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Recontextualizing Netanyahu's 2023 UN General Assembly Address: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of the Speech and Six English-Language News Reports

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Abstract

This article examines how Benjamin Netanyahu's address to the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, delivered on 22 September 2023, was recontextualized in six English-language news reports published during 22–23 September news cycle. Addressing media's role in shaping public understanding of armed conflict and peaceful society, it combines Van Leeuwen's framework of social actor representation and legitimation with framing and source-to-news recontextualization, while treating verbal, visual-spatial, embodied-performative, and journalistic anchoring resources as analytically distinct but related. The corpus consists of the official audiovisual record, the released speech transcript, and reports from Al Jazeera, Fox News, Reuters, the Associated Press, The Times of Israel, and The Jerusalem Post. The comparison shows an uneven distribution of agency and authority. Israel is largely activated as an agent of regional transformation; American and Saudi leaders are individualized as enabling authorities; Palestinians are mostly collectivized and positioned as conditional participants or possible impediments; and Iran is constructed as the principal antagonist. The paired maps add a visual trajectory from regional isolation to connectivity, but they do not politically differentiate the West Bank and Gaza within the highlighted territorial field. Across the six reports, divergent meanings "rise less from wholly different facts than from differences in selection, quotation, contextual addition, source hierarchy, and resemiotization. Three recurrent patterns capture these shifts: preservation, qualification, and reversal. The article therefore offers a transparent small-case account of how one diplomatic performance acquired competing meanings as it moved through its first cycle of news reporting.

1. Introduction

Political speeches rarely reach audiences in the form in which they were delivered. News organizations excerpt them, write headlines around selected propositions, attach images, add context, and introduce competing voices. For many readers, these mediated fragments become the speech itself. Recontextualization is therefore useful for connecting political discourse analysis with journalism studies because it directs attention not only to what a speaker says, but also to what later texts retain, reposition, qualify, or contest [7, 12, 20].

Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 22 September 2023 [6]. The speech focused on prospective normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia, the Abraham Accords, Iran's regional and nuclear policies, and the place assigned to Palestinians within a proposed regional order. Netanyahu also displayed two maps: the first represented Israel as regionally isolated in 1948, while the second projected a 'new Middle East' organized around normalization and infrastructure. The date matters. The speech preceded the Hamas-led attack of 7 October 2023 and the war that followed by fifteen days. The September reports examined here therefore cannot be read as coverage of that later war, and Netanyahu's 2024 or 2025 UNGA speeches belong to different communicative events.

Studies of Israel-Palestine news have repeatedly identified differences in sourcing, agency, victimhood, contextualization, and visual selection [3, 5, 8, 9]. Multimodal research has likewise shown that photographs, maps, captions, and platform conventions can make political boundaries appear natural, unsettled, or contestable [1, 10, 14] These findings make it useful to follow meaning across stages of circulation rather than analyze the political speech and the news report as separate objects.

The UNGA setting makes that movement especially visible. A speech delivered there is at once a diplomatic address, a televised performance, an institutional record, and raw material for immediate reporting. Journalists do not reproduce the event in sequence. They decide what leads the story, which quotations carry authority, what background is necessary, and which image or caption should anchor the report. The initial 22–23 September cycle is therefore analytically valuable because these choices were made before later wartime events encouraged retrospective readings. At that moment, normalization, Iran, Palestinian participation, and the maps were the main available points of interpretation. Temporal proximity does not make the reporting neutral, but it does reduce the risk of importing post-7 October meanings into texts written before those meanings were available.

Existing work has already examined the 2023 address as a speech. Luca [16] focused on its verbal, gestural, and visual organization, while Anwar and Butt [4] analyzed the construction of a 'new Middle East' through critical discourse analysis. The present article shifts the question from production to circulation: what happened when six professional news outlets converted the same event into headlines, summaries, quotations, captions, contextual explanations, and counter-voices? The unit of interest is the relationship between the primary event (S0) and each media item (M1–M6), not the behavior of 'international media' as a whole.

This relational design addresses a problem that appears when political texts and news texts are studied separately. The speech alone reveals its preferred actor hierarchy and legitimating narrative, but it cannot show which elements journalism later made salient. News reports alone reveal differences among outlets, but without a stable source event it becomes harder to say exactly what was retained, omitted, reframed, or supplemented. Treating S0 and M1–M6 as linked objects therefore makes transformation itself the analytical focus. The aim is not to identify a single 'correct' reading of the address. It is to show how different journalistic arrangements altered the evidential function of shared words and images.

The article makes three deliberately bounded contributions. First, it establishes a chronologically controlled pre-war corpus. Second, it brings social actor representation, legitimation, headline framing, source hierarchy, and visual recontextualization into one auditable comparison. Third, it proposes preservation, qualification, and reversal as a provisional heuristic for describing how news reports retain, constrain, or reorganize a source event. The heuristic is not offered as a population-level typology; it summarizes patterns found in these six cases. The analysis also shows that the same map can remain evidence of diplomatic connectivity in one report and become evidence of Palestinian territorial non-differentiation in another. Because the corpus is small and purposive, the claims remain analytical rather than statistical.

1. **RQ1. How does the 22 September 2023 address represent and legitimate Israel, Palestinians, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States through verbal and visual resources?**
2. **RQ2. How do six contemporaneous English-language news reports transform the address through headline selection, quotation, source hierarchy, contextual addition, and interpretation of the maps?**

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social actors and legitimation

Van Leeuwen's [14] social actor framework provides a vocabulary for examining who is included in discourse, how agency is distributed, and how actors are identified. Activation presents actors as doing or initiating something; passivation places them in affected or beneficiary roles. Nomination identifies people by proper name, whereas categorization represents them through identities, functions, or group membership. Individualization and assimilation distinguish between actors represented as particular persons and those represented as collectivities. In political discourse, these choices matter because they can make some actors appear authoritative and specific while rendering others generalized, obstructive, vulnerable, or threatening.

Legitimation adds a second layer to this analysis. Van Leeuwen distinguishes authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis. A proposal may be authorized through recognized leaders or institutions, morally evaluated through oppositions such as good and dangerous, rationalized through claims about practical benefits, or narrated as a movement from threat to reward. These strategies are not limited to language. A map tied to an infrastructure narrative, for example, can simultaneously rationalize a policy as practical and place it within a moral story of regional transformation.

In this study, these categories are treated as relational tools rather than as a checklist. Nomination is not inherently positive, and activation is not inherently empowering; both depend on the evaluative context in which they occur. The analysis therefore links grammatical role, referential specificity, and legitimating function within each segment before comparing that configuration across the speech and the six reports. This avoids reducing political meaning to counts of names or pronouns. More importantly, it makes visible the difference between actors represented as authors of a regional future and those represented mainly as conditions, beneficiaries, or threats to that future.

2.2. Framing, recontextualization, and multimodality

Framing concerns the selective emphasis through which communicators define problems, assign causes, evaluate actors, and imply remedies [11]. Work on news discourse similarly shows that headlines, quotation patterns, source order, and background information distribute authority and relevance [7, 23]. Recontextualization asks a more specific question: *what changes when discourse moves from one setting or genre to another*? [12] A news report may preserve the wording of a political

speech while changing its function through selection, deletion, paraphrase, counter-quotation, or added explanation.

Headline and source order are particularly important because they establish an interpretive hierarchy before the reader reaches the body of the report. A headline does not simply condense an event; it proposes what that event is mainly about. The lead and early quotations can then give that proposition evidential weight, while later caveats may qualify it without replacing it. This is why news discourse scholarship has treated macrostructure, quotation, and sequencing as central to relevance and credibility [7, 23, 20] In the present corpus, the key question is not merely whether Palestinians, Saudi Arabia, Iran, or the map appear. It is where they appear and what role they play in defining the event.

Multimodal critical discourse analysis examines how meaning is produced across language, image, gesture, spatial composition, color, sound, and material objects [14, 17]. Maps deserve particular attention because they can look descriptive while still depending on choices about borders, labels, color, scale, and omission. In a televised address, a map is also a performative object: the speaker holds it, points to it, marks it, and verbally directs viewers toward a preferred reading. News circulation can loosen that anchoring through cropping, captioning, or added territorial context. The present analysis therefore treats such changes as observable textual and visual operations rather than as evidence of an assumed editorial intention. Its MCDA component is intentionally bounded to verbal representation and anchoring, map-based visual-spatial organization, observable gesture and prop use, and the headline-caption-image relations through which these resources are recontextualized.

Resemiotization captures another part of this movement. A diplomatic promise can become a headline proposition; a map held during a speech can become a detached still; and a caption can turn an illustrative prop into an object of political controversy. The image itself need not change for its evidential function to change. Verbal anchoring, scale, cropping, source attribution, and surrounding context can redirect what the reader is invited to notice. This is especially relevant to maps, whose apparent factuality can obscure the political work performed by labels and territorial differentiation. The analysis therefore treats the map as structured but not semantically fixed: its visible features constrain interpretation, while news context can make different features salient.

2.3. Conflict news and the study gap

Comparative research on Israel-Palestine coverage has identified asymmetries in source access, lexical choice, agency, and human specificity. Artz [5] examined selective identification and omission in Gaza reporting; El Damanhoury and Saleh [9] compared online framing by CNN and Al Jazeera America; Doufesh and Briel [8] analyze verbal-visual ethnocentrism; and Amer [3] documented differences in transitivity and lexical patterning in BBC and New York Times coverage. More recent visual work shows how image selection can organize attention around civilian harm, military action, and national identity [10]. Taken together, this literature suggests that balance cannot be assessed by simply counting

references to two sides. Voice, agency, sequencing, context, and visual evidence also shape what a report makes visible and authoritative.

What remains less developed is a traceable comparison between a complete pre-war source event and the news items that immediately reworked it. This article addresses that gap without assigning fixed ideological labels to outlets. It asks a narrower set of questions: which elements of the speech were selected or backgrounded, what context was added, who was authorized to interpret the event, and what did the map come to signify in each report?

2.4. Genre, quotation, and evidential authority

The six reports also differ in genre, and that difference matters. Wire reports are written for rapid synthesis and reuse; a multi-country UNGA roundup must divide limited space among several speakers; reaction and controversy stories are organized around response; and an explainer has more room for historical or legal background. These conventions affect what can be selected and how much context can be supplied. The analysis therefore does not treat every difference as evidence of ideological opposition. A short wire lead and a longer controversy report may refer to the same speech while performing different journalistic tasks. Genre is treated here as a mediating condition that shapes compression, source range, and the prominence given to quotation and background.

Quotation is likewise treated as a form of evidential positioning rather than as neutral reproduction. Direct quotation may preserve a speaker's words, but its meaning depends on what is selected, where it appears, which reporting verb introduces it, and which voices surround it. A report that opens with Netanyahu's prediction of a historic agreement gives that future-oriented claim the first opportunity to define the event. A report that opens with Palestinian condemnation reverses the order and makes reaction the primary interpretive lens. The comparison therefore distinguishes presence from prominence and voice from authority. An actor can be quoted and still remain secondary; another can be paraphrased in a position that structures the entire report.

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

The study uses an exploratory, comparative multimodal critical discourse design. The primary case (S0) is the official UN audiovisual record together with the released speech transcript reproduced by The Times of Israel. The secondary corpus comprises six English-language news reports published on 22 or 23 September 2023. Sampling was purposive. Cases were selected to introduce variation in outlet location and journalistic form: an international Qatar-based outlet, a US conservative broadcaster, two international wire services, and two Israel-based English-language outlets. This maximum-variation logic is useful for comparing different forms of recontextualization, but it does not support statistical generalization to 'international media'. The primary sources are cited as United Nations [22] and The

Times of Israel [21]; the six news items are Al Jazeera [2], Fox News [13], Reuters [19], Associated Press [6], Magid [18], and Lazaroff [15].

Items were identified using combinations of ‘Netanyahu’, ‘UN’ or ‘UNGA’, ‘Saudi Arabia’, ‘Palestinians’, and ‘map’, together with the event date. To be included, an item had to provide direct and substantive coverage of the address, a publicly accessible headline and date, and enough verbal or visual material for analysis. Opinion columns, items mainly about other UNGA speeches, standalone social-media posts, and coverage of later UN addresses were excluded. The six cases were then selected from eligible contemporaneous coverage to maximize analytical contrast in outlet location and genre rather than to approximate a probability sample. This choice favors traceability over representativeness. The Fox News case is retained as a day-four UNGA roundup, and its genre is treated as part of the analysis rather than assumed to be equivalent to a dedicated wire report.

Table 1
Corpus, genre, and case-selection rationale

ID	Source/date	Genre	Exact headline or primary item	Comparative role
S0	UN/PMO, 22 Sep 2023	Primary event	Official audiovisual record and released transcript	Source verbal and visual event
M1	Al Jazeera, 22 Sep 2023	Explainer/news analysis	Palestinians must not have veto over Arab-Israel deals, Netanyahu tells UN	Palestinian conditionality and territorial context
M2	Fox News, 22 Sep 2023	Multi-country UNGA roundup	Netanyahu condemns Iran in speech, hopes for peace with Saudi Arabia on day 4 of the UN General Assembly	Diplomacy, Iran, and visual-aid framing
M3	Reuters, 22 Sep 2023	Wire report	Israel on cusp of region-reshaping peace with Saudi Arabia, Netanyahu says	Breakthrough frame with political caveats
M4	Associated Press, 22 Sep 2023	Wire report	Netanyahu tells UN that Israel is 'at the cusp' of a historic agreement with Saudi Arabia	Breakthrough frame with obstacles and map context
M5	The Times of Israel, 23 Sep 2023	Reaction report	Palestinian officials fume after Netanyahu UN speech, call address 'arrogant, racist'	Palestinian counter-voice
M6	The Jerusalem Post, 22–23 Sep 2023	Controversy report	Netanyahu under fire for using Greater Land of Israel map at UN	Map controversy and territorial interpretation

Note. Publication and update times, when displayed by the source, are recorded in Appendix A. The date window defines an initial news cycle, not a complete census of all coverage.

3.2. Unit of analysis and coding protocol

The unit of analysis was a meaning-bearing segment: a clause or short passage from the speech, a headline or standfirst, a quoted or paraphrased passage in a report, or a map/image-caption combination. Coding proceeded in two passes. The first identified social actors, role allocation, forms of identification, legitimation, and observable visual resources in S0. The second read each news item against S0 and recorded selection, deletion, contextual addition, substitution, source reordering, and resemiotization. Outlet location or ownership was not used to infer intention; the coding was restricted to operations observable in the published material.

Substantive analytical claims were linked to a stable item ID and, where possible, to a short source phrase, headline, standfirst, or caption. Appendix B records this item-level audit trail. Quotations are intentionally brief because the interpretation rests on the relationship between wording, textual position, surrounding context, and visual description rather than on isolated lexical items.

The coding moved from description toward interpretation. S0 was first segmented without reference to outlet categories so that expectations about particular organizations would not shape the initial coding. Each report was then compared with the full speech, not simply with the other reports. This made it possible to identify which propositions were reproduced, condensed, omitted, corrected, or placed beside external information. Within each item, the headline, lead, quotation sequence, and visual description were then read together to determine whether they sustained one organizing frame or introduced internal tension. A final cross-case matrix grouped recurring operations while retaining genre-specific exceptions. The procedure was iterative: interpretations were revised when later readings revealed a counter-example or supported a less inferential formulation.

Negative cases were kept in the analysis because the corpus does not divide neatly into two camps. Reports that foreground diplomatic opportunity still include Palestinian goals or negotiation constraints, while more contest reports continue to report the normalization proposal. These qualifications are analytically important rather than incidental. The audit trail therefore separates a report’s dominant frame from its complete content. Doing so prevents a headline classification from becoming a claim that the entire article expresses only one perspective, and it clarifies when a source element is foregrounded, retained as a caveat, or given a different function through added context.

Table 2
Operational coding framework

Dimension	Operational question	Indicators	Output in audit trail
Inclusion/exclusion	Which actors or territories enter the segment, and what is absent or backgrounded?	Mention, suppression, backgrounding, map/caption absence	Actor or territorial visibility claim
Role allocation	Who acts, who is affected, and who benefits?	Activation, passivation, beneficiary position, agentless process	Agency claim
Identification	How are actors made specific or collective?	Nomination, categorization, individualization, assimilation	Specificity/collectivization claim
Legitimation	What warrants the proposed order?	Authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, mythopoesis	Legitimation claim
Multimodality	Which verbal, visual-spatial, embodied, and journalistic resources modify or anchor the claim?	Map composition/boundaries, marker/corridor, gesture/pointing, verbal anchoring, still-image selection/cropping, caption	Multimodal function claim
Recontextualization	How is S0 transformed in M1-M6?	Selection, deletion, addition, substitution, source reordering, resemiotization	Source-to-news transformation claim
Intermodal relation	How do verbal and visual resources relate when meaning is carried across the source event and news item?	Reinforcement, qualification, contestation; caption-image relation; source-generated versus journalistic anchoring	Intermodal relation claim

Figure 1 presents the operational framework used in the study. It links Van Leeuwen's categories of social actor representation and legitimation to the multimodal and source-to-news dimensions used in the coding.

3.3. Multimodal operationalization and intermodal relations

The term 'multimodal' was operationalized rather than used as a general label. Four resource sets were coded. The verbal layer covered lexical and grammatical representation, direct quotation, paraphrase,

and verbal anchoring of the maps. The visual-spatial layer covered the paired-map sequence, territorial differentiation or non-differentiation, the red marker and drawn corridor, and still-image or caption choices where these appeared in a sampled report. The embodied-performative layer was limited to observable acts in the official recording, particularly holding, pointing to, marking, and sequencing the maps. The journalistic anchoring layer covered headline and standfirst design, image-caption relations, source order, and surrounding explanation. Tone, facial affect, camera angle, and sound were not coded systematically, so no findings are based on those resources.

Intermodal analysis focused on whether verbal and visual resources reinforced, qualified, or contested one another. A finding was treated as multimodal only when at least two observable resources could be related in the source event or news item. One example is the way the spoken ‘blessing’ narrative anchors the red marker and corridor as signs of connectivity. Another is the way a caption or territorial explanation redirects attention from connectivity toward political non-differentiation. This requirement keeps the multimodal claims tied to observable evidence rather than allowing thematic interpretation alone to stand in for MCDA.

3.4. Analytical procedure and cross-case comparison

The first analytical pass reconstructed the speech’s preferred representational order by coding actor inclusion, role allocation, identification, and legitimation, with particular attention to the map display. The second pass treated each news item as a transformation of that order. ‘Selection’ denotes the retention and foregrounding of source material; ‘deletion’ its absence or backgrounding; ‘addition’ contextual material not supplied in the speech; ‘substitution’ paraphrase or alternative naming; ‘source reordering’ a change in who is allowed to define the event; and ‘resemiotization’ a change in what a visual or verbal resource is made to signify. More than one operation can occur in a segment. The audit trail records the dominant operation without forcing the categories into artificial exclusivity.

Cross-case comparison proceeded at three levels. First, the headline and lead were examined for their definition of the event. Second, quotation and paraphrase were used to trace how authority was distributed among Netanyahu, Palestinian officials, diplomatic actors, and other commentators. Third, the maps were followed as travelling visual objects whose meaning changed with captioning and territorial explanation. The comparison is qualitative rather than frequency-based. The three-three split in headline orientation is reported because it describes the selected cases, not because it measures polarization statistically. Interpretive weight rests on the documented mechanisms through which the reports differ.

3.5. Reflexivity, Validity, and Terminology

Critical discourse analysis is interpretive [25], and this qualitative design does not claim formal intercoder reliability or media effects. Rigor instead rests on repeated comparison with the primary event, explicit coding categories, iterative recoding, negative-case analysis, and an item-level evidence table. Coding decisions were revisited whenever a later reading suggested a counter-example or a less inferential formulation. Observable features are kept separate from stronger interpretations. Thus,

‘territorial non-differentiation’ refers to the map’s failure to display the West Bank and Gaza as a separate Palestinian polity; it does not, by itself, establish a legal intention. The stronger term ‘erasure’ is used only when reporting a contest interpretation made by particular news reports or quoted critics. Building on research into language, conflict, and institutional discourse [26, 27], these study examines media recontextualization of political speech.

For this small-case design, transparency and traceability function as the main validity safeguards. Appendix B links representative segments to codes and analytical claims, while Appendix A records public source locations and publication timing. This does not remove interpretive judgment from the analysis. It does, however, make the route from source material to claim visible enough for a reader to inspect and challenge.

The analysis also avoids treating the authors’ political positions as evidence. Convergence and divergence are both retained: several opportunity-oriented reports include Palestinian demands or negotiation obstacles, while Israel-based outlets in this corpus foreground criticism and map controversy. These counter-patterns are important because they resist a predetermined geographic or ideological binary.

3.6. Ethics and methodological limitations

The study uses only public institutional and professional journalistic material and involves no interaction with human participants or private data. Its limits are also clear. The corpus is English-language, purposive, restricted to six items, and bounded to one event and its first news cycle. It cannot stand for all media systems, newsroom intentions, audience interpretations, or later recirculation. Visual analysis relies on the official audiovisual record and on the published stills and captions documented in Appendix A. Figures 1 and 2 are author-generated analytical figures; they do not replace the primary visual record. Figure 3 reproduces a limited headline-level screenshot from M5 as item-level evidence. The UNGA map and other publisher images are not reproduced because permissions vary across organizations, although their public locations are supplied in Appendix A. This choice reduces in-manuscript visual replicability, so the claims are correspondingly limited to the observable features recorded in Table 4. Any final reproduction of third-party material remains subject to the target journal’s permissions policy.

4. Findings

4.1. The speech: a moralized trajectory from isolation to integration

The address organizes regional politics through the opposition between ‘blessing’ and ‘curse’. Netanyahu opens with the biblical image of Moses and opposing mountains, then carries that moral contrast into contemporary policy. Saudi-Israeli normalization is placed on the side of blessing; war, terrorism, and Iran are placed on the side of curse. In Van Leeuwen’s terms, this is mythopoetic legitimation: policy

alternatives are not presented as equally contestable options but as choices with sharply different moral and historical consequences.

Rationalization works alongside that moral frame. Normalization is described as an infrastructure project linking India, the Gulf, Israel, and Europe through maritime routes, railways, energy pipelines, and fiber-optic cables. The practical language of circulation makes the proposed order appear modern, workable, and broadly beneficial. Authorization is more personal. Joe Biden, Donald Trump, and Mohammed bin Salman are named as leaders capable of advancing regional change. Israel, meanwhile, is activated as the actor that can 'tear down' barriers and become a bridge rather than merely benefit from a process led elsewhere.

The same blessing-curse opposition also organizes time. The past appears as isolation and repeated expert error; the present as an unusual diplomatic opening; and the future as a network of mobility, energy, trade, and communication. This sequencing gives normalization a sense of direction and historical momentum. Other possible futures receive far less elaboration. Palestinian claims enter mainly as conditions within the transition, while Iran appears as the actor most likely to interrupt it. The effect is not to eliminate disagreement, but to narrow the terms on which disagreement is represented: integration is aligned with progress, while resistance to the proposed order risks association with obstruction or danger.

4.2. Unequal actor roles

Palestinians are present in the speech, but their position is conditional. When described as possible beneficiaries of wider normalization, they are passivated because the process is led by others. When described as possessing a potential 'veto', they become active mainly as a possible obstacle. Mahmoud Abbas is named, yet that nomination does not grant him comparable authority; it appears within accusations of antisemitism and criticism of the Palestinian Authority. Netanyahu's own military memories and bereavement, by contrast, individualize Israeli suffering and support his claim to understand the costs of war.

Iran receives the most consistent antagonistic activation. It is represented as trying to derail normalization, arming proxies, threatening shipping, seeking nuclear leverage, and repressing its population. The speech compresses these roles into a single spoiler position within the wider peace narrative. At the same time, it distinguishes the Iranian government from 'the people of Iran'. That distinction allows solidarity with citizens while keeping the state apparatus in the role of principal threat.

Specificity is therefore distributed unevenly. American and Saudi authority is personalized through recognizable leaders whose decisions can move negotiations forward. Israel is represented both through Netanyahu's autobiographical testimony and as a state capable of reshaping the region. Palestinians appear more often as a generalized political category, with Mahmoud Abbas named chiefly in a negative evidential context. Iran is split between a threatening government and a population toward whom sympathy can be expressed. This matters because individualization can humanize, authorize, or assign

responsibility, whereas collectivization can compress internal difference. The speech gives its actors not only unequal amounts of attention, but different kinds of social presence.

Table 3
Speech-level evidence and coding

Actor/resource	Brief source evidence	Primary code	Interpretive claim
Israel	"tear down the walls of enmity"; become a "bridge"	Activation; rationalization	Israel is constructed as the agent and infrastructure of regional transformation.
United States / Saudi Arabia	Biden and Mohammed bin Salman are named as leaders able to advance the agreement.	Nomination; authorization	Recognizable leaders provide personal and institutional authority for the proposal.
Palestinians	"must not give the Palestinians a veto"; they "could greatly benefit"	Activation/passivation; assimilation	Palestinians alternate between obstacle and beneficiary, with limited individualization.
Iran	The government is positioned as the principal force likely to obstruct normalization.	Activation; moral evaluation	Iran functions as the main antagonist in the blessing-curse narrative.
Paired maps and red marker	The marker is reassigned from warning to a "great blessing" and a cross-regional corridor.	Resemiotization; visual rationalization	A familiar warning prop is converted into a sign of connectivity and future-oriented transformation.

Note. Source phrases are short anchors, not substitutes for the full audiovisual and textual context. Full source locations are listed in Appendix A.

4.3. Maps as a Contested Visual Proposition

The paired maps give visual form to the speech's temporal argument. The first presents Israel as small and isolated in 1948. The second projects a networked future in which normalization and an infrastructure corridor connect Asia, the Gulf, Israel, and Europe. The red marker is also reassigned. Rather than functioning as a warning device, as in earlier UN performances, it is verbally anchored to connection and opportunity. Gesture, prop, and speech therefore work together to recast the marker as part of a narrative of diplomatic 'blessing'.

The second map also introduces a different visual issue. The West Bank and Gaza are not marked as a distinct Palestinian polity within the highlighted territorial field. This feature does not, on its own, establish an annexation claim. What it does make unavailable is a visually separate Palestinian political geography. That ambiguity becomes important once the image enters news circulation. A report can

preserve the speaker's connectivity reading, or it can add territorial and legal context that makes non-differentiation the central feature of the image.

The setting adds to the map's evidential force. Displayed before the General Assembly and narrated by a head of government, the map is presented as something that can be seen and followed, not merely asserted. Netanyahu's pointing and marking direct viewers through a preferred movement from isolation toward connection. A still image removed from that sequence, however, is easier to inspect differently. A caption may keep the corridor narrative intact, or it may redirect attention toward boundaries and labels that were secondary in the live performance. News circulation thus detaches the image from its original choreography and makes other visible features available for emphasis.

At the intermodal level, S0 largely aligns word and image. The spoken movement from 'curse' to 'blessing' anchors the map sequence, the red marker, and the corridor as evidence of prospective connectivity. News reports can alter that relation without altering the underlying image. Opportunity-oriented items tend to preserve the connectivity anchor; qualifying or contest items add territorial explanation, counter-sources, or captioning that make political non-differentiation more salient. The multimodal finding, then, lies in the relation among speech, gesture, map, and journalistic anchoring rather than in the assumption that the map contains one fixed meaning outside context.

Table 4
Visual and intermodal audit of the map display and news circulation

Observable feature	Verbal anchoring in S0	Interpretive range	News relevance
Two-map sequence	Movement from 1948 isolation to a prospective regional network	Historical transformation narrative	Supports opportunity-oriented headlines and summaries.
Red marker and drawn corridor	Marker is described as showing a blessing rather than a nuclear warning	Prop resemiotization; technocratic connectivity	Allows reports to frame the map as a visual aid to diplomacy.
Undifferentiated West Bank and Gaza	Palestinians are verbally described as future participants/beneficiaries	Connectivity reading versus political non-differentiation reading	Allows contestatory reports to foreground territorial status and criticism.
Speaker gesture before UN cameras	The speaker holds, points to, and marks the map while narrating it	Performance of authority and evidentiality	Still-image selection and captions can preserve or contest the intended meaning.
News still/caption anchoring	Not part of the live map performance; introduced when the visual is detached and republished	Preservation, qualification, or contestation of the source visual	Shows how captioning and contextual explanation can change what the same visual resource is presented as evidence of.

4.4. Item-level News Transformations

The six headlines fall into two descriptive clusters. Fox News, Reuters, and the Associated Press define the event primarily through prospective Saudi-Israeli peace, historical breakthrough, or Iran. Al Jazeera, The Times of Israel, and The Jerusalem Post instead foreground Palestinian conditionality, Palestinian criticism, or the territorial implications of the map. The three-three split is useful as a description of this corpus, but it is not treated as a statistical measure of polarization.

The opportunity-oriented reports are not uniformly celebratory. M2 treats the map as a visual aid and emphasizes normalization and Iran, yet it also identifies Palestinian statehood as one of the hurdles. M3 leads with region-shaping diplomacy but adds US legislative constraints, Saudi and Palestinian demands, Abbas's counter-position, and a correction of Netanyahu's verbal slip from 'nuclear' to 'military' threat. M4 likewise foregrounds a historic agreement while noting substantial obstacles and stating that the map did not distinguish the West Bank, Gaza, or East Jerusalem. The dominant frame remains opportunity, but it is qualified in different ways.

The more contestatory reports change the order of authority. M1 makes Palestinians the grammatical subject of the headline, selects the ‘veto’ formulation, and adds the Arab Peace Initiative, occupation, settlement, and territorial context. M5 opens with Palestinian officials’ evaluation of the address, so Netanyahu’s self-authorization is encountered through an already critical frame. M6 defines the event through the map controversy and supplies territorial status and critical interpretation. The same visual prop can therefore function as evidence of regional transformation in one report and as evidence of Palestinian territorial non-differentiation in another.

The clusters should not be mistaken for internally uniform camps. Reuters combines an optimistic lead with a dense set of diplomatic constraints, while the Associated Press keeps the breakthrough headline but explicitly identifies the map’s territorial problem. Fox News gives the speech less space because it appears within a wider UNGA roundup, which limits the amount of counter-source and contextual material that can be included. Among the contestatory items, Al Jazeera relies on explanatory and legal context, The Times of Israel organizes the story around Palestinian reaction, and The Jerusalem Post makes the map controversy the primary event. The comparison is therefore most useful when it identifies the different routes through which the speech is preserved, qualified, displaced, or reinterpreted.

Table 5
Item-level evidence and recontextualizing operations

ID	Headline definition	Brief evidence anchor	Principal operations	Interpretive limit
M1	Palestinian conditionality	Headline selects the "veto" claim; subheading identifies maps without Palestine.	Selection; contextual addition; resemiotization	An explainer format permits more context than a short wire report.
M2	Diplomacy and Iran	Describes the map as a visual aid and peace as a prospective breakthrough.	Selection; backgrounding; limited counter-context	The item is a multi-country UNGA roundup, not a dedicated single-event report.
M3	Region-reshaping peace with caveats	Leads with the Saudi prospect but adds Palestinian, Saudi, US, and Iranian constraints.	Selection; addition; counter-position; correction	Wire genre compresses multiple constraints around a breakthrough lead.
M4	Historic agreement with obstacles	States that major obstacles remain and notes the map's territorial non-differentiation.	Selection; contextualization; visual qualification	The headline remains opportunity-oriented despite substantial caveats.
M5	Palestinian counter-voice	Leads with Palestinian officials calling the speech "arrogant" and "racist."	Source reordering; counter-voice; authority reversal	A reaction story is organized around response rather than speech summary.
M6	Map controversy	Leads with criticism that the map placed the West Bank and Gaza inside Israel.	Resemiotization; territorial addition; counter-voice	A controversy report makes the map, not normalization, the primary event.

Figure 3 provides direct headline-level evidence of the M5 counter-voice frame, showing the headline, standfirst, byline, and publication date from The Times of Israel report of 23 September 2023.

4.5. Quotation and source hierarchy

Quotation patterns help explain these differences. In M2–M4, Netanyahu’s forecast of a diplomatic breakthrough appears early and supplies the organizing proposition; Palestinian demands, Abbas’s position, and negotiation obstacles are introduced around it as qualifications. In M5–M6, critical Palestinian or peace-advocacy sources appear at the beginning and define what the speech or map is taken to mean. M1 occupies an intermediate position: it quotes Netanyahu directly but repeatedly returns to Palestinian territorial and diplomatic context. The key difference is therefore not whether Palestinians are present. It is whether they appear as a secondary constraint within another actor’s project or as authorized interpreters of the event itself.

The syntax of quotation also affects authority. When Netanyahu's words provide the proposition around which the lead is built, later information tends to function as qualification: a breakthrough is possible, although obstacles remain. When criticism supplies the lead proposition, details of the speech become the object being evaluated. Reporting verbs, paraphrase, and paragraph order can therefore produce different hierarchies even when the same actors are mentioned. Direct quotation is not automatically more faithful than paraphrase; a short quotation can be highly selective, while a careful paraphrase may preserve a broader claim. What matters here is the relationship between wording, position, and explanatory frame.

None of the six reports presents the September address as a justification for the post-7 October Gaza war. That absence follows from chronology rather than editorial silence. These reports are about normalization, Iran, Palestinians, the UN setting, and the map. Humanitarian and military frames associated with the later war require a separate longitudinal corpus.

4.6. Cross-case pattern: preservation, qualification, and reversal

Three recurrent transformation patterns emerge from the comparison, and they are used here as a provisional source-to-news heuristic. Preservation occurs when a report adopts the speech's principal proposition and broadly retains its actor hierarchy: normalization defines the event, named state leaders remain central, and the map functions as evidence of connection. Qualification occurs when that proposition stays primary but is constrained by political obstacles, Palestinian demands, correction, or territorial context. Reversal occurs when an element that was secondary or oppositional in S0 becomes the report's event definition, as with the Palestinian 'veto' formulation, Palestinian condemnation, or the map's undifferentiated territorial field. These are tendencies observed in six cases, not mutually exclusive article types or a general typology of news coverage.

This distinction helps explain why reports can share a factual core and still produce substantially different public meanings. Preservation keeps the source event's preferred future largely intact. Qualification keeps that future in view but reduces its certainty or moral coherence. Reversal changes what the event is mainly about by centering actors or visual features that were conditional or subordinate in S0. None of these operations requires fabrication. They arise through ordinary journalistic practices—headline selection, source ordering, contextual explanation, correction, captioning, and image interpretation. Their significance lies in how those practices redistribute salience and evidential authority.

5. Discussion

Taken together, the six cases suggest that media divergence can arise through selective recontextualization even when reports draw on much of the same factual material. All six recognize Saudi-Israeli normalization as important, but they differ over whether it defines the event or provides the background against which Palestinian exclusion and territorial controversy become salient. This finding

is consistent with Entman's [11] account of framing as selection and salience, while adding a more specific account of how that salience is produced through source order, quotation, contextual addition, and visual resemiotization.

The process can be described as constrained transformation. Journalists work from a finite source event, but that event contains several plausible propositions: historic normalization, opposition to Iran, Palestinian conditionality, economic connectivity, and an ambiguous map. Reports diverge by assigning these propositions different hierarchical positions and connecting them to different contextual knowledge. A shared factual core therefore does not guarantee a shared event meaning. Meaning emerges from arrangement. The preservation–qualification–reversal heuristic captures that relational difference by asking whether a report broadly retains the source hierarchy, retains it while constraining its certainty or legitimacy, or reorganizes the event around a competing proposition.

The speech's own actor structure helps explain why these news frames were available. Israel, the United States, and Saudi Arabia are represented through named leaders and future-oriented agency. Palestinians are more often collectivized and conditionally included, while Iran occupies the role of principal spoiler. Opportunity-oriented reports generally preserve that hierarchy even when they add Palestinian demands or negotiation constraints. Contestatory reports change it by naming Palestinian officials, foregrounding territorial status, and granting critics greater authority to interpret the map.

Following the map across sites of circulation also extends speech-centered analysis in a concrete way. The map is not treated here as a fixed ideological sign. What it counts as evidence of depends on headline, caption, explanatory context, and authorized source. In M2–M4, the speaker's preferred movement from isolation toward integration remains prominent. In M1 and M6, added territorial context changes the evidential function of the image. The contribution is therefore narrower than the general claim that maps are ideological: it shows how one visual prop acquired different evidential roles during the first cycle of reporting.

This case also clarifies why multimodal analysis benefits from following visual material beyond the site at which it was produced. In the speech, gesture and verbal anchoring guide viewers toward a corridor and a narrative of 'blessing'. Once the image circulates in news, still-image selection, captioning, source order, and explanation can weaken or redirect that guidance. The MCDA contribution is relational rather than exhaustive: it traces how observable verbal, visual-spatial, embodied, and journalistic resources work together across contexts. The map is neither infinitely open nor semantically fixed. Visible features constrain what can plausibly be said about it, while journalistic anchoring affects which of those features become salient. This avoids treating the image either as a neutral illustration or as a carrier of one unchanging ideological meaning.

The cases also warn against reading outlet geography as a simple ideological predictor. The two Israel-based reports in this corpus foreground Palestinian criticism and map controversy, while the international wire reports preserve a more optimistic diplomatic frame but still include caveats. Within

these six cases, genre and chosen news angle appear at least as important as outlet location. That is a bounded observation, not a general claim about Israeli, Western, Arab, or international media.

Genre therefore needs to remain part of the explanation. Space, speed, and conventional purpose affect how many sources and contextual layers a report can accommodate. A roundup's limited treatment of the map should not automatically be read as deliberate suppression, just as a controversy report's concentration on territorial criticism does not mean normalization was absent from the source event. Critical analysis can still identify the consequences of selection without inferring editorial intention. Keeping that distinction in view ties the argument to observable discourse features and makes the critique more defensible.

Chronology is equally important to discourse-analytic validity. In September 2023, the address was organized around normalization and Iran. After 7 October, the same map and references to Palestinians could acquire additional retrospective meanings. Those later readings may be analytically legitimate in a longitudinal study, but they cannot simply be projected back onto the first news cycle without collapsing distinct historical contexts.

The source-to-news design can be extended in several directions. A larger project could retain the same relational logic while adding systematic sampling, multilingual corpora, broadcast transcripts, image archives, and multiple coders. Quantitative measures could estimate how often particular transformations occur, while qualitative analysis could explain how they work in specific texts. The preservation–qualification–reversal heuristic should likewise be treated as testable: larger and more heterogeneous corpora may refine it, complicate it, or reject it. A longitudinal comparison between the September 2023 cycle and later recirculation after 7 October would be especially useful, provided the periods remain analytically separate.

6. Conclusion

This article compared Netanyahu's 22 September 2023 UNGA address with six English-language reports published during the initial 22–23 September news cycle. In the speech, a proposed regional order is legitimated through the blessing-curse narrative, economic rationalization, named diplomatic authorities, and maps that visualize movement from isolation toward integration. Israel is activated as a regional bridge; Palestinians are mainly collectivized as conditional participants and possible impediments; and Iran is activated as the principal antagonist.

The news reports do not simply reproduce that hierarchy. Three headlines foreground diplomatic opportunity, while three foreground Palestinian conditionality, counter-voice, or map controversy. The map is the clearest multimodal point of divergence. Some reports preserve its role as a visual aid to regional connection; others add territorial context that makes the non-differentiation of Palestinian political space the central issue. These differences arise through selection, source reordering, contextual addition, and resemiotization rather than through completely incompatible factual accounts.

The conclusions remain limited to this purposive corpus. Future work should widen the outlet sample, compare Arabic- and Hebrew-language reporting, examine broadcast editing and audience reception, and trace later recirculation after 7 October. Such research would benefit from the same chronological discipline and from a reproducible coding archive wherever copyright permissions allow.

The broader point is that the public meaning of a political speech is not settled at the moment of delivery. It is produced again as the speech circulates through journalistic genres that redistribute agency, authority, context, and visual evidence. For this corpus, the most defensible conclusion is modest but important: the same diplomatic performance supported distinguishable narratives of regional integration, constrained negotiation, Palestinian exclusion, and territorial controversy. The preservation–qualification–reversal heuristic summarizes how those differences emerged from alternative organizations of shared material rather than from entirely different sets of facts.

Declarations

Data availability:

The datasets/material is provided through an online repository link given below which includes all the data used in the study in the form of speeches.

https://github.com/UzairDevelops/data-sources-links

Ethical Approval:

The study analyzes public institutional and professional journalistic material. It involves no human participants, private data, or interaction with individual users.

Funding:

There was no funding available for this study.

Conflict of interest:

There is no conflict of interest among the authors.

Consent to Publish:

All the authors have given their consent to publish this manuscript with the current author positions.

Consent to Participate:

Not applicable.

Clinical Trial number:

Not applicable

Author Contribution

AN conceived the study, designed the analytical framework, and led the data collection and coding process. KA contributed to the theoretical conceptualization, particularly regarding multimodal critical discourse analysis, and co-developed the analytical matrices for social actor representation and legitimation. FK conducted the systematic comparison of the six news reports, performed the source-to-news recontextualization analysis, and drafted the initial findings on selection and quotation patterns. AKS carried out the visual-spatial and embodied-performative analysis of the audiovisual record and speech transcript, including the development of the paired maps. RSA assisted with data curation, inter-coder reliability checks, and the literature review on media framing and legitimation strategies. WSWN contributed to the framing analysis and provided critical revisions on the interpretation of source hierarchy and journalistic anchoring. AT supervised the overall project, refined the argument on preservation, qualification, and reversal patterns, and finalized the manuscript for submission. All authors reviewed and approved the final version.

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Figures

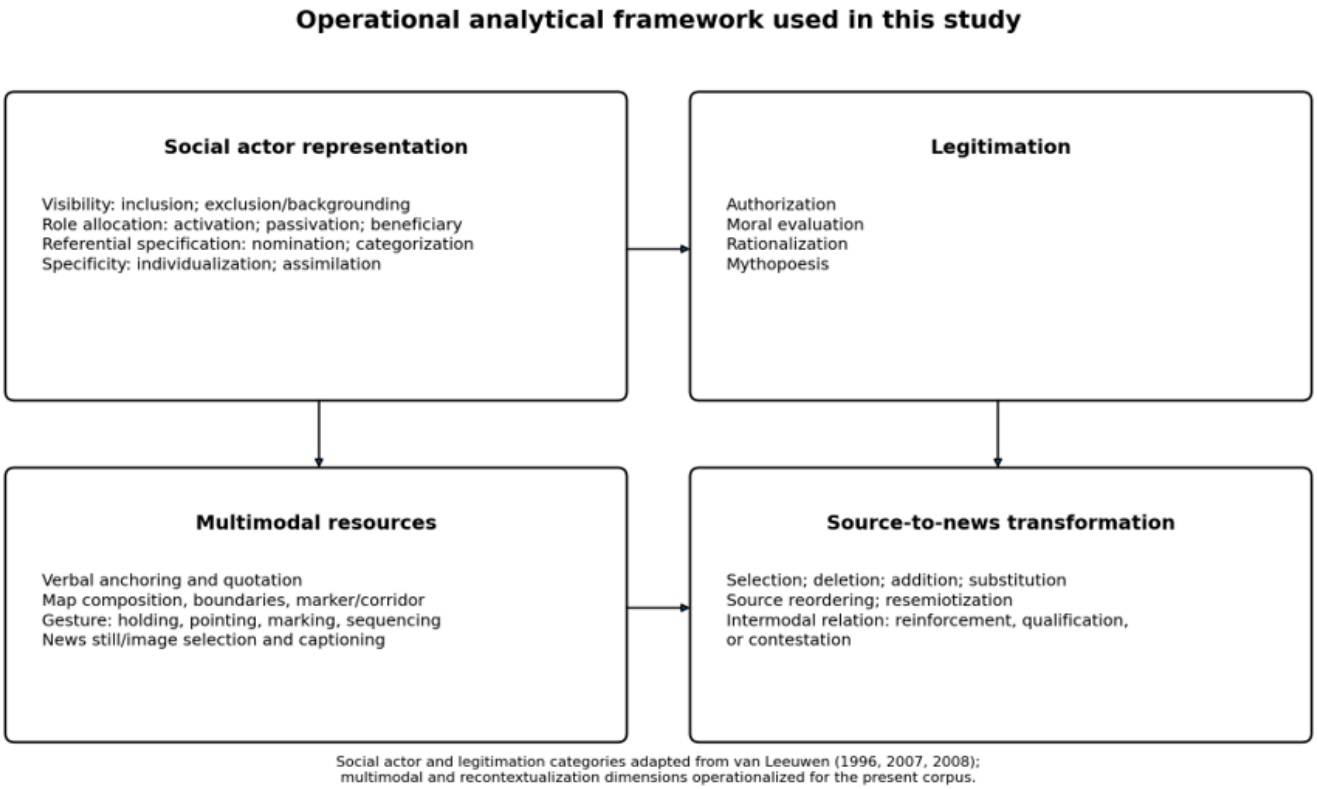


Figure 1

Operational analytical framework

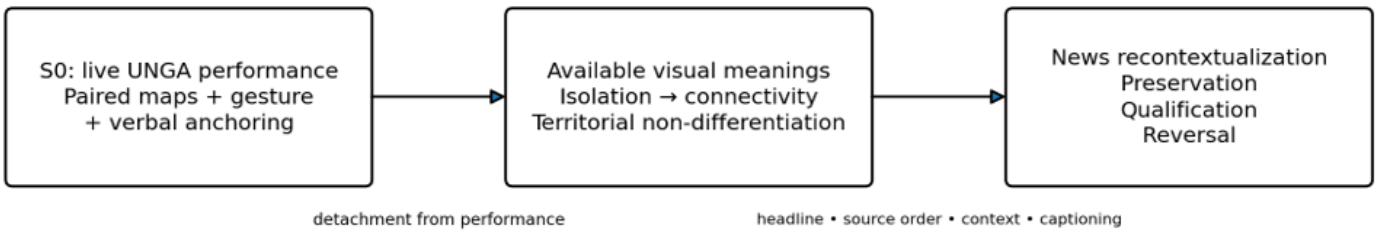


Figure 2

Analytical schematic of the map's source-to-news recontextualization pathway. Author-generated; not a reproduction of the original UNGA map.



ENVOY PROTESTS MAP WITH WEST BANK, GAZA AS PART OF ISRAEL

Palestinian officials fume after Netanyahu UN speech, call address 'arrogant, racist'

Mahmoud al-Habash, an adviser to Abbas, charges Israeli PM's speech 'full of lies and contradictions,' says there can be no regional stability when Palestinians rights violated

By JACOB MAGID FOLLOW

23 September 2023, 3:36 am

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Figure 3

provides direct headline-level evidence of the M5 counter-voice frame, showing the headline, standfirst, byline, and publication date from The Times of Israel report of 23 September 2023.

Supplementary Files

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- Appendixs.docx