



Media Narratives in the Israel-Palestine Conflict: A Constructivist Approach to Analyzing Media Bias and Digital Activism

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ABSTRACT

The Israel-Palestine conflict, one of the most complex and protracted international disputes, has been profoundly shaped by media representations that influence public opinion and international relations. This study identifies three key factors shaping narratives through mainstream and social media: (i) Western mainstream media bias favoring Israel, (ii) the use of emotional language and selective reporting, and (iii) the rise of social media activism, exemplified by campaigns such as “All Eyes on Rafah”, which amplify marginalized Palestinian voices. Using a qualitative descriptive approach based on Creswell’s framework, the research explores the existence and interaction of these factors in shaping media roles. The study highlights the dynamic interplay between media narratives, public opinion, and foreign policy-making, shaped by historical context, social values, and norms. Findings reveal that while mainstream media historically demonstrate bias and selective framing, social media platforms create space for counter-narratives and more diverse perspectives. This analysis provides deeper insight into how these three factors collectively construct media discourse and potentially influence global public opinion and policy responses to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Kata Kunci

*Bias, Konflik
Israel-
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, Media Sosial,
Media Arus
Utama*

ABSTRAK

Konflik Israel-Palestina, sebagai salah satu sengketa internasional paling kompleks dan berkepanjangan, sangat dipengaruhi oleh representasi media yang membentuk opini publik dan hubungan internasional. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi tiga faktor utama yang memengaruhi narasi melalui media arus utama dan media sosial: (i) bias media arus utama Barat yang cenderung mendukung Israel, (ii) penggunaan bahasa emosional dan pelaporan yang selektif, serta (iii) munculnya aktivisme media sosial yang dicontohkan oleh kampanye “All Eyes on Rafah” yang memperkuat suara-suara Palestina yang termarginalkan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif berdasarkan kerangka Creswell, penelitian ini menelaah keberadaan dan interaksi ketiga faktor tersebut dalam membentuk peran media. Studi ini menekankan interaksi dinamis antara narasi media, opini publik, dan pembuatan kebijakan luar negeri yang dipengaruhi konteks historis, nilai sosial, dan norma. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun media arus utama secara historis menampilkan bias dan pembingkai selektif, media sosial menyediakan ruang bagi narasi tandingan dan perspektif yang lebih beragam. Analisis ini memberikan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai bagaimana ketiga faktor tersebut secara kolektif membentuk wacana media serta berpotensi memengaruhi opini publik global dan respons kebijakan terhadap konflik Israel-Palestina.

INTRODUCTION

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most enduring and long-running conflicts in the modern world, often raising points of contention in the field of international relations on the discussion of which countries are siding (or in support) with what side, who remains neutral—and possibly—who benefitted the most from the conflict. Yet, behind these grand political narratives, lies the media as the constructing force of what we perceived to be ‘true’ on the news. With this significant role in mind, ideally, the media should be unbiased, adhering to the ethics and standards of journalism of factual reporting whilst also showing special sensitivity when dealing with mass tragedy or grievances such as conflicts. However, an event transpired in November 2023, where more than 750 journalists have signed an open letter alleging the existing bias in the United States (U.S.) newsrooms against Palestinians in the reporting of the ongoing fighting in Gaza (Wagner & Somner, 2023) has put us in a more skeptical stance when consuming news regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict, and rightfully so.

Additionally, the Guardian, a well-respected British news agency, has reported the alleged partiality of CNN in covering the conflict with its pro-Israel bias in February 2024. According to the article, CNN has faced backlash by journalists and staff from within the network for the regurgitation of Israeli propaganda with claims on Israeli official statements as the ‘truth’ and ‘had received pre-approved clearance’ whilst effectively censoring Palestinian perspectives including those who does not have ties with Hamas (i.e. civilians) in its coverage of the war in Gaza. Or as they put it in their own words, “ultimately, CNN’s coverage of the Israel-Gaza war amounts to journalistic malpractice” (McGreal, 2024). On the other hand, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League, Jonathan Greenbatt, has previously accused the U.S. media, particularly the MSNBC, on-air, for the “dehumanization of Israelis” as the network opted for a more neutral stance towards Hamas’ attack in October 2023 as an escalation of geopolitical conflict (Huston, 2023).

The scrutiny over news organizations’ bias in the Israel-Palestine conflict has also been widely discussed in academic journals, often discussed using communication sciences theories and framing analysis. A previous study by Arrosyid and Halwati (2021), uncovered differences in the framing and reasoning devices used by *republika.co.id* and *kompas.com*, both being widely popularly used Indonesian news websites. While *republika.co.id* stood for a clear pro-Palestinian stance in reporting the ‘failure’ of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in maintaining peace in Gaza through its emergency meetings, *kompas.com* chose to remain neutral with its frames by painting the issue as an ‘inaction’ by the UNSC until Egypt mediated the ceasefire between Hamas and Israel that immediately came into effect on 21 May 2021 after eleven days of fighting (Arrosyid & Halwati, 2021).

Another research conducted in a larger scale by the Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) that examines media bias in covering the Israel-Palestinian conflict have found that most TV channels (11 from within the U.K. such as the BBC and ITV News, and 3 from international outputs such as CNN and MSNBC) dominantly used “Israel’s rights to defend itself” and overshadowed “Palestinian’s rights” by a whopping ratio of 5:1 in their framing of events post-7 October 2023 attack. The research also found that there has been a significant lack of context when it comes to online articles’ coverage in representing Palestine statehood or Palestinian’s voices compared to Israel’s, twice as contextually biased as TV broadcasts (CfMM, 2024).

Hence, when the mainstream mass media is scrutinized as being biased, where should we look for reliable and trusted news? As the mainstream mass media holds the biggest responsibility in portraying an international conflict with respect to journalism ethics and have a large capacity to shape international public opinions (including pressure groups) through its reporting, how does the globalized one stay informed of what is truly is going on in the Israel-Palestine conflict and be ‘wholefully correct’?

Putting these concerns in the lens of international relations, mainstream media can be seen as having the power to shape policy responses, as previously demonstrated by “the CNN effect” in the U.S. policy-

making processes during the 1990s (Robinson, 2013). In the case of the CNN effect, a series of events heightened the status of media as a potential critical actor in policy formulation through the reporting of the Kurdish crisis and the Somali famine. According to the effect thesis, the media reporting of these events then persuaded George Bush's administration to send 28,000 humanitarian aid workers through Operation Restore Hope to Somalia in 1992. Furthermore, it has also helped the U.S.' foreign policies such as the deployment of non-coercive troops in Zaire (now Congo) in 1994 (Robinson, 2013).

Now the question is: can we also expect today's mainstream mass media to have the same effect in high-level foreign policy making processes as demonstrated by the CNN effect? And has the existence of new media (i.e. social media) weakened its influence by providing platforms for amplifying unique marginalized voices? This is as seen in May 2024 user-generated 'All Eyes on Rafah' digital activism which has the original post getting re-posted by more than 47 million users on Instagram, including accounts with high-followers count such as Nobel Prize Winner, Malala Yousafzai, and celebrities like Bella Hadid and Dua Lipa (Wilson, 2024).

Thus, this article aims to find the answer to these research questions by exploring the role of media in shaping international relations through its portrayal of representations and influence on public opinions, within the context of the highly disputed Israel-Palestine conflict. A constructivist approach is used to help me draw a correlation between media and international relations in my arguments as it deals with how the media tries to manufacture foreign-policy consent from the general public, and thus, signifying that the relations between global actors are shaped by ideational factors that are collectively held, which construct the interests and identities of said actors at the global stage. In addition to that, a constructivist approach emphasizes the importance of historical context, social values, norms, and language (Fierke, 2013), much befitting of the various ideational factors and framing devices used within media coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

THEORY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Constructivism

Constructivism in international relations posits that the core dynamics of global politics are shaped not merely by material power, but by intersubjective meanings—shared ideas, norms, identities, and historical narratives—constructed through ongoing interactions between actors (Fierke, 2013; Wendt, 1992). Unlike realism and liberalism, which prioritize material capabilities or institutional arrangements, constructivism emphasizes that the international system is socially constructed, and that the interests and identities of states are the product of social processes rather than fixed givens.

Central to this approach is Alexander Wendt's argument that "anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt, 1992: 406). Wendt contends that the structure of the international system—its so-called anarchy—does not inherently determine state behavior. Instead, the meaning of anarchy, and thus the nature of state interaction, is shaped by the intersubjective understanding between states. In this sense, agency (the capacity of states to act) and structure (the international environment) are mutually constituted: states shape, and are shaped by, the social context in which they operate.

Applying this framework to the Israel-Palestine conflict, the analysis centers on the relationship between two primary state actors—Israel and Palestine—whose identities and interests are constructed and continually renegotiated through their interactions. The conflict is not merely a contest over territory or resources, but a dynamic process in which each side interprets and asserts its identity and interests in relation to the other. These intersubjective constructions are evident in how each actor frames its struggle: for Israel, as a quest for security and legitimacy; for Palestine, as a fight for self-determination and recognition. The responses and actions of both are deeply influenced by how they perceive each other's intentions and by the narratives they construct about themselves and their adversary.

Power and influence in this context are not solely material, but are embedded in the ability of each actor to shape meanings, legitimize actions, and garner support—both domestically and internationally. Media, as a key social institution, plays a pivotal role in this process. Mainstream and social media serve as platforms where narratives are constructed, contested, and disseminated, influencing how the conflict is understood by global audiences and by the actors themselves.

Within this constructivist framework, the agency-structure relationship is particularly salient: the actions of Israel and Palestine (agency) both shape and are shaped by the broader international system (structure), including the discursive environment created by media representations. The power to define and frame the conflict—whether through mainstream media's often pro-Israel bias or social media's amplification of pro-Palestinian activism—becomes a significant dimension of the struggle itself.

Thus, this study adopts Wendt's intersubjective analysis as its conceptual foundation, focusing on how the identities and interests of Israel and Palestine are constructed through their mutual interactions and mediated by the narratives produced and circulated in both mainstream and social media. This approach enables a nuanced understanding of how power, influence, and socially constructed realities intersect in shaping the ongoing dynamics of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Media holds critical relevance within the constructivist theory of international relations because it functions as a powerful social institution that actively participates in the construction and dissemination of shared meanings, identities, and norms. Through framing, agenda-setting, and representation, media shapes how states and global audiences perceive conflicts, influencing the intersubjective understandings that constructivism emphasizes (Wendt, 1992; Fierke, 2013; Ruggie, 1998). In the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, media narratives do not merely report events but help produce the social realities that define the interests and identities of the actors involved (Burchill, 2005). Thus, media acts as both an arena and an agent in the ongoing social construction of international relations, reinforcing the dynamic interplay between agency and structure central to constructivist analysis (Zehfuss, 2004). This underscores the media's pivotal role in shaping not only public opinion but also the foreign policy responses and diplomatic interactions that emerge from these socially constructed realities.

The Role of Media in International Relations

The role of media in international relations is multifaceted and has evolved significantly with the advent of new communication technologies. Media, in its broadest sense, encompasses various means of communication, including traditional forms such as broadcasting (radio and television), publishing (newspapers and magazines), and digital platforms (Rosencrance, 2023). This classification allows us to distinguish between two primary categories of media: traditional media, which includes print and broadcast outlets, and new media, which encompasses digital media, social media, and user-generated content.

Traditional media has historically served as the primary conduit for disseminating information, operating under a monologic transmission model where information flows from a single source to many receivers. This model has shaped public perceptions and influenced foreign policy decisions for decades. However, the rise of new media has transformed this landscape. New media operates within a dialogic transmission system, allowing for many-to-many communication where multiple sources can engage with numerous receivers. This shift has significant implications for how information is shared and consumed, particularly in the context of international relations.

In the realm of international relations, the influence of media is exemplified by the concept of the "CNN effect," which posits that media coverage can shape and enforce public opinion, thereby impacting foreign policy-making decisions (Robinson, 2013). The CNN effect highlights the power of mainstream news media to mobilize public sentiment and pressure policymakers, particularly during

crises. However, this effect is increasingly challenged by the emergence of alternative media voices, such as Al-Jazeera and RT International, which provide differing perspectives on global events. The proliferation of the internet and social media has further fragmented the media landscape, leading to a chaotic environment where mainstream media's influence may be diminished. Robinson (2013) argues that this fragmentation has resulted in a more informed public that is increasingly aware of potential media biases and propaganda, making the CNN effect less pronounced than it was in the 1990s.

The rise of social media as a dominant communication channel has further transformed the dynamics of international relations. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), and Instagram have become essential tools for disseminating information, mobilizing support, and shaping public discourse. Social media's ability to reach vast audiences and facilitate real-time communication has made it a powerful force in contemporary politics. For instance, during the Arab Spring protests in 2011, social media played a crucial role in organizing and coordinating demonstrations across multiple countries. Activists utilized these platforms to share information, mobilize supporters, and apply pressure on authoritarian regimes, leading to significant political changes in countries like Tunisia and Egypt (Brownlee et al., 2013). This case illustrates how social media can parallel traditional mass media in its capacity to influence public opinion and effect change.

Moreover, social media empowers individuals to curate their information sources, allowing for a more personalized and controlled consumption of news. Users can engage with content, share their perspectives, and participate in discussions, thereby contributing to a more participatory media environment. This democratization of information dissemination challenges the traditional gatekeeping role of mainstream media and enables a broader range of voices to be heard in the public sphere. Thus, the role of media in international relations is increasingly complex and dynamic. While traditional media continues to play a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing foreign policy, the rise of new media, particularly social media, introduces new dynamics that challenge established narratives and power structures.

In line with the three main research questions outlined in the abstract, this study is organized into three thematic sections: first, it examines bias in Western mainstream media coverage that favors Israel, focusing on how selective framing and emotive language shape public opinion; second, it explores digital pro-Palestinian activism through the “All Eyes on Rafah” campaign, highlighting social media’s role in amplifying marginalized voices and challenging dominant narratives; and third, it discusses how these differing media representations construct and contest ideational factors—norms, identities, and interests—within a constructivist framework, emphasizing their impact on public discourse and international relations.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article employs Creswell’s (2013) descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the role of media in shaping public opinion and influencing foreign policy-making through its coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict. This methodology is particularly suitable as it enables a comprehensive narrative of complex global phenomena unfolding in their natural context, allowing for an in-depth exploration of ideational factors—specifically norms, identities, and interests—and how these are framed by the media in reporting the conflict.

The relevance of this approach to the research problem lies in its focus on how these ideational factors function as key variables in the construction and dissemination of media narratives. Norms, identities, and interests are conceptualized as the primary constructs that shape framing processes: norms relate to shared expectations and rules; identities concern how actors perceive themselves and others; and interests reflect the goals derived from these identities. Ideologies and assumptions, closely linked to identities and interests, serve as underlying lenses through which media frames the conflict,

influencing both traditional and new media narratives. This study examines whether and how these intersubjective factors differentiate framing between mainstream media and social media platforms.

The descriptive analysis aims to identify and describe the specific ideational elements—norms, identities, interests, ideologies, and assumptions—that are constructed and disseminated through media representations. These elements are treated as two types of variables: construction variables, which refer to how media frames and builds narratives by actively shaping these ideational elements; and dissemination variables, which concern how these constructed narratives spread, circulate, and influence public opinion and policy discourse. In other words, construction variables focus on the creation and framing of meaning within media content, while dissemination variables address the reach, reception, and impact of these narratives on audiences and decision-makers.

Data collection employs document analysis, focusing on media content as well as official statements and reports. The triangulation of data sources involves comparing media representations with public opinion indicators and official discourse to validate findings and deepen understanding. Here, media discourse is understood as the representation of the conflict through language, imagery, and framing devices, while public opinion encompasses the reactions and perceptions shaped by these media portrayals. This triangulation strengthens the credibility of the analysis by linking textual media content with broader social and political responses. This triangulation strengthens the credibility of the analysis by linking textual media content with broader social and political responses while also contributing new insights into the role of media in shaping narratives around the Israel-Palestine conflict.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biased? Mainstream media coverage on the Israel-Palestine conflict

The assertion that mainstream media outlets exhibit biased coverage favoring Israel over Palestine is supported by a wealth of empirical studies and analyses. One significant study conducted by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) highlighted a stark disparity in the use of language when reporting on the conflict. The study revealed that during the period from September 2000 to March 2002, the term "retaliation" was predominantly associated with Israeli actions, appearing in 79% of instances, while only 9% referred to Palestinian retaliation (Aharoni & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2019). This linguistic bias not only reflects a skewed portrayal of events but also shapes public perception by framing the narrative in a way that legitimizes Israeli actions while delegitimizing Palestinian responses.

Moreover, recent findings from the Center for Media Monitoring (CfMM) in early 2024 indicate that pro-Palestinian voices are increasingly misrepresented in mainstream media, often labeled as "anti-Semitic" or "pro-Hamas," which serves to vilify legitimate expressions of dissent and activism (Pace, 2018). This misrepresentation not only perpetuates harmful stereotypes but also stifles constructive dialogue and understanding of the complexities involved in the conflict.

Based on this extensive findings of media bias on the Israel-Palestine conflict, for over twenty years, it can be surmised that there has been a clear selective coverage since the early 2000s that minimizes the Palestinian experience through the use of emotive language. This is particularly seen within Western media reportage, especially those that are noted to have right-wing political inclinations, that such biases are imposed in favor of Israel. This argument can further be supported by the accounts made by two prominent American international relations scholars. In their book titled *The Israel Lobby and the U.S. Foreign Policy*, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (2007) argued that "the American media's coverage of Israel tends to be strongly biased in Israel's favor" when comparing to the reportage of other countries' media, particularly those that uphold democratic values.

Meanwhile on printed mainstream media, the Intercept—a left-wing non-profit news organization—have made an analysis on major U.S. newspapers such as the Washington Post, New York Times, and Los Angeles Times in January 2024. The analysis found that these three major U.S. newspapers have

been consistently emphasizing the deaths of Israelis by using clear emotive language in describing their killings. The same treatment does not apply to Palestinians deaths however. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that for every two Palestinian deaths, Palestinian were mentioned only once. On the other hand, for every Israeli death, Israelis were mentioned eight times (Johnson & Ali, 2024). The disproportionate nature of printed mainstream media coverage thus also contributes to the existing bias within the Western mainstream media coverage of the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Apart from bias, the Western media, particularly the British media, has also been criticized for excluding context on the decades-long oppression of the Palestinian people and occupation of Palestinian land by Israel (CfMM, 2024). Additionally, the CfMM report highlighted the many instances of misleading imagery and misinformation surrounding the conflict. As anything without context is harmful, the implication of omission and misinformation in media, especially mainstream, has the power to promote anti-Palestinian and anti-Muslim sentiments to the general public. The Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) further proved this point as anti-Muslim bias reports have sky-rocketed following the 7 October 2023 Hamas attack, which have previously taken a downturn back in 2022 (DeRose, 2024).

It can be concluded that mainstream Western mass media coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict is deeply imbued with biases and distortions that overwhelmingly favor Israel. These biases form the foundation for the pervasive use of emotive language, which serves as a key mechanism in traditional mainstream media framing. By selectively employing emotionally charged terms, media outlets construct narratives that evoke sympathy for one side while marginalizing the other, effectively shaping audience perceptions and reinforcing preferred ideological frames. This strategic use of emotive language is not incidental but a deliberate framing tool that reflects and perpetuates the underlying biases and distortions in coverage (Rodrigo-Ginés & Carrillo-de-Albornoz, 2024), ultimately shaping how the conflict is understood and discussed in the public sphere.

In addition to that, selective reporting and disproportionate coverage have persisted for more than two decades of the Israel-Palestine media coverage. Further perpetuating misrepresentation of Palestinians in the conflict which have contributed to an uptick of anti-Palestinian and anti-Muslim sentiments after the attack on 7 October based on the CAIR 2024 report. This entails that the mainstream media plays a big role in shaping public opinion, which in turn, has the power to manufacture consent for policy-making. As demonstrated through an empirical study by Dunskey in support of Mearsheimer and Walt's (2007) claims, that the U.S. media coverage bias in favor of Israel reflects the government's Middle East foreign policy, particularly in delivering aid and support for Israel (Peterson, 2014). Such claims therefore can also be applied to other countries who are in support of Palestine tend to be neutral in their media coverage—and at most—have shown bias in favor of Palestine.

Digital pro-Palestinian activism in social media: the case of “All eyes on Rafah”

The emergence of social media as a significant platform for dialogue and information dissemination has transformed the landscape of public discourse, particularly in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Unlike traditional mainstream media, which operates on a one-to-many model, social media facilitates a many-to-many interaction, allowing users to engage in discussions, share opinions, and fact-check information collaboratively. This shift is crucial in shaping public opinion and fostering a more nuanced understanding of complex issues.

Firstly, social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) have become vital spaces for digital activism, enabling users to express their views on the Israel-Palestine conflict through hashtags like #FreePalestine and #StandWithIsrael. This user-generated content amplifies diverse perspectives and democratizes the narrative surrounding the conflict, as individuals from various backgrounds can contribute to the discourse (Bhowmik & Fisher, 2023). The rapid spread of information on these platforms allows for real-time reporting of events, which can counteract the often

delayed and filtered narratives presented by traditional media outlets (Rashid, 2021). As noted by Rashid, the digitalization of conflicts has led to a significant shift in how information is shared and consumed, highlighting the importance of social media in contemporary conflict reporting (Rashid, 2021).

Moreover, the interactive nature of social media empowers users to engage in discussions that challenge mainstream narratives. On 26 May 2024 for instance, following the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) bombardment in Rafah, the southernmost part of Gaza nearing the border to Egypt where most Palestinians were seeking refuge and access to international aid. Many pictures and videos showcasing the horrors of the bombardment aftermath were shared through various social media platforms, especially X. In these videos, Palestinians were shown digging through building remains in search for their missing relatives, some of which have been found either dead or injured in terrible condition. One of the most notable videos that have garnered a lot of attention online is a Palestinian man that is shown to be holding up the corpse of a young child without a head (Al Jazeera, 2024). This incident then gained a lot of public attention to also express their grief and frustration online in various social media platforms and have given rise to the immensely widespread “All Eyes on Rafah” campaign on Instagram.

As for further context, the campaign consists of an artificial intelligence (AI) generated image with the slogan “All Eyes on Rafah” calling attention of social media users, particularly Instagram users, to the situation in Rafah. The image itself is depicting what supposed to be an aerial view of Palestinian refugee camps in Rafah and have been shared by the “Add Yours” feature in Instagram stories to allow users to easily repost the image and contribute to the virality of the campaign. In just one day after Israel’s bombardment, the picture has been reposted by more than 47 million Instagram users, including high-profile celebrities such as American supermodel of Palestinian descent, Bella Hadid, British pop star, Dua Lipa, and famous Indian actress, Priyanka Chopra. Apart from Instagram, the campaign has also been reposted on X and—likewise—gained a lot of public attention towards Israel's offensive in Rafah and snowballed to posts expressing solidarity for the Palestinians.

Immediate impact of the “All Eyes of Rafah” campaign can then be analyzed through its effectiveness in spreading awareness on the situation in Rafah and the broader Israel-Palestine conflict. As the general public becomes more aware, many of which are becoming more critical towards mainstream media coverage’s bias. As such, rather than being shaped by solely mainstream media coverage, public opinion now is also constructed by social media posts which are more likely to feature differing voices and unique experiences from Palestinians that are living amidst the conflict (Shamim, 2024). This also opens the opportunity for further discussion from a global audience to comment on the issue and collectively build shared understanding of what truly is happening in Gaza, with the majority of which are for the Palestinian rights to self-determination and against Israel’s illegal occupation.

Thus, the “All Eyes on Rafah” campaign emerges as a vital counter-narrative to the mainstream media's often skewed portrayal of Palestinian suffering, which is characterized by selective reporting and a lack of contextual depth. This campaign highlights the urgent need for a more comprehensive understanding of the Israel-Palestine conflict, particularly in light of the escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The situation has deteriorated to alarming levels, with reports indicating impending famine and a collapse of healthcare services, as emphasized by the United Nations (2024). The growing organic sympathy from the general public reflects a widespread concern for the urgent resolution of the conflict through peaceful means, notably advocating for a complete ceasefire. This public sentiment should serve as a critical signal for democratic governments to reassess their foreign policies regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict, taking into account the voices of their constituents who increasingly demand justice and accountability.

For instance, on 28 May 2024, just two days following Israel's military offensive on Rafah and amidst a wave of mass demonstrations across European cities in support of Palestine, several nations—including Spain, Ireland, and Norway—took significant steps toward recognizing Palestinian statehood. These countries based their recognition on the 1949 Armistice borders, commonly referred to as The Green Line, in response to the horrific carnage witnessed in Rafah just days earlier. This recognition signifies a pivotal shift in international relations, as these nations have publicly affirmed their support for the Palestinian right to self-determination while simultaneously opposing Israel's ongoing illegal occupation of Palestinian territories (Cafiero, 2024). The decision has been met with widespread approval from the citizens of these countries and resonates with the broader global population advocating for the Palestinian cause.

The actions of Spain, Ireland, and Norway illustrate a growing trend among democratic nations to align their foreign policies with the humanitarian concerns expressed by their citizens. This shift is indicative of a broader movement within international relations, where public opinion increasingly influences government decisions regarding foreign policy. The recognition of Palestinian statehood by these countries not only reflects a moral stance but also acknowledges the legitimacy of Palestinian aspirations for self-determination in the face of ongoing oppression.

DISCUSSION

Further reinforcing the argument on mainstream media bias, research by the Glasgow Media Group (2004) found that emotive language was selectively employed in reporting deaths, with terms like “atrocity” and “mass murder” used predominantly to describe Israeli casualties, while such language was notably absent in the context of Palestinian deaths (Hayat et al., 2024). This selective framing contributes to a narrative that humanizes one side while dehumanizing the other, perpetuating a cycle of bias that significantly influences public opinion and policy-making.

Additionally, the concept of the hostile media effect elucidates how partisans perceive media coverage as biased against their own views, which is particularly relevant in the Israel-Palestine conflict (Rashid, 2021). Both Israeli and Palestinian supporters feel misrepresented; however, the media's framing often aligns more closely with Israeli perspectives due to political alliances and economic influences on media organizations (Hasler et al., 2023). This bias extends beyond representation to affect international relations and the broader discourse surrounding the conflict.

In contrast, social media fosters a participatory culture where individuals can comment, share, and create content, enabling marginalized voices to challenge dominant discourses (McGregor, 2019). This participatory aspect is vital in a conflict often oversimplified or misrepresented in mainstream media. By providing platforms for alternative narratives, social media helps illuminate underrepresented perspectives and promotes a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict (Zahoor & Sadiq, 2021).

Moreover, social media serves as a crucial tool for mobilizing support for humanitarian efforts. Users rapidly share information about fundraising campaigns and initiatives to aid victims on both sides, allowing immediate responses during crises (Ni, 2024). The wide dissemination of such information raises awareness and can influence public opinion and policy responses (Ashraf & Baqi, 2023). The “All Eyes on Rafah” campaign exemplifies the power of grassroots activism in shaping public discourse and political action. As more individuals engage and amplify their voices through digital platforms, the potential for fostering a more informed and compassionate public narrative increases, potentially pressuring governments to adopt policies prioritizing human rights and justice for all parties involved.

These insights highlight the dynamic interplay between media framing, public opinion, and foreign policy within the constructivist framework. Mainstream media's selective construction and dissemination of ideational elements—norms, identities, interests, ideologies, and assumptions—reinforce existing power structures and foreign policy alignments. Conversely, social media enables the

construction and dissemination of counter-narratives that contest dominant frames, reshape identities, and mobilize global solidarity.

Hence, this dual process underscores that ideational factors are not static but are continuously constructed, contested, and disseminated through media, influencing the social construction of the Israel-Palestine conflict and its international ramifications.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that social media, rather than traditional mainstream media, has been more dominant in framing the constructivist narrative of the “All Eyes on Rafah” campaign. While mainstream media coverage remains largely biased in favor of Israel, reflecting norms, identities, and interests that legitimize Israeli security concerns, social media platforms have become critical spaces for constructing and disseminating alternative narratives that foreground Palestinian identity and interests.

Within the constructivist elements of social values, norms, and language, social media framing prominently emphasizes new social values and humanitarian norms, such as global solidarity, justice, and empathy for Palestinian civilians. The language used in these digital campaigns is emotive and mobilizing, reinforcing a collective identity centered on human rights and resistance to oppression. This framing contrasts sharply with traditional media’s focus on state sovereignty and security, which aligns more closely with Israeli interests and identities.

The coexistence of these two media typologies reflects the contested nature of norms, identities, and interests in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Each media form represents and reproduces different facets of the conflict’s social construction, with mainstream media reinforcing established power structures and social media enabling contestation and redefinition of meanings.

This dynamic aligns with Alexander Wendt’s (1992) argument in “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” which posits that international realities are not fixed but are continuously shaped by intersubjective processes between actors. Media, as a social institution, leverages its existence to frame these conflicting identities and interests, with the “All Eyes on Rafah” campaign serving as a trigger that mobilizes new normative understandings and challenges dominant narratives.

Ultimately, while the media, both traditional and new, should not be seen as the sole driver of foreign policy decisions, its role in shaping public opinion and manufacturing consent through framing ideational factors is significant. This confirms the constructivist tenet that change in international relations is possible through the evolving construction of social realities, where norms, identities, and interests are equally important alongside material factors.

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