



Social Actor Representation in Media Narratives of the Israel-Palestine Conflict Post-October 7: A Study of Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post

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Abstract

The media plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding of international conflicts through strategic linguistic choices that can reveal underlying ideological positions. This study aims to analyze how social actors in the Palestine-Israel conflict after October 7, 2023, are represented in the English-language news coverage of Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post. Using Critical Discourse Analysis with a focus on van Leeuwen's Social Actor Representation framework, the research examined fifteen news articles published between October 2023 and May 2024 to identify patterns of inclusion and exclusion strategies employed by each news outlet. Findings revealed that Al Jazeera actively portrays both Hamas and Israeli forces as primary agents while occasionally depersonalizing individuals through collectivization; USA Today tends to exclude individual Palestinian actors through indeterminate references while representing Israeli actors more often as collective entities; and The Jakarta Post explicitly names key figures from both sides, personalizing the conflict while emphasizing their opposing roles. These varying representation strategies reflect different editorial approaches that influence how responsibility, agency, and legitimacy are attributed in conflict reporting, ultimately shaping public perception and discourse around the complex geopolitical situation.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Social Actor Representation, Palestine-Israel Conflict, News, Mass Media.

Introduction

The media plays a critical role in shaping public understanding of conflicts and political issues. The media disseminate information through a variety of platforms,

including print (such as newspapers and magazines) and electronic formats (such as television, radio, and the internet), which collectively influence how individuals interpret global events (Saragih, 2020). However, media discourse is not always neutral. Political and economic influences often shape what is reported and how it is framed, potentially leading to biased or selective coverage.

This is particularly evident in times of international conflict when editorial decisions can be shaped by ideological agendas or national interests, affecting the accuracy and fairness of the information received by the public (Herman & Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 2008). The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one such case in which media framing has profoundly influenced global perceptions. On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a large-scale surprise attack on Israel, triggering a new and intensified phase of the long-running conflict.

Subsequently, media outlets around the world began reporting the conflict through different ideological lenses, shaping narratives about agency, culpability, victimhood, and legitimacy. As more traditional news platforms shifted to online formats, the way news is accessed and consumed has also evolved, contributing to shifts in public opinion and discourse (Rafaeli et al., 2009; Reuben, 2009). As such, the media's role in framing the conflict has become more powerful and direct.

A number of studies have examined how different media sources portray the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, Suwarno and Sahayu (2020) found that The Jakarta Post and The New York Times frequently portrayed Palestinians as victims, albeit through different geopolitical lenses. The Jakarta Post, which represents Indonesia's predominantly Muslim demographic and pro-Palestinian foreign policy, often emphasizes humanitarian concerns and calls for international intervention (Hapsoh & Puspa, 2022; Fitri, 2023).

Meanwhile, Al Jazeera, a media outlet headquartered in Qatar, tends to highlight the plight of Palestinians, although some studies show a relatively more balanced stance than the US media (Amaireh, 2023; Fitri, 2023). In contrast, USA Today, reflecting the close alliance between the US and Israel, often displays a subtle pro-Israel bias through lexical choices and narrative structures (Gladney, 1992; Fitri, 2023). These findings highlight a recurring pattern. The media not only report events but also frame them in ways that include or exclude certain voices, often reinforcing ideological positions.

Such representations can either empower or suppress certain social actors, thus shaping the broader public discourse. To analyze these dynamics, this study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically van Leeuwen's (2008) Representation of Social Actors (SAR) framework. CDA views language as a form of social practice that reflects and reinforces power structures through discourse (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1993). SAR specifically examines how individuals or groups are included, excluded, enabled, or passive in texts to construct particular ideologies.

Inclusion occurs when individuals or groups are explicitly named as agents or recipients of actions. Exclusion, on the other hand, involves the omission of actors, either entirely (oppression) or partially (backgrounding), which can obscure accountability or marginalize certain perspectives. These strategies are not arbitrary. They influence how audiences interpret events, determine agency, and make moral judgments (van Leeuwen, 2008). This study focuses on how social actors are represented in the coverage of the post-7 October Israeli-Palestinian conflict by three international English-language news media: Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post. These media were chosen because of their different geopolitical perspectives, namely Qatari, American, and Indonesian, making them ideal for comparative discourse analysis. This study examines the following research questions:

1. What are the exclusion strategies shown in the texts of the articles of the Israel-Palestine Conflict in Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post?
2. What are the inclusion strategies shown in the texts of the articles of the Israel-Palestine Conflict in Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post?
3. How does Social Actor Representation differ in Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post?

By investigating these questions, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how the media shape public perceptions of international conflicts, particularly through linguistic and representational strategies. In an era of media saturation and geopolitical polarization, such analysis is essential to improving media literacy and encouraging more critical and informed engagement with global news.

Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative research design to examine how social actors are represented in media coverage of the Palestine-Israel conflict from October 2023 to May 2024. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth analysis of language and representation, which is crucial to uncovering power dynamics and ideological framing in media discourse. The study is guided by van Leeuwen's 2008 Representation of Social Actors (SAR) framework, which has been widely used in similar discourse studies, such as Nayan's analysis of the depiction of Muslims in the Charlie Hebdo case.

The data consists of phrases and clauses taken from fifteen news articles published between October 2023 and May 2024 by three English-language news outlets: Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post. These media outlets were selected based on their different geopolitical contexts, with Al Jazeera based in Qatar, USA Today based in the United States, and The Jakarta Post published in Indonesia. This selection aims to provide a comparative perspective on international news discourse. Five articles were purposively selected from each

media outlet. While this number may seem limited, it was deemed sufficient for qualitative discourse analysis, given the depth and complexity of linguistic coding required. The articles were selected based on their relevance to five major events in the conflict, identified using Wikipedia's 2023 Israel-Hamas War Chronology. Only factual news reports were included, with opinion pieces and editorials excluded. Inclusion criteria required articles to report key conflict events, include narrative or descriptive content, and feature clear representations of Israeli and Palestinian or Hamas actors. Keyword searches such as Israel, Hamas, Palestine, Gaza, and war were used to locate relevant articles, and efforts were made to ensure articles were evenly distributed across the study period.

The primary research instrument was the researcher, who used a structured coding sheet to document information such as sources, dates, titles, and textual citations. Each phrase or clause was categorized according to van Leeuwen's framework, applying inclusion and exclusion strategies such as activation, passivation, emphasis, foregrounding, nomination, and collectivization. Although the primary coding process was conducted by one researcher, peer review and expert consultation were used to enhance the reliability of the analysis. During the pilot phase, a second coder reviewed a portion of the data to confirm coding consistency and clarify ambiguous cases. Codebooks and decision notes were kept throughout the process to ensure consistency.

Data analysis followed the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), focusing on linguistic strategies used to construct agency, responsibility, and legitimacy. Based on a model by Miles and Huberman from 1992, the analysis involved three stages: data reduction, data display, and inference. In the first stage, relevant phrases were identified and coded. They were then arranged into comparative tables by strategy and news source. The final stage involved drawing interpretive inferences about emerging patterns in the representations of social actors.

To ensure the reliability of the findings, the research process was conducted with transparency and care. An audit trail was maintained to document all important decisions. Expert debriefing was conducted to test the credibility of interpretations and reflective practices such as journaling and discussions with lecturers were used to minimize personal bias. Although the data set consisted of only fifteen articles, recurring themes were observed across all three outlets, indicating that theoretical saturation had been adequately achieved in the scope of the study. These steps strengthen the credibility, dependability, and transparency of the study as a whole.

Results

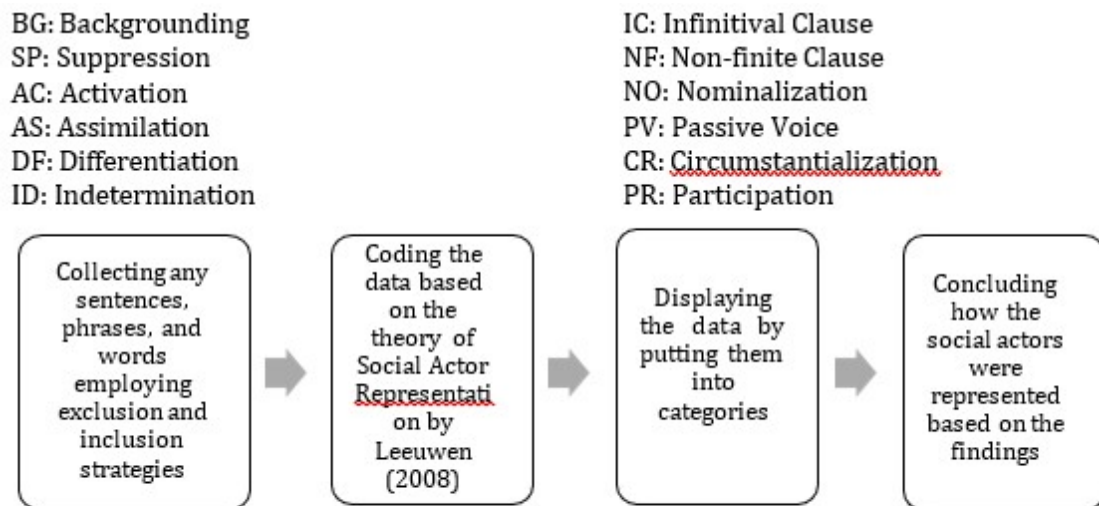
There are fifteen news articles discussing the Palestine-Israel conflict, which were collected from Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post. These articles,

spanning various reports from October 7, 2023, to May 7, 2024, were analyzed to identify the exclusion and inclusion strategies used in representing social actors. For a detailed overview of these strategies, refer to Table 1 below.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Strategies from Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post

Exclusion Strategies

Exclusion strategies in media discourse are employed to remove or downplay the presence of social actors, which often shifts the narrative away from agency and responsibility. According to van Leeuwen (2008), exclusion can take two forms: suppression, where the actor is entirely omitted, and backgrounding, where the actor is mentioned elsewhere but not in the relevant clause. This section identifies



News Portal	AG: Aggregation CL: Collectivization												Total
	Exclusion				Inclusion								
	SP		BG		AC		AS		DF	ID	NM	PS	
	PV	NO	NF	IC	PR	CR	AG	CL					
Al Jazeera	2	1	2		8	0	1	4	1	2	5	0	26
USA Today	3	4	3		8	1	4	2	2	2	7	0	36
The Jakarta Post	3	3	2		10	2	1	3	1	5	3	4	37
													99

how three major news outlets, Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post, used these strategies in reporting events related to conflict. The analysis reveals various linguistic techniques, such as the use of passive voice, nominalization, and non-finite clauses, which contribute to the manipulation or subtle redirection of responsibility in news discourse.

Al Jazeera

Al Jazeera demonstrates both suppression and backgrounding techniques in its reporting. Suppression is achieved through passive voice, as seen in sentences like “The rockets were fired as far north as Tel Aviv,” where the agent responsible for firing the rockets is completely omitted. Similarly, in a statement confirming humanitarian aid, passive verbs such as “would be sent” and “held captive” lack explicit agents, diverting attention from who is acting. Al Jazeera also utilizes nominalizations, such as “the early-morning attacks,” to shift focus from the actor to the event itself. These forms of suppression obscure human agency and create a sense of neutrality or detachment in potentially controversial reporting. Furthermore, backgrounding is evident through the use of non-finite clauses like “Fighting along the partition between Gaza and Israel has ramped up,” where the gerund “fighting” masks who are fighting, and “without mentioning the release of Palestinian prisoners,” which avoids identifying the party withholding this information.

Table 2. Passive Voice in Al Jazeera

Datum	Excerpts
1.A.1.1.1-1	“The rockets were fired as far north as Tel Aviv.”
1.C.2.1.1-1	“It confirmed that humanitarian aid would be sent to Gaza and that 50 women and children held captive there would be released in exchange for a number of Palestinian women and children detained in Israeli prisons.”

Table 3. Nominalizations in Al Jazeera

Datum	Excerpts
2.F.30.1.1-2	“The attack began with thousands of rockets fired from inside the Gaza Strip into Israel early Saturday.”
2.G.31.1.1-2	“It’s a war crime to intentionally target civilians.”
2.I.32.1.1-2	“Air attacks believed to be launched by U.S. and British forces killed at least 11 people and injured 14 Monday in port cities and small towns in western Yemen.”
2.I.33.1.1-2	“An explosion took place near a ship in the Red Sea on Monday, but the ship’s master said no one was hurt, the British military’s United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said.”

Table 4. Non-finite Clauses in Al Jazeera

Datum	Excerpts
1.B.4.1.2-1	"Fighting along the partition between Gaza and Israel has ramped up in at least three locations."
1.C.5.1.2-1	"For every additional 10 hostages released, the pause would be extended by a day, it said, without mentioning the release of Palestinian prisoners in exchange".

USA Today

In USA Today, exclusion strategies are prominent through an extensive use of passive voice and nominalizations. Examples such as "More than 123,000 people in Gaza have been removed from their homes" and "Troops are being briefed" omit the agents responsible for these actions, shifting emphasis to the affected individuals or the events themselves. Even when institutions like "the Pentagon" are mentioned, passive constructions such as "have been sent" reduce the agency of decision-makers. Nominalizations like "the attack" or "an explosion" transform active processes into abstract entities, distancing readers from the reality that these are actions carried out by individuals or groups. Additionally, backgrounding in USA Today's coverage is often achieved through non-finite clauses that de-emphasize the role of agents—for instance, "The projectiles from the bombs can slice through armor," where the origin of the bombs is unstated, or "held hostage by Hamas," which places Hamas in a subordinate clause that draws less attention.

Table 5. Passive Voice in USA Today

Datum	Excerpts
2.F.27.1.1-1	"More than 123,000 people in Gaza have been removed from their homes, according to the United Nations."
2.G.28.1.1-1	"Recent moves by the Pentagon underscore the threat: Two aircraft carriers, with dozens of warplanes, along with their escort vessels, have been sent to region...."
2.G.29.1.1-1	"Troops are being briefed on the findings and what to expect they cross the border."

Table 6. Nominalizations in USA Today

Datum	Excerpts
2.F.27.1.1-1	"More than 123,000 people in Gaza have been removed from their homes, according to the United Nations."
2.G.28.1.1-1	"Recent moves by the Pentagon underscore the threat: Two aircraft carriers, with dozens of warplanes, along with their escort vessels, have been sent to region...."
2.G.29.1.1-1	"Troops are being briefed on the findings and what to expect they cross the border."

Table 7. Non-finite Clauses in USA Today

Datum	Excerpts
2.F.27.1.1-1	"More than 123,000 people in Gaza have been removed from their homes, according to the United Nations."
2.G.28.1.1-1	"Recent moves by the Pentagon underscore the threat: Two aircraft carriers, with dozens of warplanes, along with their escort vessels, have been sent to region...."
2.G.29.1.1-1	"Troops are being briefed on the findings and what to expect they cross the border."

The Jakarta Post

The Jakarta Post also engages in exclusion through passive voice and nominalization, although less frequently than the other two outlets. In examples such as "Two Israeli tourists were shot dead along with a guide" and "Ambulance services had been disrupted," the absence of actors leaves readers unaware of who committed these acts. These passive constructions suppress agency and present the incidents as if they occurred in isolation from human responsibility. While backgrounding strategies were not as extensively noted in this outlet compared to Al Jazeera and USA Today, the existing use of passive structures contributes to a broader discursive trend where agents of violence or disruption are obscured. This suggests a cautious editorial approach, possibly to maintain neutrality or avoid political consequences.

Table 8. Passive Voice in The Jakarta Post

Datum	Excerpts
3.K.63.1.1-1	"Two Israeli tourists were shot dead along with a guide."
3.L.64.1.1-1	"Ambulance services had been disrupted."
3.L.65.1.1-1	"12 of Gaza's 35 hospitals has been forced to close."

Table 9. Nominalizations in The Jakarta Post

Datum	Excerpts
3.M.66.1.1-2	"A video released by Hamas showed masked militants with rifles,"
3.N.67.1.1-2	"The war in Gaza began with Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attack on southern Israel,"
3.O.68.1.1-2	"The Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt is closed on the Palestinian side because of the presence of Israeli tanks, the spokesperson of the Gaza border authority told Reuters on Tuesday."

Table 10. Non-finite Clauses in The Jakarta Post

Datum	Excerpts
3.M.69.1.2-1	"Following the deadliest attack in its history, Israel launched an air, artillery, and naval bombardment alongside a ground offensive to destroy Hamas,"
3.O.70.1.2-1	"After having vowed for weeks to push into the southern border town, Israel called on Monday for Palestinians in eastern Rafah to leave for an ..."

Across all three media outlets, exclusion serves as a discursive strategy to manage the portrayal of conflict and responsibility. While the specific linguistic choices vary, the cumulative effect is similar: readers are often left without clear information on who performed key actions. This omission can depersonalize violence, reduce accountability, and frame complex geopolitical events in a more sanitized or ambiguous manner. The use of suppression and backgrounding allows news outlets to present events in a way that may appear objective but is shaped by editorial decisions that influence audience perception.

Inclusion Strategies

Inclusion strategies in media discourse aim to foreground social actors and make them visible participants in reported events, often shaping perceptions of agency, legitimacy, or blame. According to van Leeuwen (2008), inclusion can involve role allocation (active vs. passive roles), activation or passivation, and categorization, where actors are defined by identity, function, or evaluation. This section examines how Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post employed inclusion strategies in their coverage of the Palestine-Israel conflict since October 7.

Al Jazeera

Al Jazeera employs the inclusion strategy of activation predominantly through participation, which clearly attributes agency to key social actors involved in the conflict. For instance, phrases like "Hamas launched a surprise attack by land, air, and sea" and "Hamas also sent fighters into southern Israel" explicitly position Hamas as the active initiator of military actions. The active verbs "launched" and "sent" emphasize Hamas's deliberate role in starting and sustaining the conflict. Similarly, Israeli forces are also portrayed as active agents, as seen in statements like "The Israeli army says dozens of fighter jets were carrying out attacks on Hamas targets," where the military is presented as proactively engaging in offensive operations.

This activation through participation continues with descriptions of direct actions such as "Israel battered Palestinians in Gaza" and "Israel upped its bombardment of the Gaza Strip." The verbs "battered" and "upped" convey forceful, intentional military moves by Israel, emphasizing their role as active combatants. Even mutual actions are highlighted, for example, "Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah exchanged artillery and rocket fire," which presents both parties as engaged

participants in an escalation. The use of active constructions like “Israel and Hamas have agreed to a temporary pause in the war” further assigns joint agency in ceasefire negotiations, demonstrating shared responsibility in moments of diplomacy.

Another important inclusion strategy is assimilation, which Al Jazeera employs

Table 11. Participation in Al Jazeera

Datum	Excerpts
1.A.6.2.1-1	“Hamas launched surprise attack by land, air, and sea.”
1.A.7.2.1-1	“Hamas also sent fighters into southern Israel.”
1.A.8.2.1-1	“The Israeli army says dozens of fighter jets were carrying out attacks on Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip.”
1.A.9.2.1-1	“Israel battered Palestinians in Gaza on Sunday, and in a sign that the conflict could spread beyond blockaded Gaza, Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah exchanged artillery and rocket fire.”
1.B.10.2.1-1	“Israel has upped its bombardment of the Gaza Strip as its military said it was “expanding” ground operations in Gaza.”
1.C.11.2.1-1	“Israel and Hamas have agreed to a temporary pause in the war.”
1.C.12.2.1-1	“Palestinian officials say at least 14,100 people have been killed,”
1.E.13.2.1-1	“The Israeli military carried out an incursion on the eastern side of Rafah.”

through aggregation and collectivization. Aggregation is apparent in references like “about 237 captives from Israel and several other countries are believed to be in Gaza,” where individuals are grouped into a numerical category.

This quantification tends to depersonalize the captives, focusing on their status as a statistic rather than as unique persons. Collectivization is used to represent groups and institutions as unified entities, such as “Israel’s military” or “some of the countries” showing solidarity with Palestine. These collective references generalize responsibility and identity, sometimes diffusing individual accountability by focusing on the group as a whole.

Table 12. Participation in Al Jazeera

Datum	Excerpts
1.B.14.2.3-1	“About 237 captives from Israel and several other countries are believed to be in Gaza.”

The use of collectivization also extends to organizations and familial groups. For example, “sources from three humanitarian relief agencies” and “families of Israeli captives gathered outside the defense ministry” portray these actors collectively rather than individually. This generalizing approach highlights institutional or relational roles rather than personal stories, which can affect how responsibility and empathy are perceived by the audience. Through collectivization, the coverage frames social actors in broader societal or institutional terms, often emphasizing the scale or unity of their involvement.

Table 13. Collectivization in Al Jazeera

Datum	Excerpts
1.A.15.2.3-2	"Israel's military, which faces questions over its failure to prevent the attack, said it was still fighting but had regained control of most infiltration points along security barriers."
1.A.16.2.3-2	"Some of the countries where people were seen waving flags in support of Palestine include Spain, South Africa, and Syria."
1.E.17.2.3-2	"Sources from three humanitarian relief agencies told the Reuters news agency that aid shipments had been halted due to the closure of the crossing."
1.C.18.2.3-2	"Families of Israeli captives gathered outside the <u>defence</u> ministry in Tel Aviv."

Al Jazeera further uses the indetermination strategy to create a level of anonymity around some social actors. In phrases such as "some analysts said the international community should use the pause to try and secure a more lasting end to the fighting," the term "some analysts" lacks specificity and personal identification. This vagueness can reduce accountability or authority associated with their opinions. Similarly, referring to "sources from three humanitarian relief agencies" without naming individuals distances the information from direct personal responsibility, creating a buffer that allows the message to be conveyed

Table 14. Indetermination in Al Jazeera

Datum	Excerpts
1.C.19.2.4	"Some analysts said the international community should use the pause to try and secure a more lasting end to the fighting."
1.E.20.2.4	"Sources from three humanitarian relief agencies told the Reuters news agency that aid shipments had been halted due to the closure of the crossing."

without attaching it to specific people.

The strategy of differentiation appears in Al Jazeera's reporting by contrasting the roles and actions of opposing parties. For instance, the sentence " Hamas, which controls Gaza, also released a statement, confirming that 50 women and children held in the territory would be freed in exchange for Israel releasing 150 Palestinian women and children from Israeli jails" highlights the asymmetrical but reciprocal nature of the hostage exchange. This differentiation emphasizes the contrasting roles of Hamas and Israel, underlining differences in authority, control, and actions in the conflict, which may shape audience perceptions of legitimacy and

Table 15. Differentiation in Al Jazeera

Datum	Excerpts
1.C.21.2.5	" Hamas, which controls Gaza, also released a statement, confirming that 50 women and children held in the territory would be freed in exchange for Israel releasing 150 Palestinian women and children from Israeli jails."

responsibility.

Nomination is frequently applied by Al Jazeera to personalize social actors by naming them explicitly, which enhances their visibility and accountability in the narrative. Naming figures like “ Hamas spokesperson Khaled Qadomi ” and “ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ” assign unique identities and authoritative

Table 16. Nomination in Al Jazeera

Datum	Excerpts
1.A.22.2.6	“ Hamas spokesperson Khaled Qadomi has told Al Jazeera that the group’s military operation is in response to all the atrocities the Palestinians have faced over the decades.”
1.A.23.2.6	“ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said his Security Cabinet has declared the country at war following the attack.”
1.D.24.2.6	“ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says the war on Gaza will continue.”
1.D.25.2.6	“ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has told US Republican senators, despite mounting criticism from Democratic leaders about the growing humanitarian catastrophe in the besieged Palestinian territory.”
1.C.26.2.6	“ Hamas spokesman Osama Hamdan has said there are “ no talks ” currently taking place between the group and Israel over a potential ceasefire and prisoner exchange.”

voices to these individuals. This use of proper names and titles brings these actors to the forefront, allowing the audience to associate specific statements and decisions with identifiable persons, thereby increasing the perceived credibility and responsibility of their words and actions.

The repeated reference to individuals such as Benjamin Netanyahu, including mentions of his security decisions and political communications, underscores his leadership role in the conflict. Similarly, naming Hamas officials, like Osama Hamdan, personalizes the group’s official positions and statements. This focus on individual nomination contrasts with collective or anonymous references and can influence how viewers assign blame, responsibility, or empathy towards particular actors in the unfolding events.

USA Today

USA Today frequently employs the inclusion strategy of activation through participation by clearly attributing agency to key social actors involved in the Israel-Gaza conflict. For example, the report states, “ The Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad launched thousands of rockets from Gaza against Israeli cities.” Here, the militant groups are directly named as active agents, with the verb “ launched ” emphasizing a deliberate and coordinated action. Similarly, “ Israeli Defense Forces responded with airstrikes and rocket attacks against cities inside the Gaza Strip ” assigns agency to the Israeli military, portraying them as purposeful actors reacting strategically to provocations. Such use of active verbs

foregrounds the roles and responsibilities of the involved parties, reinforcing their direct involvement in the unfolding events.

Further examples of activation appear in sentences like “ Hamas militants killed an estimated 260 people at the Supernova music festival ” and “ Hamas seized dozens of people as hostages from various locations during its attack and has detained them in Gaza. ” The verbs “ killed, ” “ seized, ” and “ detained ” are active constructions that explicitly assign responsibility and power to Hamas, portraying them as the instigators of violence and control. The journalist also highlights U.S. involvement through statements such as “ The U.S. is sending the USS Gerald Ford Strike Group to the eastern Mediterranean, ” with the active phrase “ is sending ”

Table 17. Participation in USA Today

Datum	Excerpts
2.F.37.2.1-1	“The Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad launched thousands of rockets from Gaza against Israeli cities.”
2.F.38.2.1-1	“Israeli Defense Forces responded with airstrikes and rocket attacks against cities inside the Gaza Strip.”
2.F.39.2.1-1	“Hamas militants killed an estimated 260 people at the Supernova music festival.”
2.F.40.2.1-1	“Hamas seized dozens of people as hostages from various locations during its attack and have detained them in Gaza.”
2.F.41.2.1-1	“The U.S. is sending the USS Gerald Ford Strike Group to the eastern Mediterranean, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement Sunday.”
2.G.42.2.1-1	“Israel has been pounding targets in the Gaza Strip from the air continually since Oct. 7.”
2.H.43.2.1-1	“Israel is set to release 150 Palestinian prisoners held as part of the deal.”
2.H.44.2.1-1	“Hamas militants crashing across the border from Gaza on Oct. 7 killed more than 1,200 Israelis and took 240 people as hostages,”

indicating direct participation by the United States. In these examples, the use of active language effectively activates actors, making their roles and actions highly visible and central to the narrative.

In contrast, USA Today sometimes uses the strategy of circumstantialization to background agency by focusing on the circumstances of events rather than on the actors themselves. For instance, the phrase “ The attack began with rockets fired from Gaza ” shifts attention away from who fired the rockets, emphasizing instead the manner and context of the attack. This use of circumstantial prepositional phrases serves to reduce the visibility of the agent responsible for the action, which can soften the perceived directness or intent behind the event.

The newspaper also utilizes assimilation strategies, particularly through aggregation, to present groups collectively rather than as individuals. For example, phrases like “ More than 1,900 people have died, including at least 14 Americans ” and “ At least 1,000 Israelis have been killed or kidnapped ” quantify victims as statistics, focusing on the scale rather than individual identities. Similarly, “ Dozens

Table 18. Circumstantialization in USA Today

Datum	Excerpt
2.F.45.2.1-2	“The attack began with rockets fired from Gaza.”

of Israelis, and an unknown number of Americans, were taken hostage” aggregates hostages into large, approximate groups, minimizing personal details. This approach emphasizes the magnitude of the conflict and its human cost while depersonalizing the individuals affected, which is typical of assimilation through aggregation.

Table 19. Aggregation in USA Today

Datum	Excerpt
2.F.46.2.3-1	“More than 1,900 people have died, including at least 14 Americans, and fighting continues.”
2.F.47.2.3-1	“At least 1,000 Israelis have been killed or kidnapped.”
2.F.48.2.3-1	“Dozens of Israelis, and an unknown number of Americans, were taken hostage and are being held in locations across Gaza,”
2.F.49.2.3-1	“Thousands attended the event, including some American and British nationals.”

Closely related is the use of collectivization, where people are grouped into social units to highlight shared roles or experiences. For instance, the phrase “Still, nearly 200 hostages will remain captive in Gaza including some women and children” presents the captives as a collective group, emphasizing their common predicament. Likewise, “Families of hostages, including nine Americans still in Gaza, have desperately awaited a deal” generalizes affected individuals into family groups. Such collectivization underlines the social relationships and shared suffering involved, rather than focusing on individuals alone.

Table 20. Collectivization in USA Today

Datum	Excerpt
2.H.50.2.3-2	“Still, nearly 200 hostages will remain captive in Gaza including some women and children even after the release of 50.”
2.H.51.2.3-2	“Families of hostages, including nine Americans still in Gaza, have desperately awaited a deal as fighting between Israeli forces and Hamas has intensified in northern Gaza.”

USA Today also incorporates the strategy of indetermination, where social actors are referenced vaguely or anonymously. For example, the mention of “two women” among hostages without further identification creates anonymity, making the individuals less personalized. Similarly, the reference to “aid groups and Israel's international partners” lacks specific names, which broadens the scope and distances the information from concrete sources. Indetermination can thus contribute to a generalized, less personalized portrayal of actors, often to emphasize the widespread nature of involvement or to avoid pinpointing specific

responsibility.

Table 22. Differentiation in USA Today

Datum	Excerpt
2.F.54.2.5	"Islamic Jihad is the second-largest militant group in the Gaza Strip, according to the National Counterterrorism Center in Washington."
2.J.55.2.5	"The Biden administration, and most of the world, in recent weeks, repeatedly urged Israel not to pursue a ground offensive in Rafah."

Finally, USA Today frequently uses nomination to personalize and individualize social actors by naming key political and institutional figures. Repeated references to "President Joe Biden" emphasize his active role in condemning attacks and reaffirming U.S. support for Israel. The mention of "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu" similarly highlights Israeli leadership and decision-making, while references to officials such as "CIA Director William Burns" and organizations like "The World Health Organization" assign formal authority and accountability. This

Table 21. Indetermination in USA Today

Datum	Excerpt
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Table 23. Nomination in USA Today

Datum	Excerpt
2.F.56.2.6	"President Joe Biden condemned the attack Saturday and reaffirmed American support for Israel."
2.F.57.2.6	"President Joe Biden speaks with Netanyahu, assures him of U.S. support."
2.H.58.2.6	"President Joe Biden confirmed the deal late Tuesday, vowing that his security team will not stop negotiating to bring Americans home."
2.I.59.2.6	"Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday defended his plan to expand Israel's military offensive into the southern city of Rafah while his defense minister warned Hamas not to test Israel's resolve during Ramadan."
2.I.60.2.6	"Biden agrees Hamas must be destroyed but wants to ensure the safe departure of civilians from Rafah."
2.J.61.2.6	"CIA Director Williams Burns is in Cairo representing the U.S. at negotiations involving Qatar, Egypt, and Israel. Qatar, a regional diplomatic lynchpin, is acting as intermediary for Hamas."
2.J.62.2.6	"The World Health Organization said Israel is also not allowing patient transfers through Rafah."

nomination strategy humanizes major actors and institutions, foregrounding their responsibilities and influence in shaping events and responses to the conflict.

The Jakarta Post

The Jakarta Post frequently employs activation to present social actors as active participants in the conflict between Israel and Hamas. For example, verbs like "pounded," "killed," and "abducted" in phrases such as "Israel pounded the Palestinian enclave of Gaza" and "Hamas killed 700 Israelis and abducted dozens more" explicitly assign agency to both parties. These framing positions Israel and Hamas as direct agents responsible for initiating and continuing violent actions, reinforcing a narrative of reciprocal retaliation. The use of active verbs such as "hit,"

“fired,” and “made limited ground incursions” further intensifies the portrayal of deliberate military actions by both sides. This strategy ensures that readers perceive the conflict as an active engagement involving clear, identifiable participants.

Table 24. Participation in The Jakarta Post

Datum	Excerpts
3.K.71.2.1-1	“Israel pounded the Palestinian enclave of Gaza on Sunday, killing hundreds of people in retaliation for one of the bloodiest attacks in its history when Islamist group Hamas killed 700 Israelis and abducted dozens more.”
3.K.72.2.1-1	“Israeli air strikes hit housing blocks, tunnels, a mosque, and homes of Hamas officials in Gaza, killing more than 400 people, including 20 children.”
3.K.73.2.1-1	“Israel has not released an official toll, but its media said at least 700 people were killed, children among them.”
3.K.74.2.1-1	“Hamas fired more rocket salvos into Israel on Sunday.”
3.L.75.2.1-1	“Israeli ground forces made limited ground incursions on Wednesday and Thursday nights.”
3.L.76.2.1-1	“Israel’s military accused Hamas of using hospitals in Gaza as operations centres for directing attacks, an allegation Hamas swiftly denied.”
3.L.77.2.1-1	“Israel has cut supplies of food, water, and power to Gaza.”
3.M.78.2.1-1	“Hamas on Saturday released a second group of Israeli and foreign civilians.”
3.M.79.2.1-1	“Hamas released 13 Israelis, all of them women and children.”
3.M.80.2.1-1	“Israel in turn released 39 Palestinian women and children.”

In addition to physical actions, The Jakarta Post highlights verbal and strategic participation through activation, as seen in statements like “Israel’s military accused Hamas of using hospitals” and “Israel has cut supplies of food, water, and power to Gaza.” These clauses emphasize both parties’ active roles in the conflict—Israel as an accuser and controller of resources, and Hamas as the alleged user of civilian infrastructure for military purposes. This inclusion strategy extends beyond battlefield actions to political and humanitarian dimensions, portraying each actor as fully engaged and responsible for unfolding events. Such language frames the situation as a multi-faceted conflict involving not only violence but also strategic and informational battles.

The narrative also includes acts of concession or negotiation through active verbs. For instance, the phrase “Hamas released 13 Israelis, all of them women and children” followed by “Israel in turn released 39 Palestinian women and children” shows both sides actively participating in hostage releases. By portraying these reciprocal actions, the report humanizes the conflict to some extent, showing moments of potential de-escalation. This use of activation underscores the agency of both Hamas and Israel not only in conflict but also in diplomatic or humanitarian

gestures, adding complexity to their roles beyond violence.

The Jakarta Post supplements activation with circumstantialization to situate social actors within broader contexts. For example, the phrase “Opposed by Hamas that wants Israel destroyed” explicitly adds the political stance of Hamas, framing it as an existential threat. This circumstantial information intensifies the perceived stakes and justifies the conflict as one rooted in deep ideological opposition.

Table 25. Circumstantialization in The Jakarta Post

Datum	Excerpt
3.K.81.2.1-2	“Opposed by Hamas that wants Israel destroyed.”
3.M.82.2.1-2	“The joint announcement by the Israeli military and the Shin Bet security service came after....”

Similarly, temporal and institutional context is provided in phrases like “The joint announcement by the Israeli military and the Shin Bet security service came after...,” which highlights coordination between key security bodies and the urgency of their actions. Such details enrich the narrative by placing events within larger strategic and political frameworks.

Passivation is used by The Jakarta Post to shift attention from agents to actions or victims, thereby reducing the visibility of certain social actors. In sentences like “Blocking all deliveries of fuel saying it would be exploited by Hamas,” the agent of exploitation is removed, focusing instead on the justification for Israel’s blockade. Similarly, “hostages held by Hamas” uses passive voice to highlight the victimization of hostages rather than Hamas’s agency in holding them. This strategy can depersonalize actors and reduce direct blame or responsibility, emphasizing consequences or conditions over perpetrators. Passivation also appears when reporting “Ten Thais and one Filipino were freed by Hamas,” which centers on the released individuals rather than the liberator.

The newspaper employs assimilation strategies to represent social actors collectively rather than individually. Aggregation is seen in references such as “at least 31,045 people in Gaza, mostly women and children,” which quantifies victims

Table 26. Passivation in The Jakarta Post

Datum	Excerpt
3.L.83.2.2	“Blocking all deliveries of fuel saying it would be exploited by Hamas to manufacture weapons and explosives.”
3.L.84.2.2	“The army also updated to 229 the number of hostages held -by Hamas, many of whom hold foreign passports, with their families frantic about their fate.”
3.M.85.2.2	“Ten Thais and one Filipino were also unexpectedly freed by Hamas.”
3.N.86.2.2	“Hamas is considered a terrorist group by most Western countries.”

Table 27. Aggregation in The Jakarta Post

Datum	Excerpt
3.N.87.2.3-1	“Israel’s retaliatory military campaign has killed at least 31,045 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to Gaza’s health ministry.”

as a large, generalized group. This statistical approach emphasizes the scale of casualties but abstracts away personal identities, making the conflict appear as a vast tragedy rather than a collection of individual stories.

Collectivization is similarly applied in phrases like “Several Americans were

Table 28. Collectivization in The Jakarta Post

Datum	Excerpt
3.K.88.2.3-2	“Several Americans were killed by Hamas attackers...”
3.M.89.2.3-2	“Relatives, friends, and supporters of Israeli hostages held in Gaza since the October 7 attack by Hamas militants in southern Israel, take part in a protest asking for their release...”
3.M.90.2.3-2	“Mothers and their children were also freed, including Doron Katz-Asher, 34, and her two young daughters.”

killed by Hamas attackers” and “Relatives, friends and supporters of Israeli hostages,” grouping victims and supporters into broad categories. This strategy fosters a sense of community or group identity but can obscure individual human experiences.

Indetermination is another inclusion strategy evident in The Jakarta Post’s reporting, where actors are referred to in vague or unspecified terms. For example, referring to “50” without a name or further details or using “a woman” without identification abstracts individuals into symbolic figures rather than unique people. Similarly, “seven foreigners” and “authorities” are general terms that mask specific identities or responsibilities. This approach can serve to anonymize vulnerable individuals, protect identities, or depersonalize certain groups, while also reinforcing symbolic representations—such as victims of suffering or faceless authorities. However, it can also obscure accountability and reduce emotional engagement with individual stories.

Finally, The Jakarta Post uses differentiation and nomination to portray social actors with contrasting roles or clearly identified names. For instance, the sentence describing Joe Biden’s “frustration with Netanyahu” illustrates political tension within allied parties, providing a nuanced view of international relations rather than a monolithic alliance.

Nomination occurs through the explicit naming of key figures such as “Israeli military spokesman Major Nir Dinar” and “Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi,”

Table 29. Indetermination in The Jakarta Post

Datum	Excerpt
3.L.91.2.4	“50 asked why her apartment block had been bombed by Israel.”
3.M.92.2.4	“Seven foreigners held in Gaza would also be released, Qatari foreign
3.M.93.2.4	“Authorities asked the media to let the newly freed hostages reunite

Table 30. Differentiation in The Jakarta Post

Datum	Excerpt
3.N.96.2.5	“Biden, who has backed Israel during the five-month-old war with Hamas but whose frustration with Netanyahu is growing increasingly visible, aired his criticism in an interview with MSNBC.”

lending authority and specificity to their statements. These strategies personalize the narrative and clarify the roles of prominent individuals, enhancing the reader's

Table 31. Nomination in The Jakarta Post

Datum	Excerpt
3.L.97.2.6	"Israeli military spokesman Major Nir Dinar told AFP..."
3.M.98.2.6	"Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi called for "a permanent ceasefire and a complete end to this aggression."
3.N.99.2.6	"Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday rejected US President Joe Biden's comment that Israel's approach to the war in Gaza was "hurting Israel more than helping Israel."

understanding of power dynamics and political perspectives in the conflict.

Discussion

This study investigates the exclusion and inclusion strategies employed by Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post in their reporting on the Israel- Palestine conflict, focusing on how these media represent Israeli and Palestinian/Hamas actors. Using van Leeuwen's (2008) framework on social actor representation, the analysis highlights differences in how each media outlet constructs agency, visibility, and responsibility for the conflicting parties.

Exclusion and Inclusion Strategies used in Al Jazeera

Al Jazeera's coverage notably employs activation strategies to represent both Hamas and Israeli forces as active agents in the conflict. Hamas is frequently depicted with active verbs such as "launched" and "sent fighters," emphasizing their role as initiators of military action. Similarly, the Israeli military is portrayed as actively "carrying out attacks," "battering Palestinians," and "upping bombardment," which underscores Israel's agency and deliberate engagement in the hostilities. This inclusion of both sides as active agents gives clear responsibility and presence to each. However, Al Jazeera also uses assimilation by collectivizing groups such as "Israel's military" or "families of captives," which can obscure individual accountability and depersonalize social actors, particularly when referring to Israeli forces or Palestinian captives. This suggests a nuanced strategy where both sides are included in action but individual identities may be excluded to manage the portrayal's emotional impact or political sensitivity.

Exclusion and Inclusion Strategies Used in the USA Today

USA Today contrasts with Al Jazeera by frequently applying indetermination and assimilation strategies, especially regarding Palestinian actors. Phrases like "some analysts," "sources," or "officials" obscure individual identities, which distances Palestinian or Hamas representatives and reduces their direct visibility or accountability. Israeli actors, while also occasionally anonymized, tend to appear more often through official statements and collective references such as the "Israeli government" or "security forces," which include but depersonalize the actors. This strategy reflects a cautious editorial approach that includes broad institutional or collective actors but excludes named individuals, possibly to maintain neutrality or avoid polarizing readers. Indetermination here functions as an exclusion strategy,

particularly for Palestinian voices, making them less defined in the discourse.

Exclusion and Inclusion Strategies used in The Jakarta Post

The Jakarta Post employs nomination and differentiation most distinctly by naming key Israeli and Palestinian/Hamas figures, such as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas spokespersons Khaled Qadomi or Osama Hamdan. This strategy personalizes the conflict by highlighting individual leaders, thereby assigning clear responsibility and enhancing the credibility of their statements. Differentiation is also used to frame these actors in contrast, emphasizing their opposing roles—for instance, Hamas controlling Gaza and Israel releasing prisoners—thereby clearly delineating their positions and actions. By explicitly naming and differentiating actors, The Jakarta Post includes both Israeli and Palestinian sides prominently but also reinforces the binary nature of the conflict, which may intensify readers' perception of opposing camps.

Together, these findings reveal that Al Jazeera actively includes both Hamas and Israeli actors as primary agents but sometimes excludes personal identities through collectivization. USA Today tends to exclude individual Palestinian actors by using indeterminate and vague references while including Israeli actors more often as collective entities. The Jakarta Post includes both sides' leaders explicitly, personalizing the conflict but also emphasizing their differences. These choices reflect each media's editorial stance and intended audience, influencing how responsibility and agency are assigned.

Conclusion

This study has examined the exclusion and inclusion strategies used by Al Jazeera, USA Today, and The Jakarta Post in representing Israeli and Palestinian/Hamas actors within the Israel-Palestine conflict discourse. Applying van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor framework revealed that each media outlet employs distinct linguistic and representational tactics to shape their narratives. Al Jazeera tends to portray both sides as active agents while occasionally depersonalizing individuals through collective references. USA Today leans towards indeterminate and aggregated representations, particularly obscuring Palestinian actors, thus limiting their individual visibility. In contrast, The Jakarta Post uses explicit nomination and differentiation to personalize and contrast the key figures from both sides, highlighting their distinct roles and responsibilities.

These varying strategies reflect different editorial choices and ideological positions that influence how responsibility, agency, and legitimacy are attributed. Consequently, the media not only inform audiences but also frame the conflict in ways that include or exclude certain social actors, thereby shaping public perception and discourse. Understanding these representational mechanisms is crucial for critically engaging with media coverage of complex conflicts and

recognizing the power of language in constructing social realities.

In terms of practical implications, this study highlights the need for media practitioners to reflect on the ethical and ideological dimensions of their reporting. Journalists should be aware of how linguistic strategies influence public understanding, especially in reporting on conflicts where the stakes are high and narratives shape perceptions of the real world. Media literacy educators can use these findings to teach students how to critically evaluate actor representations in news texts, leading to more informed and reflective news consumption.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. The sample size was limited to fifteen articles, which, while sufficient for in-depth analysis, may not capture the full range of discourse across time and platforms. The analysis also focused only on English-language coverage, which excluded perspectives from local-language reporting. Furthermore, while steps were taken to ensure reliability and transparency, future research would benefit from using multiple coders and more extensive inter-rater testing.

Future research could expand the dataset across more time periods or include other media from different regions, such as Europe, the Middle East, or Africa. Comparative research between social media and traditional news sources would also enrich our understanding of the differences in representation across platforms. Incorporating audience reception studies would provide valuable insights into how readers interpret and respond to these representations, further bridging the gap between production and reception in discourse analysis.

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