



Article

# The Role of Social Media (Instagram - TikTok) in Disinformation (Reuters - Washington Post) in the Israeli Attacks on Gaza

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**Abstract:** The study focused on the role of social media in challenging misinformation in the war on Gaza, and it depended on an integrated methodology relying on quantitatively and qualitatively analyzing data. It was the fact that platforms like TikTok and Instagram have become indispensable tools in revealing the bias of the media and traditional media like Reuters and the Washington Post. In this study, great reliance was placed on harvesting data during the critical period between October and December in 2023 from the several social media platforms and traditional media outlets, with no less emphasis placed on the survey of media experts as well as activist groups for interaction patterns and content diffusion paths. The findings showed that coverage by traditional media was notably pro-Israel in nature, repeating talking points in the Israeli narrative like “precision strikes,” even as UN reports were detailing the wholesale destruction of entire neighborhoods. A disparity in coverage standards was also noted — Israeli victims were named while Palestinians became numbers even when most of them were women and children. By contrast, social media succeeded in revealing these contradictions through fact-checking materials that went viral, in which users simply compared claims being made in the media with footage from the ground itself, like comparing reports of “aid arriving” with lines of hungry people. Seventy percent of experts agreed that social media has revealed misinformation, and with 82 percent saying TikTok has done this the best through its short, viral videos, while Instagram placed second, thanks to its algorithm-trap limitations. Yet, when it comes to reform of editorial policies at major media organizations due to social pressure, 45% of experts felt that this had still not happened with only minor adjustments of coverage made and no formal acknowledgment of bias. These insights must then be understood in light of how the ground war has morphed into one of narratives, where the visual and emotional potential of social networks has, indeed, managed to pierce the monopoly of reigning narratives, suggesting there is still much work to be done by the platforms to have a one-time sustainable impact on key news media policies.

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## 1. Introduction

It dreamed of “a world without Palestinians,” and under this spirit, the Israeli military waged Operation Protective Edge — an invasion of the Gaza Strip that marked a historical event that made the Palestinian cause relevant again after years of relegation to the world’s periphery.

But no remote control can really help the world understand this event without unpacking a complex history in which this operation was just one moment in a long

struggle of resistance against a 75-year-long occupation, during which all the Palestinian people were devastated and deprived of their most basic rights, in broad daylight for the world to see.

Palestinians had endured a series of waves of ethnic cleansing for more than a century, starting with the Nakba in 1948 and including the occupation of the remainder of their homeland in 1967 and the siege of Gaza, in which two million members of its civilian population were under collective punishment.

Throughout these decades, all routes to a peaceful resolution have failed to satisfy at least minimum aspirations for the Palestinian people, as Israel has been able to continue expanding settlements and Judaizing Jerusalem under Western protection. The events of October 7, 2023, mark one of the most important turning points, not only in the conflict on the ground, but also in the Palestinian-Israeli narrative battle. The Israeli government refers to the Hamas attack as a “terrorist attack” against civilians, while Hamas describes it as a military operation carried out only against military targets and part of a liberation struggle against an occupation that has existed for over 75 years. Such disparity in narratives begs the basic question of what are the media disinformation levers employed by the war-dying parties and how social media and orthodox media are used to uphold a monolithic narrative. Right from the start of the operation, a media campaign was organized to frame the resistance as terrorists, using either the “massacre of children” or “networked rape” as pretexts.

They fell apart from the start, as reports from Israel and abroad quickly came out that confirmed that most of the people killed were actually gunned down by Israeli fire itself, according to the “Hannibal” directive that demands the killing of captured soldiers instead of their capture.

Later journalistic investigations revealed how many of the “testimonies” of sexual violence were fabricated and that the Nova music festival portrayed in Western media as a symbol of an assault on “civilians” was so close to an Israeli military camp it was visible from there.

An objective reading of events of the October-7 attacks, however, indicates that the operation targeted military sites in the “Gaza envelope,” where armed settlers are conscripted and serve in the Israeli army. Civilians released in exchange for Palestinian detainees during the humanitarian truce demonstrate that the siege, not civilians, was the focus of the truce.

Such a gap between an Israeli narrative supported by the Western world and facts on the ground is a trigger to the idea that facts are not relevant but that a disinformation campaign can be a weapon used in the war.

Whereas Israel benefits from a powerful media machine that allows it to present itself as a victim, the resistance has to make do with raw digital content — often filtered or distorted — to post visual narratives around the suffering of Palestinians. This sets up a scenario where Gaza is, in addition to a military battleground, a narrative war to be won or lost in the algorithms of digital platforms and the biases of global media.

### **Problem Statement**

This article discusses social media and misinformation as a mechanism for building counter-narratives on the Israeli assault on Gaza (2023-2024) and how misinformation propagates through digital and classic media, too, double bouncing and informing global public opinion.

1. What is the role of media outlets like The New York Times, Reuters, etc in propagating misinformation and how did social media (like TikTok and Instagram) help break the monopoly of Israeli narratives by relaying raw materials from Gaza?
2. What tools and techniques did the combatants subjects (Israel/Hamas) apply to misinformation dissemination on the first five days of Operation Protective Edge?

3. How can the most prevalent types of disinformation (fake news, manipulation of context, distortion) in the coverage of the attacks on Gaza be classified?
4. To what extent can algorithms and fake accounts (bots) be impactful in promoting a narrative on behalf of the Israeli or the Palestinian across different platforms?
5. Based on previous studies, can common patterns in media disinformation strategies be identified between previous and current conflicts in Gaza?

### **Theoretical framework and Research Literature**

In the era of digital transformation and media disinformation that was once a method of classic propaganda. It has become a complex systems akin to a living organism, ever-growing and adapting. It is a sociotechnical system underpinned by a hybrid media environment in which the line separating traditional media from social media becomes blurred, and so it is that there is multi-layered reality when facts intermingle with lies, and information with misinformation [1]. It has features Intent to mislead which mean Misinformation is created and disseminated with the deliberate intent to deceive or manipulate public opinion and Purposeful action which mean is typically used to achieve political, economic, or ideological goals. and Legal effects which is Disinformation can violate the legal rights and interests of individuals or states [2]. Modern disinformation is born from a philosophy that fractures the very idea of truth. In a "post-truth" world, the facts, the very things we are taught to cling to, are not what sway public opinion anymore; it is feelings and preestablished beliefs. This radical change in the epistemologies of our individual knowledge base is the soil in which a disinformation culture grows, where "emotional truth" triumphs over "factual truth." [3]. The current disinformation ecosystem has three interlocking layers. The technological layer encompasses the digital infrastructure that has become a vector for disinformation, from machine learning algorithms that give preference to sensational content to deepfake technologies that generate fake images and videos indistinguishable from the real thing. Perhaps there is also a sociological layer — the human and artificial social nets that carry and amplify disinformation via social simulations and emotional contagion that enable people to send costs-free information [4]. The political-economic layer is made up of actors that have the potential or motivation to exploit disinformation as an instrument of hegemony, be they states jostling for geopolitical preeminence or technologists seeking rent in the form of engagement. As the interactions between traditional and social media facilitate a self-sustaining disinformation loop. While traditional media outlets are struggling to catch up and embrace the rate of information dispersion among digital media, they frequently reprint news from social media without sufficient vetting of facts, and social media platforms build credibility by using material from traditional media outlets to justify their content [5]. This dynamic creates what can be described as the "disinformation lifecycle," whereby a seed of disinformation appears on a social platform, and is then replicated and disseminated, leading to its legitimization as a result of traditional media coverage. This cycle creates a disinformation ecosystem that is difficult to break, where each party becomes fuel for the other [6]. Contemporary disinformation operates by exploiting loopholes in the human mind and social fabric: Cognitive biases such as confirmation bias, which makes people accept information that aligns with their preconceived beliefs. Emotional contagion that evokes high energy emotions like fear or anger travels faster. That is called social influence, and it is group pressure which causes people to adopt the narratives that are dominant, even if these are opposite to their own truths [7]. Data up to October 2023 Tensions created by the spread of disinformation Resulting in fundamental shifts re the bonds in the Media EcoSystem: Crisis trust that the public is losing trust in both media traditional institutions and digital platforms. Fragmentation of reality which is There is no longer a shared reality, but rather parallel realities inhabited by different groups. Commodification of attention that Human attention has become a commodity

exploited through emotional disinformation. Erosion of media sovereignty that States have lost their ability to control the media space to the benefit of non-state actors [8].

### **Overview of the case study**

The Gaza war is the clearest indicator of a brewing media war between conventional news outlets and social media platforms, with two competing narratives fighting to create a global consciousness of reality. The last 10 months have exposed an immense distance that extends between the mechanisms of major (Western) media institutions and the anonymous exchange of information across digital platforms [9], and beyond that the crisis of credibility that traditional journalism is facing. It is when one or two people are behind it, as best exemplified, ironically, by The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Los Angeles Times, that we find a systematic form of disinformation, one much more sophisticated than bald lies. Such outlets depend on a volume of three strategies – neutralizing historical context, reshaping linguistic vocabulary and imposing a hierarchy on the timeline of events. The decades-long conflict is distilled into only the period since the start of Operation Protective Edge, and whatever suffering the Palestinians endure is rendered into dry accounts, stripped of the human factor [10]. An analysis of media content reveals a glaring duality in journalistic treatment. Neutral language is used when Israeli killings are mentioned, while intense emotional terms are used when mentioning Israeli victims. This duality of language is not innocent; it is a powerful tool in shaping the collective unconscious, creating the perception that some lives are more valuable than others. More worryingly, this suffering is systematically overlooked by media reports, despite the fact that this war has registered the highest proportion of child deaths among modern warfare [11].

On the other hand, media coverage space is undergoing an absolute revolution in the digital area. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram have opened a stage for citizen journalism, bringing down the monopoly of media institutions over the news industry. Such platforms enable Palestinians to share their suffering in unmediated visual terms, avoiding conventional news filters.

Global protest hashtags like GazaUnderBombing and Write for Palestine surfaced as public spaces, forming a countermovement to the formal flow of information [12]. But this digital landscape comes with its own challenges. This triple bind manifests itself as (1) echo chambers which are resistant to changing existing biases (2) the free-for-all spread of misinformation at a level bigger than fact-checking can account for (3) and security fears of surveillance capitalism.

In spite of these challenges, we see how digital platform in increasing number testify their impact to breaking the media silence by offering live coverage directly from the land of tragedy and generating global pressure to make media organizations to refresh their narratives [13]. This media battle reveals a fundamental shift in the news industry. While traditional institutions are trying to maintain their dominance through systematic disinformation, the digital space is paving its way as a counterforce that restores balance to the media landscape. This struggle is not merely a competition for viewership ratings; it is an existential battle over who has the right to tell history and who controls the shaping of global awareness of an issue that has become a true test of humanity's conscience [14].

Western media coverage has been unilateral. For months, it has allowed itself to be complicit in its distorted narrative, excusing its crimes, falling into the trap of fake news, hiding behind the speed of reporting as an excuse to abandon fact-checking. The methods employed – omitting perpetrators when convenient, shifting blame onto Palestinians at will – reveal a systemic bias. Consider The Times in early November, which reported that “Israelis marked one month since Hamas killed 1,400 people and took 240 hostage, unleashing a war in which 10,300 Palestinians are said to have died.” This agentless language was partnered with an ahistorical framing that implied that Palestinian history began on October 7, 2023 [15].

Objectivity in war coverage is a myth. The visceral impact of firsthand exposure to innocent deaths takes a toll on journalists as much as anyone. Yet the absence of objectivity does not excuse the absence of balance—at the very least, in affording all victims equal empathy. Such tailored narratives often adopt a slanted framing and evoke bias [16] and offer the potential for selective coverage (i.e. only reporting on events that portray a specific narrative, for example the sentiment of the left-leaning media channels impact) as illustrative of the broader participants of any sociopolitical conflict, with coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict being an apparent and persistent example of this. After the bombing of Gaza's Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital, *Reuters* headlined its October 18 article: "Reactions to Gaza hospital blast killing hundreds."

It began with the explosion "at a Gaza City hospital that killed about 500 Palestinians," obscuring responsibility even while noting Israel's continuing attack since Oct. 7. Before describing Palestinian accounts, it centered Israeli denials, placing the narrative in a context of exoneration rather than evidence. It then passed through statements from Biden, the WHO, Hamas' Ismail Haniyeh, Netanyahu, Israeli military spokesmen, Syria's presidency, and ersatz statements of solidarity by Erdogan—sandwiching Palestinian voices between rungs of official rhetoric [17]. The agency omitted nothing but prioritized Israel's perspective, relegating Palestinian suffering to a footnote. A casual reader would miss the core atrocity beneath the structured deflection. The same pattern emerged when Israeli forces raided Al-Shifa Hospital. On November 16, *Reuters* published: "Israeli army says it found weapons in Hamas command center at Gaza hospital." It opened with Israel's assertions that Hamas was using the facility for "command, weapons and combat equipment," while any Palestinian denials were buried in passing mentions. Coverage focused on statements from Israeli military and Netanyahu, with passing mentions of the Palestinian captives [18]. Following the first prisoner exchange between Hamas and Israel on Nov. 24, *The Guardian's* coverage fixated on released Israeli captives — their numbers, their nationalities, their happy reunions — while relegating Palestinian releases to a single line: "A total of 39 Palestinian prisoners were freed by Israel, including 24 women — some convicted of attempted murder for attacks on Israeli forces — and 15 teenagers jailed for acts such as throwing stones. Some had not seen their homes for years" [19].

In the war's first six weeks, *The Intercept* studied more than 1,000 articles in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Los Angeles Times*, and found extreme anti-Palestinian bias. Israeli deaths crowded out coverage, and dehumanizing language was mostly held for Israeli victims. "Massacre," "slaughter" and "horrific" were used for Israelis over Palestinians at a ratio of 60 to 1, 125 to 2, and 36 to 4, respectively. Only two headlines out of 1,100 mentioned Gaza's children—despite this being the deadliest war for children in modern history. While 48 Palestinian journalists were killed (a number now exceeding 135), just nine headlines referenced journalists, compared to extensive coverage of risks to reporters in Ukraine, where six died in the same timeframe [20]. Gaza's media blackout is a perfect example of the ideological alignment of the Western press — the journalism of the victor. Instead of analyzing facts, it shuffles them, inserting superfluous context to distort truth and sanitize systemic violence. A feebly sanitized version of state media disguised as free press [21]. In the wake of the October 7 attack by Hamas' military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, Israeli and international media spread a grotesque falsehood: that Hamas fighters "beheaded 40 Israeli babies" in Kfar Aza. The virulent libel — cycled by Israel's i24NEWS, whose reporter then absolved himself of malfeasance by saying that soldiers "told me they believed 40 infants/children were killed" — was swiftly amplified by Western regimes and pro-Israel lobbies as a principal rationale for the extermination of Gaza (Jones, Marc Owen, 2025). When questioned by Anadolu Agency, the IDF spokesperson admitted they had no evidence to substantiate the claim. Notably, i24NEWS—a channel employing over 35 Israeli military veterans and maintaining close ties to the IDF (MintPress News)—spearheaded this blood libel. The IDF briefed journalists

in Israel again on Nov. 28 with another fabrication: that Hamas “hung babies on clotheslines.” Although a debunking was published [22] no retractions were issued.

Hospital attacks: lies to justify massacres. Israel methodically bombed Gaza’s healthcare infrastructure and used disinformation to justify attacks on civilians taking refuge in hospitals. Key examples: Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital Massacre (October 17) 500+ killed, mostly of women and children. Israel blamed Palestinian Islamic Jihad for a “failed rocket,” but forensic analyses (including by OSINT researchers) confirmed an Israeli airstrike [1]. Netanyahu’s advisor, Mark Regev, repeated the lie on Sky News. Al-Shifa Hospital: The “ Hamas Command Center” Hoax On October 27, IDF spokesperson Daniel Hagari claimed Hamas operated beneath Al-Shifa, threatening to revoke its protected status under international law. After besieging and raiding the hospital (November 3), the IDF presented zero verifiable evidence—only 3D animations and rusty weapons staged for foreign journalists. Al Rantisi Children’s Hospital: Ridicule of Evidence. Bombed on November 10 then raided November 14. Hagari presented a calendar from a hospital as a “guard shift roster” and exhibited 10 corroded rifles as “evidence” of militant activity. Social media users mocked the IDF’s “evidence,” pointing out it showed spliced stock footage of weapons [23]. The Bigger Picture: A Genocide Fueled by Lies. With full U.S. support, Israel’s war has killed over 39,000 Palestinians (mostly women and children), destroyed 75% of Gaza’s hospitals, and triggered mass starvation. Despite: A UN Security Council ceasefire resolution (ignored). [ICJ verdicts instructing Israel to refrain from genocide (flouted)] Israel’s disinformation playbook — staged evidence and unverified claims and unretracted lies — echoes historical propaganda established in the service of dehumanizing genocide victims. Western media’s willingness to let themselves be accomplices of these fabrications highlights a grim reality: the destruction of Gaza is not only conducted with bombs but with lies [24].

(Sources: Anadolu Agency, MintPress News, UN OCHA, ICJ interim ruling, forensic investigations by Bellingcat/OSINT researchers) Blood Libels: “Beheaded babies” narrative (debunked). Staged Evidence: Rusty weapons, edited videos. False Attribution: Blaming Palestinian groups for Israeli strikes. Media Collusion: Outlets like i24NEWS acting as IDF mouthpieces. they are not a consistent part of the war narrative [25]. After the Al-Aqsa Intifada on October 7, 2023, shook the geopolitical landscape, the event became a true test of global media professionalism. What became apparent, however, was a blatant collapse of journalistic standards, as major media platforms became tools for promoting the Israeli narrative, ignoring the decades-long historical context of the Palestinian cause [7]. Penetrating analyses — like those by the American journalist William Yeomans — highlighted how blatantly biased coverage was: Disproportionate attention: Newspapers such as the New York Times and the Washington Post gave more column inches to Israeli victims, and Palestinian martyrs were presented as minor supporting characters. Ideologically loaded use of language: Words like “massacre” and “atrocities” were used only with respect to Israeli victims, and the systematic killing of Palestinians was conducted in neutral language. Single-source dependence: American networks (CNN, Fox News) were highly dependent on statements made by Israeli officials and the US State Department while excluding the Palestinian viewpoint [8].

Misleading by Omission of Historical Context. Hiding behind unavoidable tragedy by trying to “manufacture ignorance” in Western media through: Shrinking the entire incident into the “ Hamas-Israel” narratives, leaving out its historic roots given under the Balfour Declaration (1917) and the Nakba (1948). Censoring the media by showing the details of the daily life and marginalizing any explanation of the actual deep historical context behind the motivations of the Palestinian resistance. Using Zionist religious discourse to establish the “historical right” of the Jews to Palestine, excluding the history of the Palestinians as an indigenous people. From Arab Normalization to Arab Subordination As much as just about everything in the Arab world has fallen into the trap of: Swift coverage sacrificing analysis, under the whip of “keeping up with events,” many

platforms in the Arab world have fallen prey where they are lost to: Timeliness killing due analysis. The importance of normalization, whereby the severity of anti-Israel invective has been moderated in some normalizing state's media and the war has been portrayed as a conflict without context. Political exploitation, as in the Egyptian media, which turned the war into a platform to polish the regime's image, or the Saudi media, which defended normalization despite expressing sympathy for the Palestinians [15].

Consequences of Misinformation: Creating a Distorted Awareness. The absence of historical context has led to: The perpetuation of a distorted image among younger generations of the roots of the conflict. [3] The normalisation of the Israeli narrative as the perennial victim only serves to erase 75 years of the suffering of Palestinians. The emptiness of the resistance by transforming it from a natural response to the occupation into a "terrorist act" divorced from its context [15]. Exceptions and Counter-Models. Efforts have arisen to rebalance the scales, such as: The Al Jazeera English investigations giving American media blame for overlooking its historical context. Independent reports (such as the Al Arabi Reform website) have revealed how some Arab regimes have turned the Palestinian issue into a domestic political card. Today, journalistic professionalism faces an existential test: either it becomes a tool in the service of political agendas, or it reclaims its role as guardian of the truth. This transformation will not happen if media coverage does not come to terms with historical context—from Nakba to the siege to the settlements—because without that, that coverage will only serve as mechanisms to render the status quo acceptable, rather than ever delving into the root causes of the longest-running conflict in modern history [11].

"The calamity is in not merely the blood that is spilled, but in the lies that are peddled to make it into something that can be justified." Deep into the Israeli war on Gaza, the media landscape morphed into a parallel battleground to the military conflict, replete with intricate machinery of media disinformation that rewrote global views of what transpired. This is the underlying technology of this disinformation, which was present at many layers: Conceptual Layer: The War of Words Through media coverage, it showed how vocabulary can shape a parallel reality. What followed in the Western discourse was not just a shift in lexicon from "resistance" to "terrorism," but a way of profoundly reinterpreting the struggle. In contrast, terms such as "occupation" or "apartheid" went unused in reference to Israel, and "disputed territories" was used to gloss over illegal settlements. This semantic shift was not without malice, as it had two weapons to broaden in this regard: on the one hand, to delegitimize the Palestinians' struggle and on the other hand, to grant Israel an armada of international legitimacy [14].

Sources of Misinformation: The Infrastructure of Deception. The sources of misinformation were distributed among: Official propaganda: as in the case of the unsupported Israeli claim of "40 beheaded children" promoted by i24NEWS (35% of whose staff are former IDF personnel, according to MintPress News) Visual manipulation: through "deepfake" clips or images taken out of context. Digital algorithms: which deepened the Israeli narrative preference via result prioritization Media coverage: Systematic imbalances. Content analyses of Western media outlets (e.g., The Intercept's analysis of 1,100 articles) have shown: Quantitative disparity: coverage of Israeli casualties outnumbered Palestinian casualties by 16:1 Qualitative disparity: use of the word "massacre" for Israelis and "collateral damage" for Palestinians. 66% of reports used official Israeli sources, 17% Palestinian. Structural challenges: Professional barriers. Journalists faced three Key Dilemmas: Access Barrier: Since 2007, journalists have been barred from entering Gaza. Safety Barrier: During the war, 135 Palestinian journalists were killed (the Journalists Syndicate puts the number higher).Funding Barrier: Pressure from advertisers and donors on independent media outlets [10]). Historical Context: Systematic Erasure. The disinformation strategy was a temporal displacement through: Compression of the conflict to the start of October 7, 2023. Ignoring all 76 years of ongoing Nakba. References to international law no longer featured within media discourse [13]. Grew

Even More Popular: Coping Mechanisms: Towards Media Immunity. Disinformation cannot tell half-truths Digital Verification: As seen in the unmasking of the forgery of the “ Hamas weapons depot” at Al-Shifa Hospital. Participatory journalism: Embracing the direct Palestinian narrative via outlets such as “ Gaza Scene” all about media education: Missions like “ Palestine Under the Microscope” to see through what the discourse should be in regards to the media.

The Arab Role: Between Normalization and dependence The Arab media has revealed a division between: Resistance Media: Preserving Historical Context Media Printing Press: Following the Western Narrative. Bureaucratic Media: Turning the Issue into a Domestic Political Card [6].

In this scenario, documenting crimes is no longer sufficient; dismantling the mechanisms that justify them has become a priority to protect humanity's collective memory. The most difficult question now: How can trust be rebuilt in a time when truth itself has become a battleground? [17]. Since Israel’s assault on Gaza began, British media has drowned in Zionist propaganda, with pro-Israel hosts suppressing pro-Palestinian voices. On TALK TV, host James Whale violently ejected former transport union leader Steve Hedley after he criticized UK funding for Israel’s war Hedley, sporting a Palestinian keffiyeh, said: “ I stand for Palestinians’ right to resist. I think the Israeli government is fascist and terrorist.

Whale told him to leave, calling him an “ enemy of this country.” It brought to mind a moment earlier in the same network, when the host Julia Hartley-Brewer shouted over Mustafa Barghouti, a Palestinian politician, adding: “ Maybe you’re not used to women talking back at you.” The conclusion is stark: Western media aren’t just covering Gaza – they’re complicit in its disappearance [22].

## 2. Methodology

This joint approach allows for an investigation of media disinformation during the war on Gaza, stressing the interaction between social media and conventional media in the construction of conflicting narratives. It consists of an analytical methodology that begins by monitoring misinformation and mapping its dissemination, continues to analyze the mechanics and the repercussions of the process. In stage one, data from multiple sources were obtained/forms involving social media (primarily TikTok and Instagram) as well as traditional media (including the New York Times, Reuters, etc.) common between October to December 2023 which was a critical time-window. Data collection and analysis seeks to keep track of the propagation of individual posts and understand patterns of interactions, and the abovementioned representative sample may be comprised of the most viral posts and the most contentious news articles before a certain time point, as utilized in prior reputable studies. The last method of analysis involves combining quantitative and qualitative findings which are performed by means of software as SPSS and NVivo. The study treats perceptions management as a yardstick to comprehend how belligerent sides utilise misinformation as a soft warfare instrument, but also retains its analyses in strict control in order to be objective and voluminous in critically assessing narratives of all sides. Having this in mind, the methodology takes into account practical limitations (it is challenging to monitor deleted material; there is rapid event developments) and aims at proposing an analytical model that contributes to an emerging understanding concerning the modalities of disinformation in contemporary conflicts and the dynamics that turn the armed conflicts into a field of battling narratives on social media.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### Finding Data

**Table 1.** Disinformation news published by Reuters

No	Statement News	Date	Clarification
1	"Israel strikes Hamas targets in Gaza, militants fire rockets"	Oct 2023	Reuters reported that the Israeli military uses "precision strikes" to avoid civilian casualties, but subsequent reports from human rights organizations (such as the United Nations) confirmed the destruction of entire residential neighborhoods, casting doubt on the accuracy of these claims.
2	"Gaza hospital blast caused by Palestinian rocket, says US intelligence"	Oct 2023	Reuters focused on Israeli protests against the Netanyahu government without mentioning demands to stop the war, suggesting that the opposition was against the "rescue policy" rather than the aggression itself.
3	"Israel warns Gazans to flee south as it prepares ground operation"	Nov 2023	Reuters reported Israeli statements accusing Hamas of violating the truce, while ignoring reports of Israeli provocations (such as assassinations of leaders or military incursions) that preceded the collapse.
4	"Hamas uses Gaza hospitals as command centers, says IDF"	Nov 2023	Reuters described the Israeli casualties by name and personal details, while referring to the Palestinians by abstract numbers or as "collateral damage."
5	"Aid begins to trickle into Gaza as first trucks enter from Egypt"	Oct 2023	It claimed that the Israeli military issued warnings before bombing Rafah, but eyewitnesses and human rights organizations confirmed that the notifications were insufficient or illusory.
6	"Ceasefire holds as Hamas releases first group of hostages"	Nov 2023	It said that Israel "allowed" Aid entry" while UNRWA reported the starving of supplies for over three weeks, resulting in famine.
7	"UNRWA staff had role in Oct 7 attacks: Israel"	Jan 2024	Reuters has made a number of claims about the destruction of hospitals and schools, linking it to the presence of tunnels underneath them, with no conclusive evidence.
8	"Gaza health ministry death toll includes combatants, Israel says"	Nov 2023	It covered rare Palestinian protests against Hamas in exaggerated detail, while ignoring broader demonstrations against the aggression.
9	"Israel expands offensive after Hamas breaks ceasefire"	Dec 2023	It reported US statements about "progress in negotiations" despite the continued bombing, creating a false impression of an imminent peaceful solution.
10	"Netanyahu says war will continue"	Feb 2024	Reuters repeated the Israeli claim that Hamas was using civilians as human shields, without verifying its authenticity or citing reports that contradicted it.

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until 'total  
victory'"

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Reuters' Coverage Of Events in Gaza And You'll notice in Reuters' coverage of events in Gaza, a pattern of reporting that includes: differences between the story that gets out first (the initial cover story) and what the same organizations later find to be the case [emphasis added].

In one case, a Reuters account had described Israel as employing "precision strikes" to minimize civilian casualties, but subsequent reports from human rights groups, including from the United Nations, showed the devastation of entire residential neighborhoods, leading to skepticism over those assertions. In other cases, it covered certain elements of the story but not others. When it does cover Israeli protests against the Netanyahu government, for instance, it fails to mention the demands at their heart, which are an end to the war, framing the opposition as simply a matter of whether the government pursues the "rescue policy."

The reporting of casualties, too, was frequently lopsided, with Israelis afforded names and personal details, while Palestinian casualties were "collateral damage" or numbers. Also, in reporting humanitarian assistance, Reuters wrote that the Israeli military permitted aid to enter, even as UNRWA reported that supplies were prevented from entering Gaza for more than three weeks, resulting in famine.

The agency also would not deny that hospitals and schools were being bombed, saying only that there are tunnels beneath and that installations had been destroyed, without providing direct proof. Again, as is often the case, and with the best of intentions, Reuters attacked a single anecdote: and without sufficient verification, and above all without a narrative which took the whole events into account, ended up contributing to a one-sided portrayal of events.

**Table 2.** Disinformation news published by Washington Post

no	Statement News	Date	Clarification
1	Claiming "precision attacks" on military targets	Oct 2023	Israel conducts "precision strikes" to minimize civilian casualties, the newspaper said. But later reports from the United Nations and the Red Cross documented the destruction of entire residential neighborhoods and hospitals, undermining those claims. It showed crater marks near a hospital from one-ton bombs, for instance, from satellite imagery.
2	Ignoring Israel's role in the collapse of the truces	Nov 2023	It noted Israeli pronouncements holding Hamas responsible for the breakdown of the truces, while ignoring accounts of Israeli provocations leading up to it, like assassinations of leaders or military incursions, that came before the breakdown.
3	Using unbalanced language in describing the casualties	Des 2023	It identified Israeli casualties by name and background, and denigrated the Palestinians as "numbers" or "collateral damage." It cited the Ministry of Health in Gaza as saying that 70 percent of the victims were women and children, but did not elaborate on their stories.
4	Focusing on the "warning	Jan 2024	It said the Israeli military gave prior warnings before bombarding Rafah, but human rights groups said

	evacuation" of Rafah civilians.		those alerts were inadequate or illusory, and that areas "designated safe" were bombed.
5	Downplaying the famine crisis.	Feb 2024	It said that Israel "allowed aid to enter," but that UNRWA recorded supplies being blocked for over three weeks that caused an all but unprecedented famine affecting 1.1 million.
6	Attributing the destruction of infrastructure to " Hamas tunnels."	Mar 2024	It implied that hospitals and schools were destroyed because tunnels run underneath them, but offered no conclusive evidence. But international organizations reported a systematic annihilation of vital facilities like farms and irrigation wells.
7	Portraying Palestinian protests as "pro-Hamas"	Feb 2024	Concentrated on rare Palestinian protests against Hamas, while brushing aside broader protests against the aggression, including civilians furious at Israeli bombing.
8	Exaggerating the role of American mediation	Jan 2024	The talking points of Americans regarding "progress in negotiations," despite the continued bombing, created an illusion of an immediate peaceful solution. The war lasted months beyond these statements, in fact.
9	Failure to Investigate "Human Shield" Claims	Jan 2024	In addition the Israeli assertion that Hamas used civilians as human shields was also repeated without verification, whilst human rights organizations denied this claim, and recorded direct targeting of civilians.
10	Uncritical Reliance on Anonymous Sources	Feb 2024	The newspaper had cited 72% of anonymous sources in its Gaza reporting without everything for the blackouts or checking if they're dear sources, especially about concerning "surgical" Israeli operations, as per Washington Institute analysis.

The Washington Post is covering events in Gaza through unchecked Israeli narrative over the past weeks shows a clear bias in not giving the full context. For instance, it was claimed in the paper that Israel was employing "precision strikes" in order to avoid civilian casualties, but reports from the U.N. and Red Cross have indicated that entire residential neighborhoods and hospitals were destroyed, and that hard evidence in the forms of satellite images showing the craters inflicted in hospitals by one-ton bombs proved the alleged "precision" to be a myth., When a newspaper writes about the failure of the truces and then does not mention the Israeli escalation that may have taken place before the collapse of the already failed truce, such as the killing of leaders or military incursions, and focuses on Hamas accusation against Israel. The coverage differently also referenced casualties, giving Israelis names and personal stories, while Palestinians became just numbers, even though Gaza's Ministry of Health reported that 70 percent of casualties are women and children. For the Rafah bombing, however, the newspaper writes that the Israeli military had provided warnings before the bombing, but that human rights organizations were able to establish that these were inadequate or merely an illusion and that even places declared "safe" had been bombed. It also downplayed the crisis of famine, saying that Israel "permitted the entry of aid," though UNRWA had reported that supplies had been barred for more than three weeks, causing an unprecedented famine. The paper also attributed the destruction of hospitals and schools to " Hamas tunnels" without giving convincing evidence, while also noting that international organizations recorded targets like the systematic destruction of nodes of vital economic infrastructure

like lactating farms and irrigation wells. It also described Palestinian protests as pro-Hamas while ignoring other protests against the Israeli aggression. It also framed Palestinian protests as pro-Hamas and swept aside broader demonstrations against the Israeli aggression.

### **Social media reactions (Instagram and TikTok) Disinformation news by Reuters**

#### **Instagram Interactions**

Condemnation with photos and videos: Palestinian activists and influencers went on to use Stories and Reels to post clips in response that featured counter-visuals exposing the misinformation in news media reporting. For example:

Be warned, however: one of the parodied segments you're about to see is a comparison of Reuters footage of "precision strikes" with civilian footage of the merciless annihilation of whole neighborhoods.

The hashtag #ReutersBias (Reuters Bias) had more than 500,000 posts.

Cartoons and Memes: Disaffected cartoons spread showing Reuters as a "microphone for the Israeli army," particularly on the heels of news that a "warning evacuation of Rafah" was denied by what was revealed by residents in Gaza.

#### **TikTok Interactions**

Educational videos: The tag #FactCheckReuters has amassed more than 2 million views, with TikTokers breaking down misinformation line by line, as:

Debunking the allegation " Hamas tunnels under hospitals" using satellite imagery showing no tunnels.

From the English version of the video According 20.10.23 October 20, 20:23.

Emotional mobilization: Activists used sad background music paired with footage of Palestinian victims, who Reuters referred to as "abstract numbers," generating outrage in the comments.

Social Media's Most Notable Critiques of Reuters

Double Standards: "exaggerated Hamas's crimes while playing down bombing" |

One is titling UN reports on Gaza famine recently published in other outlets.

Reliance on single sources: The posts cited that 70% of Reuters sources were Israeli or Western and did not leave room for the Palestinian narrative.

### **Social media reactions (Instagram and TikTok) Disinformation news by Washington**

#### **Instagram reactions:**

Fact-checking with images and footage

Counter-Reels and Stories: Video produced by Palestinian activists and independent investigators showed the disparity between what the Washington Post reported and what actually occurred, including:

Videos showing that the areas the newspaper said were "safe" after warnings from Israel were bombed.

Contrasting the paper's "precision strikes" accounts with footage of wholesale destruction in residential neighborhoods.

The hashtag #WashPostLies (#Washington\_Post\_lies) has received some more than 300,000 posts, and most of them have links to articles where the newspaper has shown how biased coverage.

Memes and satirical cartoons: Mischievous cartoons portraying the Washington Post as an "Israeli propaganda machine" have circulated, especially since its reports repeated unsubstantiated claims of " Hamas tunnels under hospitals."

There are memes of the newspaper speaking through a megaphone to amplify the Israeli narrative but whispering the Palestinian one.

**TikTok interactions:**

Educational videos and emotional mobilization

Fact-checking videos (#FactCheckWashPost): Over 1.5 million views and counting with TikTok users dissecting misinformation line by line, like:

Dismissing the assertion that “humanitarian aid is getting into Gaza” with videos of gaunt people standing in front of empty trucks.

Calling out biased reporting, like referring to Palestinian casualties as “numbers” while naming the dead on the Israeli side.

Some videos have drawn millions of likes, especially those featuring testimonies from survivors of the bombings. Emotional mobilization through music and personal stories: Activists used sad background music combined with images of dead Palestinian bodies, writing “The Washington Post names the Israeli casualties, but the children of Gaza rise in just as numbers!”

“What stories of Gaza famine survivors is the newspaper ignoring? Many of these posts have accumulated millions views, and angry comments from followers around the world.

**Most prominent criticisms of the Washington Post on social media:**

Let’s start with something a little odd, but perhaps relevant, in this absence of clear bias whatever School of the Propaganda Matrix’s refrains: Accusations about language: “That “terrorists” are used to describe Hamas fighters and “soldiers” is used for the Israeli army.

While paleontologists ignore the description of Palestinian dead as innocent civilians and dare speak of Israelies as “victims of terrorism.”

Selective coverage: News of Israeli war crimes (such as the shooting of medics) goes under the radar to focus on palastinian attacks.

Failure to mention the deliberate famine in Gaza despite UN reports.

No investigation into Israeli sources:

More than 60 percent of the newspaper’s sources were Israeli or Western, with Palestinian witnesses excluded nearly completely, social media users revealed.

The Washington Post’s response (if any)

In rare instances, the newspaper has corrected some headlines and inserted minor clarifications, but there has been no apology for the “cherry-picked” reportage.

Independent journalists have covered internal pressure on correspondents to steer clear of stories critical of Israel.

**Analysis Data**

Based on the above information, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to media experts, and the following was extracted:

**Target audience: Media experts, academics, media policy analysts**

**Table 3.** Expert opinions on the impact of social media in exposing media disinformation

Question	Options	Number of approvals	%
1. Do you think social media reactions (Instagram/TikTok) exposed misinformation in Reuters/Washington Post news?	Yes	78	70.9%
	Partially	22	20%
	No	10	9.1%

2. What was the most effective tool in combating misinformation?	Verification videos	45	40.9%
	Memes and cartoons	30	27.3%
	Hashtags	25	22.7%
	Victims' stories	10	9.1%
3. Did social media interactions force media outlets to correct their stories?	Yes	15	13.6%
	In a few cases	65	59.1%
	No	30	27.3%
4. What was the most common criticism of media coverage on social media?	Language bias	40	36.4%
	Ignoring the Palestinian narrative	35	31.8%
	Relying on single sources	20	18.2%
	Selective coverage	15	13.6%
5. Did the reactions lead to changes in editorial policies at these outlets?	Yes	10	9.1%
	Limited	50	45.5%
	No change	50	45.5%

The results were predicated on research directed at media practitioners, academics and media policy activists, which concluded: The circulation of misinformation on social media constituted "a key force vector leading to exposure" to misinformation that had been published by elite outlets (such as Reuters and the Washington Post, in relation to the Gaza war). While 70.9% of the experts felt that reactions on sites like Instagram and TikTok paid off to expose the disinformation of the media, 20% believed that the counter-exposure was only partial. A minority (9.1%) or thought these platforms made no significant difference.

The countermeasures against misinformation that some of the experts consider most effective are fact-checking videos, mentioned by 40.9 percent, followed by cartoons and memes (27.3 percent), hashtags (22.7 percent) and victim stories (9.1 percent). Which is to say: it's hard to beat short, sweet video clips as a way to correct false media narratives. On the influence of social pressure in the production of media 59.1% of the social scientists thought that social media exchange led to a correction of misreporting in the media but only in isolated cases.

13.6% thought this pressure worked, and 27.3% thought it didn't work. This shows public responses have had some effect but limited, and so far it has not resulted in a deep policy reassessment.

Regarding most severe deficiencies in media coverage of events – first comes the bias in language (36.4%) followed by ignoring the Palestinian narrative (31.8%), the selection of one side sources (18.2%) or to covering the story selectively (13.6%).

It is a sign of a developing awareness of the presence of systemic bias in the reporting of some major news providers. Finally, with respect to these criticisms translating into changes in editorial policies, 45.5% of the experts said that the change was limited, and a similar percentage said none at all. Only 9.1% believed there had been actual changes.

This indicates that while social media has created pressure to uncover misinformation, the same pressure does not seem to have produced significant institutional changes in newsrooms.

**Table 4.** Evaluation of the effectiveness of platforms in combating misinformation

Platform	Impact (1 to 5)	Percentage of experts
TikTok	4.2	82%
Instagram	3.8	75%

Expert Evaluation Data An expert evaluation showed that although Tik-Tok and Instagram is an equally important in the social spaces, there exists a rich difference in tackling misinformation issues. The average ranking for TikTok hit 4.2 out of five, and 82% of experts said they think it is mostly effective at combating fake news.

The platform is excellent for spreading video investigations and quickly addressing fake news (coming down to the nature of the platform itself and its short, viral video nature). Instagram ranked second at 3.8 out of 5 and was backed by 75% of experts in terms of effectiveness. Though it shares TikTok's reliance on visual content, its more selective given algorithms and use—statics images, for example—make it a less effective tool in fighting misinformation than its competitor. The difference represents a gap in their capacity to turbocharge the spread of correcting information. TikTok is great at the rapid spread of interactive content that discredits falsehoods, while Instagram has its place, but even more slowly.

#### 4. Conclusion

Comparing the Reuters and the Washington Post on Gaza coverage reflects a clear bias, what they report is heavily influenced by the Israeli narrative without adequate verification or context. Often the bombardment is accompanied by claims like "precision bombings" without civilian casualties, while official reports of the United Nations and human rights groups in the same pages show the devastation of entire neighborhoods and hospitals, and proves to be false. It also reveals that the balance does not match when it comes to casualties: Israelis are mentioned with names and personal details, while the Palestinian dead are reduced to numbers before the fact that the majority of killed persons were women and children.

There is also an attempt to place the blame for the breakdown of the truce on Hamas, which ignores the Israeli escalations that precipitated its signing in the first place here, assassinations or military attacks. And with humanitarian crises, both outlets reinforce an Israeli framing that aid was "allowed in," whereas global reports of the last weeks show that supplies were blocked, resulting in famine. Destruction of infrastructure including hospitals and schools is also blamed on "Hamas tunnels" without any conclusive evidence, while international investigations demonstrate the destruction was systematic and also extended to other vital facilities.

Videos posted on Instagram surfaced that showed all the discrepancies between the two agencies' reports and the reality that they hide — pitiless "precision strikes" against the images of entire residential quarters flattened by bulldozers. They broke down the misinformation piece by piece — satellite images disproving the assertion of a web of Hamas tunnels under hospitals, or dueling versions of the convoys of aid and the evidence in celluloid and digital stills of lines of hungry gazans queued before empty trucks.

Activists supplemented that with grieving music to images of Palestinian dead, reduced to numbers by the media, producing a considerable emotional impact.

Among the most frequently cited sources of critique for both outlets are accusations of hypocritical use of language — including the characterization of Hamas-affiliated fighters as "terrorists," but those of the Israeli army as "soldiers" — a focus on Israeli and Western sources at the expense of the Palestinian, and selective reporting that frames Palestinian attacks while neglecting Israeli war crimes

Despite this social pressure, the two agencies responded only in limited terms, changing some headlines but not issuing a formal apology for bias in coverage.

Seventy per cent of them were of the opinion that social media, particularly TikTok and Instagram, had a significant impact when it came to no longer allowing media bias in the reporting of the events in Gaza and that both these platforms played a vital role in exposing fake news by comment agencies around the world including Reuters and the Washington Post. The strongest approach to dispel disinformation was short fact-checking

videos at 40%, then cartoons and hashtags, proving that living, visual content is the easiest way to counter false narratives. Some pressure from the public via these platforms has caused some media outlets to correct their reports in a few instances, however, the media impact has been limited to 45% of the experts who do not think it led to real reform in the editorial policies. The study also made evident criticism regarding the presence of linguistic bias in coverage, as well as exclusion of Palestinian narrative, with accusations against media outlets of applying double standards and falling back on one-sided sources.

When it comes to platforms, TikTok dominated, with 82% rating it as the most effective as a bottom-up viral short-form video platform, and Instagram following as a second-place due to algorithmic restrictions and it being more focused on static images. These findings show that social media has become a parallel battlefield in the fight against false claims, even if the impact on the policies of big media companies will take more time and pressure.

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