

## **How CNN Arabic Retains Power in its 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment' Coverage: A Social Actors Approach**

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### **Abstract**

The Palestinian movement landscape has seen a tremendous rise following the rising death toll in Gaza. Among the loudest voices have been US campuses' student protests against their government and academic institutions' complicity in the war. In the face of the public opinion shift, this qualitative descriptive study aims to unravel how CNN Arabic maintains discursive power in its coverage of the pro-Palestinian protests. Focusing on CNN Arabic's initial reporting of the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment,' this study analyzes the data by applying Theo Van Leeuwen's critical discourse analysis framework, specifically the Social Actors Approach. By utilizing this framework, the author examines CNN Arabic's representation of social actors in its narrative, exploring both their exclusion and inclusion. In light of the results, the author categorizes the data into three categories: the representation of (1) Columbia students, (2) the Columbia University president and critics, and (3) external actors. The results demonstrate CNN Arabic's elaborate use of both exclusion and inclusion strategies. Inclusion strategies were used repeatedly to marginalize student protesters and the university president, as well as to establish the credibility of external sources. On the other hand, exclusion strategies were used much less, primarily to divert readers' attention from the real issue and protect critics of the protests. By employing these strategies, CNN Arabic is able to maintain its discursive power, regain public influence, and convey negative sentiments toward the pro-Palestinian protesters.

Keywords: Campus, Discourse, Gaza, Protests, Social Actors

### **Abstrak**

Gerakan pembebasan Palestina belakangan ini mengalami gejolak besar seiring dengan bertambahnya korban jiwa di Gaza. Di antara gebrakan terbesarnya adalah demonstrasi yang berlangsung di universitas-universitas Amerika untuk menentang keterlibatan pemerintahan Amerika dan kampus mereka dalam perang tersebut. Penelitian deskriptif kualitatif ini bermaksud untuk menyingkap cara CNN Arabic mempertahankan dominasinya dalam pemberitaan isu protes pro-Palestina yang tengah meluap. Peneliti menggunakan pendekatan analisis wacana kritis Theo Van Leeuwen yang berpijak pada strategi eksklusi dan inklusi untuk meneliti pemberitaan awal CNN Arabic terhadap 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment.' Berdasarkan hasil yang ditemukan, peneliti membagi data menjadi 3 bagian, yaitu representasi (1) mahasiswa Universitas Columbia, (2) presiden Universitas Columbia beserta pengkritiknya, dan (3) aktor eksternal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan pemanfaatan CNN Arabic terhadap strategi eksklusi dan inklusi untuk mengungkapkan narasi tertentu. Strategi inklusi digunakan secara berulang kali dan bervariasi untuk memarjinalisasikan para mahasiswa pengunjuk rasa dan pihak universitas. Strategi ini juga digunakan untuk membangun kepercayaan pembaca terhadap sumber-sumber eksternal yang dicantumkan oleh CNN Arabic. Sebaliknya, strategi eksklusi hanya digunakan dalam jumlah kecil untuk melindungi para pengkritik dan mengalihkan fokus para pembaca dari isu sebenarnya. Dengan menggunakan strategi-strategi ini, CNN Arabic mampu mempertahankan kekuatan diskursifnya untuk menetapkan kembali pengaruhnya di mata publik dan memberikan sentimen negatif terhadap demonstran pro-Palestina.

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## INTRODUCTION

In our current democratic world, the mass media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2021). This role stems from the media's authority to select images of reality and utilize them to achieve a desired social construct (Harsa & Rofil, 2021). Therefore, media products are often the outcome of intentional news framing that is inseparable from the ideologies they seek to impose (Hassan, 2018). Through the use of language and narrative, media have proven to have irrefutable power to determine what issues matter, who the enemies are, and which policies the public should support (Badham, 2019; Mohamed Fuhad & Abdul Wahab, 2024). The media landscape becomes a competitive ground for various media institutions to uphold dominance in the public narrative. Critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) examines the relationship between language and power, revealing the manifestation of power through the exploitation and manipulation of language (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018). It attempts to reveal the hegemony nuanced by the media's social and political interests in discourses (El-Sayed, 2020). Consequently, it discloses the enactment or resistance of power abuse, dominance, and inequality by elites or institutions through discourse (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018).

An intriguing subject for CDA is the depiction of the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment' that has taken place at Columbia University in the United States. On April 17, 2024, after months of discreet protests and attempts to pass referendums, Columbia students established an encampment as an escalation of the university's passivity in addressing the students' demands to divest from Israeli companies supporting the war in Gaza (Rajagopal & Cook, 2024). The encampment serves as a symbolic form of protest, signifying the physical occupation of campus space as a message of power shift and counter-enclosure, challenging the power structures within the academic institution (Alsemeiri et al., 2024; Hodali, 2025). The pinnacle of this movement comes as a result of constant media exposure and digital literacy among the youth, thereby influencing their moral compass and sensitivity to societal issues (Irfan Daniel et al., 2022; Nurfazri et al., 2024).

Like any reputable academic institution, Columbia University is also renowned for its distinctive characteristics (Rismawati et al., 2022). The university is widely renowned for promoting social justice and fostering peace movements in society (Cerami, 2024). Although academic institutions are expected to uphold a safe and encouraging space for such conversations, universities of Columbia's caliber are highly susceptible to external political influences. Acknowledging the potential socio-political influence of elite universities, external parties, such as investors and policymakers, invest in universities to secure their interests in the way universities govern and manage their campus dynamics (Buheji & Ahmed, 2024). Their influence was exhibited throughout the protests at Columbia University, with congressional hearings and threats of federal funding cuts being made in response to the university's handling of the protests (Bernstein et al., 2024; Davis, 2024). Furthermore, The Washington Post reports that a group of American billionaires has been collectively engaging in media campaigns in favor of the Israeli narrative and has been in contact with the New York City Mayor to ensure that police are brought in to disperse the encampments (Natanson & Felton, 2024). These practices of political power have resulted in the hegemony of certain social groups to suppress and efface the opposing group, which in this case is the pro-Palestinian student protesters.

Drawing upon this background, the author senses an urgency to investigate the media's portrayal of the social actors involved in the prevailing event by employing Theo Van Leeuwen's Critical Discourse

Analysis (CDA) framework, specifically the *Social Actors Approach*. Van Leeuwen's framework reveals the media's ideological stance by employing two discursive strategies — exclusion and inclusion — that illuminate how social actors are presented or ignored within a discourse (Hasan, 2024). Furthermore, this strategy clarifies how the media, as an agenda-setting actor, maintains power by highlighting particular individuals or groups that align with their views (Badham, 2019). Studies utilizing the *Social Actors Approach* on the subject of protests and the Israel-Palestine issue remain limited. Previous research on demonstrations has analyzed Liputan6's portrayal of demonstrations in Indonesia's Makassar, specifically those by citizens against the rise in fuel prices (Amalia et al., 2019). This study only focused on the exclusion and inclusion of protesters on a local scale. In another *Social Actors* research, Israel's Prime Minister's speech at the 2014 United Nations (UN) General Assembly was analyzed to see how he utilized exclusion and inclusion strategies to increase sympathy towards Israel, vilify Hamas, and portray the UN as a peace-supporting and anti-terrorist actor (Khaled, 2020). However, the study object was limited to speech data from the Israeli government's perspective. On the topic of the Gaza War, Van Leeuwen's framework was employed in synergy with Fairclough's *Three-Dimensional Model* to study the representation of social groups in Western and Arab media headlines (Ahmed & Eldin, 2019). Concerning the latest 2023 War, researchers have been quick to implement Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in navigating the media's reporting of the ongoing military assault (Alwaheidi, 2024; Liu, 2024; Mamona et al., 2024). Alas, none of the CDA studies utilized Van Leeuwen's *Social Actors Approach*. Moreover, the objects of study are hyper-focused and limited to the ground assaults in Gaza.

Collectively, the studies above reveal a gap in the literature, necessitating new research to analyze the current state of affairs as the fight for narrative continues unabatedly, leading to collisions between elite groups and concerned youth. This study will focus on one of America's leading media institutions, CNN, specifically CNN Arabic's portrayal of social actors in its 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment' coverage. The choice of CNN's Arabic branch as a study subject will provide a wider understanding of the institution's overarching ideology. To navigate this research, the author proposes the research question: How does CNN Arabic implement Theo Van Leeuwen's exclusion and inclusion strategies to maintain the dominance of certain social actors while suppressing others in the events of the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment'? By answering this question, the study is expected to provide a grounded analysis of social actor representation in a setting of societal power shift. The research is also expected to contribute to the existing research landscape by applying Van Leeuwen's framework to elucidate the representation of actors in a global demonstration movement.

As noted above, the study restricts its scope to a single media outlet. Thus, future research should expand the scope of the study, possibly by comparing multiple media outlets to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the differing implementations of exclusion and inclusion strategies in global movement coverage.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, providing a comprehensive analysis and description of the phenomenon in question (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). The data was collected using document study methodology, where the author obtained data by reviewing written materials (Busetto et al., 2020). For this study, the written materials were archived articles from CNN Arabic's online website, [cnn.arabic.com](http://cnn.arabic.com). The author first tabulated articles found on the subject of 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment' in April-May 2024. Afterward, the author limited the data to the first initial reporting found, narrowing the study object to four articles published on April 24, 2024.

To conduct the analysis, the author employed the content analysis method, adopting Theo Van Leeuwen's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, specifically the *Social Actors Approach*. This framework comprises two distinctive discursive strategies: exclusion and inclusion. Exclusion strategy involves the disguise or omission of particular social actors, oftentimes to protect perpetrators, legitimize their actions, or divert the audience's focus (As'sa'idah & Abdul Basid, 2024). This strategy may be manifested through (1) passivation, (2) nominalization, and (3) clause alteration. Opposite to the former strategy, the inclusion strategy focuses on the way social actors are materialized and framed in discourse. Van Leeuwen classifies inclusion by contrasting pairs, namely (1) differentiation-indifferentiation, (2) objectivation-abstraction, (3) nomination-categorization, (4) nomination-identification, (5) determination-indetermination, (6) assimilation-individualization, and (7) association-disassociation (Evianda et al., 2019). Adhering to the content analysis method, the author first familiarizes herself with the data by thoroughly reading it and then codes the information based on the chosen framework. The reading and coding process may be repeated frequently and discussed to ensure clarity. Afterward, the data are identified and categorized according to relevant categories related to the study's aim. Finally, the data are presented descriptively, accompanied by an English translation of each data point to assist readers' comprehension. The translation process from Arabic to English was conducted using an integrative method that combined AI translation tools with subsequent editing to ensure accuracy and appropriateness (Nugraha, 2018; Nugraha et al., 2022).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The analysis adopts Theo Van Leeuwen's *Social Actors Approach* to analyze the first four articles published by CNN Arabic in its initial reporting on the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment' by Columbia University students. In sequence, the articles discuss (1) Trump's opinion on the protests, (2) the Columbia University President's background identity, (3) the Columbia University President's message to protesting students, and (4) the spread of pro-Palestine university protests across the United States.

This section will navigate the results into three fundamental categories. The first category is the portrayal of Columbia University students. The second category is the portrayal of Columbia University's president and its critics. The last category is the portrayal of political actors mentioned in the articles. In each category, strategies of inclusion are found. However, the exclusion strategy was only found in the first and second categories in the form of nominalization. The findings also note CNN Arabic's use of direct quotations and its implications for the news outlet's strategy in framing the pro-Palestine movement. Further elaboration is as follows.

### **The Portrayal of Columbia University Students**

This category encompasses CNN Arabic's representation of the student actors involved in the pro-Palestinian protests. The results show a dominance of inclusion strategies employed by CNN Arabic to represent the student protesters. The implementation of inclusion strategies was found to marginalize the protesters and to show the negative impacts of their actions. On the other hand, the exclusion strategy was only used once to emphasize the campus disturbance that these protests have caused. Interestingly, CNN Arabic also included another student actor in one of the datasets, presenting them by their social category as Jewish students. The explanation is as follows.

## EXCLUSION

### Nominalization

The strategy of nominalization involves the omission of social actors by using nouns instead of verbs, thereby shifting the reader's focus from an action to an event (As'sa'idah & Abdul Basid, 2024). This strategy was applied once in CNN Arabic's attempt to exclude the pro-Palestinian student protesters at Columbia University.

تسببت الاضطرابات المتزايدة في الحرم الجامعي في إثارة القلق والفوضى مع استعداد الجامعات لحفلات التخرج في الأسابيع المقبلة.

Growing disturbances on campus have caused anxiety and chaos as universities prepare for graduation ceremonies in the coming weeks.

In the data above, CNN Arabic uses the noun اضطرابات 'disturbances' to describe the state of affairs at Columbia University. Instead of mentioning the student protesters as the doers, the news outlet positions the nominal structure 'growing disturbances' as the sentence subject, letting it carry the meaning of the event taking place (Sausina & Indarti, 2023). Consequently, CNN Arabic's choice to center the message on 'disturbances' allows the readers to associate the pro-Palestinian protesters as the source of chaos indirectly. This application of the nominalization strategy overlooks the identity of the protest itself: a symbolic support to the Palestinians, resistance to the suffering imposed by Israel with US support, and a form of social education to the reality in Gaza (Banerjee & Cleary, 2024). Through the exemption of agents, protesters become marginalized, and their ideas and objectives become irrelevant, overshadowed by issues of disruption. Thus, it evokes judgmental sentiments in readers toward the pro-Palestinian protesters.

As most of CNN Arabic's readers reside in the Middle East, the framing of the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment' as a source of chaos may dishearten readers who have put their hopes into this now-global movement in supporting the Palestinian cause. The primary agenda of the movement is significantly overshadowed by issues of campus disturbances, implying that CNN's broad agenda is to obscure the reality of the protests' achievements—a growing movement that challenges and continues to shake the existing ruling elites (Mahmood, 2024). This linguistic practice elucidates CDA's goal of revealing dominance that is enacted through discursive strategies, such as nominalization (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018).

## INCLUSION

### Differentiation-Indifferentiation

Indifferentiation strategy portrays social actors in a contrasting manner against other social actors in a discourse, whereas differentiation strategy portrays social actors independently (Mubasyira et al., 2021; Sausina & Indarti, 2023). The strategy of indifferentiation in CNN Arabic's portrayal of the Columbia University student protesters yields specific implications for the narrative, as evident in the data below.

(1) ويواصل طلاب جامعة كولومبيا اعتصامهم ويقولون إنهم لن يغادروا حتى يتم تلبية المطالب... وفي المقابل، حذر مسؤولو الجامعة من أن الاعتصام "ينتهك القواعد" لكنهم لم يعلنوا عن عواقب تأديبية محددة.

*Columbia University students continue their sit-in, saying they will not leave until their demands are met... In contrast, university officials have warned that the sit-in "violates the rules" but have not announced specific disciplinary consequences.*

In the data above, the pro-Palestinian protesters are homogeneously represented using the term الطلاب 'students,' indicating a group of individuals enrolled in an educational program (UNESCO Institute

of Statistics, n.d.). This group of students is presented next to actors referred to as 'university officials' مسؤول الجامعة. Through this excerpt, CNN Arabic references the academic hierarchical structure between students and university officials to evoke readers' perceptions of institutionalized power relations and traditional student-academic dynamics (Symonds, 2020). Consequently, CNN Arabic's implementation of Van Leeuwen's indifferentiation strategy contrasts the legitimacy and dominant nature of the academic body with the inferiority and expected nature of students to abide by academic rules.

Utilizing this rhetoric, CNN Arabic leads readers to delegitimize the student solidarity movement, portraying it as a rebellious action. On the contrary, by using educational context, CNN Arabic endorses public legitimation of the university's choice to impose disciplinary consequences on students—including but not limited to the dispersal and arrest of protesting students—as it is portrayed as part of the academic body's role in governing its students (Cerami, 2024).

وأضافت: "...وأدرك أن العديد من المتظاهرين تجمعوا سلمياً، ومع ذلك، فإن المخيم يؤثر مخاوف خطيرة تتعلق بالسلامة، ويعطل الحياة في الحرم الجامعي، ويخلق بيئة متوترة ومعادية في بعض الأحيان للعديد من أعضاء مجتمعنا، ومن الضروري أن نمضي قدماً في خطة لتفكيكه." (2)

*She added: "...I understand that many protesters gathered peacefully; however, the camp raises serious safety concerns, disrupts campus life, creates a tense and sometimes hostile environment for many members of our community, and we must move forward with a plan to dismantle it."*

In data (2), CNN Arabic utilizes a statement by Columbia University President Nemat Shafik to address the state of the developing campus protests. Initially, Shafik recognizes that 'many protesters gathered peacefully.' However, the following statement rebuts the peaceful nature of the protest through Shafik's emotive description of its negative repercussions. This application of the indifferentiation strategy creates a conflicting visualization that distorts the readers' comprehension of the protests. As the latter statement involves emotive language, such as 'tense environment' بيئة متوترة and 'hostile,' معادية readers are more likely to attribute the protests to this emotional description rather than the former, peaceful description. The premise imposes a one-sided idea that CNN Arabic seems to endorse continually; it is that the resolution of the problem lies in the students' compliance with the heightening pressure to shut down their pro-Palestinian movement.

Despite the polarizing description of the protests, CNN Arabic is able to distance itself from direct responsibility for the statement while still taking advantage of the message it conveys through the utilization of direct quotations which is a strategy that Mamona et al. (2024) have also taken note of throughout CNN's initial reporting of the Israel-Hamas war in 2023. By utilizing statements from other actors, CNN Arabic exhibits a journalistic tendency to convey certain political stances while attempting to maintain an image of neutrality in the public's eyes.

وأضاف ترامب للصحفيين: "...يجب أن تكتسب إدارة كولومبيا القليل من القوة والشجاعة وتبقى مفتوحة، هذا جنون ويعني أن الطرف الآخر يفوز." (3)

*Trump told the reporters... "The administration of Columbia has to gain a little strength and courage to stay open; this is crazy, and it means the other side is winning."*

In data (3), CNN Arabic quotes a statement from former US President Donald Trump that exemplifies the power struggle between Columbia University administration and the protesters. Implicitly, CNN Arabic's use of Trump's statement acknowledges the protesters' successful attempts in shaking the systemic power structure. However, the news outlet tactically includes this particular Trump statement as it carries CNN's ideological stance in promoting an in-group bias towards the university and to ostracize the protesters as 'the other side' by implementing an 'us' vs. 'them' premise. This narrative is presented as the university is formally addressed as 'Columbia administration' إدارة كولومبيا. In contrast, the

pro-Palestinian protesters are regarded as 'the other side,' providing readers with a contrasting view of both actors (Mubasyira et al., 2021). In addition, the statement also shows an underlying encouragement to the Columbia University administration to persist and resist despite the protesters' escalation of events. This revelation reflects CNN's broader stance and discursive agenda to undermine the protesters' objectives, suppress their voice, and hinder any genuine societal change.

### Objectivation-Abstraction

The strategy of objectivation and abstraction is contingent on the clearness or vagueness of actor representation in a discourse (Sausina & Indarti, 2023). Objectivation is commonly employed by displaying statistical facts to ensure clarity in readers' comprehension.

(4) وأضافت: "منذ ما يقرب من 4 أيام، تحول حرم الجامعة إلى معسكر لمئات من الطلاب الناشطين."

(Shafik) added: "For nearly four days, the university campus has been transformed into a camp for hundreds of student activists."

In data (4), CNN Arabic continues to quote President Shafik's statement regarding the campus encampment. This excerpt particularly refers to the number of student activists gathered at the Columbia University encampment. Shafik employs the strategy of objectivation, presenting the students using a clear number of 'مئات' 'hundreds.' This discursive strategy provides the readers with a tangible illustration of the magnitude of Columbia University's student encampments. In doing so, CNN Arabic conveys an understanding that enables readers to grasp the extent to which the Palestinian cause has gained traction, fostering an unprecedented solidarity for the Palestinian cause that transcends traditional social boundaries (Sadiki & Saleh, 2024).

### Nomination-Categorization

The categorization strategy involves representing social actors by assigning them to a social category, such as race, age, gender, religion, or personal identification (Ahmed & Eldin, 2019). On the other hand, the nomination strategy presents social actors as they are, without attribution to any social categories (Sausina & Indarti, 2023). Categorization was found under two circumstances, as explained below.

(5) احتجاجات مؤيدة للفلسطينيين تنتشر عبر جامعات عريقة في أمريكا.

*Pro-Palestinian protests spread across prestigious universities in America.*

In data (5), CNN Arabic attributes the protesters to have emanated from 'prestigious universities.' This categorization of social class signals a sense of urgency as the tenacious protests against Israel's actions and the US government's support, as well as the university's complicity, hail from academic institutions that host America's most prospective leaders. High-profile universities, such as Columbia University, are recognized for their significant contributions and profound impact on the socio-political landscape (Buheji & Ahmed, 2024). The superiority and high-performance nature of these institutions provide a reason for their persistence and courage in establishing protests that challenge the status quo. On that account, CNN Arabic's direct categorization of the protests enables readers to acknowledge the severity of the protests and their potential reverberations on global society and the broader political landscape.

(6) وأضافت أن "محاولة التوفيق بين حقوق حرية التعبير لأولئك الذين يريدون الاحتجاج وحقوق الطلاب اليهود في أن يكونوا في بيئة خالية من المضايقات أو التمييز كان التحدي الرئيسي في الحرم الجامعي لدينا، والعديد من الجامعات الأخرى، في الأشهر الأخيرة."

*She added that "trying to reconcile the free speech rights of those who want to protest with the rights of Jewish students to be in an environment free from harassment or discrimination has been the main challenge on our campus, and many other campuses in recent months."*

In data (6), CNN Arabic quotes the words of Columbia University President Nemat Shafik in her letter addressing the protesting students. In this statement, Shafik employs a categorization strategy to describe a particular student group. This group of students is categorized by their ethnoreligious attribute, 'الطلاب اليهود' 'Jewish students.' In this instance, the centring of Jewish students revolves around their rights to be in a safe campus environment, free from harassment and discrimination. CNN Arabic's choice to include Jewish categorization in this particular context opportunistically elicits readers' mental association of Jews and harassment, leading to the interpretation of antisemitism. As a result, CNN Arabic implies the idea that the practice of voicing support for the Palestinians' freedom comes at the cost of Jewish safety. This premise conflates criticism of Israel and its allies' policies with Jewish-hatred, creating a fallacy that supporting Palestinian rights is equivalent to antisemitism (Litvin, 2019).

Student reports have shown there were similar cases of physical and verbal assaults on not only Jewish students, but also towards Muslim and Arab students (Fuchs et al., 2024; Jewish Voice for Peace & Students for Justice in Palestine, 2023; Massel, 2024). Both reports reflect a division based on the parties' differing political beliefs, specifically Zionism versus Palestinian liberation (Fuchs et al., 2024; Jewish Voice for Peace & Students for Justice in Palestine, 2023). In addition to that, Jewish students voicing solidarity for the Palestinians have also been subjected to doxxing, physical and verbal assaults due to their anti-Zionism stance; a side of Jewish student assaults that is not present in CNN Arabic's reports (Columbia/Barnard Jewish Voice for Peace, 2024). Against this backdrop, CNN Arabic's choice to display the case by categorization of Jewishness, as opposed to the apparent political dissent, and its selective representation of the recipient of assaults implies CNN's alliance with Israel's policies and a tendentiousness to protect their cause through exploiting antisemitism accusations and exclusive narrations of victimhood (Barca, 2024). As a result, the narrative may evoke doubts in CNN Arabic's Middle Eastern readers to voice their support for the Palestinian liberation in fear of antisemitism accusations, thus silencing any valid criticism of the state of Israel and its allies.

### **Nomination-Identification**

Fundamentally, this inclusion strategy is very similar to the nomination-categorization strategy. However, regarding the identification strategy, the attribution of social actors is established by adding clauses as the vehicle for explanation (Sausina & Indarti, 2023). An example of this usage can be found in CNN Arabic's coverage, as elaborated below.

(7) *وقالت: "نحن نعمل على تحديد المتظاهرين الذين انتهكوا سياساتنا ضد التمييز والتحرش، وسيتم إخضاعهم للإجراءات التأديبية المناسبة."*

*She said: "We are working to identify protesters who violated our policies against discrimination and harassment, and they will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action."*

In data (7), CNN Arabic utilizes a statement by the Columbia University president concerning the speculation that protesters are violating campus policies. The identification strategy is characterized by the use of *الذين* prior to the explanation clause. This use of discursive strategy aligns with CDA's principle, which suggests that discourse serves as a form of power reproduction (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018). In this instance, the application of the identification strategy yields a generalization that the protesters are acting unethically and immorally, thereby opposing the university's academic rules and values. Consequently, CNN Arabic's use of this statement reiterates the power relation in an academic context. It legitimizes the



systemic power of the academic body to impose sanctions on the pro-Palestinian protesters (Symonds, 2020). The framing influences the public's view of the protesters as diabolical and unacceptable. In addition, the framing specifically induces a confirmation bias on CNN's Arab readers that there is still vilification of the Arab-Palestinian cause and that the American public opinion is still fuelled by the ruling class' favoritism toward the Western-Israeli narrative.

### **Determination-Indetermination**

The strategy of determination-indetermination refers to the portrayal of social actors as either anonymous or explicitly identified within a discourse (McLean, 2022). Determination is commonly manifested by mentioning the social actor's name as a precise identifier (Sausina & Indarti, 2023). On the other hand, indetermination is demonstrated by maintaining the anonymity of social actors, as exhibited in the data below.

(8) وقال عمدة مدينة نيويورك، إريك آدامز إن السلطات حددت "محرضين خارجيين" تسببوا في مشاكل في الاحتجاجات الطلابية السلمية في الغالب في كولومبيا وجامعة نيويورك وجامعات أخرى في المدينة.

*New York City Mayor Eric Adams stated that authorities have identified "outside agitators" responsible for causing problems at the largely peaceful student protests at Columbia University, New York University, and other universities in the city.*

The data above shows a case of indetermination through the mention of 'محرضين خارجيين' 'outside agitators,' resulting in an unclear identification of certain actors speculated to have radicalized the protests. Historically, the US government has had a record of portraying societal movements challenging the status quo as being intruded upon by outside agitators (Brewer, 2024). Ongoing investigations have revealed minimal evidence, which is insufficient to substantiate the allegation of outside agitator involvement (Anuta & Sentner, 2024). Despite that, CNN Arabic's insertion of the mayor's statement intentionally leads readers to perceive the protests as an organized, radical movement, diverting the focus away from the humanitarian-based objectives of the pro-Palestinian movement.

Concerning Van Leeuwen's strategy of indetermination, such unclear references may be a result of multiple factors, including insufficient evidence, journalistic tendencies, or the existence of structural concerns that lead the writer to withhold information anonymously (Sausina & Indarti, 2023). CNN Arabic's deliberate choice of including the outside agitator rhetoric, despite insufficient evidence, shows its journalistic tendency to delegitimize the movement's genuine motives while legitimizing police interventions to halt and dismantle the widely peaceful protests (Brewer, 2024). Referring to a Natanson & Felton (2024) report, there is evidence that leading up to the dispersal, America's ruling elites pressured Mayor Adams to disperse the Columbia University pro-Palestinian protests by using police force. Therefore, the use of the indetermination strategy in mentioning 'outside agitators' may be a motive to conceal the otherwise unnecessary police involvement, thereby giving in to the demands of the ruling elites. CNN Arabic's deliberate choice to give a platform to the mayor's rhetoric implies its support in the elite's narrative, helping to sustain their power in the public discourse.

### **Association-Disassociation**

The usage of the association strategy lies in the way social actors are portrayed with other actors in a discourse. In comparison, the disassociation strategy displays actors individually, with no interconnection between them (Sausina & Indarti, 2023). CNN Arabic utilized the strategy of association to illustrate the pro-Palestinian protests, as narrated below.

(9) يأتي كل هذا في الوقت الذي ينتشر فيه المتظاهرون المؤيدون للفلسطينيين في جميع أنحاء الجامعات الأمريكية، بما في ذلك جامعات مينيسوتا وميشيغان. وفي غيرها من الجامعة ومن بوسطن إلى بيركلي... جامعة هارفارد يارد ...

*All this comes as pro-Palestinian protesters spread across American college campuses, including the universities of Minnesota and Michigan. At other universities, from Boston to Berkeley... Harvard University Yard...*

In the data above, CNN Arabic provides readers with an illustration of how the pro-Palestinian protests have spread across the United States. To visualize the magnitude of the protests, CNN Arabic mentions several names of other universities that are collectively facing their students' respective reverberations of the Palestinian solidarity movement. CNN Arabic specifically mentions جامعة مينيسوتا 'University of Minnesota,' جامعة ميشيغان 'University of Michigan,' جامعة هارفارد 'Harvard University,' and generally other American universities, stretching from Boston to Berkeley. This practice of Van Leeuwen's association strategy provides readers with tangible evidence, illustrating the snowball effect of the pro-Palestinian protests that have transformed the movement from a local concern to a widespread national concern.

### The Portrayal of the University President and Critics

Aside from the pro-Palestinian protesters, CNN Arabic places a considerable amount of attention on scrutinizing Columbia University's president, Nemat Shafik, and other universities facing similar challenges. Her presence is signified by the utilization of a variety of Van Leeuwen's inclusion strategies. On the other hand, critics are displayed in a significantly lower quantity by utilizing strategies of nominalization and abstraction. The explanation is as follows.

### EXCLUSION

#### Nominalization

The nominalization strategy is often used to conceal or protect agents by omitting them from the text (Putriani & Juita, 2021). CNN Arabic utilized the strategy of nominalization to put out of sight the actors who have been criticizing the Columbia University president's handling of the pro-Palestinian protests. The examples are as follows.

(1) وتتصاعد الدعوات المطالبة باستقالة رئيسة جامعة كولومبيا نعمت شفيق، فيما تتعرض لانتقادات من داخل الجامعة وخارجها، وقد تواجه تصويماً بحجب الثقة من مجلس شيوخ الجامعة في وقت مبكر من الغد.

*Calls are mounting for Columbia University President Nemat Shafik to resign as she faces criticism from both inside and outside the university and could face a vote of no confidence from the university's Senate as early as tomorrow.*

In data (1), CNN Arabic employs nominal structures, such as 'الدعوات المطالبة باستقالة' 'calls for resignation' and 'انتقادات' 'criticisms,' in place of subject actors. This excerpt was derived from the last of the four initial CNN Arabic reports on the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment.' As preceding articles focused on the rising concerns for campus safety and antisemitism, CNN Arabic's exemption of social actors opportunistically lets the reader's preconception of Shafik's incapability to find a sound resolution to dismantle the encampments be the reason behind such serious calls. As a result, CNN Arabic's use of the strategy centers the issue on her declining position and inability to handle the situation.

However, this premise oversimplifies the reality of the affair. In the sentence, CNN Arabic mentions a call for resignation that refers to the no confidence motion that the Faculty of Arts and Science advanced—and has since passed—regarding Shafik's alleged violations of the university's shared governance principle

and intellectual freedom following her April 17 congressional hearing on antisemitism (Vance, 2024a). The motion serves as a collective censure of Shafik's decision to call in police sweeps and mass arrests on April 18 and April 30, despite disapproval from the University Senate's executive committee, which expressed concerns about external influences on the president's decision-making (Vance, 2024b). CNN Arabic's policy to rely on the readers' preconception and the omission of actors in this vital context reflects its ideology to protect the interests of the US congress as a powerful actor actively influencing the public discourse on pro-Palestinian movement while shifting the blame on the university president by reason of her incompetence (Masadi et al., 2024). Therefore, CNN Arabic's omission of the congress as an involved actor limits readers from gaining an accurate understanding of the critics. The strategy also reveals CNN's alliance with the elites by preserving their interests and protecting them from public scrutiny—a common application of Van Leeuwen's nominalization strategy (Masadi et al., 2024).

(2) ويواصل طلاب جامعة كولومبيا اعتصامهم ويقولون إنهم لن يغادروا حتى يتم تلبية المطالب المتعلقة بـ"سحب الاستثمارات بالكامل" من أي شيء متعلق بإسرائيل، وتطبيق الشفافية المالية في استثمارات الجامعة، والعفو عن أي إجراءات تأديبية للطلاب المشاركين في الاحتجاجات.

*Columbia University students continue their sit-in, stating they will not leave until their demands for "complete divestment" from all entities related to Israel, financial transparency in university investments, and amnesty for any disciplinary actions against students involved in the protests are met.*

In data (2), a case of nominalization was found as CNN Arabic addresses Columbia University's pro-Palestinian students' demands regarding their campus policy. The strategy of nominalization is characterized by the use of nominal structures, such as 'meeting demands,' سحب الاستثمارات 'divestment,' تطبيق الشفافية المالية 'financial transparency,' and العفو 'amnesty.' These demands reflect the Gaza Solidarity Encampment's objectives to pressure the university to divest from entities profiting off of Israel's war on Gaza, provide transparency of the university's investments, and protect the students' freedom of speech. CNN Arabic's decision to omit the university as the subject of these demands reflects its inherent political stance, which opposes the students' demands. As a result, CNN Arabic's replacement of the actor, expected to meet the students' demands, with nominal structures leaves readers to focus on the issue as an event, rather than a call for action. Thus, assigning no direct responsibilities for Columbia University to meet the students' demands.

In the wake of this analysis, it is apparent that CNN Arabic's use of the nominalization strategy tends to abuse discursive power and produce a duality to achieve a desired social construct. In data (1), the university president is treated as a scapegoat to protect the involvement and interests of the US ruling class. On the other hand, data (2) shows CNN Arabic protecting the university from direct responsibility when confronted with the possibility of yielding to the student's demands—demands that challenge the status quo and the elite's interests. The findings align with Mamona et al. (2024) regarding CNN's selective insertion and omission of certain aspects in a discourse to support their narrative, encouraging readers to interpret the state of affairs by drawing conclusions from the information the news outlet shares (Hasan, 2024).

## INCLUSION

### *Differentiation-Indifferentiation*

The strategy of indifferentiation was utilized by CNN Arabic in its representation of Columbia University president Nemat Shafik and the dichotomous response to her decision to call in police authorities.

- (1) تولت الخبيرة الأكاديمية والسياسية الاقتصادية مصرية الأصل نعمة شفيق رئاسة جامعة كولومبيا منذ يوليو/ تموز 2023، وكان سلفها لي بولينجر شغل المنصب لأطول فترة، وفقاً للجامعة.

*Egyptian-born academic and political economist Nemat Shafik has been president of Columbia University since July 2023. Her predecessor, Lee Bollinger, held the position of the longest-serving president, according to the university.*

Van Leeuwen's *Social Actors Approach* views the portrayal of social actors in a discourse as playing a crucial role in presenting the media's motive for framing (Mubasyira et al., 2021). In data (1), CNN Arabic portrays Nemat Shafik in a comparative view. Shafik is contrasted with her predecessor, Lee Bollinger, in terms of their respective tenure as the current and previous presidents of Columbia University. Within the scope of a head position role, such as university president, there is a common notion that longevity implies stability, credibility, and trust (Mulyana et al., 2024). Therefore, CNN Arabic's attribution of Bollinger's achievement as Columbia University's 'longest-serving president' alongside Shafik's short period of service, which is often highlighted in other contexts by remarks of turmoil, biases readers' perceptions of their respective job performance. As a result, CNN Arabic's implementation of the indifferenciation strategy here reflects its intention to construct a public opinion that highlights Bollinger's credibility while demeaning Shafik's credibility in leading the university within a short period.

- (2) حيث انتقد بعض أعضاء هيئة التدريس قرارها باستدعاء شرطة نيويورك الأسبوع الماضي لتفريق الاحتجاجات، بينما يطالبها آخرون بدعوة الشرطة للعودة لإخلاء مخيم للمتظاهرين.

*Some faculty members criticized her decision to call in the New York Police Department last week to disperse the protests, while others called on her to call in the police to clear the encampment.*

In data (2), CNN Arabic implemented the indifferenciation strategy to reveal a tense situation on campus, manifested by the display of two opposing sides demanding different methods in Shafik's handling of the protests. This contrasting revelation reveals a crack in university solidarity as the issue penetrates deeply into different communities within the campus. The inclusion of both parties also implies the magnitude of pressure being put on Shafik's shoulders, highlighting the broad dissatisfaction among differing communities. This manifestation of the indifferenciation strategy once again highlights CNN's inherent means to disadvantage Columbia University President Nemat Shafik's position as the head decision-maker at the university, further amplifying the blame narrative against her.

### Objectivation-Abstraction

The implementation of the objectivation or abstraction strategy inevitably impacts readers' perceptions of social actors in a text (Handayani & Hamdani, 2024). CNN Arabic employs the abstraction strategy to navigate the pressure that American universities face, as seen in the examples below.

- (3) وتعرضت شفيق لضغوط من جميع الأطراف المؤيدة أو المعارضة لتلك الاحتجاجات.

*Shafik has been subjected to pressure from all sides, supporting or opposing these protests.*

Following CNN Arabic's practice of indifferenciation in data (2), the news outlet further intensifies the pressure that Shafik is facing by using the abstraction strategy in data (3). The abstraction is manifested in CNN Arabic's description of the mounting pressure as coming from 'all sides.' The actors pressuring Shafik include two definite parties: pro-Palestinian protesters and their pro-Israeli counterparts. However, CNN Arabic's choice to present these actors using the indefinite noun 'all' leads readers to mentally overestimate the pressure that Shafik is facing, thus marginalizing her. This discursive strategy decodes CNN Arabic's overarching narrative to subject Shafik to public blame and resentment, avoiding accountability for the hidden actors and Israel's war crimes against Gaza.

(4) وأضافت أن "محاولة التوفيق بين حقوق حرية التعبير لأولئك الذين يريدون الاحتجاج وحقوق الطلاب اليهود في أن يكونوا في بيئة خالية من المضايقات أو التمييز كان التحدي الرئيسي في الحرم الجامعي لدينا، والعديد من الجامعات الأخرى، في الأشهر الأخيرة." *"Trying to reconcile the free speech rights of those who want to protest with the rights of Jewish students to be in an environment free from harassment or discrimination has been the main challenge on our campus, and many other campuses, in recent months," she added.*

In data (4), CNN Arabic quotes Shafik's statement during a congressional hearing of Columbia University's response to antisemitism, whereby she remarked on the rife challenges that universities face between upholding free speech while yielding in to the pressure to put antisemitism and Jewish safety as the primary concern above all (Deeb & Winegar, 2024). By using the abstract phrase *العديد من الجامعات الأخرى* 'many other campuses,' CNN Arabic allows Shafik's statement to produce a perception that the challenges are so significant that it has consumed a great deal of universities across the United States. This use of discursive strategy serves as CNN Arabic's enactment of an alliance with the stakeholders' narrative, which favors the pro-Israeli narrative. It also demonstrates its dominant influence over the public social construct, as the pressure has significantly impacted the way university presidents have navigated pro-Palestinian protests after congressional hearings on campus antisemitism (The Associated Press, 2024).

### Nomination-Categorization

Van Leeuwen's idea of categorization refers to a form of categorial evaluation of social actors rather than presenting them as unique individuals (Ahmed & Eldin, 2019). CNN Arabic employs this strategy to feature Nemat Shafik as illustrated in the example below.

(5) تولت الخبرة الأكاديمية والسياسية الاقتصادية المصرية الأصل نعمة شفيق رئاسة جامعة كولومبيا منذ يوليو / تموز 2023... وفرت عائلة شفيق من مصر في الستينيات...

*Egyptian-born academic and political economist expert Nemat Shafik has been president of Columbia University since July 2023... Shafik's family fled Egypt in the 1960s...*

In data (5), Shafik is categorized as an Arab, using the phrase *مصرية الأصل* 'Egyptian-born,' as well as an immigrant, using the phrase *وفرت عائلة شفيق من مصر* 'Shafik's family fled Egypt.' Putting into account CNN Arabic's identity as a US-based media, this categorization of Shafik as an Arab immigrant not only casts her as an outsider but also exposes her to negative Western stereotypes against both Arabs and immigrants. Consequently, this strategy causes readers to think partially when assessing Shafik's credibility and decision-making (Amalia et al., 2019).

Aside from socially categorizing Shafik, CNN Arabic also categorizes her based on her highly esteemed professional role as president of Columbia University and as an *الخبرة الأكاديمية والسياسية الاقتصادية* 'academic and political economic expert.' However, it is coherent that all of Shafik's professional accolades are strategically overshadowed by the prior racial categorization and overall scrutinizing narrative surrounding her. This revelation clarifies CNN Arabic's implied message to its Arab readers that securing a high socio-political position in the West, despite brilliance and adequacy, requires a level of agreeableness and compliance with the interests of Western elites. Undoubtedly, this analysis confirms the practice of CDA as a tool for exposing the manipulation of language to project belief systems and influence the audience's perceptions (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018).

### Determination-Indetermination

The strategy of determination provides readers with details about a social actor, primarily by mentioning the actor's name (Ernanda, 2025). This strategy is consistently employed by CNN Arabic in every instance concerning the Columbia University president, as shown in the example below.

(6) برز اسم رئيسة جامعة كولومبيا الأمريكية نعمت "مينوش" شفيق خلال الأيام الماضية على خلفية الاحتجاجات المؤيدة للفلسطينيين التي تشهدها الجامعة.

*The name of America's Columbia University President Nemat "Minouche" Shafik has emerged in recent days against the backdrop of the pro-Palestinian protests at the university.*

The Columbia University president becomes CNN Arabic's primary subject, as two of the four initial articles center on her role in the Columbia University 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment.' As elaborated in the preceding discursive strategies, the inclusion of the university president is displayed in a light that allows readers to marginalize and question her credibility and capability as a leader. Consequently, the university president's character becomes highly susceptible to public judgment and scrutiny. On all direct references to her, CNN Arabic allows the readers to identify her character by name, Nemat "Minouche" Shafik, as exemplified in data (6). In this case, Van Leeuwen's strategy of determination was employed by CNN Arabic to reveal the identity of the Columbia University president to the public. Bearing in mind CNN Arabic's overarching narrative of undermining Shafik's competence and magnifying the criticisms she faces, this implementation of the indeterminacy strategy further isolates her position by emphasizing her individuality as an actor and making her prone to public scrutiny.

### The Portrayal of External Actors

In addition to mentioning the actors directly involved in the protests, CNN Arabic also highlights external actors, particularly those with influential political power. These political actors were displayed by employing Van Leeuwen's strategy of categorization, determination, and association. The explanation is as follows.

### INCLUSION

#### Nomination-Categorization

All of the external actors mentioned in CNN Arabic's initial reporting of the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampments' are categorized by their respective political roles. CNN Arabic includes them as external sources to provide key statements and opinions on the prevailing protests that have erupted.

(1) قال الرئيس الأمريكي السابق دونالد ترامب، الثلاثاء، إنه يعتقد أن إدارة جامعة كولومبيا ارتكبت "خطأ فادحاً" بإلغاء حضور الفصول الدراسية وجعلها مختلطة حتى انتهاء فصل الربيع على خلفية الاحتجاجات المؤيدة للفلسطينيين.

*Former US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he believes the Columbia University administration made a "huge mistake" by canceling in-person classes and switching to co-educational classes until the end of the spring semester amid pro-Palestinian protests.*

(2) يذكر أن البيت الأبيض قال، الثلاثاء، إن الرئيس الأمريكي جو بايدن "على علم" بالاحتجاجات المؤيدة للفلسطينيين في الجامعات. وقال نائب المتحدث باسم البيت الأبيض، أندرو بيتس، للصحفيين: "نعلم أن هذه لحظة مؤلمة للعديد من المجتمعات، ونحن نحترم ذلك، وندعم حق كل أمريكي في الاحتجاج السلمي، وهذا أمر كنا متفقين بشأنه"، وأضاف أن البيت الأبيض يدين "الدعوات للعنف والخطاب المعادي للسامية".

*The White House said Tuesday that US President Joe Biden is "aware" of the pro-Palestinian protests on college campuses.*

(3) وقال عمدة مدينة نيويورك، إريك آدامز إن السلطات حددت "معرضين خارجيين" تسببوا في مشاكل في الاحتجاجات الطلابية السلمية في الغالب في كولومبيا وجامعة نيويورك وجامعات أخرى في المدينة.

*New York City Mayor Eric Adams stated that authorities have identified "outside agitators" responsible for causing problems at the largely peaceful student protests at Columbia University, New York University, and other universities in the city.*

The excerpts of data (1), (2), and (3) encapsulate CNN Arabic's partisanship by providing space for US politicians' statements. Strategically, CNN Arabic provides discursive space for actors with the highest political rank in the US government, the role of president, signified in data (1) 'الرئيس الأمريكي السابق' 'former US president' and in data (2) 'الرئيس الأمريكي' 'US president' (Branches of the US Government, 2024). In addition, data (3) shows the news outlet's inclusion of 'عمدة مدينة نيويورك' 'New York City Mayor,' the most influential local political figure in the city from which the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment' is emerging (City & State, 2024).

These inclusions of high-level political actors, both in a local and national scope, corroborate a sense of legitimacy for the US and New York City authorities. These inclusions reveal CNN Arabic's political alliance with the authorities in question and the news outlet's use of these actors as a legitimate justification to validate their shared narratives. The shared narratives include (1) resisting the pro-Palestinian protests and invoking an out-group bias against the protesters, (2) highlighting the severity of the protests as well as an urgency to dissolve them, and (3) magnifying the outside agitator narrative to delegitimize the pro-Palestinian protesters while legitimizing police involvement to disperse the protests. By using Van Leeuwen's strategy of categorization, CNN Arabic's categorial inclusion of these actors leads the readers to believe these narratives as the only legitimate and acceptable political stance concerning issues of Israel-Palestine. Thus, this implication reveals CNN Arabic's desired outcome of the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment' reports to reinstate that the elite's power and interest still prevail despite grave public disapproval.

### Determination-Indetermination

The strategy of determination is commonly manifested by mentioning social actors with detailed identifiers, such as their names or roles within a discourse (Ernanda, 2025). CNN Arabic effectively employs this strategy to identify these external actors, as illustrated in the examples below.

(4) قال الرئيس الأمريكي السابق دونالد ترامب...

*Former US President Donald Trump said...*

(5) يذكر أن البيت الأبيض قال، الثلاثاء، إن الرئيس الأمريكي جو بايدن "على علم" بالاحتجاجات المؤيدة للفلسطينيين في الجامعات.

*The White House said Tuesday that US President Joe Biden is "aware" of the pro-Palestinian protests on college campuses.*

(6) وقال نائب المتحدث باسم البيت الأبيض، أندرو بيتس، للصحفيين: ...

*Deputy White House press secretary Andrew Bates told reporters...*

(7) وقال عمدة مدينة نيويورك، إريك آدامز...

*New York City Mayor Eric Adams said...*

In the excerpts above, CNN Arabic presents a collection of external sources, mentioning their names and highlighting their prominent political roles. By clearly identifying the actors' names, CNN Arabic effectively enhances the credibility of the actors in the eyes of the public. CNN Arabic's strategic use of the determination strategy, followed by the actors' statements, enables the conveyance of specific narratives while allowing the news outlet to avoid direct responsibility for its political stances (Alwaheidi, 2024).

### Association-Disassociation

The strategy of association entails the inclusion of social actors by associating them with a larger group or entity (Sausina & Indarti, 2023). CNN Arabic employs this strategy in its inclusion of external actors commenting on the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment,' as seen in the example below.

(8) وقال نائب المتحدث باسم البيت الأبيض، أندرو بيتس، للصحفيين: "نعلم أن هذه لحظة مؤلمة للعديد من المجتمعات، ونحن نحترم ذلك، وندعم حق كل أمريكي في الاحتجاج السلمي، وهذا أمر كنا متسقين بشأنه"، وأضاف أن البيت الأبيض يدين "الدعوات للعنف والخطاب المعادي للسامية."

*Deputy White House press secretary Andrew Bates told reporters, "We know this is a painful moment for many communities, and we respect that. We support every American's right to protest peacefully, and that is something we have been consistent about." He added that the White House condemns "calls for violence and anti-Semitic rhetoric."*

In data (8), CNN Arabic quotes the statement of an actor identified as the Deputy White House press secretary. This particular actor may not be familiar to the majority of CNN Arabic's Middle Eastern audience. However, CNN Arabic's association of the actor to a larger entity, 'البيت الأبيض' 'the White House,' adds incredible weight and importance to the substance that Bates delivers. This observation aligns with one of the association strategy's implications, which is to create a correlation between the substance and the larger entity's wider interest (Sausina & Indarti, 2023). In this instance, the statement serves as an attestation to CNN Arabic's panoptic narrative that weakens the pro-Palestinian protesters' rights to voice their demands through the general presumption that allowing the protests equates to authorization of violence and antisemitism. As a result, CNN Arabic implicitly shows the readers that the odds are gravely against the pro-Palestinian movement as they are ideologically opposing an entity as big and powerful as the United States government.

## CONCLUSION

This study was initially conducted to fill in the literature gap on CDA studies investigating the Israel-Palestine issue, as previous studies have only dwelt on the discourse around the ground invasions, casualties, and political speeches concerning the conflict. However, as the conflict steps into an unprecedented phase of escalation, public opinion seems to shift in favor of the Palestinian safety and liberation significantly. What this study reveals is CNN Arabic's use of language to resist the emerging popular opinion, maintain discursive dominance, and thus control the public movement that is growing in opposition to its interests. Specifically, the study proves that Van Leeuwen's approach to CDA is practical in disclosing power manifestations in a discourse where the status quo is being challenged.

The results demonstrate CNN Arabic's strategic implementation of exclusion and inclusion strategies to achieve its ideological goals. In addressing the student protesters and the university president, CNN Arabic utilizes discursive strategies to create a duality in the readers' perception of the actors. Generally, students are portrayed through narrations of chaos, violence, disobedience, and outside agitators to delegitimize their actions and distract the readers from focusing on their true demands. However, in contrast to these negative connotations, CNN Arabic appears to amplify the vastness of these protests and the reverberations of the pro-Palestinian movement through the use of objectivation and association. Ultimately, this show of magnitude did not serve to illustrate the rising public rage against Israel's actions on Gaza, but to support CNN Arabic's argument to dismantle these protests urgently. This deduction is revealed as CNN Arabic strategically places inclusion strategies such as indifferentiation and categorization to paint these protests as the reasoning behind campus disturbances as well as alleged anti-Semitic cases, leaving to the marginalization of the protesters and urgency to stop the protests. Similarly, CNN Arabic shows a dichotomy in its portrayal of the Columbia University President Nemat Shafik. As a general narrative, CNN Arabic places a weighty blame narrative on her through the use of inclusion strategies. Despite this, in some instances, the news outlet lends legitimacy to the university president's



authority and power, but only in a context that delegitimizes the protesters through the use of the indifferentiation strategy.

Additionally, CNN Arabic's use of an exclusion strategy relinquishes the university of any responsibility to yield to the students' demands. The use of the exclusion strategy also seems to benefit the elites' covert campaign in suppressing the pro-Palestinian voice, as CNN Arabic conveniently excludes the elites and critics in the discourse, while emphasizing the blame on Shafik. Finally, CNN Arabic's selective inclusion of external actors reveals the news outlet's alignment with US powerholders, such as the US president and the mayor of New York City. All of which cite statements that support CNN Arabic's narrative of suppressing the pro-Palestinian protesters and diverting the readers from the real issue: condemnation of Israel's slaughter of Gaza and demands to divest from companies profiting off of Israel's war on Gaza.

The closure that this study provides is the enlightenment that power is institutionalized and that language is instrumentalized to aid the dominant power in winning the discourse (Lukman, 2025). CNN Arabic as a media institution proves itself to be an accomplice to the ruling elites in constructing the public's mental construct (Lukman et al., 2025). CNN Arabic utilizes its discursive power to protect the elite's interests and to suppress the Palestinian voice. Its role as a US-based media is revealed through narratives that benefit the Israeli perspective as the State of Israel is the United States' strategic ally (Liu, 2024). Through its portrayal, CNN Arabic aims to delegitimize the pro-Palestinian movement and show the readers of the anchored political power that will continuously resist any attempts to shift the existing status quo of the Israel-Palestine narrative. As a major Middle East branch, CNN Arabic's portrayal of the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment' poses an inferiority complex to any person or organization supporting the Palestinian cause. Consequently, it hampers Arab citizens' trust in the growth of the movement and discourages their spirits from showing public support for the Palestinian cause. This impact allows the US-based news outlet to control the Middle East's public movement concerning the Israel-Palestine issue.

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