face of documented mass civilian harm whose scale was publicly verifiable, does not achieve the journalistic virtue of impartiality. It achieves, as the analysis demonstrates, the political effect of moral equivalence through tonal silence, and that is not the same thing. Tonal silence in the face of catastrophic violence is not a neutral journalistic act; it is a form of editorial positioning that serves identifiable institutional interests while presenting itself as professionalism.

The normative framework established in subsection two of this research, examining the ethical and professional traditions governing international conflict journalism, articulates a clear standard; major public broadcasters bear a responsibility not only to inform, but to create the conditions under which democratic publics can hold power to account, demand legal accountability for documented violations of international humanitarian law, and form the morally grounded political judgments that are the precondition of meaningful civic engagement with distant conflicts. The evidence of this study indicates that this responsibility is discharged more fully in Ukraine, where the conflict's moral structure is narrated with clarity sufficient to support audience understanding, political judgment, and accountability demands, than in Gaza, where that same moral structure is rendered deliberately opaque in ways that systematically impede the exercise of democratic accountability.

It would be intellectually dishonest to attribute this pattern exclusively to editorial failure or institutional bad faith. The BBC operates within conditions of genuine institutional constraint: governmental funding dependencies, Royal Charter negotiations, access relationships with states and armies, the management of deeply divided domestic audiences, and the accumulated weight of British foreign policy alignments that define the boundaries of the editorially possible without ever formally prescribing them. These constraints are real, and they are operative. What the normative evaluation of this study insists upon, however, is that acknowledging these constraints is not the same as exempting their consequences from ethical scrutiny? The distance between what a globally authoritative public broadcaster claims to do, apply consistent journalistic standards in the

[1] Roger Silverstone, *Media and Morality: On the Rise of the Mediapolis* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 47.

impartial service of its audiences, and what the comparative analysis reveals it as doing, construct different moral-political worlds for different conflicts according to their proximity to the institutional interests of its home state, is not an incidental discrepancy. It is the central ethical and democratic question that the international study of media and conflict must be equipped to pose, and this research has sought to do precisely that.

The norms of journalism exist. They are codified in editorial guidelines, professional codes, and the institutional self-presentation of every major public broadcaster. The findings of this study raise the question of whether they function, in practice, as genuine constraints on editorial behaviour, or whether they function as principles honoured when they carry no political cost and suspended when they do. The answer that the comparative content analysis provides is not a comfortable one, but it is an honest one: the norms exist on paper; their application, in the context of international conflict journalism, is selective, asymmetric, and shaped by the geopolitical environment in which the institution operates. That selectivity is itself an ethical and democratic problem, and it is one that the normative evaluation of international public broadcasting has an obligation to name.

Conclusion

To sum up this research, we can return to a word written long before the cameras rolled on any modern conflict zone. Walter Lippmann observed in Public Opinion as early as 1922 that "we do not first see, and then define; we define first, then see". A century before the term media diplomacy entered the scholarly lexicon, this insight had already captured the foundational logic that this dissertation has spent its entirety tracing that the pictures institutions construct inside human minds precede and govern the moral and political judgments those minds render about distant realities. To understand the full weight of what this research has uncovered, one must begin there, not with the BBC, not with Ukraine or Gaza, but with that deeper and more enduring truth about the relationship between representation and power. The practice of shaping global consciousness predates the digital era; it runs from wartime propaganda and radio through Cold War broadcasting. This historical continuity confirms Walter Lippmann's argument that whoever controls the public picture shapes the moral universe of political choice, and it shows how that power has been institutionalized as professional neutrality.

Through rigorous comparative analysis of BBC's coverage of Ukraine and Gaza, this research shows that a single, globally authoritative institution applied fundamentally different representational logics to two crises of comparable humanitarian severity, and that the direction of this asymmetry correlates closely with the diplomatic and political interests of its home state. In Ukraine, the BBC operated as an architect of geopolitical intelligibility: it attributed causality with prosecutorial clarity, individualized civilian suffering with biographical detail that invited moral identification, and sustained a temporal horizon of principled endurance that made allied support appear not simply defensible but historically necessary. In Gaza, the same institution enacted what this study defines as diplomatic containment it dispersed responsibility into irresolvable historical ambiguity, framed suffering primarily as humanitarian tragedy while stripping it of political accountability, and quietly mirrored the posture many Western governments adopted humanitarian concern coupled with strategic alignment. These are not two editorial responses to different wars; they are two diplomatic functions. This practice, described here as differential media diplomacy, is more sophisticated and, arguably, more consequential than simple bias because it operates through the very standards the institution claims to apply universally.

The ethical weight of this finding cannot be absorbed into the comfortable language of institutional imperfection. The professional norms governing international public

broadcasting, impartiality, contextualized representation of harm, transparent causal attribution, and the democratic enablement of informed public judgment are not rhetorical decorations but codified commitments with genuine democratic stakes. The comparative evidence shows these norms operating as contextually calibrated principles: honoured when their application carries little political cost and quietly relaxed when home state diplomatic pressures make consistent application inconvenient .What replaces moral clarity in such moments is tonal silence, an evaluative withdrawal that presents itself as journalistic restraint while serving the political function of protecting governmental diplomatic space from the friction of public accountability. Sustained in the presence of verifiable mass civilian harm, that silence is not neutral; it is consequential editorial posture precisely because it assumes the authority of professionalism while advancing the logic of power.

What this research uncovers, at its deepest level, is that visibility itself has become one of the decisive political resources of the contemporary international order. It determines which violations of international humanitarian law acquire the moral weight necessary to generate accountability demands and which are dissolved into the ambient language of tragic but irresolvable conflict. It shapes, with quiet cumulative force, the horizons of democratic publics who are, in principle, the sovereign authorities behind the foreign policies conducted in their names.

The international order of the twenty-first century is shaped as decisively by the authority to define reality as by the capacity to project military or economic force. In such a world, the international broadcaster occupies a position of power that democratic theory has not yet fully reckoned with, participating not simply in the transmission of events but in the construction of the very universe within which those events acquire or forfeit political significance, within which suffering becomes either a call to accountability or a footnote to strategy . Conflicts are waged on battlefields. They are interpreted in newsrooms. And they are decided, in ways that shape historical memory and condition the boundaries of global justice, by the pictures that institutions construct inside the minds of those who watch from a distance. The grass may survive the battle of the elephants. Whether it is seen, named, mourned, and remembered, or whether it is quietly folded into the language of geopolitical necessity, depends on choices made not in the field, but in the frame.

List of References

1. Abubakar, Abdullahi Tasiu. "British Public Diplomacy: A Case Study of the BBC Hausa Service." In *Britain's International Broadcasting*, edited by R. Mirchandani and A. Abubakar. CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy. Los Angeles, CA: Figueroa Press, 2014.

2. Allan, Stuart. *Citizen Witnessing: Revisioning Journalism in Times of Crisis*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

3. Altheide, David L. "Media Hegemony: A Failure of Perspective." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1984).

4. Andersen, Robin. *A Century of Media, a Century of War*. New York: Peter Lang, 2006.

5. Arceneaux, Philip, and Shawn Powers. "International Broadcasting: Public Diplomacy as a Game in a Marketplace of Loyalties." In *The Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, 2nd ed., edited by Nancy Snow and Nicholas J. Cull. London: Routledge, 2020.

6. Artz, Lee. "Media Hegemony." In *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*, edited by Angharad N. Valdivia, 1–3. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2013.

7. Ball, Meriwether. "Width and Breadth of the Narrative Paradigm Over a Quarter Century." Preprint, School of Communication and the Arts, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA, December 2022.

8. Barker, Chris. *Global Television: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

9. Barnes-Dacey, Julien, Cinzia Bianco, and Hugh Lovatt. *The Gaza Crisis: Mapping the Middle East's Shifting Battle Lines*. Policy Brief / Special Report. Berlin: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2024.

10. BBC Trust. *Protecting and Enhancing the BBC's Independence in the Next Charter: BBC Trust Proposals*. London: BBC Trust, 2016.

11. Bélair-Gagnon, Valérie. "Revisiting Impartiality: Social Media and Journalism at the BBC." *Symbolic Interaction* 36, no. 4 (2013).

12. Bennett, W. Lance. "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the United States." *Journalism of Communication* 40, no. 2 (1990): 103–106.

13. Bennett, W. Lance, and Robert M. Entman. *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

14. Benson, Rodney. "Book Review: Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies." *Journalism* 12, no. 7 (2011).

15. Benson, Rodney. "News Media as a Journalistic Field: What Bourdieu Adds to New Institutionalism, and Vice Versa." *Political Communication* 23, no. 2 (2006): 187–188.

16. Biver, Philip. "Journalism in Times of War and Crisis: What Does It Take to Be a War Correspondent?" Dissertation, Lycée Ermesinde, Mersch, Luxembourg, 2022.

17. Boyd-Barrett, Oliver. "Judith Miller, the New York Times, and the Propaganda for War in Iraq." In *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*, edited by Stuart Allan and Barbie Zelizer, 1–39. London: Routledge, 2004.

18. British Broadcasting Corporation. "The BBC's Editorial Standards." London: BBC, 2019.

19. *BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24*. London: BBC, 2024.

20. *BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25*. London: BBC, 2025.

21. *BBC World Service Performance Review 2016–2020*. London: BBC, 2020.

22. Caballero, Gabriel, Ellyn Matta, Maike Fiedler, and Ana Vukmirovic. "Role of Media in Hegemony and Subcultures." Research report, World Heritage Studies Programme, Cottbus, Germany, 2014.

23. Calhoun, Craig. "The Importance of Imagined Communities – and Benedict Anderson." *Debats: Journal on Culture, Power and Society* 1 (December 2016): 1–6.

24. Chadwick, Andrew. *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*. 2nd ed. Oxford Studies in Digital Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

25. Chouliaraki, Lilie, and Tijana Stolic. "Rethinking Media Responsibility in the Refugee 'Crisis': A Visual Typology of European News." *Media, Culture & Society* 39, no. 8 (2017).

26. Coban, Filiz. "The Role of the Media in International Relations: From the CNN Effect to the Al-Jazeera Effect." *Journal of International Relations and Foreign Policy* 4, no. 2 (2016): 45–46.

27. Cohen, Yoel. *Media Diplomacy: The Foreign Office in the Mass Communication Age*. London: Frank Cass, 1987.

28. Cole-Adams, Peter. "Reporting War and Conflict." *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, no. 7 (1999): 103–106.

29. Cull, Nicholas J. *Public Diplomacy: Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019.

30. *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past*. CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy. Los Angeles, CA: Figueroa Press, 2009.

31. Curran, James. *Media and Power*. London: Routledge, 2002.

32. Cushion, Stephen, and Justin Lewis. "Introduction: What Is 24-Hour News Television?" In *The Rise of 24-Hour News Television: Global Perspectives*, edited by Stephen Cushion and Justin Lewis, 1–28. New York: Peter Lang, 2010.

33. Danby, Grahame, and Gavin Thompson. *BBC World Service*. SN/HA/5969. London: House of Commons Library, 2011.

34. De Carvalho, Lucie, et al. "Introduction: Changing Perspectives on the History of the BBC." *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 26, no. 1 (2021).

35. de Vreese, Claes H. "News Framing: Theory and Typology." *Information Design Journal* 13, no. 1 (2005): 51–52.

36. Dragomir, Marius. *Humanitarian Crisis Coverage Report*. Media Content Analysis Series. Santiago de Compostela: Media and Journalism Research Center, 2025.

37. Du Toit, Peter. *Handbook: A Conflict Sensitive Approach to Reporting on Conflict and Violent Extremism*. Makhanda, South Africa: Internews / Rhodes University, 2019.

38. El Issawi, Fatima, and Gerd Baumann. "The BBC Arabic Service: Changing Political Mediascapes." *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 3, no. 2 (2010).

39. Entman, Robert M. "Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 52–54.

40. Entman, Robert M. *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

41. Finkelstein, Norman G. *Gaza: An Inquest Into Its Martyrdom*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2018.

42. Galeotti, Mark. *The Weaponisation of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022.

43. Gamson, William A. *Talking Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

44. Gans, Herbert J. *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. 25th anniversary ed. Edited by David Abrahamson. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004.

45. Gilboa, Eytan. "The CNN Effect: The Search for a Communication Theory of International Relations." *Political Communication* 22, no. 1 (2005): 4–34.

46. Gilboa, Eytan. "Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects." *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12, no. 2 (2001): 3–28.

47. Gillespie, Marie. "BBC Arabic, Social Media and Citizen Production: An Experiment in Digital Democracy before the Arab Spring." *Theory, Culture & Society* 30, no. 4 (2013).

48. Gillespie, Marie, et al. *Understanding the Changing Cultural Value of the BBC World Service and the British Council*. UK Cultural Value Project. Swindon, UK: Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2014.

49. Gitlin, Todd. *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

50. Goffman, Erving. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986.

51. Groves, Paul. "History of Radio Transmission in the UK." *Frequency Finder UK*. London, April 2024.

52. Guenduez, Ali Asker, Kuno Schedler, and Dumitru Ciocan. "Generic Frames and Tonality: Mapping a Polarizing Issue in a Multifaceted Context." *European Journal of Communication* 31, no. 5 (2016).

53. Habimana, Jean Claude. "Application and Critiques of the Four Normative Theories of the Press in New Media." Master's thesis, University of Rwanda, Huye, Rwanda, 2024.

54. Hallin, Daniel C., and Paolo Mancini. *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Communication, Society and Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

55. Havens, Timothy. *Global Television Marketplace*. London: British Film Institute, 2006.

56. Hendy, David. *The BBC: A People's History*. London: Profile Books, 2022.

57. Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.

58. Hoskins, Andrew, and Ben O'Loughlin. *War and Media: The Emergence of Diffused War*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010.

59. Ikenberry, G. John, and Charles A. Kupchan. "Socialization and Hegemonic Power." *International Organization* 44, no. 3 (1990): 284–294.

60. International Broadcasting Trust. *Submission from the International Broadcasting Trust to the Future Funding of the BBC World Service*. London: IBT, 2024.

61. "Israel Gaza: UN Warns of 'Slaughter' If Israel Launches Ground Assault on Rafah." *BBC News*, February 13, 2024. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68287513 (accessed May 6, 2026).

62. Jenks, John. *British Propaganda and News Media in the Cold War*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.

63. Johnston, Gordon, and Emma Robertson. *BBC World Service: Overseas Broadcasting, 1932–2018*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

64. Juntunen, Laura. "Explaining the Need for Speed: Competition & Ethics." In *The Rise of 24-Hour News Television: Global Perspectives*, edited by Stephen Cushion and Justin Lewis, 167–182. New York: Peter Lang, 2010.

65. Kalb, Marvin. "Foreword." In *The Media and Foreign Policy*, edited by Simon Serfaty. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.

66. Katchanovski, Ivan. "The Separatist Conflict in Donbas: A Violent Break-Up of Ukraine?" Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, October 16, 2014.

67. Katz, Yaron. "Regional Dynamics and Global Implications of the War in Gaza." *European Academic Research* 13, no. 2 (2025): 142–154.

68. Kaur, Avneet, and Arnav Arora. "Beyond the Battlefield: Framing Analysis of Media Coverage in Conflict Reporting." arXiv Preprint. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2025.

69. Khalidi, Rashid. *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017*. New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2020.

70. Khan, Munam. "Role of Media in Diplomacy." *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities* 4, no. 3 (2021): 3462–3463.

71. Kuitenbrouwer, Vincent. "Radio Wars: Histories of Cross-Border Radio Propaganda." In *The Wireless World: Global Histories of International Radio Broadcasting*, edited by Simon J. Potter, 104–133. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.

72. Kumari, Manisha. "The Role of Soft Power in International Diplomacy." *International Journal of Political Science and Governance* 7, no. 5 (2025): 213–214.

73. Lasswell, Harold D. "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society." In *The Communication of Ideas*, edited by Lyman Bryson, 84–99. New York: The Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1948.

74. Lee, Angela M., Renita Coleman, and Logan Molyneux. "From Thinking to Doing: Effects of Different Social Norms on Ethical Behavior in Journalism." *Journal of Media Ethics* 31, no. 2 (2016): 73–74.

75. Leffler, Melvyn P. *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007.

76. Lim, Young Joon. "Conceptual Models of Media Diplomacy: For the Resolution of International Communication Conflict." *International Journal of Communication Research* 7, no. 1 (2017).

77. Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. New York: Free Press, 1997.

78. Livingston, Steven. "Clarifying the CNN Effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention." Research paper, Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1997.

79. Ljajić, Samir H. "Media, Ethical Norms and Media Literacy Education." *Facta Universitatis: Series Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education* 4, no. 2 (2020): 185–186.

80. Loughborough University Communication Research Centre. *A BBC Trust Report on the Impartiality and Accuracy of the BBC's Coverage of the Events Known as the "Arab Spring": Content Analysis*. Content Analysis Report. Loughborough: Loughborough University, 2012.

81. Major, Patrick. "Listening behind the Curtain: BBC Broadcasting to East Germany and Its Cold War Echo." *Cold War History* 14, no. 4 (2014): 585–586.

82. Mattern, Janice Bially. "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005).

83. McCombs, Maxwell. "Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, edited by Gustavo Mesch, 2–3. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2008.

84. McCombs, Maxwell E., and Donald L. Shaw. "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972).

85. McNair, Brian. *An Introduction to Political Communication*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 1999.

86. McQueen, David Adrian. "BBC TV's Panorama, Conflict Coverage and the 'Westminster Consensus.'" PhD diss., Bournemouth University, Bournemouth, UK, 2010.

87. Mearsheimer, John J. "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin." *Foreign Affairs* 93 (October 2014): 1–11.

88. Medhurst, Jamie. "The BBC and the Origins and Development of the Notion of Public Service Broadcasting." In *The BBC and Public Service Broadcasting in the Twentieth Century*. Paris: CRECIB, 2021.

89. Melki, Jad. "The Interplay of Politics, Economics and Culture in Foreign News Coverage." *Media, War & Conflict* 7, no. 2 (2014).

90. Milasinovic, Marija. "Media and Military from the First Conflict to the 'War on Terror.'" In *Security Challenges of Modern Society: Dilemmas and Implications*, edited by Dejan Dasic. Belgrade: University 'Union-Nikola Tesla,' 2022.

91. Mortimer, Edward. *A BBC Trust Report on the Impartiality and Accuracy of the BBC's Coverage of the Events Known as the "Arab Spring"*. London: BBC Trust, 2012.

92. Moula, Hossin Abdul. "Hayden White's Theory of History as Narrative in the Light of New Historicism." *Eurasian Journal of English Language and Literature* 5, no. 1 (2023): 27–38.

93. National Audit Office. *The BBC World Service's Savings Programmes*. HC 1382. London: NAO, 2025.

94. Noelle-Neumann, Elisabeth. *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion—Our Social Skin*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

95. Nye, Joseph S., Jr. *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. New York: Basic Books, 1990.

96. *The Future of Power*. New York: Public Affairs, 2011.

97. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004.

98. Okereke, Chukwumerije. "Neo-Gramscianism." In *Edward Elgar Encyclopaedia for Global Environmental Governance and Politics*, edited by Philipp H. Pattberg and Fariborz Zelli. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015.

99. Oluwasola, Omoloa. "The Normative Theories of the Press in the Digital Age: A Need for Revision." *IMSU Journal of Communication Studies* 4, no. 2 (2020).

100. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024. Consulted February 17, 2026.

101. Oz, Talha, and Halil Bisgin. "Attribution of Responsibility and Blame Regarding a Man-Made Disaster: #FlintWaterCrisis." In *CIKM-SWDM '16: Proceedings of the Joint Workshop on Social Web for Disaster Management*, 1–2. Indianapolis, IN: ACM, 2016.

102. Pak, Daniel. "Conflict Framing: Content Analysis of Peace and War Journalism in Coverage of the Russia-Ukraine War." *American Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2024).

103. Pamment, James. *New Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century: A Comparative Study of Policy and Practice*. Routledge New Diplomacy Studies. London: Routledge, 2013.

104. Pappé, Ilan. *The Biggest Prison on Earth: A History of the Occupied Territories*. London: Oneworld Publications, 2017.

105. Paterson, Chris. "The Hidden Role of Television News Agencies: Going Live." In *The Rise of 24-Hour News Television: Global Perspectives*, edited by Stephen Cushion and Justin Lewis, 99–116. New York: Peter Lang, 2010.

106. Peter, Ada Sonia, and Nnamdi T. Ekeanyanwu. "Book Review: The Elements of Journalism Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel." *Covenant Journal of Communication* 1, no. 2 (2013).

107. Potter, Simon J. "Out of the Ether: The Wireless World and New Histories of International Radio Broadcasting." In *The Wireless World: Global Histories of International Radio Broadcasting*, edited by Simon J. Potter, 1–32. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.

108. Price, Monroe E. *Media and Sovereignty: The Global Information Revolution and Its Challenge to State Power*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.

109. Price, Monroe E. "Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of International Broadcasting." *Cardozo Arts & Entertainment Law Journal* 21, no. 1 (2003).

110. Ramsey, Phil. "BBC Radio and Public Value: The Governance of Public Service Radio in the United Kingdom." *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 15, no. 1 (2017): 89–91.

111. Rawnsley, Gary D. "Introduction to 'International Broadcasting and Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century.'" *Media and Communication* 4, no. 2 (2016): 42–43.

112. Risso, Linda. *Propaganda and Intelligence in the Cold War: The NATO Information Service*. London: Routledge, 2014.

113. Risso, Linda. "Radio Wars: Broadcasting in the Cold War." *Cold War History* 13, no. 2 (2013): 145–152.

114. Robinson, Piers. *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention*. London: Routledge, 2002.

115. Robinson, Piers. "The CNN Effect Revisited." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, no. 4 (2005).

116. Robinson, Piers. "Media and Foreign Policy." In *Routledge Handbook of Media, Conflict and Security*, edited by Philip Seib and Romy Fröhlich. London: Routledge, 2016.

117. Roman, Janice D. "Critical Theories of Communication and Media." Doctoral research paper, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines, 2022.

118. Roy, Sara. "The Gaza Strip: A Case of Economic De-Development." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17, no. 1 (1987): 56–57.

119. Rutland, Peter. "Book Review: Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands by Richard Sakwa." *LSE Review of Books*, 2015.

120. Safa, Ramazn, and Mohamed Barati. "CNN and BBC Shaping the Opinions in Different Countries: A Multi-Dimensional Descriptive Commentary Related to Security, Military and Diplomacy." *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences* 9, no. 6 (2024).

121. Saliu, Hasan. "Rethinking Media Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy: Towards a New Concept: Digital Media Diplomacy." *Online Journal Modelling the New Europe*, no. 39 (2022): 11–12.

122. Scherling, Johannes. *Representations of Victimhood in Media Reporting of Armed Conflicts*. Basel: MDPI, 2026.

123. Scheufele, Dietram A., and David Tewksbury. "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models." *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007): 11–12.

124. Schudson, Michael. "The Objectivity Norm in American Journalism." *Journalism* 2, no. 2 (2001): 149–150.

125. Scott, Martin, Kate Wright, and Mel Bunce. *The State of Humanitarian Journalism*. Norwich, UK: University of East Anglia, 2018.

126. Seib, Philip. *Real-Time Diplomacy: Politics and Power in the Social Media Era*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

127. Silverstone, Roger. *Media and Morality: On the Rise of the Mediapolis*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.

128. Simionov, Loredana Maria. "Book Review: Andrew Wilson, Ukraine Crisis – What It Means for the West." *Eastern Journal of European Studies* 6, no. 2 (2015): 189–192.

129. StudySmarter. "International Communication: Definition & Importance." StudySmarter, October 11, 2024. Consulted February 18, 2026.

130. Telsaç, Cüneyt. "Media Ethics." In *Mass Communication*, 92–93. Niš: Facta Universitatis, 2022.

131. Thussu, Daya Kishan. *International Communication: Continuity and Change*. 3rd ed. London: Sage, 2018.

132. Tomlinson, John. *Globalization and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999.

133. Torfeh, Massoumeh, and Annabelle Sreberny. "Broadcasting to Afghanistan: A History of the BBC Pashto Service." *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 3, no. 2 (2010).

134. Track Changes, ed. *Violence and Conflict Reporting: The Media Debates Its Role*. Proceedings of the Regional Conference of Senior Editors. New Delhi: Zubaan Books, 2015.

135. Tuchman, Gaye. *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press, 1978.

136. Tuchman, Gaye. "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity." *The American Journal of Sociology* 77, no. 4 (1972): 660–665.

137. Van Dijk, Teun A. *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: SAGE Publications, 1998.

138. Vladisavljevic, Nebojsa. "Media Framing of Political Conflict: A Review of the Literature." Working paper, MeCoDEM Working Papers, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK, 2015.

139. Vuving, Alexander L. *The Logic of Attraction: Outline of a Theory of Soft Power*. Honolulu: Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2019.

140. Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin, et al. "Rethinking Balance and Impartiality in Journalism? How the BBC Attempted and Failed to Change the Paradigm." *Journalism* 18, no. 7 (2017): 781–782.

141. Walsh, Matt. "Constructing Impartiality in a Polarised News Environment: An Analysis of BBC Question Time Contributors 2014–2024." *Journalism*, advance online publication (2024): 1–2.

142. Webb, Alban, et al. *BBC World Service and the Political Economy of Cultural Value in Historical Context*. Research report, The Open University/AHRC Cultural Value Project, Milton Keynes, UK, 2014.

143. Wijfjes, Huub. "A British Broadcasting Centenary and Media History." *TMG Journal of Media History* 26, no. 1 (2023).

144. Winn, Giles. *Global Reach, National Impact: The Soft Power Impact of the BBC World Service to the UK*. London: Institute for Global Prosperity, University College London, 2025.

145. Yanardağoğlu, Eylem. "Changing Practices in International Broadcasting: The BBC World Service Example." *Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences*, no. 48 (2015).

146. Zeng, Yuan. "Detached Disseminator, Populist Watchdog and Facilitative Change Agent: The Professional Role of Perception of Foreign Correspondents in China." *Journalism* 18, no. 10 (2017): 1–5.

Appendices

Content analysis form

This content analysis form has been developed within the framework of a Master's thesis in International Relations entitled:

"Media Diplomacy during International Conflicts: A Comparative Study of the BBC's Coverage of Atrocities in Ukraine (2022) and Gaza (2023)".

The study aims to examine how international media, particularly the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), constructs representations of armed conflicts and contributes to shaping international perceptions through its journalistic coverage. It focuses on the role of media diplomacy in framing, selecting, and interpreting conflict-related events.

The analysis is applied to two case studies:

- The Ukraine conflict (February-April 2022)
- The Gaza conflict (October-December 2023)

The main research question guiding this analysis is:

-To what extent does the BBC construct differentiated representations of international conflicts in its coverage of the war in Ukraine (2022) compared to the Gaza conflict (2023)?

The coding system was designed to analyze BBC news articles across both cases by breaking down media content into measurable units, allowing for a structured comparison of framing patterns, actor representation, attribution of responsibility, and overall narrative construction.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the entire BBC online news article, including headline, lead paragraph, body text, and all visual or multimedia elements. Each article is coded once per category.

Inter-coder Reliability

To ensure methodological consistency and reduce subjective bias in the coding process, the reliability of the content analysis instrument was assessed through inter-coder reliability testing using Holsti's coefficient.

General information of the article:

A. Article Title

B. Article Type

C. Date of Publication

D. Conflict Case (Ukraine / Gaza)

- **Form-related categories:**

I). Journalistic Genre Category

01	02	03	04	05

II). Publication Length Category

06	07	08

III). Visual / Multimedia framing Category

09	10	11

- **Content related categories**:

IV). Nature of the Topic

12	13	14

V). Dominant Frame Category

15	16	17	18

VI). Representation of Actors

19	20	21	22	23

VII). Representation of Victims

24	25	26

VIII). Attribution of Responsibility

27	28	29	30	31

IX) Evaluative Orientation

32	33	34

X). Sources and Voices

35	36	37

XI). News Priority Category:

38	39	40	41

XII) Diplomatic purpose

42	43	44	45

XIII. Media and information environment category

46	47	48

Content Analysis guide:

The content analysis form has been divided into three main sections:

First section: General Information

It includes the article title represented by "A", the article type represented by "B", the publication date represented by "C", and the conflict case represented by "D".

Second section: Form categories (how was it said?)

Numbers **(01–10)** refer to the form categories and indicators as follows:

I). Journalistic Genre Category:

Codes (**01–05)** refer to the type of journalistic content and include:

01News article

02 Analytical reports

03Live coverage

04Interview / Statements

05 Editorial / Fact-check article

II). Publication Length Category:

Codes (**06–08)** refer to article length:

06Long (>400 words or multi-section structure)

07 Medium (150–400 words)

08Short (<150 words)

III). Visual / Multimedia framing Categories:

This category captures non-textual framing elements:

09Photographs

10Videos / embedded footage

11 Mixed multi-media

Third section: Content categories (what was said?)

IV). Nature of the Topic:

Codes (**12–14)** refer to:

12Military operations and clashes

13Humanitarian situation and casualties

14 Political and diplomatic developments

V). Dominant Frame Category:

Codes (**15–18)** refer to:

15Humanitarian

16Military / Security

17Political / Diplomatic

18Geopolitical / Strategic

VI). Representation of Actors:

Codes (**19–23)** refer to:

19actor A (main initiating / most visible side)

20actor B (opposing principle side)

21 both principle actors

22 International actors

23 Civilians / Non-state actors

VII) Representations of Victims:

Codes (**24–26)** refer to:

24Civilians

25Mixed (civilians + military)

26Absent / Limited

VIII). Attribution of Responsibility:

This category examines how BBC reporting assigns responsibility for escalation, continuation, or consequences of the conflict. Attribution may be explicit (direct statements by sources) or implicit (through framing choices, lexical emphasis, or selection of sources).

Codes **(27–31)** refer to:

27Actor A responsibility

28Actor B responsibility

29 International actors

30shared / multiple responsibilities

31Unclear / neutral attribution

IX. Evaluative Orientation

This category refers to the evaluative orientation of BBC reporting toward conflict actors, events, or consequences (military, humanitarian, or political developments).

32 Sympathetic toward Actor A narrative

33 Sympathetic toward Actor B narrative

34 Neutral / balanced / mixed

X. Sources and Voices:

This category refers to types of voices used to construct credibility

35Official sources

36Eyewitnesses / civilians

37Mixed sources

XI). News Priority Category:

Codes (**38-41)** refer to:

38Urgent / frontline developments

39Background / contextual reporting

40Humanitarian

41International reactions

XII) Diplomatic purpose of coverage

42 Legitimization of Actor A

43 Legitimization of Actor B

44 Mediation / ceasefire / negotiations

45 No diplomatic purpose visible

XIII. Media and information environment category

46Information control / propaganda

47Digital circulation / platforms

48Traditional reporting environments

Operational definitions guide

This guide has been prepared within the framework of a Master's thesis in International Relations entitled:

"Media Diplomacy during International Conflicts: A Comparative Study of the BBC's Coverage of Atrocities in Ukraine (2022) and Gaza (2023)".

It aims to support the content analysis process by verifying the accuracy and adequacy of the operational categories used in examining BBC coverage of the Ukraine case, ensuring methodological consistency and the validity of measurement tools.

First section: form-Related Categories

These categories answer the question: How was the content presented? They concern the journalistic form adopted by the BBC in covering the Ukraine (2022) and Gaza conflict (2023) and include the following:

I) Journalistic Genre Category

The journalistic genre refers to the editorial format through which media institutions organize and present information according to purpose, structure, style, and target audience. In BBC coverage of conflicts under study, this category is determined by the dominant format used in the article.

1) News Article: A standard news item published by BBC that focuses on reporting recent developments related to the analyzed conflict contexts, in a concise informational style. It generally emphasizes key facts such as who, what, when, where, and why.

2) Analytical Report: A longer journalistic item published by BBC that goes beyond immediate facts by interpreting events, explaining causes, presenting context, or assessing possible consequences of developments linked to the conflict situations under examination

3) Live Coverage: A continuously updated news format used by BBC to follow fast moving events in real-time. It usually contains short updates, breaking developments, battlefield changes, diplomatic announcements, or urgent reactions connected to ongoing conflict cases.

Live coverage is coded according to its original publication format. Archived live blogs remain classified as “Live Coverage” unless structurally transformed into a standard article.

4) Interview / Statements: A journalistic item in which information is primarily conveyed through direct quotations, official declarations, or responses from political leaders, military officials, diplomats, experts, witnesses, or other actors involved in the examined conflict cases.

5) Editorial / Fact-check Article: A specialized-article published by BBC that aims to explain disputed claims, verify circulating information, clarify misleading narratives,.

II) *Publication Length Category:* This category refers to the quantitative size of the article based on approximate word count, textual depth, and amount of detail devoted to the conflict cases under study (Ukraine 2022 and Gaza 2023). It helps indicate the level of editorial attention granted by the BBC to a specific event or issue.

6) Long: An extended article containing detailed background, multiple sources, analytical elements, and substantial narrative development related to the examined conflict contexts. Such coverage usually reflects high editorial importance and generally exceeds 400 words.

7) Medium: It’s a moderately sized article presenting principal facts of the events with some contextual explanation but without extensive analysis. This type of coverage usually ranges between 150 and 400 words.

8) Short: A brief article focused on a single update, rapid reaction, or limited factual development concerning the two conflicts contexts, with minimal contextual detail or analytical depth. It is generally below 150 words.

III) Visual / Multimedia Framing Category:

This category captures all non-textual elements that contribute to meaning construction.

9) Photographs: refers to a single or multiple images used as visual support for the article.

10) Videos / embedded footage: Video content integrated in the article (reporting, interviews, or field footage.)

11) Mixed multi-media: refers to the combination of multiple visual elements.

Second section: Content-Related categories

IV) Nature of the Topic Category

This category refers to the principal subject addressed in the article. It is identified according to the issue receiving the greatest textual emphasis in the BBC narrative.

12) Military Operations and Clashes: Includes articles focused on battlefield developments such as troop movements, missile strikes, shelling, territorial advances or withdrawals, weapons deployment, military strategy, ceasefire breaches, or direct confrontation between the main armed actors involved in the respective conflict under analysis.

13) Humanitarian Situation and Casualties: Refers to the items that emphasize civilian suffering, social consequences of war, including deaths, injuries, displacement, refugee movements, shortages of food or medicine, housing destruction, and disruption of essential services.

14) Political and Diplomatic Developments: Concerns reports dealing with negotiations, official meetings, peace initiatives, summit diplomacy, governmental decisions, and speeches by leaders, foreign policy positions, or diplomatic reactions linked to the conflict.

V) Dominant Frame Category: Refers to the interpretative lens, through which the article structures and prioritizes meaning, shaping how events and actors are understood within the conflict narrative.

15) Humanitarian Frame: Centres' the narrative on civilian suffering and urgent human needs, with emphasis on displacement, casualties, relief conditions, and the social cost of war.

16) Military / Security Frame: Structures the article around armed confrontations and security –related dynamics, with primary attention given to battlefield developments and the distribution of military power between the actors involved.

17) Political / Diplomatic Frame: Focus on state and institutional interactions related to the conflict, including, negotiations, official statements, diplomatic initiatives, alliance coordination, and policy-level decisions.

18) Geopolitical / Strategic Frame: Refers to the Framing of the conflict within broader international competition, where events are interpreted through strategic interests, balance of power dynamics, areas of influence, and global order transformations.

VI) Representation of Actors Category

Examines which actors are made most visible in the article and how their roles are constructed within the narrative of the conflict.

19) Actor A: Refers to the conflict party that the article gives greater prominence to as the main reference point in the conflict narrative, particularly through being associated with initiating or leading escalation and shaping the development of events.

20) Actor B: Applied when the article assigns causal responsibility for escalation, continuation, or consequences of the conflict to Actor B, whether explicitly through source statements or implicitly through narrative framing, even if Actor B's actions are described as retaliatory or defensive in character

21) Both principal actors: Both principal actors are coded when the article assigns comparable narrative visibility to both main conflict parties, meaning that Actor A and Actor B are both substantially present across the structure of the text, including headline, lead, and body sections. In such cases, neither actor clearly dominates the framing of the article, and both are repeatedly referenced through actions, statements, or descriptive emphasis. The category is applied when the reporting constructs the conflict as a dual-actor narrative in which both sides receive relatively equivalent informational and discursive attention, without a clear prioritization of one actor as the central reference point of the story.

22) International Actors: External states, alliances, or international institutions appearing in the article as participate influencing, responding to, or shaping developments in the conflict.

23) Civilians / Non-state Actors: Refers to individuals and entities that are not part of formal state institutions or regular armed forces, and that appear in the article as part of the conflict environment. This category includes ordinary civilians affected by the war such as residents, refugees, displaced persons, witnesses, families, volunteers, and local communities, as well as organized non-state entities such as humanitarian organizations, NGOs, private actors, transnational networks, or armed groups operating outside official state authority. It is applied

when the article gives visibility to either of these groups as actors or affected populations within the narrative of the conflict.

VII) Representation of Victims Category

Focuses on how the article constructs victims of the conflict according to their social or institutional position within the reported events.

24) Civilians: Refer to non-combatant populations presented in the article as being affected by the conflict. This includes residents, displaced persons, injured individuals, and local communities exposed to military or political violence, without any direct combat role.

25) Mixed: This category applies when both civilian and military casualties are presented within the same article without clear emphasis on one category over the other.

26) Absent / Limited: This category is used when victimization is minimally present in the article, only indirectly mentioned, or not developed as a clear element of the narrative. In such cases, victims are either not quantified, not described in detail, or appear only in passing without substantive focus within the reporting structure.

VIII) Attribution of Responsibility Category

This category examines how BBC reporting constructs causal explanations for the escalation, continuation, or consequences of the conflict through narrative framing, sourcing choices, and explicit or implicit assignment of agency.

27) Actor A responsibility: This one is used when the article attributes responsibility for initiating, escalating, or driving the conflict to Actor A. It applies when Actor A is presented as the main source of offensive action, triggering events, or primary causal force behind the developments described in the reporting.

28) Actor B responsibility: It applies when the article assigns responsibility to Actor B for responding to escalation or reacting to developments in the conflict. Actor B is mainly presented in defensive, retaliatory, or protective actions following events attributed to Actor A, rather than being framed as the initiator of escalation.

29) International actors: It refers to actors outside the immediate conflict parties whose involvement is presented as influencing the course of events. This includes states, alliances, or

international institutions engaged through diplomacy, mediation, political support, sanctions, or other forms of intervention in the conflict dynamics.

30) Shared / Multiple: It applies to cases where the article distributes responsibility for the escalation, continuation, or consequences of the conflict across more than one actor at the same time, without identifying a single dominant responsible party.

31) Unclear / Neutral: No dominant actor is clearly identified as responsible for escalation, or the article distributes explanatory weight across multiple parties without prioritizing any single actor.

IX). Evaluative Orientation

This category refers to the evaluative orientation of BBC reporting toward conflict actors, events, or consequences (military, humanitarian, or political developments).

32) Sympathetic toward Actor A narrative: This category applies when the article's framing, language, or selection of information tends to favour Actor A's perspective, justifying its actions, emphasizing its position positively, or presenting its narrative in a more legitimized or less critical manner compared to other actors.

33) Sympathetic toward Actor B narrative: This is observed when the article's framing, language, or selection of information tends to favour Actor B's perspective, by justifying its actions, emphasizing its position positively, or presenting its narrative in a more legitimized or less critical manner compared to other actors.

34) Neutral / balanced / mixed: This applies when the article maintains a descriptive or balanced evaluative stance, without clear preference or bias toward either Actor A or Actor B, or when different evaluative tones are combined without a dominant orientation.

X) Sources and Voices Category

This category examines how BBC reporting constructs credibility and authority through the selection and hierarchy of voices included in the coverage of the Ukraine conflict.

35) Official Sources: Government representatives, military spokespersons, and institutional actors constitute the primary official voices cited within the article's narrative.

36) Eyewitnesses / Civilians: First-hand accounts from individuals directly affected by events, including residents, displaced persons, and civilians, are incorporated as experiential evidence of the conflict.

37) Mixed Sources: Multiple categories of sources are combined within the same article without a single dominant voice shaping the narrative.

XI) News Priority Category

This category identifies the main informational emphasis within BBC reporting on the Ukraine conflict, based on how the article structures newsworthiness and allocates narrative prominence.

38) Urgent / Frontline Developments: Priority is given to real-time events, breaking updates, battlefield movements, or rapidly evolving political and military situations.

39) Background / Context: The article foregrounds explanatory material, historical background, or structural analysis intended to contextualize ongoing developments rather than report immediate events.

40) Humanitarian: Narrative emphasis is placed on human consequences of the conflict, including casualties, displacement, living conditions, and relief efforts.

41) International reactions: Identifies articles where the main informational focus is placed on responses from external Actors outside the immediate conflict parties. It includes diplomatic statements, official positions, condemnations, support declarations, mediation initiatives, or coordinated reactions from states, international organizations, or global institutions as reported developments in response to the conflict events.

XII) Diplomatic purpose of coverage

This category examines how the article frames diplomacy within its narrative, including whether it supports the legitimacy of a conflict actor, highlights diplomatic efforts such as mediation or negotiations, or contains no meaningful diplomatic framing.

42) Legitimization of Actor A: Applies when the article frames Actor A's actions or position in a way that highlights justification, credibility, or moral/political validity, often through emphasis on rationale, context, or supportive narrative cues.

43) Legitimization of Actor B: Observed when the article frames Actor B's actions or position in a way that highlights justification, credibility, or moral/political validity, often by stressing defensive reasoning, contextual constraints, or mitigating circumstances surrounding its actions.

44) Mediation / ceasefire / negotiations: Identified when the article highlights diplomatic initiatives aimed at de-escalation or conflict resolution, including references to negotiations, peace talks, ceasefire proposals, mediation efforts, or formal diplomatic attempts to reduce or end hostilities.

45) No diplomatic purpose visible: Absence of meaningful diplomatic framing, negotiation processes, mediation efforts, or any legitimizing diplomatic discourse related to conflict actors or events within the article.

XIII). Media and Information Environment

This category examines the informational conditions and communication environment in which BBC reporting is produced and circulated. It captures how external constraints, digital dynamics, and informational strategies shape the construction and dissemination of conflict narratives in the Ukraine (2022) and Gaza (2023) cases.

46). Information Control / Propaganda Narratives: It refers to the presence of strategic communication efforts aimed at shaping public perception of the conflict. This includes references to propaganda, disinformation, misinformation, or competing narratives promoted by states, armed actors, or institutions. It also includes journalistic identification of contested information environments or narrative warfare.

47). Digital Circulation / Platforms: It refers to the role of digital technologies and online platforms in the production and dissemination of conflict-related information. This includes the use of social media content, online videos, satellite imagery, messaging applications, and digital verification tools in shaping or supplementing BBC reporting.

48). Traditional Reporting Environment: Refers to reporting based primarily on conventional journalistic practices such as field reporting, official press briefings, institutional sources, and on-the-ground correspondence, with limited reliance on digital or platform-based content.