

# A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Egypt-Gaza Border Blockage in Selected Online News Reports

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## Abstract

The Egypt-Gaza crossing has not been seen as 'a normal border'. The Rafah border is 'a vital lifeline' for Gaza (BBC News). This crossing has passed through several openings and closings over the years, prompting further illicit tunnels beneath it to transport people and commodities. Since 2007, Israel imposed an 'intermittent blockage' of the border to Palestinians, in spite of the fact that, theoretically speaking, this border should be controlled by Egypt and Palestine (France24.com). Due to the Israeli- Hamas war (October 2023), this border now plays a more vital role in evacuation and delivering humanitarian aids. This paper aims to study the different angles of representation of how selected western and Middle Eastern news reports reflect different ideologies towards the border closure. Western media, as well as some Arab media, view 'the blockage' on Gaza by Egypt as 'destructive to the economy and population, 'a double standard in the treatment of Palestinians', 'a crime against humanity' and leading to Gazan 'gasping for resources'. The opposite views expressed sympathy and understanding behind Egypt's position as an attempt to '*defend its territory from Islamist militants*' and is '*a security decision*'. The Gulf Times reports UN views of equally strong words condemning the Israeli side of the Gaza blockage. New York Times recognizes 'the pressure on Egypt to allow Palestinians to cross the border'. The data will comprise images and their corresponding texts (captions and headlines) from the beginning of the border closure on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023 taken from different online news reports, for example, *BBC News*, *France 24*, *CNN World*, *The Guardian*, *NPR*, *The New Arab News*, *English Ahram*. The model of analysis will be an eclectic approach based on the Critical Discourse Analysis framework (Fairclough, 1995, 2001, 2005, Van Dijk, 2001, Wodak, 2006) and a multimodal analysis of the images examining the semiotic/visual choices used to develop ideologies based on the models of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Machin and Mayr, (2012) and Norris, (2019). Findings are confined to the MCDA of selected images from various Western and Middle Eastern news reports, comparing visual and linguistic representations focusing on how image and language map to persuade, normalize and evade agency of the true culprits of this crisis.

Keywords: Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) – CDA - Ideology - political news report – semiotic/visual analysis.

## Introduction

Rafah is often described as a "divided border town." Over the years, Egypt's policies regarding the Rafah border and tunnels have varied, with the crossing frequently being opened and closed. These openings are typically brief and irregular, often coordinated with Israel and the Palestinian Authority (Gisha, 2009). During the Israeli military operations in 2008, the border was completely closed (Castanon, 2011).

Since the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA), which established regulations for border management to Gaza, the crossing has been shut during crises to comply with the

agreement. However, Egypt has informally permitted humanitarian workers to cross to prevent human rights violations (Article 13). The Rafah crossing has often been opened to allow essential humanitarian and medical aid to reach Gaza (Fleishman, 2010).

Currently, crossing into and out of Gaza is difficult. Travelers need permits from either the Egyptian or Israeli authorities. Those wishing to leave through Rafah must register with local Palestinian authorities weeks in advance, or pay extra to try to get through the Egyptian authorities (France 24, 2023). The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has pointed out that the procedures used by both governments are often unclear.

Many people find themselves waiting for long periods to cross, sometimes for up to two months. Lorenzo Navone, a sociologist specializing in borders and conflicts, refers to the border as a "mobile frontier" shaped by a history of conflicts, including the Arab-Israeli wars. (France 24, 2023)

Since Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007, both Egypt and Israel have largely sealed their borders, citing security concerns due to Hamas's presence. This has led to the emergence of illegal tunnels for the movement of goods and people between Gaza and Egypt. Since the Egyptian revolution in 2011, the northern Sinai has been mostly closed for security reasons (France 24, 2023). In the past decade, the Rafah crossing has been closed more often than it has been open.

During the recent conflict, Egypt initially stated that the border was open, but it quickly became nonfunctioning due to Israeli airstrikes, which caused significant damage and made it impossible for humanitarian aid to reach Gaza. The first aid convoy finally managed to cross into Gaza on October 21, 2023.

Navone (cited in France24, 2023) expresses concern about the uncertain situation for Palestinians in Gaza, particularly regarding discussions about relocating them to Egypt's Sinai region. According to the UN, 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza are refugees, and if they were displaced again, it raises difficult questions about what they would return to in Gaza.

The Palestinians, though, have always been seen as resilient against "marginalization, siege, closure, social, political, economic inequality as well as the lack of accountability and transparency of Egyptian public policy in border relations" (Castanon, 2011, p. 8).

Taking all this into consideration, the selected sample in this paper was chosen with a focus on the resilience of the people affected by the crisis, rather than the political justifications provided by those in power at various times. The political landscape is often fluid, influenced by shifting policies and alliances, especially given the long history of border issues. Therefore, the selected images and their accompanying headlines and captions primarily highlight the humanitarian experiences of Palestinians during the Israeli assault that began on October 7, 2023.

The sample selection is grounded in how Palestinians are represented in Western media, as well as how Egypt's perspective is portrayed in both Western and Middle Eastern news. This approach allows for a MCDA of the contrasting narratives surrounding the Palestinian experience and the Egyptian viewpoint.

## Literature review:

Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) has developed significantly over the years, reflecting our understanding that communication happens through various modes, such as visuals, language, and gestures. The groundwork for MDA was founded by Kress and van Leeuwen in 1996, who created a framework for social semiotics that explored how images communicate meaning alongside text (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

In 2004, Halloran's book, *Multimodal Discourse Analysis*, brought together key research on texts that use multiple symbolic systems. This work highlighted how different forms of media—like ads, websites, and educational materials—combine various modes to convey messages effectively (Halloran, 2004). In recent years, MDA has found applications beyond linguistics and education, especially in marketing and media studies. Researchers are now examining how advertisements blend visual and linguistic elements to create persuasive messages (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The rise of digital media has also prompted scholars to explore how we engage with various forms of content online, where multiple modes of communication interact at once (Jewitt, 2009). Thus, MDA is evolving as a crucial tool for understanding the complexities of communication in our media-rich world, helping us make sense of how different elements work together to convey meaning.

Multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) builds on the principles of traditional critical discourse analysis (CDA) by incorporating various modes of communication, such as visual elements, spoken language, and sound. While CDA primarily focuses on language and its social implications, MCDA recognizes that meaning is created not just through words but also through images, design, and other forms of expression. Fairclough (2001, 2005) states that language functions as a social practice, intricately linked to social structures, thus shaping and being shaped by them. He contends that discourse embodies power relations and ideologies, a notion that lies at the core of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In this context, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) adapts Fairclough's (1995) framework to incorporate visual elements, enabling researchers to investigate how images collaborate with text to construct meaning, potentially reinforcing or challenging societal norms. Similarly, Van Dijk (2001) highlights the importance of discourse in shaping social perceptions and group identities, illustrating its role in creating contrasts between "us" and "them." In the MCDA framework, this concept is expanded to examine how visual representations influence these forces, affecting audience perceptions of various social groups. Wodak (2006) further enhances this discourse by highlighting the importance of historical and cultural contexts in shaping language and imagery. She stresses the necessity of critical awareness in understanding how these elements contribute to social inequalities. Building on Wodak's insights, MCDA explores the interplay between visual and linguistic elements, revealing how they can construct compelling narratives that either challenge or maintain existing ideologies.

Machin and Mayr (2012), further, offer an analytical framework that integrates both textual and visual analysis into a cohesive approach. Their framework encompasses various elements, including overlexicalization, personalization, metaphor, quantification, and quotatives, providing a comprehensive tool for examining the multifaceted nature of discourse in a multimodal context.

In the present study, the analysis utilizes several devices to examine the linguistic elements accompanying images. One key analytical framework employed is the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) framework proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). This framework emphasizes the integration of image and text relationships, which are central to the MCDA approach.

Image analysis, as outlined by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), focuses on the organization of images to convey meaning in relation to information value, salience, and framing. Their work connects visual information to grammar and discourse. A detailed description of this analytical model is provided in the methodology section below.

Furthermore, MCDA enhances traditional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) frameworks, as proposed by Fairclough, van Dijk, and Wodak, by incorporating multiple modes of communication. This approach fosters a more comprehensive understanding of how meaning is constructed and how power dynamics manifest in various contexts.

## **Empirical Studies**

The analytical framework of this study is grounded in Multimodal Discourse Analysis of political discourse. Political news is predominantly structured using an inverted pyramid format, beginning with the most salient information. Richardson (2007) argues that political news is never neutral; it serves the interests of powerful entities and acts as a mechanism to propagate their ideologies. News narratives selectively emphasize or downplay certain events to present a particular perspective or ideology, aiming to persuade and influence the target audience regarding a specific angle of representation.

Van Dijk (2001) defines ideology as a set of shared beliefs and values among a group, which are disseminated to a target audience to persuade and shape their social practices. This ideological dissemination allows those in power to exert an unconscious influence over public thoughts and beliefs, leading individuals to "accept unequal or illegal rule and guidance" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 21).

Numerous critical discourse studies focus on how power relations subtly convey ideology, persuading the target audience toward a specific ideological stance advocated by the discourse producers. Over the past two decades, Multimodal Analysis has significantly influenced nearly all CDA research (Mai & Jacuns, 2023).

Silveira (2016) conducted a study combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with images and visual elements, to understand how they interact with textual content in constructing discourse. The framework aims to map three forms of analyses onto one another: the textual and visual elements, the discourse practices, and the sociocultural practices that inform these discourses. This comprehensive approach allows for a deeper understanding of how individual elements signify broader discourses related to migration and asylum seekers. She chose a sample of articles and images from *The Guardian* and *the Daily Mail* each representing different ideological standpoints. *The Guardian* is known for its liberal stance related to migration, while *the Daily Mail* has a right-wing perspective that often employs sensationalist language. Analyzing these contrasting

viewpoints allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how different media outlets frame the discourse around migrants and refugees. She selectively focused on a current issue of articles published during a time of heightened attention to the migrant crisis in Europe, making them timely examples for examining how media representations can shape public understanding and attitudes towards migration. She analyzed two images: one from The Guardian and one from the Daily Mail. in conjunction with the respective article to explore how visual representations contribute to the discourse surrounding migrants and refugees. Both the Daily Mail and The Guardian contribute to a discourse that negatively constructs refugees and migrants. Despite their differing styles—where the Daily Mail employs more emotive and sensationalist language while The Guardian uses a more objective tone—both articles ultimately frame migrants in a way that distances them from the audience and portrays them as a threat to the UK. In general, the findings highlight how media representations of migrants are shaped by ideological perspectives, language choices, and visual elements, ultimately contributing to a negative and often dehumanizing portrayal of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK media landscape.

Bi (2019) analyzed news picture discourse using Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar as a theoretical framework, aiming to enhance audience comprehension of news images. Bi identified several characteristics that differentiate news images from other forms of visual media. For instance, news pictures are specifically designed to convey information swiftly and effectively, illustrating news stories and providing visual context to facilitate understanding of the accompanying text. Additionally, news images evoke emotional responses, capturing moments of human interest, tragedy, or triumph, thereby influencing public perception and engagement with the news.

Crucially, news pictures strive to represent reality accurately, although the selection and framing of these images can introduce bias. The composition of a photograph, including choices regarding subjects, angles, and lighting, can significantly shape the narrative and affect how viewers interpret the depicted events. Furthermore, news images often spotlight issues of public interest, social justice, and human rights, making them powerful tools for advocacy and raising awareness. Generally, news pictures play a vital role in news communication, serving not only to inform but also to engage and influence audiences through their visual representation of reality.

Ezzina (2021) conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the coverage surrounding Palestine's membership in the United Nations as reported by two prominent Western media agencies, CNN and the BBC. The analysis of lexis related to violence reveals that the BBC tends to employ terminology that presents a more negative image of Israel, referring to it as an "illegal occupation" and "colonial occupation." In contrast, the portrayal of Palestinians is comparatively less negative, often labeling them as "militant groups" rather than explicitly labelling them as terrorists.

Conversely, CNN adopts specific terminology that frames Palestinian sects, particularly Hamas, in a negative light. Terms such as "terrorist" and "terror attacks" are prevalent in CNN's coverage, which seeks to depict Palestinians- especially those associated with Hamas- as aggressors initiating violence against Israel. CNN further justifies Israeli military actions by framing them as legitimate defense measures against attacks from Palestinian groups (Ezzina, 2021, p. 5). This framing

positions the Israeli military as a protective entity responding to threats, thereby minimizing the impact of these actions on Palestinian civilians and the broader context of occupation.

CNN's representation of Palestinians is marked by an emphasis on violence, a negative portrayal of Hamas, and a framing that tends to justify Israeli military actions. This contributes to a one-dimensional representation of the Palestinian experience within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The article notes that CNN's language often reflects a specific ideological agenda aligned with a pro-Israeli narrative, while the BBC's language is more descriptive and less ideologically charged. These differences in lexical choices significantly influence the ideological framing of the conflict by each network (Ezzina, 2021).

While substantial research exists on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the representation of Hamas and Fatah in Western media, there has been limited focus on the recent closure of the Egypt-Gaza border following October 7, 2023. Investigating how Western media portray the current situation, the perspective from which they approach the issue, and their views on Egypt's role in the border closure could provide valuable insights into the specific narratives adopted by these news networks.

Recent studies have increasingly employed Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) across various media coverage. However, there remains a gap in applying an eclectic MCDA framework—drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Machin and Mayr (2012), and Norris (2019)—to images relevant to the Egypt-Gaza border blockade. This analysis could reveal differences in framing, language, and visual representation, contributing to a deeper understanding of how Western media narratives differ from Egypt's perspective on the issue. Such an inquiry could also examine how Western media emphasis influences the framing of the blockade, the representation of Egypt's perspective, and the depiction of Palestinians during this period.

## **Research Questions**

This research paper aims to employ an eclectic framework of multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) to address the following questions.

- What semiotic and visual choices do different news agencies use in their reports about the Egypt-Gaza border, and how do these choices reflect their ideologies?
- What are the main linguistic resources and persuasive strategies employed to align with the images to represent agency and accountability for actions?

## **Methodology**

This study employs a multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) framework to explore how diverse viewpoints utilize both textual and visual elements to reproduce different ideologies. The goal is to understand how these elements are used to persuade, normalize, and evade the responsibility and agency of the actual initiators behind an issue.

## **Analytical Framework:**

### **Multimodal Framework of Analysis:**

The study adopts a mixed-method design, drawing from Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Machin and Mayr (2012), and Norris (2019). Key concepts of this adapted framework include:

### 1. Representational Meaning:

- Contextualization: Understanding the context, target audience, and the purpose behind pairing images with text.
- Identification of textual elements, such as captions, headlines, and accompanying text.
- Contextual understanding of the intended audience and purpose of the visual-textual combination.

### 2. Visual Analysis:

- **Mode of Representation (representational, interactive and compositional):** For example, an interactive/ transactional mode is depicted in an image when action is represented by two participants or elements interacting (e.g. agent versus goal).
- **Design:**
  - **Color:** Analysis of color usage (e.g., bright colors indicating passion; green symbolizing nature).
  - **Composition:** Evaluation of symmetry, balance, and visual impact (e.g., how angle shots highlight architectural beauty).
  - **Perspective:** for example, an image taken from above, bird's eye view, of a place reflects inspection and surveillance. Perspective assesses: *social distance* (e.g., close-ups for intimacy; long and panoramic shots for detachment) and *point of view* (e.g., vertical angle for power dynamics; horizontal for engagement or detachment). If the angle shot is frontal, it reflects contact and transaction with the viewer, whereas a profile, eye level angle shows detachment. Frontal shot (the photographer is facing the participant in the image) reveals direct contact with the viewer, reflecting salience and minimal social distancing versus side shot (lateral perspective/oblique, where the shot is taken from the side) reflects non-involvement as if not part of this world.
  - **Framing:** The presence or absence of framing devices connects or disconnects elements within an image. This is also referred to as design. For example, a landscape image with a natural frame of extending trees, draws attention to the mountain peak in the middle.
- **Salience:** Identifies focal points, contrasts, and hierarchical elements within the image (e.g., prominent faces on magazine covers; contrast between dark and light elements).

- **Focal Points:** For Example, A magazine cover featuring a celebrity, with their face prominently positioned in the center to capture immediate attention.
  - **Contrast:** for example, a black and white photograph of a single dark tree against a white sky, emphasizing the shadow and texture of the tree's branches. Another example is an image of a stormy sea with an illuminated lighthouse appearing within the dark, ominous clouds, emphasize the feeling of contrast between safety and danger.
  - **Hierarchy (Order):** for example, using bold fonts and smaller texts to arrange information by order of importance, or an image with numbered steps to guide viewers through the process.
- **Symbolism and Iconography:** Interprets visual metaphors, symbols, and icons (e.g., a dove for peace; a heart for affection; a visual metaphor like a broken chain symbolizes freedom).

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) further emphasize examining image composition to understand meaning, focusing on:

- **Information Value:** How element positioning affects meaning (e.g., left-right, top-bottom, center-margin).
- **Salience:** Importance of elements based on their prominence.
- **Framing:** The role of framing devices in representing distinct elements in the image or linked entities indicating connectivity or separation.

### 3. Linguistic Analysis:

- **Lexical Choices:** Examines vocabulary and connotations.
- **Grammar and Syntax:** Analyzes grammatical structures and syntax.
- **Discourse Features:** Investigates rhetorical devices and persuasive techniques.

Machin and Mayr's (2012) MCDA framework will be applied to complement this analysis, focusing on:

- **Overlexicalization:** The use of varied vocabulary to express similar concepts (e.g. "urgent humanitarian crisis", "extreme measure").
- **Personalization:** The use of emotive language and personal pronouns to create rapport and empathy (e.g., "we" and "you").
- **Metaphor:** Prevalence of metaphors in discourse (e.g. war metaphors).
- **Quantification:** Implications of numerical data (e.g. numbers to suggest magnitude).
- **Quotatives:** Use of quotations to convey opinions and judgments.



#### 4. **Intermodal Analysis:**

- **Interplay:** How text and image interact and complement each other.
- **Complementarity:** Instances where text and image reinforce or provide alternative perspectives.
- **Contrast:** Cases where text and image present conflicting messages or interpretations.

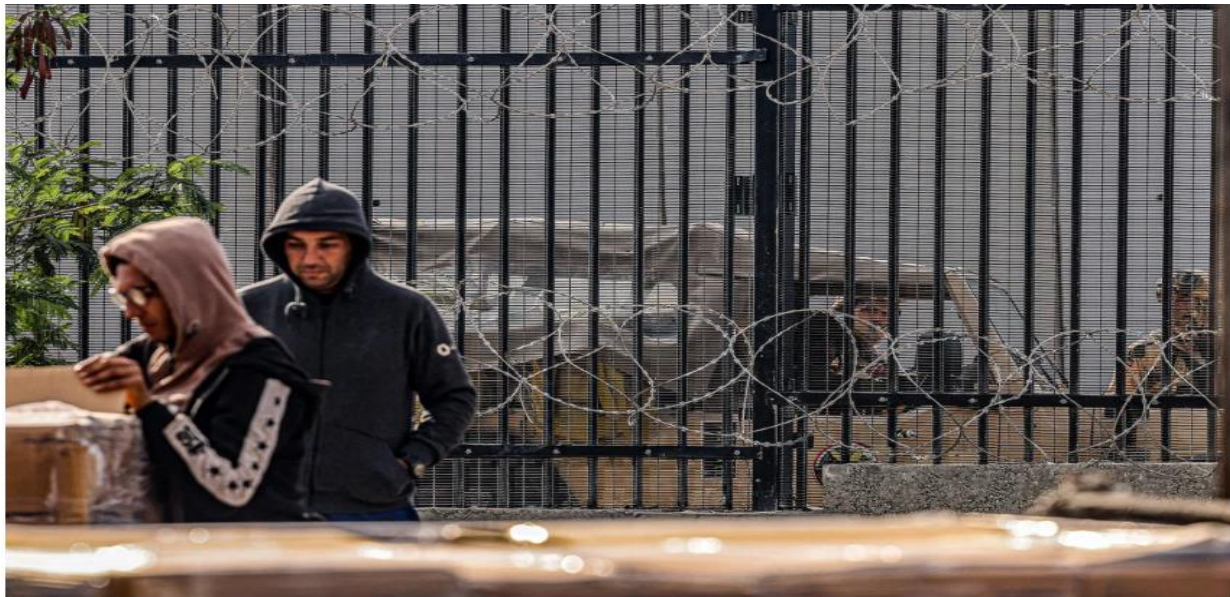
#### 5. **Critical Reflection:**

- **Purpose and Effect:** Evaluates the effectiveness of achieving the intended purpose.
- **Ideological Perspective:** Analyzes ideological and cultural implications.
- **Audience Response:** Considers how different audiences may interpret the message differently.

This comprehensive methodology allows for an extensive examination of how text and imagery together construct and convey ideologies, revealing underlying biases and mechanisms of persuasion.

#### **The Visual and Textual Analysis**

Building upon the above multimodal critical discourse analysis framework, the following section presents a visual and textual analysis of thirteen images sourced from various online news agencies dealing with the closure of Egypt-Gaza Borderline.



Egyptian army soldiers look on from behind the barbed-wire border fence as Palestinian workers unload crates of humanitarian aid entering the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom (Karm Abu Salem) border

Figure 1: CNN 13 February 2024

Caption: Egyptian army soldiers look on from behind the barbed-wire border fence as Palestinian workers unload crates of humanitarian aid entering the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom (Karm Abu Salem) border crossing in the southern part of the enclave on January 29.

Headline: **Egypt on edge as Israel's war presses more than a million Palestinians up against its border**

## 1. Representational Meaning

### Mode of Representation:

- **Contextualization:**

Figure 1 is sourced from CNN, an American news agency. In this depiction, the background, featuring a fence and barbed wire with two military soldiers in uniform watching vigilantly the two Palestinians loading humanitarian aid. The background is rendered more prominently than the slightly blurred foreground. This arrangement emphasizes the separation created by the fence and barbed wire between two Egyptian soldiers and two Palestinian workers. The soldiers are portrayed with a clear, frontal view, suggesting vigilance, while the Palestinians are depicted with less direct engagement, implying subjugation and detachment.

This visual representation aligns with the headline "Egypt on Edge." The bars, framing the image, symbolize a prison, depicting the Palestinians as being held in captivity under the watch of the military soldiers. This framing reinforces the perception of their victimhood. Despite the Palestinians being positioned closer to the viewer, their gaze does not directly engage with the audience, contrasting with the soldiers who, although placed in the background, face the viewer directly. This frontal presentation of the soldiers conveys a

sense of vigilance and surveillance. Thus, Figure 1 has a dynamic composition focusing on division and unequal exhibition of agency.

- **Visual analysis:**

### **Mode of representation:**

- As to mode of representation, the image illustrates two distinct actions. Firstly, the two Palestinian workers are shown engaging in a transactional representational action as they load humanitarian aid. Secondly, the two Egyptian soldiers in the background are depicted in a separate transactional mode, observing the workers. According to Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) framework for MCDA, this dual representation emphasizes the interaction and separation between the two groups. The workers' active involvement in the aid process contrasts with the soldiers' passive role as observers, thereby highlighting the power dynamics and surveillance present in the scene.

### **Design:**

- **Color**  
The image is rendered in a naturalistic style with pastel colors, lacking in brightness. The predominant tones are shades of light brown, visible in the hoodie of one Palestinian loader and in the lower portion of the frame. The green color of the tree on the left symbolizes hope and peace. The foreground is more defined, while the background has a slightly hazy effect, showing the khaki color of the soldiers' military uniforms. The contrast between the soldiers' military attire and the Palestinians' hoodies highlights a symbolic tension: the hoodies represent comfort and casualness, whereas the military uniforms evoke a sense of fear and insecurity. This visual disproportion accentuates the contrasting emotional states of safety and vulnerability.
- **Compositional Meaning**  
The composition reflects a power imbalance. Although the soldiers are positioned in the background, they are portrayed as salient and dominant figures. The barbed wire and fence serve as the most prominent elements in the image, creating a clear separation between the individuals depicted. In contrast, the Palestinians in the foreground appear less interactive and more vulnerable, highlighting their subjugation and suffering.
- **Perspective (or Point of View):**  
The horizontal (eye-level) angle shows both engagement and detachment. The Palestinians are engaged in a frontal view, while the soldiers are in the background, creating a sense of separation and depth.
- **Framing**  
The image is almost divided into two halves, effectively disconnecting the Palestinians from the military forces. This separation is reinforced by the framing device, the fence and barbed wire, which establishes a clear boundary between the two groups depicted in the image.

### **Salience:**

- **Focal points:** The two Palestinians are the most salient and visually prominent elements in the image, as they are positioned at the forefront and are larger in size. Their hoodies feature a bright color that contrasts sharply with the fading khaki of the soldier's uniform, enhancing their visibility. The presence of a fence and barbed wire distinctly separates the world of the Palestinians from that of the soldiers, suggesting a division between two disparate realities. Additionally, their placement on the left side of the image conveys a sense of old information, or established facts.
- **Contact:** The Palestinian workers are not engaging with the viewer, as they are either looking down or sideways, indicating a non-transactional interaction. Conversely, the soldiers in the background are shown in a more frontal view, creating a sense of demand and watchfulness.
- **Distance:** The wide shot encompasses both the Palestinians (medium shot) and the soldiers (long shot), positioning the viewer closer to the Palestinians, thereby inviting a more intimate engagement. The soldiers are presented further away, adding a layer of detachment.

### **Symbolism:**

- **Fence and Barbed Wire:** These elements serve as a visual metaphor symbolizing captivity, oppression, and restricted movement. They emphasize the constrained situation of the Palestinians while highlighting the separation from the Egyptian soldiers.

### **Interpersonal Metafunction**

#### **Engagement with the Viewer:**

- The soldiers' gaze creates a sense of interaction with the viewer, implying demand and authority. The Palestinians' avoidance of eye contact reflects their passive and inert position, suggesting a lack of agency and engagement with the viewer.

#### **Modality:**

- The image has a naturalistic modality with its muted, pastel colors. The contrast between the bright hoodies of the Palestinians and the faded khaki uniforms of the soldiers enhances the thematic contrast of vulnerability versus authority.

#### **Information Value:**

- **Given/New:** The Palestinians, positioned on the left as the central theme of the narrative, are presented as given information (facts). In contrast, the soldiers, placed on the right in the background, introduce new information that underscores the barrier and the context of control. The fence and barbed wire occupy the horizontal center of the image, forming a sharp line that emphasizes separation and imprisonment.

- **Ideal (Top) to Real (Bottom):** The image positions the more dramatic and salient elements—namely the soldiers and the fence—within the upper sections, while the Palestinians, despite their prominence, are placed in the lower sections in a more subdued manner. This arrangement indicates their subordinate position.

### **Linguistic Analysis of Figure 1:**

Caption: Egyptian army soldiers look on from behind the barbed-wire border fence as Palestinian workers unload crates of humanitarian aid entering the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom (Karm Abu Salem) border crossing in the southern part of the enclave on January 29.

Headline:

### **Egypt on edge as Israel's war presses more than a million Palestinians up against its border**

The headline "On the Edge" implies a mobilization of power driven by feelings of fear and concern. It also suggests a sense of advantage over others, indicating a more favorable position. This reflects CNN's portrayal of Egypt as reacting with an upper hand in a vigilant and watchful manner to secure its border.

The use of the word "presses" in the phrase "as Israel's war presses more than a million Palestinians up against its border" suggests an aggressive attempt to exert control. According to Dictionary.com, "press" means "to try and get something out of someone through aggressive means." This choice of language highlights the contrasting actions of blocking and pressing forward. The phrasing creates an awkward dynamic: Egypt is described as "on edge," implying a static quality, while Israel is positioned as the agent through the action verb "presses." The million Palestinians are portrayed as the passive recipients of this action, presented as vulnerable both linguistically and visually.

The caption also foregrounds "Egyptian army soldiers," establishing them as the sentence theme by placing the phrase at the beginning. This choice reflects mediated agency, as the soldiers are described through a mental process, "look," which positions them as less agentive and more as sensors—watchful and ready for action behind the fence and barbed wire.

The contrast between control and helplessness in both the image and text serves as a powerful persuasive technique that implies division: it fosters empathy toward the weak while suggesting apathy toward the enforcers or authoritarian figures.

### **Critical Reflection**

This image is depicted by CNN (2024, February 13) in an article entitled *Egypt boosts security along border with Gaza amid Israel war*. The selection of the angle of representation emphasizes the security measures implemented by Egypt to strengthen its border in response to Palestinian requests for entry. Egypt is portrayed as steadfastly maintaining its border closure, despite the vulnerable situation of Palestinians seeking refuge from imminent danger. While Israel is portrayed as the agent initiating action, both Egypt and Palestine are shown as unequal entities. The combination of the soldiers' authoritative presence and the Palestinians' suffering evokes empathy for the latter and a cautious stance towards Egypt's role in the blockade. Both visual and

textual elements create a compelling contrast between the suffering of the Palestinians and the *indifferent* stance of the Egyptian authorities. This dynamic stimulates sympathy for the Palestinians while highlighting the enforcement of the blockade by Egypt.

CNN, as a leading American news agency, strives to present unbiased and factually neutral news; however, it inherently reflects its own ideologies in the stories it portrays or/and obscures. The choice of the angle of representation in reporting provides a depiction that claims to be an "uncoded naturalistic representation" while actually it is imposing an authoritative interpretation through image and text, which influences the reading and interpretation of the image. The intention is to persuade a global audience, appealing to mass readership.

### **Analysis of Figures 2 – 10 (The Theme of Vulnerability in Refugee Discourse)**

Figures 2 to 10 have been selected for analysis to trace how Western networks choose their angles of representation regarding Palestinians and Egypt during the border closure issue and the persuasive strategies adopted to support their selected narratives. Image selection is depicted in various Western networks, which share a similar angle of representation. They tend to highlight the portrayal of Palestinians during the border crisis as vulnerable and trapped in a state of waiting. This portrayal suggests that their primary suffering stems from the waiting itself, shifting blame onto the entity prolonging their wait rather than addressing the original instigator of the crisis and the violence.

In the field of psychology, research has demonstrated that individuals tend to exhibit greater empathy toward a single personal story rather than a larger number of victims (Ropeik, 2011). This principle is evident in the persuasive strategies employed in the images and accompanying text analyzed here.

The focus on the gendered nature of these photos is significant, as participants are depicted both individually and in groups. The composition prominently features vulnerable figures, including children, women, and elderly men- when middle-aged males are portrayed, they are often positioned in a subdued manner (e.g., Figure 10). These vulnerable figures often exhibit submissive body language- such as lowered heads, hunched postures, and crossed arms- characteristics that are notably absent in more secure subjects (Silveira, 2016).

Heather Johnson, Senior Director of Humanitarian Services at the American Red Cross, notes that the vulnerability embodied by images of women is often utilized as a tool to mobilize support for humanitarian intervention and refugee assistance (2011, p. 1032, cited in Silveira, 2016). This vulnerability is predominantly represented through female figures, who are depicted as voiceless and passive symbols.

**Figure. 2** shows a girl from a low angle, emphasizing her size to symbolize dominance. **Contact:** Two young girls occupy a prominent position but do not engage with the viewer, as they look sideways, reflecting a non-transactional action. **Distance:** A medium shot captures the girls' full bodies from a low angle, magnifying them as focal elements in the photo and enhancing their sense of dominance and involvement in their state of waiting. **Point of View:** The vertical angle presents the full bodies of all participants, with the girls in a frontal view and the suitcases dominating the

background. **Compositional Meaning:** The two vulnerable girls dominate the photo from left to right. The dramatic magnification of the suitcases further occupies the image, further reinforcing the themes of vulnerability and waiting. The camera employs a medium-long shot, capturing the faces of the individuals, making it easier for viewers to identify with them in an attempt to create empathy and approachability.

**Framing:** The suitcases command attention from front to back, emphasizing continuity and connection between the girls and the suitcases—key themes in refugee discourse. **Modality:** The image employs multiple bright colors—red, blue, violet, brown, and black—creating an assertive implication. The predominance of red evokes an alarmist view of the situation. The colors of the participants' clothing stand out, with each person wearing different outfit, highlighting a sense of individuality that emphasizes the strong impact of their individual stories.

**Engagement with the Viewer:** All participants look away from the viewer, reflecting a passive and weak position, suggesting a lack of agency and portraying them as powerless recipients of action.

**Symbolism:** The salience and magnification of the girls and the suitcases, along with the predominance of red, symbolize vulnerability, homelessness, and alarm.

### **Linguistic analysis of Figure 2:**

The above visual analysis mirrors and reinforces the image's textual analysis.

Headline: What is the Rafah crossing and why is it Gaza's lifeline? 1 November 2023 BBC.com

Caption: Palestinians with dual citizenship have been waiting to cross into Egypt

Both the headline and the caption emphasize the theme of waiting, looking at the crossing between Egypt and Palestine as the only way out of the state of waiting. The metaphor of referring to the crossing as a 'lifeline' highlights its critical importance and urgency for the Palestinians' survival. The use of the questing form involves the reader with the issue creating pseudo-interactivity to create a bond with the reader, thus involvement; a tool of persuasion. The main agent of the caption is 'Palestinians with dual citizenship' rather than *all Palestinians* which partially excludes Palestinian nationals and simultaneously resonates with the Western audience, which is the main intended readership of the BBC. The use of the present perfect continuous tense "have been waiting" further emphasizes the continuity of the action that started earlier and will last emphasizing the length and continuity of the lagging of time.

The image and the text work together to maintain the refugee discourse of helplessness, emotional persuasion and waiting.





Palestinians with dual citizenship have been waiting to cross into Egypt

Figure 2 (BBC.com)

This article is more than 2 months old

## Number of Palestinians fleeing Rafah rises above 150,000 amid Israeli strikes

People who have already been repeatedly displaced by war describe their plight as they seek safety elsewhere in Gaza



People travel on a cart in Rafah, Gaza's southernmost city, on Friday. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

Figure 3 (The Guardian)

## Palestinians await Israeli onslaught

Refugees crammed into the border city face a terrifying choice: stay for the expected attack, or flee back north through a war zone

Middle East crisis - live updates



Palestinians queue for food at a charity kitchen in Rafah on 5 February. Photograph: Ibraheem Abu Mustafa/Reuters

Figure 4 (The Guardian)



BBC

Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Travel Earth Video Live



Watch: I have the thought of me dying in a bomb in Gaza - British-Palestinian girl

The UK has "not been successful" yet in opening the Rafah crossing into Egypt to help British nationals leave Gaza, the foreign secretary has said.

Figure 5 (BBC)





Palestinians, some with foreign passports hoping to cross into Egypt and others waiting for aid wait at the Rafah crossing in the southern Gaza strip, on October 16, 2023.

Figure 6 (CNBC)



Palestinians, some with foreign passports hoping to cross into Egypt and others waiting for aid wait at the Rafah crossing in the southern Gaza strip, on October 16, 2023.

Mohammed Abed | Afp | Getty Images

Figure 7 (CNBC)



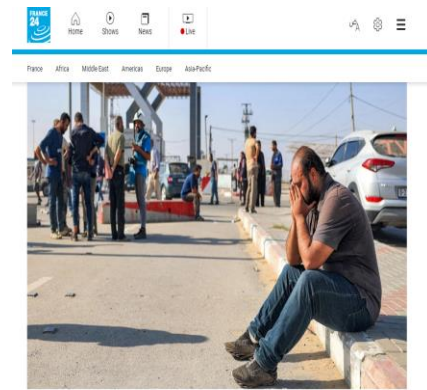
Palestinians flee with their belongings to Cairo in Gaza, on August 22, 2024. (AFP)

Figure 8 (CNN)



A Palestinian man waits at the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. Photograph: AP/Images/Shutterstock

Figure 9 (The Guardian)



A man sits near the gate to the Rafah border crossing with Egypt in the south of the Gaza Strip on November 3, 2023. © Saad Khatib, AFP

Figure 10 (France 24)

Figures 3 to 10 further reinforce the Western agencies' unanimous choice of representation that portrays Palestinians as victims—vulnerable and trapped in a state of waiting. This approach aims to direct attention toward the weaker entity, eliciting sympathy and urging humanitarian aid.

These images highlight the theme of vulnerability in refugee discourse, particularly concerning women and children, to evoke an emotional response and reflect the gravity of the situation to evoke rescue measures. For instance, Figure 3 presents a long shot of passengers on an animal-drawn cart, mainly women, with a lone child depicted frontally but with a withdrawn expression. The blurred background suggests a sense of moving into the unknown, emphasizing isolation and alienation. Figure 4 portrays a line of women holding containers at the border, with a young girl positioned centrally yet not engaging with the viewer, reinforcing a sense of disconnection. Figure 5 shows a young girl crying, with two men and cars in the background, their backs turned and waiting, evoking a feeling of entrapment. Figure 6 depicts women either covering their faces or placing their fists near their faces, symbolizing helplessness and the anticipation of distant aid.

Figure 7 introduces a novel element by featuring men, though, in a prominent left frontal position, yet are seen helplessly standing behind two women, adding to the theme of waiting and vulnerability.

Figures 7, 9, and 10 include men, who are shown in vulnerable positions due to their age or circumstances. In Figure 10, a middle-aged man is sitting on the pavement, with his elbows on his knees and hands covering his face, highlighting themes of waiting, vulnerability, and sympathy. Throughout these images, subjects consistently avoid direct engagement with the viewer, either looking down or sideways, reflecting a state of non-transactional action.

*The distance* in these images predominantly features wide shots, depicting the background and the subjects' full bodies, positioning them in a salient focal position. *The point of view* often includes side shots and frontal images, particularly of children as in Figures 3, 4, and 5, portraying them in helpless postures that enhance their alienation and separation from the viewers. Contrary to Figure 1, which employs framing devices like fences and barbed wires to delineate separation, Figures 2 to 10 focus solely on the subjects to highlight their solidarity in their plight.

*Modality* is conveyed using bright colors: green and red in Figure 4; red in Figure 5; yellow and green in Figure 6; and red and green in Figure 8, with men often in brown. The vibrant colors assert a strong desire for survival, while the predominance of brown suggests a more somber outlook on men's feeling of helplessness and responsibility.

*The interpersonal metafunction* is marked by the absence of direct engagement with the camera, with all individuals shown from behind or not facing the viewer. This visual distance accentuates their alienation and reinforces the call for global assistance toward the vulnerable.

### **Linguistic analysis of Figures 3 – 10:**

#### **Figure 3**

**Headline: Number of Palestinians fleeing Rafah rises above 150,000 amid Israeli strikes**

**Caption: People travel on a cart in Rafah, Gaza's southernmost city, on Friday.**

The headline in Figure 3 enhances the sense of urgency and aggravates the perception of danger by highlighting the significant number of Palestinians—exceeding 150,000—(quantification) using the emotive phrases 'amid Israeli strikes' and 'fleeing.' The lexical choice highlights the perilous nature of their situation. The accompanying image of women and children traveling by cart further intensifies the portrayal of danger, as the use of such a simple and hazardous mode of transportation accentuates the vulnerability and peril faced by Palestinians during the strikes and their journey towards the border.

#### **Figure 4**

**Headline: 'Our last stop is Rafah': trapped Palestinians await Israeli onslaught**

**Caption: Palestinians queue for food at a charity kitchen in Rafah on 5 February.**

The headline of Figure 4 presents one of the tools of persuasive language which is 'quotations'. "Our last stop is Rafah," is a quote by Palestinians who are described as being "trapped" and anticipating imminent death from an Israeli offensive, which again highlights their desperate situation in the 'last stop' and emphasizes the theme of waiting. This portrayal intensifies the emotional impact by depicting a scenario of looming violence, thereby reinforcing the notion of entrapment and imprisonment. The use of direct quotations and emotive language serves to accentuate the symbolism of being trapped. In this perilous context, the Palestinians, despite their desperate circumstances, are seen queuing for charitable food aid focusing on a young girl squeezed among a crowd of Palestinians waiting in line for food; a strong symbol of helplessness and suffering.

### **Figure 5**

**Headline: Gaza: UK pushing for Rafah crossing into Egypt to open**

**15 October 2023 The UK has "not been successful" yet in opening the Rafah crossing into Egypt to help British nationals leave Gaza, the foreign secretary has said.**

**Caption: Watch: I have the thought of me dying in a bomb in Gaza - British-Palestinian girl**

The headline in Figure 5 from the BBC accentuates the UK's role in addressing the situation, using the emotive term "pushing" to convey the resistance encountered from the Egyptian side. This is further supported by a quotation from a senior officer, stating that the UK has "not been successful" in opening the Rafah crossing into Egypt to facilitate the evacuation of British nationals from Gaza, according to the Foreign Secretary. The reference to "British nationals" highlights a focus on the British audience by marginalizing Palestinians in general, thus targeting British readership in specific. Additionally, the caption includes an emotional *individual* quotation from a British-Palestinian girl: "I have the thought of me dying in a bomb in Gaza."

There is another quotation in **Figure 6**, 'There are no longer places to go': Thousands in Gaza forced to flee again after Israeli evacuation orders.

The extensive use of direct quotations serves to enhance authenticity and convey a direct scream for help from those who are most affected, focusing on individual stories, thereby eliciting a stronger emotional response from the reader and humanitarian aids.

**Figures 6 and 7: Headline: Images show crowds of people gathering at the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt**

**Caption: Palestinians, some with foreign passports hoping to cross into Egypt and others waiting for aid wait at the Rafah crossing in the southern Gaza strip, on October 16, 2023.**

CNBC uses the same caption for two images depicting large 'crowds of people' (quantification), suggesting a sense of being overwhelmed by forces beyond their control. The caption adopts a more inclusive perspective by referring to "Palestinians, some with foreign passports," in contrast to BBC and CNN, which primarily focused on "Palestinians with dual nationalities." The emotive nature of the images directs attention to their impact, making the visuals more powerful than the words in the headline and caption

**Figure 8 (CNN):**

**Headline: ‘There are no longer places to go’: Thousands in Gaza forced to flee again after Israeli evacuation orders**

**Caption: Palestinians flee with their belongings in Deir al-Balah, Gaza, on August 21, 2024.**

**Figure 9 (The Guardian):**

**Headline: Rafah border crossing: could Egypt open it to fleeing Palestinians? 15 October, 2023**

**Caption: A Palestinian man waits at the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt.**

**Figure 10 (France 24):**

**Headline: The Gaza-Egypt Rafah crossing explained: ‘It is not a normal border’**

**issued on: 03/11/2023 - 21:57**

**Caption: A man sits near the gate to the Rafah border crossing with Egypt in the south of the Gaza Strip on November 3, 2023.**

The headlines for Figures 8, 9, and 10 emphasize the theme of escape, using terms like "flee," "refuge," and "evacuation" to highlight the urgency of the situation and escape narrative. Quotations, questions, and quantification are also employed in these headlines as emotive persuasive strategies. The phrase "Israeli evacuation orders" gives agency to Israel in this dilemma, as noted by CNN nearly a year after the assault. The Guardian's headline ends with an aspirational question about whether Egypt will open the border, inviting readers to speculate and consider various scenarios. In contrast, France 24 (Fig. 10) presents an emphatic statement with the quote, "It is not a normal border," underscoring its significance for both a lifeline for Palestinians and a safeguard for Egyptians.

**An Alternative Perspective**

The analysis and selection of images in the above section highlight Western viewpoints regarding the Egypt-Gaza border blockade, focusing mainly on the plight of Palestinians and their efforts to flee and seek safety across the border. Implicitly, Egypt is portrayed as the agent responsible for the Palestinians' problems and dilemmas. In the next section, a more supportive perspective on Egypt's stance will be presented. The alternative perspective offers support for the Egyptian viewpoint illustrated in Figures 11 through 13. Figure 11, sourced from English Ahram, an Egyptian state-owned newspaper that publishes in English for an international audience, presents an official Egyptian perspective.

**Headline: 'Egypt never closed Rafah border crossing with Gaza': UNRWA chief**

**Caption: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini. Photo: AFP**



The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) Commissioner-General  
Philippe Lazzarini. Photo: AFP

Figure 11 (English Ahram online)

The image is a full shot captured from a frontal angle, featuring a close-up of a speaker from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The presence of the UN logo in the background helps identify the speaker and emphasizes the organization's role. The close-up shot fosters a stronger connection with the viewer, as the speaker directly faces the camera, creating a sense of trust and engagement. His positioning, with his head and hands actively involved in discussion, emphasizes his role in persuading the audience. The microphone indicates that the address is being broadcasted to a wider audience. The speaker's central placement in the image, combined with an eye-level frontal angle, enhances his prominence and fosters a direct transactional interaction with the viewers. The light blue background symbolizes hope and potential relief for refugees.

Linguistic Analysis: The headline reinforces the direct quotation from the UNRWA Chief, stating, "Egypt never closed Rafah border crossing with Gaza." The use of the modal verb "never" strongly asserts that the border has always been open, thus shifting responsibility for any closure to the Israeli side, which is viewed as responsible for obstructing aid delivery. The speaker's identity as the UNRWA Chief lends authenticity and credibility to the quotation, supporting the Egyptian position, transferring agency of the action of closure to the Israel assault.

**Figure 12:**

**Headline: US in talks with Egypt and Israel to open Gaza's Rafah border crossing to foreigners [Ahram Online](#) , Friday 13 Oct 2023**

**Caption: A picture taken on October 10, 2023, shows the closed gates of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. AFP**





A picture taken on October 10, 2023, shows the closed gates of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. AFP

Figure 12 (English Ahram online)



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Figure 13 (The New Arab)

Figure 12 illustrates the closed Rafah border crossing, devoid of human presence to emphasize the themes of closure and desolation. The barrier arm is depicted in a horizontal shot, reinforcing the concept of restricted access. This wide, long-angle shot captures the gate in its entirety, occupying a central and prominent position within the image in a salient position. The predominant color scheme is muted, with the barrier arm and its base highlighted in red to symbolize access denial. The blue sky in the background contrasts with the gate, symbolizing the notion of freedom at the other side of the gate.

**Framing:** The gate serves as a visual divide between captivity, in muted colors, and freedom on the far side, represented by the blue sky. It signifies a separation and detachment symbol between the two states.

### **Linguistic Analysis:**

The caption indicates that the image was taken on October 10, 2023, only a few days after the onset of Israel's assault, underscoring the immediacy and awareness of the border closure situation. The headline, "US in Talks with Egypt and Israel to Open Gaza's Rafah Border Crossing to Foreigners," highlights the shared responsibility for the closure between Egypt and Israel, with the United States acting as a mediator. The phrase "US in talks" highlights the ongoing nature of the negotiations and the unresolved status of the situation. The use of 'foreigners', not 'Palestinians', represents Egypt's view as a keeper of its own safety.

### **Figure 13 (The New Arab)**

**Headline: Egypt denies fortifying North Sinai's Rafah border crossing with Gaza**

**Caption: Rafah Border crossing is Gaza's only connection to the outside world.**

Figure 13, sourced from The New Arab—a prominent London-based English-language news agency specializing in the Middle East and North Africa—offers an independent perspective due to its non-affiliated stance.

The image depicts several individuals crossing the border gate with luggage on trolleys. The person pushing a trolley is identifiable by a high-visibility vest, indicating his role in assisting with luggage transport. The photograph is primarily a lateral shot from the side with no direct

engagement with the viewer, which accentuates a sense of detachment and remoteness. Compared to Figure 12, this image is brighter in color, suggesting a degree of hope for crossing the border. It features a wide, horizontal view with the baggage handler prominently in the foreground in a salient position, dressed in an official uniform. The black border gate, central to the image, frames the scene and symbolizes the connection between the two sides of the border.

In contrast to Western media, which often emphasize humanitarian aspects such as the vulnerability of women, children, and the elderly, *The New Arab* focuses on the operational aspects of border management, particularly the opening and closing of the gates.

**Linguistic Analysis:** The headline "Egypt denies fortifying North Sinai's Rafah border crossing with Gaza" attributes the main agent to Egypt, reflecting Egypt's perspective and its denial of fortifying the border. The caption provided by *The New Arab*—"Rafah border crossing is Gaza's only connection to the outside world"—is a factual statement that highlights the border's significance without assigning responsibility for its closure. This neutral stance suggests that *The New Arab* is avoiding implicating Egypt in the border's closure, maintaining an objective position on the issue.

### **Critical Reflection and Discussion**

This paper examined 13 images, and their accompanying headlines and captions depicted in different Western and Middle Eastern news reports. These images were selected primarily to examine how Western media portray the Egypt-Gaza blockade from their own perspectives and what specific aspects they emphasize regarding the representation of Palestinians and Egyptians. They reflect the ideology of a sample of prominent and influential Western news agencies, which consistently depict Palestinians and the Egyptian authorities as two distinct entities. This representation aims to portray Egypt as determined in its decision to keep the border closed for its own security reasons despite efforts from the west to allow the Palestinians to be relocated in Sinai-Egypt. Notably, there is a more sympathetic attitude toward Palestinians in these images than has been observed in previous research (Ezzina, 2021). Additionally, the images were chosen for their significance in illustrating the ideological stance of the news agencies and their emotional impact on shaping public opinion. While news images are expected to accurately represent reality, their selection often reveals inherent biases.

The analysis address the research questions by revealing both visual/semiotic and linguistic representations of the differing narratives surrounding the border issue.

Understanding how Palestinians are depicted in Western media often highlights themes of victimhood and displacement, while the Egyptian perspective may emphasize security concerns and national sovereignty. The analysis commences with Figure 1, in which CNN portrays the separation and division between Egyptians and Palestinians concerning the border issue, adopting a more sympathetic view toward the Palestinians. This contrasts with CNN's depiction of Palestinians in Ezzina's (2021) study, which presented them in a more negative light and tended to justify Israeli military actions. This variation in the representation of Palestinians illustrates how ideological perspectives can change within the same agency, influenced by factors such as the changing alliances, timing, and evolving ideologies. These shifts often align with prevailing public

sentiments at different moments in time. For instance, during crises that invite widespread media attention, agencies may adopt a more sympathetic portrayal of Palestinians, highlighting their struggles and vulnerabilities. Conversely, in times of political stability or shifting public opinion, the narrative may tend to frame them differently to resonate with contemporary views. This dynamic reflects the fluidity of media representation and its responsiveness to the socio-political context.

Figure 1 serves as a foundation for the entire analytical framework applied throughout the paper. Figures 2 to 10 depict the Palestinian plight and resilience during the waiting process, emphasizing representations in Western news media that often portray Palestinians primarily as refugees, with a particular focus on individuals with dual nationalities.

The final set of images shifts to the Egyptian perspective, highlighting how media representations from Egypt seek to justify their position in the ongoing discourse. This contrast highlights the differing narratives surrounding the border situation, illustrating the complexities of changing ideological stance, public sentiment, and humanitarian concerns within the context of the crisis.

The sample data were extracted from various Western news websites, primarily CNN (Figures 1 & 8), BBC (Figures 2 & 5), The Guardian (Figures 3, 4 & 9), CNBC (Figures 6 & 7), France 24 (Figure 10), English Ahram Online (Figures 11 & 12), and The New Arab (Figure 13). The selection period spanned from October 10, 2023, shortly after the assault, to August 21, 2024.

The Western agencies mainly cater to Western audiences and their online platforms attract a significant international readership, particularly from the Middle East. Each claims objectivity, impartiality, and balanced coverage. The Guardian and BBC are British, with the BBC funded by the government while The Guardian is privately owned, often taking a more critical, left-leaning stance. CNN and CNBC are American, with CNBC presenting a centrist to center-right perspective and CNN generally viewed as centrist to center-left, though it has faced criticism for perceived liberal bias and sensationalism. English Ahram Online represents the official perspective of Egypt, being state-owned, while The New Arab is an independent agency based in London focusing on Middle Eastern news.

Each of these agencies claims to present balanced views on global news presenting their countries' viewpoints to national and internal audience. Generally, these news agencies are influenced by their ownership and target readership.

The international news agencies in this paper primarily focused on the refugee discourse, emphasizing the waiting and presenting a clear separation between the Palestinians and Egypt through framing devices such as gates, fences, and barbed wire. The themes of vulnerability and waiting were predominant in both the images and text. The images mainly depicted vulnerable Palestinians—children, women, the elderly, and younger men—often in subdued positions. Most participants in the images (Figures 1 to 10) portrayed Palestinians in non-transactional actions with the viewers, avoiding direct contact with the camera and looking sideways or downwards, which reflected isolation and separation.



The design of the images aligned with this narrative, representing the degree of distance and engagement or detachment between the participants and the viewer. The angles of representation primarily consisted of wide shots that revealed a large portion of the background, while full shots displayed the entire bodies of the Palestinians, typically in downcast postures that accentuated their alienation and sense of waiting. Long shots were predominantly used to depict the Egyptian military, highlighting their distance and authority.

Color also played a significant role in the representation: vulnerable Palestinians, particularly children, were shown wearing bright colors—mainly red, green, and pink—while men typically wore brown and darker shades. The Egyptian military was depicted in pale khaki uniforms. This distinction between bright and muted colors reflects the spectrum between hope and authority. Salience primarily focused on the Palestinians to highlight their plight, positioning them either on the left side of the image or centrally as focal points. The main symbols used—fences, barbed wire, and the figures of children and women—exemplified the central themes of obstruction and waiting.

The linguistic choices presented in the headlines and captions reflected the images and employed many elements from Machin and Mayr's (2012) framework, complementing the visual analysis. The primary aim of the text accompanying the images was to serve as a persuasive strategy. Key tactics included overlexicalization through emotive lexis such as "fleeing," "trapped," "pushing," "refugees," "last stop," "lifeline," and "await Israeli onslaught." This language was designed to emotionally charge readers regarding the desperate situation of the Palestinians to draw humanitarian response.

Direct quotations were used to convey the individual stories of Palestinians, providing a direct call for help and leaving a strong emotional impact (Figures 4, 5, and 6). To create a sense of pseudo-interactivity with readers, questions and direct addresses were employed to establish connectivity and rapport as persuasive strategies (Figures 1 & 9). Quantification, by referring to the large number of refugees, served as another persuasive tool to highlight the plight of the masses afflicted by this state of waiting, helplessly anticipating survival (Figures 2, 6, & 7).

The ideology and target readership were addressed through the use of restrictive terms, such as "Palestinians with dual citizenship" (Figure 1), "British nationals" (Figure 5), and "Palestinians, some with foreign passports" (Figures 6 & 7). These terms refer to Palestinians but reflect their representation according to the viewpoints of the news agency and their target audience. Assertive language, such as the modal verb "never" in Figure 11, and symbols, such as references to Palestinians fleeing on animal-drawn carts (Figure 3), support this emotional discourse on vulnerability.

Other linguistic resources were also employed to address this issue. The theme of vulnerability predominated in the discourse across all images, portraying Palestinians in a passive state of waiting, despite their active voices calling for help through images and quotations. This aligns with Silveira's (2016) findings on the representation of (illegal) migrants in British news, where migrants were depicted as lacking agency and unable to disembark from ships until granted permission by higher authorities. Similarly, the imagery of bars represented separation from

freedom, akin to a prison. In Silveira's article, bars served a dual function, symbolizing both "illegal migration" into Europe by sea and the portrayal of migrants as victims.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this paper is mainly to conduct a multi-modal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) of the representation of the Egypt-Gaza border blockade following the Israeli assault on October 7, 2023. A mixed-methods design was employed to analyze the varying viewpoints presented in both international and local news coverage. The purpose is to trace the different representations highlighted in images and text, particularly in headlines and captions that reflect the prevailing ideologies during this critical period.

The analysis and discussion seek to answer the research questions by identifying the primary visual and lexical devices employed by different news agencies to convey their ideological stances and cater to their assumed target audiences. The analytical framework utilized in this study is an adapted model based on the works of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Machin and Mayr (2012), and Norris (2019). This framework provides an understanding of how visual and textual elements work together to construct narratives around the blockade.

Given the constraints of this paper's length, the findings are necessarily limited and provide only an objective, partial analysis of a selection of images. While these findings illuminate key aspects of representation, they do not delve deeply into the broader ideological differences and justifications that inform these representations. Future research could expand upon this analysis by exploring the complexities of media representation in greater detail, considering factors such as historical context, audience reception, and the socio-political implications of each news agency.

By focusing on both visual and textual elements, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of how media representations shape public perception and discourse surrounding significant political events. Such an understanding is crucial for critically engaging with media content and recognizing the power dynamics and biases at play in the framing of news stories, particularly in contexts of conflict and crisis.

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