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Framing Conflict News in Transnational Media: *English-Arabic Transediting/Translation as Secondary Gatekeeping and Frame Mutation*

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Abstract

This study reconceptualizes frame mutation in transnational political and conflict-adjacent media by modeling English-Arabic news transediting/translation as a secondary gatekeeping stage where micro-textual interventions reshape frames before they reach target publics. Using Entman's four framing functions (problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and implied remedy) and Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Critical Discourse Model (text, discursive practice, sociocultural practice), the analysis examines a purposive micro-corpus of seven case-study published English source texts and their Arabic target versions. Source-target pairs were fully aligned into 15 sentence/clause-level segments and coded with an explicit operator codebook capturing six recurrent reframing operators: loaded terminology substitution, evaluative additions, modality/evidentiality shifts, omission/backgrounding, agency rekeying, and rhetorical modulation. To strengthen auditability in a single-analyst design, a blinded two-pass stability audit was conducted on 90 operator-cells, yielding 96.7% agreement and strong reliability ($\kappa = 0.911$; $\alpha = 0.911$; PABAK = 0.933). Results show that translational media gatekeeping systematically rekeys legitimacy and responsibility patterns, with rhetorical modulation and evaluative additions that appear in most cases and lexical relabeling concentrating around conflict naming and contested toponymy. Rarer omissions and agency shifts nonetheless produced high-leverage accountability effects. The study concludes that media transediting/translation gatekeeping in multilingual news circulation is not a neutral transfer device but an embedded locus of framing power, and it demonstrates how mechanism-focused micro-corpus designs can produce disciplined, theory-relevant evidence suitable for scaling to larger multilingual datasets and production studies.

Keywords: framing, conflict journalism, English-Arabic news translation, transediting, gatekeeping, critical discourse analysis

1. Introduction

1.1 Framing and Gatekeeping in Transnational Conflict News

Transnational publics rarely encounter conflict and politically sensitive events as unmediated facts. Instead, they encounter mediated narratives that have already crossed multiple institutional and infrastructural thresholds, including, at minimum, the selection of which events count as news, editorial shaping and contextualization, headline framing and sourcing decisions, and platform governance and distribution (Shoemaker, 2020; Shoemaker and Vos, 2009; Wallace, 2018; Welbers and Opgenhaffen, 2018; Hermida, 2020; van Dijck, Poell and de Waal, 2018; Napoli, 2019; Gillespie, 2018; Helmond, 2015).

In journalism and mass communication studies, these thresholds are classically theorized as gatekeeping: that is, how information passes through successive gates and how those gates structure public knowledge (Shoemaker, 2020; Shoemaker and Vos, 2009; Wallace, 2018). By contrast, the meaning-making architecture of the output is theorized as framing (Entman, 1993; von Sikorski and Matthes, 2020; Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar, 2016). Framing, in this sense, is not a cosmetic after-layer. It is an organizing principle that makes certain interpretations and moral readings more available than others by shaping salience, evaluation, and perceived responsibility (Entman, 1993; von Sikorski and Matthes, 2020; Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar, 2016).

Yet a persistent methodological blind spot remains in framing research on international and conflict news. Much of this research says little about the linguistic and editorial transformations that occur when stories cross language boundaries. Translation tends to be treated as a transparent device rather than as a constitutive stage of news production (Valdeón, 2018; Valdeón, 2022b; Kalantari, 2022; Zeng and Li, 2025). Where accounts travel across languages, the stage of translation and transediting is easily relegated to technical transmission, even though it functions as a base of selection, omission and recontextualization that can materially reshape what is framed and how (van Doorslaer, 2010b; Davier, Schäffner and van Doorslaer, 2018; Wu, 2018; Valdeón, 2022a).

1.2 Related Works: Transediting/Translation as Secondary Gatekeeping and Frame Mutation

Journalistic translation scholarship has repeatedly shown, however, that news translation is frequently transediting. Texts are condensed, expanded, reorganised, or rhetorically modulated under acute time pressure and under institutional alignment constraints (Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009; Schäffner, 2012; Scammell, 2018; Davier, Schäffner and van Doorslaer, 2018; Alwazna and Al Hamed, 2024). Consequently, these transformations do not only reframe information. They participate in gatekeeping processes and in the distribution of interpretive frames for target publics (Valdeón, 2022a; Kalantari, 2022; Zeng and Li, 2025). Reviews further stress that the field increasingly interfaces with journalism-studies concepts, especially framing, gatekeeping and news-production convergence, rather than remaining confined to translation equivalence as an explanatory endpoint (Valdeón, 2018; Valdeón, 2020; Valdeón, 2022b; Wu, 2018; Zeng and Li, 2023).

Operationally, this article conceptualizes English-to-Arabic journalistic transediting/ translation as a form of secondary gatekeeping within the news-production chain, and it theorizes frame mutation as its principal discursive outcome (Valdeón, 2021; Scammell, 2018; Voinea, 2025; Dorrimanesh *et al*., 2023). Frame mutation is defined as the systematic alteration of one or more of Entman's four framing functions, including problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and implied remedy. This mutation occurs through micro-textual operations, such as omission, addition, substitution, and reordering, that can re-key salience, re-allocate responsibility, and re-position the target audience's interpretive response (Entman, 1993; Qin and Zhang, 2018; Wu, 2018; Pan and Liao, 2021; Alwazna and Al Hamed, 2024). The mechanism claim is accordingly bounded. That is, it is not that every translated sentence is reframed, but that the transediting/translation stage is a structurally available base where framing functions and stance can be recalibrated before reaching the target public, particularly under conflict-adjacent conditions where labels, agency attribution, and epistemic positioning are politically consequential (Zanettin, 2016; Boéri and Fattah, 2020; Pan and Liao, 2021; Wu, 2018; Valdeón, 2021).

Three bodies of scholarship motivate this claim. First, framing theory argues that frames supply interpretive structure. They select certain aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient to promote particular definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations (Entman, 1993). If framing is about selection-and-salience, then any production stage where selection and salience can be modified is a base of framing power. Second, gatekeeping theory emphasizes that news is a cumulative product of decisions distributed across roles and routines; "the gate" is not a single portal but an architecture of filtering, shaping, and routing information (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). Third, research on journalistic translation insists that multilingual circulation is not external to news production but internal to it, where translation is embedded in the journalistic field and can extend or reconfigure communicative reach and ideological positioning (Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009; van Doorslaer, 2010a).

Consequently, a translation stage can be theorized as a gate-within-gate process. It may not select which event is covered in the source public sphere, but it can decide which interpretive patterns enter the target public sphere, and in what form (Valdeón, 2022a). This is consistent with the broader idea that gatekeeping is distributed and multi-layered (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009) and with the journalistic translation argument that translation decisions are often embedded in editorial policy rather than in purely linguistic preference (Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009; Valdeón, 2020). At the same time, asserting that translation can mutate frames requires methodological caution. Frames are not reducible to isolated words, and not every lexical difference should be interpreted as ideological steering (Entman, 1993; Matthes and Kohring, 2008). For this reason, the present study adopts an operator model that forces interpretive claims to be based on explicit textual evidence and linked to an identified framing function.

Analytically, the article positions framing theory as the front-stage core and uses Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the explanatory basis that connects micro-operations to meso-gatekeeping practice and macro sociocultural narratives (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough, 1995a). CDA is not used here as an interpretive license for attributing private intention. That is, it is used as a structured link between (A) textual description of micro choices - such as lexis, modality, agency, and rhetoric - (B) discursive practice - including production/consumption conditions, newsroom and outlet positioning - and (C) sociocultural practice that tackles conflict narratives, legitimacy regimes, and historically sedimented common sense about actors and events.

1.3 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study is structured around the following research questions:

RQ1. Which transediting/translational operators recur as framing-relevant interventions in English-to-Arabic circulation of conflict-adjacent and political news?

RQ2. How do these operators correspond to framing functions, including problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and implied remedy, at the micro-text level?

RQ3. How can the observed micro-operators be explained via meso-level gatekeeping conditions and macro-level conflict and political narratives?

Two hypotheses structure interpretation:

H1. Conflict/politically sensitive items will display patterned moral re-keying that involves loaded terminology substitution, evaluative additions, and rhetorical modulation and that shifts legitimacy and polarization discursive markers.

H2. Frame mutation will gravitate toward accountability engineering, through omission/backgrounding and agency management, consistent with gatekeeping pressures and audience design.

The claims are mechanism-oriented and bounded to this fixed micro-corpus. Accordingly, the dependent variable is framing-function shift, not translation equivalence.

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

Before detailing individual procedures, a brief orienting note may help the reader follow the analytical logic of the study. The Methods section proceeds sequentially, from (a) research design and corpus rationale in sections 2.1 to 2.3, through (b) the unit of analysis, segmentation rule, and locked operator codebook in sections 2.4 to 2.6, and finally to (c) frame-function mapping, reliability safeguards, and ethical considerations in sections 2.7 to 2.10. This ordering mirrors the analytical chain used in the study itself. Each coded micro-operator is traceable back to an aligned ST-TT segment and forward to an Entmanian framing function, so that every interpretive claim rests on an auditable evidential path. The research design is qualitative, controlled, and audit-oriented. It targets mechanism explanation rather than population inference. That is, the goal is to specify how particular micro textual operations in transediting/translation can mutate framing functions. To do so, the process is operated with traceable bilingual evidence and explicit decision rules. In contrast to large-corpus frequency designs, the present approach treats the micro-corpus as an explanatory instrument. It aims to show "how" reframing works through explicit, inspectable operator instances rather than to estimate "how often" reframing occurs in a population of transedited/translated news.

Methodologically, the study treats the seven-pair corpus as a "mechanism laboratory" rather than as a miniature population. This stance supports arguments in qualitative methodology that small-N case analysis can yield strong scientific contribution when it targets explanatory mechanisms and is transparent about scope conditions (Flyvbjerg, 2006; George and Bennett, 2005). Case-study methodology also emphasizes analytic generalization where findings are generalized to theory through mechanism specification, not to a population through statistical inference (Yin, 2014). Consequently, the present design prioritizes full bilingual alignment, explicit coding rules, and dense within-case evidence, which together increase auditability and reduce speculative interpretation.

2.2 Corpus, Sampling Logic, and Time Window

The dataset is fixed at n = 7 English source texts (ST) and their published Arabic target versions (TT). Each pair concerns conflict-adjacent or politically sensitive discourse, including conflict naming/toponymy, electoral legitimacy discursive markers, leader legitimation/delegitimation, accountability allocation, and modality/evidentiality mutation. The corpus is purposive and information-rich. It is designed to maximize variation across frame-sensitive pressures while maintaining auditable alignment.

Operationally, the seven ST-TT pairs are extracted from published items and are treated as fixed cases: S1 (Newsweek-to-Al Quds) (cited in Farghal, 2015); S2 (U.S. Department of State-to-Algérie Presse Service) (U.S. Department of State, 2014; Algérie Presse Service, 2014); S3 and S5 (The New York Times-to-Al-Wafd/Al-Ahram, respectively) (Kirkpatrick, 2014; Crowley et al., 2019; Al-Ahram, 2014; Al-Wafd, 2019); S4 (The Washington Post-to-Al-Ra'y) (Frankel, 1992); S6 (Geopolitical Monitor-to-Al-Wafd) (Geopolitical Monitor, 2016; Al-Sharquawi, 2016); and S7 (The Daily Beast-to-Orient Net) (Oueiss, 2015; Orient News, 2015). Table 2 reports the corpus profile and conflict/political implications, and the Results section features close readings of excerpts only from these seven pairs.

2.3 Provenance and Alignment of ST-TT Pairs

To ensure that each Arabic item constitutes a transedited/translated circulation of the specified English source, rather than

an independent report, each case was retained only when (A) the target item explicitly attributes the English outlet/source, and/or (B) the ST-TT pair exhibits distinctive shared propositional content and sequencing that permits traceable alignment at sentence/clause level. Where outlets republish, mirror, or archive items, the citation records both the original source and the accessible archival location, and dates are reported as publication dates shown on the hosted item or, where applicable, edition dates embedded in the URL metadata. This provenance discipline is necessary because the article's mechanism claim concerns a transediting/translation gate within the news production chain. Accordingly, traceable alignment is treated as a validity condition of the corpus.

Table 1. Full corpus: seven case-study paired ST-TT extracts (n = 7)

Source Text (ST) - English	Target Text (TT) - Arabic
S1. Newsweek → Al-Quds (Arabic outlet) | Domain: Israel-Palestine conflict	
In an interview with Newsweek yesterday, the "Israeli" Defense Minister said that the Palestinian suicide operations constitute the main cause for the "Israeli" troops' entering cities in the West Bank. *(Farghal, 2015)*	*ادعى وزير الحرب الصهيوني في مقابلة مع مجلة النيوزيك أمس أن العمليات الاستشهادية الفلسطينية هي السبب الرئيس في اجتياح قوات الاحتلال الصهيوني للمدن الفلسطينية في الضفة الغربية المحتلة.* *(Farghal, 2015)*
S2. U.S. Department of State (03 Apr 2014) → Algérie Presse Service (APS) (03 Apr 2014) | Domain: State politics / elections (Algeria)	
John Kerry's Remarks: "Lastly, you have an election coming up here in Algeria two weeks from now. We look forward to elections that are transparent and in line with international standards, and the United States will work with the president that the people of Algeria choose in order to bring about the future that Algeria and its neighbors deserve." *(US Department of State, 2014)*	*وقال السيد كيري في كلمة ألقاها لدى افتتاح أشغال الدورة الثانية للحوار الاستراتيجي الجزائري الأمريكي "إننا مرتاحون لكون الانتخابات الرئاسية المقررة في 17 ابريل تجري في إطار الشفافية".* *ويرى السيد كيري أن الولايات المتحدة ستعمل مع الرئيس المنتخب على تطوير العلاقات والتعاون بين البلدين. وأضاف قائلا أن "الجزائر بلد حريص على تطور شعبه ومجتمعه المدني".* *(Algérie Presse Service, 2014 April 3)*
S3. The New York Times (09 Nov 2019) → Al-Wafd (09 Nov 2019) | Domain: Diplomacy / U.S.-Turkey relations	
On his return to Turkey, Mr. Erdogan was rewarded with accolades from pro- governmental news outlets for standing up to Mr. Trump by returning a blustery letter Mr. Trump sent him in October. In the message, Mr. Trump warned the Turkish leader, "Don't be a fool," by launching a military operation against Kurdish fighters in northeastern Syria. Mr. Erdogan ignored the warning and sent troops across the border on Oct. 9. *(Crowley et al., 2019)*	*كما أوضحت أنه خلال المؤتمر الصحفي المشترك في البيت الأبيض، لم يُظهر أردوغان ذات المودة التي أظهرها ترامب له، فلم يتظاهر بأنه يأخذ بجدية الرسالة الشهيرة التي بعثها ترامب له في 9 اكتوبر الماضي، والتي قال فيها لا تكن متصلبا.. لا تكن أحمق.. سأتصل بك في وقت لاحق.* *فقد بدا الرئيس التركي حصل على دعوة زيارة البيت الأبيض دون تقديم مقابل.* *ورأت /نيويورك تايمز/ أن هذه هي ضربية إجراء اجتماع مع مجرم مستبد مثل أردوغان، لافتة إلى أنه كان يتوجب ضمان تحقيق فائدة* *واضحة وملموسة على السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية والعالم بأسره من هذا الاجتماع.* *(Al Wafd, 2019 November 9)*
S4. The Washington Post (21 Jan 1992) → Al-Raay (Jan 1992) | Domain: Palestine / Hamas-PLO dynamics	
After Israeli police and Palestinian demonstrators clashed on the Temple Mount a year ago and 21 Arabs were shot dead, a number of Palestinians retaliated with knife attacks on Jews inside Israel proper. *(Frankel, 1992)*	*بعد أن اصطدمت الشرطة الإسرائيلية والمتظاهرون الفلسطينيون في المسجد الأقصى قبل سنة، وقتل واحد وعشرون عربيا، فقد انتقم عدد من الفلسطينيين بالهجمات بالسكاكين على اليهود داخل إسرائيل نفسها.* *(Al Raay, 1992 January)*
S5. The New York Times (07 Oct 2014) → Al-Ahram (09 Oct 2014) | Domain: Egyptian politics / media control	
what the event demonstrated was the strength of the cult of personality that Mr. Sisi's allies are building around him at home as he consolidates his power, a persona far more exalted and protected than even that of Hosni Mubarak, his long-serving predecessor. *(Kirkpatrick, 2014)*	*وذكر أن حكم السيسي أصبح يعتمد على قوة شخصيته وشعبيته الجارفة بشكل غير مسبوق، من خلال الدعم الذي يلقاه في الدولة المصرية ومن قبل حلفائه، وهو الأمر الذي عزز من سلطته وتوج كل ما قام به منذ اندلاع ثورة 30 يونيو.* *(Al-Ahram, 2014 October 9)*
S6. Geopolitical Monitor (28 Mar 2016) → Al-Wafd (30 Mar 2016) | Domain: Regeni case / Egypt-Italy crisis	
This idea has been argued in many ways: (1) that Giulio has been killed because his research shed light on the brutality of the Al-Sisi regime and labor conditions in Egypt. *(Geopolitical Monitor, 2016 March 28)*	*وأضاف أن عدة دوافع لمقتل ريجيني ظهرت بعد الحادث كان على رأسها بحث الطالب الذى كان يناقش عنف النظام وأوضاع العمال فى مصر.* *(Al-Sharquawi, 2016)*
S7. The Daily Beast (15 Dec 2015) → Orient Net (15 Dec 2015) | Domain: Syrian conflict / opposition legitimacy	
The Daily Beast: "Why do many people call you a dictator? And what is the reason behind the demonstrations against you?" *(Oueiss, 2015)*	*أورينت نت: "البعض يدعي أن الشيخ زهران ديكتاتور حين يتعلق الأمر بانتقاده مما جلب له أعداء مجانيين، هل هذا الكلام صحيح ومن هم المتظاهرين ضد زهران علوش في الغوطة؟"* *(Orient News, 2015)*

As shown in Table 1, the full corpus with paired ST-TT extracts

The small-N design is therefore treated as a research feature because it maximizes auditability and explanatory precision,

and it allows the study to demonstrate portable framing mechanisms with traceable evidence rather than dilute the analysis into descriptive frequency claims.

The seven pairs are retained because they instantiate recurring frame-sensitive pressures across the corpus, notably conflict naming and site toponymy, legitimacy and endorsement markers, actor evaluation and labeling, accountability allocation through omission and agency shifts, and modality downgrades that convert apparent facts into claims.

The primary sampling window concentrates on 2014-2019, selected to isolate frame-mutation mechanisms under a comparatively stable phase of digital transnational journalism. Ending the sampling frame before 2020 avoids pandemic-era disruptions that reconfigured newsroom constraints, sourcing conditions, audience routines, and platform governance in ways that confound mechanism attribution (Casero-Ripollés, 2021; García-Avilés et al., 2022; Broersma and Swart, 2022; Cotter et al., 2022). This period also corresponds to a consolidated stage of platform-mediated distribution logics, platformization, and the entrenchment of platform society infrastructures before the crisis ecology of 2020 rekeyed verification regimes and attention economies (Poell et al., 2019; van Dijck et al., 2018; Cinelli et al., 2020; Cotter et al., 2022).

Although the primary window concentrates on 2014-2019, one case (**S4, 1992**) is retained as a deliberate historical reference. The purpose is not to widen the sampling frame, but to test whether the same operator-frame-function mechanisms, especially toponymy and contested naming, are portable under an earlier phase of conflict reporting in which sacred-site labels already functioned as frame-sensitive markers. Analytically, S4 is therefore treated as an out-of-window contrast case that supports mechanism plausibility by demonstrating that the identified reframing operators are not period-bound artefacts of late-2010s platform ecology.

2.4 Unit of Analysis and Alignment Protocol

The unit of analysis is the aligned ST-TT segment that is operationalized as a minimal sentence/clause-level propositional or evaluative unit capable of hosting a discrete reframing move. Alignment is sequential. Because transediting/translation routinely introduce additions, compressions, and reordering, the alignment protocol permits NULL-matches in either language to capture (A) TT-only insertions and (B) ST-only omissions as analytically meaningful events rather than as noise. In a framing-and-gatekeeping model, these NULL matches are not peripheral. They instantiate the gatekeeping act at its most direct form. This form tackles what information is allowed to appear for the target public and what is suppressed.

2.5 Segmentation Rule and Completeness of the Analytic Matrix

Segmentation followed a sentence/clause-level propositional and evaluative rule. An aligned unit was created whenever a clause (A) hosts an explicit stance/evaluation, (B) assigns agency or responsibility, (C) contains conflict-sensitive naming/toponymy, or (D) alters epistemic status, such as claim-fact, prevalence shifts, and evidential rekeying. This rule yields 15 aligned units across the seven cases. The stability audit is computed on the complete coded matrix used for analysis (15 units × 6 operators), rather than on a subsample. This ensures that reported reliability pertains to the full evidential base of the article.

2.6 Operator Codebook, Coding Procedure, and Counting Rule

Each aligned segment is coded on a binary presence/absence grid for six operators:

Loaded Terminology Substitution (LTS): ideologically consequential lexical relabeling, including intensity shifts and contested naming.

Evaluative Additions (EA): appraised or judgmental TT material not situated in the ST's propositional content.

Modality/Evidentiality Shifts (MES): hedging/strengthening moves, quantifier downgrades/upgrades, and claim↔fact rewrites that alter epistemic certainty.

Omission/Backgrounding (OB): salient ST content removed or structurally backgrounded in the TT.

Agency Rekeying Management (ARM): grammatical reassignment or defocusing of responsibility via nominalization, passivization, or actor deletion.

Rhetorical Modulation (RM): rhetorical intensification/attenuation, insinuation, or reframed interrogatives steering evaluation.

Coding follows the locked codebook and the alignment rules. LTS is restricted to substitutions with plausible framing consequences in a conflict/political context, such as sacralized toponymy, euphemization/dysphemization, and intensity shift. EA is restricted to evaluative insertions that are not required by grammatical completion. MES requires a shift in epistemic stance, such as "look forward" rendered as "is occurring", quantifier shift, such as "many people" rendered as "some claim", or evidential rekeying. OB and ARM require that omission or agency defocusing plausibly alters responsibility attribution or causal coherence. RM captures rhetorical steering, including insinuation and interrogative reframing.

To avoid over-reading micro-corpus frequencies, the counting rule is case-level presence only. Each operator is counted once per case if at least one clear instance appears in any segment of that case. Percentages are descriptive within-corpus indicators only and are not used for statistical inference. This conservative rule prevents the micro-corpus from being misread as a large-scale content analysis and keeps the quantitative layer aligned with the study's mechanism-oriented goal.

2.7 Frame-function Mapping and Explanatory Approach

For each operator instance discussed in Results, the analysis specifies which framing function is altered. These functions, as discussed, include problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and implied remedy (Entman, 1993). This mapping is the central bridge that secures journalism and framing fit: the operators are treated as micro gatekeeping interventions that can rekey journalistic framing functions, not as purely linguistic differences (Perreault, 2022; Valdeón, 2021).

Interpretation proceeds through Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA sequence (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough, 1995a). Micro textual description identifies what changed.

Meso interpretation considers how those changes align with discursive practice, such as institutional positioning of outlets, audience design, and production routines. Macro explanation situates those changes within sociocultural narratives of conflict, legitimacy, and blame. The analysis avoids claims about personal motives; it focuses on the patterned availability of reframing moves under institutional and socioculturally stabilized discursive conditions (Zotzmann and O'Regan, 2023).

2.8 Reliability and Auditability

Because the study is single-analyst, reliability is operationalized as coding stability. A blinded two-pass stability audit was conducted on N = 15 aligned segments, producing 90 operator-cells (15 segments × 6 operators). Pass A applied the locked codebook. Pass B re-coded the same segments with prior labels withheld and segment order randomized, a procedure consistent with content-analytic recommendations for auditing coding stability (Hayes and Krippendorff, 2007; Belur et al., 2021).

Observed agreement was 96.7% (87/90). Pooled reliability coefficients were strong: Cohen's $\kappa = 0.911$ and Krippendorff's $\alpha = 0.911$. Because κ can be deflated under low prevalence, the "high agreement-low κ" paradox, PABAK is reported as robustness statistic (Cicchetti and Feinstein, 1990; Byrt et al., 1993; Chen et al., 2009; Minozzi et al., 2022; Vach and Gerke, 2023). PABAK was 0.933. Disagreements were confined to LTS, MES, and RM and were resolved via adjudication. The final analytic dataset reflects adjudicated decisions. These coefficients index intra-coder stability and do not substitute for independent coders.

2.9 Robustness and Alternative Explanations

To avoid over-attributing ideological intent to routine bilingual production, the analysis treats operator activation as conditional rather than inevitable. Several aligned segments exhibit baseline transfer with no operator triggered, disciplining interpretation and indicating that reframing gravitates to specific pressure points, such as naming, legitimacy, accountability, and epistemic stance, rather than appearing as diffuse distortion. In addition, each operator is constrained by decision rules that exclude changes plausibly attributable to grammatical accommodation alone, such as obligatory reordering or morphosyntactic completion, unless the change plausibly modifies a framing function. Consequently, the article's claims concern the structural availability and demonstrated operation of frame-mutation mechanisms under transediting/translation constraints, not blanket assertions that translation is inherently ideological.

2.10 Ethics

All materials are publicly published texts. The analysis does not attribute intent to identifiable individuals. It focuses on observable textual operations and their framing consequences, and it maintains an evidence discipline by basing interpretive claims on coded operators and displayed excerpts. This approach aligns with publication ethics expectations in journalism research to avoid manipulated reporting and over-interpretation.

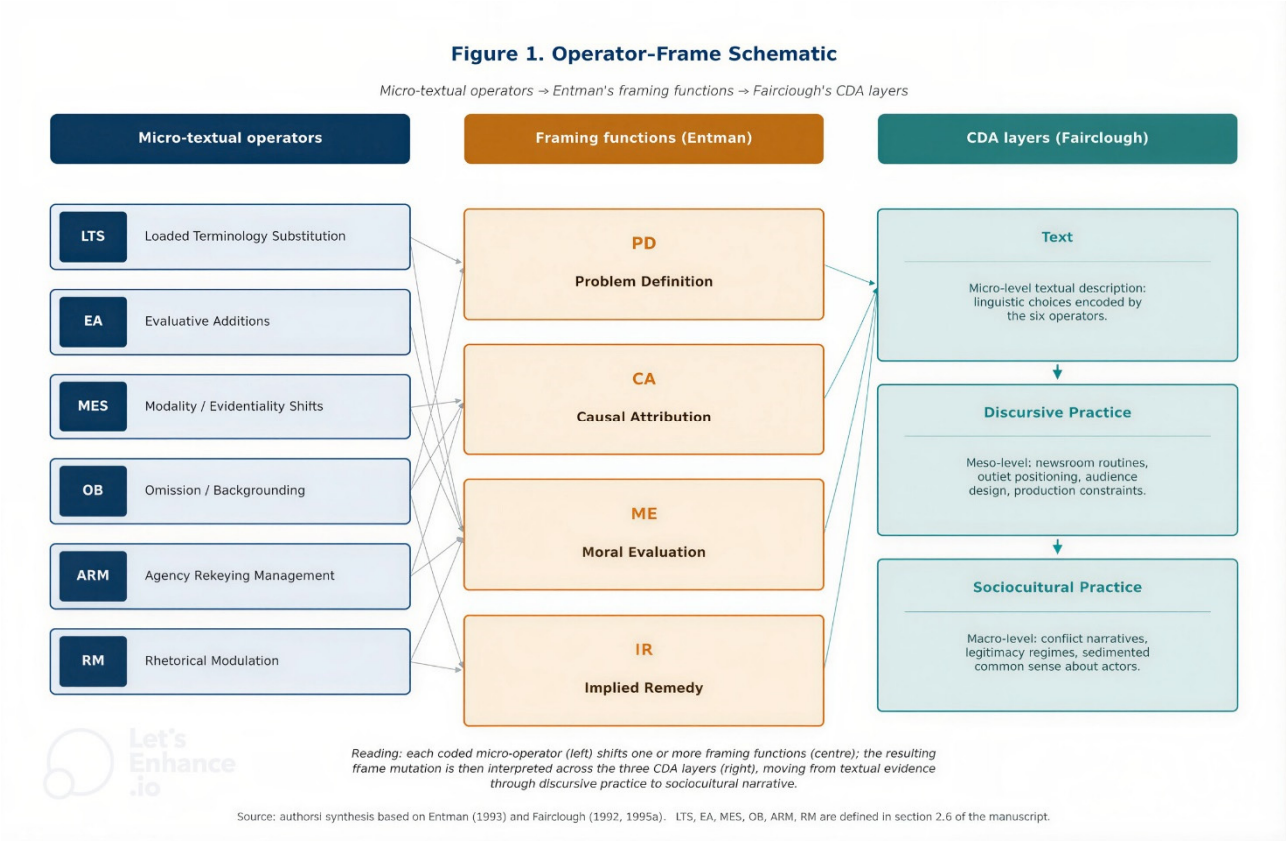


Figure 1. Operator–Frame Schematic: Micro-textual Operators → Framing Functions → CDA Layers

Note. Figure 1 visualises the analytical chain of the study. Each of the six micro-textual operators in the locked codebook (LTS, EA, MES, OB, ARM, RM) is mapped onto one or more of Entman's (1993) four framing functions (problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, implied remedy). The right-hand column situates these textual movements within Fairclough's (1992, 1995a) three-dimensional CDA, so that interpretive claims can be traced from the textual layer through discursive practice to sociocultural practice. The figure is referenced from sections 2.6 and 2.7.

3. Results

Results are reported in three steps: **(A)** the corpus and its conflict/political implications, **(B)** the distribution of operator families at the case level, and **(C)** three mini-vignettes that demonstrate frame mutation through close and evidence-based reading. Descriptive counts are presented as within-corpus indicators only.

Table 2. Corpus profile with domain, source-target outlets, year, and political implication (n = 7)

Case	Domain	ST -> TT (source -> target outlet)	Year	Conflict/political implication (frame pressure)
S1	Israel-Palestine conflict	Newsweek-to-Al-Quds	2016	Conflict naming; moral evaluation of violence (*'suicide' vs 'martyrdom'*); occupation framing
S2	State politics / elections (Algeria)	U.S. Department of State-to- Algérie Presse Service (APS)	2014	Electoral legitimacy discursive markers; endorsement; certainty rekeying of transparency claims
S3	Diplomacy / U.S.-Turkey relations	The New York Times-to-Al-Wafd	2019	Leader evaluation and diplomatic payoff framing; omission and evaluative steering
S4	Sacred-site naming / toponymy (Palestine / Hamas-PLO dynamics)	The Washington Post-to-Al-Raay	1992	Toponymy contestation (*'Temple Mount' -> 'al-Aqsa'*) embedded in conflict narration
S5	Egyptian politics / media control	The New York Times-to-Al-Ahram	2014	Leader legitimation via evaluative modulation; regime consolidation framed as popular mandate
S6	Regeni case / Egypt-Italy crisis	Geopolitical Monitor-to-Al-Wafd	2016	Accountability management via nominalization; causal framing of political violence
S7	Syrian conflict / opposition legitimacy	The Daily Beast-to-Orient Net	2015	Delegitimation/legitimation via modality shifts; rhetorical rekeying

As shown in Table 2, the Corpus profile with domain, source-target outlets, year, and political implications

Table 3. Operator families, operational definitions, and distribution (case-level presence; n = 7)

Operator	Operational definition (binary per segment; counted once per case)	Cases with operator (n)	Descriptive %
LTS	Ideologically consequential lexical relabeling: loaded substitution, intensity shift, contested naming/toponymy	4	57.1%
EA	TT-only evaluative content: praise/pejoratives, appraisal beyond ST proposition	5	71.4%
MES	Epistemic rekeying: hedging/strengthening, quantifier change, claim↔fact shift, evidentiality adjustment	2	28.6%
OB	ST salient content omitted/backgrounded in TT, not only shortened	1	14.3%
ARM	Responsibility defocusing by grammar: nominalization/passive/actor deletion	1	14.3%
RM	Rhetorical steering: intensification/attenuation, insinuation, reframed interrogatives	6	85.7%

Tables 1 and 2, including the descriptive distribution counts and percentages, are derived from the fixed seven-pair dataset and the case-level counting rule specified in the audit pack. The numerical layer is descriptive only and should not be read as inferential.

Two conclusions can be formulated from Table 2 with appropriate caution. First, RM and EA appear in most cases. This indicates that secondary gatekeeping in this corpus frequently operates through rhetorical steering and inserted evaluation (Valdeón, 2021; Boéri and Fattah, 2020; Ping and Wang, 2025). These operations can mutate moral evaluation while leaving the surface propositional content partially intact, which makes them particularly difficult to detect in downstream frame analysis that assumes monolingual equivalence (Pan and Liao, 2021; Boéri and Fattah, 2020; Otmakhova *et al*., 2024). Second, OB and ARM appear rarely but remain structurally high-leverage. They directly recalibrate responsibility distribution and causal coherence, which are central to framing functions in conflict and political reporting (Entman, 1993; Simonsen, 2024).

Notably, the coding also registers negative cases, which are analytically important in a micro-corpus because they discipline interpretation (Johnson *et al.*, 2020; Rahimi and Khatooni, 2024). Several aligned segments show baseline transfer with no operator activated. For example, the no-operator transfer is reflected in the segment in S2, that continues the diplomatic quote without additional appraisal, and early aligned segments in S3, that retain the ST letter content without evaluative amplification. Such baseline alignment indicates that operator activation is not mechanically inevitable; it clusters around specific frame-sensitive pressure points (naming, legitimacy, accountability) rather than appearing as a diffuse and uniform distortion (Pan and Liao, 2021; Boéri and Fattah, 2020; Valdeón, 2021).

Table 4. Stability audit summary (N = 15 aligned segments; 90 operator-cells)

Statistic	Value
Observed agreement	96.7% (87/90)
Cohen's κ (pooled)	0.911
Krippendorff's α (pooled, nominal)	0.911
PABAK	0.933
Disagreements	Confined to LTS, MES, RM; resolved via adjudication log

The audit indicates high coding stability. Consequently, the interpretive claims in the vignettes below rest on validated operator identification rather than on impressionistic reading alone.

3.1 Vignette 1 on Conflict Naming and Moral Evaluation Shifts

Conflict reporting is frequently adjudicated at the level of naming. In S1, Israel-Palestine case, the ST includes the phrase *"the Palestinian suicide operations."* The TT renders this as *"العمليات الاستشهادية الفلسطينية"* (literally, *"Palestinian martyrdom operations"*). This substitution is coded as LTS because it alters legitimating connotations: *"suicide operations"* in English is compatible with a delegitimizing terrorism frame, while *"martyrdom operations"* in Arabic is compatible with valorization and sacrifice within a culturally resonant repertoire.

Micro-excerpt (S1; LTS + EA + RM):

ST: *"the Palestinian suicide operations"*
TT: *"العمليات الاستشهادية الفلسطينية"*

ST: *"troops' entering cities in the West Bank"*
TT: *"اجتياح قوات الاحتلال"* (literally, *"storming/invading occupation forces"*)

Frame-function mapping clarifies why such lexical shifts are not only translation choices. Moral evaluation is directly mutated. Violence is reframed toward heroic sacrifice. Problem definition is also mutated. *"Entering cities"* can be processed as neutral movement within a security frame, whereas *"storming/invading occupation forces"* defines the

situation as an occupation-violence problem. Causal attribution is indirectly altered because the moral framing of violence conditions what causal narratives are plausible, such as security response vs occupation resistance. Implied remedy is rekeyed through an occupation frame. This invites solutions aligned with resistance/withdrawal rather than policing/security.

Fairclough's CDA approach helps explain how these micro-operations plausibly function as meso-level gatekeeping under audience design. Conflict-adjacent Arabic discourse contains culturally stabilized repertoires for naming violence and military actors. Outlets can draw on these repertoires to generate affective and ideological alignment with target publics. At the macro level, naming is an arena of conflict politics: toponymy and violence labeling are historically and ideologically contested, and therefore they become predictable pressure points for frame mutation.

3.2 Vignette 2 on Legitimacy Through Modality and Evidentiality Mutation

Legitimacy is not negotiated only through labels. It is negotiated through epistemic stance: what is presented as confirmed fact, normative hope, contested allegation, or public consensus. In S2, the Algerian elections case, the ST states: *"We look forward to elections that are transparent and in line with international standards."* The TT converts this anticipatory stance into an assurance: *"إننا مرتاحون لكون الانتخابات ... تجري في إطار الشفافية"* (roughly: *"we are satisfied/comfortable that the elections ... are being conducted transparently"*). This is coded as MES because epistemic stance shifts from expectation to apparent confirmation.

Micro-excerpt (S2; MES):

ST: *"We look forward to elections that are transparent..."*
TT: "إننا مرتاحون لكون الانتخابات ... تجري في إطار الشفافية."

The framing consequences are direct. In Entman's terms, the moral evaluation function shifts from conditional endorsement. In S2's ST, transparent elections that are desired shifts toward affirming legitimacy where electoral transparency is treated as present. The implied remedy function is muted. The ST's anticipatory stance leaves room for monitoring and potential critique, whereas the TT's certainty suggests that no corrective action is needed. Consequently, the transediting/translation operates as a legitimacy-stabilizing gate. It filters out uncertainty in a way that can be consequential for audiences' interpretation of electoral credibility.

A parallel MES logic appears in S7, the Syrian conflict interview discourse case. The ST asks: *"Why do many people call you a dictator?"* The TT downgrades both quantifier and evidential footing: "**البعض يدعي ... هل هذا الكلام صحيح**" (literally, *"some claim ... is this true?"*). The shift entails RM because the interrogative is reframed to solicit denial rather than explanation of a widely circulating accusation.

Micro-excerpt (S7; MES + RM):

ST: *"Why do many people call you a dictator?"*
TT: *"البعض يدعي ... هل هذا الكلام صحيح"*

Here, the problem definition is rekeyed. The ST constructs a broad legitimacy crisis (*"many people call you"*) that demands explanation, while the TT constructs a limited allegation that can be dismissed or corrected. The moral evaluation function is softened by narrowing the scale of condemnation. The implied remedy function shifts as well. The ST implies that the interviewee should address widespread dissent. The TT implies that the interviewee should rebut a claim. At meso level, these MES and RM operations are consistent with gatekeeping under institutional alignment and audience design, where legitimacy protection can be achieved by downgrading evidential force rather than by deleting the topic outright.

3.3 Vignette 3 on Accountability Through Omission and Agency Management

Accountability in conflict-adjacent journalism is often engineered through what is not said and through how agency is grammatically distributed. In S3, the U.S.-Turkey relations case, the ST states: *"Mr. Erdogan ignored the warning and sent troops across the border on Oct. 9."* The TT omits this segment, which is a NULL match, coded as OB.

Micro-excerpt (S3; OB):

ST: *"Mr. Erdogan ignored the warning and sent troops across the border on Oct. 9."*
TT: [NULL - omitted]

This omission mutates causal attribution. The ST provides a causal chain, which involves warning, defiance, and action. This chain assigns responsibility to an agent's choice. By deleting the action, the TT reduces the reader's textual access to a responsibility frame and weakens the conditions for moral evaluation of militarized escalation. It also changes

problem definition. Without the cross-border incursion, the discursive center of gravity can shift away from accountability for violence and toward alternative evaluative themes. In a framing model, OB is therefore a gatekeeping move that alters what causal and moral readings are linguistically available in the target public sphere.

In S6, the Regeni case, accountability management proceeds through grammatical structure. The ST states that the victim *"Giulio has been killed,"* realized as a verbal event. The TT uses nominalization (*"لمقتل ريجيني"*, literally, *"the murder of Regeni"*). This shifted the event into an abstract noun phrase, and this is, thus, coded as ARM.

Micro-excerpt (S6; ARM):

ST: *"Giulio has been killed"*
TT: *"لمقتل ريجيني"*

Nominalization can package violence into a referent that reduces explicit agency and diminishes actor visibility (Machin and Mayr, 2023; Golshaie and Hosseini, 2022). In framing terms, ARM affects causal attribution by making "who did what" less legible, and it can soften moral evaluation through distancing (Fairclough, 1995a; Machin and Mayr, 2023). Analytically, these accountability operators are low-frequency but high-leverage. Even a single omission or agency defocusing can remove the textual prerequisites for blame assignment (Boukes, 2022; Simonsen, 2024). Meso-level interpretation frames this as gatekeeping under structural constraints, such as legal risk, diplomatic sensitivity, and domestic alignment (Björkenfeldt, 2025), while macro-level explanation positions responsibility attribution as a core battleground in conflict narratives (Boukes, 2022; Simonsen, 2024).

4. Discussion: The Three-Dimensional CDA Synthesis of Frame Mutation Across Cases

Across the analyzed vignettes, the text-level patterning shows that translational gatekeeping operates through a compact set of recurrent micro-operations that directly gravitate to framing functions. Lexical relabeling and toponymic choices (LTS) re-define the problem and pre-structure moral evaluation by selecting ideologically charged category labels. Evaluative additions and rhetorical modulation (EA, RM) intensify appraisal and polarization markers. These discursive mutations can, henceforth, thicken the interpretive horizon offered to the target reader (Entman, 1993; Fairclough, 1995a; Martin and White, 2005).

However, modality and evidentiality recalibration (MES) shifts epistemic status from claim to near-fact or from prevalence to minority assertion. These re-keys causal attribution and legitimizes particular inferences as common sense rather than contestable interpretation (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1998). Omission/backgrounding and agency rekeying management (OB, ARM) restructure accountability by deleting, nominalizing, or defocusing actors and actions. These mutations can produce an informational texture in which "who did what" becomes less legible, and the prerequisites for blame assignment are selectively weakened (Fairclough, 1992; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001).

At the level of discursive practice, these micro-operators are not treated as free stylistic variation but as routinised transediting moves embedded in newswork constraints, outlet positioning, and audience design, meaning that translation functions as a gate-within-gate architecture rather than a neutral transmission (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009; Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009). The alignment of LTS and EA with conflict naming and leader evaluation suggests a systematic recalibration of legitimacy regimes that travels with institutional stance, while MES and OB/ARM align with risk-sensitive zones of attribution and evidentiality where diplomatic, legal, or reputational pressures incentivize hedging, deflection, or selective deletion (Fairclough, 1995b; Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

At the sociocultural level, the resulting frame mutations reproduce or contest sedimented conflict narratives and ideological polarities by normalizing particular moral and causal logics as the available reading for transnational publics. These mutations, thus, can extend framing analysis beyond monolingual public spheres and specifying translation as a consequential core of discursive power (Entman, 1993; van Dijk, 1998; Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009).

5. Conclusion

Across a fixed micro-corpus of seven English-Arabic ST-TT pairs segmented into 15 aligned units, this study demonstrates that journalistic transediting/translation can function as secondary gatekeeping in transnational conflict-adjacent and political journalism. The mechanism finding is that frame mutation is achieved through identifiable micro-operators that alter Entman's framing functions. Rhetorical modulation (RM) and evaluative additions (EA) were the most recurrent operator families. This suggests that secondary gatekeeping frequently operates through subtle evaluative steering rather than through overt falsification or wholesale content replacement.

In relation to the hypotheses, H1 is supported within the corpus. Patterned moral re-keying via LTS, EA, and RM recurs across conflict-adjacent domains. It systematically reconfigures moral evaluation and problem definition. H2 is supported more cautiously. Accountability engineering appears in fewer cases but performs strong framing work by

restructuring causal attribution and responsibility. This illustrates that some decisions, in gatekeeping, are rare but decisive.

The study contributes to journalism and mass communication in two ways. Conceptually, it extends framing research beyond monolingual public spheres by specifying transediting/translation as a locus of framing power. Frames do not only travel. They can be re-manufactured at a translational gate that is structurally embedded in journalistic routines (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009; Valdeón, 2020). Methodologically, it demonstrates that a micro-corpus can yield explanatory insight when it is treated as a mechanism laboratory. Full bilingual alignment, explicit operator rules, and a reliability-audited coding protocol support auditability and disciplined interpretation in a way that larger descriptive corpora do not automatically guarantee (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Hayes and Krippendorff, 2007).

A limitation is intrinsic to the design. That is, the corpus is intentionally small and the analysis is based on published text pairs rather than ethnographic access to newsroom workflows. Accordingly, the study does not claim that the observed operators represent the frequency of such practices in a wider population, nor does it claim direct evidence about practitioner intentions. It claims, instead, that the operator-frame links demonstrated here are plausible and portable mechanisms that can be tested, challenged, or refined in larger multilingual datasets and in production studies. In this sense, the seven-pair micro-corpus is not intended to support frequency claims; its function is to make the mechanism sufficiently explicit and reproducible that scale-up studies can inherit the operator codebook, the alignment protocol, and the frame-function mapping without conceptual retooling.

Future research can test the portability of the operator-frame mechanism model with larger corpora, additional language pairs, and ethnographic access to newsroom workflows. At scale, the same six-operator grid can be adapted into a semi-automated coding pipeline, for example by combining aligned bilingual segmentation with annotation schemes suitable for computational frame analysis (Otmakhova et al., 2024), which would allow the mechanism claim to be tested across thousands of ST-TT pairs rather than a purposive sample. The approach is also portable to other language pairs in which conflict labelling, sacralised toponymy, and legitimacy vocabulary carry strong ideological weight, such as English-Russian, English-Persian, or English-Mandarin transediting (Ping and Wang, 2025; Zeng and Li, 2025), and it can be combined with production-side methods, including newsroom observation and editor interviews, to triangulate textual evidence with the professional routines that generate it. Nonetheless, the present study shows how transnational conflict and political frames can be systematically rekeyed in transediting/translation in ways that are traceable, theoretically integrated, and journal-relevant.

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Author contributions

The corresponding author conducted the study and drafted the manuscript. Prof. Bouziane and Prof. Zakhir provided academic guidance and scholarly support throughout the development of the study and the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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