Indexing the "First Rough Draft of History": Source Selection and Narrative Dominance in *The New York Times's* Coverage of the First 30 Days of the Israel-Hamas War

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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The first 30 days of the Israel-Hamas war represent a critical window of time during which communication researchers can examine news coverage of the conflict through a variety of journalistic and theoretical lenses. This study quantifies sourcing patterns by *The New York Times* in order to assess the extent to which Bennett's indexing theory accounts for the relative prominence of voices within the broader conflict narrative that the *Times*, due to its international prestige and institutional prominence, helped shape during the initial stages of the war. The study hypothesizes that indexing theory will hold within the bounded empirical context examined here and that sources of information in *Times* reporting of the war will index to a range of voices found among political elites. This quantitative content analysis defines 33 distinct source category types, introduces a conception of novel units of information, and codes them across a proportionate stratified random sample of 77 NYTimes.com articles published under the "Israel-Hamas War" subject banner. The study finds 930 instances of sources introducing novel units of information, with 51.4% of those sources classified as government or military. Israeli and U.S. government voices account for almost half of that source subset (46.7%), with a near-perfect balance between the two (U.S.: n = 112; Israeli: n = 111). When Israeli and U.S. military sources are included, those four categories together account for 65.9% of the government-and-military subset. Conversely, Hamas (both its government and military wings; the *Times* does not consistently distinguish between them across the sample) was utilized as a source of information

just 2.5% of the time. By synthesizing Bennett's indexing framework with additional theoretical insights, including Becker's hierarchy of credibility and Hall's description of primary definers, this study demonstrates that the *Times* elevated elite voices to the apex of its newsgathering informational hierarchy during the war's first month, helped delineate the range of perspectives represented within its mainstream conflict narrative, and became, along with its sources, the authors of the conflict's "first rough draft of history."

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DEDICATION

For my children, Quincy Noelle Medina Moore and Vaughn Augustine Medina Moore, whom I love and cherish more with each passing moment: May you remain invigorated by the pursuit and promotion of quantitative precision and qualitative truth. Let's contribute to a world in which the awareness of our species' shared humanity does not rise and fall along with the political tides. Life is short, my darlings. Be brave. Be bold. Do good. Daddy loves you.

For my parents, William Sheridan Moore and Karen Jean Moore.

For my big brothers, William Sheridan Moore, Jr. and Robert Lance Moore, and my little sister, Amanda Jean Moore.

And finally, for my wife, Gloria Gissel Medina Moore, who imagined our beautiful children into the world and made me a father: Thank you. Without your support, this project would not have been possible. As Carl said to Annie so many years ago: In the vastness of space and the immensity of time, it is my joy to share a planet and an epoch with you.

mono no aware

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List of Source Category Coding Abbreviations

I	Israeli
P	Palestinian
G	Gazan
US	United States
NS	Non-State
Hez	Hezbollah
Pal	Palestinian
UnID	Unidentified
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
AVF	Audiovisual/Forensic
Non-gov	Nongovernmental
G/P	Gaza/Palestinian

I. INTRODUCTION

Althaus (2003) makes an assertion in his study of evening news coverage of the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War that seems incongruent with the traditional image of journalists as intrepid muckrakers devoted to skeptically assessing the veracity of information routed along the corridors of power. Referencing a declaration by Lippmann that "news is not a mirror of social conditions, but the report of an aspect that has obtruded itself" (as cited in Althaus, 2003, p. 381), Althaus claims that "since governmental institutions provide the most efficient, reliable, and legitimate means for registering socially important obtrusions, one can hardly conceive of a functional press system in which news coverage does not closely shadow the activities of governments" (p. 381). Gans (1979) asserts much the same thing. Journalists, he says, seek "the ideal," which is "an important story that is also interesting," and they consider "the federal government and its activities" as "always important" (p. 65). At first glance, these assertions seem to sidestep or outright ignore Stone's (1989a) dictum that "all governments lie" (p. 317).[1] However, considering daily news-production tensions, such as those faced by *New York Times* reporters tasked with covering the Israel-Hamas war and making sense of it for their readers, Althaus's and Gans's observations make perfect, pragmatic sense. "Socially important obtrusions" occur regularly in conflict news coverage; journalists are duty-bound to report them, while, ideally, remaining aware of their tendency to engage in "pushover journalism in the realm of foreign affairs" (Althaus, 2003, p. 404). Many surely are—and many would surely push back

[1] Stone used variations of the "all governments lie" phrase throughout his career; it's become synonymous with this work. But the quote in its fuller context might actually be more appropriate in the context of this study: "All governments lie, but disaster lies in wait for countries whose officials smoke the same hashish they give out (Stone, 1989a, p. 317).

on "pushover." But considerable research attention over the decades has been directed toward identifying and examining the structural and institutional pressures that align during the process of newsgathering. Obtrusions granted the privilege of publication and promotion are generally those that emanate from positions of state and institutional authority, resulting in news copy that remains within accepted bounds of discourse, minimizes alternate frames of interpretation, relies on officials, the well-known, and the powerful to relay information, and, ultimately, defends Western hegemony (Bennett, 1990, 2007; Chomsky, 1988; Entman, 1993; Gans, 1979; Hallin, 1994; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948; Said, 1997; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1978).

To date, there appears to be no study that quantifies sourcing patterns in *New York Times* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war over the first 30 days of that conflict. This study seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the "range of opinions" (Chomsky, 1986, p. 56) published in the *Times* by situating the paper[2] within a historical and organizational framework, establishing the relevance of the Israel-Hamas war for American news consumers, categorizing and defining source types, and then quantifying the frequency with which those source types are used as informational resources by *Times* reporters during the first month of the war. Building from Becker's hierarchy of credibility, Hall's concept of primary definers and, fundamentally, Bennett's indexing theory, the study quantifies and evaluates a proportionate stratified random sample of 77 articles (out of 306) spread over five weeks and published on the NYTimes.com website under the "Israel-Hamas War" subject banner. The study defines 33 source category types and quantifies 930 instances of those sources providing the *Times* with distinct units of

[2] Throughout this study, *The New York Times* is often referred to as "the paper" and "the newspaper," despite the fact that the study's quantitative analysis focuses on NYTimes.com. "The paper" and "the newspaper" remain conventional shorthand for mass media publications like the *Times*; this choice of nomenclature is not intended to suggest that a review of the paper's print edition has been undertaken.

information, a concept explicated here, across the 77 units of analysis, dating from October 7, 2023, to November 5, 2023.

As an adjunct to its primary focus, this study also provides examples of the ways in which editorial framing contributes to narrative authority and reinforces the boundaries of indexed discourse. Throughout, this analysis acknowledges the structural and institutional limitations of newsgathering in a modern, digital media ecosystem. However, this analysis also suggests that it is in fact conceivable to construct a media system that not only functions at a consistently high level when reporting on conflict but is capable of real-time adjustments to the routine selection of sources. Althaus (2003) writes:

> If journalists don't encounter ready sources of dissent, they are trained to prod and cajole sources to provide it for them. If there is any authoritative dissent to be found, even if only on background, journalists will use it to construct their narratives. When such dissent cannot be found in government circles, journalists may decide to "follow the trail of power" to non-governmental sources that have a legitimate stake in the policy (Althaus et al., 1996; Bennett, 1996) or use "accidental" occurrences as pegs on which to hang criticisms of government policy (Bennett, 1996; Lawrence, 1996; Molotch & Lester, 1974). But journalists do not merely excuse themselves from indexing to follow the trail of power. In large part, they independently decide who has power and where the trail is heading. (p. 405)

Entman (1993) argues that providing readers with "a balanced assessment of a situation" (p. 56) requires that journalists learn the "difference between including scattered oppositional facts and challenging a dominant frame" (p. 57). If this study's quantitative content analysis is any indication, this may take some doing. During the first 30 days following October 7,

the *Times's* sourcing ecology was consistent with Bennett's (1990) indexing theory: Government and military actors accounted for a majority of all sourcing instances, with comparatively limited representation of non-elite sources. Historically, the restrictions of time, place, and institutional prerogatives have structurally limited the range of views accorded legitimacy in mainstream media's real-time narratives of world events (Hallin, 1986; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1978). Transcending these restrictions—no small task—requires "a far more active and sophisticated role for reporters than they now take, resulting in more balanced reporting than what the formulaic norm of objectivity produces" (Entman, 1993, p. 57). In other words, by routinely incorporating non-elite sources and perspectives that challenge dominant frames, "journalists might be better equipped to construct news that makes equally salient—equally accessible to the average, inattentive, and marginally informed audience—two or more interpretations of problems" (Entman, 1993, p. 57).

Scholarship on foreign policy and conflict reporting has consistently documented the broader structural pressures that favor reliance on official and authoritative sources (Bennett, 1990; Hallin, 1986; Mermin, 1999; Zaller & Chiu, 1996). Gans's (2004) ethnographic study of *CBS Evening News*, *NBC Nightly News*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* identified six source consideration criteria that are salient for an analysis of the *Times's* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war. Limited access to events, dependence on official briefings, compressed reporting deadlines, and difficulties in independently verifying claims can all increase the reliance on sources that have proven themselves to be suitable, productive, reliable, trustworthy, articulate, and authoritative (pp. 129–131).

The First Rough Draft of History

The earliest coverage of a major international crisis occupies a pivotal place in journalism. Before narratives harden and historical interpretations emerge, reporters produce what has been called the "first rough draft of history" (Barth, 1943, p. 677). During this initial phase, decisions are made about whose voices to include, what topics are broached, whose statements are reflexively challenged, and whose claims are accepted as the baseline from which all other conversations derive and against which all other arguments and competing counterframes are compared (Becker, 1967; Bennett, 1990; Entman, 1993; Hall et al., 1978; Hallin, 1986). These choices establish the informational framework through which subsequent events are analyzed and understood (Entman, 1993; Lippmann, 1922/1957). Ultimately, this paper argues that source selection is the initial reporting process through which narrative authority is established. As Dawson (2025) argues in a discussion of media coverage of international relations (IR), "journalistic discourse employs the methods of IR study of 'strategic narratives' not just to report and analyse the influence of narratives, but to shape the narrative itself, to contribute to the early emplotment of history, as an 'actor' in the contestation of narratives alongside both other news media and the agents it reports on" (p. 236).

Sourcing decisions made by *New York Times* reporters function as fundamental structural mechanisms through which the paper first constructs and then solidifies narrative authority; these decisions are frontline determinants that ultimately influence the ways in which authority over public knowledge is allocated. It is hoped that, by quantifying source category types and analyzing their distribution during *The New York Times's* coverage of the first 30 days of the Israel–Hamas war, this study will establish a baseline of new knowledge from which further studies on this topic can be designed and deployed. This study sets out to construct a quantitative

analysis of the types of sources used by *The New York Times* in its coverage of the Israel-Hamas war and the frequency with which those sources are utilized in material published on NYTimes.com over the first 30 days of the war. It aims to provide a data-infused backdrop with which researchers may further evaluate the *Times's* commitment to its century-old pledge "to give the news impartially, without fear or favor, regardless of party, sect, or interests involved" (The New York Times Co., n.d.), not only in its selection and utilization of sources but in its overall coverage of foreign policy and international conflicts. Sourcing choices can allude to the *Times's* attentiveness—or lack thereof—to what Friel and Falk (2007) call the "joint repudiation of international law constraints" on the part of the United States and Israel—an attentiveness that, if deployed consistently and with all the institutional heft that *The New York Times* is capable of mustering, can "exert a constructive influence on the whole media climate" (pp. 1–2).

This study addresses a core research question: Does indexing theory anticipate the types of sources the *Times* chooses during the initial phases of a fast-moving, unpredictable story? Secondarily, do these sourcing choices establish narrative authority? If, as hypothesized, Bennett's theory holds within the bounded empirical context of this study, the data will show that the majority of information published by the *Times* in its coverage of the war will come from elite sources. In fact, the initial 30-day time period is one in which the mechanism of indexing will likely be most visible. In a time of information uncertainty, journalists will depend on actors with privileged access to information. At the same time, those actors and others will try to position themselves so as to define the meaning of events.

Source selection is but one dimension of mass media content production that can be analyzed using an indexing theoretical lens (Bennett, 1990), and this study's quantitative methodology is tightly focused there; it does not independently measure the range of government

debate during the first 30 days of the war nor does it test whether the viewpoints expressed by sources in *Times* coverage correspond with that debate or align with "stable majority opinion" (p. 104). Instead, it hypothesizes that the *Times* will privilege elite institutional sources during the first month of its coverage of the conflict and that indexing theory would anticipate such an outcome.

Early news coverage of an ongoing story can help establish which actors are treated as legitimate (Hall et al., 1978; Hallin, 1986), which sources are positioned as authoritative narrators (Becker, 1967; Gans, 1979; Hall et al., 1978), whose claims require independent confirmation (Becker, 1967; Tuchman, 1972), and whose experiences become evidence and, thus, part of the resulting news narrative (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). Ultimately, however, it is elite sources, positioned at the apex of the hierarchy of credibility (Becker, 1967), who are most likely to become both the primary definers of mediated reality (Hall et al., 1978) and the principal authors of "the first rough draft of history."

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical and Scholarly Background

Indexing and News Production

This study utilizes indexing theory as a foundational theoretical approach toward observing and measuring source prominence in *New York Times* articles related to the Israel-Hamas war. Bennett (1990) proposes that "mass media news professionals, from the boardroom to the beat, tend to 'index' the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic" (p. 106). Bennett et al.'s (2007) research into the media's use (or, more accurately, *non*-use) of the word "torture" to describe the actions of U.S. Army troops and the Central Intelligence Agency toward prisoners at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison in 2003, ultimately exposed by *CBS News* in April 2004, suggests "that news of provocative events, particularly in the foreign policy realm, is highly constrained by journalistic dependence on government sources and processes to advance perspective and stories" (p. 100). Bennett et al. also cite work by Bennett and Klockner (1996), Entman and Page (1994), Hallin (1986), Mermin (1999) and Zaller and Chiu (1996) to suggest that, while reporting stories, journalists "track the circles of power more closely in sensitive national security and foreign policy issues, where stakes are high, debate more constrained, and news organizations more reluctant to probe far beyond the cues offered by inside sources" (p. 101). This institutional trepidation, perhaps borne out of a powerful and often irresistible combination of tradition, pragmatism, necessity, habit, and the dictates of deadline efficiency, echoes both Herman's and Chomsky's (1988) assertion that "the heavy weight given to official sources" helps journalists "maintain the image of objectivity" while protecting themselves and their organizations "from criticisms of bias and the threat of libel suits" (p. 19)

and Gans's (1979) insistence that "journalists often follow American foreign policy in selecting foreign news because it supplies a quick and easy importance consideration" while also discouraging "State Department criticism" (p. 65). As Tuchman (1978) asserts, "standard repertorial practice legitimates those with institutional power" (p. 142). Tuchman (1972) also argues that a reliance on official and authoritative sources is not simply because journalists prefer those sources; rather, the practice is embedded in professional norms about how to produce credible news. In Tuchman's view, these journalistic routines and reliable sourcing standbys, part and parcel of journalists' "strategic rituals" (p. 677), help reporters fend off accusations of bias. In other words, attributing information to what a reporter considers to be an authoritative source helps that reporter produce news accepted as objective while insulating themselves from those accusations.

This study employs a quantitative measurement of source categories used by the *Times* during the first month of the Israel-Hamas war, creating a body of data related to the paper's newsgathering during what can be called a highly provocative, ongoing news event involving one of America's closest allies. Subsequent analyses of the resulting data highlight what Herman and Chomsky (1988) would call the "symbiotic relationship" between the paper and its "powerful sources of information," a relationship shaped by "economic necessity and reciprocity of interest" (p. 18) and, in the case of this study, dominated by American and Israeli government sources. This paper argues that their relative prominence across the sample contributes to the dominance of elite frames in first defining and then policing the boundaries of discourse related to the war, while minimizing voices that would contribute to what Bennett et al. (2007) call "robust counterframes" (p. 101) that would contribute to the public's understanding of the conflict and its historical origins. The window for introducing counterframes into the conflict

newsgathering process is tight, however; "once officials engage with news events, the story frames generated by journalists are then generally 'indexed' to the range of sources and viewpoints that reflect levels of official agreement and consensus" (p. 100).

Researchers have found that a variety of institutional and industry guidelines and guardrails influence the newsgathering process. Daily routines, as well as internal bureaucracies and politics, shape the ways in which news is reported, edited, and disseminated. Taken together, the literature suggests that the dependable backbone of productive newsgathering consists of organizational routines, professional norms, and established sourcing practices (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). The incessant pressures of deadline journalism, especially on a beat, demand efficiency and dictate "newsgathering through routine channels" (Sigal, 1973, p. 119), thus making it a near-inevitability that "more news emanates from officials than from any other source" (p. 131). Sigal continues:

> First, most national and foreign news in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* comes to reporters through routine channels. Second, most nonlocal news, regardless of subject matter, comes from officials and agencies of the U.S. government. (p. 119)

Securing reliable sources who will speak on the record and provide one's publication with a steady flow of information is the end result of a process outlined by Gans (2004) in which journalists utilize sources based on six considerations that are "interrelated because they have one overriding aim: efficiency" (p. 128). Those source considerations: past suitability, productivity, reliability, trustworthiness, authoritativeness, and articulateness (pp. 129–131). As Gans summarizes:

> The means by which sources gain access to journalists, source considerations, and the relationships between reporters and their sources feed into each other to create a

> cumulative pattern by which journalists are repeatedly brought into contact with a limited number of the same types of sources. (p. 144)

Examining "the feasibility of multiperspectival news," Gans also argues that "journalists have little incentive for significant change," especially a change or turn toward more frequent sourcing of multiple perspectives in a news story. For one thing, that process "undercuts the twin bases of the present journalistic enterprise: efficiency and the power of sources" (p. 334). Secondly, "the news pays most attention to and upholds the actions of elite individuals and elite institutions" (p. 61) because not only is that where fresh news is most likely to be found but also because the media itself "views nation and society through its own set of values and with its own conception of the good social order" (p. 62).

Scholarship on news production and sourcing practices has also demonstrated that journalistic routines, professional norms, and institutional forces collectively shape the production of news content. Hallin (1986) shows that during foreign policy crises journalists often rely on official and authoritative voices. Shoemaker and Reese (2013) situate these practices within a broader "hierarchy of influences," arguing that media content is shaped by interconnected individual, organizational, routine, institutional, and social forces. Finally, Bennett (1990) argues that indexing "might be expected to operate most consistently" in news related to "military decisions, foreign affairs, trade, and macroeconomic policy—areas of great importance not only to corporate economic interests but to the advancement of state power as well" (p. 122). These theories provide insights into the structural inertia of institutional routines and practices reflected in Sigal's view that news more often than not emanates from official sources. Additionally, as Wolfsfeld (2018) asserts:

> When it comes to internal conflicts, the advantages the powerful enjoy are particularly obvious. The authorities have regular, almost automatic access to the news media as legitimate sources, while weaker antagonists must prove their newsworthiness, often through acts of disorder. Wolfsfeld (1997, 2015) referred to this imbalance as the difference between gaining media access through the front door, while the rear door is intended for deviants who provide sufficient drama to be admitted. Consequently, more powerful actors are more likely to be covered as legitimate, while their challengers are more likely to be portrayed as deviants. This principle can also apply internationally. (p. 109)

Research examining indexing theory and media misinformation finds that, in the case of the COVID-19 health crisis, by sourcing "governmental institutions (e.g. CDC, the U.S. president) even when the information promoted is currently unsubstantiated" (Muddiman et al., 2022, p. 191), the news contributes to misinformation. This would seem to indicate a failure on the part of journalists to provide more information to the public by finding and publishing dissenting voices (Althaus, 2003). The bounded approach of Muddiman et al.'s study is relevant to the current one; their findings suggest that in times of unfolding crisis, when information is "in flux" (p. 174), media consumers

> are likely to believe misinformation that is frequently repeated (Lewandowsky et al., 2012) and, even when misinformation is corrected and people remember the correct information (Wood & Porter, 2019), individuals are likely to hold on to beliefs based on the misinformation (Thorson, 2016). (p. 194)

Althaus et al. (1996) tested the correspondence between elite debate and media content and found a qualified indexing relationship; news coverage reflected elite debate in important

respects but also demonstrated journalistic selectivity in the inclusion and prominence of particular voices. The present study tests the predicted prominence of elite institutional sources within media content as anticipated by Bennett (1990). Its methodology is designed to unearth from the content produced by the *New York Times* during the first 30 days of its coverage of the Israel-Hamas war a different—but nevertheless central—and observable implication of Bennett's theory: mainstream media's reliance on elite sourcing. Reinforced by Becker's hierarchy of credibility and Hall's concept of primary definers, among others, the aim of this project is not to test whether *Times* discourse precisely tracked elite debate related to the Israel-Hamas war but to quantify which actors were most frequently afforded the opportunity to introduce information into the *Times's* news narrative. In short, if the first month of war is when the "first rough draft of history" is written, then examining who was entrusted to write that draft—through the sourcing decisions of one of the world's most influential newspapers—is a meaningful way to study the construction of public knowledge during a moment of extraordinary political consequence. Although indexing has been examined through source selection in other political and foreign-policy contexts (Althaus, 2003; Althaus et al., 1996; Bennett, 1990), its relevance to sourcing patterns in *New York Times* coverage during the formative first month of the Israel-Hamas war appears to remain unexplored.

Establishing the Narrative

Primary Definers

Other theoretical approaches inform the creation of this study in terms of the ways in which it sets up the possibility of examining the establishment of initial interpretive frameworks. The first is the concept of *primary definers*; as examined by Hall et al. (1992), it posits a

structured relationship between journalists and those afforded the opportunity to define mediated reality.

> The important point about the structured relationship between the media and the primary institutional definers is that it permits the institutional definers to establish the initial definition or *primary interpretation* of the topic in question. This interpretation then 'commands the field' in all subsequent treatment and sets the terms of reference within which all further coverage or debate takes place. (p. 58)

Later, this study's Discussion section enters into an examination of the *Times's* enforcement of one such primary interpretation in a story about Michigan Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib's use of the term *genocide* to describe Israel's post-October 7 military bombardment of Gaza. That institutional enforcement provides one example of the challenges faced by outside voices seeking entry into an established, primary interpretive framework. As Hall et al. (1992) write:

> Arguments *against* a primary interpretation are forced to insert themselves into *its* definition of 'what is at issue'—they must begin from this framework of interpretation as their starting-point. This initial interpretative framework—what Lang and Lang have called an 'inferential structure'—is extremely difficult to alter fundamentally, once established. (p. 58)

However, Hall et al. caution against assuming that this process of crafting and enforcing an initial definition or primary interpretational framework is managed or even controlled by the media itself.

> The media, then, do not simply 'create' the news; nor do they simply transmit the ideology of the 'ruling class' in a conspiratorial fashion. Indeed, we have suggested that,

> in a critical sense, the media are frequently not the 'primary definers' of news events at all; but their structured relationship to power has the effect of making them play a crucial but secondary role in *reproducing* the definitions of those who have privileged access, as of right, to the media as 'accredited source.' From this point of view, in the moment of news production, the media stand in a position of structured subordination to the primary definers. (Hall et al., 1992, p. 59)

Hall et al.'s findings fit snugly within the current study's approach toward the construction of a more refined and subtle explanation of narrative media creation than one that would simply position journalists as mindless megaphones on the corporate-capitalist payroll. Journalists and news producers indeed inhabit a position of "relative autonomy" (p. 57); it is their subordination to "the more routine *structures* of news production" (p. 57) and their subsequent role as "*secondary definers* of social events" that ultimately contribute to news content that reproduces the "definitions of the powerful" (p. 57). Essentially, Hall et al. provide a theoretical addition to the study's hypothesis: Not only will the *Times* rely on state actors as its predominant sources, but this reliance will subsequently position those source types as primary definers of events.

Becker's Hierarchy of Credibility

A second theoretical approach, Becker's *hierarchy of credibility* (1967), may also help inform analyses of the quantitative findings of this study. Simply put, Becker argues that within systems of ranked groups, people assume that members inhabiting the highest tier in the hierarchy "have the right to define the way things really are" (p. 241) because they possess more information than those below them in the hierarchy. Thus,

> members of lower groups will have incomplete information, and their view of reality will be partial and distorted in consequence. Therefore, from the point of view of a well-socialized participant in the system, any tale told by those at the top intrinsically deserves to be regarded as the most credible account obtainable of the organization's workings. And since, as Sumner pointed out, matters of rank and status are contained in the mores, this belief has a moral quality. (p. 241)

Routine Events and Accidents

Molotch and Lester's (1974) conceptualization of *routine events* and *accidents* plays a role in this analysis, as well. Those two terms function as expressions of the relationships between news promoters, assemblers, and consumers. Despite the fact that it is not a "prototypical routine event" (Molotch & Lester, 1974, p. 106), it seems at first glance that October 7 might very well be considered a routine event in this formulation because Hamas purposively generated the "underlying happening" (p. 106) and intended to promote its immediate transformation into a public event. The authors explain:

> Routine events are distinguishable by the fact that the underlying happenings on which they are presumably based are purposive accomplishments and by the fact that the people who undertake the happening (whom we call "effectors") are identical with those who promote them into events. The prototypical routine event is the press conference statement, but the great majority of stories appearing in the daily press fall in this category; hence, on grounds of frequency, we term them "routine." (p. 106)

However, as this analysis also shows, Hamas did not retain even a single day's ability to shape the narrative or the "meaning of the occurrence" (p. 103) as it was reported, edited, and assembled by the *Times* and presented to the consumer. The events of October 7 therefore cannot

be said to constitute an "ideal-typical routine event" (p. 108), defined by Molotch and Lester (1974) as "the generating of a public experience by those in positions to have continual access to asserting the importance and factual status of 'their' occurrences" (p. 108). Indexing theory, Becker's hierarchy of credibility, Hall's "primary definers" model, the concept of "routine events," and Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model all suggest structural factors that limit the ability of an effector responsible for such an obtrusion to shape subsequent coverage and its public meaning. Instead, Hamas's attacks on October 7 fit more precisely into Molotch and Lester's conception of disruptive access.

> Those lacking habitual access to event-making who wish to contribute to the public experience, often come to rely on disruption (cf. Myerhoff, 1972). They must "make news" by somehow crashing through the ongoing arrangements of newsmaking, generating surprise, shock, or some more violent form of "trouble." Thus, the relatively powerless disrupt the social world to disrupt the habitual forms of event-making. In extreme cases, multitudes are assembled in an inappropriate place to intervene in the daily schedule of occurrence and events. Such activities constitute, in a sense, "anti-routine" events. This "obvious" disruption of normal functioning and its challenge to the received social world prompts the coverage of the mass media. (p. 108)

Moloch and Lester's formulations provide another framework through which scholars can examine the concepts of media access and the construction of narrative meaning in news coverage. More precisely, their work helps explain how events enter the news and which actors are subsequently sourced by journalists to define the meaning of those events.

Lawrence (2023), building on Molotch and Lester, suggests that in order to understand the media's "shifting representations of groups, events, and issues," one must think of the news

"as a socially constructed representation of reality and as an arena of problem construction in which struggles to designate and define public problems are waged" (p. 18). Seeking to develop and challenge the "official dominance" (p. 20) model of news production, Lawrence writes:

> Rather, the news is best viewed as a product of (unequal) struggle among competing news sources who often press competing politically charged claims about issues and events. A key factor in the outcome of struggles among competing sources to shape the news, I argue, is the appearance and use of dramatic, unplanned news events. Such "accidental" events present challenges to officials who must work to contain these events' publicly shared meanings. (p. 21)

Lawrence proposes "a model of problem construction that differs from that offered by the official-dominance model of the news" (p. 23), one in which problem construction is driven by events rather than institutions.

> Institutionally driven news is cued by official activities in official arenas. It is pegged to institutional news beats, official actors, and institutionally defined decision points. … Event-driven news is cued by the appearance of dramatic news events and the "story cues" for reporters that arise out of those events. Event-driven discourse about public issues is often more variable and dynamic than institutionally driven news, ranging beyond established news beats and drawing on a wider variety of voices and perspectives. In institutionally driven news, political institutions set the agendas of news organizations; in contrast, as event-driven news gathers momentum, officials and institutions often respond to the news agenda rather than set it. (pp. 23–24)

In their discussion of "life-event news" and the use of technology in the construction of news, Livingston and Bennett (2003) contend that international news, with its "steady stream of

wars, terrorist incidents, famines, and humanitarian crises," contains "the greatest number of events subject to the greatest possible shift from institution-driven to event-driven coverage" (p. 367).[3]

> Indeed, Lawrence's account of event-driven news has a parallel in the lore of international affairs coverage in what is often referred to as the "CNN effect." This legendary effect is reportedly caused by coverage that brings crisis events so quickly and dramatically to public view that officials often lament a loss of policy control to media (Livingston, 1997; Livingston & Eachus, 1995; Robinson, 2002). (p. 367)

Livingston and Bennett define "event-driven news" as "activities that are, at least at their initial occurrence, spontaneous and not managed by officials within institutional settings" (pp. 364–365). The immense scope and breadth of news coverage related to the Israel-Hamas war as a whole would seem to prevent it from fitting neatly into either their or Lawrence's definition of event-driven news; the various conceptualizations of "event-driven" derives its theoretical power most precisely when applied to singular events. However, this paper argues that in conflict coverage, particularly the specific coverage contained within the 77-article sample, much of the content production is, indeed, driven by spontaneous, unmanaged, dramatic, variable, and dynamic news events. In other words, it seems reasonable to suggest that the ongoing conflict is made up of many specific and novel occurrences of spontaneous activities not initially managed by either officials or institutions, for whom narrative control and containment is more easily achieved when "pegged to institutional news beats, official actors, and institutionally defined decision points" (Lawrence, p. 23-24).

[3] Livingston and Bennett suggest that this is "due to the greater journalistic access provided by new technology" (p. 367). Indeed, the present content analysis demonstrates that journalists at the *Times* showed a keen interest in utilizing technology in their newsgathering and storytelling in the first 30 days of the Israel-Hamas war.

Observable Aspects of Indexing Theory

Who Are The Elites?

In order to determine which observable aspects of indexing theory manifest within news discourse, it's critical to make several determinations. First, the term "mainstream government debate" (Bennett, 1990, p. 106) and the concept of *elites* should be defined as precisely as possible. Althaus et al. (1996) provide a helpful roadmap:

> We should distinguish three ways of segmenting elites: Governing elites as a whole; the executive branch or administration, which typically initiates foreign policy; and oppositional officials, whom the media generally identify among members of the opposition party in Congress. Together the administration and its critics in Congress compose the *governing elite*. (p. 408)

Bennett (1990) uses the word "elites" (p. 106) only once in his foundational article on indexing—his attempt to synthesize "diverse perspectives into a general theory of the press and the state in the United States" (p. 103)—and he does not explicitly define it. Contextually, however, the meaning is clear; scattered throughout the study are references to relationships between the press and the government, the military, business and "corporate interests" (p. 110), economic interests, the mass media, media conglomerates, "prestige mass media" (p. 106), "institutional power blocs" (p. 122), and, of course, the state—the last of which Mills, in his book "The Power Elite" (2000) would likely define as a combination of all of the above.

> There is no longer, on the one hand, an economy, and, on the other hand, a political order containing a military establishment unimportant to politics and to money-making. There is a political economy linked, in a thousand ways, with military institutions and decisions. On each side of the world-split running through central Europe and around the Asiatic

> rimlands, there is an ever-increasing interlocking of economic, military, and political structures. If there is government intervention in the corporate economy, so is there corporate intervention in the governmental process. In the structural sense, this triangle of power is the source of the interlocking directorate that is most important for the historical structure of the present. (p. 8)

Mills argues that "changes in the American structure of power have generally come about by institutional shifts in the relative positions of the political, the economic, and the military orders" (p. 269), not by—and here Mills is quoting Elmer Davis, head of the United States Office of War Information during the Second World War—"resort to the guns of a cruiser, the dispersal of an elected assembly by bayonets, or the mechanisms of a police state" (p. 269). Nevertheless, according to Mills, the power elites have remained the same. Mills further asserts that "very little of what we think we know of the social realities of the world have we found out first-hand. Most of the 'pictures in our heads' we have gained from the media" (p. 311).[4] If, as indexing theory predicts, the pictures in our heads about the Israel-Hamas war originate from within a cadre of elite information disseminators to whom *Times* journalists turn when engaged in their symbiotic journalistic routines, and if "oppositional views" (Bennett, 1990, p. 110) are only incorporated into news content once "parallel voices are being raised in circles of government power" (p. 110), then it's perhaps no wonder at all that "the domination of the military event" (Mills, 2000, p. 5) leads media consumers to "infer that generals and admirals, as well as other men of decision influenced by them, must be enormously powerful" (p. 5). From there, it's no great leap to infer that power must also reside "among the corporate rich" (p. 9) and "at the top of the political order" (p. 9), joining with the "military establishment, the elite of

[4] Mills doesn't source his "pictures in our heads" quote, but it almost certainly comes from Walter Lippmann's 1922 book, "Public Opinion."

soldier-statesmen clustered in and around the Joint Chiefs of Staff" (p. 9) to form "three domains of power—the warlords, the corporation chieftains, the political directorate" (p. 9) who together "form the power elite of America" (p. 9). In other words, precisely the kind of people we would expect to find atop Becker's hierarchy of influence—be they American or Israeli—with the media standing in their shadows "in a position of structured subordination to the primary definers" (Hall et al., 1992, p. 59).

Mills's book remains influential, but it is not comprehensive. Scholars have argued that it lacks empirical evidence for its conclusions and fails to include information on other sectors of elite power that were prominent at the time of the book's publication, such as the Council on Foreign Relations (Doob, 2019, p. 48). Others have criticized the book's lack of a consistently applied theoretical framework and the fact that Mills's own writing seems to suggest that "the big three" should actually be "'the big two'—the corporate and the military domains" (Sweezy, 1968, p. 124), arguing instead that "what we have in the United States is a *ruling class* with its roots deeply sunk in the 'apparatus of appropriation' which is the corporate system" (p. 129). Still, it provides a defensible foundation from which the concept of "elites" can be further explored.

A second determination when applying indexing theory to this study is to focus its theoretical lens on one observable implication of indexing theory with such precision that one can extract through data a singular implication of the theory itself, which is the creation of a causal chain that moves from the parameters of elite—e.g., mainstream government—debate to the "observed patterns of journalistic reliance on official sources" (Bennett, 1990, p. 105) to the publication of an equally observable and quantifiable range of voices, resulting in a news narrative that can be identified and analyzed. This study sets as its goal the measurement of

source categories (the range of voices) from which to infer aspects of narrative creation; as noted, it does not independently measure the nature of elite debate itself. Scholars have approached this subject from a number of different angles.

In their attempt to revise the indexing hypothesis, Althaus et al. (1996) test the correspondence between elite debate and media discourse by reviewing the *Congressional Record*, which they argue "should reflect the range of debate among those Washington elites who have the ability to affect U.S. policy" (p. 409). They found that, within *New York Times* coverage of the U.S.-Libya crisis of 1985–1986, journalists exercised discretion in their choice of sources, both elevating and marginalizing elite voices while also seeking foreign sources "to provide opinions contrary to the dominant policy position" (p. 407). For the authors, journalistic routines can complicate any predictive capacity of press-state relations that indexing theory might suggest. Nevertheless, it remains a useful and valuable framework for understanding foreign policy coverage, as the present study seeks to demonstrate.

Sourcing Filters

The long history of critical studies provides additional interpretive analyses through which one can investigate the subject of news sourcing, media access, the establishment of narrative authority, and the boundaries of discourse as defined and defended by societal power societal structures. Herman and Chomsky (1988) posit five filters in their propaganda model, the third of which is sourcing (p. 18). Mass media have routine access to sources "who already have the great merit of being recognizable and credible by their status and prestige" (p. 19), including experts who, by virtue of their proximity to the power, status, and prestige of bureaucratic power centers, if not their own, are treated as objective, neutral analysts. The media relies on

information "provided by government, business, and 'experts' funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power" (p. 2) in order to ensure

> a steady, reliable flow of the raw material of news. They have daily news demands and imperative news schedules that they must meet. They cannot afford to have reporters and cameras at all places where important stories may break. Economics dictates that they concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs, where important rumors and leaks abound, and where regular press conferences are held. (pp. 18–19)

Thus, Herman and Chomsky argue, news organizations depend on continuous access to these sources of power and face structural pressures that guide them toward the framing of news narratives that stay within the boundaries defined by those same sources.

Power, Representation, and Access to Discourse

Gramsci's work on hegemony helps situate this paper's particular focus on source selection within a broader discussion of media power, access, and the public's subsequent understanding of complex issues. The media is no passive conduit of information; it is an active participant in the production of meaning and can contribute to the maintenance of hegemony. Gramsci writes:

> The "normal" exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary regime is characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion—newspapers and associations—which, therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied. (p. 85)

Gramsci, therefore, provides a broad theoretical context for examining whether a reliance on elite sources might contribute to the establishment of narrative dominance in the *Times's* coverage of the Israel-Hamas, especially during its early stages, when meanings related to the conflict are still being established. The present paper argues that source selection is one mechanism through which the *New York Times* performs an intellectual function in the Gramscian sense: organizing and circulating authoritative interpretations that may contribute to the production of consent. Gramsci (2009) explains:

> The intellectuals are the dominant group's "deputies" exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government. These comprise: 1. The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. (pp. 88–89)

In his analysis of the relationship between discourse and power, van Dijk (2015) asserts that access to discourse reflects social power and suggests an ability to influence not only the production of content but subsequent interpretations of that content, as well.

> *Access* to specific forms of discourse—for example, those of politics, the media, education, or science—is itself a power resource (van Dijk, 1996). Secondly, as suggested earlier, action is controlled by our minds. … If we are able to influence people's minds—for example, their knowledge, attitudes, or ideologies—we indirectly may control (some of) their actions, as we know from persuasion and manipulation. Closing the discourse–power circle, finally, this means that those groups who control

most influential discourse also have more chances to indirectly control the minds and actions of others. (pp. 469–470)

Thus, there is a chain of intellectual inquiry from Gramsci to van Dijk, with each complementing Bennett (1990) and informing the present analysis. Gramsci establishes the relationship between cultural authority and the production of dominant meaning, and van Dijk argues that access to public discourse itself reflects the unequal distribution of social power as a resource. The indexing hypothesis supplies the specific mechanism examined here: the tendency of news discourse to uplift elite voices that define and reflect the boundaries of legitimate debate. Research also shows that when government officials speak to reporters, their statements contribute to and regulate the boundaries of news coverage and discourse (Bennett, 1990; Althaus, 2003).

This study's quantitative measurement of source selection is designed not simply to identify who appears most frequently in *The New York Times* during the first 30 days of the Israel-Hamas war, but also to suggest the possibility of an examination into how the distribution of journalistic access embeds narrative authority.

The New York Times

When America goes to war, journalist Marvin Kalb observed, "the press does, too" (as cited in Bennett & Paletz, 2004, p. 3). Similarly, when Israel goes to war, *The New York Times* does, too, as it did in the immediate aftermath of the October 7, 2023, attacks, when Hamas breached the Gaza-Israel barrier, or Iron Wall (Jones, 2023), and killed more than 800 civilians (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Codenamed Operation Al-Aqsa Flood by Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups, Israelis call it Black Saturday or the Simchat Torah Massacre. Israel's former ambassador to the United Nations, Gilad Erdan, said it was "Israel's 9/11" (as cited in Kelemen,

2023). Goodman (2025), meanwhile, labels it "a historical marker" and a date "that divides time in the same way that September 11, 2001, and the Yom Kippur War of 1973 did" (para. 29). This study analyzes *New York Times* coverage of the first 30 days of the ensuing war between Israel and Hamas. With its longstanding capacity to maintain its stature as one of the world's leading journalistic outlets and its status as "'the newspaper of record' for the world's most powerful state" (Chomsky, 1986, p. 56), this paper argues that the *Times* is currently better positioned than any other American-based newspaper to provide information about the war to a worldwide readership.

In his original paper establishing his concept of indexing, Bennett (1990) asserted that the *Times* was "arguably the leading news organization in the United States," "the organization from which other mass media outlets take the most cues," and one that had "become a self-conscious keeper of the nation's ongoing historical record" (p. 113). This paper argues that those assertions are even more accurate and relevant to the contemporary media ecosystem. The *Times's* combined print and digital subscribers numbered 12.78 million at the end of 2025 (Robertson, 2026), 2.7 times higher than its next closest competitor, *The Wall Street Journal*, and 5.6 times higher than *The Washington Post*. It has long maintained its status as one of the nation's newspapers of record; in fact, that phrase was coined specifically for the paper (The Broadview Guide to Writing, 2017, p. 27). It has an international reach (The New York Times Company, 2020), expanded its Middle East team in 2024 (The New York Times Company, 2024), and continues to operate a dedicated Jerusalem bureau (Slackman et al., 2020). *The Washington Post*, by way of comparison, fired all of its Middle East editors and correspondents in February 2026 (Bauder, 2026). These factors position the *Times* prominently among American media publications capable of setting a national agenda on topics of international interest and,

specifically, of covering and delivering news of the Israel-Hamas war with consistency and comprehensiveness.

Its social media reach is expansive, too; as of May 2026, it has 53.4 million followers on X, which is 34 million more than *The Washington Post* (19.3 million followers). With 57% of X users consuming news on the platform (Pew Research, 2025), the *Times* can reach a daily—indeed, an hourly—market of tens of millions of people interested in engaging with their content on just that one platform. With its global reach, institutional cache, and journalistic heft, the NYT can establish the initial narrative dynamics and contours of news content, both domestically and internationally, across a wide variety of topics.

Writing in the late-1990s, by which point the American media landscape had splintered but not yet fractured and reconsolidated into pieces both large and small, Said (1997) noted a newsgathering-and-dissemination dynamic among certain media giants that remains relevant to the current information ecosystem.

> It is only necessary to mention a few names for the point to be made: *CBS*, *Time*, *the New York Times*, *AP*. Among them they reach more people, make a deeper impression, get more of a certain kind of news across than do other smaller, less wealthy news-distributing agencies. What this means as far as foreign news is concerned is obvious: Such corporations have more on-the-spot reporters than others, and therefore their reporters furnish the basis for what participating newspapers, local television stations, and radio stations distribute to their immediate clientele. This sheer mass and density of foreign-news reporting usually means [*sic*] greater authority and hence more frequent sourcing instance by people using the news, so that a *New York Times* or *CBS* report will have credibility by virtue of its source, its institutional prestige, its frequency (daily,

> hourly, etc.), its air of expertise and experience. Together, the small group of principal news suppliers and the extraordinary array of much smaller suppliers that are independent of and yet in many ways dependent on the giants furnish an American image of reality that does have a recognizable coherence. (Said, 1997, pp. 54–55)

Eleven years earlier, Chomsky (1986) made similar comments regarding the *Times*, the discussion of which, he argued, "also extends to the corporate media in general and mainstream journals of opinion."

> In its news coverage, editorial commentary and range of opinions, the *Times* reflects a certain view of the world: that of privileged U.S. elites, those who own and manage American society and the "experts" who achieve such status because of their service to those in power. The *Times* is thus a leading practitioner of what American historians called "historical engineering" when they united to serve the state during World War I: "explaining the issues of the war that we might the better win it." Such "engineering" now extends beyond outright war to affairs of state more generally and to the interests of the corporate institutions that dominate the domestic society (and to a large extent, the state as well)." (Chomsky, 1986, p. 56)

Beyond the numbers, *The New York Times* also holds a privileged place among elite American media based on its tendency to establish and redefine the parameters of the broader media agenda, as well as its widely recognized and much-envied ("Everybody Is Jealous," 2024, p. 36) ability to impress its authority, reputation, power, and influence—its "unwarranted influence on public attitudes," according to Friel & Falk (2007, p. 2)—upon the media landscape. *New Yorker* writer and editor Hendrik Hertzberg argues that *The New York Times's* authority "isn't just journalistic; it's downright ontological. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that

the *Times* defines public reality" (as cited in Friel & Falk, 2004, p. 45). Hertzberg's colleague, staff writer and Pulitzer Prize-winner Elizabeth Kolbert, has argued that "it is almost impossible to exaggerate the paper's significance. Not only is it bigger and better than its rivals; it enjoys a whole different ontological status. An event it doesn't cover might, in a manner of speaking, just as well not have happened" (as cited in Friel & Falk, 2004, p. 45).

Criticism of the *Times's* perceived shortcomings, including its editorial choices and emphases, its deployment of resources, and its reliance on official narratives and spokespeople instead of international law when interpreting events, provides an additional soft metric by which one can continue evaluating how big a shadow it casts over the media landscape and why it's necessary and defensible to focus on the *Times's* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war. Friel and Falk (2007, p. 4) argue that the *Times* "is guilty both of ignoring international law when it conflicts with US foreign policy and of relying upon its authority when it supports official positions adopted in Washington." Regarding the more general Israel-Palestine discussion and the potential for peace and the way the issues are framed within the pages of *The New York Times*, Friel and Falk argue that the paper's "assessments of the reasonableness of the behavior of the two sides habitually start from the de facto realities of Israeli occupation, which is treated as the baseline from which compromises should be made. This leads to Palestinians being perceived by American public opinion as consistently unreasonable and rejectionist," an assessment that recalls Hall et al.'s (1992) notion of "arguments *against* a primary interpretation" (p. 58). Others have argued that the *NYT*-dominated media ecosphere in the U.S. has few counterparts in, for example, Europe. Blankfort (2003, p. 102) writes that "the extreme bias in favor of Israel on the part of the U.S. media is immediately apparent" when comparing its coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict with that of the European press. Finally, while stopping

short of insisting that the *Times* is the cause of impediments preventing "a balanced understanding" of the topic, Friel and Falk do blame the paper for

> its failure to cover the conflict in an impartial manner. Given the prestige of the newspaper and its reputation for objective journalism, this tilting toward Israel reinforces a set of (mis)perceptions damaging to the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and consistent with Israel's effort to impose a solution that denies fundamental Palestinian rights as embodied in international law. (2007, p. 7)

Dialogue related to the *Times's* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war, its sourcing decisions, and editorial judgment is, perhaps unsurprisingly, as contentious within the paper as it is without. In early 2024, the paper faced an internal dispute over its December 2023 investigation into sexual violence during the October 7 Hamas attacks, with newsroom staffers, particularly the paper's audio team, questioning the strength of the evidence and the rigor of the reporting process. Management, meanwhile, defended the story, and, after *The Intercept* published a story on the newsroom discussion, launched a leak investigation, "an extraordinary act for a news organization often reliant on leaks of sensitive material for its own stories" (Folkenflik, 2024). This led to the newsroom's union, the Times Guild, filing a grievance, accusing the paper's executive team of targeting its own journalists who are of Middle Eastern descent. The newsroom drama reveals that news narratives don't always coalesce from internal consensus; often they're published despite internal dissent.

Intelligencer, the online news blog of *New York* magazine, reported in October 2024 that, "in the year since October 7, leaders of news organizations have had to defend their coverage, not only to the readers, but also to their staff" (Klein, 2024). The piece quotes a digital media executive saying Israel-Palestine was "the most divisive issue internally in the last decade, more

so than George Floyd" and an editor who shared that "the depth and intensity of emotion, and the microscopic scrutiny of every word and every headline, is like nothing I've been through." Stephen Engelberg, editor in chief of *ProPublica,* said, "it's really, really difficult to cover a war when you only have access to one side. And so, the lack of on-the-ground reporting from Gaza is really, really a handicap." As to Engelberg's comment, one of the articles in this study's sample references an awareness on the part of the *Times* that an Israeli-enforced informational blackout was about to descend over Gaza: "Amid the worsening humanitarian conditions in Gaza and the prospect of invasion, the world's visibility into the conflict was increasingly in jeopardy" (Fuller & Yee, 2023). Media companies continue to press the Israeli government for access to Gaza, however (Hajela, 2026).

Historical Coverage and Additional Scholarly Considerations

A review of 20th century scholarship will help situate the present study within the broader history of analyses and criticisms of U.S. media coverage of foreign policy and international conflict coverage.

"Our first concern with fictions and symbols," Lippmann (1922/1957) writes, "is to forget their value to the existing social order, and to think of them simply as an important part of the machinery of human communication" (p. 12). Lippmann imagines a news consumer, whom he calls "Miss Sherwin of Gopher" in a nod to Sinclair Lewis. Miss Sherwin, he writes, "is aware that a war is raging in France and tries to conceive it. She has never been to France, and certainly she has never been along what is now the battlefront" (p. 12). Lippmann continues:

> Pictures of French and German soldiers she has seen, but it is impossible for her to imagine three million men. No one, in fact, can imagine them, and the professionals do not try. They think of them as, say, two hundred divisions. But Miss Sherwin has no

> access to the order of battle maps, and so if she is to think about the war, she fastens upon Joffre and the Kaiser as if they were engaged in a personal duel. (p. 13)

In his classic treatise on public opinion, propaganda, and "fictions,"[5] the book in which he coined the phrase "manufacture of consent" (p. 248), Lippmann argues that the public cannot be directly acquainted with world events because they are too big and too complex. People require the construction of simplified models of reality in order to manage "so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations" (p. 16). He writes:

> To traverse the world men must have maps of the world. Their persistent difficulty is to secure maps on which their own need, or someone else's need, has not sketched in the coast of Bohemia. The analyst of public opinion must begin then, by recognizing the triangular relationship between the scene of action, the human picture of that scene, and the human response to that picture working itself out upon the scene of action. (p. 17)

Cohen (1963) agrees with Lippmann, arguing that "this 'map-making' function of the press is very easy to overlook" (p. 12).

> It is a truism, but an important one, that none of us has direct experience with the whole range of international affairs, whatever that range may be. We may know very small parts of it at first hand, if we are lucky enough to have been participants in or observers of significant events. But generally the external world, the world of foreign policy, reaches us—or those of us who are interested and attentive—via the media of mass communication, and most importantly via the press. For most of the foreign policy audience, the really effective political map of the world—that is to say, their *operational*

[5] "By fictions," Lippmann (1922/1957) explains, "I do not mean lies. I mean a representation of the environment which is in lesser or greater degree made by man himself." (p. 15)

map of the world—is drawn by the reporter and the editor, not by the cartographer. (pp. 12–13)

Cohen contends that the press "is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion," and, in an oft-referenced phrase, suggests that "it may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*" (p. 13). Furthermore, he writes, "if we do not see a story in the newspapers (or catch it on radio or television)[6], it effectively has not happened so far as we are concerned," (p. 13) anticipating writers who, as this paper has shown, now say the same thing about the *Times*.

The *Times,* in fact, has long attracted scholarly inquiry. Lippmann et al. (1920) chose the paper for their landmark study, "A Test of the News,"[7] in which they analyzed thousands of published items relating to the Russian Revolution, deducing that "in the large, the news about Russia is a case of seeing not what was, but what men wished to see" (p. 3). The authors' reasons for choosing the *Times* resemble those of the present study, including the fact that the *Times* then, like the *Times* now, "as great as any newspaper in America, and far greater than the majority, has the means for securing news" (p. 1) and is "one of the really great newspapers of the world" (p. 1). "A Test of the News," therefore, is an early example of the paper's relevance to scholarly inquiry, as well as an early example of scholarly criticism related to the responsibility of the *Times* —and, as this paper would argue, of powerful news institutions in general—to remember their "supreme duty in a democracy" (p. 3): that of "supplying the information on which public opinion feeds" (p. 3) and in understanding their role in the public's understanding of events, especially those related to international conflict that so often embroil

[6] If Cohen were writing today, he would likely add "or podcasts, websites, apps, email newsletters, streaming platforms, and RSS feeds," which many newspapers utilize to create and share content.
[7] Full title: "A Test of the News: An examination of the news reports in the New York Times on aspects of the Russian Revolution of special importance to Americans, March 1917–March 1920."

nations and their allies and enemies. This paper makes no attempt to ascertain the motivations of journalists working for the contemporary version of *The New York Times*, but Lippmann et al.'s assessment of the paper's reporting on the Russian Revolution is worth quoting in full:

> This deduction is more important, in the opinion of the authors, than any other. The chief censor and the chief propagandist were hope and fear in the minds of reporters and editors. They wanted to win the war; they wanted to ward off bolshevism. These subjective obstacles to the free pursuit of facts account for the tame submission of enterprising men to the objective censorship and propaganda under which they did their work. For subjective reasons they accepted and believed most of what they were told by the State Department, the so-called Russian Embassy in Washington, Russian Information Bureau in New York, the Russian Committee in Paris, and the agents and adherents of the old regime all over Europe. For the same reason they endured the attention of officials at crucial points like Helsingfors, Omsk, Vladivostok, Stockholm, Copenhagen, London and Paris. For the same reason they accepted reports of governmentally controlled news services abroad, and of correspondents who were unduly intimate with the various secret services and with members of the old Russian nobility. From the point of view of professional journalism the reporting of the Russian Revolution is nothing short of a disaster. (p. 3)

Academic inquiries into the *Times* continue unabated. So much so, in fact, that Hamilton and Tworek (2023), caution against scholars assuming the paper is somehow representative of American newspapers in general.

> Researchers need to look at a variety of news sources to get a picture of what the public is reading. Unless they want to understand a specific segment of the population, such as

elites who read *The Times*. No single newspaper can represent all the rest. One has to look at a variety, national, regional, and local. (p. 667)

This makes sense, of course. However, this study does not contend that the *Times's* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war is "representative" of U.S. media writ large, only that it is better positioned to generate original reporting related to the conflict; that its coverage is more consistent and more comprehensive; and that it is capable of reaching a larger audience than any other American newspaper.

Hamilton and Tworek continue:

Our argument is not that *The Times* is not worthy of study. It is that *The Times* is representative of itself. It is significant for a certain kind of coverage. And the newspaper is significant because elites think it is significant. (p. 667)

The last sentence resonates. The authors characterize *Times* readers as elite and argue that its audience shapes its coverage. They also note that the paper "has 'always been edited by elites for elites' (Tifft & Jones, 1999, p. 656)" (p. 663). Yet quantitative evidence demonstrating that *Times* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war strongly favored elite sources, as indexing theory would predict, would remain significant, not only because elites edit the paper for elites, but also because the *Times's* audience extends beyond elite circles.

Political power may be concentrated among elite sectors of American society, but this study is more concerned with how that power is made manifest through the production of news narratives and, specifically, through reporters' selection of the sources from which those narratives are constructed. Such narratives may reflect the priorities of political, economic, and military elites, as well as reinforce the priors and perspectives of elite readers, but they also circulate more broadly, helping establish a baseline of knowledge for non-elite readers who seek

to understand world events and America's role within them through what they reasonably perceive as thoroughly reported accounts of the conflict's realities.

Finally, there seems to be space for additional research into the ways in which newspaper content has been standardized across the United States. Scholars and researchers have long been aware of this trend. Breed (1952/1980) describes the result of the proliferation of syndicated news sourcing as "a situation in which hundreds of papers—no matter of what shade or bent—print identical material on national and world news" (p. 215), a process that applies at least as much if not more precisely today than it did in the middle of the 20th century. Local papers can now receive news content from syndicates, including Reuters, the Associated Press, and New York Times Licensing nearly at the speed of light for use in their print products and/or digital platforms, the latter of which can host syndicated content as soon as it's released by its creators. However, whereas Breed's research focused on the "dendritic" growth and information flow "from influential news organizations to lesser ones in a pattern resembling the branches on a tree" (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013, p. 119), today's information ecosystem, while perhaps many tendrilled, is dominated by a singular institution: *The New York Times.* This is especially true when it comes to news emanating from the Middle East.

The Israel-Hamas War

The subject of the Israel-Hamas war, vis-à-vis news-coverage sourcing in *The New York Times*, is fertile ground for media and communication scholarship due in no small part to the longstanding "special relationship," in President John F. Kennedy's assessment (1962), between the United States and Israel. On May 14, 1948, 11 minutes after the U.S. was "informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine" the Truman administration officially recognized "the provisional government as the de facto authority of the new State of Israel," making the

United States the first country to do so. (Three days later, the Soviet Union became the first government in the world to bestow de jure recognition of the new state of Israel; the U.S. followed suit on January 31, 1949.) Some of Truman's advisers argued that this "was the only proper response to the holocaust and would benefit American interests"; others in the administration "took the opposite view" and expressed concerns that this decision "would create more conflict in an already tumultuous region" (Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, n.d., "Background" section, para. 3).

U.S. Aid for Israel

The United States continues to support Israel through a combination of military and diplomatic assistance. Masters and Merrow (2025) report that, since 1948, the year of its founding, Israel has received an inflation-adjusted $300 billion in foreign aid from the U.S., more than any other country. The U.S. has also agreed to send Israel $3.8 billion every year until 2028. Since October 7, 2023, the U.S. has passed legislation aimed at providing Israel with $16.3 billion in military aid. Much of that aid will go directly back to American defense contractors, who will manufacture the jets, missiles, and other equipment for Israel. As of May 2025, the Israeli Defense Ministry reported that the U.S. had provided it with 90,000 tons of arms and equipment, including "tank and artillery ammunition, bombs, rockets, and small arms" Masters and Merrow (2025). The relationship has long been reciprocal, while not always beneficial to everyone living under its influence. Halper explains:

> Israel provides, on the basis of its suppression of the Palestinians, weapons, tactics, technologies, surveillance systems, that it sends out to the elites all over the world in order to control their own restless people that are being excluded and oppressed. And, in

return, the international community is closing its eyes and allowing Israel to maintain the occupation. (Halper & Chávez, 2019, p. 168)

The United States has also provided political support for Israel at the United Nations, including the use of its Security Council veto dozens of times to block resolutions condemning Israel. That support also manifests itself in presidential declarations of support for Israel's military actions in Gaza. For example, in October 2023, U.S. President Joe Biden was asked about civilian casualties in Gaza. His response: "It's the price of waging a war" (Kestler-D'Amours & Stepansky, 2024, para. 1). Domestically, records unsealed by a federal judge confirmed that the Trump administration was targeting noncitizen students and faculty for deportation based on their pro-Palestinian advocacy (Reporters Committee, 2026).

Then there is the state-level legislation and executive orders currently in 38 states designed to deter boycotts of Israel (Kim, 2023); nationwide protests and demonstrations in response to the Israeli government's actions in Gaza (*The New York Times*, 2023); the arrest and detainment of thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters across American college campuses (*The New York Times*, 2024); threats of deportation for student visa-holders engaged in protests against Israel (Montague, 2025); threats to tenured college professors (Speri, 2026) for including statements about violence against Palestinians in their course materials; and accusations of genocide against the state of Israel (Nader, 2025). President Donald Trump also threatened to expel American students for what he called "illegal" protests and to cut funding for universities that failed to comply (Debusmann Jr., 2025). The U.S. attacks on Iran in 2026 were seen in critical circles as having been undertaken at the urging of the state of Israel (Swan & Haberman, 2026) .[8]

[8] See also Chomsky (2005), who states, "For years Israel has been pressing the United States to take on Iran. Iran is too big for Israel to attack, so they want the big boys to do it" (p. 25).

In January 2006, Palestinians in the occupied territories elected a Hamas-majority for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). Bennis (2007, p. 65) writes that international observers, including the U.S.-based Carter Center, determined the election to be democratic, competitive, and peaceful. After the election, Israel called for an international boycott of the PLC, which the United States both honored and helped enforce. The two nations also discussed how they might destabilize the new government in Palestine "so that newly elected Hamas officials will fail and elections will be called again" (Erlanger, 2006). According to Bennis, the boycott "was largely responsible for the humanitarian crisis that soon hit the occupied territories, especially Gaza."

> For example, when some Arab banks announced plans to transmit humanitarian assistance donated to beleaguered Palestinians, the US announced that the US branches of those banks would face serious sanctions. Not surprisingly, the banks withdrew their plans, and the Palestinians did not get the funds. The result was a dramatic rise in the already dangerous humanitarian crisis. (Bennis, 2007, pp. 66–67)

On July 8, 2006, the United Nations Humanitarian Agencies issued a statement stating they were "alarmed by developments on the ground," including "innocent civilians, including children, killed," "poverty rates at nearly eighty percent and unemployment at nearly forty percent," and a crisis that was "likely to deteriorate rapidly, unless immediate and urgent action is taken" (as cited as Bennis, 2007, p. 67).

Real-Time Information Integration

Speaking at a celebration of his 80th birthday in early 1988 at the Herbst Theater in San Francisco, American journalist I.F. Stone warned the audience that dark days were ahead—not just for the region but for the world—without an emphasis on justice in the Middle East.

> It is not a private quarrel between the Israelis and Arabs. It's a world concern—and of great concern to America, as a great power, to have stability and peace. And there is no way to have peace without some modicum of justice. The Arabs can not [*sic*] be held in second-class citizenship and bondage. If something isn't done pretty soon, the lines may harden, each side will destroy its own moderates—and then they will move on to destroy each other. (as cited in MacPherson, 2006, p. xiii)

Decades earlier, Stone (1967) made a similarly dark prediction in *The New York Review of Books:*

> If enmity deepens and tension rises between Israel and the Arab states, both sides will by one means or another obtain nuclear weapons for the next round. This will change the whole situation. No longer will Israeli and Arab be able to play the game of war in anachronistic fashion as an extension of politics by other means. Neither will they be able to depend on a mutual balance of terror like the great powers with their "second strike" capacity. In this pygmy struggle the first strike will determine the outcome and leave nothing behind. (p. 14)

Stone couldn't have known this, but by the time *The New York Review of Books* published his dire warning about a possible apocalyptic future for the Israelis and Arabs in the Middle East, Israel already had nuclear weapons and was preparing to detonate them "atop a mountain in the Sinai Peninsula as a warning to Egyptian and other Arab forces" (Broad & Sanger, 2017) once the third Arab-Israeli war (commonly known as the Six-Day War) commenced in early June 1967. The United States was monitoring the possibility of an advanced Israeli nuclear weapons program and could not "lightly dismiss" the allegations, having not seen the evidence (INR - Thomas Hughes to NEA, 1967). Six years after the Six Day War, then-

Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir ordered the country's nuclear weapons to be moved to its airbases when it was thought that Israel might lose the Yom Kippur War ("Insight: Revealed," 1986). Stone insisted that the world's most powerful nations must use their influence to help stem what he saw as a continuously growing tide of animosity and distrust between Israel and the Arabs, a tide all the more dangerous in an age of nuclear weapons:

> Otherwise, the Arab-Israeli conflict may some day set off a wider Final Solution. That irascible Old Testament God of Vengeance is fully capable, if provoked, of turning the whole planet into a crematorium. (Stone, 1967, p. 14)

Similar to Hallin (1986), who wrote that he would not be foolish enough to suggest that open political processes "will always produce wise results" (p. 215), this paper does not propose that an increase in levels of media literacy borne from a likewise increased awareness of sourcing patterns in the nation's most prominent and powerful media institutions will always produce wise readers capable of understanding complex patterns of international warfare and diplomacy. Nor does it suggest that newly enlightened readers might then harness their newfound awareness along with their strength as a unified consumer base to demand more representative coverage of major political issues. But in America's fragmented media landscape, where many people likely believe that "political elites would govern better without the press and the public looking over their shoulders" (1986, p. 215) and that "the ordinary citizen must turn over power to elites and let them rule" (Almond & Verba, as cited in Hallin, 1986, p. 215), an emphasis on media literacy is a worthwhile endeavor.[9] An influx of new voices in a breaking news story, as well as in subsequent reporting built out over weeks and months, would at least provide readers with new perspectives with which to supplement their knowledge of what's

[9] This paper also touches on the topic of media literacy in the Discussion section.

happening in the region. Access to new voices and perspectives might help better inform readers who might then feel compelled to speak out about these issues, possibly changing the conversation from without instead of rehashing what is found within. That might in turn help us avoid diving headfirst into what Stone warned us would be a planet-wide crematorium.

Kimmerling (2003) argues that, while "the doomsday scenario that lies ahead has never been inevitable, and nor are the stages leading to it irreversible," this "frightening vision" seems "more probable than it has ever been since 1948" (p. 4). This assessment was based on his appraisal of the then-Sharon government. Kimmerling, who argues that Israel had never been "a perfect liberal democracy, because the circumstances of its birth and its roots never allowed it to be," sees it "deteriorating as Israel becomes a Thatcherist and semi-fascist regime" (p. 5), with military and security officers "camouflaged as academic experts," who not only became the "predominant interpreters of the situation in the mass media" but also partnered with the Israeli government to make decisions in the face of what they consistently saw as "an existential crisis, regardless of whether the threat was real or not" (p. 6). Ten years earlier, Kimmerling (1993) proposed the concept of civilian militarism as a defining characteristic of Israeli society, a type of militarism that is unconsciously adopted, "suffuses both the structural and cultural state of mind of the collectivity" (p. 206), and accepts that "military and national security considerations will constitute part of the central organizing principles of the collectivity" (p. 207).

> Civilian militarism, or what might be called the military mind, is systematically internalized by most statesmen, politicians and the general public to be a self-evident reality whose imperatives transcend partisan party or social allegiances. The gist of civilian militarism is that military considerations, as well as matters that are defined as

> "national-security" issues almost always receive higher priority than political, economic, and ideological problems. (p. 207)

It seems only natural that such a baseline state of affairs would swiftly shift to a more active, present, conscious, and electrifying state of awareness in the wake of the attacks of October 7, 2023. And it was into this reanimated, reactivated, and reawakened mayhem—filled with fear, anger, confusion, shock, and grief—that *New York Times* journalists were forced to plunge in order to seek answers to questions that the whole world was asking and gather information that the whole world was integrating into its real-time understanding of the modern Middle East.

Quantitative Content Analysis

Lasswell (1966) states plainly that "the procedures of 'content analysis' of communication are appropriate to the problem of describing the structure of attention in quantitative terms" (p. 253). He argues that the results of such a quantitative inquiry serve "another practical purpose—the detecting of political propaganda" (p. 254).

> In deciding how much we can rely upon a given newspaper, it is important to know if that newspaper ceases to attack Russia when Germany and Russia sign a non-aggression pact, and then returns to the attack as soon as Germany and Russia fall apart. Under these conditions, we have grounds for inferring a pro-German propaganda policy. (p. 254)

Berelson (1952/1971) defined content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 18). While the concept of *measurement* is inherent in Berelson's definition, Berger (1998) adds it explicitly: "a research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something (violence, negative portrayals of women, or whatever) in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular

art form" (p. 23). Krippendorff (2019) defines content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (p. 24), noting that, historically speaking,

> the first concise presentation of these conceptual and methodological developments under the new umbrella term *content analysis* appeared in a 1948 mimeographed text titled *The Analysis of Communication Content,* authored by Berelson and Lazarsfeld, which was later published as Berelson's *Content Analysis in Communications Research* (1952). This first systematic presentation codified the field for years to come." (p. 14)

Echoing the earlier mimeograph by Berelson and Lazarsfeld, Krippendorff (2019) argues that

> there is no point in counting unless the frequencies lead to inferences about the conditions surrounding what is counted. For example, counting the numbers of mentions of *Microsoft* or *AIDS* or the term *road rage* over time in, say, the *New York Times* would be totally meaningless if the observed frequencies could not be related to something else, such as political, cultural, or economic trends. That something else is the context that lends significance to quantitative findings. (pp. 33–34)

Finally, Neuendorf's (2017) defines content analysis "as the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics" (p. 1) and provides some examples of the many ways in which such an analysis would be efficacious:

> Its applications can include the careful examination of face-to-face human interactions; the analysis of character portrayals in media venues ranging from novels to online videos; the computer-driven analysis of word usage in news media and political speeches,

advertising, and blogs; the examination of interactive content such as video gaming and social media exchanges; and so much more. (p. 1)

III. METHODOLOGY

A foundational belief in the methodological suitability of content analysis derives from the assumption that the "behavioral patterns, values, and attitudes" found in the content "reflect and affect the behaviors, attitudes, and values of the people who create the material" (Berger, 1998, p. 23). A quantitative content analysis of a discrete aspect of news gathering—in this case, sourcing—from a temporally bounded corpus of *New York Times* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war may indeed provide an empirical basis from which to examine that assumption. The methodology here, however, is designed solely to quantify sourcing patterns that characterize the study period. For purposes of this study, October 7, 2023, marks the beginning of the 30-day study period, and the use of the label "Israel-Hamas War" reflects both the publicly familiar nomenclature for the war and its editorial categorization on NYTimes.com. The label is not intended to suggest a particular characterization of the conflict or its historical underpinnings.

Overview

This study's design resembles and was informed by approaches used in war journalism studies (Gonen, 2018; Hallin, 1986), elite indexing research (Althaus et al., 1996; Bennett, 1990), source hierarchy analyses (Becker, 1967; Gans, 1979; Hall et al., 1978; Sigal, 1973), and political communication content analysis (Althaus, 2003; Althaus et al., 1996; Bennett, 1990). It also draws on scholarship concerning narrative legitimacy (Becker, 1967; Hall et al., 1978), viewpoint access, and official versus nonofficial sourcing (Althaus et al., 1996; Bennett, 1990; Gans, 1979; Gonen, 2018; Hall et al., 1978; Hallin, 1986; Sigal, 1973). The study analyzes a proportionate stratified random sample of 77 articles drawn from 306 NYTimes.com articles labeled "Israel-Hamas War" and published from October 7, 2023, through November 5, 2023. The 306-article population was divided into five temporal strata: four consecutive seven-day

weeks and a final two-day stratum containing three articles. A proportionate stratified random sample of 77 articles was then selected, yielding 23, 21, 14, 16, and 3 articles from Weeks 1–5, respectively.

- Week 1: October 7–13, 2023
- Week 2: October 14–20
- Week 3: October 21–27
- Week 4: October 28–November 3
- Week 5: November 4–5

Articles were identified using *The New York Times's* internal search function via the query "Israel Hamas war," which is the label the *Times* uses to categorize articles related to this topic, and restricted to the publication dates October 7, 2023, through November 5, 2023. Results were sorted chronologically by publication date and assigned sequential identification numbers. All 306 articles returned by the NYTimes.com search engine for "Israel Hamas war" during the defined period were included. Although the search returned results outside the specified timeframe, articles published after November 5, 2023, were excluded from analysis. This anomaly likely reflects the search engine prioritizing keyword relevance over strict chronological order. Each article was assigned a sequential identification number. The dataset reflects results as they appeared on the date of collection; articles added to the site or reindexed afterward are not included. The NYTimes.com search URL includes the *searchResultPosition* parameter, providing a verifiable link between the ID and the specific article used for coding.

Methodological Qualifications and Limitations

Because *Times* articles may be updated after their initial publication, the dates currently displayed on NYTimes.com do not always correspond to those recorded when the study sample

was constructed. Where such discrepancies occur, the article is the same item originally selected for the sample, although the study does not assume that its online text remained unchanged after sampling. Finally, some of the links in the spreadsheet go to a page with multiple articles; readers may need to scroll down the page to find the actual article being analyzed.

It should also be noted at this section's outset that this study's design and execution, including its coding conceptualizations and determinations and subsequent analytical interpretations, were created by one researcher working alone. This and other limitations, such as the resulting lack of an intercoder reliability process, are also mentioned in the Discussion section. The findings and evaluation of those findings should be understood and recognized as the results of a theory-informed and systematically applied single-coder methodology; they have not been independently validated by additional researchers.

Methodological Scope and Textual Boundaries

Bennett's indexing framework describes a relationship between state discourse and news text. However, the present study does not create a repository of elite debate against which to compare the news text. Instead, it restricts its units of analysis to the manifest text of *The New York Times* and codes for source category types contained within it. By analyzing sourcing patterns, it seeks to demonstrate how the newspaper contributes to the promotion of elite narratives.

Population and Sampling

The study population was drawn exclusively from articles published on the NYTimes.com website under the "Israel-Hamas War" subject banner during the first 30 days of the conflict. The website was selected partly for practical reasons, including the accessibility and searchability of its archived coverage, but more importantly because it approximates the

information environment encountered by a reader actively seeking *Times* reporting on the war. The study was designed in part to replicate what a reader might encounter when visiting NYTimes.com in search of coverage identified by the newspaper as pertaining to the Israel-Hamas war. Using the "Israel-Hamas War" subject banner also provided a methodologically relevant means of defining the study population. Rather than constructing a corpus solely through researcher-selected keywords or search terms, the study relied on a collection of articles that the *Times* itself had organized under a common label. The resulting sampling frame therefore reflects, at least in part, an editorial act of classification: The newspaper determined which articles were presented to readers as belonging to its broader coverage of the war. This distinction is particularly relevant to a study concerned with narrative construction, because the corpus represents not simply articles located by the researcher, but a body of reporting assembled and presented by the *Times* as constituting its coverage of the conflict. In other words, the banner itself is part of the study's internal methodological logic in that it was not necessary to define or delineate what constitutes the *Times's* Israel-Hamas war coverage; the paper provided that framing, as well as the site-search terms.

Accordingly, the population for this study consisted of the 306 articles appearing under that subject banner during the defined 30-day period, from which a proportionate stratified random sample of 77 articles was drawn. The findings should therefore be understood as pertaining specifically to the body of coverage published and organized on NYTimes.com within this sampling frame. They should not be assumed to represent the *Times* print edition or other distribution platforms, which may differ in article selection, presentation, prominence, or organization. Some articles had only peripheral connection to the Israel-Hamas war, but since they were assigned the "Israel-Hamas War" label by the *Times*, they are included in the study.

Generating the Random Sample

The study's 77-article sample was generated from the 306-article population using a 25% proportionate stratified random sampling procedure, with articles grouped into weekly strata to preserve their proportional representation across the 30-day study period. Google Search AI Mode was utilized to assist in generating the R commands necessary to implement the sampling procedure; those commands were executed in R 4.6.0 using RStudio 2026.04.0+526 and the dplyr package, version 1.2.1. A fixed random seed of 765 was used to make the random selection reproducible, and a round-half-up rule was applied when a stratum's 25% allocation resulted in a fractional value ending in .5. The resulting selections were combined, sorted by article ID, and exported as the final 77-article sample.

The commands used to execute the procedure were saved as an R script in RStudio and annotated by the researcher with explanatory comments; the complete reproducible sampling script appears in Appendix B. The introductory text to Appendix B was written by the researcher with the assistance of ChatGPT, as were portions of this part of the paper's Methodology section.

Analytical Units

The sampled articles served as both the sampling units and units of analysis. Each of the 77 articles constituted an individual case in the dataset. Within each article, the coding unit was a distinct source-category instance introducing a novel unit of information.

Presence, Visibility, and Narrative Authority

The coding process distinguishes at least three dimensions of source use:

1. Breadth — the number of articles containing a source category.
2. Intensity — the number of times that category is cited.
3. Primacy — whether it is the most frequently used source category within an article.

This distinction reveals how marginalized sources can appear relatively visible while remaining structurally subordinate. In some cases, a source may be included in many stories but receive only one or two sourcing instances within each unit of analysis. In other cases, official actors receive repeated sourcing instances and define the article's principal interpretation. Inclusion therefore does not necessarily confer agenda-setting power, narrative authority, or the ability to frame causes, responsibility, and policy responses. Some categories appeared across many articles at low intensity; others appeared less often but received concentrated attention when present (see Table 1).

Table 1

Same/Similar Sourcing Instances, Different Reach and Intensity

Categories	Article Appearances	Total Sourcing Instances	Comments
Civilian (I) AVF Evidence	15 28	58 58	Same total, but civilian sourcing is more concentrated
Civilian (Other) Other	9 16	25 25	Same total, different frequency
Hamas Hospital (non-gov)	9 13	19 19	Hamas is sourced more intensively when present
Civilian (USA) Media (Other)	6 10	15 15	Same total, civilian sourcing is more concentrated
Government (P) Media (US-based)	9 7	10 10	Same total, with similar article appearances
Civilian (UnID) Civilian (USA)	6 6	14 15	Same appearances and almost identical totals

Two-Decimal Rule

Percentages in the spreadsheet are presented to two decimal places. Standard rounding, if down, would eliminate trace-level sources. Formatting each cell to display two decimal places ensures that every source category remains visible in the spreadsheet.

Coding Procedures and Source Classification Rules

Development of the Coding Scheme

Because of the complexity and variability of sourcing patterns observed throughout the sample, operational definitions were refined iteratively; unanticipated source categories, such as "Civilian (UnID)," were either folded into existing definitions or used to create new categories. Rather than conducting a separate pilot coding exercise on a subset of articles, the coding scheme was developed and refined through systematic engagement with the full sample. When category definitions were clarified or modified, previously coded articles were reviewed as necessary to ensure that the revised rules were applied consistently across the dataset.

Intracoder Reliability

The study's 16-article intracoder reliability subsample was generated from the 77-article sample using a 20.78% proportionate stratified random sampling procedure, with articles grouped into weekly strata to preserve their proportional representation across the 30-day study period. ChatGPT was utilized to assist in generating the R commands necessary to implement the sampling procedure; those commands were executed in R 4.6.0 using RStudio 2026.04.0+526 and the dplyr package, version 1.2.1. A fixed random seed of 766 was used to make the random selection reproducible, and a round-half-up rule was applied to the proportional allocation for each stratum. The resulting selections were combined, sorted by article ID, and exported as the final 16-article intracoder reliability subsample.

The commands used to execute the procedure were saved as an R script in RStudio and annotated by the researcher with explanatory comments; the complete reproducible sampling script appears in Appendix B. The introductory text to Appendix B was written by the researcher with the assistance of ChatGPT, as were portions of this part of the paper's Methodology section.

Intracoder Reliability Results

The 16 selected articles were recoded using the same source categories and coding procedures applied during the original coding process. The new tallies were then compared with those recorded in the All Weeks worksheet. Across 16 articles and 33 source categories, this produced 528 article-by-category comparisons. Source-category presence or absence matched in 517 of those 528 comparisons, or 97.9%. Cohen's kappa for category presence was $\kappa = .905$. Because 456 comparisons were zero–zero matches, meaning that the category was absent in both coding rounds, the kappa statistic provides a more conservative measure of agreement than raw percentage agreement alone.

Exact source-category tallies matched in 497 of the 528 comparisons, or 94.1%. In 523 comparisons (99.1%), the two coding rounds differed by no more than one sourcing instance, and no comparison differed by more than two instances. Three of the 16 articles produced identical category tallies across both coding rounds, while four produced the same total number of sourcing instances. The original coding produced 153 sourcing instances across the 16 articles, compared with 167 during recoding, an increase of 14 instances, or 9.2%.

Source primacy remained relatively stable. The same primary or tied-primary category set appeared in 13 of the 16 articles (81.3%). In 15 of 16 articles (93.8%), at least one category identified as primary during the original coding remained primary or tied for primary during recoding. The only complete change in article-level primacy occurred in Article 102. During recoding, one instance originally tallied as NGO was excluded because it did not provide a new unit of information, while an additional Civilian (Gaza) instance was identified as introducing a distinct unit of information. Those changes were sufficient to shift the article's primary source category from NGO to Civilian (Gaza).

Overall, the recoding produced strong agreement in identifying whether source categories were present and substantial consistency in identifying the primary source category within articles. Exact sourcing-frequency tallies varied somewhat more, and the second coding effort produced a modest increase in the total number of identified sourcing instances.

This section of the text was composed by the researcher with the assistance of ChatGPT and Copilot.

Definition of Source

A source is defined as an identifiable individual, group, institution, media organization, or audiovisual/forensic evidentiary source to which an article explicitly attributed information through quotation, paraphrase, reporting attribution, or reference to evidence. Information presented solely through the journalist's narrative voice without explicit attribution was not coded as a source.

Coding Boundaries

Coding was based exclusively on the manifest text of each sampled article. The analysis therefore considered only information explicitly presented to the reader and did not rely on outside research to determine the identity, affiliation, or background of a source. When an article did not provide enough information to place a source within a more specific category, the source was coded according to the information available in the text rather than according to information the researcher might reasonably infer from context or knowledge obtained from outside the text.

The coding process was also limited to the main body text of each article. Text appearing in headlines, subheadings, photo captions or cutlines, pull quotes, call-out boxes, and other secondary elements was excluded. Similarly, when a reporter attributed information to text accessed through an embedded hyperlink to another news site, the source was coded as "Media"

and the appropriate regional press category. The researcher did not drill down into hyperlinked articles to locate secondary or primary sources. This approach ensured the study's analysis remained on the manifest text as published on NYTimes.com.

Source Frequency and Units of Information

Source frequency was not determined by simply counting quotations, sentences, paragraphs, or individual speakers. Instead, a source-category instance was counted when it introduced a novel unit of information into an article. This distinction was necessary because a single source can appear repeatedly across several sentences or paragraphs without introducing new information. It was decided that coding for each quotation or attribution in cases where no new information was provided would have artificially inflated the apparent prominence of that source category. For this reason, sequential references to the same source or source category were generally treated as a single sourcing instance when they remained part of the same informational or narrative thread. A new tally was recorded when the source introduced a different unit of information, when the article returned to that source in a different context, or when the source addressed a new time frame, location, or narrative dimension of the story.

For example, several consecutive paragraphs describing a single interview, event, or chronological sequence could constitute one sourcing instance even if the source was quoted multiple times. If the article later returned to that source for a separate explanation, retrospective assessment, or different body of information, an additional sourcing instance could be recorded. The purpose of this rule was to capture the amount of distinct information supplied by each source category rather than the stylistic frequency with which reporters inserted quotations or attribution phrases. In other words, the method requires coding distinct sources each time they shared distinct units of information.

Operationalizing Concepts

Designing a study methodology that is both internally consistent and replicable required a two-fold approach: the creation of an operational definition of "novel unit of information" and the creation of a rule for determining its applicability.

A novel unit of information was coded when a reporter attributed to a source category type—either by direct quote or paraphrase—a statement, claim, assessment, response, opinion, evaluation, account, explanation, or thematically coherent set thereof that added substantively new information to the story. Multiple details from a single source might therefore constitute a single unit of information when they formed one thematically coherent informational contribution.

To determine whether information should be considered "substantively new," the following rule was applied: If removing the source-attributed passage from the text would eliminate a statement, claim, assessment, response, opinion, evaluation, account, explanation, or thematically coherent set thereof that is not found elsewhere in the text—thus depriving the reader of that information—then this was determined to be a "novel unit of information." Conversely, if removing the passage would not eliminate that information completely from the text—if, for example, it repeats, references, elaborates on, revisits, or paraphrases information already provided by the reporter—then it was not considered to be an instance of a "novel unit of information."

Consider the following excerpt from the Times:

> Mike and Adele Rubin, a couple in their 90s, were huddled in their home in Sderot with their doors locked, watching reports on television about gun battles unfolding in the streets not far away. They couldn't hear the gunfire because of the noise from sirens

> warning of incoming rocket fire, and from Israeli fighter jets flying to bomb targets in Gaza. “I don’t think anybody can describe what’s happening,” Mr. Rubin said by telephone. “From what we heard on television,” he added, “a building about 150 meters from our house” had come under attack. (Kershner & Abdulrahim, 2023, paras. 10–11)

This would be coded as one novel unit of information from one Israeli civilian (a thematically coherent set of information about their experience and knowledge of the attack). The opening description carries no attribution; thus, it is not coded. Because this study uses indexing as its theoretical backdrop, it is concerned with who is afforded the opportunity to appear as a source in Times news coverage. Coding a journalist’s introductory prose as a unit of information would skew the data away from this concern.

Another example:

> Mr. Assabti has ruled out leaving, even if the invasion draws close. Unable to pay rent elsewhere or to find a relative or friend to stay with in the south, he has run out of all options, he said. At home, his family can use the bathroom without having to line up and can sleep in a bed with enough blankets. They can get water from a nearby water desalination plant that runs on solar panels, though they are subsisting only on stocks of canned food. “We’ve already lived through 30 years of suffering,” he said, sounding worn down. “One would rather die with his family.” (Yee et al., 2023, paras. 18–20)

This would also be coded as one novel unit of information, this time from a Gazan civilian. In this excerpt, the information attributed to the source coheres around a single information contribution: his reasons for staying home with his family. Removing this passage would deprive readers of information they would not be able to find elsewhere in the article.

An additional example here should make the coding rule even more explicit. In an October 31, 2023, article, Israeli national security adviser Tzachi Hanegbi was first paraphrased and then quoted directly:

> On Tuesday, Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, told reporters in Tel Aviv that the authorities were making plans for "the day after Hamas," though they were far from achieving that goal. "We are working on it, a long list of agencies are working on it. Every security body was asked to put forward thoughts for discussions," he said. "But let's not deceive ourselves—the 'day after' is not close." (Yazbek & Boxerman, 2023, paras. 17–18)

This excerpt provides an example of revisited or elaborated information that is treated as repetitive and not coded as a new unit of information. Although the initial paraphrase and the subsequent direct quote might appear at first glance to represent two separate units of information, the quotation repeats or restates and elaborates on information already provided in the preceding attribution. Thus, these two passages are coded as containing a single sourcing instance from the Israeli government. This example illustrates the purpose of the coding rules: to capture distinct units of information supplied by identifiable source category types and to avoid inflating the data because of the stylistic choices reporters make when inserting quotations, paragraph breaks, or attributive phrasing.

One final example demonstrating how claims are treated under the coding protocol:

> Ethan Missner, a close friend of Mr. Balva's since childhood, said that the two had talked "almost daily" for their entire lives, except when Mr. Balva was training with the Israeli military. "Since we were 6 years old, I've spent, you know, endless time with him," he said. "I truthfully don't know a single person that's ever fought with Omer," Mr. Missner

> added. “And I think that that’s a superpower Omer had, that he can know and be close to so many people and he was just only sweet.” Mr. Balva was on vacation in the United States when he was called up to fight in Israel, Mr. Missner said. He said that Mr. Balva had been traveling with his girlfriend of four years, whom he had planned to propose to soon. (Holpuch, 2023, paras. 5–8)

This excerpt would be coded as two units of information from one American civilian: one thematically coherent unit related to Missner’s assessment of Balva as a friend and person and one related to Balva’s situation prior to traveling to Israel. If two different sources had provided this same information, it would be coded accordingly: two units of information from two sources.

These same principles are applied when several individuals were grouped within a single attribution. A phrase such as “three officials said” or “four eyewitnesses described” was counted as one sourcing instance when the individuals collectively supplied the same information. The number of people contained within the attribution did not itself determine the number of tallies. An additional tally was recorded only when an individual within the group was subsequently identified and introduced a distinct unit of information.

This procedure produced two related measures. The first recorded whether a source category appeared anywhere within an article. The second recorded the number of distinct sourcing instances attributed to that category. Article-level presence therefore captures how broadly a category was distributed throughout the sample, while source frequency measures the amount of distinct information attributed to that category. A third metric was created to determine which source category received the most sourcing instances within a unit of analysis.

Active Sourcing and Background Information

The study distinguished between active sourcing and information presented through the reporter's own narrative voice. Human or institutional sources were coded when the article explicitly attributed information, a claim, or a perspective to an identifiable source. Common markers included phrases such as "said," "told," "according to," "wrote," or similar language. Information presented by the reporter as background or narrative context without an explicit source attribution was not coded. This included passages describing an actor's motivations, actions, history, or circumstances when the article did not identify the source from which that information had been obtained. Although such information must necessarily originate somewhere, identifying its original source would require the researcher to move beyond the manifest text and reconstruct the reporter's newsgathering process. That task falls outside the boundaries of the present content analysis. The distinction was therefore not between information that was sourced and information that was literally source-free. Rather, it was between sourcing made visible within the article and background information that had been incorporated into the reporter's own narrative voice.

Source Identity and Institutional Affiliation

Source categories were assigned according to the identity and institutional position explicitly established in the article. Active government and military personnel were coded within the appropriate institutional category when they were identified as speaking or providing information in that capacity. Former or retired officials were treated differently. A retired military officer or former government official who was no longer exercising official authority or speaking on behalf of an institution was not coded as an active government or military source. Instead, the individual was coded as a civilian according to whatever geographic or national

identity was explicitly supplied by the text. If a reporter left a source's nationality or citizenship ambiguous or unknown, this study did not guess or assume that identity, even if doing so would be reasonable based on the story's context. This study acknowledges and codes for this by the creation of a "Civilian (UnID)" category.

Civilian categories were further distinguished by geographic and national identity. Civilian (Gaza) was reserved for non-institutional Palestinian residents identified as living or located within the Gaza Strip. Palestinians identified as living outside Gaza, or whose location was not specified, were coded as Civilian (Pal). Israeli hostages held within Gaza were coded as Civilian (I), rather than Civilian (Gaza), because the categories were based on the identity of the source rather than the source's temporary physical location.

Academic sources represented a specific exception to the broader distinction between professional description and personal identity. When an individual was explicitly introduced through an academic title or university affiliation, that source was coded within the appropriate Research/Education category. The category was based on the institutional identity supplied by the article, even when the substance of the individual's quotation concerned personal experience rather than academic research.

Generalized expert groups lacking an explicit institutional, organizational, or national affiliation—such as "intelligence experts," "military analysts," or "specialists"—were coded as Other rather than assigned to a more specific category through researcher inference. Anonymous or vaguely described state-adjacent sources required a separate rule. Individuals described, for example, as "connected to the government" or "familiar with internal deliberations," but who were not identified through a formal government title or position, were coded as Other. Coding such individuals as government sources would have required an inference about their

institutional status that the manifest text did not always support. At the same time, their reported proximity to government decision-making distinguished them from ordinary civilian sources.

Non-State Actor Sourcing Classifications

When *The New York Times* attributed information to Hamas or Hezbollah without identifying the source through an explicitly military role or descriptor, the source was coded under the Hamas or Hezbollah category. Military (NS-Hamas) or Military (NS-Hez) was used only when the manifest text specifically identified the source as a military actor, such as a "fighter," "commander," or similar designation.

Indirect Media and Social Media Sourcing

A chain-of-custody rule was created for information obtained indirectly through another media organization. When the *Times* explicitly relied on another news outlet for information or a quotation, the distributing news organization was treated as the source for coding purposes rather than the individual who originally supplied the statement. Thus, a statement by a political figure reported by an outside newspaper or broadcast network was coded under the appropriate Media category when that outside outlet constituted the *Times's* manifest source of the information. Similarly, when an individual's personal statement was obtained from a public social media post rather than through direct communication with the *Times*, the source was coded as Media (Other). In those cases, the social media post functioned as the immediate published source from which the information was drawn.

Official institutional accounts were treated differently. Statements, announcements, directives, or other information distributed through the official social media account, website, or digital channel of a government, military, NGO, or other organization were coded according to the organization rather than the platform. For example, information taken from an official Israel

Defense Forces social media account was coded Military (I), while information published through an official U.S. government social media account was coded Government (US). In these cases, the platform served as the means of distribution, while the institution remained the source of the communication.

Audiovisual and Forensic Evidence

A distinct category, Audiovisual and Forensic Evidence (AVF Evidence), was created to account for information derived from nonhuman evidentiary material rather than from a traditional human or institutional source. The category included audiovisual materials such as photographs, video, audio recordings, satellite imagery, security-camera footage, dashboard-camera footage, and similar digital artifacts when the *Times* explicitly relied on those materials to produce content.

The category also included forensic uses of such evidence. For purposes of this study, *forensic* refers to the analysis of physical or digital traces in order to determine or verify what occurred. This could include geolocation, examination of satellite imagery, analysis of weapon fragments or blast patterns, trajectory reconstruction, metadata analysis, acoustic analysis, or other technical examination of available evidence.

The coding distinction centered on the difference between the subject of the evidence and the source of the information. If a video depicted members of an armed group carrying out an attack, for example, the individuals visible in the footage were treated as subjects of the evidence rather than as communicative sources. If the *Times* relied on the video itself to establish what occurred, the sourcing instance was coded as AVF Evidence rather than under the category corresponding to the people depicted in the recording.

Ownership of the recording equipment or the platform on which the material appeared did not determine its category. Footage captured by a camera located at a private business, for example, was not coded as Business/Company merely because the business owned the camera. Similarly, a raw video found on Telegram, Facebook, X, or another platform was not automatically coded as Media. When the evidentiary value came from what the recording itself showed, rather than from a statement made by the account or organization distributing it, the material was coded as AVF Evidence. An important exception applied when audiovisual material was presented as part of an institution's own communicative claim. If a military or government official introduced a video, image, or other artifact in a press conference, statement, or official release as evidence supporting an institutional assertion, the source was coded according to that institution. In short, AVF Evidence was reserved for instances in which the article treated the artifact itself as the evidentiary basis for the information, including cases in which *Times* journalists independently examined the AVF content. This distinction allowed the analysis to separate communicative actors from evidentiary artifacts. Human and institutional sources deliberately communicate information to journalists or the public. Audiovisual and forensic materials do not possess communicative agency; nevertheless, those materials can function as identifiable sources of information within a news article when journalists explicitly use them to establish or verify facts.

Data Recording and Analytical Procedures

Workbook Organization and Matrix Structure

The workbook was organized as an article-by-source matrix for a quantitative content analysis of 77 sampled articles. The principal analytical worksheet, *All Weeks*, consolidates the complete sample within 41 columns (A:AO). The individual article is the unit of analysis, and

each article occupies one row in rows 2–78. Columns A:G contain article metadata, columns H:AN contain 33 source-category variables, and column AO reports the category or categories with the highest sourcing frequency in each article.

The worksheets *Week 1* through *Week 5* reproduce the same matrix structure for separate periods in the sampling interval. They contain 23, 21, 14, 16, and 3 articles, respectively. Together, these worksheets contain the same 77 unique article IDs represented in *All Weeks*, without duplication or omission. Their coded source values correspond with those in the consolidated matrix.

The *Final77Sample* worksheet contains the metadata and links for the 77 articles included in the final sample. Selected metadata are reproduced in the worksheet *Appendix A (Sample)*, which provided the researcher with a clean, publication-ready appendix for the thesis document (see Appendix A). *Appendix B (Rankings)* ranks all 77 sampled articles: First by Article Appearance Count (A1:F79), which counts how many different source categories appear in each article (source breadth); and second, by Total Sourcing Instances (A82:F160), which adds all source occurrences in each article (source volume).

Article Rankings and Comparative Use

To summarize, the worksheet *Appendix B (Rankings)* contains two formula-generated ranking tables. The first ranks articles by the number of source categories represented in each article; this is a measure of the breadth of source categories appearing in an article. The second ranks articles by total sourcing instances; this is a measure of all sourcing frequencies recorded across the 33 categories for each article. Both tables use competition ranking, under which articles with equal values receive the same rank. The matrix structure permits comparison across articles, source categories, and time periods. The consolidated worksheet supports complete-

sample comparisons, while the weekly worksheets provide equivalent measures for each time period. Unique article IDs and a common source taxonomy permit records to be compared across the consolidated, weekly, sample, and appendix worksheets.

The Article Appearance Count worksheet is reproduced in Appendix C. Total Sourcing Instances is reproduced in Appendix D.

Article Metadata and Source Coding

In the *All Weeks* worksheet, Columns A:G record each article's week, article ID, headline, publication date, section, URL, and a formula-generated link. The article ID provides a consistent identifier across the consolidated matrix, weekly worksheets, sample list, and appendices. The 33 source-category variables are arranged across columns H:AN. Each column represents one category in the study's source taxonomy, while each row represents one sampled article. When a category appeared in an article, the corresponding cell contains the number of sourcing instances assigned to that category. A blank cell indicates that no sourcing instance was recorded for that category. The sourcing-frequency values in *All Weeks* H2:AN78 are numeric inputs rather than formula outputs. Source identification, category assignment, and frequency entry was determined by the researcher.

Aggregate Measures

The workbook calculates two complementary measures for each source category. Article appearances represent the number of articles in which at least one sourcing instance was recorded for a category. In *All Weeks* H83:AN83, nonblank cells are counted down each category column. Because category absences are represented by blank cells and recorded values are positive, this procedure measures category presence without summing sourcing frequency. Total sourcing instances, reported in *All Weeks* H85:AN85, sum the numeric sourcing frequencies

assigned to each category across all articles. Article appearance counts therefore measure the breadth of a category's distribution, whereas total sourcing instances measure its cumulative frequency. Article appearance rates in *All Weeks* H84:AN84 divide each category's article appearance count by the complete sample of 77 articles. Sourcing instance shares in *All Weeks* H86:AN86 divide each category's total sourcing instances by the total number of sourcing instances recorded across all 33 categories in the complete sample.

The weekly worksheets calculate the same measures independently for their respective subsets. Weekly article appearance counts and total sourcing instances include only the article rows contained in the applicable worksheet. Weekly article appearance rates divide category appearances by the number of articles in that week: 23 for Week 1, 21 for Week 2, 14 for Week 3, 16 for Week 4, and 3 for Week 5. Weekly sourcing instance shares divide each category's sourcing-instance total by the total sourcing instances recorded across all 33 categories within that week. Accordingly, both weekly measures describe the applicable weekly subset rather than its contribution to the complete sample. The complete formula syntax and configuration are documented separately in the thesis appendix titled "Excel Formula Syntax and Configurations."

Highest-Frequency Classification and Ties

For each article, Excel compares the sourcing frequencies recorded across the 33 source-category columns (H:AN) and identifies the largest value in that row. The corresponding category name and frequency are reported in column AO. This output identifies the category with the highest sourcing frequency within the article. The classification procedure retains ties. When two or more categories share the maximum frequency, column AO lists all tied categories together with their common score. No category is selected arbitrarily when multiple source types

have the same highest frequency. Each tied category is also credited when aggregate highest-frequency prevalence is calculated.

The summary calculation in *All Weeks* AO83 processes the article-level classifications in AO2:AO78. It separates category names from their numerical scores, separates categories listed jointly because of ties, counts each category's participation in sole or shared highest-frequency status, and reports the leading category's prevalence as a proportion of the 77 articles. A separate calculation in *All Weeks* AO85 compares the aggregate sourcing-instance totals in H85:AN85 and identifies the category with the largest total. These procedures distinguish between how often a category receives highest-frequency status within individual articles and which category accumulates the most sourcing instances across the sample. Each weekly worksheet applies the same highest-frequency procedures only to the articles contained in that week. The calculations are therefore performed separately within each weekly subset.

Researcher Coding and Automated Calculations

The researcher developed the initial source category definitions, revised them during an iterative process of content analysis, coded each sampled article, and manually entered the resulting sourcing frequencies into the article-level matrix. Excel automatically performed the subsequent calculations. These include calculating article appearance counts and rates, summing sourcing instances, calculating sourcing instance shares, identifying highest-frequency categories, retaining tied classifications, determining aggregate leaders, and producing article rankings. Formula-generated tables in *Appendix B (Rankings)* reproduce article metadata from the All Weeks worksheet and automatically calculate source-category appearance counts, total sourcing instances, and competition rankings. This separation between researcher-coded inputs and formula-generated outputs contributes to transparency because aggregate results can be

traced to the underlying article-level cells. Consistent headers, identifiers, and ranges make the calculations inspectable and repeatable. Reproducing the study's results requires consistent application of source-category definitions and units of information, as well as the use of blank cells for category absences, the entry of positive numeric values for recorded sourcing instances, and preservation of the formulas across the valid article ranges.

AI-Assisted Tools

Artificial intelligence tools were used at several stages of the research and writing process. Microsoft Copilot in Excel assisted with spreadsheet operations and formula implementation, exploratory analysis of the dataset, examination of relationships among source categories and other variables selected by the researcher for comparison, and generation of selected figures from statistics derived from the study. Copilot also generated the preliminary methodological text describing portions of the workbook, which the researcher verified and substantially revised.

ChatGPT was used in a consultative role throughout the research and writing process, including for methodological discussion, theoretical clarification, organization, APA style questions, feedback on wording and revision, development of spreadsheet instructions, and discussion of analytical relationships identified in the data. Google Search AI Mode was used to assist in generating R commands for the sampling procedure; those commands were executed by the researcher in RStudio and preserved in the study documentation. All AI-assisted calculations and methodological descriptions, as well as AI-assisted examinations of researcher-selected variables and relationships, were reviewed and verified by the researcher. The researcher designed the study, developed the coding scheme and source classifications, conducted the

content analyses, developed the interpretations and arguments, and authored the final written content. AI tools served only in the assistive, instructive, and consultative roles described above.

Methodological Relationship to Indexing

These procedures were designed to measure the relative prominence and distribution of source categories within the sampled coverage. They do not, by themselves, establish whether a particular source successfully determined the meaning of an article or persuaded readers to accept a particular interpretation. Source frequency and article-level presence instead provide observable measures of which source categories the *Times* relied on when constructing its coverage. This distinction is particularly important to the study's use of indexing theory. The coding scheme does not attempt to reproduce the entire process through which elite political debate may be translated into news content. Rather, it measures one observable component of that process: the selection and relative prominence of sources within published news reports. Sourcing patterns can therefore be evaluated for the extent to which they are consistent with indexing theory's expectation that official actors will occupy a substantial portion of the available sourcing space. A closer qualitative examination and analysis of individual articles can address how those sources function within particular narratives.

The coding procedure consequently provides both article-level and aggregate measures of source prominence without assuming that numerical prominence is equivalent to narrative or interpretive influence. Determining whether a source confirmed, challenged, complicated, or displaced another account requires returning to the text itself. The quantitative coding establishes the sourcing structure within which those more focused qualitative observations can be made.

IV. FINDINGS

Bennett's Indexing

Bennett's indexing theory proposes that news organizations tend to calibrate—or "index"—the range of viewpoints they present to their readers with the range of debate among politically powerful institutional actors. Applied to this study, the central question is not simply whether marginalized voices appeared, but whether *The New York Times* organized its coverage primarily around government and military actors whose institutional authority established the initial narrative framework and defined the conflict's public agenda. The data are consistent with what indexing theory would anticipate in the sourcing architecture of early conflict coverage: governmental, military, and other institutional actors appear with disproportionate frequency and prominence (see Figure 1). Bennett's indexing hypothesis ultimately concerns the relationship between news discourse and the range of disagreement among political elites, a relationship this study does not measure independently. The present analysis instead examines one of the journalistic mechanisms through which indexed discourse can emerge—source selection—by identifying which categories of actors were repeatedly given access to the *Times's* reporting and provided the opportunity to supply information from which the broader conflict narrative was constructed.

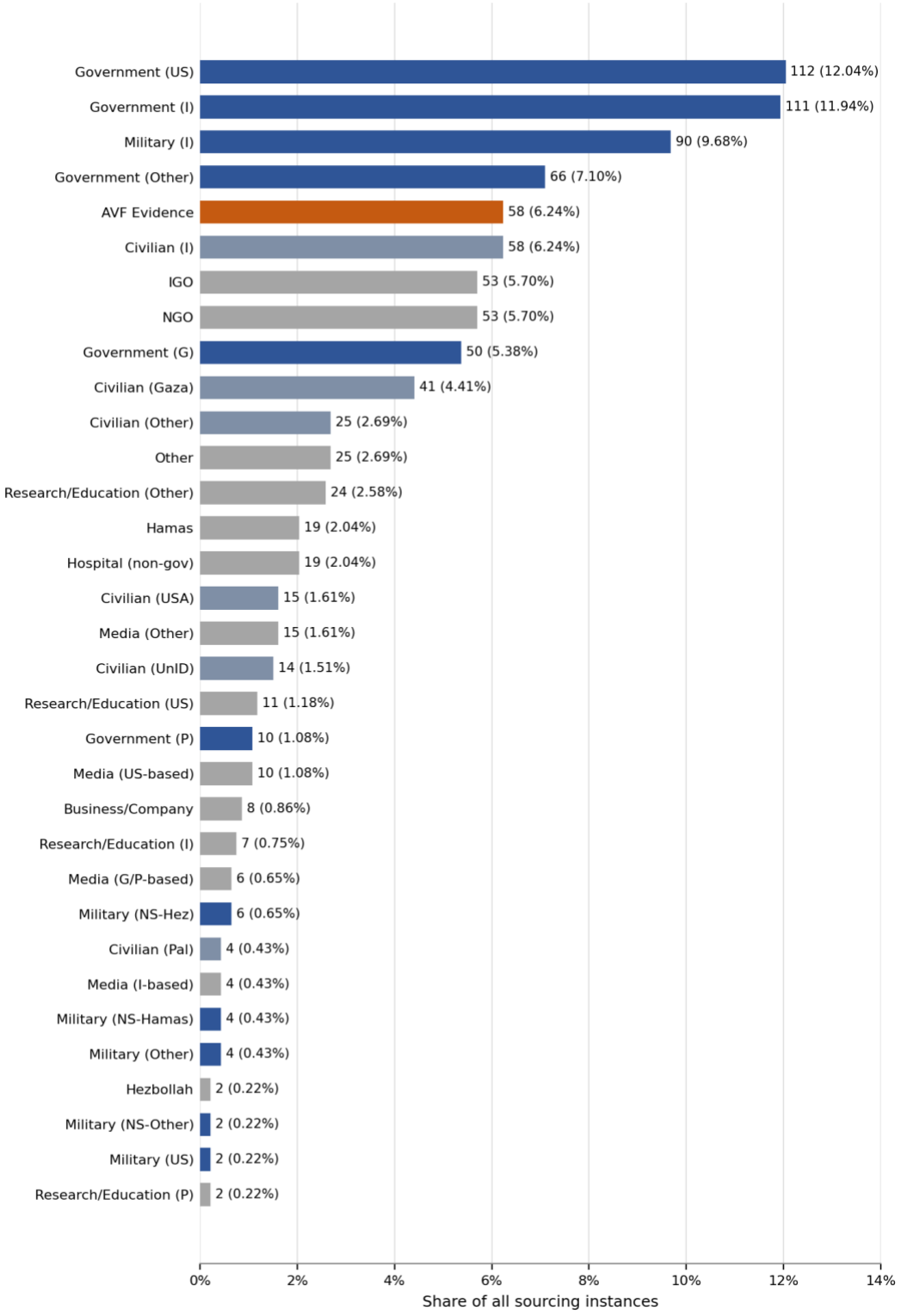
This study finds that 51.4% of all sourcing instances involved government, military, or nonstate armed actors. This subset was structured primarily around Israeli and U.S. government and military sources, which together accounted for 65.9% of these sourcing instances. Israeli sources contributed 201 sourcing instances, compared with 114 from U.S. sources. By comparison, Hamas and Military (NS-Hamas) sources together accounted for only 2.5% of all sourcing instances. The combined U.S. and Israeli government categories generated 223 sourcing

instances (24.0% of every sourcing instance in the sample). Adding Israeli military sources raises the total to 313 sourcing instances, or 33.7%. Thus, approximately one-third of all sourcing instances came from only three institutionally powerful source categories. These sources were also distributed broadly across the coverage, signaling that elite actors were consistently sought out by *Times* reporters across the 30-day timeframe.

- Government (I): 45 of 77 articles (58.4%)
- Government (US): 37 of 77 articles (48.1%)
- Military (I): 35 of 77 articles (45.5%)
- Government (G): 28 of 77 articles (36.4%)
- Government (Other): 26 of 77 articles (33.8%)

Figure 1

Sourcing Instances and Shares by Source Category.



Note. N = 930 sourcing instances across 77 articles. Percentages may not total 100.00% because of rounding.

Note. Figure generated with Microsoft Copilot from statistics derived from the present study.

Figure Color Key

- **Blue** — Government and military sources
- **Orange** — AVF Evidence
- **Blue-gray** — Civilian sources
- **Gray** — Other source categories

Note. Colors identify broad source groupings and do not represent quantitative values.

Elite Alignment, Elite Authority

This study finds a near-perfect sourcing symmetry between the United States and Israel, the two primary state actors involved in the early stages of the war. The *Times* cited the U.S. government 112 times (12.04% of all sourcing instances) and the Israeli government 111 times (11.94% of all sourcing instances). These two source categories are distributed across the sample rather than always appearing together; in fact, they share sourcing in just 22 of 77 articles (28.6%).

Government and military sources (excluding the amorphous category of Hamas and Hezbollah, both of which the *Times* labeled inconsistently), account for 457 of 930 coded references (49.1%). Excluding 58 AVF-evidence entries, which are often presented as coming from a government or military source but are coded separately here, they represent 52.4% of sourcing instances. Israeli government and military sources remain prominent when AVF is included. AVF Evidence frequently co-occurs with these categories: Government (I) is AVF's most common co-occurring source category, appearing in 21 of 28 AVF articles (75.0%); Military (I) is a close second with 20 co-occurring articles (71.4%).

Israeli/U.S. government and military categories received 315 sourcing instances, compared with 60 for Palestinian/Gaza government categories, a ratio of more than 5 to 1. Government (I) and Military (I) co-occur in 27 articles, a stronger relationship than Israeli and

U.S. government sourcing. This suggests a relatively integrated presentation of Israeli governmental and military authority, which is to be expected in conflict coverage centered on the Israel-Hamas war. Collectively, Government (US), Government (I), Government (Other), and Military (I) received 44 primary-source designations.

Israeli and U.S. Government Co-occurrences

- The Israeli government appeared in 45 articles (58.4% of all articles)
- The U.S. government appeared in 37 articles (48% of all articles)
- The U.S. and Israeli governments appeared together in 22 articles (28.6% of all articles).
- Almost half (48.9%) of articles containing Israeli government sources also contained U.S. government sources. Meanwhile, 59.5% of articles containing U.S. government sources also contained Israeli government sources.
- Israeli government sources appeared without U.S. government sources in 23 articles; U.S. government sources appeared without Israeli government sources in 15 articles.

Israeli Military

Israeli military sources appeared in 35 of the 77 articles (45.5%), generated 90 sourcing instances (9.7% of all 930 sourcing instances) and were primary or tied-primary sources in eight articles (10.4%). When present, they averaged 2.57 sourcing instances per article, although 15 of their 35 appearances (42.9%) involved only one sourcing instance. Their highest concentration occurred in Article 100, which contained 13 Israeli military sourcing instances. Overall, Israeli military sources were broadly present and sometimes highly prominent, but their sourcing intensity varied substantially across the sample.

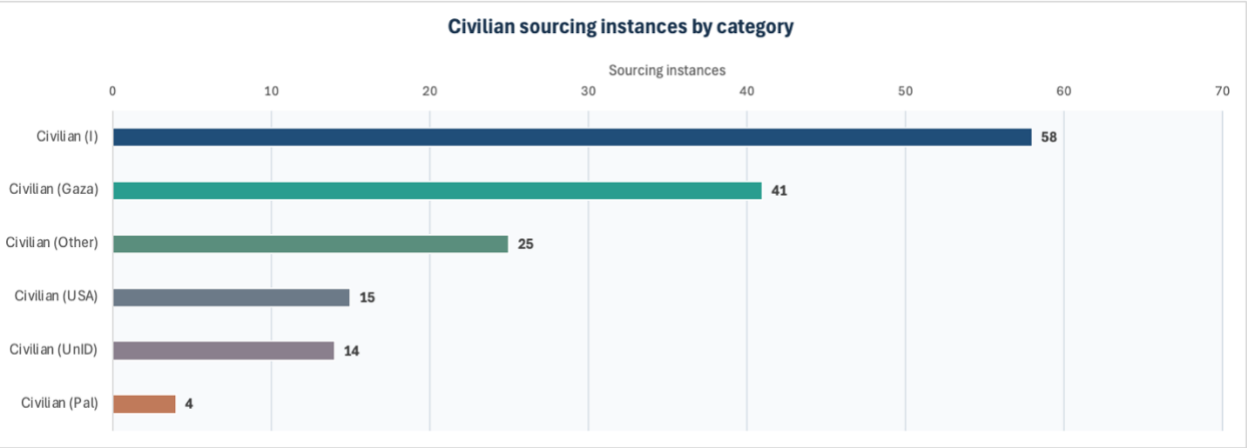
Civilians

Civilian sources contributed 157 sourcing instances; their presence prevents the coverage from being characterized as exclusively official. Collectively, however, civilian sources received only about one-third as many sourcing instances as all government and armed-actor categories combined, including Hamas, Hezbollah, and state and nonstate military sources (157 versus 478). The civilian distribution was also uneven. Israeli civilians received 58 sourcing instances, compared with 45 combined sourcing instances for both Gaza and Palestinian civilians (see Figure 2). The asymmetry is also visible in these findings:

- U.S. and Israeli governments: 223 sourcing instances
- Gaza and Palestinian governments: 60 sourcing instances
- Israeli government and military: 201 sourcing instances
- Hamas and non-state Hamas military: 23 sourcing instances

Figure 2

Civilian sourcing instances by category across the 77-article sample.



Note. Figure generated with Microsoft Copilot from statistics derived from the present study.

The study finds that Gaza civilians appeared in slightly more articles than Israeli civilians: 16 of 77 articles (20.8%), compared with 15 of 77 articles (19.5%). However, Israeli civilians

received 41.5% more sourcing instances and were nearly twice as likely to be the primary or tied-primary article source type when present (46.7% versus 25.0%). Additionally, the study finds that:

- Gaza civilians most frequently appeared with Government (G) (12 articles), Government (I) (11), and Military (I) (10).
- Israeli civilians most frequently appeared with Government (I) (10), AVF Evidence (8), and Military (I) (6).
- The two civilian groups appeared together in only 2 of 77 articles. In one, Civilian (I) was primary; in the other, Government (I) and Government (US) were primary.
- Israeli civilians were strongest early—25 sourcing instances in Week 1—whereas Gaza civilians gained primary or tied-primary status only later, with two such articles in Week 3 and two in Week 4.
- NGOs and IGOs were balanced at 53 sourcing instances each.
- Israeli civilians were sourced 25 times in Week 1 and two times in Week 4. AVF was sourced 23 times in Week 1, often in event/timeline recreations, eight times in Week 2, and 19 times in Week 3.
- Israeli government sources appeared in 45 of the 77 articles (58.4%), generated 111 sourcing instances, and were primary or tied-primary sources in 12 articles (15.6%).
- U.S. government sources, meanwhile, appeared in 37 articles (48.1%), generated 112 sourcing instances—the highest total of any category—and were primary or tied-primary in 14 articles (18.2%).

- Gaza government sources appeared in 28 articles (36.4%) but generated only 50 sourcing instances and were primary or tied-primary in just two articles (2.6%); moreover, 18 of those 28 appearances involved only one sourcing instance.
- Palestinian government sources appeared in nine articles (11.7%), generated 10 sourcing instances, and were never primary or tied-primary; eight of that source category's nine appearances involved only one sourcing instance, and Palestinian government sources were never cited more than twice in a single article.
- Collectively, the Israeli and U.S. government categories received 223 sourcing instances and 26 category-level primary or tied-primary credits, compared with 60 combined sourcing instances and two such credits for both the Palestinian and Gaza government categories. Thus, official Israeli and U.S. voices were not merely present more often; they were generally cited more extensively and more frequently occupied the dominant sourcing position. Israeli and U.S. government sourcing also overlapped substantially—nearly 3 in 10 articles included both.

Technological Evidence

Audiovisual and Forensic

AVF evidence appeared in 28 of 77 articles (36.4%), tied fourth in appearances with Government (G) and NGO. Its 58 sourcing instances tied Civilian (I) for fifth place and exceeded NGO, IGO, Government (G), and every media and research category individually. AVF and Civilian (I) both produced 58 sourcing instances, but AVF required 28 articles versus only 15 for Israeli civilians. AVF sourcing instances were especially concentrated in Week 1 and Week 3. Civilian (I) sourcing was more concentrated within particular stories. AVF, NGO, and IGO produced 58, 53, and 53 sourcing instances, respectively. AVF was slightly more prominent but

belonged to the same general middle tier beneath dominant government and military sources. AVF was rarely the principal authority; it is identified as primary in only three articles, compared with 14 for Government (US), 12 for Government (I), and eight for Military (I). Instead, AVF was generally used to supplement a story that also involved the sourcing of information from officials, civilians, organizations, or experts. As shown in Table 2, Government (I) was AVF's most common co-occurring category, appearing in 21 of the 28 AVF articles (75.0%), with Military (I) a close second with 20 co-occurring articles.

Table 2

Source Categories Most Frequently Co-Occurring with AVF Evidence

Co-occurring category	AVF Articles	Share
Government (I)	21	75.0%
Military (I)	20	71.4%
Government (G)	17	60.7%
Government (US)	15	53.6%
IGO	13	46.4%
Government (Other)	12	42.9%
NGO	11	39.3%

Week 1

Official-Source Dominance

Week 1 (23 articles) demonstrated a pronounced official-source hierarchy. Israeli government sources appeared in 65.2% of articles, while U.S. government and Israeli military sources each appeared in 52.2%. These were the three most prevalent categories, consistent with indexing theory's expectation that institutionally authoritative official voices occupy central positions in news sourcing. The hierarchy was uneven across government categories. Gaza government sources appeared in 30.4% of articles and Palestinian government sources in 17.4%,

substantially below Israeli and U.S. government sources. International organizations (43.5%) and NGOs (39.1%) were also prominent, suggesting that Week 1 coverage incorporated a substantial humanitarian and institutional presence alongside government and military voices. AVF Evidence appeared in 34.8% of articles, indicating frequent reliance on audiovisual or forensic material during the conflict's opening week. Hamas appeared as a coded source category in 8.7% of articles. Military (NS-Hamas) did not appear. This indicates a notable asymmetry between the prevalence of Israeli official sources and the limited presence of Hamas-related source categories (see Table 3).

Table 3

Week 1 Article Count, Rate by Source Type

Source Type	Article Count (Appearances)	Article Rate
Government (I)	15	65.2%
Government (US)	12	52.2%
Military (I)	12	52.2%
IGO	10	43.5%
NGO	9	39.1%
AVF Evidence	8	34.8%
Government (G)	7	30.4%
Government (Other)	7	30.4%
Civilian (I)	6	26.1%
Civilian (Gaza)	5	21.7%
Civilian (UnID)	5	21.7%
Government (P)	4	17.4%
Research/Education (Other)	3	13.0%
Other	3	13.0%
Hamas	2	8.7%
Military (NS-Hez)	2	8.7%
Civilian (USA)	2	8.7%
Media (US-based)	2	8.7%
Media (Other)	2	8.7%
Hezbollah	1	4.3%
Military (NS-Other)	1	4.3%
Military (Other)	1	4.3%
Civilian (Pal)	1	4.3%

Civilian (Other)	1	4.3%
Hospital (non-gov)	1	4.3%
Media (I-based)	1	4.3%
Research/Education (US)	1	4.3%
Business/Company	1	4.3%
Military (NS-Hamas)	0	0.0%
Military (US)	0	0.0%
Media (G/P-based)	0	0.0%
Research/Education (I)	0	0.0%
Research/Education (P)	0	0.0%

Week 2

U.S. Government Prominence

Week 2 (21 articles) showed especially strong U.S. government prominence. Government (US) appeared in 12 of 21 articles (57.1%), substantially exceeding every other category and generating 48 sourcing instances. Israeli government, Gaza government, Israeli military, and AVF Evidence each appeared in 8 of 21 articles (38.1%), tying for the second-highest appearance rate. Overall, governmental and armed-actor source categories generated 141 of 240 Week 2 sourcing instances (58.8%), consistent with indexing theory's expectation that institutionally authoritative actors occupy central sourcing positions. Humanitarian and Gaza-centered sources remained visible: NGOs appeared in 33.3% of articles, Civilian (Gaza) in 28.6%, and non-government hospitals in 19.0%. Hamas appeared in only one article (4.8%), while Military (NS-Hamas) appeared in two (9.5%). This indicates a substantial asymmetry between frequent Israeli and U.S. official sourcing and limited sourcing from Hamas-related categories (see Table 4).

Table 4

Week 2 Article Count, Rate by Source Type

Source Type	Article Count (Appearances)	Article Rate
Government (US)	12	57.1%
Military (I)	8	38.1%
Government (I)	8	38.1%
Government (G)	8	38.1%
AVF Evidence	8	38.1%
NGO	7	33.3%
Civilian (Gaza)	6	28.6%
Government (Other)	5	23.8%
IGO	5	23.8%
Civilian (I)	4	19.0%
Hospital (non-gov)	4	19.0%
Government (P)	4	19.0%
Civilian (Other)	3	14.3%
Research/Education (I)	2	9.5%
Military (NS-Hez)	2	9.5%
Research/Education (US)	2	9.5%
Civilian (Pal)	2	9.5%
Media (I-based)	2	9.5%
Media (G/P-based)	2	9.5%
Media (Other)	2	9.5%
Military (NS-Hamas)	2	9.5%
Research/Education (Other)	2	9.5%
Civilian (UnID)	1	4.8%
Media (US-based)	1	4.8%
Military (Other)	1	4.8%
Other	1	4.8%
Business/Company	1	4.8%
Hamas	1	4.8%
Military (US)	1	4.8%
Research/Education (P)	1	4.8%
Civilian (USA)	0	0.0%
Hezbollah	0	0.0%
Military (NS-Other)	0	0.0%

Week 3

Israeli Official-Source Prominence

Week 3 (14 articles) showed a pronounced Israeli official-source hierarchy. Government (I) appeared in 10 of 14 articles (71.4%), the highest rate of any source type during that week.

Military (I) appeared in 50%. Government (US) appeared in 35.7%, down from its Week 2 rate of 57.1%. Governmental and armed-actor source categories, which include all government and military categories, as well as Hamas and Hezbollah, generated 97 of 196 Week 3 sourcing instances (49.5%), placing them just below half of all Week 3 sourcing instances. AVF Evidence appeared in 35.7% of articles and generated 19 sourcing instances, indicating substantial reliance on audiovisual or forensic material. Civilian (I) appeared in only 21.4% of articles but generated 20 sourcing instances, showing that its sourcing was concentrated and intensive when present. Hamas also appeared in 21.4%, a notable increase from Week 2's 4.8%, although Military (NS-Hamas) appeared in only one article (see Table 5).

Hamas

Regarding Hamas sourcing, Week 3 had the highest sourcing instance volume of any week, accounting for 13 of all 19 Hamas sourcing instances (68.4%) and averaging 4.33 Hamas sourcing instances per Hamas-containing article, versus exactly one in every other week. The spike appears to be associated with topical concentration: all 13 Week 3 Hamas sourcing instances occurred in three articles focused on hostage negotiations, disputed evidence, or Hamas personnel.

- ID 181 (hostage release): 5
- ID 188 (hospital-blast/evidence dispute): 4
- ID 192 (deaths of Hamas officials): 4

Thus, the increase does not indicate a broad, sustained expansion of Hamas sourcing. It reflects three unusually Hamas-centered articles published over two days, particularly stories involving hostage negotiations, disputed evidence, and organizational leadership. Note: This interpretation describes the sample's topical structure; it does not establish an editorial cause.

Table 5

Week 3

Source Type	Article Count (Appearances)	Article Rate
Government (I)	10	71.4%
Military (I)	7	50.0%
Government (G)	6	42.9%
Other	6	42.9%
AVF Evidence	5	35.7%
Government (US)	5	35.7%
IGO	5	35.7%
Government (Other)	4	28.6%
Civilian (I)	3	21.4%
Hamas	3	21.4%
Civilian (Gaza)	2	14.3%
Civilian (USA)	2	14.3%
NGO	2	14.3%
Research/Education (Other)	2	14.3%
Media (Other)	2	14.3%
Hospital (non-gov)	2	14.3%
Media (G/P-based)	2	14.3%
Media (US-based)	1	7.1%
Business/Company	1	7.1%
Government (P)	1	7.1%
Military (NS-Hamas)	1	7.1%
Military (NS-Other)	1	7.1%
Research/Education (I)	1	7.1%
Research/Education (US)	1	7.1%
Civilian (Other)	0	0.0%
Civilian (Pal)	0	0.0%
Civilian (UnID)	0	0.0%
Hezbollah	0	0.0%
Media (I-based)	0	0.0%
Military (NS-Hez)	0	0.0%
Military (Other)	0	0.0%
Military (US)	0	0.0%
Research/Education (P)	0	0.0%

Week 4

Heightened NGO Sourcing

Week 4 (16 articles) retained a strong official-source hierarchy. Government (I) appeared in 9 of 16 articles (56.3%), the highest rate of the week. Government (US), Government (Other), and Military (I) each appeared in 43.8%. Governmental and armed-actor source categories generated 94 of 179 sourcing instances (52.5%), again constituting more than half of Week 4 sourcing. NGOs appeared in 50.0% of Week 4 articles, the second-highest rate of any source type and their strongest weekly presence in the sample. Research/Education (Other) also appeared in 31.3%, suggesting broader reliance on nongovernmental expertise. Civilian (Gaza) appeared in only 18.8% of articles but generated 12 sourcing instances, averaging four sourcing instances when present. Hamas appeared in 12.5% and generated only two sourcing instances, showing that Week 3's Hamas sourcing spike did not persist (see Table 6).

Continuing Prominence of Official Sources

Overall, Week 4 combined an official-source hierarchy with greater humanitarian and expert sourcing because its articles increasingly addressed both the conduct of military operations and their civilian, legal, diplomatic, and material consequences. This appears closely related to the types of stories published. Several articles focused directly on governmental decisions, military operations, or diplomatic disputes:

- Netanyahu's dispute with Israeli security officials
- Israel's ground operation in Gaza
- Conflicting official claims about airstrikes
- Iran's regional calculations
- Saudi Arabia's aid initiative
- U.S. political disputes involving Biden and Rashida Tlaib

This is consistent with topics that require sourcing statements from Israeli, U.S., Gaza, and other governments. This may help explain why Government (I), Government (US), Government (Other), and Military (I) remained among the most prevalent categories.

NGOs and Experts

Week 4 included multiple stories concerning Gazan casualties and displacement, evacuation difficulties, humanitarian assistance, heavy-bomb use and strike analysis, and regional strategy involving Hezbollah and Iran. Those topics created a greater role for NGOs, hospitals, researchers, and regional experts. For example, the Jabaliya bombing analysis also included Research/Education (Other), AVF Evidence, hospitals, and NGOs. The article about videos showing Gaza's destruction was led jointly by NGO and hospital sources.

Gaza Civilians

Only three articles used Civilian (Gaza), but those articles dealt specifically with personal experiences of bombardment, displacement, and evacuation. Two of the three articles were primarily civilian-centered: "'You Think of Dying at Any Time'" and "Some See No Point in Fleeing Gaza." This concentration is consistent with civilian voices being used intensively in a small number of human-interest articles rather than distributed broadly throughout the week.

Hamas's Decline

Week 3 contained several stories directly focused on Hamas hostages, officials, and claims. Week 4 shifted toward Israeli ground operations, humanitarian consequences, regional diplomacy, international criticism, and U.S. domestic politics. Accordingly, Hamas appeared in only two Week 4 articles and received one sourcing instance in each. The decline therefore appears linked to a change in the sample's topical composition rather than demonstrating a general editorial change.

Table 6

Week 4

Source Type	Article Count (Appearances)	Article Rate
Government (I)	9	56.3%
NGO	8	50.0%
Government (Other)	7	43.8%
Government (US)	7	43.8%
Military (I)	7	43.8%
Government (G)	6	37.5%
Other	6	37.5%
Research/Education (Other)	5	31.3%
AVF Evidence	5	31.3%
Civilian (Other)	4	25.0%
Hospital (non-gov)	4	25.0%
Civilian (Gaza)	3	18.8%
IGO	3	18.8%
Research/Education (US)	2	12.5%
Civilian (I)	2	12.5%
Civilian (USA)	2	12.5%
Hamas	2	12.5%
Media (G/P-based)	2	12.5%
Media (Other)	2	12.5%
Media (US-based)	2	12.5%
Business/Company	1	6.3%
Hezbollah	1	6.3%
Military (NS-Hamas)	1	6.3%
Military (Other)	1	6.3%
Military (US)	1	6.3%
Research/Education (P)	1	6.3%
Civilian (Pal)	0	0.0%
Civilian (UnID)	0	0.0%
Government (P)	0	0.0%
Media (I-based)	0	0.0%
Military (NS-Hez)	0	0.0%
Military (NS-Other)	0	0.0%
Research/Education (I)	0	0.0%

Week 5

Broader Source Distribution in a Limited Sample

Government (I) appeared in all three Week 5 articles, while Government (Other) appeared in two. However, governmental and armed-actor source categories generated only 15 of 37 sourcing instances (40.5%), their lowest weekly share. This suggests that official sources remained consistently present but were less dominant in sourcing instance volume. The pattern reflects the three article topics: French aid flights emphasized Government (Other); Thai hostages produced nine Civilian (Other) sourcing instances; and the Gaza explosion story drew on hospitals, media, AVF evidence, and competing official claims. Consequently, humanitarian, civilian, evidentiary, and media categories appeared unusually prominent. These percentages should not be treated as a stable weekly trend because the Week 5 sample contains only three articles (see Table 7).

Table 7

Week 5

Source Type	Article Count (Appearances)	Article Rate
Government (I)	3	100.0%
Government (Other)	2	66.7%
AVF Evidence	2	66.7%
Hospital (non-gov)	2	66.7%
IGO	2	66.7%
Media (Other)	2	66.7%
NGO	2	66.7%
Civilian (Other)	1	33.3%
Government (US)	1	33.3%
Media (US-based)	1	33.3%
Government (G)	1	33.3%
Hamas	1	33.3%
Military (I)	1	33.3%
Research/Education (I)	1	33.3%
Business/Company	0	0.0%

Civilian (Gaza)	0	0.0%
Civilian (I)	0	0.0%
Civilian (Pal)	0	0.0%
Civilian (UnID)	0	0.0%
Civilian (USA)	0	0.0%
Government (P)	0	0.0%
Hezbollah	0	0.0%
Media (G/P-based)	0	0.0%
Media (I-based)	0	0.0%
Military (NS-Hamas)	0	0.0%
Military (NS-Hez)	0	0.0%
Military (NS-Other)	0	0.0%
Military (Other)	0	0.0%
Military (US)	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%
Research/Education (Other)	0	0.0%
Research/Education (P)	0	0.0%
Research/Education (US)	0	0.0%

V. DISCUSSION

This study examines one central prediction of indexing theory: that news sourcing in foreign policy reporting will rely predominantly on official, elite actors. It does so with a quantitative analysis of sourcing patterns in *New York Times* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war during that conflict's first 30 days. The observed sourcing patterns are consistent with indexing theory. The data provide systematic evidence about which types of sources were afforded opportunities to become the primary definers of foundational narratives about the war. A few specific examples drawn from the data and a review of associated article content may be illustrative of the ways in which these findings can contribute to a substantive discussion of indexing in *New York Times* articles about the Israel-Hamas war.

Given the shocking, brutal nature of the October 7 attacks on Israelis, greater representation of Israeli sources can be expected as part of the *Times* initial framing of the event and its aftermath. This analysis, however, does not seek to determine the appropriate frequency of Israeli sources and perspectives. Instead, it examines source structures through which conflict narratives are constructed during an initial period of extreme crisis and whether those structures reflect elite-centered patterns predicted by indexing theory. Reporting during political and foreign-policy crises will be structured by institutional channels of information (Althaus, 2003; Sigal, 1973). This study looks at how those channels shape whose perspectives are available, whose perspectives are treated as authoritative, and whose voices are most prominent during early stages of the conflict.

Civilians

Times coverage gave both Israeli and Gazan civilians similar article-level visibility, but not equivalent sourcing weight. Israeli civilians were more likely to shape an article's source

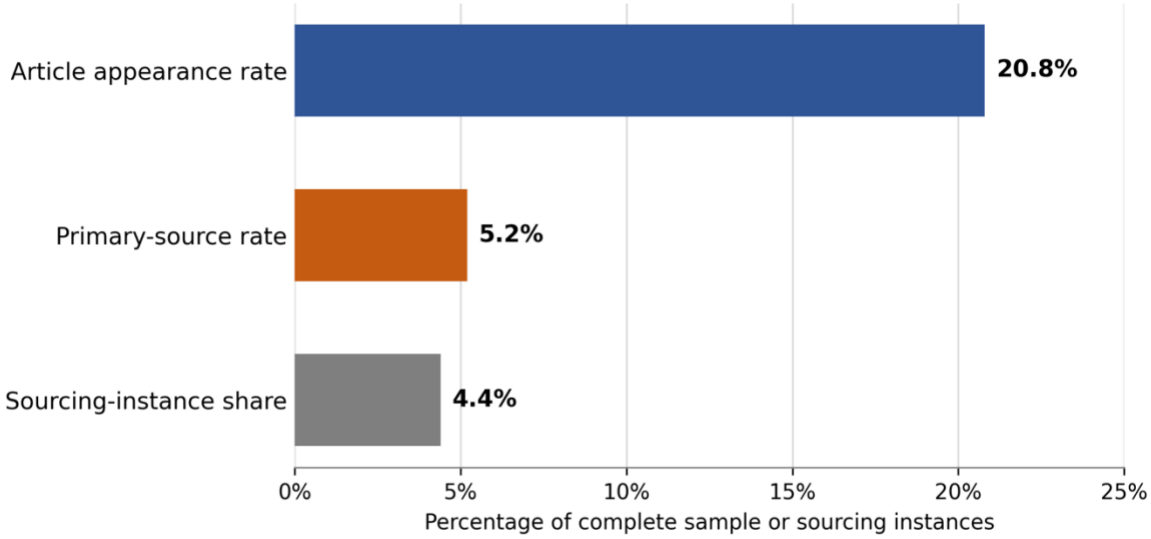
structure; Gaza civilians were more often incorporated alongside government, military, humanitarian, or evidentiary authorities. This asymmetry echoes AlShebli et al. (2025), who found that "while Palestinian tragedies were reported, Israeli stories received more narrative depth, emotional detail, and prominence, even on days when no new Israeli casualties occurred" (p. 5). In terms of coverage of the Israel-Hamas war, this may be understandable within the framework of modern mainstream conflict coverage. The disparity may reflect the initial news focus on the October 7 attacks and differences in source accessibility. Israeli civilians were likely more accessible to *Times* reporters than Gazans, who faced not only physical and technological barriers to access but also restrictions to their movement, Israel's ban on independent media access to Gaza (Boxerman, 2025), and the minute-to-minute reality of trying to survive as a trapped population under near-constant bombardment.

The category of Gaza civilians was primary in 4 of the 16 articles in which it appeared (5.2% of the complete 77-article sample), with none of those articles occurring before the latter half of the Week 3 sample. In the other 12 articles in which this source category appeared, another category—often a government, military, NGO, hospital, or other institutional source—received greater sourcing weight. Thus, Gaza civilians achieved some measure of visibility but rarely held primary sourcing status, indicating that their perspectives were usually incorporated within source structures led by governmental, military, or institutional actors. The distinction can be expressed as one of *presence versus authority* (see Figure 3); Gaza civilians were often positioned to describe what happened to them, while institutionally powerful sources were more often positioned to explain what events meant, why they occurred, who was responsible, and what should happen next—a pattern consistent with Becker's (1967) hierarchy of credibility and Hall et al.'s (1978) concept of primary definers. Under Bennett's indexing framework,

meanwhile, this is a recognizable form of marginalization: non-elite voices are not necessarily excluded, but their contributions remain embedded within narratives whose political boundaries are established largely by elites. These interpretations, however, require additional qualitative analysis.

Figure 3

Gaza Civilian Sourcing: Presence Versus Authority



Note. Article appearance rate = 16/77; primary-source rate = 4/77; sourcing-instance share = 41/930.

Note. Figure generated with Microsoft Copilot from statistics derived from the present study.

Trauma Narratives

To emphasize this point, some of the sampled article titles suggest that Gaza civilians were used in narratives of suffering, fear, displacement, deprivation, and survival—e.g., "An Audio Diary of Despair" (Al-Hlou, 2023) and "You Think of Dying at Any Time" (Abdulrahim, 2023). This again suggests an emphasis on trauma narrative; however, the data alone cannot confirm this. Still, if Gaza civilians are primarily the focus of narrative suffering, the *Times* seems to have granted these voices visibility but no interpretive agency (Becker, 1967; Hall et

al., 1978). That would demonstrate how apparent source diversity can coexist with elite-centered indexing (Bennett, 1990).

Humanitarian Sources

NGOs, IGOs, and hospitals contributed 125 sourcing instances, or 13.4% of all sourcing instances. A qualitative overview finds that these sources introduced humanitarian conditions, casualties, displacement, medical consequences, and aid concerns. However, their combined presence may itself be an indication of indexing; many of these organizations occupy positions of institutional authority.

Audiovisual and Forensic Evidence

New York Times journalists covering the first month of the Israel-Hamas war incorporated audiovisual and forensic (AVF) evidence into their newsgathering and storytelling processes, providing readers with content of tremendous dramatic power and often visceral immediacy. Text, by virtue of its static nature and the elevated mental workload required to process it, can lack this immediate punch, no matter how well-crafted. AVF also assists reporters in their efforts to corroborate information provided to them by other sources and in recreating event timelines. Gates (2024) examines work done by the *Times's* Visual Investigations team, which she calls "historically unique" (p. 80) and "at the leading-edge of this type of reporting" (p. 80), and argues that this genre of news production "stands out among the variety of ways that journalists and news organizations are claiming epistemic authority to legitimize the news in the digital era (Carlson, 2017)" (p. 80). The skills of this news team and the narrative possibilities of AVF may explain why it occupies a relatively high position in the study's sourcing hierarchy, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

AVF Evidence: Position in Sourcing Hierarchy

Category	Appearances	Sourcing Instances	Sourcing Instances per appearance
Government (I)	45	111	2.47
Government (US)	37	112	3.03
Military (I)	35	90	2.57
AVF Evidence	**28**	**58**	**2.07**
Government (G)	28	50	1.79
NGO	28	53	1.89
IGO	25	53	2.12
Civilian (I)	15	58	3.87
Civilian (Gaza)	16	41	2.56

AVF Evidence was prominent but not authoritative in the same way as elite sources. Government and military actors generally retained primary-source status across the sample. Under indexing theory, AVF is an evidence-verification and storytelling/events-recap mechanism that remains inside the bounds of the news index; in other words, it is not operationalized by *Times* reporters as an independent source of outside information. This is puzzling considering the narrative possibilities inherent in procuring self-produced and often first-person audiovisual content, especially from within Gaza. Wolfsfeld (2018) found that, while not eliminating their entrenched structural advantages, these pocket-sized technologies do make it more difficult for societal power structures to manage and control informational flows. They also improve "the ability of weaker challengers to compete with their more powerful adversaries" (p. 112), particularly in asymmetrical conflicts. Wolfsfeld explains what else he learned during the course of a series of interviews he conducted with 30 political leaders (15 Israeli and 15 Palestinian):

It was apparent from talking to Israeli and Palestinian leaders that the former group

> saw recent technological changes as a threat, while the latter saw these changes as an opportunity. The most obvious, powerful change in this area has been the revolutionary rise in the number of ordinary Palestinians and human-rights groups using camera phones to record and upload abuses by Israeli security forces. The Israelis also have their own cameras, which sometimes worked to their advantage, especially when capturing Palestinian attacks on Israeli citizens. Nevertheless, the interviews made it abundantly clear that the Palestinian leaders are far more enthusiastic about these changes than are their Israeli counterparts. (p. 112)

The ease with which people can use personal technology to broadcast events live and/or record events and their aftermaths before sharing the resulting audiovisual content online did not necessarily lead to narrative integration into the mainstream flow of information churned out by outlets like *The New York Times*. In fact, a limited, qualitative content review demonstrates that, at least during the initial 30 days of the conflict, the availability of these technologies did not translate into actual informational, advocacy, or index-challenging viewpoint representations within *Times* coverage. Thus, while AVF evidence appears to have expanded journalists' ability to verify or corroborate elite narratives, it did not necessarily disrupt the broader indexed and elite-centered sourcing hierarchy.

Al-Ahli Hospital Bombing

Consider the final sentence of the following paragraph from a story headlined "Hamas Fails to Make Case That Israel Struck Hospital" (Kingsley & Boxerman, 2023) about the bombing of Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City. Readers, if they consider these issues at all, may wonder what function it is intended to serve, other than to cast doubts about the conclusions

of both a research agency based at Goldsmiths, University of London, and of the *Times's* journalism colleagues at *Al Jazeera*.

> Forensic Architecture, a London-based visual investigation group, disputed the Israeli account, saying that the munition had been fired from the direction of Israel. *Al Jazeera,* a Qatari news channel, concluded that a Palestinian rocket had been intercepted by an Israeli air defense missile. *Both are often critical of Israeli policies* [emphasis added] (para. 19).

None of the 77 articles reviewed during this project contain similar language at the tail end of paragraphs sourcing information from the Israeli or the American government. In fact, the same article, while acknowledging Israeli inconsistencies in "messaging about the rocket launch site" (Kingsley & Boxerman, 2023, para. 16), contains information blaming Hamas or Islamic Jihad sourced from the Israeli military, the Israeli government, the U.S. government, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Associated Press*, and *CNN*. *The New York Times* did not append to any of the information attributed to these sources a sentence stating that they were "often critical of Hamas/Islamic Jihad." In noting this journalistic choice, this paper does not purport to adjudicate the issue from afar; instead, it hopes to draw attention to one small—perhaps even subtle—way in which the *Times* editorializes on behalf of the state of Israel in a piece that, to the paper's credit, does source information and quotes from both Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The structural asymmetry at play—Israeli and U.S. government officials at the top, everyone else somewhere down below—operationalizes Becker's (1967) "hierarchy of credibility." As summarized by Hall et al. (1992), this hierarchy suggests "the likelihood that those in powerful or high-status positions in society who offer opinions about controversial topics will have their definitions

accepted, because such spokesmen are understood to have access to more accurate or more specialized information on particular topics than the majority of the population" (p. 58).

Becker's and Hall's insights help describe the phenomenon we see above, in which *Times* journalists treat official state elites as inherently neutral, objective arbiters of truth. Concurrently, nonstate actors, described in this example as "critical of Israeli policies," are incongruously utilized as newsworthy sources and subsequently stigmatized as being political, biased, and, perhaps, untrustworthy. Ultimately, in the course of conducting a content analysis about newspaper sourcing, one wonders why reporters would choose sources and highlight their analyses only to undermine the legitimacy of those sources and their analyses within the same paragraph—a puzzling practice noticeably abandoned when elite sources drive the narrative within the sampled articles.[10]

Headline "Hell"

Then there are the discrepancies between headlines and article content. For example, a piece headlined "85-Year-Old Held Hostage in Gaza Says She 'Went Through Hell'" quotes the released hostage, Yocheved Lifshitz, multiple times over the course of the article, including her comments about going "through hell" and that her captors "beat her painfully in the ribs, making it hard for her to breathe, and also took away her watch" (para. 10). But she said other things, as well, including "that she was later treated relatively well" (para. 2) and that she blamed the Israeli military for failing to heed warnings of an impending attack. The article, while noting that Lifshitz's husband was still being held captive (he later died in captivity), states

[10] In the paragraph following the one analyzed here (Kingsley & Boxerman, 2023, para. 20), the reporters acknowledge that "without examining the munition that hit the parking lot, it may be impossible to draw a definitive conclusion about who fired it."

> that she and others were relatively well taken care of, given medicine and the same food as their captors. Fearing disease, her captors worked to sanitize the area, she said, and doctors would visit sporadically to check on them. "They treated us gently and fulfilled all of our needs," she said (Boxerman & Gavrielov, 2023).

The tonal shift within the article itself may come as a bit of a surprise to readers who are perhaps primed to expect something more hellish than being treated gently by their captors. This is not to diminish or dismiss the terror and associated tragedy of the experience. However, it is instructive because of how the article is initially framed by the headline and how that framing contributes to the establishment of a broader and perhaps more sympathetic narrative about Israeli victims than is afforded to Palestinians in Gaza.

Another sampled article, headlined/sub-headlined "Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza Worsens as Israel Prepares a Possible Invasion: As Israel retaliates for the Hamas assault last weekend and plans a potential ground attack, its airstrikes have left Gazans without power, water and medical care" (Wong & Yazbek, 2023), used the final seven paragraphs of the story to report on how civilians *in Israel* were angered by a perceived lack of effort on the part of the Israeli government. The article quoted a civilian in Israel who blamed the "terrible nightmare" (para. 35) on members of the Knesset, Netanyahu, and the Israeli national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir. The article ended with a quote from the Israeli military chief of staff, who "acknowledged on Thursday that the military had not lived up to its responsibilities" (para. 36), but that "now is the time for war" (para. 36). Recall the first five words of the headline: "Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza Worsens."

Indexing and Institutional Legitimacy

Indexing theory anticipates the ways in which mainstream media outlets grant or deny legitimacy to different actors and viewpoints based on the range of debate among recognized state power structures. If *The New York Times* fails to consistently distinguish between different components of the organizational structure of non-state actors but consistently distinguishes between the various components of the organizational structure of state forces, quantitative research that assumes or forces a categorical distinction onto non-state actors that is not apparent in the manifest text threatens to contaminate the dataset and the ensuing analysis. This study's method allows for a subsequent qualitative review that mathematically tracks when journalists utilize vague, undifferentiated labels for non-state entities while reserving precise operational labels for state entities. This approach ensures a dataset that isolates naming conventions contained within the manifest text.

Indexing theory provides insights into this tendency to assign precise organizational nomenclature to state actors while collapsing multifaceted non-state actors into a single nonspecific mass. The *Times* grants institutional legitimacy and contributes to the appearance of elite transparency by specifically identifying officials and separating them into their respective institutional domains—e.g., cabinet officials, Pentagon spokespeople, IDF commanders, the president, etc.—across distinct civic, administrative, military, and diplomatic domains. In the case of Israeli military operations, for example, readers of the *Times* are presented with source labels that render institutional command structures legible and legitimate to readers. Conversely, in the sampled articles, there were several occasions when reporting either failed to differentiate an administrative or leadership entity within Hamas from its military wing or used the Hamas label to associate non-military entities with Hamas more generally. For example, the *Times* often

referred to the Health Ministry in Gaza as "the Hamas-run Health Ministry in Gaza" (see Stack & Yazbek, 2023, para. 1). And the following reference to its military wing appears to be one of the few times that Hamas's organizational structure was specified by the paper: "On Oct. 17 the military wing of Hamas, the Al Qassam Brigades, said that one of its top commanders, Ayman Nofal, was killed in an Israeli strike on the Bureij refugee camp" (Stack & Yazbek, 2023, para. 12). This collapsed framing of a structurally limited but nevertheless multifaceted organization into a single label blurs or erases the boundaries between its own civic, administrative, military, and diplomatic components, positioning them in the *Times's* coverage not as a rational actor with legitimate political aims but rather as a potentially irrational, monolithic menace. This pattern is consistent with studies of elite-defined discourse in which mainstream news tends to reproduce the boundaries, classifications, and assumptions established by elite actors (Bennett, 1990; Hall et al., 1978; Hallin, 1986). In the current study's sample, state actors are consistently granted bureaucratic and political complexity; Hamas, on the other hand, is sometimes represented by a singular organizational label. Thus, the *Times* executes an indexing function when its coverage mirrors geopolitical boundaries established by state elites. However, at least one story makes it explicit to the reader that Hamas has more than one role within Gaza. In a story headlined "Hamas put wounded fighters on departure lists, delaying efforts to evacuate foreigners, a U.S. official says," the *Times* included this bit of info: "Hamas rules Gaza politically and also has an armed wing whose fighters are embedded within the enclave's civilian population" (Shear, 2023, para. 2). This appears to be one of the few times, if not the only time, that any of the sampled articles mentioned a part of Hamas's organizational structure.

Narrative Prominence

Regarding media coverage of the war in Vietnam, Hallin (1986) lists a number of issues related to the conflict that were "never seriously discussed" in the *Times*, including, somewhat unsurprisingly, what type of outcome would have been best for the people living in Indochina (p. 214). These issues were not discussed, he argues, "because the constraints of ideology and of journalistic routines tying news coverage to Washington perspectives excluded them from the news agenda" (p. 214), anticipating Bennett's (1990) work on indexing, which suggests that "the range of voices in news stories" is restricted not due to "overt censorship" but instead from "routine 'professional' decisions about who and what the media should cover with their limited resources" (p. 103).

This paper argues that these institutional and ideological restrictions are even more effective at limiting the range of issues discussed and the range of sources utilized by journalists when they are tasked with covering a fluid, breaking news story that's taking place thousands of miles away. Further complicating the journalist's task is the fact that Israel has worked to prevent international journalists from entering Gaza unless supervised by the Israeli military (Boxerman, 2025), an example of a state attempting to exercise its political power by controlling the flow of images and information (Hallin, 1986, p. 214), thus positioning itself as the arbiter or creator of media narrative frames. Halper (2010) is instructive:

> This is the power of framing. It is a crucial intervening variable between facts and reaching particular conclusions. In any debate, the party that succeeds in framing the issue, in determining the parameters of the discussion and the terms used, control the flow of the discussion and usually wins. Conclusions follow naturally from the framer's presentation. The other side (called "the negative" in college debates) can only rebut. It

> lacks the space to present a coherent and persuasive framing of its own; it comes across as defensive, inarticulate and unconvincing. And if a framing like Israel's is lavishly funded by state agencies, painstakingly constructed by PR agencies and communicated by professional spokespeople enjoying unlimited access to the media, it must be effective (p. 82).

Hallin's Spheres

Hallin (1986) proffers an explanation for why media coverage of the Vietnam war changed over time, harnessing both data about the content of news media and our shared understanding of the relationship between media and political authorities, the latter of which guides media reflections of and responses to the collapse of elite consensus on foreign policy. The author proposes what has come to be known as *Hallin's spheres*. Briefly, journalists' working worlds can be divided into three regions or spheres, each with "internal gradations" and "fuzzy" boundaries (p. 117): consensus, controversy, and deviance. In the *sphere of consensus*, "journalists do not feel compelled either to present opposing views or to remain disinterested observers" (p. 117) and, in fact, often act as advocates or celebrants of "consensus values" (p. 117). In this sphere, Hallin (1984) argues, "the media play an essentially conservative, legitimizing role; here the case for a Gramscian model of the media as maintainers of the hegemony of a dominant political ideology is strong" (p. 21). Next, the *sphere of legitimate controversy* is one "where objective journalism reigns supreme" (p. 21) alongside "neutrality and balance" (p. 21). Finally, the *sphere of deviance*, perhaps the most relevant conceptual sphere for the current study, deals with how journalists establish boundaries for political discourse, sourcing information from those whom journalists regard as being outside acceptable debate. These voices may be ignored, marginalized, or condemned; in other words, journalists may utilize these

sources but not accord them the neutrality that's typically applied to sources operating from within a sphere of legitimate controversy. Indexing guides researchers to a question: Whose views get indexed into news coverage. Hallin's spheres also guide researchers to a question: How are views that fall within the sphere of deviance managed by journalists?

The "Extraordinary Broadside"

An article from Week 4 of the sample not only provides some answers to those questions but also serves as an exemplar of mainstream media behavior when journalists are confronted by an elite institutional actor expressing opinions that are treated as having emerged from the sphere of deviance. In an article headlined, "Rashida Tlaib Posts Video Accusing Biden of Supporting 'Genocide,'" the paper does not present her critique of Biden neutrally; it frames it as "an extraordinary broadside against the president by a lawmaker from his own party" (Guo, 2023, para. 5) that "threatens to widen an already tense fissure within the Democratic Party on the conflict" (para. 7). Here, the *Times* implicitly acknowledges that Tlaib possesses institutional and bureaucratic legitimacy and explicitly acknowledges that the video's message sits beyond the approved boundaries of both American and Israeli foreign policy discourse. The article, the headline of which places the word *genocide* in quotation marks, consults both the Anti-Defamation League (para. 14) and the dictionary to neutralize Tlaib's comments. As to the latter, the article reads:

> A genocide is defined as the deliberate and systematic killing of members of a particular ethnic, national, racial or religious group in order to annihilate that group. The Israeli military has said it is targeting Hamas, which carried out terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians, not the Palestinian people (para. 6).

Hallin's spheres are not fixed. Like Bennett's indexing theory, the spheres contribute to a conceptualization of mainstream media's tendency to recalibrate its news coverage as the boundaries of legitimate discourse and elite debate shift. And like indexing theory, the spheres provide a helpful conceptual framework for the analysis of elite disagreements and the ways in which that disagreement manifests itself into news coverage. Bennett can help explain why the range of published debate might be narrow; Hallin's spheres can help show how information is processed when it exceeds the bounds of legitimate debate or even treads along its edges. In this regard, the Tlaib article is illuminating. The *Times's* coverage of the controversy shows how elite disagreements will expand its index; the article qualitatively demonstrates how the *Times* situates that disagreement in relation to dominant discourse. Tlaib's institutional clout demands news coverage. The article itself demonstrates what scholars have called "discursive containment" (Kinsella, 2001)[11], deployed in order to indicate to readers that this official and/or her comments are *deviant*. From an indexing perspective, the Tlaib article may represent an early indication that elite discourse was already broadening the range of voices represented in *Times* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war. Further study is necessary to determine if Tlaib's comments have subsequently moved from a sphere of deviance to one of legitimate controversy.

As for indexing, the Tlaib article demonstrates another facet of Bennett's theory: One need not necessarily examine the range of elite debate in Washington, D.C., to know that a person or a unit of information is positioned beyond the bounds of acceptable dialogue. Here, *The New York Times* does that work for its readers, policing the consensus boundary and framing the story in such a way as to indicate clearly and without reservation (i.e., without quoting someone who agrees with or defends Tlaib) that the congresswoman is an outsider.

[11] Or perhaps what Erving Goffman (1974) called "editorial violence routinely employed by gentle writers" (p. 14).

Limitations

This study's limitations include the deliberately bounded scope of its population: *The New York Times's* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war over the first 30 days of the conflict. The study deploys a proportionate stratified random sample; therefore, its findings can be generalized to the population of 306 *Times* articles from which the sample was drawn, not to the *Times's* coverage of the conflict beyond this 30-day period, articles about the war not labeled "Israel-Hamas war" on the NYTimes.com website, or the newspaper's coverage of other topics.

This paper proposes a methodological definition and rule of applicability for conceptualizing and operationalizing "novel units of information," along with examples pulled directly from the coded sample, in an attempt to provide reasonable and replicable standards for coding decisions that inevitably involve human judgment. There are recognized challenges and potential limitations involved in defining, operationalizing, and coding for subjective, interpretive concepts like "novel units of information," especially considering that the study's design, execution, coding, and analytical interpretations are the work of a single researcher. Thus, another limitation is related to the single-researcher limitation: the absence of a broad set of intercoder reliability tests. Additional limitations are broken into two sections below.

Source Frequency

Source frequency alone cannot establish whether the viewpoints and frames matched the boundaries of elite debate. A second quantitative content analysis of the sample would be required that codes each source's viewpoint/debate position—e.g., supportive, critical, humanitarian, legal, cease-fire, military escalation—and compares those frames with contemporaneous debates among U.S. and Israeli policymakers and military structures.

News Consumption and Media Literacy

In their discussion of media literacy, Lewis and Jhally (1998) argue that important issues of representation play out at a textual level, and, citing Hall (1993), acknowledge that textual analyses can demonstrate aspects of encoding and decoding. However, they warn that, without a consideration of "the institutional, cultural, and economic conditions in which texts are produced and understood" (p. 111), such analyses may be of limited utility. In short, they implore consumers to "go beyond the text" (p. 112). While not focused on the subject of media literacy, the hope for the present study is that it hints at potentially fruitful avenues of research into news consumption and the ways in which "media literacy can provide people with the wherewithal for thinking about the limits and possibilities of media systems" (p. 113). Lewis and Jhally write:

> Media literacy, in short, is about more than the analysis of messages, it is about an awareness of why those messages are there. It is not enough to know that they are produced, or even how, in a technical sense, they are produced. To appreciate the significance of contemporary media, we need to know why they are produced, under what constraints and conditions, and by whom. (p. 111)

Finally, citing Herman & Chomsky (1988), Lewis and Jhally argue that "an analysis of the news should be concerned not only with the way stories are constructed, but also with who is and who is not allowed to speak" (p. 112), an approach more in line with the parameters of the present analysis. However, quantifying source prominence in *New York Times* coverage of the Israel-Hamas war in particular and of Israel-Palestine in general is but one piece of a content-consumption/media-literacy puzzle. The goals of any media literacy project, which would surely include building an awareness of who is being left out of the conversation, are worth pursuing. Still, it may be wise, albeit a bit pessimistic, to remember that a new critical awareness of news

production is not necessarily synonymous with deeper insights, especially when dealing with an issue as seemingly intractable as Israel-Palestine. Stone's (1989b) caveat takes on additional relevance here: "The roots of this struggle lie deeper than reason. It is not at all certain that information will replace passion with knowledge" (p. 412).

Entman (2003) asserts that index theorists point to "elite discord" as "a necessary condition for politically influential frame challenges," proposing his own cascading activation model to help explain "whether those conditions arise" in the first place "and how journalists can hinder or advance them" (p. 429). Sourcing patterns demonstrate that this necessary discord is barely visible in the 30-day sample on which this study is focused. This represents an opportunity for further study to determine if and when some conversation-shifting discord first appears in the *Times* or another legacy media outlet and is subsequently reflected in the media ecosystem.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

> The *Times* can speak authoritatively about a subject and also make that subject pertinent to the nation; it does so deliberately and, it seems, successfully.
>
> —Edward Said

> A judicious reader of the *Times* can learn a great deal about two topics of major importance: current world events, and the American system of ideological control, in which the *Times*, by virtue of its unique standing, plays a central role.
>
> —Noam Chomsky

> News is only the first rough draft of history.
>
> — Alan Barth

Journalists must make decisions about whom to source, and those decisions are informed by a number of criteria, including access, geography, credibility, and challenges in verifying information, especially if done from afar. Nevertheless, if the preponderance of sourcing is from U.S. and Israeli government, military, and civilian sectors, where might that leave Palestinians in Gaza? Where might they be now if source selection early in the war had included more of their voices? Sources and information, time and place, identity and authority—these are fertile crossroads for newsgathering, especially if journalists keep Stone's dictum that "all governments lie" firmly in the forefront of their newsgathering processes.

Barth (1943) was the first to suggest that "news is only the first rough draft of history" (p. 677), but many others have agreed with, endorsed, and promoted versions of this statement. Among them is the Israeli Government Press Office (GPO), which administers press relations and public-diplomacy functions but is also associated in Israeli government materials with *hasbara* (Hebrew for *explaining*). Operating under the purview of the Israeli prime minister,

the GPO features a similar version of the Barth quote—"Journalism is the first rough draft of history," which it attributes to former *Washington Post* publisher Philip Graham—on a wall in its Tel Aviv headquarters. The GPO operates as part of an assemblage of public relations organizations working within the prime minister's office, alongside the National Information Directorate and the National Public Diplomacy Directorate—the latter "better known in Israel as the hasbara unit" (Blau, 2024).

If all governments lie[12] and if news is the first rough draft of history, then who decides what's newsworthy? A journalist who accepts the framing of news as the first rough draft of history is interpreting that statement from a different vantage point than are the government employees who work for the Israeli GPO. A journalist recognizes that what they're reporting in real time is a work in progress; that the material they compile and edit into a story is likely to change over time—revised as more information comes in and is contextualized; and that mistakes are inevitable and corrections are forthcoming. A government press office that places this quote on their wall is likely endorsing a much different view of it—one that has more to do with managing the message than in delivering it raw and unfiltered.

War is an especially powerful content motivator. Wars involving an ally with whom America has developed a "special relationship" are even further incentivizing. And war emanating from a region that cradles the origins of the world's three major religions—a region that to this researcher seems too small to partition and too holy to divide—provides a seemingly limitless supply of content for stories that are devastating, infuriating, heartbreaking, graphic, shocking, and entertaining, driving traffic to websites and eyeballs to screens.

[12] Another variation of Stone's dictum: "Every government is run by liars, and nothing they say should be believed. That's a prima facie assumption unless proven to the contrary" (Bruck, 1973, 0:01).

Journalists have historically faced specific challenges during wartime newsgathering; those challenges have in many ways intensified in the digital age. Despite having been mostly relieved of the burden of daily print deadlines, modern journalists nevertheless face novel pressures in a content-production environment in which every moment feels like an impending deadline. Audiences have grown accustomed to the easy availability of instant information and real-time updates, not just on news websites but across social media feeds, as well. As noted above, Gans (1979) writes that the "government and its activities are always important" and that the government's position within the informational hierarchy endow it with "journalistic legitimation" (p. 65). But, he argues, there are "very practical reasons" (p. 65) for this arrangement, including the fact that the "news media cannot report all stories that affect the nation" or their audience and so must turn to government sources to help them determine "the number of suitable stories" (p. 65). Similarly, as Althaus (2003) reminds us, governments "provide the most efficient, reliable, and legitimate means" for acquiring "socially important" information; thus, as a matter of course, a "functional press system" will tend to publish stories that "closely shadow the activities of governments" (p. 81). These practical and functional considerations have "numerous ideological implications" (Gans, 1979, p. 65), including their relationship to what scholars have argued is the agenda-setting function of the news media and its "stunningly successful" ability to tell consumers "what to think *about*" (Cohen, 1963, p. 13). When it comes to *The New York Times* reporting on the Israel-Hamas war, perhaps it is within the relatively new and relentlessly deadline-driven digital dynamic that Bennett et al.'s (2007) reminder that "in most matters of public policy, the news agenda itself is set by those in power" (p. 54) is most clearly illustrated.

As we approach the 40th anniversary of the genesis of Bennett's influential insights, scholars have certainly gathered "a body of evidence strong enough to support a general theory" (p. 122) of press-state relations in newsgathering; others have attempted to update or revise it. From the outset, however, Bennett's "emerging theory" (p. 110) acknowledged not only that "patterns of media indexing may vary from issue to issue and from one political situation to another" (p. 122) but also that, when it comes to covering issues "of little consequence for the corporate economic order, normative vigilance may be relaxed to allow a greater range of voices to enter the news" (p. 122).

The Israel-Hamas war is most assuredly not "of little consequence," neither in terms of its international import nor its visceral, mediated immediacy. For journalists, it can be a confusing cacophony, a moment-to-moment maelstrom of violence and victims, politics and patriotism, religion and human rights, history and *hasbara*. The bounds of respectable discourse related to the conflict are policed by powerful institutions both public and private and filtered through the "special relationship" between the United States and Israel. Media theorists, researchers, and scholars from a wide range of academic disciplines have defined and described the contours of press-state relations with increasing precision and increasingly elegant insights. The ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas provides us with yet another contemporary case study with which these foundational theories can be tested, refined, expanded, or discarded. Voices that are included but not foregrounded in daily news coverage can easily become voices that suddenly disappear from the narrative. And as writers have noted, voices and events that are excluded from *Times* coverage may "just as well not have happened." In the meantime, however, elite voices are rarely if ever submerged for long beneath the relentless torrent of ever-breaking news coverage emanating from Israel and the Occupied Territories.

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APPENDIX A

77-Article Sample

Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date
Week 1	7	'The Children Were Terrified' Fear Grips Israel and Gaza	10/07/23
Week 1	8	The war could upend Biden's diplomacy on Saudi-Israel normalization.	10/07/23
Week 1	14	Israel and Hamas Battle Around Gaza as Netanyahu Warns of 'Long and Difficult War'	10/08/23
Week 1	15	A Quick Look at Hamas	10/08/23
Week 1	19	Video captures concertgoer being kidnapped by militants.	10/08/23
Week 1	22	What We Know About the War Between Israel and Hamas	10/08/23
Week 1	35	With 300,000 reservists mobilized, the war 'hits close to home' for many Israelis.	10/09/23
Week 1	38	American Airlines, Other Major Airlines Suspend Flights to Israel	10/10/23
Week 1	44	Hamas Leaves Trail of Terror in Israel	10/10/23
Week 1	47	Relatives of Americans Missing in Israel Plead for Help	10/10/23
Week 1	57	Why Tensions Are Rising on Israel's Border With Lebanon as It Fights Hamas in Gaza	10/11/23
Week 1	68	As Deaths Soar in Gaza From Israeli Strikes, Egypt Offers Aid, but No Exit	10/12/23
Week 1	70	Conditions in Gaza Are 'Horrible,' U.N. Official Says, as Israel Strikes Back at Hamas	10/12/23
Week 2	113	Some Republican lawmakers reject calls for Israeli restraint after Hamas attacks.	10/15/23
Week 2	117	Twins Are Born in Gaza After Their Mother Flees to the South	10/16/23
Week 2	127	U.S. Response to Israel-Hamas War Draws Fury in Middle East	10/17/23
Week 2	136	Rescuers struggle as Israel's bombardment buries Gazans in their homes.	10/17/23
Week 2	144	In Tel Aviv, Biden's Embrace of Israel Came With a Gentle Warning	10/18/23
Week 2	146	A Sudden Blast, Then Carnage in a Hospital Courtyard	10/18/23

Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date
Week 2	150	Families of Hamas Hostages Split on Invasion of Gaza	10/18/23
Week 2	151	Biden's Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Israel Is Grilled by Senators	10/18/23
Week 2	154	After losing his parents, a son carries on his father's sense of optimism.	10/18/23
Week 2	156	Before a deadly blast, Israeli soldiers repeatedly warned a hospital to evacuate, its owners say.	10/18/23
Week 2	160	Israelis Praise Biden Visit but Fear U.S. Constraints on Action	10/19/23
Week 2	172	Israeli Airstrike Hits Greek Orthodox Church Compound in Gaza City	10/20/23
Week 2	174	Violence Surges in West Bank, With 13 Palestinians and an Israeli Killed	10/20/23
Week 2	176	Security threats disrupt a Muslim rights group's annual event near Washington, organizers say.	10/20/23
Week 3	179	First Humanitarian Aid Reaches a Hard-Pressed Gaza	10/21/23
Week 3	181	How Two American Hostages Were Set Free From Gaza	10/21/23
Week 3	182	Blinken says the U.S. is still trying to secure passage into Egypt for its citizens trapped in Gaza.	10/21/23
Week 3	188	Hamas Fails to Make Case That Israel Struck Hospital	10/22/23
Week 3	190	Israeli Reservist From Maryland Is Killed Near Lebanon Border	10/22/23
Week 3	192	Here are the Hamas officials believed to have been killed since Oct. 7.	10/22/23
Week 3	202	A Close Look at Some Key Evidence in the Gaza Hospital Blast	10/24/23
Week 3	206	85-Year-Old Held Hostage in Gaza Says She 'Went Through Hell'	10/24/23
Week 3	208	Cease-fire Calls Dominate Fiery U.N. Security Council Session	10/24/23
Week 3	216	An Audio Diary of Despair	10/25/23
Week 3	220	Alone and Outgunned, Israeli Police Fought Hamas From House to House	10/26/23
Week 3	225	Who Is in Israel's War Cabinet?	10/26/23
Week 3	227	What to Know About UNRWA, the Largest Aid Organization in Gaza	10/26/23

Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date
Week 3	228	A Palestinian American in Gaza talks about the scramble to survive.	10/26/23
Week 4	236	'You Think of Dying at Any Time'	10/28/23
Week 4	240	As Fighting Rages, Ukraine Takes Its Battle to the Diplomatic Arena	10/29/23
Week 4	241	Cornell Jewish Center Under Guard After Online Threats to Jewish Students	10/29/23
Week 4	246	Netanyahu Apologizes After Blaming Security Chiefs for Failure in Hamas Attack	10/29/23
Week 4	251	One Would Rather Die With His Family': Some See No Point in Fleeing Gaza.	10/30/23
Week 4	254	A Very Slow Game': Why the Pace of Israel's Ground Operation Counts	10/30/23
Week 4	261	Hezbollah Hesitates as Israel Strikes Gaza	10/31/23
Week 4	264	Israeli Troops Battle Into Gaza as Airstrike Draws Conflicting Claims	10/31/23
Week 4	266	Videos show a densely populated area of Gaza decimated by Israel's airstrike.	10/31/23
Week 4	274	After Years of Vowing to Destroy Israel, Iran Faces a Dilemma	11/01/23
Week 4	281	Evacuating From Gaza Is Its Own Ordeal	11/02/23
Week 4	286	Saudi Arabia Begins Aid Effort for Gaza and Raises $17 Million in Hours	11/02/23
Week 4	289	Criticism of Israel intensifies as the death toll from airstrikes rises.	11/02/23
Week 4	291	Hamas put wounded fighters on departure lists, delaying efforts to evacuate foreigners, a U.S. official says.	11/03/23
Week 4	292	Israel Used 2,000-Pound Bombs in Strike on Jabaliya, Analysis Shows	11/03/23
Week 4	296	Rashida Tlaib Posts Video Accusing Biden of Supporting 'Genocide'	11/03/23
Week 5	298	France says it will send two military flights with aid for Gaza.	11/04/23
Week 5	301	Among Hamas Hostages: More Than 20 Thais, Half a World From Home	11/05/23

Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date
Week 5	303	Explosion Gazans Say Was Airstrike Leaves Many Casualties in Dense Neighborhood	11/05/23

Intracoder Reliability 16-Article Subsample

Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date
Week 1	15	A Quick Look at Hamas	2023-10-08
Week 1	38	American Airlines, Other Major Airlines Suspend Flights to Israel	2023-10-10
Week 1	44	Hamas Leaves Trail of Terror in Israel	2023-10-10
Week 1	90	U.S. Cities Bolster Security After Hamas Calls for Day of Protest	2023-10-13
Week 1	92	Israeli officials take journalists on a tour of a morgue.	2023-10-13
Week 2	102	In southern Gaza, finding water is now ‘the hardest thing.’	2023-10-14
Week 2	103	Ukraine Worries That Prolonged War in Gaza May Dilute Global Support	2023-10-15
Week 2	113	Some Republican lawmakers reject calls for Israeli restraint after Hamas attacks.	2023-10-15
Week 2	136	Rescuers struggle as Israel’s bombardment buries Gazans in their homes.	2023-10-17
Week 3	190	Israeli Reservist From Maryland Is Killed Near Lebanon Border	2023-10-22
Week 3	220	Alone and Outgunned, Israeli Police Fought Hamas From House to House	2023-10-26
Week 3	227	What to Know About UNRWA, the Largest Aid Organization in Gaza	2023-10-26
Week 4	261	Hezbollah Hesitates as Israel Strikes Gaza	2023-10-31
Week 4	291	Hamas put wounded fighters on departure lists, delaying efforts to evacuate foreigners, a U.S. official says.	2023-11-03
Week 4	296	Rashida Tlaib Posts Video Accusing Biden of Supporting ‘Genocide’	2023-11-03
Week 5	303	Explosion Gazans Say Was Airstrike Leaves Many Casualties in Dense Neighborhood	2023-11-05

APPENDIX B

Sampling Script

This is the reproducible computational procedure used to generate the study's proportionate stratified random sample. Sampling was conducted in R 4.6.0 using RStudio 2026.04.0+526 and the dplyr package, version 1.2.1. A fixed random seed of 765 permits sample reproduction. The text of this paragraph was generated with the assistance of OpenAI's ChatGPT.

```
# ============================================================
# THESIS SAMPLING SCRIPT: MATTHEW GEORGE MOORE
# METHOD: 25% Proportional Stratified Random Sample
# ============================================================

library(dplyr)

# 1. Prepare Data
# Ensure you run the line: my_data <- read.csv(file.choose()) before this
colnames(my_data)[3] <- "Weeks_Column" # Fixes the '...3' naming issue

# 2. Set Seed for Reproducibility
set.seed(765)

# 3. Sampling Logic (Round Half Up)
final_sample <- my_data %>%
  group_by(Weeks_Column) %>%
  group_modify(~ {
    n_size <- nrow(.x) * 0.25
    final_n <- ifelse(n_size %% 1 == 0.5, ceiling(n_size), round(n_size))
    slice_sample(.x, n = final_n)
  }) %>%
  ungroup()

# 4. Final Cleanup & Sorting
final_sample <- na.omit(final_sample)
final_sample <- final_sample[order(as.numeric(final_sample$ID)), ]

# 5. Output Results
print(table(final_sample$Weeks_Column))
write.csv(final_sample, "Moore_Matt_George_Final_77_Sample.csv", row.names
= FALSE)
View(final_sample)
```

Intracoder Reliability Sampling Script

This is the reproducible computational procedure used to generate the study's 16-article proportionate stratified random intracoder reliability subsample from the original 77-article sample. Sampling was conducted in R 4.6.0 using RStudio 2026.04.0+526 and the dplyr

package, version 1.2.1. A fixed random seed of 766 permits sample reproduction. The text of this paragraph was generated with the assistance of OpenAI's ChatGPT.

```
# ========================================================
# INTRACODER RELIABILITY SAMPLING SCRIPT: MATTHEW GEORGE MOORE
# METHOD: 20.78% Proportionate Stratified Random Subsample
# ========================================================

library(dplyr)

# 1. Load the existing 77-article sample
my_data <- read.csv("Moore_Matt_George_Final_77_Sample.csv")

# 2. Set a fixed seed so the reliability sample can be reproduced
set.seed(766)

# 3. Draw a proportionate stratified random sample of 16 articles
reliability_sample <- my_data %>%
  group_by(Weeks_Column) %>%
  group_modify(~ {
    n_size <- nrow(.x) * (16 / 77)
    final_n <- floor(n_size + 0.5)   # Round half up
    slice_sample(.x, n = final_n)
  }) %>%
  ungroup()

# 4. Sort the selected articles by ID
reliability_sample <- reliability_sample[
  order(as.numeric(reliability_sample$ID)), ]

# 5. Check the sample
print(table(reliability_sample$Weeks_Column))
print(nrow(reliability_sample))

# 6. Save the 16-article reliability sample as a CSV
write.csv(
  reliability_sample,
  "Moore_Matt_George_Intracoder_Reliability_16_Sample.csv",
  row.names = FALSE)

# 7. View the sample in RStudio
View(reliability_sample)
```

APPENDIX C

Article Appearance Count (descending)

Competition ranking is used; ties share the same rank and retain ID order (ascending by date).

Article Count (Appearances) — Competition Ranking

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Article Count
1	Week 3	188	Hamas Fails to Make Case That Israel Struck Hospital	10/22/23	13
2	Week 1	22	What We Know About the War Between Israel and Hamas	10/08/23	12
2	Week 2	108	As Israeli Invasion Looms, Diplomats Seek to Meet Gaza's Dire Human Needs	10/15/23	12
2	Week 2	127	U.S. Response to Israel-Hamas War Draws Fury in Middle East	10/17/23	12
5	Week 1	44	Hamas Leaves Trail of Terror in Israel	10/10/23	10
5	Week 1	73	Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza Worsens as Israel Prepares a Possible Invasion	10/12/23	10
5	Week 2	146	A Sudden Blast, Then Carnage in a Hospital Courtyard	10/18/23	10
5	Week 2	172	Israeli Airstrike Hits Greek Orthodox Church Compound in Gaza City	10/20/23	10
5	Week 3	202	A Close Look at Some Key Evidence in the Gaza Hospital Blast	10/24/23	10
5	Week 4	264	Israeli Troops Battle Into Gaza as Airstrike Draws Conflicting Claims	10/31/23	10

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Article Count
11	Week 1	14	Israel and Hamas Battle Around Gaza as Netanyahu Warns of ‘Long and Difficult War’	10/08/23	9
11	Week 1	89	A Reuters cameraman is killed and six other journalists are injured near Lebanon’s southern border.	10/13/23	9
11	Week 2	174	Violence Surges in West Bank, With 13 Palestinians and an Israeli Killed	10/20/23	9
11	Week 3	179	First Humanitarian Aid Reaches a Hard-Pressed Gaza	10/21/23	9
11	Week 3	181	How Two American Hostages Were Set Free From Gaza	10/21/23	9
11	Week 4	236	‘You Think of Dying at Any Time’	10/28/23	9
11	Week 4	266	Videos show a densely populated area of Gaza decimated by Israel’s airstrike.	10/31/23	9
11	Week 5	303	Explosion Gazans Say Was Airstrike Leaves Many Casualties in Dense Neighborhood	11/05/23	9
19	Week 1	7	‘The Children Were Terrified.’ Fear Grips Israel and Gaza	10/07/23	8
19	Week 1	74	As Warnings of Crisis in Gaza Mount, Palestinians Struggle to Find Room for the Dead	10/12/23	8
19	Week 1	80	Airstrikes on besieged Gaza add to a crisis that has already lasted more than a decade.	10/12/23	8

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Article Count
19	Week 2	100	Israeli Invasion Plans Target Gaza City and Hamas Leadership	10/14/23	8
19	Week 4	254	A Very Slow Game': Why the Pace of Israel's Ground Operation Counts	10/30/23	8
19	Week 4	289	Criticism of Israel intensifies as the death toll from airstrikes rises.	11/02/23	8
25	Week 1	68	As Deaths Soar in Gaza From Israeli Strikes, Egypt Offers Aid, but No Exit	10/12/23	7
25	Week 2	112	Clashes between Hezbollah and Israel intensify on the Lebanese border.	10/15/23	7
25	Week 4	274	After Years of Vowing to Destroy Israel, Iran Faces a Dilemma	11/01/23	7
25	Week 4	281	Evacuating From Gaza Is Its Own Ordeal	11/02/23	7
25	Week 5	298	France says it will send two military flights with aid for Gaza.	11/04/23	7
30	Week 2	156	Before a deadly blast, Israeli soldiers repeatedly warned a hospital to evacuate, its owners say.	10/18/23	6
30	Week 3	192	Here are the Hamas officials believed to have been killed since Oct. 7.	10/22/23	6
30	Week 4	251	One Would Rather Die With His Family': Some See No Point in Fleeing Gaza.	10/30/23	6
30	Week 4	261	Hezbollah Hesitates as Israel Strikes Gaza	10/31/23	6

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Article Count
30	Week 4	292	Israel Used 2,000-Pound Bombs in Strike on Jabaliya, Analysis Shows	11/03/23	6
30	Week 5	301	Among Hamas Hostages: More Than 20 Thais, Half a World From Home	11/05/23	6
36	Week 1	8	The war could upend Biden's diplomacy on Saudi-Israel normalization.	10/07/23	5
36	Week 1	70	Conditions in Gaza Are 'Horrible,' U.N. Official Says, as Israel Strikes Back at Hamas	10/12/23	5
36	Week 1	71	The Retired Israeli General Who Grabbed His Pistol and Took On Hamas	10/12/23	5
36	Week 2	103	Ukraine Worries That Prolonged War in Gaza May Dilute Global Support	10/15/23	5
36	Week 2	144	In Tel Aviv, Biden's Embrace of Israel Came With a Gentle Warning	10/18/23	5
36	Week 2	160	Israelis Praise Biden Visit but Fear U.S. Constraints on Action	10/19/23	5
36	Week 3	190	Israeli Reservist From Maryland Is Killed Near Lebanon Border	10/22/23	5
36	Week 3	208	Cease-fire Calls Dominate Fiery U.N. Security Council Session	10/24/23	5
44	Week 1	57	Why Tensions Are Rising on Israel's Border With Lebanon as It Fights Hamas in Gaza	10/11/23	4
44	Week 1	90	U.S. Cities Bolster Security After Hamas Calls for Day of Protest	10/13/23	4

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Article Count
44	Week 1	91	A trip to visit relatives in Gaza turns into a nightmare.	10/13/23	4
44	Week 2	136	Rescuers struggle as Israel's bombardment buries Gazans in their homes.	10/17/23	4
44	Week 2	176	Security threats disrupt a Muslim rights group's annual event near Washington, organizers say.	10/20/23	4
44	Week 3	206	85-Year-Old Held Hostage in Gaza Says She 'Went Through Hell'	10/24/23	4
44	Week 4	286	Saudi Arabia Begins Aid Effort for Gaza and Raises $17 Million in Hours	11/02/23	4
44	Week 4	296	Rashida Tlaib Posts Video Accusing Biden of Supporting 'Genocide'	11/03/23	4
52	Week 1	35	With 300,000 reservists mobilized, the war 'hits close to home' for many Israelis.	10/09/23	3
52	Week 1	38	American Airlines, Other Major Airlines Suspend Flights to Israel	10/10/23	3
52	Week 1	78	Israel Tells Northern Gaza Residents to Evacuate South	10/12/23	3
52	Week 1	92	Israeli officials take journalists on a tour of a morgue.	10/13/23	3
52	Week 2	102	In southern Gaza, finding water is now 'the hardest thing'	10/14/23	3
52	Week 3	216	An Audio Diary of Despair	10/25/23	3

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Article Count
52	Week 3	220	Alone and Outgunned, Israeli Police Fought Hamas From House to House	10/26/23	3
52	Week 3	227	What to Know About UNRWA, the Largest Aid Organization in Gaza	10/26/23	3
52	Week 4	240	As Fighting Rages, Ukraine Takes Its Battle to the Diplomatic Arena	10/29/23	3
52	Week 4	241	Cornell Jewish Center Under Guard After Online Threats to Jewish Students	10/29/23	3
52	Week 4	246	Netanyahu Apologizes After Blaming Security Chiefs for Failure in Hamas Attack	10/29/23	3
63	Week 1	19	Video captures concertgoer being kidnapped by militants.	10/08/23	2
63	Week 2	150	Families of Hamas Hostages Split on Invasion of Gaza	10/18/23	2
63	Week 3	182	Blinken says the U.S. is still trying to secure passage into Egypt for its citizens trapped in Gaza.	10/21/23	2
63	Week 3	225	Who Is in Israel's War Cabinet?	10/26/23	2
67	Week 1	15	A Quick Look at Hamas	10/08/23	1
67	Week 1	47	Relatives of Americans Missing in Israel Plead for Help	10/10/23	1
67	Week 1	72	No Immediate Threat to U.S. Security Amid Hamas Call for Protests, Officials Say	10/12/23	1

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Article Count
67	Week 2	101	Schumer Plans Vote of Support Upon Returning From Israel	10/14/23	1
67	Week 2	110	Biden administration seeks emergency aid package for both Israel and Ukraine.	10/15/23	1
67	Week 2	113	Some Republican lawmakers reject calls for Israeli restraint after Hamas attacks.	10/15/23	1
67	Week 2	117	Twins Are Born in Gaza After Their Mother Flees to the South	10/16/23	1
67	Week 2	151	Biden's Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Israel Is Grilled by Senators	10/18/23	1
67	Week 2	154	After losing his parents, a son carries on his father's sense of optimism.	10/18/23	1
67	Week 3	228	A Palestinian American in Gaza talks about the scramble to survive.	10/26/23	1
67	Week 4	291	Hamas put wounded fighters on departure lists, delaying efforts to evacuate foreigners, a U.S. official says.	11/03/23	1

APPENDIX D

Total Source Citations (descending)

Competition ranking is used; ties share the same rank and retain ID order (ascending by date).

Total Source Citations — Competition Ranking

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Total Source Citations
1	Week 3	188	Hamas Fails to Make Case That Israel Struck Hospital	10/22/23	29
2	Week 2	127	U.S. Response to Israel-Hamas War Draws Fury in Middle East	10/17/23	27
3	Week 2	108	As Israeli Invasion Looms, Diplomats Seek to Meet Gaza's Dire Human Needs	10/15/23	26
4	Week 4	264	Israeli Troops Battle Into Gaza as Airstrike Draws Conflicting Claims	10/31/23	25
5	Week 1	73	Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza Worsens as Israel Prepares a Possible Invasion	10/12/23	24
5	Week 3	220	Alone and Outgunned, Israeli Police Fought Hamas From House to House	10/26/23	24
7	Week 1	74	As Warnings of Crisis in Gaza Mount, Palestinians Struggle to Find Room for the Dead	10/12/23	23
7	Week 3	181	How Two American Hostages Were Set Free From Gaza	10/21/23	23

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Total Source Citations
7	Week 3	202	A Close Look at Some Key Evidence in the Gaza Hospital Blast	10/24/23	23
10	Week 1	22	What We Know About the War Between Israel and Hamas	10/08/23	22
10	Week 2	100	Israeli Invasion Plans Target Gaza City and Hamas Leadership	10/14/23	22
10	Week 2	146	A Sudden Blast, Then Carnage in a Hospital Courtyard	10/18/23	22
10	Week 3	179	First Humanitarian Aid Reaches a Hard-Pressed Gaza	10/21/23	22
14	Week 3	192	Here are the Hamas officials believed to have been killed since Oct. 7.	10/22/23	21
15	Week 1	7	'The Children Were Terrified.' Fear Grips Israel and Gaza	10/07/23	20
15	Week 1	80	Airstrikes on besieged Gaza add to a crisis that has already lasted more than a decade.	10/12/23	20
17	Week 1	14	Israel and Hamas Battle Around Gaza as Netanyahu Warns of 'Long and Difficult War'	10/08/23	19
17	Week 1	44	Hamas Leaves Trail of Terror in Israel	10/10/23	19
17	Week 1	71	The Retired Israeli General Who Grabbed His Pistol and Took On Hamas	10/12/23	19
20	Week 2	144	In Tel Aviv, Biden's Embrace of Israel Came With a Gentle Warning	10/18/23	18

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Total Source Citations
20	Week 4	236	'You Think of Dying at Any Time'	10/28/23	18
22	Week 1	68	As Deaths Soar in Gaza From Israeli Strikes, Egypt Offers Aid, but No Exit	10/12/23	16
22	Week 4	274	After Years of Vowing to Destroy Israel, Iran Faces a Dilemma	11/01/23	16
24	Week 4	289	Criticism of Israel intensifies as the death toll from airstrikes rises.	11/02/23	15
24	Week 5	301	Among Hamas Hostages: More Than 20 Thais, Half a World From Home	11/05/23	15
26	Week 1	89	A Reuters cameraman is killed and six other journalists are injured near Lebanon's southern border.	10/13/23	14
26	Week 2	172	Israeli Airstrike Hits Greek Orthodox Church Compound in Gaza City	10/20/23	14
26	Week 2	174	Violence Surges in West Bank, With 13 Palestinians and an Israeli Killed	10/20/23	14
29	Week 2	112	Clashes between Hezbollah and Israel intensify on the Lebanese border.	10/15/23	13
30	Week 1	90	U.S. Cities Bolster Security After Hamas Calls for Day of Protest	10/13/23	12
30	Week 3	208	Cease-fire Calls Dominate Fiery U.N. Security Council Session	10/24/23	12
30	Week 4	254	A Very Slow Game': Why the Pace of Israel's Ground Operation Counts	10/30/23	12
30	Week 4	261	Hezbollah Hesitates as Israel Strikes Gaza	10/31/23	12

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Total Source Citations
30	Week 5	298	France says it will send two military flights with aid for Gaza.	11/04/23	12
35	Week 1	8	The war could upend Biden's diplomacy on Saudi-Israel normalization.	10/07/23	11
35	Week 4	251	One Would Rather Die With His Family': Some See No Point in Fleeing Gaza.	10/30/23	11
35	Week 4	266	Videos show a densely populated area of Gaza decimated by Israel's airstrike.	10/31/23	11
38	Week 2	103	Ukraine Worries That Prolonged War in Gaza May Dilute Global Support	10/15/23	10
38	Week 2	136	Rescuers struggle as Israel's bombardment buries Gazans in their homes.	10/17/23	10
38	Week 2	160	Israelis Praise Biden Visit but Fear U.S. Constraints on Action	10/19/23	10
38	Week 3	190	Israeli Reservist From Maryland Is Killed Near Lebanon Border	10/22/23	10
38	Week 4	292	Israel Used 2,000-Pound Bombs in Strike on Jabaliya, Analysis Shows	11/03/23	10
38	Week 5	303	Explosion Gazans Say Was Airstrike Leaves Many Casualties in Dense Neighborhood	11/05/23	10

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Total Source Citations
44	Week 1	70	Conditions in Gaza Are 'Horrible,' U.N. Official Says, as Israel Strikes Back at Hamas	10/12/23	9
44	Week 2	176	Security threats disrupt a Muslim rights group's annual event near Washington, organizers say.	10/20/23	9
44	Week 4	286	Saudi Arabia Begins Aid Effort for Gaza and Raises $17 Million in Hours	11/02/23	9
47	Week 1	38	American Airlines, Other Major Airlines Suspend Flights to Israel	10/10/23	8
47	Week 3	216	An Audio Diary of Despair	10/25/23	8
47	Week 4	246	Netanyahu Apologizes After Blaming Security Chiefs for Failure in Hamas Attack	10/29/23	8
47	Week 4	281	Evacuating From Gaza Is Its Own Ordeal	11/02/23	8
47	Week 4	296	Rashida Tlaib Posts Video Accusing Biden of Supporting 'Genocide'	11/03/23	8
52	Week 1	19	Video captures concertgoer being kidnapped by militants.	10/08/23	7
52	Week 1	92	Israeli officials take journalists on a tour of a morgue.	10/13/23	7
52	Week 2	110	Biden administration seeks emergency aid package for both Israel and Ukraine.	10/15/23	7

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Total Source Citations
52	Week 2	156	Before a deadly blast, Israeli soldiers repeatedly warned a hospital to evacuate, its owners say.	10/18/23	7
52	Week 3	206	85-Year-Old Held Hostage in Gaza Says She 'Went Through Hell'	10/24/23	7
52	Week 4	241	Cornell Jewish Center Under Guard After Online Threats to Jewish Students	10/29/23	7
58	Week 2	101	Schumer Plans Vote of Support Upon Returning From Israel	10/14/23	6
58	Week 2	113	Some Republican lawmakers reject calls for Israeli restraint after Hamas attacks.	10/15/23	6
58	Week 2	150	Families of Hamas Hostages Split on Invasion of Gaza	10/18/23	6
58	Week 3	227	What to Know About UNRWA, the Largest Aid Organization in Gaza	10/26/23	6
62	Week 1	57	Why Tensions Are Rising on Israel's Border With Lebanon as It Fights Hamas in Gaza	10/11/23	5
62	Week 1	78	Israel Tells Northern Gaza Residents to Evacuate South	10/12/23	5
62	Week 1	91	A trip to visit relatives in Gaza turns into a nightmare.	10/13/23	5
62	Week 2	102	In southern Gaza, finding water is now 'the hardest thing'	10/14/23	5

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Total Source Citations
62	Week 3	182	Blinken says the U.S. is still trying to secure passage into Egypt for its citizens trapped in Gaza.	10/21/23	5
62	Week 4	240	As Fighting Rages, Ukraine Takes Its Battle to the Diplomatic Arena	10/29/23	5
68	Week 1	47	Relatives of Americans Missing in Israel Plead for Help	10/10/23	4
68	Week 1	72	No Immediate Threat to U.S. Security Amid Hamas Call for Protests, Officials Say	10/12/23	4
68	Week 3	228	A Palestinian American in Gaza talks about the scramble to survive.	10/26/23	4
68	Week 4	291	Hamas put wounded fighters on departure lists, delaying efforts to evacuate foreigners, a U.S. official says.	11/03/23	4
72	Week 1	35	With 300,000 reservists mobilized, the war 'hits close to home' for many Israelis.	10/09/23	3
72	Week 2	151	Biden's Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Israel Is Grilled by Senators	10/18/23	3
72	Week 2	154	After losing his parents, a son carries on his father's sense of optimism.	10/18/23	3
75	Week 1	15	A Quick Look at Hamas	10/08/23	2
75	Week 2	117	Twins Are Born in Gaza After Their Mother Flees to the South	10/16/23	2

Rank	Week	ID	Headline	Publication Date	Total Source Citations
75	Week 3	225	Who Is in Israel's War Cabinet?	10/26/23	2

APPENDIX E

Source Categories

- **Government and State Authorities**
    - **Government (I):** Israeli elected officials, cabinet ministers, or ministry bureaucrats, such as Ministry of Health or Ministry of Defense officials.
    - **Government (P):** Palestinian Authority or West Bank-based government officials.
    - **Government (G):** Gaza-based government officials or administrative ministry bureaucrats, such as Gaza Ministry of Health officials.
    - **Government (US):** U.S. executive, legislative, or diplomatic officials, such as State Department or White House spokespeople.
    - **Government (Other):** Officials or diplomats representing any other foreign nation.
    - **Hamas:** Political leaders, administrative spokespeople, or institutional statements from Hamas acting in a governing capacity. When the article does not identify which component of Hamas is being sourced, it is placed in this category.
    - **Hezbollah:** Political officials, administrative spokespeople, or institutional statements from Hezbollah. When the article does not identify which component of Hezbollah is being sourced, it is placed in this category.
- **State Militaries and Non-State Armed Actors**
    - **Military (I):** Active Israel Defense Forces personnel, field commanders, and official military spokespeople, such as the IDF Spokesperson Unit.

    - **Military (NS-Hamas):** Hamas fighters, field commanders, or explicitly identified military wings, such as the Al-Qassam Brigades, operating in a combatant or tactical capacity.
    - **Military (NS-Hez):** Hezbollah fighters, field commanders, or military wings operating in a combatant or tactical capacity.
    - **Military (NS-Other):** Fighters, commanders, or spokespeople representing other non-state armed groups operating in a combatant or tactical capacity.
    - **Military (Other):** Personnel, commanders, or official spokespeople representing state militaries other than Israel or the United States.
    - **Military (US):** U.S. Armed Forces personnel, commanders, or Pentagon officials.
- **Non-Institutional and Civil-Society Actors**
    - **Civilian (I):** Israeli private citizens, eyewitnesses, victims, or families of hostages.
    - **Civilian (Gaza):** Palestinian private citizens, eyewitnesses, or residents located in Gaza.
    - **Civilian (Pal):** Palestinian private citizens, eyewitnesses, or residents located outside Gaza, including the West Bank.
    - **Civilian (UnID):** Individuals whose nationality, identity, or location is not explicitly stated.
    - **Civilian (USA):** U.S. private citizens, including American victims, eyewitnesses, hostages, or their families.
    - **Civilian (Other):** Private citizens from countries or populations not represented by the other civilian categories.

    - **NGO:** Nongovernmental organizations and human-rights or humanitarian groups, such as Amnesty International, B'Tselem, or the Red Cross.
    - **IGO:** Intergovernmental organizations, including United Nations bodies, officials, and relief workers, such as UNRWA representatives.
    - **Hospital (non-gov):** Clinicians, doctors, nurses, or hospital directors acting in a medical capacity outside official government ministry roles.
- **Media and Digital Attribution**
    - **Media (I-based):** Israeli news outlets or journalists cited or hyperlinked by *The New York Times*.
    - **Media (G/P-based):** Palestinian or Gaza-based news outlets or journalists cited or hyperlinked by *The New York Times*.
    - **Media (US-based):** Other U.S. news organizations or previous *New York Times* articles used through hyperlinks to attribute information.
    - **Media (Other):** Regional or international news organizations explicitly cited or hyperlinked, such as *Al Jazeera, BBC, or Reuters*.
- **Experts, Industry, and Forensic Artifacts**
    - **AVF Evidence:** Raw audiovisual or forensic artifacts—such as CCTV footage, dashboard-camera recordings, satellite imagery, or weapon-mounted-camera footage—independently analyzed or reviewed by journalists to verify factual claims.
    - **Research/Education (I):** Israeli academics, think-tank analysts, or university researchers.

- **Research/Education (P):** Palestinian academics, think-tank analysts, or university researchers.
- **Research/Education (US):** U.S. academics, think-tank analysts, or university researchers.
- **Research/Education (Other):** Regional or international academics, think-tank analysts, or university researchers.
- **Business/Company:** Private corporations, industries, executives, or company representatives, such as airline or cruise-line officials.
- **Other:** Unique sources that do not fit another category, such as religious institutions or archaeological groups.

APPENDIX F

Excel Formula Syntax and Configurations

To ensure methodological replicability, the formulas and the text of this appendix were developed with the assistance of Microsoft Copilot (2026).

The primary coded dataset is located in All Weeks!A1:AO87. Rows 2:78 contain the 77 sampled articles. Columns H:AN contain the 33 source-category tally variables, and column AO identifies each article's highest-frequency source category or tied categories. Aggregate calculations appear in rows 82:86.

The weekly worksheets—Week 1 through Week 5—repeat these calculations for separate weekly subsets. Their Article Rates use the number of articles in the applicable week, while their Citation Rates use the total sourcing instances recorded within that week.

Article-level competition rankings are reproduced in Appendix C, *Source-Type Count by Article*, and Appendix D, *Total Source Citation Count by Article*.

Source-Category Data Entry and Article Appearances

Source use was recorded as a numerical tally in columns H:AN. A positive value represents the number of coded sourcing instances assigned to that category within the article. Blank cells indicate that the category did not appear.

Article Count (Appearances)

Article Count measures the number of articles in which a source category appears. The workbook counts nonblank cells within each category column. For example, All Weeks!H83 counts articles containing a coded entry for Government (I):

=COUNTA(H2:H78)

This formula was filled across All Weeks!H83:AN83.

Because COUNTA counts every nonblank cell, an explicitly entered zero would also be counted. Blank cells must therefore be used to indicate category absence.

Article Rate: Complete Sample

Article Rate expresses each source category's appearance count as a percentage of the 77 sampled articles. For example, All Weeks!H84 contains:

=H83/77

This formula was filled across All Weeks!H84:AN84 and formatted as a percentage.

Article Rate: Weekly Subsets

Each weekly worksheet calculates Article Rate using only the number of articles contained in that week.

Worksheet	Articles	Count row	Article Rate row	Representative formula
Week 1	23	29	30	=H29/23
Week 2	21	27	28	=H27/21
Week 3	14	20	21	=H20/14
Week 4	16	22	23	=H22/16
Week 5	3	9	10	=H9/3

These formulas were filled across columns H:AN on their respective Article Rate rows.

For example, Government (I) appeared in 8 of the 21 Week 2 articles:

=H27/21```

The resulting rate in `Week 2!H28` is 38.10%.

2. Primary Sourcing and Inclusive Tie Handling

Each article's highest-frequency source category was identified by finding the largest numerical tally across columns `H:AN` and returning the corresponding category header from row 1.

The following formula was entered in `All Weeks!AO2` and filled through `All Weeks!AO78`:

excel =TEXTJOIN(", ",TRUE,FILTER($H$1:$AN$1,H2:AN2=MAX(H2:AN2)))&",
"&MAX(H2:AN2)

If multiple categories share the maximum tally, `FILTER` returns every matching header and `TEXTJOIN` combines them. The common maximum is then appended to the category names. For example:

> Government (I), Government (US), 5

This output indicates that both categories received five sourcing instances and shared highest-frequency status. The procedure does not impose an arbitrary single winner.

The same formula pattern is used in the weekly worksheets, with each formula confined to the source-category cells in its applicable article row.

3. Aggregate Highest-Frequency Prevalence

`All Weeks!AO83` identifies the source category most frequently attaining either sole or tied highest-frequency status across the 77 articles:

excel =LET(last,ROW()-
2,ids,$B$2:INDEX($B:$B,last),vals,$AO$2:INDEX($AO:$AO,last),raw,FILTER(vals,(ids<>"")
*(vals<>"")),labels,MAP(raw,LAMBDA(x,TEXTBEFORE(x,", ",-
1))),all*types,TOCOL(TEXTSPLIT(TEXTJOIN(", ",TRUE,labels),",
"),1),types,UNIQUE(all*types),counts,MAP(types,LAMBDA(t,SUM(MAP(labels,LAMBDA(x,--
ISNUMBER(XMATCH(t,TEXTSPLIT(x,",
"))))))),max*c,MAX(counts),winners,FILTER(types,counts=max*c),TEXTJOIN(",
",TRUE,winners)&" ("&TEXT(max_c/ROWS(raw),"0%")&")")

This formula:

1. Retains valid article-level results from column `AO`.

2 Removes the trailing numerical score from each result.

3 Separates categories listed together because of ties.

4 Credits every category receiving sole or tied highest-frequency status.

5 Counts each category’s article-level appearances.

6 Retains all categories tied for the largest aggregate count.

7 Divides that count by the number of valid articles.

The current workbook output is:

> Government (US) (18%)

This indicates that Government (US) attained sole or tied highest-frequency status in approximately 18% of the 77 articles.

The weekly worksheets use the same procedure but restrict the input to their own article rows. The resulting percentages are therefore calculated relative to the number of articles in the applicable week.## 4 Total Source Citations and Citation Shares### Complete Sample

Total Source Citations sum the numerical tallies in each source-category column. For example,`All Weeks!H85` contains:

excel =SUM(H2:H78)```

This formula was filled across All Weeks!H85:AN85.

All Weeks!AO85 identifies the category with the greatest aggregate sourcing instance total:

=LET(types,INDEX($H:$AN,ROW()-3,0),totals,INDEX($H:$AN,ROW(),0),max_total,MAX(totals),winners,FILTER(types,totals=max_total),TEXTJOIN(", ",TRUE,winners)&" ("&max_total&")")

The formula retains multiple categories if they share the largest total. The current workbook output is:

Government (US) (112)

Citation Rate expresses each category's sourcing instances as a share of all sourcing instances recorded across the 33 categories. For example, All Weeks!H86 contains:

=H85/SUM($H$85:$AN$85)

This formula was filled across All Weeks!H86:AN86. The denominator is currently 930 sourcing instances.

Weekly Citation Totals and Rates

Each weekly worksheet sums only the sourcing instance tallies recorded in that week. Its Citation Rate then divides each category total by the sum of all 33 category totals for that week.

Worksheet	Total-sourcing instance row	Citation Rate row	Weekly sourcing instance denominator	Representative formula
Week 1	31	32	278	=H31/SUM($H$31:$AN$31)
Week 2	29	30	240	=H29/SUM($H$29:$AN$29)
Week 3	22	23	196	=H22/SUM($H$22:$AN$22)
Week 4	24	25	179	=H24/SUM($H$24:$AN$24)
Week 5	11	12	37	=H11/SUM($H$11:$AN$11)

For example, Government (I) received 21 of the 240 sourcing instances recorded in Week 2:

=H29/SUM($H$29:$AN$29)```

The resulting value in `Week 2!H30` is 8.75%.

Thus, both weekly measures now use week-specific denominators:

- **Article Rate:** category appearances ÷ articles in that week.

- **Citation Rate:** category sourcing instances ÷ total sourcing instances in that week.

5. Article-Level Competition Rankings

The finalized workbook contains two article-level competition rankings, reproduced in Appendix C and Appendix D.

Appendix C: Source-Type Count by Article

Appendix C ranks articles by source-category breadth, defined as the number of different categories with positive tallies in an article.

For example, Article 188 corresponds to `All Weeks!49`. Its source-category count is calculated with:

excel =COUNTIF('All Weeks'!H49:AN49,">0")

This formula counts only categories with positive values. The referenced article row is adjusted for each of the 77 articles.

The resulting article-level values are ranked using:

excel =RANK.EQ(F3,$F$3:$F$79,0)

Under competition ranking, equal values receive the same rank and subsequent positions are skipped. Rankings may therefore proceed as 1, 2, 2, 2, 5### Appendix D: Total Source Citation Count by Article

Appendix D ranks articles by the total sourcing instance volume recorded across all 33 source categories.

For example, Article 188 is calculated with:

excel =SUM('All Weeks'!H49:AN49)```

The referenced row is adjusted for each article. The totals are ranked with:

=RANK.EQ(F84,$F$84:$F$160,0)

Equal sourcing instance totals receive equal competition ranks.

Appendix C therefore measures the number of different source categories represented in an article, whereas Appendix D measures the total number of coded sourcing instances within that article.

APPENDIX G

Consolidated Methodology Prompt

Review this entire Excel workbook and write a methodology subsection titled “Data Recording and Analytical Procedures” describing the spreadsheet design, data recording, and analytical procedures used in the study.

Write the subsection as formal Methods prose suitable for a master’s thesis. Base the description on what is actually present in the workbook and on the methodological information supplied below. Do not make assumptions about procedures that cannot be verified from the workbook or from these instructions.

Examine the workbook’s worksheet structure, column headers, row ranges, labels, article-level data, aggregate rows, and formulas. Explain how the workbook is organized and how data move from researcher-coded observations at the article level to the quantitative measures used in the analysis.

The individual article is the unit of analysis. The workbook contains 77 sampled articles and 33 source-category variables. Describe how each article is represented in the spreadsheet, including the identifying metadata recorded for each article and the numerical source-category frequencies entered for it.

Clearly distinguish between information manually coded or entered by the researcher and values calculated automatically by Excel formulas. The researcher established the 25% proportionate stratified random sampling procedure described elsewhere in the Methods section, as well as the source taxonomy, coding definitions, category assignments, and manually entered sourcing frequencies. Do not imply that the researcher simply selected the sample manually.

Excel was used to organize the coded observations and perform calculations specified by the researcher; do not describe Excel as making coding decisions or analytical judgments.

Use “sourcing instances” rather than “citations” wherever the text refers to coded observations in the dataset. The study does not simply count quotations or sourcing instances. A sourcing instance is a coded source-category occurrence meeting the study’s operational criteria. Use “sourcing frequency,” “sourcing instances,” or similar terminology where appropriate.

Explain the following analytical measures and how the workbook derives them:

- Article appearances: the number of sampled articles in which each source category appears at least once.
- Article appearance rates: the number of article appearances divided by the appropriate number of sampled articles.
- Total sourcing instances: the sum of all researcher-coded frequencies for each source category.
- Sourcing-instance shares: each category’s total sourcing instances divided by the total number of sourcing instances across the relevant sample or weekly period.
- Weekly measures: article appearance rates use the number of sampled articles in the applicable week as their denominator: Week 1 = 23, Week 2 = 21, Week 3 = 14, Week 4 = 16, and Week 5 = 3. Weekly sourcing-instance shares use only that week’s total sourcing instances as the denominator.
- Complete-sample measures: the *All Weeks* worksheet uses 77 articles as the denominator for article appearance rates and the complete-sample sourcing total as the denominator for sourcing-instance shares.

- Highest-frequency source category: explain how the workbook identifies the category or categories with the highest sourcing frequency within each individual article and retains ties rather than selecting an arbitrary single category.
- Aggregate measures: explain how the workbook calculates category prevalence and identifies aggregate leaders across the complete sample.

Identify the relevant worksheets, columns, and row ranges where useful so that the procedure is transparent and reproducible but describe their methodological function rather than merely inventorying spreadsheet cells.

Retain a concise description of *Appendix B (Rankings)*. Explain that its two ranking tables measure, respectively, the number of source categories represented in each article and the total number of sourcing instances recorded in each article. Describe the ranking method if it can be verified from the workbook, but do not overstate the analytical importance of these rankings or imply that they are central findings.

Use clear, restrained language appropriate for a master's thesis. Avoid unnecessarily sophisticated, promotional, or inflated phrasing. For example, use "highest sourcing frequency within the article" rather than phrases such as "greatest numerical sourcing weight."

Do not reproduce full Excel formula syntax. The formulas are documented separately in the thesis appendix titled *Excel Formula Syntax and Configurations*. You may refer to that appendix where appropriate.

Do not discuss stray formulas, punctuation differences, URL variants, or other workbook-audit details that do not affect the final analysis.

Do not repeat operational definitions or coding procedures already documented elsewhere in the Methods section unless they are necessary to explain how the spreadsheet records or calculates the data.

Do not add substantive interpretation of the findings, indexing theory, narrative dominance, or what the numerical results mean. This subsection should remain procedural and descriptive.

Do not add new claims that cannot be verified from the workbook or from the methodological information supplied above.

Aim for enough methodological detail that another researcher could understand how the coded data were transformed into the quantitative measures reported in the study without reproducing the formula syntax already documented in the appendix.

Return the complete “Data Recording and Analytical Procedures” subsection as polished thesis prose, including appropriate retained subheadings.

APPENDIX H

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