

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

**Master's Thesis**

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**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

**Beyond Peace Journalism: Can Mindful Journalism  
Help Promote Global Inclusivity in the Face of Israel's  
War on Palestine?**

Master's Thesis

Author of the Thesis: Áine Donnellan

Supervisor: Mgr. Mazlum Kemal Dağdelen

Year of the defense: 2024

## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on  
**24/06/24**

**Áine Donnellan**

## References

Donnellan, Á. (2024). *Beyond Peace Journalism: Can Mindful Journalism help promote Global Inclusivity in the face of Israel's escalating war on Palestine?*. Master thesis. Supervisor prof. Mazlum Kemal Dagdelen, Mgr., Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

**Length of the Thesis:** 122 pages and 158,390 characters

## **Abstract**

The world in which today's mainstream journalism practices were developed was openly ruled by colonial powers, hence its professional codes are imbued with values originating in the West, or Global North, while largely lacking influences from the East, or Global South. From this perspective, the journalistic creation of social reality rests largely upon a partial, Western-centric understanding of the world. This model does not appear to serve the citizens of the world. Lack of trust in news is prevalent globally, and readership is declining worldwide. Can allowing the 'truth-seeking' Eastern philosophy of Buddhism to influence journalistic practices be part of repairing this relationship by restoring the representative imbalance at hand? Upon this premise, the Buddhist approach of Mindful Journalism (MJ) was formed; to serve the interest of all and not just a select few.

This research explores the discourses perpetuated through MJ elements prevalent in journalistic coverage of Israel's ongoing war on Palestine, one month into the conflict that broke out on October 7, 2023, to examine if they contribute to a uniting narrative of Global Inclusivity (GI). Additionally, it compares the suitability of various news platforms for the practice of MJ. The study utilizes a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis approach to examine seven news pieces from four international news sources. These are divided into two categories: legacy news outlets and independent journalists. Each category features one news source from the Global North and one from the Global South. The findings suggest that the elements of Mindful Journalism focusing on context, highlighting similarities rather than differences, revealing corruption and false narratives, allowing for voices from 'inside' rather than 'outside' to drive the stories, and focusing on the power of collaboration are great tools for spreading a discourse of GI. Yet divisive narratives were also found within a few of the pieces under analysis, implying that to classify content as MJ, their aims must be investigated. The analysis of the selected news sources also

indicated that YouTube appears to be especially effective for contextual reporting, while Instagram appears to be a suitable option for igniting compassion. Overall, these findings contribute applicable insights that may help those interested in tackling the crises faced by traditional journalism by testing out an MJ approach.

## **Abstrakt**

Svět, v němž se vyvinuly dnešní mainstreamové novinářské postupy, byl otevřeně ovládnán koloniálními mocnostmi, a proto jsou jeho profesní kodexy prodchnuty hodnotami pocházejícími ze Západu neboli globálního Severu, zatímco vlivy z Východu neboli globálního Jihu do značné míry chybí. Z tohoto pohledu se novinářské vytváření sociální reality do značné míry opírá o částečné, západocentrické chápání světa. Zdá se, že tento model neslouží občanům světa. Nedůvěra ve zpravodajství je celosvětově rozšířená a čtenost novin celosvětově klesá. Může být umožnění vlivu východní filozofie buddhismu, která "hledá pravdu", na novinářskou praxi součástí nápravy tohoto vztahu tím, že se obnoví daná reprezentativní nerovnováha? Na základě této premisy vznikl buddhistický přístup Mindful Journalism (MJ), který má sloužit zájmům všech, a ne jen několika vyvolených.

Tento výzkum zkoumá diskurzy udržované prostřednictvím prvků MJ, které převládají v novinářském zpravodajství o probíhající válce Izraele proti Palestině, měsíc po konfliktu, který vypukl 7. října 2023, s cílem zjistit, zda přispívají k jednotícímu narativu globální inkuzivity (GI). Dále porovnává vhodnost různých zpravodajských platforem pro praxi MJ. Studie využívá přístupu multimodální kritické analýzy diskurzu ke zkoumání sedmi zpravodajských příspěvků ze čtyř mezinárodních zpravodajských zdrojů. Ty jsou rozděleny do dvou kategorií: starší zpravodajské zdroje a nezávislí novináři. Každá kategorie zahrnuje jeden zpravodajský zdroj z globálního Severu a jeden z globálního Jihu.

Zjištění naznačují, že prvky vědomé žurnalistiky zaměřené na kontext a zdůrazňování podobností spíše než rozdílů, odhalování korupce a falešných narativů, umožnění, aby příběhy řídily hlasy "zevnitř" spíše než "zvenčí", a zaměření na sílu spolupráce jsou skvělými nástroji pro šíření diskurzu GI. Přesto byly v několika analyzovaných dílech nalezeny i rozdělující narativy, což naznačuje, že pro klasifikaci obsahu jako MJ je třeba zkoumat jejich cíle. Analýza vybraných zpravodajských zdrojů také ukázala, že YouTube se jeví jako obzvláště účinný pro kontextuální zpravodajství, zatímco Instagram se jeví jako vhodná možnost pro rozněcování soucitu. Celkově tato zjištění přispívají použitelnými poznatky, které mohou pomoci zájemcům o řešení krizí, jimž čelí tradiční žurnalistika, vyzkoušením přístupu MJ.

## **Keywords**

**Mindful Journalism; Peace Journalism; Global Inclusivity; Discourse Theory; Post-Colonial Theory; Israel-Palestine; Legacy Media; Independent Journalism.**

## **Klíčová slova**

**Ohleduplná Žurnalistika; Mírová Žurnalistika; Globální Inkluzivita; Teorie Diskurzu; Postkoloniální Teorie; Izrael-Palestina; Dědictví Médii; Nezávislá Žurnalistika.**

## **Title**

**Beyond Peace Journalism: Can Mindful Journalism Help Promote Global Inclusivity in the face of Israel's war on Palestine?**

## **Název práce**

**Za Hranice Mírové Žurnalistiky: Může Ohleduplná Žurnalistika Pomoci Podpořit Globální Inkluzivitu Tváří v Tvář Izraelské Válce Proti Palestině?**


## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Mazlum Kemal Dağdelen, whose guidance, patience, and input has been of invaluable assistance throughout this journey. Thank you Mazlum, for the time, energy, and care you poured into helping me make this thesis come to life – it has taught me so much about the beauty and value of mentorship. To my soulmate, fiancé, and best friend, Karl Hadife: thank you for your unwavering faith in my abilities (especially during the times when my own trust is flickering) and for your unconditional and boundaryless love, joy, and support, which brightens my life every day. Thank you to all my beloved friends and my dear family for always encouraging me to follow my heart, and for allowing me to evolve into the person I am continuously becoming – and thank you to every single step of life that has led me to this experience. Without *all* of the steps, the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’, this would never have happened – so thank you, life, for the eternal mystery, and for bringing me along on this grand adventure.



**Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism FSV UK**  
**Research proposal for Erasmus Mundus Journalism Diploma Thesis**

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**Thesis title in English:**  
 Exploring the application of Mindful Journalism and its potential in promoting Global Inclusivity amid the escalating Israel-Palestine conflict

**Expected date of submission**  
 Spring semester 2023/24

**Main research question (max. 250 characters):**  
  
 RQ:  
 How was the approach of Mindful Journalism applied in the coverage by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Al-Jazeera during the first month of Israel's war on Palestine in 2023, in comparison to the coverage by citizen journalists Motaz Azaiza and Johnny Harris?

**Current State of Research on the Topic (max. 1800 characters):**

A growing number of industry professionals are seeking alternative methods to approach journalism since they consider the shortcomings of the traditional Western-centric journalism practices too pressing to ignore (Harcup, 2022; see also Bro, 2023; Davis, 1999; Farrell et al., 2023; Youngblood, 2016). One major weakness of traditional journalism is, according to Galtung and Ruge (1965), the often societally harmful selection of news – a process based on “Western ethics and epistemologies” (Malikhao, 2017).

Simultaneously, within global media ethics studies, there is a call for the practice of a “wider, more generally accepted set of values and ethics” (Aslam, 2021) to better represent the global audience that this content is aimed at. The issue within today's global media ethics, as noted by Jotia (2011) and other scholars, is the favouring of Global North (GN) world views, whilst overlooking those of the Global South (GS). To tackle both issues, Gunaratne et al. (2015) have put forward the initial draft of a new type of reporting: Mindful Journalism.

It is a values-driven approach, based on Buddhist philosophy, with the aim of operating journalism as a public good, rather than as a money-making commodity (Athugala, 2016; Morton & Pearson, 2015; Pearson, 2014; Seneviratne et al., 2016). The approach has some overlaps with other alternative journalism concepts, such as Peace Journalism, Solutions Journalism, and Emancipatory Journalism, mainly in that it seeks to redefine today's Western-centric news values. In the case of Mindful Journalism, this would entail allowing ethical frameworks from the Global South to influence global media ethics.

**Expected methodology, and methods for data gathering and analysis (max. 1800 characters):**

This qualitative exploratory study will employ Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a “framework for studying connections between language, power, and ideology” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 23), and Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), which will allow an investigation of “how meaning is made through the use of multiple modes of communication as opposed to just language” (Jones, 2021, p. 3).

By bringing the “critical tradition of social analysis into language studies” (Fairclough, 2016, p. 9), CDA allows for both a “normative and explanatory critique” (p. 9) of the relations between discourse and social elements – such as ideologies, power relations, social identities, social realities – as well as of the discourse itself. The aim of MCMA, on the other hand, is to bring a broader spectrum of modes of discourses into scrutiny, by assuming that “language, whether speech or as writing, is one means amongst many available for representation and for making meaning.” (Kress, 2016, p. 37)

Combining CDA with an MCDA approach, whereby various modes of communication – such as text, still images, and videos – are analysed together, allows for the exploration of a wider range of media, apt for analysing today’s multimedia heavy news environment.

CDA is linked with Social Semiotics Theory – exploring how a given content is socially constructed – as well as with Poststructuralist Theory, which poses that knowledge is an “aesthetic, normative, and political matter” (Devetak, 2012, p. 187). This research perceives news media as sources of disseminated ‘knowledges’ in the form of images (still/moving), and text (head, bodies, captions). Hence, by utilizing a CDA framework, whilst applying a multimodal approach to the content analysis, this research aims to investigate how power relations play out in media – and if Mindful Journalism can assist in the dispersal of power for Global Inclusivity to prevail.

**Expected research design (data to be analyzed, for example, the titles of analyzed newspapers and selected time period):**

This research is a comparative study investigating how, if at all, a Mindful Journalism approach was deployed in legacy media and citizen journalists’ coverage during the first month of Israel’s military campaign of Palestine in October-November 2023. The narratives surrounding the deadly attacks launched by Hamas on October 7, 2023, and Israel’s deadlier response – their ongoing war on Palestine, and the siege of the Gaza Strip which, according to the United Nations, violates international law – differ widely across the world, and within various social circles. And there is division on how the issue is being covered, both from outside and within newsrooms: more than 750 US journalists signed a letter condemning Western media’s complicity in the “dehumanizing rhetoric that has served to justify ethnic cleansing of Palestinians” (NY Post, 2023)

With a CDA lens, MCDA will be adopted in this research, to analyse selected news artifacts from the BBC, Al Jazeera English, as well as selected posts from Palestinian citizen journalist Motaz Azaiza’s Instagram account @motaz\_azaiza, and US citizen journalist Johnny Harris’ YouTube account @Johnny Harris.

The artefacts/posts will be selected through purposive sampling – also known as selective, or subjective sampling – a non-probability method where samples that “possess certain traits or qualities” (Koerber,

Global Inclusivity is a concept based on “social justice and human rights for all” (Aslam, 2021), brought about by globalization – and subsequent studies of the phenomenon. Yet, globalization is, according to Buddhism, nothing new. Buddhist philosophy views life as “numerous hierarchical systems that are interconnected, interdependent, and interactive with one another” (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 9).

Both the concept of Global Inclusivity and the interdependence of our global systems, go hand in hand with Stephen J. Ward’s (2021) view that journalists are global citizens – and that as such, they play a crucial role in promoting “global justice” (p. 920) through their ability to create understanding amongst diverse groups. From this perspective, journalists can act as ‘bridges’ across different cultures, nationalities, and religions, to create a less binary, more inclusive image of the world. And with its roots in Buddhism, the framework of Mindful Journalism could be a great tool for helping journalists fully take on their roles as ‘global citizens’.

So far, there is a lack of research on the potential of Mindful Journalism to help promote the notion of Global Inclusivity – as well as on the application of this framework broadly speaking. To begin filling the gap, this research uses textual analysis to explore the application of Mindful Journalism in the coverage of the escalating Israel-Palestine conflict in both GN and GS media content.

**Expected theoretical framework (max. 1800 characters):**

This paper will take a critical social research approach, rooted in Foucault’s Discourse Theory, as well as Post-Colonial Theory, aligned with a Buddhist approach to journalism and its link with the concept of Global Inclusivity. By critically engaging with widespread concepts of the social world, critical social research attempts to challenge the established social order (Harvey, 2022). In the words of Muncie (2006, as cited in Harvey, 2022), this methodology aims to “reveal the socio-historical specificity of knowledge and to shed light on how particular knowledges reproduce structural relations of inequality and oppression” (p. 145).

The discourse of ‘truth’ is, in Foucault’s (1980) view, linked with systems of power in a circulatory flow. Whoever is in power, rules the discourse, and creates the ‘truths’ of a society – which yields them more power, enabling them to maintain control over the ‘truths’ – and around it goes. In highlighting the neo-colonial world order of today, Nkrumah (1965) and Said (1978) see the Western-centric structure of news (Gunaratne et al., 2015) as hindering the redistribution of cultural and intellectual power within our globalized world. Herman and Chomsky (2010) take this critique one step further, by arguing that mainstream media is used as a propaganda tool for those in power – a view that supports the need for Mindful Journalism practices to enter the media landscape. And if, as Harcup (2022) puts it, “the point of news should be to serve the public good” (p. 11), and the concerned public is now of a global reach, there is, in the view of Aslam (2021) a dire need to reshuffle news values within global journalism.

Upon this theoretical ground, this research will investigate the potential of Gunaratne et al.’s (2015) Mindful Journalism approach, in moving towards a media landscape that promotes Global Inclusivity rather than the “nationalistic, propagandist, and divisive” (Aslam, 2021) traditional journalism models. This would be possible, as expressed earlier, by allowing GS perspectives to enter global journalism practices which today are mainly informed by GN values (Jotia, 2011).

McMichael, 2008, p. 464) are sought out by the researcher. The logic behind this type of sampling is to select as many information-rich case studies as possible, to perform an in-depth study of a phenomenon (Coyne, 1997). The purposive sampling used in this research will entail both criterion sampling, which involves the selection of “cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Palinkas et al., 2016, p. 17), and stratified purposeful, described by Patton (2002) as a means to “capture major variations rather than to identify a common core, although the later may also emerge in the analysis” (p. 240).

To start, I will complete a review of relevant posts/artefacts, using keywords and hashtags, found through CDA low-inference coding – a process that involves “reading through material multiple times and iteratively coding excerpts... with very literal tags and descriptions of meaningful segments of speech or text” (Ziskiny, 2019, p. 22). The time interval of the collection will be between October 7, 2023, and November 7, 2023, stretching across the first month of the violent Israel-Palestine escalations.

The next step will entail the application of MCDA to 12 pieces (three from each outlet/profile), evaluating them against the framework of Mindful Journalism as a path toward Global Inclusivity. This number may change depending on when the data saturation point is reached – a phenomenon that Urquhart (2013) defines as “the point in coding when you find that no new codes occur in the data. There are mounting instances of the same codes, but no new ones” (p. 194). What results from this data collection will then be used to answer the research question.

#### **Expected thesis structure (chapters and subchapters with a brief description of their content):**

1. **Abstract** (*Brief summary of research + keywords*)

2. **Introduction** (*Overview of thesis, including the theme, research issue at hand, justification, methodology, and the overall structure of the paper*)

3. **Literature Review** (*overview of previously published works on the topic*)

4. **Theoretical Framework**

4.1 **Mindful Journalism: Towards a Media Ethics of Global Inclusivity**

- Mindful Journalism (*Framework that includes, and transcends other practices such as Solutions Journalism, Peace Journalism, Community Journalism*)
- Global Inclusivity (*Description of this global media ethics concept which is rooted in universal values such as human rights – and how it relates to Mindful Journalism*)
- ‘Not Either or, And’: How the Buddhist ‘Middle Way’ allows for nuance

4.2 **Reality-shaping in a post-colonial world** (*Presentation of literature about the relationship between journalism/media and social reality*)

- Intro to the works of Foucault, Said, Chomsky, and Nkrumah, regarding media/power
- Post-Colonial legacy of news values (*View on the influence colonialism has had, and continues to have, on the formation of news culture across the globe*)
- Southern Theory: Allowed to go beyond ‘inspection’ and enter the media systems?

## 5. Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis + Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (*Explanation of the method of analysis used, including limitations and capabilities*)

Research design (*Explanation of how the analysis is to be carried out*)

Ethical considerations (*researcher subjectivity etc.*)

## 6. Results & Discussion (*Presentation and dissection of the findings from the analysis*)

## 7. Conclusion (*Critical assessment of the findings yielded by the research*)

## 8. References (*List of references used to support thesis*)

## 9. Appendices

**Basic literature list (at least 5 most important works related to the topic and the method(s) of analysis; all works should be briefly characterized on 2-5 lines):**

Gunaratne, S.A., Pearson, M. and Senarath, S. (2017) *Mindful journalism and news ethics in the Digital Era: A Buddhist approach*. London: Routledge.

Aiming to be the first overarching exploration of Mindful Journalism, this book draws on Buddhist ethics to inform journalism ethics. By applying Buddhist mindfulness strategies to the practice of journalism, it argues that Mindful Journalism can help guide decision-making within news by adding clarity and fairness to the process – and that Mindful Journalism offers a moral compass for any working journalist seeking to act ethically.

Aslam, R. (2021). Global patriotism: Is peace journalism the solution? *Handbook of Global Media Ethics*, 919–937. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32103-5\\_46](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32103-5_46)

“Global patriotism” as part of global media ethics is imbued with the values of social justice and human rights for all. In relation to media values and principles, it encourages media practitioners to surpass the traditional journalism models that have been parochial, nationalist, propagandist, and divisive. This chapter argues in favor of peace journalism as a broader, value-based journalism model for journalists to face the issues and concerns faced in the twenty-first century.”

HARCUP, T. (2021). *What's the point of news?: A study in ethical journalism*. SPRINGER NATURE.

“...provides a pragmatic and theoretical framework for reimagining the values that undergird the role of news and journalism for cultivating a democratic society – not as it is but as it could and should be... Harcup builds upon his own work in journalism studies and ethics to explore how we might reformulate news ethics as values... values must be more than a guide for identifying the news but an orientation for amplifying the voices and experiences of the marginalized and cultivating citizenship – in the hope that journalism can live up to its credo of working for the democratic public good.”

Foucault, M., Gordon, C., Marshall, L., Mepham, J., & Sopers, K. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. Vintage.

“According to Foucault's understanding, power is based on knowledge and makes use of knowledge; on the other hand, power reproduces knowledge by shaping it in accordance with its anonymous intentions.<sup>[1]</sup> Power creates and recreates its own fields of exercise through knowledge.”

Handford, M., & Gee, J.P. (Eds.). (2012). *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk/10.4324/9780203809068>

“The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis covers the major approaches to Discourse Analysis from Critical Discourse Analysis to Multimodal Discourse Analysis and their applications in key educational and institutional settings. The handbook is divided into six sections: Approaches to Discourse Analysis, Register and Genre, Developments in Spoken Discourse, Educational Applications, Institutional Applications and Identity, Culture and Discourse.”

Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (2010). *Manufacturing consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Vintage Digital.

“This book centers in what we call a “Propaganda model,” an analytical framework that attempts to explain the performance of the U.S. media in terms of the basic institutional structures and relationships within which they operate. It is our view that, among their other functions, the media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them. The representatives of these interests have important agendas and principles that they want to advance, and they are well positioned to shape and constrain media policy.”

King, T. (2003). *The truth about stories: A native narrative*. House of Anansi Press Inc.

“Beginning with Native oral stories, King weaves his way through literature and history, religion and politics, popular culture and social protest, in an effort to make sense of North America's relationship with its Aboriginal peoples.”

Nkrumah, K. (1966). *Neo-colonialism: The last stage of imperialism*. International publishers.

“The neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage. In the past it was possible to convert a country upon which a neo-colonial regime had been imposed — Egypt in the nineteenth century is an example — into a colonial territory. Today this process is no longer feasible. Old-fashioned colonialism is by no means entirely abolished. It still constitutes an African problem, but it is everywhere on the retreat. Once a territory has become nominally independent it is no longer possible, as it was in the last century, to reverse the process. Existing colonies may linger on, but no new colonies will be created. In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism.”

**Related theses and dissertations (list of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. theses defended at Charles University or other academic institutions in the last five years):**

- Palestine & Israel through the eyes of Swedish news press : A study of four Swedish newspapers' coverage of the Israel-Palestine-conflict; Berglund Svensson, Hampus; 2019; Umeå University, Sweden
- Twitter as an additional battlefield? Analysis of Israel Defense Forces' social media campaign during the Great March of Return; Plíštilová, Tereza; 2020; Charles University, Czech Republic
- Peace Journalism in 140 characters: A qualitative analysis of the use of Twitter by Israel and Palestine news sources during Operation Brother's Keeper; Kayla Lee LaTarte; 2019, John Hopkins University, United States

**Date / Signature of the student:**

11/12/23



**THIS PART TO BE FILLED BY THE ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR:**

I confirm that I have consulted this research proposal with the author and that the proposal is related to my field of expertise at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

I agree to be the Thesis supervisor.

Dagdelen, Mazlum Kemal

11.12.2023

Surname and name of the supervisor

Date / Signature of the supervisor

**Further recommendations related to the topic, structure and methods for analysis:**

The student already received feedback and successfully implemented it in this second version of the thesis proposal. Also, in communication with me, she improved the text and developed the future plan for the thesis trajectory. So, no further recommendations are needed at this point.

**Further recommendations of literature related to the topic:**

The research proposal has to be printed, signed and submitted to the FSV UK registry office (podatelna) in two copies, **by November 15**, addressed to the Program Coordinator. Accepted research proposals have to be picked up at the Program Coordinator's Office, Sandra Lábová. The accepted research proposal needs to be included in the hard copy version of the submitted thesis.

**RESEARCH PROPOSALS NEED TO BE APPROVED BY THE HEAD OF ERASMUS MUNDUS JOURNALISM PROGRAM.**



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## Introduction

"In the pursuit of truth, let your mind be your compass."

*Lester Hughes*

Buddhism and journalism are somewhat two sides of the same coin. Although seemingly unrelated, these traditions share a core aspect – both are concerned with seeking truth. This is a complex task. Consider, for example, the statement “one plus one equals two”. Is that true? At first glance, and from a mathematical perspective, it is. However, if approached from the perspective of mycology (the study of fungi), that statement does not hold. When a fungus and an alga come together, they form a new, combined organism known as a lichen<sup>1</sup>. Hence, one plus one can also equal one. Similarly confusing is the idea of what it means to be human. If someone was asked, “Are you 100 percent human?”, to which they answered, “Yes” – would that be true? From their perspective, absolutely. Yet Western science commonly claims that our bodies are made up of more microbial cells than human ones<sup>2</sup>, and from such a perspective, that answer would then be false. What is ‘true’ from one viewpoint can, as argued, be incorrect from another. The complexities of what makes a ‘truth’ true expand, as power dynamics, biases, culture, and emotions are added to the equation. These are but a few of the aspects that newsmakers need to consider – both inwardly and outwardly – when producing content that contributes to creating social reality while resting upon its societal authority as ‘truth’ (Bird & Dardenne, 1988). Thereby,

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. FOREST SERVICE. (n.d.). *About lichens*. [www.fs.usda.gov](http://www.fs.usda.gov). Retrieved July 24, 2024, from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/beauty/lichens/about.shtml#:~:text=Lichens%20are%20a%20complex%20life,shape%20to%20its%20fruiting%20bodies>

<sup>2</sup> LaFee, S. (2023, January 24). *Pharming the microbiome*. UC San Diego Today. <https://today.ucsd.edu/story/pharming-the-microbiome>

journalists can be seen as ‘truth-makers’, both reflecting and creating “a version of reality that is culturally determined” (Harcup, 2020, p. 33). Through the proliferation of certain discourses – a term that Van Dijk (1997) loosely defines as the language used to communicate ideas in specific social interactions – journalists contribute to shaping the narratives that make up social reality. This task of “establishing [the] consensual knowledge” (Kress & Bezemer, 2023, p. 140) of society, whilst remaining committed to their social duty of serving the public good, entails a huge responsibility. One which is best achieved by allowing as wide a variety of perspectives as possible to inform both the stories told, and the tools by which they are gathered, composed, and distributed, according to Aslam (2021). Yet, a growing number of industry professionals are seeking alternative methods to approach journalism, since they believe that this responsibility is, at large, not met by today’s Western-centric practices (Harcup, 2020). A major issue of the traditional model is in the eyes of Jotia (2011) the favoring of Global North (GN) worldviews, whilst overlooking those of the Global South (GS)<sup>3</sup>. Allowing for the values and ethics guiding news practices to include others than Western philosophy will better represent a global understanding of the world, in the eyes of aforementioned scholars.

To tackle these issues, Gunaratne et al. (2015) have put forward the initial draft of a new type of reporting: Mindful Journalism (MJ). It is a values-driven approach, based on Buddhist philosophy, with the aim of having journalism operate as a public good, rather than as a money-making commodity (Pearson, 2014). This idea of news, not as a commodity but

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<sup>3</sup> GN refers to “economically developed societies” with political stability – such as Europe, Israel, and South Africa, whilst GS refers to “economically backwards” societies, such as Brazil, India, and parts of Africa (Odeh, 2010, p.338), that are politically and economically dependent on, and dominated by, the GN. Rather than merely referencing ‘underdevelopment’, the North-South terminology draws on an “entire history of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and different economic and social changes through which large inequalities in living standards, life expectancy, and access to resources are maintained” (Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 13).

as a social good, was initially put forward by Juan Sumavika<sup>4</sup> and a plethora of other politicians/scholars, during the call for a New World Information and Communications Order in the late 80s – a movement that will later be discussed in more detail. To help bring about the change Gunaratne et al. (2015) deem necessary for journalists to pursue reporting that fully embraces the responsibility of representing a global public, they suggest combining the Buddhist, introspective truth-seeking methods, with the extrospective truth-seeking methods of traditional journalism. MJ is thus, in brief, an attempt to expand contemporary journalistic practices by adding contemplative Buddhist aspects to the traditional news-making process. Eastern thought has been “suppressed as mere metaphysics since the rise of the Occident” (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 7), whilst the Western-centric, globally distorted worldview continues to ‘falsely’ inform the world, according to critical theorists such as Edward Said (1978), and Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (2008). Hence, MJ is an attempt to help guide principles of Eastern philosophy into the pre-existing system of journalism, primarily informed by Western philosophy. The idea is that the application of mindfulness strategies will help to “add clarity, fairness, and equity to news decision-making and to offer a moral compass to journalists facing ethical dilemmas in their work” (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 1). Rather than replacing the current ‘yang’ (mainstream journalism), the ‘yin’ (MJ) is meant to coexist with it, for more balanced narratives to prevail. To investigate how MJ can best be applied within global journalism for more inclusive ‘truths’ to be told, this thesis will examine how elements of MJ show up in legacy media, as well as in the work of independent journalists. Moreover, it seeks to explore whether these elements are somehow contributing to the discourse of Global Inclusivity (GI) – a global media ethics concept concerned with equity and harmony within the international community, that will be expanded upon in the

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<sup>4</sup> Somavia, J. (1976). Transnational power structure and international information. *Media Asia*, 3(3), 149-157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.1976.11725884>

following chapter. As stated by Bird and Dardenne (1988), “news values, rules, and formulas are essential for journalists to do their job” (p. 73), so rather than discarding the outdated structures of today, this research aims to highlight new ways of thinking about journalism and its values, so that news may contribute to a world where all global citizens are allowed to inform the construction of “public cultural truth” (Hackett, 2010, p. 191).

This will be done by looking for MJ patterns in both legacy media and independent journalists’ reporting on Israel’s onslaught on Gaza, following the deadly response of Hamas<sup>5</sup> to 76 years of Israeli oppression<sup>6</sup>, on October 7, 2023. The aim is to examine the elements of MJ found within the news pieces, and whether or not these promote discourses aligning with GI. The deeply divisive onslaught has so far taken the lives of tens of thousands of civilians – many of whom are children. It has forcedly displaced millions of Palestinians. Drawn the condemnation of a majority of nations in the world, with several countries accusing Israel of committing war crimes, genocide, and ecocide<sup>7</sup>. Stirred international mass protests. Seen hate crimes against both Palestinians and Jewish people increase significantly across the world and affected global trade. It is hence an undeniably significant event in world history, in “the most conflicted part of our world” (Loewenstein & Moore, 2024, p. 23). As such, it is a potent case on which to apply the inquiry of MJ’s suitability as a journalistic framework to

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Hamas’, short for Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-Islāmiyyah, translates to Islamic Resistance Movement. The militant group was founded in 1987, as a means to resist “Israeli and US hegemony in the region”, and due to this shared interest, Hamas receives funds, weapons, and training from Iran (El Hussein, 2010, p. 812). It has been ruling over Gaza since 2007, and interestingly has received plenty of funding from the Israeli government, in an aim to strengthen the opposition to secular political groups within Palestine (Singh, 2021, p. 58).

<sup>6</sup> The Nakba, which translates to ‘catastrophe’, refers to the ethnic cleansing of two-thirds of the Palestinian population in 1948, as the local population was forcibly expelled to make place for the state of Israel (Chomsky & Papé, 2015, p. 8). Since this occupation, Israel has continued to illegally steal more land from Palestine.

<sup>7</sup> UN’s Special Rapporteur, Francesca Albanese, unveiled a report in March 2024 stating that there are grounds to believe that the Israeli state is committing genocide towards Palestinians. Genocide is here defined as “the denial of the right of a people to exist and the subsequent attempt or success in annihilating them” (Albanese, 2024, p. 3, through various means of persecution and destructing.

promote the mediating concept of GI. However, since the concept of MJ is still relatively novel, studies on its applicability and effectiveness in contributing to a more harmonious world – such as through the promotion of GI – are yet to be pursued. By applying the qualitative research method of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA)<sup>8</sup>, different patterns (or absences thereof) relating to MJ will be identified within the seven selected news pieces. This is done less to determine “why certain events are selected as news and more with how they are constructed as news” (Harcup, 2020, p. 30). Accordingly, the data collected reveals the construction of several discourses, the majority of which promote uniting narratives correlating to GI. However, this research also finds divisive narratives pursued in news pieces appearing to contain elements of MJ. This confirms critical theorists’ claim that hidden discourses revealing structures of injustices move through texts, by contradicting its apparent message – as well as the necessity to investigate these underlying narratives to classify journalism as mindful or not, since the aim of this approach is ultimately to create media that unites.

## **1. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

This chapter, which is organized into two sections, comprises an overview of the theoretical framework used in this thesis and a review of relevant literature. The focus will initially be on defining and situating MJ within the field of global journalism, and global media ethics – as well as connecting it to the concept of GI. Then, this chapter will provide an overview of theories that constitute the backbone of this research, namely Discourse Theory, Post-Colonial Theory, and Social Responsibility Theory, exploring various perspectives on these concepts.

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<sup>8</sup> A method that explores the relationship between different communication modes and media; their meaning-making potential, as well as their relationship to power (Djonov & Zhao, 2014).

## **1.1 Mindful Journalism: Towards a Media Ethics of Global Inclusivity**

This first section examines the role played by journalism in creating a global environment that benefits the many, rather than the few – and how MJ can be of service to this process. It is comprised of three main segments. *Mindful Journalism: An Umbrella Approach* delves into the concept and its relevance as an alternative approach to journalism; *Global Inclusivity to Guide Global Journalism Ethics* describes this media ethics concept which is rooted in universal values such as human rights, and contextualizes it within a global media environment; and lastly, *‘Not Either or, And’: How the Buddhist ‘Middle Way’ Allows for Nuance* examines the relevance of applying Buddhist philosophy to the field of journalism, in search of ‘truths’ that better represent the ‘whole’. Overall, this section aims to form a comprehensive narrative around the convergence of these concepts and their significance in our increasingly interconnected world.

### **1.1.1 Mindful Journalism: An Umbrella Approach**

News, just like any other form of narrative, is not a natural occurrence but must be constructed – and thus inevitably entails choices of what to include and what to leave out. It is “a version of reality that is culturally determined” (Harcup, 2020, p. 33) and as such, the journalism industry has a responsibility – an ability to respond (Sadhguru, 2016) – to all issues, misrepresentations, or systematic injustices perceived within its practices. Because as Davies (1999) puts it, “If, in the final analysis, we as cultural participants decide an activity is not socially useful, then we have every right – if not duty – to criticize it, reform it, expunge it, or whatever is necessary for fruitful social participation” (p. 54). Today, there is a commonly recognized ‘crisis’ within global news media whereby news is losing ad revenues, as well as the attention and the trust of audiences (Curran, 2019), attributed to a set of factors, ranging from technological to social. One major weakness of today’s journalism practices



that is contributing to this crisis is, according to Galtung and Ruge (1965), the often societally harmful selection of news. This process, based on Western ethics and epistemologies, is creating a skewed image of reality where negativity, violence, and scandals are favored (Malikhao, 2017) as it engages readers and benefits “formal agents of social control” (Altheide & Michalowski, 1999, p. 476). With news avoidance on the rise, whilst trust in the news continues to fall worldwide (Newman et al., 2023, p. 24), this sentiment appears to be reflected in the views of international news audiences. Another issue with traditional media is its news values, according to Tandoc and Oh (2017), who found ‘prominence’ to be the most common news value signifier. In mainstream news, according to these scholars, prominence is “linked to the concept of legitimacy” (p. 1009), which means that including a well-known person in an article is believed to enhance the reader’s trust in the piece. But, as pointed out by Tandoc and Oh, “in doing so, traditional news becomes complicit in perpetuating the influence of those in power” (2017, p. 1009). This favoring of elite voices before those of ‘ordinary citizens’ is equally criticized by Galtung (2015), who calls for the implementation of Peace Journalism – a concept based on win-win metrics – to combat the divisive nature of traditional news. Moreover, scholars have been criticizing the ‘objectivity regime’ for a long time, since “the dominant social order [...] significantly influences what the media takes to be objective” and presenting and selecting news from “everyone’s viewpoints” is simply impossible (Hackett & Zhao, 1998, p. 84). This all points to the benefit of allowing the practices of journalism to expand, for the field to better represent social reality, which for most people today is one of global scope. Since news are socially constructed, ideological products that cement ideologies such as nationalism, racism, and sexism through the stories they share (Van Dijk, 2008), (re-)constructing news practices to better represent truths that embrace a global audience is arguably both doable and desirable.

In the first-ever comprehensive book to cover the concept, Gunaratne et al. (2015) propose MJ to be one potential solution that could help move the journalism industry out of this crisis, through both practical and theoretical means. This claim is supported by Wright (2017), who argues that evolutionary biology proves Buddhism to be “true”, since “our brains are designed to, among other things, delude us” (p. 18). This, as he argues, is a result of natural selection only ‘caring’ about one thing: “getting genes into the next generation” (Wright, 2017, p. 18). Since Buddhism offers a step-by-step guide for how to break free from the delusions that, according to Wright (2017), are hardwired into us, MJ arguably holds the potential to be a great tool for change within the industry. According to Pearson (2013), MJ aims to apply mindfulness strategies in journalism to enhance clarity and equity in the news-making process, as well as provide a moral compass to the ethically rooted journalism profession (Gunaratne et al., 2015). It rests upon Buddha’s “Four Noble Truths that Siddhārtha Gautama discovered to attain Buddhahood” (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 2), which will here be unpacked in brief:

- i. The first of these ‘truths’ holds that “cyclical existence is suffering” (p. 2). When applied to the perceived crisis of journalism, it can be verified: the practices that have been called out as insufficient, yet continue to be operated, are causing dissatisfaction.
- ii. Cravings, ill will, and restlessness “all result from ignorance and are the causes of suffering” (p. 2). Buddhism holds that we are all interconnected; the mistaken belief that we are separate makes up the ‘ignorance’ that drives all suffering. Again, when applied to the world this ‘truth’ can be justified: All acts of violence stem from the idea of hurting the ‘other’, hence due to the ‘illusion of separation’, suffering – such

as war – arises.

- iii. “There is a path which will lead to the cessation of suffering” (p. 2). The idea is that each moment holds the potential for change; right now you may be ignorant of the ‘true’, interconnected nature of life, but you can change that by realize it in any moment. This requires ‘purification’ of your mind, done by following the Middle Path (see below).
- iv. That path to end suffering includes meditation, living ethically, and harnessing wisdom and is known as the Noble Eightfold/Middle Path.

This thesis will explore what this path entails further on – for now, the focus will remain on exploring literature related to the concept, examining key components of MJ, and situating it within the field of alternative journalism.

Mindfulness, which traces back more than two thousand years, to early Buddhism, has many definitions. According to Malikhao (2017), it can “help us control our five sense doors: eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin in such a way that our mind will not fluctuate according to any sensory pleasure” (p. 105). In the words of Buddhist monk Gunaratna (1990), “mindfulness is pre-symbolic[...] The actual experience lies beyond the words and above the symbols” (p. 38). Yet if one had to describe it, Pearson et al. (2021) believe it can be viewed as a “practice of enhancing awareness” (p. 1649). Mindfulness and meditation, which have gained worldwide interest in recent years (Athugala, 2019), are scientifically proven to increase intrapersonal aspects such as empathy, emotional regulation, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, whilst simultaneously decreasing unproductive aspects such as

ruminations, depression, and anxiety (Keng et al., 2011, see also Elder et al., 2014; Engert et al., 2023; Goldberg et al., 2018; Saeed et al., 2019; Tseng, 2022). Additionally, a growing body of research is putting forth empirical evidence on the physical health benefits of “bringing one’s attention to the present-moment experience with acceptance” (Sala et al., 2020, p. 345). Aiming to offer an alternative approach to news-making based on “principles of universality and ethical anchoring from the Buddhist philosophy and phenomenology”, MJ puts a strong emphasis on “conditioning one’s own mind” (Murthy, 2016, p. 505). Another way of thinking about it can be found in the Sanskrit word for meditation, *Bhavana*, which means “mental culture” (Athugala, 2019, p. 321). An instrumental part of an MJ practitioner’s journey would hence be to create an optimal culture within their own minds to fulfill their roles as journalists, and as ‘truth seekers’.

To practice MJ one must “understand the reality of existence” (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 11) which, according to Buddhist philosophy, entails no fixed self, and no permanence since everything is in a constant state of “becoming” (p. 11). This perspective instantly breaks the persistent and problematic ‘Orientalism’ of Western media, which will be discussed in more detail in the following pages, whereby citizens of the GS are treated as ‘other’, ‘exotic’, and as ‘lesser’ (Said, 1978), since there is no ‘self’ for the ‘other’ to be separated from.

Additionally, viewing life as a dynamic process can awaken hope. Bhikkhu (2006) expresses this idea with the statement “no matter how bad the situation, anything is possible” (p. 39). He holds that “insight into change teaches us hope” (p. 39) since it is the only constant in our lives, which means that we can rely on it to move us out of negative situations. According to Bhikkhu’s logic, if newsrooms across the globe pursued journalism that highlighted the ever-changing nature of life news could potentially act as a springboard to what Harcup (2020) believes to be the essence of the trade: enabling positive change to occur on a societal level,

inspired by MJ's perspective on change. On the other hand, if we fail to see our 'asoulity'<sup>9</sup>, or 'non-self', life becomes sorrowful from a Buddhist perspective, as it creates a separation between oneself and the world (Gunaratne et al., 2015). The way MJ can contribute to breaking out of this cycle of sorrow, they suggest, is to emphasize "cooperative efforts highlighting mutual interdependence at different levels – international or global, national, or local" (Gunaratne et. Al., 2015, p. 11). By telling cross-cultural stories; stories highlighting similarities rather than differences; pointing to historical ties; or the ideas; traditions; myths shared by people across the world, MJ could assist in shifting the collective consciousness towards realizing the Buddhist concept of 'asoulity'. Such a shift in perception could allow for a more harmonious and balanced global culture to emerge.

Another key component of this framework, is its emphasis on the interdependent nature of life, highlighting the "relation of mind and body, the relation of past actions to present choices, and the relation of self to society and nature" (Gunaratne et al, 2015, p. 60). Applying such an understanding to modern mass communication with its heavy focus on individualism (Dascălu, 2014) could make way for more communal and inclusive thinking, bringing journalism closer to its 'civil ideal' of serving its audience as citizens instead of as consumers (Seneviratne, 2019). This same idea permeated the call for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) which was mentioned in the introduction. It was a movement spearheaded by nations of the GS, and supported by UNESCO, claiming that "the means of communication of information are concentrated in a few countries" which "perpetuates the colonial era of dependence and domination" (Nordenstreng & Valdivia, 2012, p. 3). In linking academic discourse with institutional discourse on an authoritarian level, the movement garnered considerable attention. Although it seemingly died out in the

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<sup>9</sup> Buddhism sees life as a flow of change where nothing remains constant. It is held that there is no fixed 'self', but rather, life is seen to be made up of co-dependent processes. This concept is called asoulity, and links with the idea of interconnectedness, as all life is essentially seen as one unified flow of change (Olendzki, 2022).

1990s, “its ideas carried over into the new millennium” (Nordenstreng & Valdivia, 2012, p. 2), both through inspiring global grassroots movements, as well as being scrutinized by scholars of global media – because the issues it addresses are yet to be resolved. Similarly to NWICO’s principles of decolonization, and democratization of the ‘one-way flow of information’, believed to reflect the cultural and economic domination of the GN over the GS (Roach, 1990), this thesis argues that by allowing MJ to inform global media ethics, the industry would be moving one step closer towards the information-flow-equilibrium called for by the NWICO.

Returning to a practical overview of the concept itself, an MJ practitioner, as put forth by Gunaratne et al. (2015), is encouraged to 1/“discard linear thinking and look for plurality [...] and feedback loops” (p. 57), 2/seek truths that lie “in the mean between two extreme views” (p. 3), 3/analyze problems by identifying how “matter, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness” co-create the “craving/greed and clinging” (p. 77) that causes it to occur – thereby enabling them to dissolve, and 4/to lower the level of suffering in society by addressing corruption in two ways. These aims are achieved, firstly, by exposing it “among those entrenched in power”, and secondly, “by helping people to purify their minds” of destructive patterns such as attachment, ignorance, and aversion that may give birth to corruption” (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 11). In a similar manner, and towards a similar end, MJ practitioners ought to engage in the mental cultivation aspect described earlier. The aim would be to turn the same curious gaze inwards also outwards, to gain an increased understanding of one’s own motifs, thought processes, and behaviors – as well as that of the surrounding world – through combining these two ways of harnessing information. Lastly, MJ would aim to spark creativity and solution-based thinking among the audience, as another means of reducing the state of suffering in the world (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 56).

The concept and its applicability within the field is still in its early stages and may require some work to be accessible to an audience that is not versed in Buddhist philosophy. However, compared to other alternative methods aiming to rectify news practices, such as, for example, Peace Journalism (PJ) (Youngblood, 2016), Solutions Journalism (SJ) (McIntyre, 2019), and Emancipatory Journalism (EJ) (Shah, 1996), “found to be less than ideal in fulfilling the democratic expectations placed upon news in terms of deepening citizens’ understanding of the societies in which we live” (Harcup, 2020, p. 34), this thesis argues that MJ includes and transcends much of what these concepts have to offer. Compared to PJ, a concept invented by Buddhism-inspired Norwegian sociologist Galtung (1985), to oppose the traditional, West-centric “war journalism” (Youngblood, 2016, p. XVI), the MJ approach arguably has wider applicability. Rather than being limited to stories related to conflict like its peace-focused counterpart, MJ could be applied to everything from cultural to political, to environmental reporting. SJ, which McIntyre (2019) defines as “rigorous reporting on responses to social problems” (p. 19), is – like MJ – what Bro (2008) refers to as an active form of journalism, whereby reporters act as “change agents” (Malikhao & Servaes, 2005, p. 50), aiming to inspire citizens to action in the face of problems, rather than merely informing about them. However, in contrast to MJ, SJ does not offer as wide a toolkit related to practical conduit – nor is it rooted in a set of values with global applicability (Galtung, 1985). Hence, MJ is arguably better suited as an alternative framework for approaching global news production. Lastly, the concept of EJ put forth by Shah (1996) as a ‘bottoms-up approach’ to combat the neocolonial structures of today’s world order, shares with MJ a core mission to promote the human rights of all people, and not just a select few. Nevertheless, the framework of MJ is again applicable to a wider range of issues, due to its holistic philosophy of humans and nature as equally important (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 91), meaning that the rights promoted would extend to all interdependent forms of life.

Moreover, all aforementioned concepts are committed to expanding beyond reporting focused on single events, to “analyze contexts and critically explore structures of power” (Hackett, 2010, p. 186). This logic goes in line with both the Buddhist concept of non-harm, intending to mitigate structural violence, as well as Social Responsibility Theory, which suggests that in exchange for press freedom, journalists are obliged to be devoted to “provide citizens with thorough, incisive, and useful information” (Shah, 1996, p. 145). On a similar note, yet dismissing the idea of neutrality stressed by Social Responsibility Theory, EJ urges journalists to critique unequal forms of power relations by “abandoning the role of the neutral observer while reporting in a manner that is thorough, deeply researched, and historically and culturally grounded” (Shah, 1996, p. 144). Such a stance, shared by all concepts mentioned in this paragraph, could lead the industry away from the previously addressed ‘objectivity regime’ (Hackett, 2015) – and “towards an ethos of dialogue, an epistemology of self-reflexivity, and to fundamental change in media and social structures” (Aslam, 2021, p. 924) – whereby all members of society would be invited to “participate in constructing public cultural truth” (Hackett, 2010, p. 191). With its heavy focus on the mental cultivation of both practitioners and the audience, as well as valuing all life forms equally, MJ could be a helpful framework for such a pursuit, promoting balanced, inclusive, and selfless reporting. Therein lies the main difference between the alternative journalism concepts touched upon in this segment and MJ: It seeks to deal with the human predicament of the journalists themselves, as well as the audience and the surrounding world at large (Pearson, 2013). By adding the introspective practices of Buddhism to the more extrospective practices of traditional journalism, MJ aims to expand the field to help us better understand reality. This will, in the



eyes of Gunaratne et al. (2015) lead us to see the ‘oneness’<sup>10</sup> of life – a Buddhist concept that coincides strongly with the global media ethics concept of Global Inclusivity.

### **1.1.2 Global Inclusivity to Guide Global Journalism Ethics**

In the eyes of Aslam (2021), all news reporting practices are somehow related since “the stories today may be local but the issues are global” (p. 933). This touches upon another core aspect of Buddhist philosophy: interconnectedness – that is, nothing occurs in a vacuum. Hence, for something to be fully understood, both the ‘parts’ and the ‘whole’ must be recognized – whereas the traditional Cartesian-Newtonian model, which Western journalism is based upon (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 90), often tends to look at the ‘parts’ separately (such as reporting on events), while neglecting the ‘whole’ (including context/history). This can result in incoherency and a lack of finding root causes of issues, and thus, merely exposing the symptoms. Hence, following an MJ approach, all news are both local and global – and must be addressed accordingly. Even outside of Buddhism, it is today commonly recognized that we live in a “global village” because of worldwide communication (McLuhan & Powers, 1989), which holds at its core the intrinsic, equal value of all human life (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Hence, it is arguably of more importance now than ever before that the news claiming to cater to a global audience represents the ‘whole’ (GN and GS), rather than merely the ‘parts’ (GN), to avoid promoting “cultural assimilation [rather] than cultural pluralism” (Jotia, 2011, p. 248).

Although, as Chalaby (1996) puts it, “journalism has been widely accepted as a universal discursive form without a particular culture of origin” (p. 323), the tradition originates in the GN, and its dominant place in our world is sustained through post-colonial,

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<sup>10</sup> “Living beings and their environment, though two seemingly distinct phenomena, are essentially non-dual; they are two integral phases of a single reality” (Maeda & Sado, 2019).

GN cultural power (Paul & Sosale, 2023). Hence, its ethics and philosophies are today mainly informed by ‘Western traditions’ – and thereby impose a worldview of ‘truths’ that stem primarily from the GN while neglecting the perspective of the GS. This clashes with the essence of journalism, seen by Aslam (2021) as being “rooted in its ethical and moral obligations towards society which commits reporters to the values of social justice and human rights” (p. 922). Because our society now is global, a journalist’s moral obligation includes representing and serving GN and GS citizens simultaneously. Applying the Buddhist idea of ‘interconnectedness’ to journalism could help such a shift occur since it would assist in forming narratives that favor collaboration and ‘win-win’ metrics over competition and win-lose metrics (Galtung, 1985). From such a viewpoint, any action that harms another or the world also harms oneself – and reversely, “one does good onto oneself when one does good to others” (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 113). This principle of altruism, which can be found within most world religions, is even supported by Western science, as can be seen through the Prisoner’s Dilemma employed in Game Theory (Binmore, 2007). It holds that when two parties involved in a game/dilemma collaborate they will both always end up better off than if they act out of self-interest (Kuhn & Zalta, 1997). Having a global news media system whose narratives favor the GN at the expense of the GS may then even mean that both ‘sides’ are worse off. The MJ approach, rooted in an ethical “concern with compassion and kindness for all members of the world community” (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 43) presents a suitable option for the necessary paradigm shift. It holds the potential of filling the “need for a universal code of ethics in the contemporary globalized, cosmopolitan, and multicultural world” (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 6) – where even the concept of a ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ audiences as two separate entities is becoming outdated due to migration and globalization as a whole (Skrbiš, 2008).

Correspondingly, Aslam (2021) coined the global media ethics concept GI, committed “by choice to find beauty in diversity, to uphold the principles of kindness and tolerance for all life forms, and to care for nature and its gift to mankind” (p. 930). Promoting values of social justice and human rights for all, GI aims to encourage journalists to move beyond divisive and nationalistic narratives, to a new storyline where all global inhabitants are truly seen as equal. Aslam (2021) suggests that applying PJ as an alternative to traditional journalism can bring about “significant contributions towards achieving the goals of global justice, equity, and human rights” (p. 919) embedded within GI. Building on this argument, this thesis suggests MJ as, potentially, a more appropriate framework to bring about such a sentiment internationally. Where “mainstream journalism pays little attention to the impact of mind on matter and concentrates primarily on the external manifestation of matter” (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 94), MJ compliments the concept of GI by actively pushing for the development of our minds for harmony to prevail. Furthermore, by surpassing the national basis upon which most of the world’s news media operate (Hackett, 2010), MJ aims to act as a ‘societal bridge’: “journalists should report nonslanting information and avoid fueling conflict or xenophobia [...] as well as promote a global ethics, serve the citizens of the world, and promote nonparochial understanding of reality” (Kumar, 2012, as cited in Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 58), leaving a ripe ground upon which the concept of GI could flourish. To build such a societal bridge, journalists will, according to MJ, benefit from the Buddhist ‘Middle Path’, a concept that will be explored in the following section.

### **1.1.3 ‘Not Either or, And’: The Buddhist ‘Middle Path’ Allows for Nuance**

The literal translation of ‘Buddha’ is the “awakened one” (Wright, 2017, p. 299), and hence, within Buddhist philosophy, the ‘Four Noble Truths’ are meant to assist the awakening of those who apply their teachings. The awakening referred to involves “apprehending [...] elusive truths about the world” (Wright, 2017, p. 299). A parallel can

thus be drawn, according to Gunaratne et al. (2015), between the role of a journalist and that of a Buddhist; both are seekers – and ideally tellers – of truth through means guided by morals and ethics. They suggest that such a link between “Western knowledge... [and] Eastern wisdom” (p. 7) was first drawn by Siu (1957), who highlighted how the two complement each other and how they would work best when used in unison. Western scholars – such as Thoreau, Hume, Nietzsche, and Jung – have also found it of value to connect Eastern wisdom with Western knowledge for centuries. Yet, due to the insistence of Western science as the only correct method to reach ‘truths’, and the imperialistic world order globalizing such an idea, Eastern thought was dismissed as inferior and useless for centuries (Wallerstein, 2004). Today, that is slowly shifting as the limitations of Western science are increasingly acknowledged (Gunaratne et al., 2015). By pointing to Western science’s reliance on sense-perception, Siu (1957) shows how it lacks substance in areas of non-materiality, and thus in finding ‘absolute truths’. Because – just like quantum physicists – Buddhists assert that the universe is made up of nothing but energy, of which 68 percent is dark energy, and 27 percent is dark matter (Gunaratne et al., 2015). Hence, since Western science relies on what can be measured by our sense perceptions, it “can explain only 5 percent of the universe” (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 77). The MJ approach stresses the importance of developing meditative and contemplative practices, in combination with their external investigations, to ‘marry’ the Eastern tradition with the Western one to reach the ‘truest truth’. Here, MJ is referring to a more inclusive narrative, or ‘truth’ than the hegemonic ‘truths’ created by mainstream media today, which serve mainly the good of the privileged (GN) at the cost of the underprivileged (GS). The concept of hegemony is used by (1926) to explain the class relations, whereby the cultural, ideological, and moral leadership is exercised by a dominant group to maintain and legitimize its power over the rest of the society by diffusing and popularizing the ideas of the ruling class and securing the consent of

subordinate groups. Their leadership within the hegemonic system is cemented by a common worldview or “organic ideology”<sup>11</sup>, which is distributed and diffused through civil society by social institutions and structures – including the news (Ramos & Saba, 1982, Concept of ideology section). By pursuing inclusive narratives, MJ seeks to challenge and ultimately replace mainstream journalism’s divisive hegemonic position, with a counter-hegemonic stance of unity, serving all, rather than merely the ruling class. According to Gramsci, when hegemonic systems undergo an “organic crisis”<sup>12</sup> (Ramos & Saba, 1982, Concept of hegemony section) the time is ripe for subaltern yet influential classes to challenge the status quo, whilst aligning with the interests of other subaltern groups. For MJ to establish itself as a counter-hegemonic journalistic approach during the current industry crisis, striking a balance between calling out the mass corruptions that rest upon the current-day hegemonic truths and pursuing narratives highlighting the power of collaboration and co-creation, could thus be desirable. This way, the approach can garner support from the masses, both by stirring anger by revealing how global systems are currently acting to their disservice, as well as installing resilience by showcasing the strength in working together to realize the uniting discourse of GI. The following section will delve further into the concept of hegemony, and the socially constructed nature of news – for now, the focus will remain on exploring MJ’s version of ‘truth’, which Buddhism holds can be found by following the ‘Middle Path’, or *magga*.

According to Buddhist philosophy, “the truth lies in between two extremes” (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 3). To reach it, one must choose the correct path, *magga*, “when two extremes exist, abandoning both of them” (p. 131). This coincides with Aristotle’s Golden Mean

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<sup>11</sup> Gramsci defines ideology “in terms of a system of class rule, i.e. hegemony” where all ideological elements are organically arranged into a system: A class holds state power and thereby also social hegemony since it successfully expresses the ideological discourses of the subalternate classes (Ramos & Saba, 1982).

<sup>12</sup> An “organic crisis” occurs when then the equilibrium between leaders and led within a hegemonic system is unstable, leading to a threat to “the hegemonic position and the ruling position of the leading class in the hegemonic system” (Ramos & Saba, 1982, Concept of hegemony section).

concept, which asserts that the ethical solution to all moral issues, is to be found between two extremes (Kraut, 2022). The idea is to explore the extremes, in order to see beyond them, to a point where the polarities can be united rather than stay divided. Practically, this could look like: “not favoring specific sources for regular attribution” (p. 28); avoiding “linear cause-effect reasoning” (p. 72); and/or moving away from the West-centric news value of “proximity” (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001, p. 264) – which divides people into identities related to their ethnicity, religion, or race. Buddhist philosophy sees the cosmos as one big cooperative, rendering geographical, or emotional closeness irrelevant. Rather than mirroring the idea of ‘balanced reporting’ stemming from Western journalism, which “neutralizes the construction of conflicts as two-sided zero-sum contests” (Hackett, 2010, p. 182), the concept of *magga* aims to showcase complexity, to mitigate rather than spur polarity. This could look like “framing stories highlighting similarities that could bring about greater cohesion in multicultural societies (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 62), or investigating who is profiting from a specific war, thereby revealing corruption among ‘the leaders’ and promoting unity among ‘the people’, who are often at the losing end on both sides of a conflict. In his book, *What’s the Point of News* (2020), Harcup describes how GN-informed reporting encourages extremist behavior: “Mainstream news coverage of protests such as the mass gatherings around United Nations Climate Change summits has tended to be non-existent unless somebody starts smashing the windows of a nearby McDonald’s” (p. 62). A journalist pursuing a *magga* path would thus aim to ‘go where the silence is’ (Stockwell, 2021). Pearson (2014) explores the applicability of *magga* elements to modern-day ‘Watchdog journalism’ – whereby journalists ‘dig out’ information that holds governments, and those in power, accountable. In accordance, to conduct reporting based on the *magga*, one must practice the following: “understanding free of superstition, kindly and truthful speech, right conduct, doing no harm, perseverance, mindfulness and contemplation” (p. 38). As a means

to justify the application of Buddhist codes of morality to the journalistic process, Pearson (2014) points to how the originators of the frameworks such as the ‘Four theories of the press’ – which claims that the press “always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates” (Siebert et al., 1984, p. 1) – and the Social Responsibility Theory touched upon earlier, were firmly anchored in Western philosophical thought and political history. This, they argue, is now an outdated foundational guide, seeing that “large-scale immigration has forced cultural re-evaluation within former colonial powers”, citizen journalism is on the rise, and the economic model for legacy media is falling apart (p. 38). Not to mention the issue of representation within global journalism, both content-wise, as well as within the practices informing journalism as a profession – a key issue that this thesis aims to address.

## **1.2 Reality-Shaping in a Post-Colonial World**

This section addresses the relationship between journalism and social ‘reality’, and consists of two segments, which are 1/*Media, Power, and Global Journalism* exploring the impact of global journalism on the world order and 2/*Post-Colonial Legacy of News Values* examining the influence of colonialism on global news culture and presents research calling for more inclusive media environments. This segment aims to situate MJ within Post-Colonial Theory using Discourse Theory and Social Responsibility Theory, to confirm the importance of this counter-hegemonic concept to enable journalism that serves the good of all, rather than a select few.

### **1.2.1 Media, Power, and Global Journalism**

Discourse can be, and consequently is, defined in a myriad of ways. Most broadly, one of the influential French philosophers, Michel Foucault’s definition of the term is according to

Mills (2004) “the general domain of all statements” which she interprets as “all utterances or texts which have meaning and which have some effects in the real world” (p. 6). Mills’ definition refers to how texts and utterances build on each other and upon interactions to create meaning and have an impact on the world. Once a word, concept, or utterance is commonly agreed upon to symbolize a certain idea, object, or philosophy, it takes on a meaning (Halliday, 1992). Once textual and/or verbal communication creates patterned ways of thinking, or groups of ideas, “located in wider social structures”, they are according to Lupton (1992) to be considered as discourse (p. 145). These patterns or groups of communication are in Foucault’s view used to construct knowledge and ‘truths’ (1980). Due to being systemic bodies of knowledge, discourses are, by this line of thought linked with systems of power in a circulatory flow: Whoever is in power rules the discourse and creates the ‘truths’ of a society. This, in turn, yields them more power, enabling them to maintain control over the ‘truths’ – and around it goes (Foucault, 1980). The hegemonic truths mentioned earlier are, according to Marxist Theory, formed this way. However, in Gramsci’s concept of hegemonic systems, those who “elaborate and spread organic ideology” (Ramos & Saba, 1982, Organic Intellectual section), which then forms hegemonic truths, are made up of a range of social agents. These span from traditional intellectuals such as artists and scholars, to politicians, industrial managers, administrators, and so on. What these diverse groups have in common is that they are all “directly related to the economic structure of their society” (Ramos & Saba, 1982, Concept of Organic Intellectuals section), although some operate within the “political society” and others within the “civil society” (Ramos & Saba, 1982, Concept of hegemony section). Paradoxically, as Gramsci asserts, groups of people often accept the status quo even when it is not in their own best interest (1926). Hence, if not recognized and dismantled, ‘truths’ that benefit the minority and restrict and exclude the majority, may be circulated by society at large. Foucault’s Discourse Theory thus works to



examine how structures of power shape societal communication, and vice versa. The workings of this theory, and an illustration of how hegemony can shift using discourse, can be seen by observing the progression of the international community's stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict. According to Chomsky and Pappé (2015), who are both considered leading scholarly voices on Palestine, the activist movement 'Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions'<sup>13</sup> seeking to liberate Palestine from Israeli oppression, has dramatically shifted public opinion globally in favor of the Palestinian plight. However, since this shift has so far "failed to reach the upper echelons of society" (Chomsky & Pappé, 2015, p. 14), no considerable political change has manifested despite the 'lower echelons' condemning the "overtly racist and apartheid state" (p. 20) of Israel. Here, we see the relationship between 'truth' and power. Although a majority of the international community now calls for an end to Israel's occupation of Palestine – a call supported by important academic voices – Israel's "policies of dispossession" continue "unabated and uninterrupted" (Chomsky & Pappé, 2015, p. 20). However, with Israel's ongoing, highly criticized military campaign in Palestine, waves of Palestinian solidarity movements are springing up across the world, supported by 'organic intellectuals' from diverse subaltern groups. Hence, although the 'upper echelons' are yet to agree with the shift in discourses that have occurred within civil society and academia worldwide, whereby Israel is now commonly defined as a "settler colonial state"<sup>14</sup> (Chomsky & Pappé, 2015, p. 20), the hegemonic truth of Israel being the 'victim' and Palestine the 'culprit' is increasingly challenged by the opposite view.

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<sup>13</sup> Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS). (n.d.). BDS Movement. Retrieved July 24, 2024, from <https://bdsmovement.net/>

<sup>14</sup> "The Hebrew verb *le-hitnahel* or *le-hityashev* and the Hebrew nouns *hitanchalut* and *hitayasvut* were used ever since 1882 by the Zionist movement and later the state of Israel to describe the takeover of land in Palestine. Their accurate translation into English is 'to settle', 'to colonize', 'settlement', and 'colonization'" (Chomsky & Pappé, 2015, p. 23).

When applying the phenomenon of hegemony to Postcolonial Theory, the dominant position of the GN in the world, pointed to by postcolonial scholars, becomes increasingly problematic. Postcolonial Theory is concerned with forming an understanding of “the complex conditions which attends the aftermath of colonial occupation” (Gandhi, 2022, p. 4). In highlighting the neocolonial world order of today, Said (1978), Spivak (1988), and others see the Western-centric structure of news as hindering the redistribution of cultural and intellectual power within the world (Gunaratne et al., 2015). According to Said (1978), in their representation of the colonial ‘other’, the West has left the East voiceless – and thereby misrepresented through stereotypes and tropes. Similarly, Spivak (1988) holds that the dominant GN’s ‘othering’ of the GS spills into the worldview of those being ‘othered’, who consequently assume a submissive role – a view that aligns with the concept of hegemony. Chomsky and Herman (2008) take a more direct approach to this critique, by arguing that mainstream media is used as a propaganda tool for those in power – a view that supports the need for MJ practices to enter the media landscape. If global news is meant to serve the public good (Harcup, 2020), yet is currently used to propagate narratives favoring those in power, there is, according to Aslam (2021), a dire need to reshuffle news practices. Cultural domination is, according to Singham and Hune (1968) “a kind of neo-colonialism which is [...] difficult to shake off, because it is a cultural infiltration of the minds and souls of people” (p. 27). To avoid repeating imperialistic patterns through news production, “global media demands a wider, more generally accepted set of values and ethics to be practiced” (Aslam, 2021, p. 920). When writing on the importance of an education that creates “global citizens who will take into cognizance the diversity of various world cultures”, Jotia (2011, p. 250) highlights the point that historically, we have even taught in schools to neglect GS. Adapting an MJ approach to news production could be a step towards breaking this persistent pattern of cultural neo-colonialism, by allowing GS perspectives to inform global media

practices (Gunaratne et al., 2015). By openly signifying the acceptance of Buddhism as a sufficient philosophy to draw upon, in the context of global media ethics, it would allow a GS theory ‘a seat at the table’.

## **1.2.2 Post-Colonial Legacy of News Values**

Promisingly, industry professionals are, as previously mentioned, seeking alternative methods to approach journalism to address the crisis faced by traditional Western-centric journalism – such as a news selection process that thrives on fear and favors negativity. These news values are, in Foucault’s understanding of how knowledge, power, and language intersect, created within the context of what he calls ‘epistemes’ – namely “the general system of thought” (Foucault, 2001, p. 83), at any given time in history, or in other words, the commonly agreed truths of a particular epoch. Similarly, Paul and Sosale (2023), define news values as “shared, situated philosophies that inform journalistic practices” (p. 2), and in the eyes of Bird and Dardenne (1988), they are “culturally specific story-telling codes” (p. 73). Hence, for journalism to exit out of its neocolonial patterns, the traditional news values must arguably be re-evaluated to encompass, include, and be informed by perspectives and philosophies from the GS. Pointing to the relevance of scrutinizing news selection before anything else, Aslam (2021) writes: “Journalism is about making ‘choices’ in terms of what to report, and how to report [...] Selection is the issue, the criteria applied and the codes and the context in which the event is placed and interpreted” (p. 924). This initial step in the creation of news is of immense importance, as it shapes the whole story – what is deemed worthy to gain attention, and within which frame we place the story. In accordance, Harcup (2020) points to the contingent nature of news values, as they “are in no way a ‘natural’ phenomenon” (p. 6). He goes on to highlight a news value that he deems outdated: ‘Reference to Elite Nations,’ which refers to how economically ‘powerful’ nations, such as

the US, are regarded as more newsworthy than ‘weaker’ ones, “thereby privileging the perspectives of the global north over the global south and regarding the West as ‘us’ and the rest as ‘other’” (Harcup, 2020, p. 21). Here, Harcup draws on Said’s previously mentioned ‘Orientalism’ concept. By directing “attention to the discursive and textual production of colonial meanings” (Gandhi, 2022, p. 65), Said points to the foundation for colonial hegemony. This Western dominance in the production of knowledge continues to influence GN policies and interventions in the GS – and can be seen through discourses such as the ‘war on terrorism’. This, according to Douai and Lauricella (2014), is a “‘neo-Orientalist’ discourse”, that puts the Muslim world “in a binary opposition to the West” by associating “the whole world of Islam with breeding terrorism and violence” (p. 19). Their argument is supported by data showing how the ‘terrorism frame’ dominates not only US news media’s coverage of Islam but also other Western news outlets – showcasing a discursive narrative that “emphasizes the irrationality and violence of the ‘other’, from the Orient. Altwaiji (2014), describes neo-Orientalism as discourse “based on binarism between the superior American values and the inferior Arab culture” (p. 313), echoing the sentiment of Western news values favoring the GN at the expense of the GS.

One traditional news value that can be used to support this stance is ‘objectivity’. Journalism as a profession and industry was able to develop rapidly in the GN during the 18th century and onwards, due to their colonial legacy providing them a dominant position in the world (Chalaby, 1996, p. 303). However, according to Hackett (2010) some of these values are not ethically, but rather opportunistically rooted. Objectivity, he claims, was invented to broaden the range of readers “as the daily press replaced party-oriented papers of the 19th century [...] the claim to objectivity thus correspond to the imperative of mass marketing” (p. 181). Moreover, Hackett (2010) argues that the concept is implicit in upholding a “symbiotic relationship between news media and the state”, whereby if journalists adhere to the rules of

objectivity, they “gain relatively stable access to senior officials and politicians”, and the politicians get an “opportunity to shape the public definition of political issues” (p. 181). This view corresponds with Chomsky and Herman’s aforementioned ‘Propaganda Model’, which claims that “the media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them” (2008, p. 12). Canella (2021) similarly point to the inescapable paradox of objectivity; “for whom? Journalists select stories and make photographs for whom? Journalists identify sources and edit information for whom? Truths are disinterested for whom?” (p. 210). This is but one example of a news value that neglects GS perspectives and fails to fulfill its ‘duty’ to guide journalists to achieve their role as servers of the global public. Inducing a sense of responsibility and hope to the debate, Gunaratne et al. (2015), states “We are conditioned by the environment, by our heredity... Yet although we are conditioned, we are not version determined by these factors” (p. 74). This connects back to the Buddhist perspective of change being the only constant in life. When applied to the arguably non-representative mainstream news values of today, this idea encourages the pursuit of alternative methods that enable the prosperity of all involved. To investigate the potential of MJ as such a counter-approach, this thesis selects and analyses news pieces containing certain MJ elements. The following chapter introduces the methodology utilized, to form a clear understanding of the research approach.

## **2. Methodology**

The following chapter outlines the qualitative approach employed to explore the potential MJ holds in spreading the message of GI, in the context of global coverage of Israel’s most recent invasion of the occupied Gaza Strip. Thereby, this thesis aims to answer the following research question:

How was the approach of MJ applied in legacy media outlets BBC and AJE's coverage of Israel's war on Palestine in 2023, one month into the conflict, compared to the coverage of independent journalists Motaz Azaiza and Johnny Harris'?

In order to answer the research question, this study analyzes seven news pieces, including two news articles by legacy news media outlet BBC, one news article and one photo essay by legacy news outlet AJE, one YouTube video by independent journalist Johnny Harris, and two Instagram posts by independent photojournalist Motaz Azaiza. The selected data falls within a 3-day time frame, which was published between 8 and 10 November 2023. The focus of the study is to evaluate content published approximately one month into this most recent outbreak of Israel's war on Palestine, to examine whether elements of MJ are employed, and if so, how they become evident, as well as what discourses they articulate. Additionally, this study investigates MJ's applicability to independently produced social media content, in comparison to that produced within a legacy news structure, for their online platforms.

The subjects of study are primarily selected due to their strong international presence, and to represent views from two sides of the world-order spectrum – those stemming from the GN and those from the GS. The GN outlet BBC has a well-established global reach (Kasmani, 2014), whilst the GS outlet AJE is the “Arab world's largest purveyor of English language news to an international audience” (Usher, 2013, p. 335); GS Palestinian citizen journalist Motaz Azaiza has a following of 18,6 million people on the social media platform Instagram, under the handle @Motaz\_Azaiza; and GN American freelance journalist Johnny Harris's YouTube Channel @johnnyharris has 4,94 million followers.

The selection of the most recent outbreak within this decades-long conflict is based on three factors. Firstly, as of January 2024, more than half of the world's human population uses social media (Kemp, 2024). Consequently, the traumatic experiences of the millions of civilians affected by the ongoing conflict, can be – and to a large scale, are – live-streamed to large swaths of the international community<sup>15</sup>. Thus, global legacy media outlets – who have been found by a Center for Media Monitoring report<sup>16</sup> to favor Israeli narratives while misrepresenting, vilifying, and undermining Palestinian voices – are no longer the only ones disseminating ‘truths’, and thereby their control over the hegemonic truths are decreasing. Another impact of the increased use of social media to share information during conflict is the spread of AI disinformation. This practice has been detected several times during Israel's ongoing war from ‘both sides’, as pointed out by Stănescu (2023). Such malpractices hold the potential of “threatening democratic process and national interests” (Kaplan, 2020, p. 149), and are a contributing factor to the decreasing trust in news across the globe (Newman et al., 2023). In her research paper on the topic, Stănescu (2023) even falls short of recognizing such misinformation herself, when she claims that Israel “proved” (p. 308) themselves innocent of the explosion at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital on 17 October 2023. This statement is not supported by any evidence in the paper, yet there is so far no international consensus on who instigated the strike (Alser & Alser, 2023). As can be seen, AI has thus made fake news even more prevalent and difficult to trace since it is here spilling into academia. Secondly, today, every leading human rights group – be it Israeli, Palestinian, or international – concludes that Israel is committing the crime of Apartheid in the Occupied Territories (Loewenstein &

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<sup>15</sup> However, Israel's governance declared a complete siege on Gaza on October 9th, cutting their electricity supply to the strip, leaving Gazans with 25% of the electricity they could access before (Sharon, 2023), hence making it harder for Palestinians to share their story from the ground.

<sup>16</sup> Centre for Media Monitoring. *Media Bias in Gaza: A Study of Media Coverage 2023-24*. March 2024. [CfMM Report](https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CfMM-Report-Final-MEDIA-BIAS-GAZA-2023-24-ePDF.pdf). Accessed July 24, 2024, 2024. <https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CfMM-Report-Final-MEDIA-BIAS-GAZA-2023-24-ePDF.pdf>

Moor, 2024, p. 16). Such an understanding has drastically shifted public opinion on the conflict to the extent that in March 2023, a Gallup poll found “for the first time that a majority of American Democrats had more sympathy for Palestinians than Israelis” (Loewenstein & Moor, 2024, p. 13). This change in attitudes among the public of a nation heavily funding the Israeli army (Sharp, 2023) makes this outbreak significant to study, in terms of global coverage, since it may have caused old media narratives to shift as well. The third and last reason for the selection is the devastating severity of the situation. It is the deadliest episode since Israel’s occupation of the Gaza Strip in 1967, with over 28,000 Palestinians killed as of February 15, 2024 (Abukmail et al., 2024). The deaths between October and December 2023 alone make up 37 percent of civilian casualties globally that year (Hamourtziadou, 2024), excluding all civilians killed between January and June 2024. The Israel-Palestine conflict has been a story of contested histories and division for decades and since this division often falls along domestic partisan lines, public debates on the matter are largely heated and polarizing (Farneti, 2015). Yet since the October 7 attacks, and Israel’s ongoing response, comprehensive insight into the international community’s stance is showing a different, more unanimous, picture. In December 2023, a United Nations (UN) General Assembly emergency meeting, showed that a vast majority of member states (153) stood in favor of an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, whilst only 10 – including the US – voted against, and 23 abstained (UN News, 2023). As of March 2024, the US has vetoed three UN resolutions demanding a ceasefire, with little to no support from other nations in this stance (UN News, 2024). Hence, although division still exists within both public and private spheres regarding a resolution (Günay, 2024), calls for peace are now commonplace, and sympathy for ‘both sides’ has risen in all Western nations surveyed by YouGov in December 2023<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Smith, M. (2023, December 20). *Israel-Palestine: Fundamental attitudes to the conflict among western Europeans*. YouGov. <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/48218-israel-palestine-fundamental-attitudes-to-the-conflict-among-western-europeans>



Accordingly, by examining coverage from a diverse set of news sources this thesis aims to explore the efficiency of MJ as a counter-hegemonic alternative to today's divisive mainstream news media. To investigate the research question, the following chapter describes the selected news sources, explains the sampling approach, and lays out the collection of data. Furthermore, the methods and techniques chosen for the analysis will be presented to ensure research transparency.

## **2.1 Description of Selected News Sources and Platform Analysis**

This study aims to examine whether global reporting on a conflict that is causing deep polarization within societies across the world (Caplan, 2019) is contributing to the discourse of GI as an extension of the traditional Social Responsibility Theory – or if the narratives pursued are instead divisive and parochial – using the framework of MJ. To investigate whether, and how, the GN narrative differs from that of the GS – as well as explore whether there is a difference in narratives pursued by legacy media, in comparison to that of independent journalists, on ‘both sides’ – four units of study have been selected. BBC is the leading public service broadcaster in the United Kingdom, its transnational audience makes up close to half a million people (Webb, 2024), and as of January 2024, it is among the top ten leading news websites in the world (Majid, 2024). Additionally, Freedman (2018) revealed that the BBC was “one of the very few organizations that were trusted by the American audiences from across the ideological spectrum” (p. 204), as it is by many believed to pursue reporting that is “balanced, objective, and representative of diverse viewpoints” (Stiglitz, 2017, p. 13). On the other hand, research by Ameli et al. (2007), shows repeated misrepresentation of Muslims in Western media, to some degree including that of the BBC – which Freedman (2018) argues could be due to a lack of independence, stating that the BBC is “far too implicated in and attached to existing elite networks of power to be able to offer an

effective challenge to them” (p. 206). This ambiguity arguably makes the BBC an ideal subject of MCDA, to further the research on the matter. Additionally, like most foreign media, the BBC has been denied access to Gaza since the outbreak of the war, by Israel, aside from “rare and escorted trips with the Israeli military” (Gritten & Rufo, 2024, para. 6). Thereby it makes an interesting case study for understanding the applicability of MJ under such circumstances, alongside its prominence in the global media landscape making it a suitable subject to represent GN legacy media.

Correspondingly, Al-Jazeera’s continuously growing popularity among an international audience, as the third-fastest growing news website in the world between 2023-2024 (Majid, 2024), makes it an appropriate representation of GS legacy media’s portrayal of the situation. The 27-year-old, Qatari state-funded network, which has been “likened to an Arabic Cable News Network (CNN)” (“Al Jazeera”, 2024), is one of few news organizations with an agency operating inside of Gaza. The channel’s political agency is a contested topic, with some scholars such as Hansen et al. (2013) claiming that it is a propaganda tool serving the interest of Qatar; others like Cherribi (2006) seeing it as a means to promote Arabism and political Islam; and lastly, the plenty — in tandem with Rushing (2007) — see Al-Jazeera as a catalyst for change in the region by promoting freedom, democracy, and human rights. No matter which of these takes one abides by, all share the view of Seib (2005), who explains that, by establishing a liberally leaning Arab media to compete with Western counterparts, Al-Jazeera provides a voice from inside the “Arab world”<sup>18</sup>. However, this as it turns out, comes with plenty of challenges. The controversial network’s bureaus have “periodically been shut down by Middle Eastern governments angered by its coverage”, and the US has on several occasions bombed their headquarters (Seib, 2005, p. 601). According to the 2024

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<sup>18</sup> No universal definition of “the Arab world” exists, but it often includes the 22 countries belonging to the Arab League with a combined population of 280 million (Seib, 2005, p. 604).

report of the Committee to Protect Journalists<sup>19</sup>, as of March 7, 2024, it is estimated that at least 95 journalists and media workers have been killed since Israel declared war against Hamas, following the militant groups' attack on October 7, 2023; 90 of them Palestinian, 3 Lebanese, and 2 Israeli, out of which at least 5 were employed by Al-Jazeera. Hence, in seeking to 'bring truth' to their audiences, the network and its journalists have paid a heavy price – something that Motaz Azaiza, a self-taught, 25-year-old, Palestinian photojournalist and Instagrammer – can relate to. In an interview with *The New Arab* on November 7, 2023, Azaiza – who has been a key reporter on the most recent war in Gaza – says: “I am destroyed. I cannot talk about it. Unfortunately, Israel's aggression against Gaza has dragged me into a dark place”<sup>20</sup>. Prior to the outbreak of the war, Azaiza already had a significant following on Instagram, with 25,000 people consuming his content. Yet as he began documenting what Gazans have had to endure during the latest Israeli onslaught – sharing live updates through his Instagram-Stories of bombardments; the aftermaths of airstrikes; and the struggles of searching for food, water, shelter, and medicine – his following skyrocketed. Vázquez-Herrero et al. (2019) compare the ephemerality of Instagram's Stories feature to news shared orally, since “the contents posted are volatile, primitive, ephemeral, and do not store by default” (p. 3). The popularity of Azaiza's Instagram content shows the demand for the more unfiltered, direct, and personal accounts of the conflict, typically generated by this type of journalism (Horoub, 2023; Radsch, 2016). While interest and trust in legacy news continue to fall globally, video-based content, found on networks such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are, according to Newman et al (2023), becoming more important for news. This

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<sup>19</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists. (2024, March 7). *Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war*. Retrieved March 7, 2024, from <https://cpj.org/2024/07/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-conflict/>

<sup>20</sup> Abed, A. (2023, November 7). *Motaz Azaiza: Gaza's window to the world*. *The New Arab*. Retrieved July 24, 2024, from <https://www.newarab.com/features/motaz-azaiza-gazas-window-world>

confirms the relevance of Azaiza as a subject of study, to represent an independent GS journalist, covering the issue using a social media platform.

Although there are plenty of independent GN journalists covering Israel's war on Palestine on social media, this thesis analyzes the content of Johnny Harris – an American filmmaker, journalist, and YouTuber. The choice is based on the following logic: Harris has visited both Palestine and Israel as a journalist for Vox and is, hence, familiar with the situation on the ground. With a master's degree in international Peace and Conflict Resolution, he is also familiar with the decades-long conflict at the root of it all. However, none of the content he has published after the October 7 atrocities and Israel's violent response, comes from the ground – which is the case for much of the GN reporting on conflicts in the region, mainly due to a lack of access (Seib, 2005). Rather, it is based on content from second-hand sources or stock footage and hence exhibits a different type of journalistic approach to that of Azaiza, who often delivers action-packed, unedited live footage. This variance can largely be attributed to the favoring of specific storytelling formats on the two distinct social media platforms used to disseminate their content, by algorithms, platform design, and audiences (Hutchinson & Dwyer, 2022). According to Djerf-Pierre et al. (2019), YouTube news content “adheres to traditional and institutional journalism standards in both production approach and content elements” (p. 237), while Instagram's more ephemeral design, which makes it an ideal platform for sharing what is happening behind the scenes (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019), calls for a more unfiltered, ‘breaking-news’ approach. By analyzing content from these diverse news sources, insight into the applicability of MJ within the ever-changing industry of journalism is sought.

## **2.2 Data Collection**

The news pieces included in this study are selected using purposive sampling – also known as selective, or subjective sampling – a non-probability method where samples that “possess certain traits or qualities” (Koerber & McMichael, 2008, p. 464) are sought out by the researcher. The logic behind this type of sampling is to select as information-rich case studies as possible, to perform an in-depth study of a phenomenon (Coyne, 1997). The purposive sampling used in this research will entail criterion sampling, which involves the selection of “cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 17). Purposive data collection is used to “improve the rigor of the study and trustworthiness of the data and results” (Campbell et al., 2020, p. 653) when depth of understanding, is required (Palinkas et al., 2015). This thesis adopts this qualitative method due to the existing research gap concerning MJ. Using keywords and hashtags found through low-inference coding – a process that involves “reading through material multiple times and iteratively coding excerpts” (Ziskin, 2019, p. 22), against the framework of MJ, relevant news pieces will be selected from each subject of study.

The initial data collection was made possible by the following online tools: Factiva, Google News, Instagram, and YouTube. To access the content published on AJE’s site between 9 and 12 November 2023, the licensed database Factiva, which has agreements with various publishers to collect and store their content (Buntain et al., 2023), was used. However, articles published by BBC’s official UK branch were unavailable within this system, hence this thesis uses Google News – a search engine accessible to the public which offers a news aggregator and a set of search term operators (Buntain et al., 2023) – to find BBC’s coverage within the set timeframe. Potential data from Azaiza and Harris’ profiles was collected manually, using one of the following data-collection methods:

Two separate sets of search criteria were set up, one for the legacy news outlets and another for the independent journalists, due to disparities between the operative nature of the

two categories (Olteanu et. al., 2015). When selecting the legacy news pieces to analyze, apart from landing within the set time frame, each selection had to contain at least one of the following keywords (context-related): ‘Israel’, ‘Palestine’, ‘ Hamas’, ‘Gaza’, ‘Israel Defense Forces’, or ‘IDF’; coupled with at least one of the keywords (concept-related): ‘context’, ‘community’, ‘hope’, ‘ceasefire’, or ‘peace’. These were crafted against the framework of MJ, which in conflict reporting calls for context, analysis, and highlighting similarities as opposed to differences, when possible, to de-escalate polarization (Gunaratne et al., 2015, p. 11). After placing the date restraint within the search engines, the title and lead paragraph of each article were scanned for said keywords. Out of AJE’s initial 99 articles published on the topic within the set timeframe, two were selected due to their correlation to an MJ framework. This thesis located 76 BBC articles in English relating to the conflict within the timeframe, and upon utilizing the keyword search, two articles were singled out for analysis.

The independent journalists’ social media posts required a wider selection criterion due to the smaller number of available posts, and the difference in format. They had to be centered on the conflict and correlate to one of the following aspects of MJ: Providing context, promoting peace, giving a voice to the voiceless, or highlighting cross-cultural similarities. Out of Azaiza’s six posts made within the timeframe, two were found to correlate more strongly with peace promotion and providing ‘ordinary people’ a voice. The video posted by Harris on the topic within that period also aligns with aspects of MJ.

**Table 1:** *The News Pieces Analyzed in this Thesis*

<b>Code for reference</b>	<b>News Source</b>	<b>Link</b>
BBC1	BBC	<a href="https://bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-67369061">https://bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-67369061</a>

BBC2	BBC	<a href="https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67376148">https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67376148</a>
AJE1	Al Jazeera English	<a href="https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/11/9/beacon-of-hope-amid-gaza-war-indian-muslims-take-care-of-synagogues">https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/11/9/beacon-of-hope-amid-gaza-war-indian-muslims-take-care-of-synagogues</a>
AJE2	Al Jazeera English	<a href="https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2023/11/9/from-new-york-to-karachi-protesters-rally-in-solidarity-with-palestine">https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2023/11/9/from-new-york-to-karachi-protesters-rally-in-solidarity-with-palestine</a>
MA1	Motaz Azaiza	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Czd2z_ZMjWz/?hl=en">https://www.instagram.com/p/Czd2z_ZMjWz/?hl=en</a>
MA2	Motaz Azaiza	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Czj7_gErWiU/?img_index=1">https://www.instagram.com/p/Czj7_gErWiU/?img_index=1</a>
JH	Johnny Harris	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5B9FBiFkQk&amp;ab_channel=JohnnyHarris">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5B9FBiFkQk&amp;ab_channel=JohnnyHarris</a>

In accordance with Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, the visual (photograph or video) and the textual (headline, textual body, caption, and hashtags) aspects were considered jointly. Out of the 7 news pieces, one consists of a single photograph; one is a short-format video (1-60 seconds); one is a long-format video (10< minutes); and four combine text and photographs. All modes implemented will be viewed interactively.

### 2.3 Limitations and Ethical Concerns

Both Instagram and YouTube are today commonly used as information search engines, with YouTube being the “second most visited search engine in the world” (Ertemel & Ammoura, 2021, p. 871), and almost 40 percent of young people prefer using social media such as Instagram as a search engine, according to a Google senior vice president<sup>21</sup>. As pointed out by Blatchford (2019) there are considerable inconsistencies between various

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<sup>21</sup> Perez, S. (2022, July 12). Google exec suggests Instagram and TikTok are eating into Google’s core products, Search and Maps. *Tech Crunch*. <https://techcrunch.com/2022/07/12/google-exec-suggests-instagram-and-tiktok-are-eating-into-googles-core-products-search-and-maps/?guccounter=1>

online databases and search engines due to “the unpredictable, transient and overwhelming nature of the Internet” which jeopardizes the validity of all “findings arising from an online publishing environment”, yet as she concludes there are currently no “better” alternatives (pp. 143-144). Additionally, in social sciences, there is hardly any research that is or can be value-free, according to Holmes (2020). His suggestion for overcoming this ethical concern is to disclose researcher positionality<sup>22</sup>, as well as conduct a reflexive<sup>23</sup> analysis on the position. In terms of positionality, the author views the research process through the lens of a yogic and a post-colonial worldview, influenced by extensive travels across the globe. Moreover, although an outsider to the research topic, the author is engaged to a Lebanese; grew up in a multicultural area in Sweden; attended an international high school diploma; and studied at universities in five different countries across three continents. This has supplied significant insight into the repressive effects of the world order on GS nations, which situates the researcher as an outsider with direct inside information. Hence, due to preconceived ideas, personal life history, and political views, the author currently feels sympathy for the Palestinian plight – while standing firmly grounded in the fundamental rights of all humans to live freely and equally. Taking this into consideration, using an external framework to help guide the selection process and the analysis, is an attempt to mitigate any unconscious bias interfering with the results. Additionally, acknowledging that it is impossible to perform any research without bias, this thesis considers awareness and transparency of its presence as vital for creating a legitimate research study (Holmes, 2020).

## **2.4. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis**

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<sup>22</sup> A term describing an individual’s worldview as well as “the position they adopt towards a research task and its social and political context” (Holmes, 2020, p. 1).

<sup>23</sup> Researcher reflexivity requires an acknowledgment and disclosure of the researcher within their research, aiming to “understand their part in it, or influence on it (Holmes, 2020, p. 2).



To conduct the analysis, this thesis makes use of a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) approach, which analyzes texts “beyond language, taking on board that discourses are often multimodally realized” (Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 292), through “visual features and elements such as images [and] colors” (Machin, 2013, p. 347). According to Van Leeuwen (2006), MCDA is rooted in the idea that both written and spoken language play a key role in upholding and legitimizing systems of oppression, inequality, and injustices in society – and that spreading awareness of language used for such purposes through discourse analysis, can help shift said imbalances (p. 290). MCDA focuses on the use of several modes in designing a specific idea, product, or event, alongside the way these modes collaborate to create a shared meaning (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). As argued by Levine and Scollon (2004), discourse is “inherently multimodal, not monomodal” (p. 3), since even spoken or written language itself makes use of several modes of communication such as speech and gestures, or typography and design. Taking a multimodal approach to analyzing discourse can deepen the understanding of how language and other modes co-create meaning (Çoşkun, 2015, p. 41). Additionally, a multimodal approach to content analysis appropriately reflects the Buddhist sentiment of interactivity and interconnectedness of various modes in creating semiotic meaning, which forms the basis of how communication shapes and is shaped by society (Çoşkun, 2015). Hence, this thesis makes use of MCDA to explore what semiotic resources are used to “carry out ideological work” (Ledin & Machin, 2017, p. 74) in the selected data.

This critical approach to content analysis is, as described by Çoşkun (2015), founded upon Critical Theory, which claims that societal ideologies and power imbalances are “directly linked to existing socioeconomic conditions” (p. 41). By building on the works of Frankfurt School scholars, such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (2002) and their idea of a ‘Culture Industry’ whereby ‘monopolized’ mass media manipulates people in the

pursuit of capitalism, and Foucault's subsequent theory of discourse being a tool for social power (1980), Fairclough – alongside other critical linguists such as Gunter Kress – founded the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis in the early 1990s (Gölbaşı, 2017). In his eyes, it is impossible to separate language from life, rendering it crucial to include the study of discourse and language in social research. According to MCDA, discourse is a social construct that “may have major ideological effects”, such as helping produce and reproduce unequal power relations within society (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258), matching the reasoning of Critical Theory.

A key linguistics scholar, Halliday (1992), explains how learning a language entails “building up a meaning potential” (p. 30), which makes up the ‘reality’ of a culture (p. 123). When it comes to nonlinguistic forms of communication, MCDA also searches for “the underlying grammar of visual communication and the syntax of images” (Machin, 2013, p. 2), which is referred to as “affordance” (Kress, 2010, p. 80). Kress (2010) argues that those who add meaning to affordances are in a position of great power, stating that “makers of representations are shapers of knowledge” (p. 27). The point to stress here is that language, discourse, and knowledge, according to these approaches, both reflect and create reality. In analyzing the communicative choices made by authors, MCDA seeks to unveil the ideological strategies that potentially lie beneath what may appear to be a ‘neutral’ surface (Machin & Meyr, 2012). According to Machin and Mayr (2012), investigating semiotic choices allows for power relations hidden within the subject of study to be exposed, as they can signal identities or values that are promoted or discouraged (p. 15). MCDA should, in their eyes, “be based on careful detailed description of the semiotic choices found in talk, texts and images” (Machin & Meyr, 2012, p. 29), scrutinizing why they were used and to what consequence, in terms of power relations. This could take the shape of lexical analysis, whereby word choices are analyzed to reveal implicit meanings “related to underlying

beliefs” (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 104) that may not be openly expressed in the text. For images, that would entail investigating individual elements of the footage, such as content, composition, or lighting – or *mise-en-scène*, sound, or narrative structure in a moving image (Rose, 2001, p. 34).

Scholars naturally point to shortcomings with this method, the most common of which, according to Van Leeuwen (2006), is “the explicit social and political goals” (p. 293) of MCDA – which he claims is an invalid argument since it applies to all academic work. Kress (2010) raises a concern about how MCDA assumes all modes of representation to be equally significant in creating meaning. To this, Ledin and Machin (2018) respond that by recognizing the different affordances – or ‘meaning libraries’ – carried by various modes, this can be avoided. However, they do stress the need to equally consider their interdependence, to avoid fully separating them within the analysis. Additionally, according to Machin et al. (2016), there is a lack of coherence within the body of MCDA research since there is no single standardized framework, leading to varying interpretations and applications of the method. Hence, for clarification purposes, this thesis utilizes the following five steps to perform MCDA, inspired by the work of Machin and Meyr (2012), alongside the framework of MJ, in an attempt to reveal possible ideologies within the selected data:

**I. Establish the modes in use**

- a. Establish and clarify which modes are used in the news articles, Instagram posts, and the YouTube video. These may include text, video, photographs, audio, links, and other multimodal elements.

**II. Consider lexical semiotic choices**

- a. By analyzing details like choices of words; naming strategies; metaphors; what people are depicted doing; and connotations, discursive formation and lexical semiotics will be identified.
- b. Focus on the context: the history involving the subjects selected and how they are presented; how the sociocultural use of language tied to this situation affects the overall meaning of the news piece.

### III. **Examine the composition of photographs and videos**

- a. Consider various aspects of the photographs, such as setting, color, spatial composition, and framing, to interpret how these choices create meaning and communicate implicit discourses and ideologies.
- b. Treat video as a sequence of moving images when performing an analysis on what resources are used to create meaning; such as narrative structure, montage, and sound, and elements like hand gestures and facial expressions.

### IV. **Reflect on semiotic choices in the face of a divisive conflict**

- a. By examining the semiotic choices made within the selected data, in light of the context, explore what discourses are utilized and what ideologies are presented – both directly and indirectly. By placing these against the concept of GI, investigate the applicability of the available elements of MJ in promoting cross-cultural inclusivity.
- b. Consider the political/commercial interests of pushing certain ideologies and discourses in the face of the conflict. Inspect potential biases and corruption, as well as reflect on representations/exclusions.

## V. **Analyze cross-modal and -platformal affordances**

- a. Look at how communication works across various modes: shared affordances, and how they interact to create meaning. Additionally, compare how communication occurs on the different platforms, identifying both similarities and differences between them.

By applying this process, insights can be gained on MJ and its proficiency in promoting GI, through examining the discourses pursued by the selected news sources. See the following chapter for an exploration of the relevant data and the narratives it contains.

### **3. Analysis**

This chapter presents the analysis of seven news pieces – two Instagram posts, three news articles, a photo essay, and a YouTube video – exploring the elements of MJ contained within their reporting on the Israel-Palestine conflict, as well as delving into the discourses to be found within them. Each news source has been dedicated a subchapter, to ensure a clear exploration of the content.

#### **3.1. Al-Jazeera English — AJE**

Al-Jazeera English (AJE) has, since the outbreak of the war, extensively covered the conflict which, as of April 2, 2024, has a dedicated tab on their online website, titled ‘Israel War on Gaza’. Already here, we can see a discursive practice operated by AJE since placing Israel in the active role in this headline suggests that they are responsible for the war. The two articles selected for analysis make up a minuscule part of the whole, yet many of the MJ

elements found within them are largely visible in AJE's reporting on the topic. This subchapter is divided into two sections, each focus on one news piece at a time.

### **3.1.1 AJE1: “‘Beacon of hope’: Amid Gaza war, Indian Muslims take care of synagogues”**

The first article under investigation is a news feature of 1562 words (excluding captions) that contains six captioned photographs. It highlights cross-cultural/religious harmony by describing how synagogues in Kolkata, eastern India, are managed by Muslim caretakers. From the outset, the text employs words with certain connotations with the aim of evoking emotions of inspiration, contrast, compassion, and unity. The title opens with “Beacon of hope”, which in the context of war reporting and cross-cultural collaboration builds expectations and anticipation of the potential for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Referring to the “tranquil halls” of the synagogues in contrast to how “Israel has been bombing Gaza relentlessly” and the “horrors of the Israel-Hamas war”, creates a sense of emotional turmoil, since these realities are experienced simultaneously yet describe scenes that are worlds apart. Notably, a Muslim caretaker declaring that “their house of God is also our house of God” evokes feelings of compassion, by showing his willingness to reach beyond differences to find common ground. By referring to the “bond across faiths” as “normal” and “natural”, the text also creates a sense that this story is not something extraordinary – rather the opposite – again to contrast the situation in Gaza, which according to the article is the “unnatural” case here. Combining “Our ‘mazhab’ [faith] doesn’t teach us to hate”, with “I pray for the people of all religions suffering in the war” evokes a sense of camaraderie, underscoring the humanitarian values held by the community in question. This structure is applied to promote the idea that religion is not the issue at hand in the Israel-Palestine conflict, but rather interpretations of it, highlighting the freedom that comes with a

non-dogmatic view of religion, as well as how it can be misused as a power tool. Hence a discourse is formed, calling out an insatiable hunger for power, falsely acted out in the name of religion, as the true problem.

The solution to said problem should, according to the narratives within this text, be brought about using the MJ concept of peaceful conflict resolution, since it claims that “all problems should be solved peacefully”. Interestingly, the sense of cross-cultural compassion evoked in the text also corresponds significantly with an element of MJ that promotes GI – highlighting similarities rather than differences. One of the Muslim caretakers even declares that he is willing to risk his life to protect the synagogue, seeing that it is a “house of God”, again providing an invitation to look beyond the structure of religion and see the commonality in all faiths; God, Allah, Yahweh. By describing how the Jewish community “flourished” upon their arrival to Kolkata in the early 19th century, a story of hospitality and togetherness is created in the context of immigration – again correlating with the sentiments of GI. In explaining the history of the Jewish-Muslim connection in the city – once more showcasing an element of MJ by diving into context – the article highlights material similarities between the two religious groups in the area. These include sharing an immigrant background: “We were both strangers in a new land” – as well as having “similar dietary restrictions”, again aiming to portray the bond as logical rather than exceptional. By bringing forth these ideas, the article aims to create a sense of hope and of possibility – since there is at least this one place on earth where the two faiths can co-exist harmoniously. This can also be seen in the metaphorical concept of declaring this phenomenon a “beacon of hope”, where this story is the ‘lighthouse’, beaming out hope into the world by its mere existence. In this context, it paints a picture of the surrounding world laying in darkness due to the war, and this story of peace, harmony, and cross-faith brotherhood, spreading a guiding light for those

out on the ‘open seas’. The synagogues become the safe harbors for which to aim, and the Muslim caretakers, the guardians of the ‘light’ which here takes the form of peace and unity.

Within the article, there are links to seven suggested articles, four of which have their own dedicated paragraph. Three of these focus on the misinformation spread in India about the “Israel-Hamas war” in favor of Israel and point to how “Palestine solidarity sees crackdown” in the country, while “Pro-Israel rallies [are] allowed”. The fourth one tells of a poet, Rupi Kaur, who refuses to attend an event at the White House “over support for Israel’s Gaza bombardment”. A clear link between the four suggested articles is the narrative of the unfair treatment of Palestine by two influential global superpowers, US and India. Within the context of this article, the inclusion of these links is significant for two reasons: juxtaposing the non-partisan, peaceful approach of the Synagogues’ caretakers with that of India’s anti-Palestinian stance shows how they embody the metaphor of being a “beacon of hope” even more, by standing up for their values of mutual respect despite their national community at large, disagreeing. Additionally, it provides an insight into the division that exists within the international community surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict and its global significance, which acts to reinforce the messages shared within this article; peace comes from mutual respect, from uniting across differences, and from seeking to find common ground.

**Figure 1:** *The six images included in the first AJE article.*







When applying Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2020) visual grammar analysis to the images presented within the article, which holds that images’ representational meaning, compositional meaning, and interactive meaning make up the overall message portrayed, three main qualities that create meaning become apparent. Firstly, all the images (see Figure 1) can be classified as narrative images since they focus on representing the caretakers actively in their roles. Notably, we see the man in image no. 1 wearing a head covering assimilating that of a Jewish *kippah*<sup>24</sup>, and although it may be a Muslim equivalent, seeing that there are plenty of Islamic head covers, this detail of the image can be seen to represent similar notions to the text; either portraying the humbleness of the caretaker for wearing a

<sup>24</sup> A “Jewish head cover, also known as the yarmulke” (Harel, 2012, p. 760), worn by men.

Jewish costume, or highlighting the similarities between the two faiths. Secondly, out of the six images, four of them contain human subjects, yet none of them provide direct eye contact, which creates emotional distance between the reader and those depicted, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2020). This shifts the focus away from the caretakers themselves, and rather places it upon the tasks they are carrying out – reiterating the idea that the story here is the cross-religious respect found within the community and not the personal stories of these men. Hence, in AJE1, we see how both the text and the photographs contribute to two main discourses. The first one is, ‘a better world is possible in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict’, and the second is, ‘religions themselves are not the issue, but the exploitation of various faiths as a means to gain and maintain political power is’.

### **3.1.2 AJE2: “From NYC to Karachi, protesters rally in support of Gaza amid Israeli war”**

The second news piece posted by Al-Jazeera on November 9, 2024, is a photo essay showcasing global calls for “an immediate ceasefire and urgent humanitarian action for Gaza”, consisting of 14 photographs and 565 words (including captions). Similarly to AJE1, these images make use of a narrative style of representation whereby participants are depicted in action. Despite being captured all over the world, varying in composition, and sending somewhat different messages, they have common denominators: sympathy for the civilians of Gaza, depicting peaceful social movements in action, and calls for a ceasefire.

**Figure 2:** *Second news article by AJE; Headline, lead paragraph, and photographs*

#### **In Pictures**

News | Israel War on Gaza

## **From NYC to Karachi, protesters rally in support of Gaza amid Israeli war**

People across the world call for an immediate ceasefire and urgent humanitarian action for Gaza.





Note: Screenshots by author, captured on 27/03/2024

In terms of conceptual representation, there are some general details to note before exploring the narratives and discourses to be found within this news piece. Out of the 14 photos that make up the essay, seven clearly depict protesters carrying the Palestinian flag and/or the Palestinian *keffiyeh*<sup>25</sup> – both a metonymy for the Palestinian plight – signaling the

<sup>25</sup> The Palestinian checkered 'keffiyeh', originally used as a "utilitarian accessory, good for keeping the sun and dust off one's face while tending to an olive grove", has today become "a symbol of solidarity for the pursuit of social justice under occupation by Israel" (Renfro, 2017, p. 573).

politically-natured glue that binds these diverse groups of people together. Two others portray calls for a ceasefire displayed in highly accessible public space – one of them projected onto a wall at the foot of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the other a taped across the peace-promoting cruise ship ‘Pacific World’ as it is docked in the Suez Canal – creating a sense of power and influence held by the movement. In six of the images, we see groups of people gathered in protest, some holding signs calling for the end of killing, some praying, and some holding a vigil. This serves to convey how solidarity, grief, and peaceful protests unite the movement across borders. Five of the photos contain elements of “political aesthetics”, used by peaceful protesters seeking to send their messages across through countering the stance of those in power with art or performance (Werbner et al., 2014) – such as protesters parading with images of Palestinian parents carrying their dead children; or others carrying “dummy bodies of victims” wrapped in a traditional Islamic white cloth. These symbols, which by now have become a signifier for the Palestinian-solidarity movement, are a means by which the movement acts to challenge the narratives of the political authority by painting an alternative picture of the situation and spreading it through mass media (Tilly, 2019). The humanitarian discourse that is here shared for this end is that of Palestinians as victims of aggression and oppression, and as equally worthy of every right enjoyed by GN citizens. It is conveyed by suggesting that the international community is failing to uphold the concept of human rights if they do not stand behind those – including Palestinians – who are experiencing breaches of the UN charter without any repercussions being imposed on the perpetrators, due to geopolitics and maintenance of the current world-order (Chomsky & Pappé, 2015). The humanitarian discourse pursued in this photo essay aligns with elements of MJ, which aims to forge an understanding of the equal value of all components of life – even if they may differ in form, they all serve their own unique and meaningful part in the whole – as well as the calling out of systematic corruption, in the form

of GN nations inventing humanitarian concepts for the rest of the world to abide by, yet not acting to uphold these rules and values themselves.

Although the photo essay as a whole corresponds to several elements of MJ – such as the promotion of peace, showcasing cross-cultural understanding, highlighting interconnectedness, and focusing on grassroots sources – two of the images stand out especially for their correlation with a narrative of GI. Those are image no. 2 and image no. 6 of Figure 2. The first one depicts a vigil, the second one a Jewish man wearing a Palestinian *keffiyeh*. While image no. 6 is more symbolically powerful, due to the cross-cultural reference, which in the context of the article as a whole takes on huge significance, as it creates a discourse of sympathy amongst the Jewish community towards the suffering of Palestinians, the caption of image no. 2 makes it equally important in contributing to a discourse of cross-cultural compassion. Because it reveals that the vigil is organized by “a group of Jewish, Muslim and Christian students at the University of Cape Town”, showcasing yet another example of a community where people from different religious backgrounds are living in harmony with one another. Here we see a very clear example of how text can complement and clarify images (Barthes, 1967, cited in Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020, p.17), since they add the necessary detail for the discourse of an ‘international community united against war’ and of ‘cross-cultural/religious connection and sympathy’, as well as a discourse of hope, to be built. Although image no. 6 requires less explanation to deliver the above-mentioned discourses, the fact that the subject is an “Orthodox Jewish rabbi” which is revealed in the caption, increases the significance of his political statement of wearing the *keffiyeh* – both since Orthodox Jews adhere most strictly to religious traditions and beliefs (“Orthodox Judaism”, 2024) as well as his position of being a teacher of the faith. Moreover, the rabbi is depicted using a heroic framing, which adds a narrative of the brave act of leaders who stand up for causes that unite people across differences, as well as

contributing to the narrative of a ceasefire being the moral truth. This humanitarian-centered-approach-is-the-moral-truth discourse is to be found throughout the piece. The lead sentence reads “people across the world call for an immediate ceasefire and urgent humanitarian action in Gaza”, which together with the photos create a narrative of global support for a ceasefire, as well as forming a moral narrative where Israel’s actions are condemned due to “the high rate of civilian casualties” and for the manmade humanitarian crises in Gaza.

Both the photos and the text make use of several elements to evoke emotions such as compassion, urgency, grief, anger, sadness, and hope, all to strengthen the humanitarian discourse underlining the article. Using the words “support”, “solidarity” and “across the world” when describing the rallies implies a strong sense of togetherness within the global community, which contributes to a sort of ‘David and Goliath’ discourse whereby ‘the people’ unite against ‘the powers’ carrying a message of peace, of ‘all lives matter’, and of empowerment, – all messages that align with GI. Additionally, it forms a narrative of hope for a peaceful ending to the war, due to the extensive support for the cause displayed through the global reach of the protests. Placing emphasis on how “Israeli attacks continue to pound the already destroyed parts of the Gaza strip” and how the “continuous Israeli attacks on Gaza have led to widespread killings of the civilian population”, the article provides the reader with context for the protests and stresses the urgency of calling for a ceasefire before more harm is done, seeing that Israel so far has shown no signs of backing off. Hence, without including any direct quotations from participants, the authors approach the story from the perspective of those protesting which contributes to a narrative that presents the message of the rallies concisely. Similarly to AJE1, none of the photos provide the reader direct eye contact with the reader, again placing the focus on the story itself rather than the characters it is told through, putting emphasis on the collective rather than individual. This method aligns with MJ’s philosophy of ‘non-self’, as it strengthens the discourse of the interconnectedness

of all humans, and the collective experience of life. Image No. 13, 11, 10, 9, and 7 all contain emotionally provoking content – be it the body bags, the taped mouth, the drawing of the child chased by birds/planes – aimed at stirring compassion for the people in Gaza and the hardship they are going through. The inclusion of these images hence contributes to the aforementioned discourse of ‘all lives matter’ – a discourse which the article suggests has huge support as can be seen especially in image No. 9, 7, and 5, portraying large crowds of people standing in support of the cause. As a whole, AJE2’s main discourses are thus communicated using elements of MJ and successfully spreads the narrative of GI.

### **3.2 British Broadcasting Corporation — BBC**

Similarly to AJE, BBC has on their website a subcategory under the tab ‘news’, titled ‘Israel-Gaza war’. Opposite to AJE’s headline, this naming signals a more ‘neutral’ stance regarding the war, where none of the ‘sides’ are pointed out as being the sole driver of it – hinting that the discourses delivered by the BBC may differ from that of AJE. Notably, six BBC reporters were taken off-air for potentially engaging with pro-Palestinian content on their social media accounts, showcasing the BBC’s approach to remaining ‘neutral’. Below follows an analysis of two articles showcasing elements of MJ, which although rarer across BBC’s reporting on the war compared to AJE’s, still appears across the site. This subchapter will be split into two sections, analyzing one news piece at a time.

#### **3.2.1 BBC1: “Gaza war: 'I'm marching for peace this Saturday'”**

The first of BBC’s news pieces in question is an interview with a middle-aged “Londoner” named Celia Webster, who is attending a “pro-Palestinian demonstration”. The article, which was posted on November 9, 2023, contains two photographs depicting the woman and is made up of 642 words worth of text (excluding the headline). It was selected as a subject of



study due to its focal element being a call for peace, showcasing cross-cultural unity, and giving voice to a member of ‘the public’. These stances correlate to MJ’s pursuits of highlighting peaceful means of conflict resolution, contributing to a harmonious global culture, and allowing media to serve the interest of all rather than the few.

At first glance, and on some levels the article does align with a narrative of cross-cultural unity, as well as peaceful conflict resolutions since the main subject, Ms. Webster, is making a humanitarian statement by dismissing UK prime minister Rishi Sunak’s call for shutting down the Palestinian solidarity protests as it coincided with Armistice Day<sup>26</sup>. Rather than choosing sides, Ms. Webster explains that she will be attending both events, declaring that ultimately, they are both calling for the same thing, which is peace. The article suggests that the significance of her action is furthered by her family history, being a daughter of a WWI veteran who helped liberate a Jewish concentration camp. The narrative of cross-cultural compassion can also be found in Ms. Webster’s account of having “met wonderful people from various Jewish organizations and there are people there from all different faiths and none”. This coincides with a discourse found in both AJE1 and AJE2, namely that of ‘religion is not the issue, the interpretation, or exploitation of it, is’. However, when looking deeper into the underlying narratives within the article, the messages conveyed align less with MJ than it appears on the surface.

By choosing to frame the protests as “pro-Palestinian” when they could be described in a myriad of ways that puts the focus on the humanitarian urge to call for a ceasefire, explicitly expressed by Ms. Webster as the motivation behind her own action, the authors create a divisive narrative which opposes the aim of MJ. Not only does it add a trivial connotation of a game to the atrocities occurring in Gaza, but it also contributes to a pro

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<sup>26</sup> “The Armistice, an agreement to end the fighting of the First World War as a prelude to peace negotiations [...] *Armistice* is Latin for *to stand (still) arms*” (Royal British Legion, n.d., para. 2-3)

versus against narrative, forcing people to ‘pick a side’ which contradicts the non-partisan, humanitarian message sent by Ms. Webster, and hence acts to further polarization rather than help people find common ground. Moreover, the authors make use of several descriptive adjectives when introducing the story, which significantly informs of underlying narratives. Before all else, Ms. Webster is introduced as a “Londoner”, which defines her within national boundaries. This is noteworthy in a story about Israel and Palestine, seeing that the conflict arguably exists on part due to the invention and implementation of the imaginary, divisive concept of statehood. Yet although imagined, the idea of nation states does, as pointed out by Anderson (2006), have very real political effects. According to Chomsky and Pappé (2015), “extreme violence” is an indiscriminate component of state creation, since there is “no other way to impose a uniform structure on people of varying interests, backgrounds, languages, and so on” (p. 58). Choosing to define Ms. Webster according to her nationality could hence be seen as a means to confirm and cement the idea of nation states, and thereby legitimize the struggle between various nations for sovereignty and power. However, in contrast to the state of Israel that, according to Chomsky and Pappé (2015) “regards any perspective other than that of a racist Jewish state as ‘suicide’ and an ‘existential danger’” (p. 166), London is known as possibly the most ethnically diverse city in the world (Sturgis et al., 2015). Hence, defining Ms. Webster along nationalistic lines could also be seen as a means to highlight the possibility for people of all nationalities to co-exist in peace. Seeing that these are not mutually exclusive, this thesis perceives both as operating narratives within the story. The authors then move on to define Ms. Webster by where she lives – in Muswell Hill, a north London suburb which was rated one of London’s best places to live in 2021 by the Sunday

Times.<sup>27</sup> This, alongside the information of her Christian faith and the two images depicting her as a middle-aged lady of European descent, somewhat conservatively yet casually dressed, show a narrative being built whereby Ms. Webster’s activism is portrayed as heroic. Because despite her socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious background that allows her by default to lead a privileged life, she dedicates her spare time to standing up for the human rights of Palestinians. It implies that Ms. Webster’s lack of prejudice and dedication towards a humanitarian cause of this nature deserves praise, which suggests that the general attitude amongst her demographic on the topic of Israel and Palestine tends to lean towards the opposite spectrum. Additionally, it paints her actions of calling for the killing and starvation of citizens to end as something extraordinary, rather than as human decency and the norm. Hence, through the article’s use of framing Ms. Webster is narrated as a white savior – a trope which “builds on the predictable black-and-white savages-victims-saviors metaphor” (Finnegan, 2022, p. 618), which downplays the message she is trying to convey by placing the focus on her, rather than on the cause she is trying to highlight.

Furthermore, the article uses negating descriptions of the peaceful atmosphere at the marches; “She hasn’t seen any negative behavior at any of the other marches”, “she had not seen any extremist views displayed at previous demonstrations”, and “amazed at what a peaceful atmosphere it is”. The assumption of danger and extremist behavior at the marches, despite years of non-violent protests carried out by the Palestinian solidarity movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel and a month’s worth of evidence of peaceful protests in solidarity with the Palestinian cause, informs of two things: that the ‘Orientalist’ othering of Arabs in Western media following 9/11 and the resulting ‘war on

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<sup>27</sup> Norfolk House School. (2023, October 24). *A Complete Guide for Living in Muswell Hill*. <https://www.norfolkhouseschool.org/school-life/latest-news/a-complete-guide-for-living-in-muswell-hill/#:~:text=Muswell%20Hill%2C%20a%20leafy%20suburb,London's%20best%20places%20to%20live>

terror' discourses has effectively created an image that people from the Middle East, of Arab-decent, are by default to be feared; and secondly, that the approach of this article is contributing to this discourse by not questioning Ms. Webster's assumptions, not providing context of the situation on the ground in Gaza, nor any mention of the many historical wrongs that has led to what is taking place there today. Additionally, by comparing the death of the WWII veterans commemorated on Armistice Day with the tens of thousands of civilians killed and injured in Gaza during Israel's ongoing offensive, Ms. Webster minimize the Palestinian plight to something equal to a fair battle, fought between two armies, while the vast majority of the deceased in Gaza are children and civilians. As previously mentioned, the authors do not provide any significant context to the protests, which could have allowed for the readers to make up their own minds on if they agree with Ms. Webster's framing of what she calls the "Israel-Gaza war" or not – but that is left out. In a similar fashion, the authors do not question or add alternative views after Ms. Webster's take on what the marches are asking for – namely, in her view, "a ceasefire and a permanent two-state peaceful solution". Although there may be people within the protests marching for this cause, significant actors (such as those behind the BDS movement) are against the idea of a so called two-state solution, since it dismisses the "struggle between a settler-colonialist movement and a native indigenous population that has raged since the late nineteenth century" (Chomsky & Pappé, 2015, p. 155), and accepts the idea of Palestinian's living in "human mega-prison[s]" (p. 158) within territories whose faiths depend on Israel's government (p. 159). Moreover, it also neglects the fact that the Israeli state apparatus has continued to illegally occupy increasing amounts of Palestinian land since the UN partition of Palestine in 1967 (Imseis, 2020). Hence, even if a two-state solution was implemented, the evidence for Israel abiding by it does not bode well, according to Chomsky and Pappé (2015), especially considering the

IDF's track record of disregarding ceasefires:

“The regular pattern is for Israel [...] to disregard whatever agreement is in place, while Hamas observes it – as Israel has officially recognized – until a sharp increase in Israeli violence elicits a Hamas response, followed by an even fiercer brutality. Rather than “mowing the lawn,” in Israeli parlance, the most recent was more accurately described as “removing the topsoil” by a senior US military officer, appalled by the practices of the self-described “most moral army in the world” (p. 167).

Lastly, the choice of sources used to tell this story further contributes to the perpetuation of an underlying ‘Othering’ discourse to be found within this article. The author has selected three strategic sources to, presumably, tell the story from several perspectives: Ms. Webster, to represent a member of public personally connected to the Armistice Day marches; Ajmal Masroor, a London-based imam to represent the voice of Muslim people; and Natan Ley, a Rabbi, to represent the voice of Jewish people. Hence, at first glance, the article may appear nuanced and balanced. However, there is a gap in the source list; there is no voice from the ‘inside’. There is no member from the public there to represent the Palestinian plight from a ‘lived experience perspective’. No one who is an active part of the community organizing the protests, nor who seemingly has extensive knowledge on the conflict/history of the region. This is arguably a major flaw in the story, seeing that plenty of suitable sources gather at the London-marches on a weekly basis and would hence not be difficult getting a hold of. Furthermore, by selecting the voice of a rabbi who states that the “timing of Armistice Day “pains” him” because it is a day when we should be seeking peace and dialogue between people”, rather than one of the many Jewish people in support of the cause, the authors once more chooses to provide an outside perspective on the marches, contributing to a narrative

which questions the legitimacy and intent of them. Juxtaposing the rabbi's reluctant stance towards the solidarity protests with the Imam's support for them contributes to a divisive narrative whereby Jews and Muslims appear to have fundamentally different opinions on the issue which, according to the statement by Ms. Webster, is untrue seeing that there has been people of all faiths at the protests she has attended. Finally, concluding the article with the rabbi's statement: "I don't see these protests as finding those good solid places for Jews and Muslims and people from different opinions to come together [...] The kind of things you can say in a slogan, on a sign, aren't the kind of things you can say in a deep and meaningful dialogue", minimizes the efforts of Ms. Webster and all those protesting along her, and distracts from the urgency to stop the killing and mistreatment of innocent humans which is moving people to protest. Hence, by allowing for voices from the 'outside-looking-in' take the forefront of this story, this BBC article takes an opposing approach to AJE2's reporting on the same topic, which depicts people of different fates united by the cause of standing up for humanity. Furthermore, rather than choosing a narrative approach to the story, where the event or the topic is in focus, BBC chooses to take a concept-based approach which places the focus on Ms. Webster as an individual – which can be seen by the direct eye-contact and static images included in the article. Since Ms. Webster is not fully part of the community behind the protests, placing the focus on her restricts the reader's ability to form a deeper understanding of the rallies to her limited insights. Thereby, the BBC creates a narrative that presents the protests as 'the unknown'. As potentially dangerous, insensitive, futile, and slightly barbaric. Something that you are either 'for' or 'against', due to the Pro-Palestinian framing and the selection of sources, which goes against the uniting efforts of MJ.

There are however still elements of MJ to be found within this text, namely a call for a peaceful resolution of conflict, the discourse of 'human rights apply to all, including Gazans', and a 'Middle Path'-stance by Ms. Webster, who was selected as the primary source

for that very reason. It does not, however, provide much context of the war, nor refer to any ‘inside’ sources, as previously mentioned; it does not contribute to any deeper cross-cultural understanding, or point to actual solutions that can lead to a ceasefire. Hence, although some elements of MJ are present within the piece, it is less effective in driving a discourse of GI than the two previous AJE articles. This suggests that there are features of MJ that are more sufficient in helping to drive such a unifying discourse, whilst there are others that may be of less value in this matter. From this finding, these appear to be: cross-cultural narratives including context, history, and insights from all sides involved, favoring a diversity of sources; diving into context and history as it can help create a deeper understanding of the ‘opposing side’ in a conflict; solution-based stories; and peace-promoting content. Additionally, it also suggests that the promotion of GI will depend on how the MJ elements are manifested, and which discourses run through the entirety of the news piece. Moreover, looking at a news organization’s content as a whole may allow for a better picture of what their accumulative narratives are; singling out articles to then comparing how they interact with one another may allow for a deeper understanding of how MJ moves through them.

### **3.2.2 BBC2: “Divided communities in the occupied West Bank”**

The second news piece by the BBC is an article of 1227 words (excluding captions) describing the increased divide between the Arab and Israeli communities in the occupied West Bank following the October 7 attacks, complimented by two photographs, and five in-text links. The article uses descriptive language, as well as metaphorical language, such as “at the olive grove, just as the sun is dipping below the Church of the Nativity”, or “a scene that could be from biblical times”, to paint scenes which draw the reader into the story and thereby increase their feelings of connection with the narrative, and with the people involved. As pointed out by Bird and Dardenne (1988), using ‘storytelling’ features to convey news

makes readers more responsive, and it helps them to process information more accurately (p. 78). The story looks to take a more human-centered approach to conflict-reporting, by focusing on the effect it is having on local communities – showcasing elements of MJ. However, although it appears to be giving a neutral account by adapting traditional Western journalistic standards of including sources from both sides of the conflict, subtle wording choices paint a different picture.

For example, by merely describing the Palestinian man Ahmed by name when introducing him yet adding the adjective “cheerful” when addressing the British settler Danny Chesterman, the author makes it slightly easier for the reader to gain an emotional connection with Chesterman as he has been given a characteristic quality. Similarly, throughout the piece the author refers to the Jewish sources by first and last name, yet Ahmed is just Ahmed. Thereby the author depicts his ‘Jewish’ subjects as superior to their ‘Arab’ counterpart, since referring to someone by their full name signals status and importance compared to the more informal action of referring to someone by first name. Furthermore, Chesterman’s statement of having “not stolen anyone’s land” is not directly disputed with the subject in the text, but rather addressed passively, by pointing to how the UN “say all settlements are illegal under international law”, followed by a claim that “many Israelis...vehemently dispute” such a claim. Here, again, are signs of how Western journalistic standards – of objectivity, and factual reporting – fail to fairly report on an issue where there is a clear right and wrong, yet it is portrayed as a grey area. In a paragraph titled “Settlement controversy”, only the first two sentences deal with the aforementioned issue. After this, no more details are presented regarding this matter, instead, the paragraph is dedicated to describing the October 7 attacks, Israel’s response, and how this has fueled the prejudices held within the settler communities towards their Arab neighbors. Moreover, by framing the Israeli army’s killing of civilians as “the military campaign is thought to have left more than 10,800 people dead”, BBC abstains



from placing any direct responsibility on the Israeli army for having taken these lives. It becomes a passive and disengaged way of reporting, having the opposite effect of stirring emotion – rather it suppresses such a response, and neutralizes the death of thousands of civilians. This contributes to an indirect discourse of Israel being the more trustworthy party in this conflict, as well as their aggressions being a necessity, rather than excessive.

Another instance where word choices point to a ‘hidden’ discourse within the text, which opposes the ‘public’ discourse of neutral reporting, is where the author chooses to call Israel’s ramping up of checkpoints and banning of “almost all Arab access to Israel” as “increased security”, rather than, for example, “increased hostility”. This follows the stereotypical ‘Orientalist’ Western discourse whereby Palestinians are seen as a threat, and Israelis as victims (Philo & Berry, 2011). This narrative is supported by unverified claims by a British settler that “he has heard the Hamas attackers had help from Gazans who worked with Israelis”. Allowing Israeli hearsay to influence the audience’s perception of Palestinians, while not including anything of the like from the one Palestinian source included in the article, does not only neglect the Western notion of balanced reporting – it also utilizes what Bird and Dardenne (1988) refers to as the mythic quality of news, whereby they build upon each other, and on stereotypes. Furthermore, the article showcases more support of the ‘passive Israel’ discourse by allowing for the mayor of an illegal settlement, Oded Rivivi, to describe how Israel reluctantly left the Gaza Strip – pointing out that this was done only due to “pressure from the international community” – only to be gifted “a military army of Hamas” for their ‘generous’ actions of handing illegally occupied Palestinian land back to Palestinians. This, according to Rivivi, is a justification for why the two-state solution is doomed. Here, the article does state that such a sentiment would be “met with fury” and “resistance”, yet it doesn’t dig into any justifications to counter Rivivi’s account. Again, providing the Israeli voices in the piece space to contextualize their claims, and leaving out

the Palestinian perspective. In this specific case, that could for example have looked like bringing forth one of the several accounts claiming that Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government were in support of Hamas ruling in Gaza – a claim partially based on a document from a 2007 meeting between the head of intelligence for the Israeli army and the US ambassador in Tel Aviv, leaked by Wikileaks<sup>28</sup>, stating that “Israel would be happy if Hamas took over Gaza, because it would mean that Israel could now treat Gaza as a hostile country”. There is hence an imbalance in the article, masked under the pretense of portraying the struggles on both sides. Because although the article creates a narrative arch by opening the piece describing Palestinian Ahmed's struggles with finding work to feed his family after October 7, and then closing it with quoting his wishes for the future, such as “peace and security” and “we're looking to be able to feed our children, that's all”, that is the only information we receive about Ahmed, who as a source in the story stands to represent the Palestinian people of the West Bank. Here we see that the choice and treatment of subjects – which does fall within the framework of MJ by stepping into local communities – creates a discourse of a ‘simple-life yearning, uncivilized, and uneducated Palestinian’ who doesn't understand the complexity of the situation but wishes to live in peace. This is contrasted by a discourse of ‘the intellectual, civilized Israeli’ who “go to work in the morning”, “run businesses”, “have professors at university”, and “are people of the book and not of the sword”. The subjects chosen to represent Israel are a mayor and a businessperson, while Ahmed who here represents the Palestinian people is ‘just’ a construction worker. This plays on a social hierarchy between their social statuses, forming a juxtaposed depiction of

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<sup>28</sup> Wikileaks. (2007, June 13). Military intelligence director Yadin comments on Gaza, Syria and Lebanon [Cable 07TELAVIV1733\_a]. Wikileaks. [https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07TELAVIV1733\\_a.html](https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07TELAVIV1733_a.html)

Palestinians as ‘backward’ and thus ‘wrong’, and Israelis as ‘progressive’ and thus ‘right’ – arguably a clear case of Orientalism.

**Figure 3:** *Second of the two BBC articles under analysis, depicting the two article photos*



Note: Screenshot captured by author 15 June 2024.

The two photographs included in the article – that seen in Figure 3, as well as a landscape shot of “Bethlehem as seen from Efrat” do not provide much addition to the narratives – yet they do complement the text in two ways. The initial image strengthens the descriptive text, helping the reader ‘arrive’ more easily in the setting. The second image furthers our

situational understanding, by showing how close the two communities live but also how segregated their lives are; the hierarchy by the Jewish people living in comfortable, (semi-)detached houses and the Palestinians living in densely habituated areas, in collective buildings. Just like in AJE's news article, there are also links to five suggested readings to be found about halfway down the article. Including headlines such as "Watch: The devastating effects of war on Gaza's children", "Explained: Who are the hostages taken by Hamas from Israel?", and "History behind the story: The Israel-Palestine conflict", these indicate a variety of perspectives, as well as encouraging the audience to explore the context – which in turn corresponds with elements of MJ. Hence, these finding suggests that in-text suggestions can be a great online tool for an MJ approach, since they enhance the ability to 'dive deeper' and present the complexity than a stand-alone piece – as well as adding nuance, by providing 'several angles' to a story. Moreover, they also confirm the findings from BBC1, which suggests that although elements of MJ are present, it does not necessarily mean a piece will be contributing to a narrative of GI.

### **3.3 Johnny Harris — JH**

The third subject of study in this thesis is the independent, American journalist Johnny Harris, who, as of 26 June 2024, has posted two videos directly addressing the Israel-Palestine conflict since the October 7 attack. This thesis will analyze the first of these, which was published on November 9, 2023, on YouTube, and hence falls within the set timeframe. In addition to investigating the discourses found within Harris' video, the following subchapter will also explore the elements of MJ found within the news piece and their role in furthering the narratives of the video.

### 3.3.1 JH: “The War is Spreading”

The video is titled ‘The War is Spreading’, and has a thumbnail depicting a map where Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine are highlighted – alongside a headshot of the US President, Joe Biden, as a symbol for the nation’s involvement in the war (see figure 6). It is a 17’20” long film divided into the following chapters: “October 7th Attacks”, “The Bigger Picture”, “The Potential Escalation”, and “Conclusion”. As suggested by these titles, Harris’ approach matches several aspects of MJ, such as providing context; showcasing the interconnectedness of war in a globalized world; stressing the importance of holding power to account; and providing a mindful analysis of the future to stimulate debate and thought among the audience. Additionally, he highlights the disconnect between the tactical actions of politicians on both sides, with the wishes and fates of the public whom they are supposed to, “yet failing” to represent. This aligns with the MJ sentiment of fighting corruption, as well as representing ‘the people’ rather than ‘the elites’.

**Figure 4:** *An opening image of Johnny Harris’ YouTube video on Israel’s war on Palestine*



Note: Screenshot by author, captured on 27/03/2024

Harris uses different modes to deliver his story; video, graphics, text, music, sound effects, as well as audio-narration. Several of these are often used simultaneously to heighten whatever point Harris wishes to stress. An example of this can be found between 0'23''-0'32'', where the voiceover states “it [the conflict] actually involves multiple countries and groups, all with different interests and capabilities”, whilst the computer-game-like graphics display a map pointing to the main ‘players’ involved, and ominous music contributes to building a feeling of tension surrounding the narrative. He finishes the sentence with “and all with the power to influence this war”, whilst the graphic sweeps over to focus only on Iran. In a short amount of time, Harris hence manages to communicate several things to the audience. Namely, that the conflict is not only between Israel and Hamas; it is a tense situation – and even more so due to the multiple parties involved; war somehow resembles a game in the eyes of those conducting it, due to the strategic, tactical, and interactive elements involved; and that Iran is one of the main ‘players’ in this ‘game’. Compared to AJE and BBC, Harris uses less emotive words in his narration – yet complemented by evocative visuals such as the bombing of civilian areas, grieving family members, and large groups of armed troops moving in synchronicity, the emotional effect of his news piece is arguably greater. According to Regehr et al. (2023), “Video stimuli in particular, as opposed to written stimuli, are more [...] emotionally triggering to viewers” (p. 336).

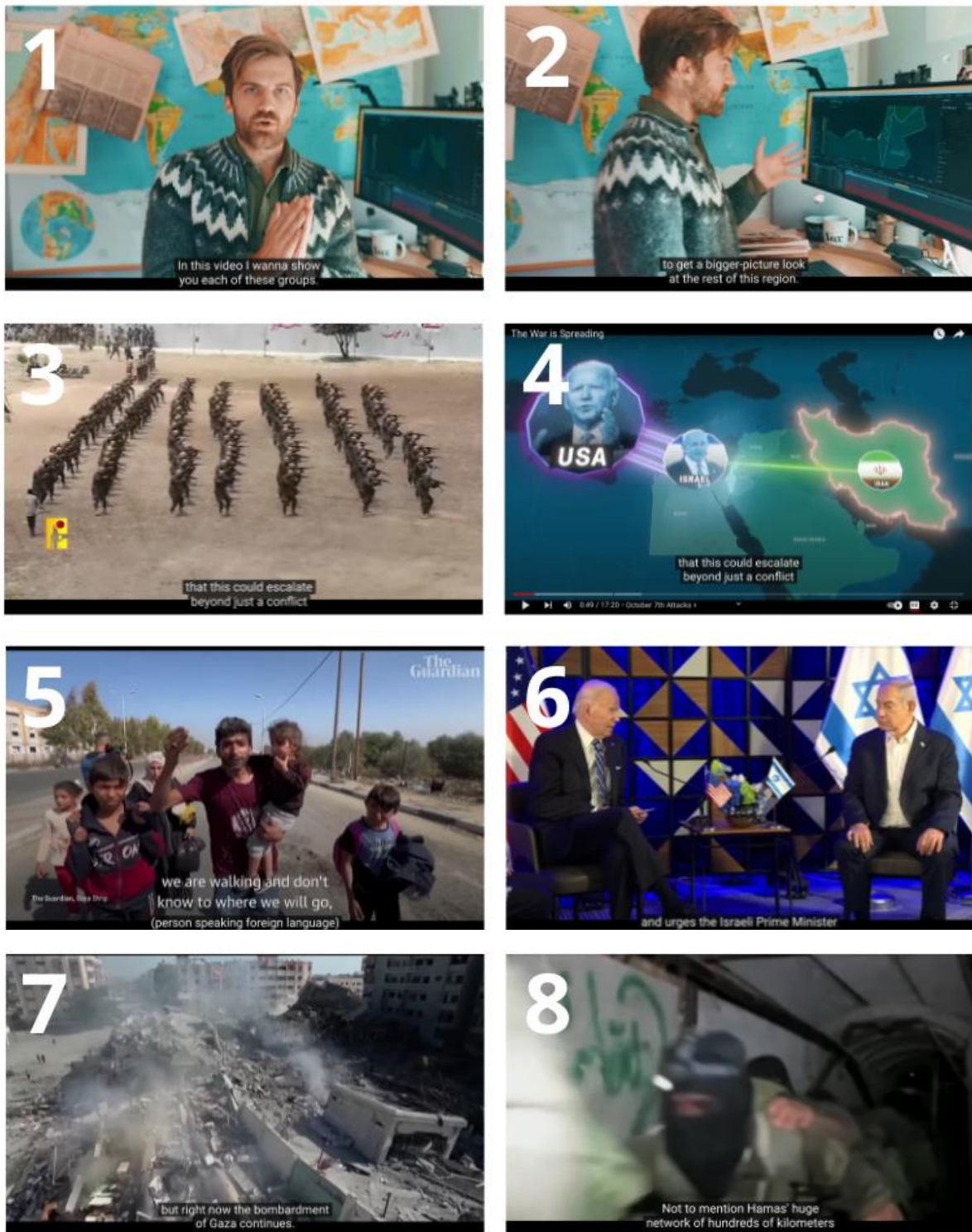
Furthermore, as seen in Figure 5, Harris builds his visual narrative using multiple types of videos and affordances, such as news footage, talking heads, and maps. Switching frequently between these helps keep the viewer engaged, and by using footage from several international news sources, Harris is able to portray the global significance of the war. He also utilizes the visual affordance of juxtaposition to showcase similarities rather than differences between the ‘two sides’ – as can be seen in images no. 9 and no. 10, where Israeli and Palestinian alike are mourning their loved ones. Lastly, in terms of visuals, the *mise-en-*

*scene* of Harris' talking head (see image no. 1 in Figure 5) plays on a 'detective stereotype', by the placement of maps and a newspaper taped to the wall behind him, creating an added sense of authority to his journalistic narrative. It is easier for humans to absorb information through a story format compared to mere facts. By drawing upon the archetype of a detective, Harris hence uses a familiar structure to further the absorption potential of the information shared in his video.

Using assertive language, such as "I am going to show you how this war...is threatening to spread" or "I want to show you...what they want" when referring to the various parties he claims are involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict, Harris builds a narrative about a "grueling and doomed war" through an international relations lens. The dominant discourse of his piece is one of superpowers scrambling for world domination, in complete disregard for the all people adversely affected by this fight. According to Harris, the US is using Israel "as a foothold" to "project its power into the Middle East", whilst Iran counteracts this through "funding a network of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish militia groups and governments around the region". Moreover, by highlighting "one of the paradoxes of global conflicts" – that even when none of the sides wants a full-scale war it can break out anyway – there is also a discourse of the volatility and futility of war in Harris' video. This is in part created by describing the war using metaphors such as "deadly game of chicken", referring to a fight where no side has anything to gain from a conflict, yet pride prevents them from backing off; as well as by pointing to the "delicate balance" of war, "one that could easily break and spiral". This discourse aligns with an MJ framework, as it favors peace, highlights corruption, provides context, and aims to equip the audience with a wider perspective on the events playing out. Additionally, Harris' narrative creates a separation between the people involved in the war, and the war itself, which almost becomes its own entity. This way of

thinking can assist in depolarization and de-escalation, hence it is another element within this piece correlating to an MJ approach.

**Figure 5:** Various images used by Harris to convey the context of “the Israel-Hamas war



Note: Screenshots by author, captured on 27/03/2024





In contrast to the BBC, Harris does not follow the neo-Orientalist ‘war on terror’, or ‘Othering’ discourse by pointing to Hamas as ‘the bad guy terrorist’ which the ‘good guy Israel’ must defeat – rather he maintains a discourse of ‘all sides have their own motifs in this war’ by defining Hamas as an “Islamist organization with a militia wing” who at times commit acts of terror – which the IDF arguably does too – and clarifying that from an Iranian perspective they belong to an “axis of resistance” against US power. Another discourse to be found in Harris’ video, is interestingly the legitimacy of legacy news – seeing that he repeatedly backs up his claims in the video using footage from various news sources supporting his points. One unique feature of this news pieces published on YouTube, compared to the other ones under analysis, is the option for the author to add a reflection on his own news piece, via the (optional) lengthy captions and pinned comments. In the comment-section, Harris chooses to address the limitations of telling complex stories in a short-time span: “I wish I could have fit so much more into this video. The whole history of how this region got to look like this is key context that I didn't have room to include in this geopolitics piece”, upon which he includes a link to where people can learn more about the history of the region. This reflective quality arguably makes YouTube a suitable platform for the practice of MJ, since it enables context provision, allows the potential for audiences to broaden their understanding of topics, and helps to highlight the complexities of reality rather than presenting one single ‘truth’. As opposed to AJE and BBC’s content, Harris’ video thereby manages to inform the reader of many ‘whys’ behind the conflict through an

international relations frame, despite the absence of any on-the-ground reporting, or the inclusion of any primary sources.

### **3.4 Motaz Azaiza**

Until Azaiza was evacuated from Gaza on January 22, 2024, he covered the war on a daily basis through his Instagram account – his feed providing a global audience direct insights into the horrors of daily life in Gaza since the October 7 attacks. Due to the extensive nature of Azaiza’s coverage, the posts selected for analysis are but a sliver of the whole – yet as they provide insight into the nature and style of his content, they are a sufficient representation of his work. Below are two sections, delving into one Instagram post each.

#### **3.4.1 MA1: “The super mom”**

The first of Azaiza’s posts is a 27’ phone video, with a caption of 25 words, depicting people living in the north of Gaza fleeing their homes, after Israel’s army ordered the 1,1 million Palestinians living there to evacuate. It portrays a mother pulling her two children along on a tarmac road in what looks like child safety seats (see Figure 6), whilst carrying several bags. We see people of all ages walking alongside her, many of them children. Someone is being pushed forward in a wheelchair. The audio catches a man calling out: “We are people that gift you our blood”, followed by, “If you don’t have homes, our homes are open for you” in Arabic. Apart from video and audio, Azaiza also makes use of a small amount of text in this piece to deliver his message of the struggles faced by the forcibly displaced Palestinians. Just like in all pieces analyzed, we here see the different modalities complementing each other, with the video setting the scene, the caption situating the video within the conflict, and the audio adding information on the sentiment among the marching people. Although the film does not even last for half a minute, does not contain any dramatic action, and the caption

contains few words, this Instagram post provides us with plenty of information. By Azaiza giving the woman in the video the title “The super mom”, he draws upon archetypal language to convey the strength of the people fleeing Gaza City, allowing his chosen subject to represent their resistance. According to D’Amore (2012), “the notion of the supermom is symbolically reliant on the idea of the superheroine” (p. 1226), hence Azaiza’s use of such a connotative title seeks to connect the audience’s image of civilian Palestinians with that of superheroes.

**Figure 6:** A still image from Azaiza’s video depicting civilians forced to flee due to the war.



Additionally, the juxtaposition of this American derived-character (D’Amore, 2012, p. 1226), typically depicted wearing flamboyant outfits, flashy gear, futuristic transportation,

and possessing powers that exceed the norm, with the harsh reality of a Palestinian mother who lacks superhuman powers and any form of transport and thus is forced to “pull her two children” for “14 kilometers” in search of safety, contributes to creating an ever deeper sense of respect and admiration for her actions – since she is acting like a hero, despite her harsh conditions. This leads us to explore the main discourse to be found within this Instagram post; that of Palestinians as the ‘underdog heroes’. Who despite all the struggles they face do what it takes to continue moving, continue living, and continue caring for each other. This discourse is strengthened by the audio segment mentioned earlier, which both points to the trauma experienced by the Palestinians who have ‘gifted’ their blood to this war and to the sense of camaraderie among their community, as the man declares that those without homes will not go homeless. Furthermore, the Instagram post also conveys an anti-war discourse, by showcasing the detrimental effect this type of political action has on the everyday people whom their elected leaders are meant to protect.

In terms of MJ elements present within this piece, the main one is its focus on the stories of everyday people rather than the elites. Being exposed to the lived reality of the forced displacement experienced by Palestinian civilians, enables the viewer to get an insight into the struggles and trauma this population is enduring. Compared to an official statement regarding the matter, during a press release, by a member of the elite, this approach provides the audience with more agency to choose how they view the issue, since it contains less gatekeeping. Additionally, as previously mentioned, it is clearly in disfavor of the war and its effect on the Palestinian people – hence it aligns with the MJ element of bringing corruption to light: the post depicts the collective punishment endured by the Palestinians, which is a gross violation of international law<sup>29</sup>. Hence, it points to a dissonance between the official

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<sup>29</sup> “[...] international law prohibits any form of forced displacement” (Global Protection Cluster Working Group, 2010).

narrative pursued by Israel, whereby they are acting according to the rules of law, compared to the realities on the ground which showcases an opposing narrative. This suggests that social media's ability to challenge status quo on a larger scale may make it an optimal tool in the MJ pursuit of exposing corruption.

Compared to Harris' video there is a clear difference in the context provided, which speaks to YouTube being a favorable platform when it comes to catering for this aspect of MJ. However, seeing that Instagram favors constant posting, narratives on this platform are built more in an accumulative manner and the context missing from a single post may thus be provided over time, across several posts and stories – which is the case for Azaiza, who as previously mentioned posts content related to the Palestinian-plight on a daily basis. Additionally, when viewed against the legacy news content, Azaiza's post is void of editorial standards and structural expectations. This allows the independent photojournalist to publish a broader array of content, which may contribute to depicting a more "truthful" version of reality, as it is not required to fit into a 'news standard'. As such, being an independent journalist may thus allow you more freedom to pursue MJ practices – especially while the concept remains relatively unknown. Similarly to the discourse to be found within AJE2, Azaiza's choice of subject contribute to a sort of 'David and Goliath' narrative regarding Israel's war on Palestine, where the 'weak' civilians fight back towards the 'strong' Israeli army, and by moral high ground thereby will ultimately win – and from a spiritual standpoint, has already won – the fight, as the story goes. The posts also draws upon the aforementioned humanitarian discourse, of 'all lives matter', by highlighting the struggles faced by this Palestinian mother and her children, refusing to normalize what they are going through despite the apparent lack of 'drama' or 'sensation' to be found within the video. Although it may appear mundane, a reality where a mother needs to take such an action is not one that aligns with a humanitarian focused worldview, which Azaiza's post informs the viewer of.

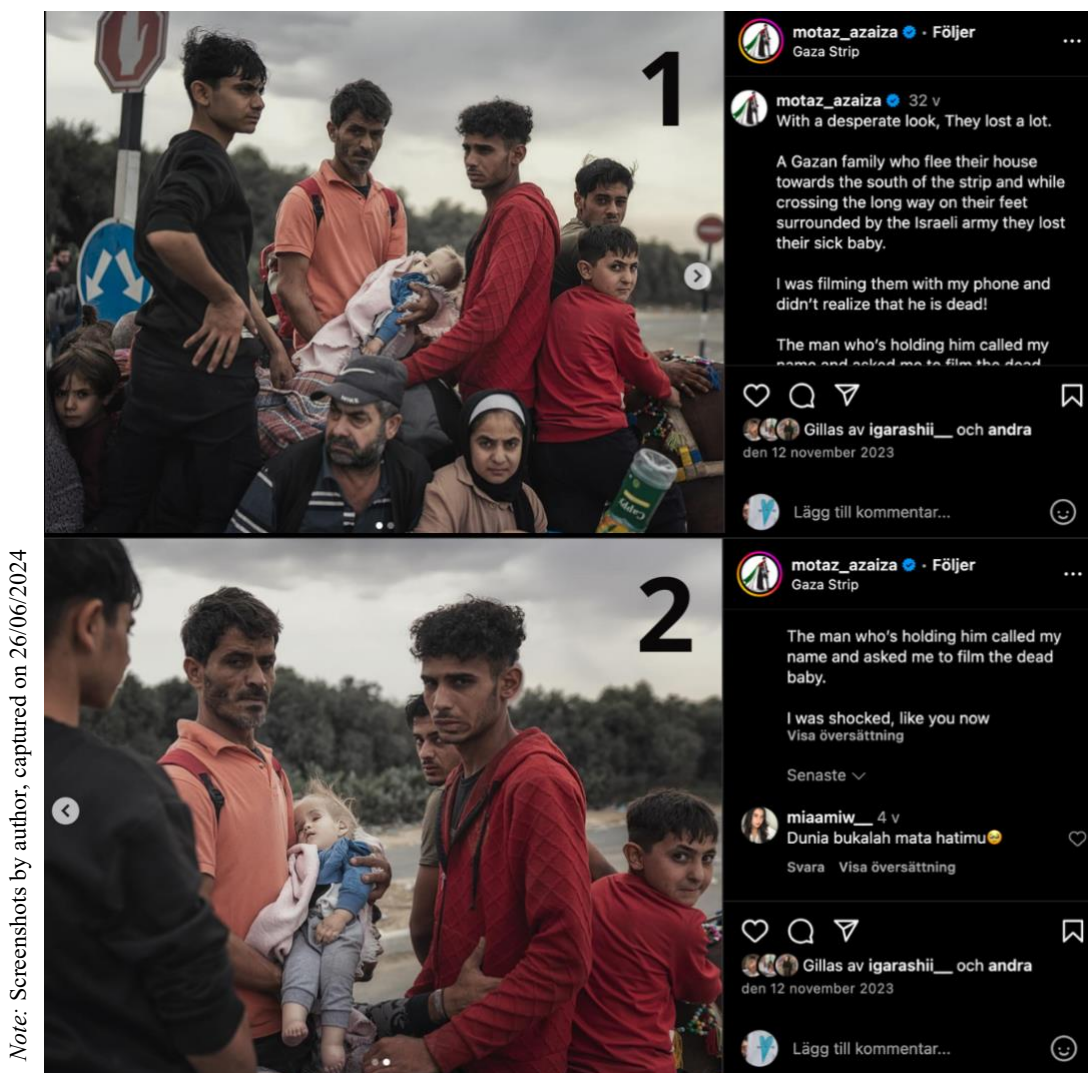
Interestingly, due to the circumstances being filmed, the viewer experiences both the absence of, and direct eye-contact with the primary subjects of the video. The mother, who is turned away from the camera for most part of the video, and the two children, who are facing the camera. This creates a dynamic whereby the mother, who could be seen to represent the adult Palestinians, appear to have given up hope on receiving help from the outside world and is instead doing what she can to help her family survive on her own; whilst the children, with whom the viewer get direct eye-contact, are still maintaining the dream of external intervention in the name of humanity. Because, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2020), direct eye-contact between the viewer and the subject places the viewer in an active position, where something appears to be requested from them. In this case, the narrative created by Azaiza in choosing to face the back of the mother, rather than the front, is one of the harm done to these innocent children – and the agency held by the international community in putting pressure on their governments to step in to halt the illegal, collective punishment of Palestinians. Hence, this post contains a discourse of collective power, addressing the power of the individual within the masses once they realize the power of uniting. Such a discourse correlates with the Buddhist perspective of ‘interconnectedness’, as well as that of the ‘non-self’, whereby all will hurt if one is hurting, and all will be strengthened if the weakest grows stronger. Hence, Azaiza’s choice of placing the children in a direct contact with the viewer can be seen aligning with GI, as it both addresses the injustices faced by these young lives, pointing to what needs to be fixed, and simultaneously reminds the viewer of their own agency in taking a stance, and collectively working towards a more global inclusive society.

### **3.4.2 MA2: “With a desperate look, they lost a lot”**

The second Instagram post of Azaiza’s, and the last of the seven news pieces to be analyzed in this thesis, consists of two photos depicting a Palestinian family of whom nine are visible in the two frames, fleeing the north of Gaza on a donkey-carriage. A father is

carrying his dead child, who passed away as a consequence of the war. The depicted family speak of grief, fear, angst, and exhaustion as they lock eyes with the camera. A caption of 76 words accompanies the photos, clarifying that the child in the image is deceased. It was uploaded on November 12, 2023.

**Figure 9:** *The second of Azaiza's posts; a family who's youngest died due to the war*



These are two emotionally evocative images that are difficult to face as they depict the most unnatural occurrence imaginable; a young life that did not get a chance to live. Simultaneously, this also seems to be Azaiza's motivation behind posting the image. It appears he wishes to provoke emotion, stir the audience into action, and create compassion

for the plight of the Palestinians. He decides to convey such a message by showcasing and highlighting the cold-heartedness and the unimaginable pain that war carries with it – here strikingly represented by the deceased child, and the sorrow of her remaining family. With the cloudy sky adding an ominous atmosphere, the desaturated colors stripping the image of life, and the portrait setting blurring out the surrounding world the same way intense emotions do to ones’ external environment, Azaiza creates an eye-catching and powerful image of an already harrowing situation. The desaturation enhances the discoloration of the baby’s skin, and the framing places the viewer’s focus on the dead child. Alongside the intense eye gazes of the other family members which, as previously mentioned, creates the impression that something is requested from the viewer, this image appears to demand justice for the innocent Palestinians who have died at the hands of the IDF. Compared to the previous image, where the children were innocently gazing into the camera, thus sending a message of the trust that the children still hold in humanity even if their parent has given up hers, this image sees the eyes of these more mature humans filled with doubt and suspicion due to their traumatic life experiences. Providing the viewer direct eye contact with the subject/s is, as previously mentioned, a method to engage the viewer. Under the dire circumstance in which these photographs are captured, the eye contact appears to call upon a humanitarian response to the subjects’ suffering. This implies the humanitarian discourse claiming that ‘all lives matter, including Palestinians’ is not only posed to the viewer, but it demands that they take a stance on it. Hence, this image could be seen as a call to action, for people to stand up for the rights that they claim to believe applies to all humans – including the most basic one; the right to live. Furthermore, the images can also be seen to represent the horror and despair of the situation, yet the sliver of hope contained within the family – they are fleeing into the unknown, within a heavy militarized “open-air prison” (Chomsky & Pappé, 2015, p. 162), where bombs continue to drop and essential resources like clean water



and food are scarce, yet they continue going. That same hope can be seen reflected in Azaiza's action of having to photograph a family who has just lost their child due to the war, in an artistic and professional way, and post it on his social media account in hope that it will make a difference, that it will somehow bring the violence to an end. And although for most people, seeing dead children will feel like a rare, and unnatural occurrence, in the Gaza Strip that is no longer the case, since as of April 1, 2024, 13,000 children have been killed by Israel's onslaught. Hence, this image also speaks of the extreme dissonance between the audiences' lived reality, and that of Azaiza – and by extension the people of Gaza. Simultaneously, this post carries a narrative that refuses to normalize the deaths of Palestinians. By displaying the heavy emotions this grieving family of refugees are enduring, Azaiza counteract the commonplace practice of turning Palestinian deaths into statistics and numbers. He is putting a face both to the deceased child, as well as her family, allowing for more compassion to arise within the viewer. Combined with the caption that declares his own surprise at the dead child in the arms of her father, Azaiza stresses the anomaly of the situation, which draws upon a discourse declaring peace to be at the core of our human nature, not war. As stated by Julian Assange, journalist, activist, and founder of Wikileaks:

Nearly every war that has started in the past 50 years has been a result of media lies. The media could have stopped it if they had searched deep enough, if they had not reprinted government propaganda, they could have stopped it. But what does that mean? Well, that means basically populations don't like wars, and populations have to be fooled into wars. So if we have a good media environment, then we'll also have a peaceful environment. (Russia Today, 2011, 10:43AM section).

This sentiment aligns with the MJ element of calling out corruption contained within these photographs, whereby Azaiza showcases what is actually occurring on the ground in contrast to the official statements made by parties involved, which allows for people to move out of their ignorance. Azaiza's work hence makes up personal testimonies from the ground, which heavily contrast the polished accounts made by politicians with stakes placed on this conflict, as well as calling out the corruption within mainstream media that leave out large chunks of lived experiences as the content may distress the audience. Although this confronting approach may not appear to align with the uniting efforts of MJ, the ancient Buddhist texts contains instructions to "meditate on such bodily ingredients as "feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil" (Wright, 2017, p. 13), and so on – in other words, to look at reality directly, to not shy away, as an unclouded view allows for the most appropriate responses to any situation. From such a standpoint, these confronting images rest upon the discourse of the innate goodness of human beings, as they are published in hope to stir compassion, and ultimately move enough of 'the people' that 'the elite' must stop their support of the conflict – and thus, these images can arguably be seen to indirectly promote GI.

Moreover, we see here how Instagram as a platform becomes an important propagator of the effect of juxtaposition. Compared to a news feed, an Instagram feed contains much more variety in terms of content – due to its nature of being an open-access platform, which lacks the professional standards, guidelines, regulations, and purpose of a legacy news outlet. Hence, while scrolling to find Figure 9 on your Instagram feed, you may previously have been exposed to someone's joyful, 'newlywed' photos, and following it, you may see a celebrity posting pictures from their island getaway. The contrast between these images – and the parallel realities lived by those who are sharing them – enhances the disturbing and shocking effects of Azaiza's images. This implies that Instagram is a suitable platform for

stories that rests upon a humanitarian discourse, seeing that the contrasts that can occur may strengthen emotions of compassion and solidarity – hence it could also be a useful platform for the spreading of GI narratives.

Looking at the caption, Azaiza uses a small amount of words. The lack of an in-depth caption can be interpreted as a form of communication in itself. By providing brief information on the family's situation, to then simply state the fact that he was taken off-guard by the dead child in the father's arms, the same way the audience is after reading his caption, Azaiza signals that there are no words that can communicate what he – nor anyone who has to post such photographs for people to 'share', 'like', and 'react' to online – feel or think. He allows for the images to do all the talking, to convey the humanitarian discourses previously touched upon, that all align with MJ. The caption also contains a 're-humanizing Palestinians' discourse, as it aims to connect Azaiza's own experience of shock at finding the dead child with that of the audiences' when they learn the fact. It seems to suggest that despite all the trauma and the horror that Azaiza has experienced, the sacredness of life still lives as true in him – and by extension other Palestinians – as in the audience. Moreover, a journalist practicing MJ should aim to highlight similarities rather than differences, which Azaiza does by choosing a child as his subject. Since the depicted child has not yet been brought up to adopt certain beliefs, carry any cultural identity, or express any distinct political preference, it represents the purity of 'uncorrupted' children. Hereby, Azaiza's photo relies on a 'we are all born equal', humanitarian discourse, which in aiming to highlight the injustices faced by the innocent Palestinian civilians of Gaza, also contributes to a discourse of the equal value of all human beings. Additionally, Azaiza's post carries an anti-war discourse that highlights the discrepancy between who essentially wages it, and who is affected by it. This narrative is in line with MJ's aim to place more focus on 'the people', and away from the traditional Western journalistic news value of 'elite people'. Furthermore, the

post carries the discourse of the sacredness of life – and the human-derived source of the suffering depicted, seeing that this child died at the hands of political leaders fighting for power. This aligns with the MJ view of all suffering essentially stemming from insatiable cravings – in this case, a craving for power, revenge, and resources – which can only be eliminated through a fundamental realization of the sacredness of life since such an understanding renders all cravings unnecessary.

#### **4. Conclusion**

“Should you sit upon a cloud you would not see the boundary line between one country and another, nor the boundary stone between a farm and a farm. It is a pity you cannot sit upon a cloud.”

*Kahlil Gibran*

The need for structural changes to the journalistic endeavor is becoming pressingly obvious, as global news outlets are going bankrupt and news consumers are declining year after year (Newman et al., 2023). Moreover, political polarization is on the rise worldwide, and we are currently witnessing an increase in global warfare. Coupled with a looming climate catastrophe that is already adversely affecting millions of people in the GS, collaboration on a global scale seems more important than ever before. Through their first comprehensive guide to MJ, Gunaratne et al. (2015) has, as showcased in this thesis, introduced a journalistic framework as a potential part of the solution to these seemingly unrelated issues.

Although the concept remains largely unknown within the world of journalism, this thesis found evidence that elements of MJ already show up both within global legacy news media, as well as internationally intended content posted by independent journalists on social

media platforms. This is a hopeful finding for MJ proponents, as it suggests that spreading MJ as a counter-hegemonic journalistic approach may prove easier than assumed, since a wide variety of journalists are already making use of similar frameworks, to present similar ‘truths’ to the world. Upon analyzing the content from the selected news sources, here are the main comparative findings: In contrast to Harris’ YouTube video, which provided layers upon layers of researched context to the conflict, or AJE1’s and BBC2’s webpage content that, although more narrowly focused than Harris’, still contained multiple sources and followed a more traditional news reportage structure, Azaiza’s content is simple and direct. This could in part be attributed to the structure of Instagram, as a platform that calls for bit-sized, ‘sharable’ pieces of information, compared to YouTube, where you have the option of uploading hours’ worth of footage – or news websites, where the formula varies but where the market holds certain expectations on wording, quantity, framing, and so on. Yet if we turn back to Harcup (2020), who focused a whole book on answering the question ‘What’s the point of news?’, another possible logic behind Azaiza’s content – as well as his huge surge in followers as a consequence of his reporting in Gaza – arises: through his informal way of addressing the audience, his content may appear ‘truer’ and closer to reality, compared to the polished and edited versions of reality presented by Harris, AJE, and BBC. Hence, if the ‘point of news’ is to bring audiences insights and information into the reality of people across the world, Azaiza’s approach could arguably be seen as a strategic decision resting on the discourse of mistrust in legacy media, as well as in other societal power structures – a narrative that does have a foothold in many nations across the world; and can for example be seen in the insistent high levels of distrust in news media globally, as well as the low levels of turnouts for elections in a majority of countries worldwide.

Furthermore, eight main discourses aligning with MJ and contributing to GI were to be found within the news pieces: “A better world is possible, with cross-cultural compassion

at its core”, “Religion is not the problem, a relentless hunger for power is”, “The vision of ‘the people in power’ must represent ‘the people’ for peace to prevail”, “The international community unites against war”, “Human rights are human rights – designated not for the few, but for all”, “War begets war, peace begets peace”, “human nature is to be kind and loving”, and “We are all born equal”. Simultaneously, although the pieces were selected on behalf of their MJ elements, there were a few parochial and critically disengaged discourses running through them as well, such as: “The war on terror”, “Israel’s illegal settlements are disputable”, “caring about Palestinian suffering is extraordinary and heroic”, “Othering”, and “The ‘educated and civilized Israelis’ need to be protected from the ‘dangerous, uncivilized Palestinians’”. This confirms the relevance of using GI as a guiding tool when performing MJ, as it will allow for uniting narratives to prevail. Which platform was used did not seem to play a major role in the promotion of GI narratives, as it appeared quite equally across all platforms investigated. However, a feature that was found helpful to the practice of MJ, was the in-text links to related articles since they enable the expansion of contextual knowledge. Additionally, YouTube appears to be especially effective when it comes to the MJ element of contextual reporting, and Instagram may be suitable to ignite compassion. Lastly, the analysis also suggests that it may be easier for independent journalists to pursue MJ practices, as they are under fewer structural restrictions. These findings contribute valuable insights into the small body of research on the applicability of MJ, and its ability to promote the GI narrative.

Harcup (2020) asserts that “news does not always have to be selected and reported in the ways that it has often been in the past” (p. 144). This notion coincides with the Buddhist concept of the ever-changing nature of life and can be a helpful framework to apply when looking at the mounting issues faced by traditional journalism globally. Viewed from this perspective, obstacles become helpful guides rather than frustrating blockades – because they point to augmented stagnation within the ‘system’ that requires attention for the structure to

work properly again. With the aim of removing veils of ‘illusion’ from the human experience – such as anxiety, greed, and hatred – MJ speaks to the importance of looking at the world holistically. Through approaching news from the perspective of GI, highlighting the relevance of exploring the widest variety of perspectives possible, MJ can thus be of help in the search for the closest thing to a globally representative ‘truth’. It would, contradictory to Kahlil Gibran’s belief, allow us to sit upon a metaphorical cloud – thereby blurring the boundary lines between nations, between humans, and between nature as a whole.

## Summary

Svět, v němž se vyvinuly dnešní mainstreamové novinářské postupy, byl otevřeně ovládnán koloniálními mocnostmi, a proto jsou jeho profesní kodexy prodchnuty hodnotami pocházejícími ze Západu neboli globálního Severu, zatímco vlivy z Východu neboli globálního Jihu do značné míry chybí. Z tohoto pohledu se novinářské vytváření sociální reality do značné míry opírá o částečné, západocentrické chápání světa. Zdá se, že tento model neslouží občanům světa. Nedůvěra ve zpravodajství je celosvětově rozšířená a čtenost novin celosvětově klesá. Může být umožnění vlivu východní filozofie buddhismu, která "hledá pravdu", na novinářskou praxi součástí nápravy tohoto vztahu tím, že se obnoví daná reprezentativní nerovnováha? Na základě této premisy vznikl buddhistický přístup Mindful Journalism (MJ), který má sloužit zájmům všech, a ne jen několika vyvolených.

Tento výzkum zkoumá diskurzy udržované prostřednictvím prvků MJ, které převládají v novinářském zpravodajství o probíhající válce Izraele proti Palestině, měsíc po konfliktu, který vypukl 7. října 2023, s cílem zjistit, zda přispívají k jednotčímu narativu globální inkluzivity (GI). Dále porovnává vhodnost různých zpravodajských platform pro praxi MJ. Studie využívá přístupu multimodální kritické analýzy diskurzu ke zkoumání

sedmi zpravodajských příspěvků ze čtyř mezinárodních zpravodajských zdrojů. Ty jsou rozděleny do dvou kategorií: starší zpravodajské zdroje a nezávislí novináři. Každá kategorie zahrnuje jeden zpravodajský zdroj z globálního Severu a jeden z globálního Jihu. Zjištění naznačují, že prvky vědomé žurnalistiky zaměřené na kontext a zdůrazňování podobností spíše než rozdílů, odhalování korupce a falešných narativů, umožnění, aby příběhy řídily hlasy "zevnitř" spíše než "zvenčí", a zaměření na sílu spolupráce jsou skvělými nástroji pro šíření diskurzu GI. Přesto byly v několika analyzovaných dílech nalezeny i rozdělující narativy, což naznačuje, že pro klasifikaci obsahu jako MJ je třeba zkoumat jejich cíle. Analýza vybraných zpravodajských zdrojů také ukázala, že YouTube se jeví jako obzvláště účinný pro kontextuální zpravodajství, zatímco Instagram se jeví jako vhodná možnost pro rozněcování soucitu. Celkově tato zjištění přispívají použitelnými poznatky, které mohou pomoci zájemcům o řešení krizí, jimž čelí tradiční žurnalistika, vyzkoušením přístupu MJ.



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