



Western Media Coverage of the Ongoing War in Gaza

Ibrahim Assalia

Lecturer of media ethics at the European international school and college, London

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the portrayal of the ongoing conflict in Gaza by Western media outlets, analyzing the framing, biases, and narratives that shape public perception. Through a critical discourse analysis of major news networks, the study reveals patterns of selective reporting, the emphasis on certain narratives over others, and the impact of geopolitical alliances on media coverage. The research highlights how the representation of the Gaza conflict in Western media influences international opinions and policy-making, often marginalizing the voices and experiences of those directly affected by the war.

Introduction

As the most important informative agent in society, the media, especially mass media, should operate within strict ethical principles, including accuracy, objectivity, truthfulness, fairness, and independence. However, there are some instances where the media has seemed to be biased toward or against a particular group. The ongoing Israel-Hamas War (Gaza War), which broke out in early October 2023, has attracted many Western media, including Cable News Network (CNN), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Fox News, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), France 24, and Deutsche Welle, to name a few. However, despite its vast pool of media talent, this group of the media has been criticized for apparent bias in how it reports the Gaza War because it sometimes trivializes or sanitizes the atrocities the Israeli government commits against Palestinians. In this research paper, I explain that the Western media coverage of the ongoing war in Gaza is unethical because it violates the core ethical principles of the profession, such as fairness and objectivity.

How the Western Media's Coverage of the Gaza War Is Unethical Being One-Sided

If media professionals disseminate one-sided stories or news about an event, they can be accused of unfair conduct. Notwithstanding the historical conflict between Israel and Palestine, the latter is one that initiated the ongoing war in Gaza. On October 07, 2023, Hamas waged an unprecedented attack against communities and military stations in Southern Israel (Nashed, 2023, para.4). Eventually, the group killed over 1,400 Israelis and took several others hostage (Nashed, 2023, para.4). Therefore, if the media reported that Hamas was behind the commencement of the war, it would have maintained its principle of fairness. However, this has

not been the case because many Western media entities only visit the affected communities and areas of Israel from where they report or show the world the devastating effects of the war, including deaths and property destruction. However, disseminating information showing how the war has affected Israel without considering the effects on Palestinians makes this media's reports one-sided.

Undoubtedly, the Gaza War has devastated Israel because of many deaths and infrastructure destruction the country has experienced since the conflict began last year. However, what Western media fail to report is that the war has caused more severe effects on Palestinians than on the Israelis. By the end of October 2023, Israeli armed forces' relentless bombardment had killed over 8,000 people, 40% of whom were children (Nashed, 2023, para.5). As of 2024, Israel has killed over 34,000 people in Gaza, with a significant number of them being children (Byman, 2024, p.61). Yet, Western media focuses more on the destruction or deaths that Hamas has caused to Israel with little to no regard for the effects of the latter on Gaza. However, the principle of fairness requires media professionals to exercise equality or justice when presenting news (Altmeyden, Arnold and Kössler, 2012, p.330). Therefore, under this principle, media should not limit the news from certain sources to build a certain belief. Another ethical principle that guides media professionals is objectivity, which requires them to present the facts of an event regardless of their views regarding it (Daniel, Gabriel and Shemenenge, 2023, p.3). Hence, based on this principle, the media should present facts and let the audience make sense of them without incorporating the bias or personal views of the broadcasters. The above analysis reveals that the Western media has violated the ethical principle of objectivity by neglecting the facts that might taint Israel's global image. As such, how the Western media reports the effects of the Gaza War is unethical because it is one-sided and

Deliberately avoids crucial facts.

Bias Based on the Choice of Words

Some commentators pinpoint overt bias in the words that Western media employs to report the effects of the Gaza war on the two parties. When reporting about the effects of the war on Palestinians, the media does not apply sympathizing words like “victims”, even though the root cause of the current conflict was the creation of Israel inside a territory historically considered to be for Palestinians in 1948 (Nashed, 2023, para.12).. In addition, this media presents the effects of the war on Palestinians in a way that justifies Israel’s right to defend its borders. In contrast, it applies words and phrases that evoke sympathy, such as “Killing in cold blood” when describing Israeli people who have died in the war. Thus, the biased choice of words causes the Western media to violate the ethical principle of fairness.

Appearing to Take the Position of the Advocates of Israel

Many Western news channels advance the Israeli narrative during their reporting instead of presenting the facts of the war. For instance, although BBC built its name based on the virtue of neutrality, it has been referring to Hamas fighters as militants and emphasizing its connection to Iran (Schoones, 2024, p.2). CNN adopted a similar perspective because it presented news without considering Palestinian voices. For instance, during the first three days of the war, the CNN website displayed only three photos or videos sourced from Palestinians (Schoones, 2024, p.2). In contrast, it published about ten photos or videos acquired from the Israelis. Worse, the network labelled Hamas as terrorists and even likened them to Al-Qaeda and Islamic State. This media also overwhelmingly reports about Palestinian fighters killing children and kidnapping the elderly and people with disabilities without informing the audience of the fact that Israeli armed forces engage in similar atrocities (Schoones, 2024, p.3). Unethical behavior is conduct that

violates generally accepted codes of conduct (Kaptein, 2011, p.843). Thus, Western media coverage has conducted itself unethically when covering the Gaza War because it violates the core values and principles of the profession.

Conclusion

The papers show that the Western media coverage of the Gaza conflict has been unethical because it deviates from the principles of fairness and objectivity and positions itself as an advocate of the Israelis. Indeed, this media propagates the Israeli narrative by airing Israeli stories without considering the experiences of the Palestinian people. Thus, although this media has been valuable in informing the world of the conflict in Gaza, it has done so unethically.

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