

Competing Narratives and Disinformation in Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital Explosion: A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of I24news and Al-Mayadeen English

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Abstract: Critical Discourse Analysis offers a framework to understand how media discourse can influence public perceptions of conflict, particularly in contested narratives and disinformation. Explosion at Gaza's Baptist Hospital on 17 October 2023 produced contrasting stories. I24NEWS and Al Mayadeen English, each present conflicting interpretations of responsibility, morality, and institutional credibility. This study aims at exploring how these reports create ideological meaning by means of language and discourse strategies, using Fairclough's textual analysis, Entman's framing theory, Van Leeuwen's inclusion and exclusion, Van Dijk's ideological square, examining agency, framing, representation, and power embedded in discourse. The study attempts to identify linguistic patterns that construct ideological bias, explore framing that shapes narrative direction, find out inclusion/exclusion strategies in the representation of actors, and investigate ideological polarization between Israeli and Palestinian actors. They are based on the hypothesis that each outlet employs distinctive discourse strategies. Generally, I24NEWS foregrounds Israeli authority, whereas Al Mayadeen English emphasizes Palestinian victimhood and moral condemnation. Methodologically, the research applies qualitative CDA at micro-, meso-, and macro-levels, followed by quantitative analysis and systematic comparison. The findings indicate that both reports produce polarized ideological positions through selective lexical choices, strategic framing, and asymmetrical representation. The study's main conclusion is that media discourse acts as a way to create and spread ideologies. It shapes how the public understands the hospital explosion, using existing power structures, disinformation, and global policy reactions..

Keywords: Critical discourse Analysis, Media Discourse, Disinformation, Propaganda, Ideology, Israel-Palestine conflict, Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital's Explosion.

INTRODUCTION

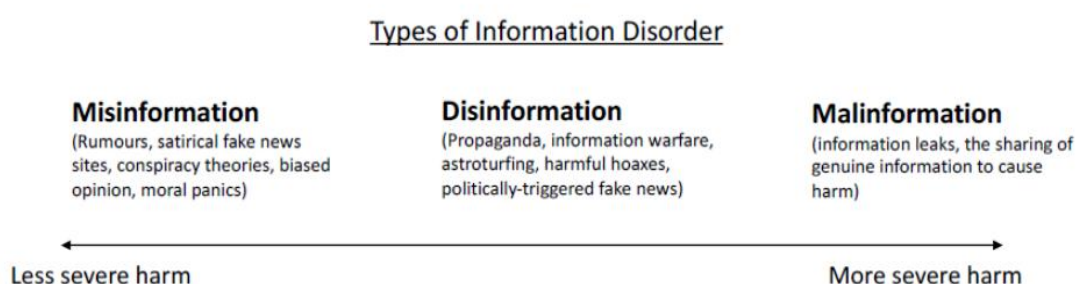
The linguistic characteristics and social implications of news, a dominating genre in mass communication, have attracted a lot of scholarly study. Bell (1991), Van Dijk (1991), Fairclough (1995), Richardson (2007), and Conboy (2007, 2011) are just a few of the academics that have studied in-depth how news media affect public opinion, reinforce ideologies, and shape meaning (Conboy, 2011, p. 3). As Norman Fairclough noted, language is not just a tool for passing on information, but it is frequently used to frame events in specific ways, shape public opinion, and support political or....

It is significant to know that Ideology is described as “a set of beliefs or attitudes shared by members of a particular social group. As critical discourse analysts, it is important to be aware that most discourse used by members of a group tends to be ideologically based” (Bloor and Bloor, 2007, p. 10). CDA examines the underlying linguistic patterns as well as ideological choices that shape what is presented as truth, revealing how media texts can distort events, influence public perception, and legitimize particular viewpoints. By focusing on the relationship between language, power, and ideology, CDA helps expose the hidden mechanisms through which disinformation takes shape and gains credibility in news discourse.

Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) developed an explanation to understand the nowadays

complexities of false information in the internet era. “Information disorder” is widespread used as an overarching term to encompass falsehood and various types of false or misleading information, just as misinformation, disinformation and malinformation. This broader term can be used also instead of relying on the phrase ‘fake news’. The dimensions of information disorder are based on “harm and falseness”. To look deeper into information disorder, misinformation is the least severe one, referring to misleading information, errors, and satire, all of which inflict the least amount of harm. Disinformation, which is our concept in this study is more severe and refers to intentional deceptive information usually with a political purpose, such as propaganda, information warfare, and astroturfing. ‘Malinformation’ the last kind refers to the sharing of genuine information to cause harm, such as Wikileaks releasing Clinton’s emails, or hate speech (Wardle and Derakshan, 2017).

Figure 1:Types of Information Disorder



Note. Adapted from Wardle & Derakhshan (2017) and based on definitions from First Draft News

One of the main functions for which the creation and circulation of disinformation is used is

propaganda. Soe (2018) defines propaganda as “information of a biased/misleading nature to promote a political cause”. Biddle in a *Psychological Definition of Propaganda* writes how propaganda has relied on methods including “persuasion”, “direct emotional appeal”, “direct suggestion” and “indirect suggestion” (Biddle, 1931, p. 283). The spreading of disinformation can be a powerful propagandistic tactic in that it presents a false sense of reality which can be used either to bolster the image of those in or seeking power or undermine the critics and opponents of those in or seeking power. In this sense, propaganda is one of the purposes to which disinformation can be put, and many of the tactics available to the propagandist make use of disinformation as a resource. (Maci et al., 2023)

In this research, disinformation is understood as more than just false or fabricated news. It is both the deliberate spread of falsehoods and the careful use of language to manipulate meaning. van Dijk (2006, p. 359) writes that manipulation consists of “social power abuse, cognitive mind control and discursive interaction”. These qualities can be linked to deceptive communication and the intentional harm caused by disinformation. To simplify the matter, disinformation is not only about what is said but also about how it is said. On one hand, it includes the obvious, false or distorted information, whether by inventing facts, omitting key details, or twisting events. On the other hand, it also entails a more subtle layer, such as the use of discursive strategies, word choice, issue framing, the inclusion or exclusion of specific actors, or the emphasis on specific causes and consequences. These strategies can make those dubious or false claims seem more plausible, more natural, and more difficult for audiences to challenge. Disinformation in fact doesn't always have to be false, even though it usually is. It only needs to be deceptive. Disinformation deliberately aims to trick people to accept a false narrative in order to create chaos or, in case of severe situations, violence (Fallis 2015). This indicates that disinformation usually operates in a two-fold process. Firstly, some inaccurate or deceptive information is presented, then secondly, to make the material seem credible, it is actually packaged in persuasive discourse using framing or appeals to authority. Even if the facts themselves are shaky, the way by which they are presented can convince people that they are true. From this perspective, disinformation is best seen as a manipulative tool. Each outlet shapes it differently, much like assembling pieces of a puzzle or a cube. The chosen “colors” of discourses specific words, frames, and narratives fit together to build a large picture that reflects the outlet's own agenda. In this way, disinformation does not simply disinform, it actively shapes how people perceive reality, guiding their understanding toward a particular ideological direction.

Method

Data Selection

The study employs mixed method both qualitative and quantitative analysis to detect disinformation through CDA strategies that are used in news reporting by the two completely opposite outlets I24news and Al-Mayadeen English with the aim of exploring linguistic, ideological, and representational patterns across those selected news reports. Very controversial event that happened in Gaza has been tackled which is about the accusation of who is responsible of the explosion at Gaza's Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital on 17 October 2023. News reports directly addressed the target event, which is published on the official English-language websites of selected outlets. Although each outlet had published many news reports about the same event, priority was given to the news report that was most evidence-based, comprehensive, and rich in involving CDA strategies.

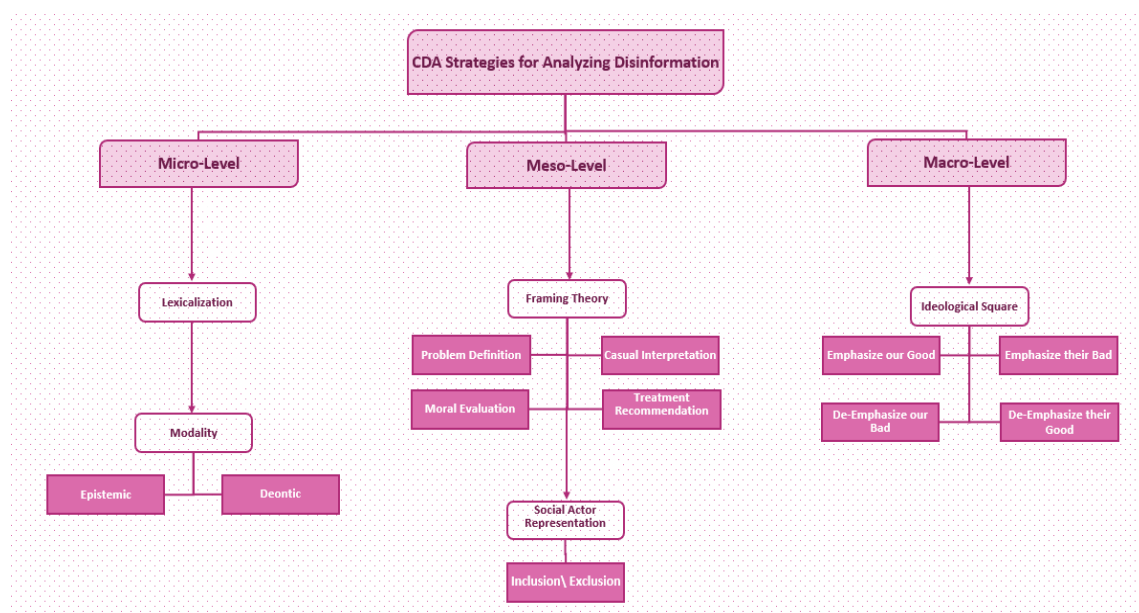
Data Description

Two full-length news reports from I24News and Al Mayadeen English make up the dataset, providing equal representation from the chosen media outlets. To preserve the overall linguistic, rhetorical, and discursive structure of the texts, every report was collected in its entirety, including the headline, lead paragraph, and entire article body. Thorough analysis make study able to identify even subtle framing choices, and ideological indications present at several textual levels, in addition to frank meanings. The dataset offers a strong and trustworthy foundation for analysing the way by which same events are discursively produced and ideologically positioned across outlets by preserving the integrity of each report.

Analytical Model

An eclectic CDA model that incorporates multiple complementary theoretical frameworks is used for the analysis. Fairclough's textual analysis is used to examine linguistic choices and meaning-making, modality at the textual level. Entman's framing theory guides the identification of how issues are defined, emphasized, or marginalized, and Van Leeuwen's inclusion and exclusion framework reveals how social actors are represented or silenced. Van Dijk's ideological square is applied to uncover polarized in-group and out-group representations. Together, these frameworks form a coherent eclectic model that enables a nuanced and multidimensional analysis of ideological framing and disinformation in the selected news reports.

Figure 2: Eclectic Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Model for Analysing Disinformation



Analysis

Qualitative Analysis of News Report About Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza in I24News Outlet.

Article 1: News report: I24news Date: October 18, 2023 (latest revision: June 20, 2024) By: (I24news stuff)

Headline: *"Netanyahu: Those who brutally murdered our kids also murder their own."*

Source: [Gaza Hospital Blast Caused By Islamic Jihad Misfire – IDF - i24NEWS](#)

Micro-Level Analysis. Lexicalization. From the very beginning, specifically the headline, *"Netanyahu: Those who brutally murdered our kids also murder their own,"* immediately puts ideological frame, for example when looking at the phrase *brutally murdered* it appears as extremely evaluative, the adverb *brutally* intensifies *murdered*, which presents the act as savage and inhuman. Saying *Our kids* attract the feelings of shared innocence and victimhood, it means that the choice of this word is more emotive than if it was "children" or "civilians", while choosing words like *their own* threw Palestinians away and frames them as immoral actors who harm not only others but even their own people. This illustrates Israelis as innocent victims and Palestinians as self-destructive aggressors. Within this article, Israeli institutions are legitimized by the use of factual and authoritative lexis. Words like *determined*, *showed*, *investigation*, and *intelligence from multiple sources we have in our hands indicates* show the IDF's claims as objective, conclusive, and backed by evidence. It is Obvious that the article contrasts this with Palestinian and Arab responses as their outlet declare, it will be clear by observing the IDF's conclusions

that are said to be *determined* after an *investigation*, while Palestinian reactions are framed as emotive and reactive. Palestinian institutions are delegitimized by kind of descriptions such as *Hamas-controlled* (in "*The Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry*"), which suggests propaganda, this means they are not independent. There are also verbs like *claimed* and *revised* which reinforce doubt and inconsistency, which stands sharply in contrast with Israel's categorical *determined*. PIJ is associated with recklessness through lexical use like *misfired* and *failed rocket launch*, this reduces Israeli responsibility by presenting the blast as an accident caused by a non-state actor. In similar way, the phrase *Gaza-based terrorist organizations* are heavily loaded, *terrorist* portray groups as illegitimate and immoral. Accusations against Israel are appeared to be hedged or undermined for example the verb *blamed* portrays Arab responses as rash and baseless. The adjective *alleged* in *alleged airstrike* formally withholds confirmation, aligning the report with the IDF's perspective. There is a powerful word *massacre* attributed clearly to Mahmoud Abbas framing it as subjective opinion rather than fact. Quantification gives a sense of precision but it also reveals uncertainty. Figures such as *approximately 500 Palestinians*, *200 to 300*, and *450 rockets* provides an impression of accuracy, but still their hesitancy highlights confusion.

There some highly evaluative and dehumanizing lexis are detected that deepens polarization. Netanyahu's description *barbaric terrorists*, Herzog's words *21st century blood libel*, and phrases like *vile terrorists* and *wilfully spill the blood of the innocent* (a biblical, archaic construction), all frame Palestinians as uncivilized, deceptive, and profoundly immoral. Herzog's words *shame on the media who swallow the lies* extends this delegitimization to global journalism, while *blood libel* invokes antisemitic history, linking criticism of Israel to ancient. In fact, broader phrases such as *the Arab world condemning and protests broke out across the Arab and Muslim world* brings together diverse populations into a single hostile bloc, trying to reinforce the portrayal of Israel as a civilized state besieged by all those enemies. The U.S. response is lexically framed as compassionate but yet cautious. Biden's saying *I am outraged and deeply saddened* employs emotional lexis, while his references to *the terrible loss of life* and *we mourn the patients, medical staff and other innocents* emphasize humanitarian concern. The adjective *terrible* is evaluative, but *innocents* carry stronger moral weight than neutral terms such as "civilians." This portrays Palestinians as victims in humanitarian terms at first glance without granting their institutions credibility. At the same time, Biden's instruction to *review* the IDF intelligence signals his tendency to agree with Israel narrative but with caution he does not *accept* or *endorse* it outright, distancing the U.S. slightly from full adoption of Israel's version.

Modality. The strongest and most explicit deontic modal is *should*, appearing once in Netanyahu's statement: "*The entire world should know: It was barbaric terrorists in Gaza that attacked the hospital.*" Here, *should* functions as a marker of deontic modality, expressing moral obligation and necessity. Netanyahu is not merely describing an event, he is prescribing what the global audience is morally required to recognize and believe. Within Fairclough's CDA framework, this usage demonstrates how modality operates to construct power relations, amplifying the speaker's authority and normalizing Israel's account as universally binding.

In addition to *should*, the modal *will* occur two times throughout the article, primarily in statements about future actions by political figures:

"*Biden will be in Israel on Wednesday to pay a wartime solidarity visit.*"

"*He will have a second phone call with them immediately after his visit to Israel.*"

These examples express certainty regarding planned or intended actions and indicate deontic or circumstantial modality. They clearly support the article's general framing of political power, portraying confidence in future events and institutional control, even though they are not as ideologically strong as they should be.

Meso-Level Analysis. Framing Analysis. It is recognized that the explosion at the Al-Ahli hospital caused "*protests across the Arab and Muslim world*" and "*killed and wounded approximately 500 Palestinians.*" However, the report presents the conflict over responsibility as the main issue rather than the deaths themselves. The human cost is essentially reduced to the numbers "*500*," "*200-300*," which give the impression of accuracy but eliminate affective resonance. Netanyahu's counteraccusation, "*Those who brutally murdered our kids also murder their own*," is highlighted in the headline, shifting the

focus from lamenting victims to narrative warfare. In this sense, rather than the humanitarian catastrophe, the issue is defined as false accusation against Israel and the dissemination of disinformation.

The report attributes the cause unequivocally to Palestinian actors. The IDF states that the blast was due to *"a misfired Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket"* and a *"failed launch."* These phrases are repeated to fix the causal chain in the reader's mind, Palestinians are to blame because of their incompetence. Quantification reinforces this *"approximately 450 rockets fired by Gaza-based organizations"* is presented as evidence of an ongoing pattern of reckless aggression. Numbers thus act as implicit proof, suggesting the sheer scale of Palestinian rocket fire makes the IDF's explanation credible. Israeli responsibility is introduced only to be refuted, the explosion *"was immediately blamed on an Israeli airstrike"* but this is dismissed as *"an alleged airstrike"* and countered by the IDF's *"investigation."* Palestinian institutions are framed as unreliable causal interpreters, the *" Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry"* first *"claimed 500 deaths"* but later *"revised"* its toll, implying inconsistency and dishonesty. Thus, the frame positions Palestinians as both the direct cause of the explosion and untrustworthy narrators of its aftermath.

The article applies starkly polarized moral judgments. Israeli institutions are depicted positively, the IDF *"determined"* and *"showed"* findings using *"intelligence from multiple sources,"* constructing an image of professionalism and rationality. Leaders such as Netanyahu and Herzog are framed as righteous defenders of truth, with Herzog condemning a *"21st century blood libel"* and Netanyahu asserting that *"the entire world should know"* the facts. Biden says he is *"outraged and deeply saddened,"* laments *"the terrible loss of life,"* and asks for a *"review"* of intelligence, indicating cautious authority. The United States is tended to be seen as both responsible and compassionate. In contrast, Palestinian actors are criticized as condemned and immoral. *"Terrorists," "barbaric," "vile,"* and *"wilfully spilling the blood of the innocent"* are accusations used against militants. The Gaza Health Ministry's claims are qualified as *"claimed"* or *"revised,"* and it is delegitimized as *" Hamas-controlled."* After *"immediately blaming"* Israel, the *"Arab world"* is lumped together as being reactionary. The media is portrayed as unethical and complicit, accused of *"swallowing the lies of Hamas and Islamic Jihad"* and spreading a *"blood libel."* The article juxtaposes competing moral frames, Abbas calls the incident a *"massacre,"* an inscribed moral judgment of atrocity, but the word is placed in quotation marks, marking it as subjective opinion. In contrast, Biden's description of a *"tragedy"* and a *"terrible loss of life"* is normalized as the authoritative, humanitarian frame. This contrast delegitimizes Palestinian leaders' moral evaluations while validating Western and Israeli ones.

The report suggests a number of solutions, however they are not disclosed. It is urged that the global audience reject other narratives and accept the IDF's perspective as authoritative. Netanyahu's demand that *"the entire world should know"* is an order to support Israel politically and morally. Biden's *"wartime solidarity visit"* serves as another example of the required world response, defend Israel, grieve for the deceased, but have faith in Israeli intelligence. Arab indignation and protests are portrayed as erroneous attitudes rather than justifiable demands for action. More broadly, the framing reinforces the legitimacy of Israeli military action by validating harsh actions against *"terrorist organizations,"* which are shown as both vicious and inept.

Social Actor representation. Israeli voices with full names and titles, such as *"President Herzog," "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu," "Opposition Leader Yair Lapid,"* and *"IDF spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari,"* are presented throughout the narrative. This individualized label imparts responsibility and authority. Including Lapid, the leader of the opposition, helps to strengthen agreement among Israeli politicians and shows that all respectable Israeli voices are in agreement with the same story. Although they are included, Palestinian actors are portrayed negatively. To deny its claims, groups are referred to as *"terrorist organizations"* or *"Palestinian Islamic Jihad,"* and the *" Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry"* is linguistically associated with Hamas. In spite of his presence, President Mahmoud Abbas is limited to emotive speech actions (such as *"calling the incident a massacre"*) rather than authoritative analysis.

Exclusion is glaring at the same time. The names, identities, and lives of Palestinian victims are erased. Rather, they appear as numerals in the background, *"500," "200 to 300."* As a result, they cease to be human beings and become abstract statistics. In order to prevent any third-party verification from

challenging the Israeli story, independent or neutral organizations like the UN, NGOs, or technical experts are completely prohibited. Accountability and defence are hindered by the ambiguous reference to "the media" (i.e., *"the media who swallow the lies"*) without identifying outlets.

Macro-Level Analysis. Ideological Square. The positive aspects of Israel are constantly highlighted in the report. With looking at phrases like "the IDF determined," "the investigation showed," and "intelligence from multiple sources," obviously the IDF will look like logical and professional. These expressions serve to emphasize how truthful, scientific, and technologically advanced Israel seem. Quotations produced from political figures such as "President Herzog," "Prime Minister Netanyahu," and "Opposition Leader Yair Lapid" show unity and legitimacy. Additionally, Israel is portrayed as a moral victim, by claims denounced as "blood libel" and the explosion referred to as "alleged airstrike." In addition to the goal of shielding Israel from criticism, this phrase raises the peruse by recalling antisemitic cultural memories from the past time. "President Biden," who was "outraged and deeply saddened," but also appears as cautious in his actions by "instructing the NSC to review the intelligence," can be regarded as one evident example of U.S. support. This intended to enhance restraint and try to strengthen Israel's commitment to global responsibility. The report furthermore strongly highlights the negative characteristics of Palestinians. Terms like "terrorist organizations," "barbaric terrorists," and "vile terrorists" are repeatedly used to describe their militants. Such expressions label them as doing criminal activity beyond the bounds of legitimate politics. References to a "misfired" and "failed rocket launch" indicate their incompetence and view them as dangerous threats even to their own people. The words such as "claimed," "revised," and " Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry" reflect their deception. This suggests systematic dishonesty. "Immediately blamed," "condemning," and "protests broke out" are degrading examples of how the "Arab world" and "Muslim world" are represented as reactive and emotional, portraying Palestinians and their supporters as illogical, violent, and cunning.

It is important to take in consideration that the report avoid any negative characteristics of Israelis. The explosion was "immediately blamed on an Israeli airstrike," so it is quickly dismissed as premature. The IDF's denial is regarded as conclusive, whereas the word "blamed" suggests hastiness. Independent investigations and critical examination of Israel's narrative are not given any room. There is no larger structural background, such as the embargo, Israeli attacks on Gaza, or the power imbalance. Israel's "bad" deeds are thus eliminated which makes the in-group appear pure. Any potential mention of Palestinians positive traits is also minimized in the text. The reduction of civilian casualties carelessly to "500" or "200 to 300" dehumanizes the victims. They are deprived of human dignity because of the absence of their names, narratives, or testimony. Abbas's use of quotation marks to describe the incident as being "massacre" isolates it to be subjective rhetoric rather than being objective reality. Instead of considering legitimate displays of solidarity, the Arab and Muslim protests are portrayed as emotional and misdirected. Any credible counter-evidence that may support Palestinian claims is made impossible, since independent or neutral actors like the UN, Amnesty International, or humanitarian physicians are totally excluded. The text prevents any recognition of "their" good deeds or legitimate perspectives by completely suppressing these voices.

According to Van Dijk's square theory, numbers themselves serve as an ideological purpose. The IDF try to emphasize Israeli accuracy and present Palestinians as an overwhelming threat by using "approximately 450 rockets." On the other hand, Palestinian figures of "500 deaths" and later "200 to 300" are criticized for being inconsistent and implying inaccuracy. Statistics therefore highlight Palestinian vulnerability as well as Israeli factual authority. The media's delegitimization serves two purposes. Herzog's charge that "shame on the media who swallow the lies" associates journalists with "Them" by depicting them as dishonest accomplices. By portraying any unfavourable media as unethical lies, it also protects "Us" from criticism. Criticism of Israel is reduced to prejudice by the cultural invocation of a "21st century blood libel," which makes criticism seem not only incorrect but also historically antisemitic. This strengthens resonance stigmatizes opposing viewpoints and fosters in-group solidarity. Van Dijk's ideological square is embodied in the report. It stresses "their" cruelty, ineptitude, and deceit while emphasizing "our" morality, rationality, and global validity. Neutral voices are completely excluded, Palestinians are reduced to nameless victims or dishonest actors, and Israeli accountability is ignored. The effect is amplified by numbers, media delegitimization, and historical-

cultural allusions, which make Israel seem like the logical and moral victim of disinformation while Palestinians and their supporters are portrayed as intrinsically dishonest aggressors.

Qualitative Analysis of News Report About Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza in Al-Mayadeen English outlet.

Article 2: News report: Al Mayadeen English Date: October 25, 2023 (latest revision: October 25, 2023) By: Al Mayadeen English, Source: The New York Times

Headline: *"Israeli alleged evidence of Baptist Hospital massacre debunked."*

Source: [Israeli alleged evidence of Baptist Hospital massacre debunked | Al Mayadeen English](#)

Micro-Level Analysis. Lexicalization. There are intentional distinctions in language between Israelis and Palestinians in the report. Quotation marks are frequently used to refer to Israel as "Israel" or "Israeli occupation forces." The term "occupation forces" portrays the state's military as an oppressive, unlawful presence not as a defence force, and the use of quotation marks casts doubt on the state's legitimacy. On the contrary hand, Palestinians are portrayed as victims rather than offenders and are lexically acknowledged through their collective identity ("Palestinian"). Even when weapons are stated, they are only referred to as "rockets," and "the Israeli bomb" or "Israeli occupation forces" are definitively blamed for the hospital explosion. This lexicalization absolves the Palestinian people as entirety while placing the blame on Israel.

The hospital attack was described by the use of remarkably sentimental and ethically charged language. Words like "massacre" and "war crime" frame the incident as intentional atrocities with moral and legal significance rather than unintentional collateral damage. The explosion as it is said "shredded people to pieces," a dramatic and visceral description that highlights violence and incites indignation. Israel's counter-narrative, on the other hand, is reduced to "claims" and "a big lie," and lexically associated with deception. Israel is portrayed as consistently dishonest by the frequent use of "strained efforts to sell its narrative," "swirl of Israeli untruths and falsehoods," and "lies through its teeth." Additionally, lexicalization distinguishes between reliable and unreliable sources.

Terms like "detailed visual investigation," "synchronised analysis," and "concluded" reinforce references to the NYT investigation. These word selections give the impression of objectivity and scientific accuracy. Israeli evidence, on the reverse, is invariably preceded with uncertain or distant terms like "claimed," "undisclosed," and "alleged." In a similar vein, Israel's explanation is presented as something they "rushed to claim," implying haste and unreliability, yet the health ministry is validated when mentioned explicitly.

Through the linguistic contrasts, the report creates a significant in-group/out-group split. Palestinians are linked to "evidence," "analysis," and "investigation," according to Western media investigations. Israel is linked to "untruths," "lies," and "falsehoods." Phrases like "lies through its teeth" reinforce moral judgment because they are both descriptive and lexically condemning. The ideological framing revolves around this disparity, with one side portraying themselves as truth-tellers and the other as wilful liars. Sharply intense terminology is used for describing violence. A bomb "shredded people to pieces" and produced "unfathomable massacre" in the hospital attack, which is considered a "blatant war crime." The broader bombing of Gaza is described by additional images such as "relentless thunder" and "haunting roar," which immerse this particular incident in a continuous cycle of bloodshed. This impact is supported by statistics such as "500 killed," "over 6,500 Palestinians," and "17,000 wounded." Here, raw data is transformed into moral arguments concerning the extent of atrocities by the linguistic coupling of statistics with emotive descriptions. Temporal expressions like "after a series," "shortly before," and "25 seconds passed" are more than just chronological indicators. They are lexical strategies that use accuracy to build credibility. This meticulous sequencing presents an investigative narrative that seems precise and cohesive, strengthening the allegations against Israel.

One common lexical device is quotation marks. Important terms like "Israel," "evidence," or "terrorist group" are frequently quoted, indicating scepticism and discrediting them as propaganda rather than objective facts. In contrast, conclusions from the Palestinian or New York Times are published without quotation marks, making them seem clear-cut and reliable.

Modality. The U.S. assessment maintains an open epistemic space by using "may evolve," which denotes a sanctioned possibility regarding the number of casualties. In contrast to the otherwise unequivocal presentation of causation, this hedging makes the text appear cautious without compromising its main point. In the same register, the article's conditional forecasting uses *would* to keep judgments provisional: "*If confirmed, the attack **would** be by far the deadliest ...*" Here *would* ties the superlative evaluation to a not-yet-met condition, displaying procedural caution rather than outright assertion. On the Israeli side, *would* is used performatively to promise evidentiary delivery: "*the army **would** also provide conversations in Arabic that indicate ...*" This *would* mark intention/commitment more than present proof, shifting persuasion into the near-future while preserving agency over what gets disclosed and when. It functions as a promissory hedge asserting readiness to substantiate without immediate verification.

By contrast, Palestinian and Arab attributions are reported without modals inside their propositions e.g., "*said an Israeli air strike hit the hospital*" so the claims themselves appear categorical, yet they are grammatically contained by a reporting frame ("said") rather than modalised. The absence of modal verbs within those quoted propositions makes the statements sound firm, but because the narrator withholds modals for that side while employing *may/would* around U.S./Israeli material, the text assigns calibrated scientific caution to one camp and unmodalised allegation to the other. The distribution of modal verbs does subtle ideological work. *May* legitimises U.S. uncertainty management ("*may evolve*"), *would* projects conditional authority and procedural care ("*If confirmed ... **would** be ...*"), and *would* also stages Israeli evidentiary intent ("***would** also provide conversations ...*"). Meanwhile, the lack of modals inside Palestinian propositions keeps their claims sounding stark but enclaved within attribution. The net effect is to foreground measured, institutionally endorsed possibility and promise on the U.S./Israeli side, while leaving opposing assertions unmodalised and, therefore, easier to position as merely "said."

Meso-Level Analysis. Framing Theory. The text constructs a tightly bounded frame by selecting and amplifying elements that define the event as criminal, deceptive, and singularly attributable to Israel. It defines the central problem not as a contested battlefield incident but as an Israeli atrocity and information operation, front-loading morally and legally saturated labels "*war crime*," "*massacre*," and a "*big lie*" so the incident is read as a settled category rather than an open question. The humanitarian toll is folded into that problem definition through quantification, making suffering itself salient and morally unambiguous. Causality is assigned with categorical force, the actor and action are fused in metonymy "*The Israeli bomb shredded people to pieces*" while the rival account is pre-emptively delegitimized as deliberate misinformation that Israel "*rushed to*" and sustained through "*strained efforts to sell its narrative*." The New York Times' visual forensics is elevated as the dispositive arbiter, with its procedures foregrounded to fix an alternative locus of launch and thus render the Palestinian-rocket explanation "*unlikely to have caused*" the blast, closing off competing causal stories.

Moral evaluation saturates the frame. Israel is positioned as both violent perpetrator and conscious deceiver "*lies through its teeth*," "*swirl of untruths and falsehoods*" while Palestinians are cast as innocent sufferers "*killing at least 500*," "*over 6,500 Palestinians*," "*17,000 wounded*." Investigative media are morally and epistemically valorised through process terms "*detailed visual investigation*," "*synchronized... footage*," "*pinpoint*" so that truth-seeking itself appears aligned against state deception. From these selections flow implied remedies. By defining the episode as a "*war crime*," the text implicitly calls for condemnation and accountability, while the repeated privileging of external investigations recommends a practical response: reject Israeli claims and accept the investigative narrative as corrective truth. The frame's salience is engineered through repetition of keystone labels ("*war crime*," "*massacre*," "*big lie*"), vivid imagery ("*shredded people to pieces*"), strategic placement of accusations early, and authority sourcing that naturalizes one account while backgrounding or dismissing others.

Social Actor Representation. The text makes Israel the most visible and consistently included actor. It appears under multiple labels such as "*Israeli occupation forces*," "*Israeli authorities*," "*Israeli military*," and often simply "*Israel*" in quotation marks, which symbolically undermines its legitimacy

as a state. Israel's supporters are collectivized as *"official Israeli accounts and supporters,"* collapsing different voices into a single bloc complicit in its actions. Looking to other side, Palestinians are included primarily as undifferentiated victims: *"hundreds," "people shredded to pieces," "over 6,500 Palestinians killed," "17,000 wounded."* They are homogenized into statistics of suffering rather than individualized people with names or agency. When their military capacity is mentioned, agency is transferred to objects rather than people: *"a misfired rocket," "a malfunctioning Palestinian rocket," "barrages of Palestinian rockets were launched."* Since the actors who launched them are not mentioned, responsibility is unclear. Investigators like "The New York Times" and "Al Jazeera" are also widely mentioned, but their role is discursively distinct, they are shown as unbiased arbiters of truth, with "detailed," "synchronized," and "concluded" methods of investigation.

Exclusions are just as important. Hamas, the governing entity in Gaza, is never expressly named in this report, although it is important to the broader conflict. Despite their power to affect worldwide reactions, Israel's Western allies such as the governments of the United States and Europe are similarly eliminated. The most notable thing is that Palestinian victims are not treated as identifiable people, instead, they are treated like anonymous numbers with no particular story or identity. These omissions shorten the narrative and place all blame on Israel. Van Leeuwen's theory demonstrates how the text creates a highly ideological and polarizing portrayal. Israel is included, activated, and criminalized as the aggressor and deceiver. Palestinians are included but passive, reduced to victims who are powerless. The NYT and other investigators are activated and included as authentic truth-tellers. In the meanwhile, the scope of accountability is limited by the exclusion of Hamas, Western allies, and particular identities of victims. The article carefully distributes agency and credibility in a way that reinforces its ideological position by using discursive strategies, illustrating Israel as the only criminal, the Palestinians as defenceless victims, and international investigators as authoritative seekers of truth.

Macro-Level Analysis. Ideological Square. The positive aspects of the in-group are emphasized by severe victimization and epistemic credibility. Palestinians are framed as blameless sufferers via visceral and quantitative cues *"shredded people to pieces," "killing over 6,500," "17,000 wounded"* that solicit empathy and moral urgency. Epistemically, "truth-tellers" are elevated the NYT is cast as a rigorous arbiter *"detailed visual investigation," "synchronized footage," "pinpoint the launch location," "concluded," "shows beyond doubt."* These choices bind humanitarian innocence to methodological authority, aligning "our" side with truth and care.

The out-group's negatives are maximized through criminalization, deceit, and relentless force. Israel is labelled with the severest moral-legal terms *"war crime," "massacre"* and its discourse is delegitimized as propaganda *"big lie," "swirl of untruths and falsehoods," "lies through its teeth," "strained efforts to sell its narrative."* Military dominance is painted as cruel and continuous *"relentless thunder of artillery," "haunting roar of warplanes."* Together, these predicates crystallize an image of a powerful, immoral perpetrator. Simultaneously, negatives about the in-group are downplayed or erased. Armed Palestinian agency is grammatically backgrounded: *"barrages of Palestinian rockets were launched,"* where human launchers vanish, and temporal distancing *"25 seconds passed before the hospital explosion"* helps sever perceived causality. The text omits Hamas entirely, and it withholds reflexive scrutiny of the NYT's fallibility, presenting its findings as incontestable rather than one expert interpretation.

Positives about the out-group are minimized by pre-emptive dismissal. Israeli evidence *"military activity logs, data from radar systems, additional audio interceptions, and more videos"* is reduced to *"undisclosed"* or *"so-called evidence,"* without substantive engagement. Even the state label itself is symbolically challenged through quotation *"Israel"* which undermines legitimacy at the level of naming and primes scepticism toward any official statement.

Quantitative Analysis of News Report About Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza in I24News and Al-Mayadeen English Outlet.

Competing Narratives and Disinformation in Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital Explosion: A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of I24news and Al-Mayadeen English

Table 1 Lexicalisation used in the two opposite outlets I24news and Al-Mayadeen News report

Lexical Category	I24news Report			Al-Mayadeen Report		Comparison
	Fr eq.	Per.		Freq.	Pe r.	
Positive words, their side	24	44%		17	44 %	Both try hard to make their side look good. I24News says Israel is smart and innocent. Al-Mayadeen says Palestinians are victims with solid proof.
Negative words, other side	22	41%		16	41 %	Both attack the other side's character. I24News calls them evil. Al-Mayadeen calls them liars and criminals. Different attack strategies: I24 = moral, Al-Mayadeen = legal
Neutral words and numeration	8	15%		6	15 %	Same numbers tell opposite stories. Each uses data to prove their point. Numbers weaponized for opposing arguments

Table 2 Ideological square used in the two opposite outlets I24news and Al-Mayadeen News report

Square Component	I24news Report			Al-Mayadeen Report		Comparison
	Fr eq.	Per.		Freq.	Per .	
Emphasize Our Good	8	21%		15	30 %	Al-Mayadeen emphasizes in-group goodness more.
Emphasize Their Bad	22	57%		25	51 %	Both focus on out-group badness, but I24 proportionally more.
De-emphasize Our Bad	5	13%		6	12 %	Both use similar strategies to minimize in-group faults.
De-emphasize Their Good	3	7%		3	6%	Both minimize out-group virtues.

Discussion

Study shows a clear split in how consent is made, I24News seeks consent through authority and group loyalty. Its main disinformation tactic is to mix Israeli state claims with a moral division of "us vs. them." It appeals most to those who already trust state military institutions or strongly identify with Israel. Al-Mayadeen English seeks consent through the look of thorough investigation and legal blame. Its main disinformation tactic is to use human rights and investigative journalism tools to build a strong case against Israel. It appeals most to those who doubt state power and trust critical journalism or

international law frameworks. Therefore, in terms of disinformation strategies: Al-Mayadeen's are more varied and deeply rooted. In terms of persuasiveness based on evidence: Al-Mayadeen's narrative is designed to seem more evidence-based to a critical reader.

The tools used to weaken the opposing story are advanced and specific: I24News uses moral disqualification ("terrorist," "barbaric") and verbs that cast doubt ("claimed," "revised"). This makes the opposition seem immoral and untrustworthy. Al-Mayadeen uses legal blame ("war crime," "occupation") and scare quotes ("Israel," "evidence"). Because of this, the resistance appears to be criminal and illegitimate. Both strategically employ numbers to reinforce their own claims and discredit those of the other, demonstrating the flexibility of data as a disinformation tactic.

The Reality of Division vs. the Illusion of Balance, A cursory glance may reveal that each side "gets a voice." However, the analysis reveals that these voices are not given equal treatment. They are positioned to sway the reader's judgment. The preferred assertion is presented in a good light, while the opponent's claim is always surrounded by uncertainty or blame. Strong bias is produced as a result, which appears as reporting.

Both make use of emotion, but for different aims. I24News employs both outgroup condemnation ("barbaric terrorists") and group empathy ("our kids"). Al-Mayadeen depicts the suffering with terror and indignation ("shredded to pieces"). Crucially, Al-Mayadeen frequently combines this attitude with a technical, in-depth examination ("synchronized analysis"), strengthening its narrative by appealing to both logic and emotion. I24 News integrates declarations of institutional logic ("intelligence from multiple sources") with emotions.

Conclusion

This comparative study does more than just identify "bias." It illustrates how sophisticated media apparatuses create cohesive, evidence-rich, but opposing realities for audiences while operating from deeply held ideological beliefs. The effect of disinformation is a comprehensive discursive structure rather than a single falsehood that:

Pre-emptively defines truth and falsehood based on speaker identity.

Systematically erodes the symbolic legitimacy of the opposing side.

Uses the formal features of credible discourse (data, expert sources, technical language) to inoculate its narrative against criticism.

Ultimately, this research shows that the most potent disinformation in today's world of media appears as skilfully constructed narratives that imitate reliable journalism rather than being as blatant lies. I24News and Al-Mayadeen English both use sophisticated linguistic and framing strategies to create entirely, opposite realities, conveying carefully chosen data as absolute facts. The main concern rests not in choosing between them, but in failing to realize that each is a purposefully created version of events designed to persuade, not simply inform. Since our critical awareness must be the final line of defence in wars where truth is the first casualty, true media literacy necessitates that we look beyond what is being said and comprehend how the story is being constructed.

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