

## Framing the Coverage of the Lebanon Conflict: An Entman Framing Analysis of AP News, Reuters, and The Guardian's Reporting on Israeli Attacks on Beirut

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### Abstract

Reporting on Israeli attacks on Beirut reveals divergent media framings of the Israel–Hezbollah conflict, demonstrating that media actively shape public perceptions rather than merely transmitting information. This study compares the framing of Israeli attacks on Beirut in AP News, Reuters, and The Guardian using Robert Entman's framing analysis, focusing on problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, thematically similar news articles published within comparable timeframes are analyzed to identify framing differences across outlets. The findings show that AP News adopts a security-oriented framing that presents Hezbollah as the main threat and legitimizes Israeli military actions, while Reuters offers a more balanced perspective by situating the attacks within concerns over escalation and regional stability. Conversely, The Guardian emphasizes humanitarian impacts, civilian casualties, and the escalation of violence. These differences indicate that media framing shapes the positioning of conflict actors, the construction of military legitimacy, and implied resolutions, confirming the media's role as discursive actors in international conflict narratives.

**Keywords:** *Media framing, Israel–Hezbollah conflict, news, framing analysis*

## INTRODUCTION

The conflict between Israel and Lebanon has long been a critical issue in the Middle East and continues to attract significant international attention (Umam & Basid, 2025). Since the late twentieth century, Israel has conducted a series of major military operations against Lebanon, shaping a prolonged and volatile pattern of confrontation. The first large-scale invasion occurred in 1978 during the South Lebanon Conflict, followed by a much broader offensive in 1982 that reached Beirut and aimed to expel the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This invasion resulted in Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon until its withdrawal in 2000 (Wikipedia, 2024). These episodes laid the groundwork for the emergence of Hezbollah as a central military and political actor in Lebanon and as Israel's primary security concern along its northern border.

During the 1990s, Israel launched Operation Accountability in 1993 and Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996, both justified as responses to intensified Hezbollah rocket attacks. These operations further consolidated Hezbollah's position in the Lebanon-Israel conflict. The most significant escalation occurred during the 2006 Lebanon War, triggered by Hezbollah's capture of two Israeli soldiers and escalating into a 34-day war that resulted in over a thousand deaths and extensive economic damage to Lebanon (Zafar et al., 2025). The long-term consequences of this war were exacerbated by Lebanon's subsequent economic collapse, institutional fragility, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2020 Beirut port explosion, leaving the country particularly vulnerable to renewed conflict (Maila et al., 2025).

Tensions escalated once again in September 2024 when Israel launched renewed military operations in Lebanon amid regional instability linked to the Israel-Gaza war. These attacks targeted Hezbollah and other armed groups in Beirut and southern Lebanon (Putri et al., 2025). The latest Israeli airstrikes on Beirut marked a new phase in the conflict, resulting in civilian casualties,

infrastructure damage, and heightened international concern over the risk of a broader regional war. Against the backdrop of ongoing violence in Gaza, these developments reinforced fears of conflict spillover and further destabilization in the Middle East.

As with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which has dominated global media coverage for decades, the renewed escalation in Lebanon has once again become a focal point of international news (Alfriandi & Zuhriah, 2024). Israeli military actions are frequently framed as responses to attacks by Palestinian-affiliated or Hezbollah-linked armed groups operating from Lebanese territory. From this perspective, Israel’s operations are often interpreted as part of a broader strategy to maintain military deterrence and prevent Hezbollah from expanding its support for Palestinian resistance movements (Umam & Basid, 2025). Hezbollah itself occupies a complex position as both an armed organization and a political actor represented in the Lebanese parliament, while also providing social services to segments of the Shiite community. From Israel’s security standpoint, Hezbollah has consistently been framed as a major threat due to its growing arsenal and its expanding regional influence, particularly in Syria (Ayu, 2024).

Beyond its military dimension, the recurring escalation between Israel, Hezbollah, and Palestinian-affiliated groups has also generated intense competition over narrative control at the international level. In this context, media coverage plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding of the conflict. News reporting does not merely reflect events but actively constructs meanings through selective emphasis, omission, and interpretation. Each media outlet operates within specific political, ideological, and institutional frameworks that influence how conflicts are represented and how responsibility, legitimacy, and victimhood are assigned (Paramitha & Karim, 2022; Ramadhana et al., 2025).

Media framing functions as a double-edged sword. While claims of “balanced” or “neutral” reporting are commonly invoked as markers of journalistic

objectivity (Tuchman, 1972), critical media studies have shown that balance may operate as a strategic framing practice that obscures ideological positions by treating unequal power relations as equivalent (Bennett, 1990). In international conflict reporting, appeals to balance can normalize dominant security discourses by privileging official and state-centered perspectives while marginalizing humanitarian concerns (Wolfsfeld, 2004). Accordingly, this study does not treat Reuters' relatively balanced coverage as genuine neutrality, but rather as an institutional framing strategy grounded in elite source symmetry, which reproduces particular geopolitical alignments by confining contestation within the boundaries of official authority rather than fundamentally challenging dominant security narratives. Conversely, selective or biased framing may intensify polarization, legitimize violence, and shape foreign policy decisions (Ninan et al., 2022). Framing orientations are influenced by geographical proximity, historical relations, and ideological alignment (Pratiwi et al., 2025), with media closer to Palestine or Lebanon often portraying Israeli actions as aggression or resistance to occupation, while many Western outlets frame them as security or counterterrorism measures, frequently downplaying humanitarian impacts on civilians.

To examine these dynamics, this study employs Robert Entman's framing theory, which views the media as active agents in constructing social reality through selective emphasis. Entman's four framing elements; problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation are applied through a consistent analytical procedure across AP News, Reuters, and The Guardian to ensure rigor and comparability despite differences in journalistic styles and institutional norms. To address ideological power relations and geopolitical interests in international conflict reporting, the analysis is complemented by contextual examination of source selection, discursive authority, and the positioning of security-oriented versus humanitarian perspectives. Using a uniform

sequential coding scheme, each text is analyzed to identify dominant framing patterns, with overlapping or ambiguous elements classified according to their primary discursive function, allowing the study to capture framing processes in relation to broader power asymmetries and geopolitical alignments (Entman, 1993, 2007).

In addition, this study examines source selection and quotation patterns as key mechanisms of framing, based on the expectation that discursive authority is distributed in line with each outlet's dominant framing orientation. Security-oriented coverage is expected to prioritize Israeli political and military officials as primary definers of threats and legitimate responses, institutional framing to rely on a limited range of elite sources across opposing actors, and humanitarian-oriented framing to foreground civilian and humanitarian voices. By analyzing not only which actors are quoted but also whose interpretations organize the narrative, this study treats source hierarchy as central to the construction of legitimacy, responsibility, and acceptable responses in conflict reporting..

Previous studies on media coverage of conflicts in Lebanon and the broader Middle East consistently demonstrate that news framing is far from neutral. Research by Umam & Basid (2025), Alfriandi and Zuhriah (2024), Zawawi et al. (2024), and Ramadhana et al. (2025) shows that media framing is deeply influenced by ideological positions, political interests, and geopolitical affiliations. These studies reveal how media narratives construct images of aggressors and victims, while simultaneously legitimizing or delegitimizing military actions. Beyond conflict reporting, studies by Anggoro et al. (2023) and Sunaryanto et al. (2022) further confirm that editorial orientation plays a decisive role in shaping public opinion through news construction.

Other strands of research emphasize the broader implications of the Israel–Hezbollah conflict for regional and human security. Widyoseno (2024) highlights the limited effectiveness of UNIFIL in mitigating tensions between Israel and

Hezbollah, while Zafar et al. (2025) argue that Iran's support for Hezbollah has strengthened the group's military capacity at the expense of Lebanon's sovereignty and stability. Meanwhile, studies by Wulandari & Nurdin (2025), Putri et al. (2025), and McClearn & Talhouk (2023) draw attention to the disproportionate impact of the conflict on civilians, particularly women and refugees, who face physical, psychological, and even digital forms of violence amid weak state protection.

Building on this body of literature, the present study shares a common focus on media representations of the Lebanon conflict but differs in its more specific analytical scope. While previous studies have examined regional, Arab, or Indonesian media, this research focuses on three influential international outlets AP News, Reuters, and *The Guardian* and applies Robert Entman's framing model to analyze their coverage of Israeli attacks on Beirut. By systematically examining how these media define problems, diagnose causes, construct moral judgments, and propose solutions, this study aims to reveal differences in framing orientations across outlets by explicitly situating framing elements within ideological and power relations that shape legitimacy, authority, and responsibility in conflict reporting. The analysis moves beyond descriptive mapping to highlight how the dominance of state and military actors, alongside the marginalization of civilian voices, structures the meanings of conflict produced by each outlet

Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the understanding of how international media framing shapes socio-political interpretations of armed conflict. By comparing the framing strategies of AP News, Reuters, and *The Guardian*, this study underscores that the media do not merely report events but actively participate in constructing discourses of security, legitimacy, and humanitarian concern within the Israel-Lebanon conflict.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method based on close textual analysis to examine how the Israeli attack on Beirut was framed by AP News, Reuters, and The Guardian, each operating within distinct institutional logics and editorial routines (Ramdhan, 2021). Differences in framing are interpreted in relation to documented journalistic models and audience orientations such as AP News' role as a U.S.-based wire service reliant on official security sources, Reuters' institutional emphasis on elite-source symmetry for global audiences, and The Guardian's editorial tradition of critical and humanitarian engagement while treating these factors as contextual conditions rather than deterministic explanations. The analysis focuses on articles published within a short, event-centered timeframe to ensure comparability of early-stage framing within a shared news cycle; however, this temporal delimitation necessarily captures initial framing orientations and may obscure subsequent reframing, contestation, or narrative stabilization processes that typically emerge over longer coverage cycles in protracted conflicts.

Robert Entman's framing theory underpins the analysis, using four analytical elements: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation to examine how each outlet selects, emphasizes, and interprets aspects of the attack. Primary data consist of news reports published in November 2025, capturing an early phase of escalation following the Israeli airstrike in Beirut. Focusing on an identical temporal window ensures comparability across outlets despite differences in editorial mandates and audience orientation. Data were collected through close reading and classified according to Entman's framing elements, supported by translation tools to ensure accuracy.

Secondary data include scholarly works on framing theory, media studies, and international conflict. Data analysis followed the stages proposed by Miles and

Huberman: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to identify dominant framing patterns and comparative similarities and differences across the three outlets, while acknowledging that the analysis captures initial framing orientations rather than long-term narrative shifts or audience reception (Miles et al., 2018).

## **RESULT & DISCUSSION**

Reporting by AP News, Reuters, and *The Guardian* focused on the Israeli airstrike in southern Beirut that killed senior Hezbollah military official Haytham (Ali) Tabbatai. The attack occurred nearly a year after the Israel–Hezbollah ceasefire and marked a renewed escalation amid fragile regional stability. Israel framed the strike as a preventive measure to stop Hezbollah from rebuilding its military capacity, while Lebanon and Hezbollah regarded it as a violation of the ceasefire that caused civilian casualties and infrastructure damage. This incident intensified concerns over conflict escalation and highlighted the vulnerability of Lebanon’s security environment.

### **AP News Framing**

AP News constructs its coverage through selective emphasis that closely aligns with Robert Entman’s framing elements, shaping how audiences interpret the Israeli attack on Beirut and the broader Israel–Hezbollah conflict (Entman, 1993; Siregar & Qurniawati, 2022). Through its choice of sources, diction, and narrative focus, AP News prioritizes a security-oriented interpretation that centers on threat prevention and military necessity, while alternative political or humanitarian perspectives remain secondary.

### **Defining Problems**

AP News defines the central problem as a security threat arising from Hezbollah’s potential military resurgence. The Israeli airstrike is framed as a preventive action aimed at stopping Hezbollah from rebuilding its military capabilities. This problem definition is clearly articulated through the following



report: *“Israel on Sunday struck Lebanon’s capital... saying it killed Hezbollah’s chief of staff Haytham Tabtabai and warning the Iran-backed militant group not to rearm and rebuild.”* (APNews, 2025)

By foregrounding Israel’s justification for the strike, AP News frames the incident primarily as a military and security issue rather than as a political, humanitarian, or diplomatic crisis. The emphasis on *“rearm and rebuild”* constructs Hezbollah’s military capacity as an imminent danger that requires immediate action. This framing is further reinforced by official Israeli statements that stress urgency and legitimacy: *“We will continue to act forcefully to prevent any threat to the residents of the north and the state of Israel.”* (APNews, 2025)

Consistent with Entman & Usher (2023), this problem definition frames Hezbollah as the primary source of threat, categorizes the situation as a military issue, and legitimizes Israel’s use of force as preventive action. This framing is reinforced by structural inequalities in media access, whereby state and military actors are afforded greater discursive authority than civilian or non-elite sources. The repeated use of securitizing language such as “threat,” “rearm and rebuild,” and “act forcefully,” largely drawn from Israeli official statements, amplifies state-centered security narratives while marginalizing civilian perspectives. Consequently, alternative problem definitions that emphasize ceasefire obligations, civilian harm, or diplomatic accountability receive limited visibility, demonstrating how unequal access to media discourse constrains framing possibilities in conflict reporting.

### **Diagnosing Causes**

In diagnosing the causes of escalation, AP News attributes responsibility primarily to Hezbollah’s efforts to restore and strengthen its military capacity, positioning Haytham Tabtabai as a central figure driving regional instability. This causal attribution is evident in the following statements:

*“Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Tabtabai of leading Hezbollah’s efforts to rearm.”*

*"Israel asserts that the group is trying to rebuild its military capabilities."* (APNews, 2025)

Through this framing, the cause of the conflict is located not in Israel's decision to launch the strike, but in Hezbollah's internal military activities. Readers are encouraged to interpret the Israeli attack as a reaction to Hezbollah's actions rather than as an act of aggression initiated by Israel. As Salman et al. (2023) note, causal diagnosis directs responsibility and blame. In this case, AP News attributes escalation primarily to Hezbollah by privileging Israeli political and military sources, while civilian, non-elite, and humanitarian voices remain largely absent. This reflects structural inequalities in access to international media, where state actors hold greater discursive authority. Consequently, alternative explanations such as Lebanese domestic dynamics, civilian experiences of violence, or the broader geopolitical logic of Israel's military strategy are marginalized. This source-driven framing normalizes escalation as inevitable as long as Hezbollah continues its military consolidation, thereby narrowing the range of moral and interpretive judgments available to audiences.

### **Making Moral Judgment**

AP News constructs moral evaluations by presenting competing narratives from the involved actors, although greater discursive space is afforded to Israel's justification. From the Israeli perspective, the airstrike is framed as morally justified and necessary to protect national security: *"We will continue to act forcefully to prevent any threat..."* (APNews, 2025)

This narrative positions Israel's actions as defensive and ethically legitimate, emphasizing the moral obligation of the state to safeguard its citizens. Military force is thus framed not as aggression, but as a responsible act of deterrence and self-defense. In contrast, Lebanon and Hezbollah offer an opposing moral interpretation, framing the strike as an unlawful escalation and a violation of international commitments:

*"The strike... opens the door to an escalation of assaults all over Lebanon," and Lebanon's president accused Israel of "refusing to implement its end of the ceasefire agreement."* (APNews, 2025)

Israel is alternatively framed as undermining regional stability and violating ceasefire obligations, producing a dual moral framing within AP News' coverage. This positions Israel either as fulfilling a moral duty to counter security threats or as an illegitimate actor breaching legal and ethical norms. Such moral framing shapes the discursive construction of legitimacy, victimhood, and responsibility in international conflict reporting, thereby delimiting the range of audience interpretations concerning military deterrence and diplomatic intervention. More broadly, moral framing structures public and policy discourse by normalizing certain responses to violence while marginalizing others, reflecting a discursive potential rather than a directly measurable effect (Entman, 1993).

### **Treatment Recommendation**

AP News also presents divergent solutions proposed by the conflicting parties, reflecting their competing framings of the problem and its causes. From Israel's perspective, the appropriate solution lies in sustained military pressure and Hezbollah's disarmament: *"Israel and the United States have pressured Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah."* (APNews, 2025)

This recommendation frames the conflict as a security issue that can only be resolved through coercive measures, positioning disarmament as a prerequisite for stability. Conversely, the Lebanese government proposes a diplomatic solution based on international intervention: *"Lebanon's President called on the international community to 'intervene with strength and seriousness to stop the attacks.'"* (APNews, 2025)

This approach shifts responsibility for de-escalation onto international actors and frames Israeli military action as the primary obstacle to peace. Hezbollah, meanwhile, firmly rejects disarmament and frames armed resistance as essential for survival: *"They want to take our weapons. But our weapons will not be taken."*

(APNews, 2025). These competing treatment recommendations demonstrate framing competition, where proposed solutions are directly shaped by how problems and causes are defined (Entman, 2007). Through this coverage, AP News illustrates how media framing not only interprets events but also structures the range of acceptable and legitimate responses to the conflict.

### Reuters Framing

Reuters frames the Israeli airstrike in Beirut that killed senior Hezbollah official Ali (Haytham) Tabtabai through an institutional, security-oriented lens. Compared to AP News, Reuters draws on a broader range of elite sources, including Israeli officials, Hezbollah representatives, and the Lebanese government, creating an appearance of balance based on source diversity rather than normative neutrality. Within Entman's framing elements, the attack is contextualized as a consequence of ceasefire fragility and ongoing security threats, situating it within a wider regional dynamic rather than an isolated act of aggression. This institutional framing reflects journalistic routines that privilege official authority while leaving power asymmetries and humanitarian perspectives relatively underexamined.

### Defining Problem

Reuters frames the Israeli strike as part of a persistent security concern related to Hezbollah's military capacity and the risk of renewed escalation. The problem is defined not only as the killing of a Hezbollah official, but as a challenge to regional stability and the sustainability of a ceasefire reached a year earlier. This framing is evident in the following reports: *"Israel killed militant group Hezbollah's top military official in an airstrike... despite a U.S.-brokered truce a year ago."*

*"The strike... targeted Iran-backed Hezbollah's acting chief of staff, Ali Tabtabai."* (Reuters, 2025)

By emphasizing that the strike occurred despite a ceasefire, Reuters constructs a paradoxical situation in which formal agreements exist but fail to eliminate perceived threats. The use of terms such as *"militant group"* and *"Iran-backed"* positions Hezbollah as a transnational security actor rather than a purely

domestic Lebanese force. This lexical framing directs readers to interpret the conflict within a broader geopolitical context involving Iran and regional power dynamics. Consequently, the core problem is framed as the persistence of a military threat that undermines ceasefire stability and risks triggering further escalation.

### Diagnosing Causes

In diagnosing the causes of the escalation, Reuters primarily attributes responsibility to Hezbollah's internal military consolidation. Drawing heavily on Israeli official statements, the report frames the attack as a response to Hezbollah's efforts to restore its combat readiness:

*"Israel said Tabbai 'commanded most of Hezbollah's units and worked hard to restore them to readiness for war with Israel.'"*

*"Israel would not allow Hezbollah to rebuild its forces." (Reuters, 2025)*

Through this causal attribution, Tabbai is constructed as a key figure in Hezbollah's military revitalization, personalizing the source of the threat. Reuters thus presents Israel's action as reactive rather than initiatory. As Entman (1993) argues, diagnosing causes determines where responsibility is placed. In this case, Hezbollah's military ambitions are foregrounded as the trigger of tension, making Israeli military action appear rational and defensive. Alternative explanations, such as Israeli strategic interests or humanitarian considerations, are present but remain secondary.

### Making Moral Judgment

Reuters presents competing moral evaluations articulated by different actors. From the Israeli perspective, the strike is framed as morally justified and necessary for security: *"Israel would not allow Hezbollah to rebuild its forces." "Israel makes decisions independently." (Reuters, 2025)*

These statements frame Israel's actions as expressions of sovereign responsibility and legitimate self-defense, suggesting that pre-emptive action is preferable to waiting for threats to materialize. Conversely, Hezbollah constructs a moral narrative that portrays the strike as an unacceptable violation: *"Mahmoud Qmati*

*said Israel's action crossed a 'red line.' "The great jihadist commander... who had worked to confront Israeli enemy." (Reuters, 2025)*

Through this framing, Hezbollah presents Tabbai as a resistance figure and depicts Israel as an aggressor acting outside ethical boundaries. The Lebanese government reinforces this moral critique by invoking international law and ceasefire obligations. Israeli actions are described as:

*"Major breaches" against the ceasefire, with President Aoun urging the international community "to intervene to halt Israeli attacks." (Reuters, 2025)* This framing positions Israel as violating Lebanese sovereignty and international agreements. Reuters thus constructs a tripartite moral landscape in which Israel, Hezbollah, and Lebanon each assert competing claims of legitimacy, shaping readers' judgments about responsibility and wrongdoing (Entman, 2007).

### **Treatment Recommendation**

Reuters also highlights divergent solutions proposed by the actors, reflecting different understandings of the conflict's root causes. Israel promotes a security-based solution centered on disarmament and deterrence: *Netanyahu stated that Lebanon must "fulfill its obligation to disarm Hezbollah" and that "Israel would not allow Hezbollah to rebuild its forces." (Reuters, 2025)*

This recommendation assumes that Hezbollah's military capacity is the central problem and that stability depends on preventing rearmament through military and political pressure. In contrast, the Lebanese government proposes a diplomatic solution: *President Aoun called on the international community "to intervene to halt Israeli attacks." (Reuters, 2025)*

In this case, instability is attributed to Israeli aggression rather than Hezbollah's presence, making international intervention and de-escalation the preferred response. Hezbollah, meanwhile, advances a resistance-oriented approach that frames military force as essential for security and dignity. These competing recommendations illustrate framing competition, where proposed solutions depend heavily on how problems and causes are defined from the outset

(Entman, 2007). Reuters' framing thus demonstrates how media discourse not only interprets conflict events but also structures the range of legitimate responses available to audiences.

### ***The Guardian Framing***

Alongside AP News and Reuters, *The Guardian* reported the Israeli airstrike in Beirut that killed senior Hezbollah military official Haytham Ali Tabtabai. However, *The Guardian's* coverage reflects a more critical framing orientation by foregrounding escalation, civilian impact, and humanitarian consequences. Through Entman's framing elements, the outlet constructs the Israeli attack not merely as a security response but as a significant escalation with broader political and moral implications.

### **Defining Problems**

*The Guardian* defines the central problem as a dramatic escalation of conflict triggered by an Israeli attack targeting one of Hezbollah's highest-ranking military officials in a densely populated area of Beirut. This framing emphasizes both the scale of the attack and its immediate human cost:

*"Israel targeted one of Hezbollah's most senior military commanders ... dramatically escalating tensions."*

*"Haytham Ali Tabatabai, Hezbollah's chief of staff, was killed in the strike."*

*"The attack killed at least five people and wounded 28."*

*"Three missiles were fired at the building." (Guardian, 2025)*

Through these descriptions, the incident is framed as an Israeli offensive that not only eliminated a key military figure but also caused civilian casualties and intensified political-military tensions. Unlike security-oriented framings, *The Guardian* positions the attack as a turning point that risks opening a wider phase of conflict, particularly because it occurred in a civilian area. The emphasis on casualties and the use of force reinforces the perception that the attack carries serious humanitarian and escalation risks.

## Diagnosing Causes

In diagnosing the causes of escalation, *The Guardian* presents a layered and relational interpretation. The report highlights both Israel's intensifying airstrikes and Hezbollah's continued military activities, suggesting a two-way dynamic rather than a single source of responsibility. At the same time, Israeli actions are framed as responses to Hezbollah's efforts to rebuild its military capacity:

*"Israel has launched increasingly frequent airstrikes in southern Lebanon this month."*

*"Intended to thwart a military revival by Hezbollah."*

*"The IDF attacked the Hezbollah chief of staff, who had been leading the terrorist organisation's buildup and rearmament."* (Guardian, 2025)

This framing implies that Israel has escalated military operations as a preventive strategy against Hezbollah's resurgence. For some readers, however, the emphasis on repeated Israeli airstrikes may position Israel as the actor initiating escalation.

*The Guardian* further contextualizes the attack by detailing Tabtabai's regional role: Tabtabai *"had been leading the terrorist organisation's buildup and rearmament," "led elite Hezbollah fighters in support of Bashar al-Assad in Syria," "is thought to have tutored Houthi forces in Yemen."* (Guardian, 2025)

By highlighting his involvement in Syria and Yemen, *The Guardian* frames Tabtabai as part of a broader pro-Iranian regional military network. This portrayal reinforces the perception that Hezbollah represents a transnational threat, thereby providing a strategic context for Israel's actions. As Entman & Usher (2023) note, diagnosing causes involves determining responsibility through selective emphasis. While *The Guardian* acknowledges a reciprocal escalation dynamic, the dominant framing suggests that Israel's actions were justified by Hezbollah's military expansion, even as they intensified regional instability.



## Making Moral Judgment

*The Guardian* presents competing moral narratives that frame the conflict as a struggle over legitimacy rather than merely a military confrontation. From the Israeli perspective, the attack is framed as a necessary act to ensure national security: *"We will continue to fight 'terrorism' on several fronts."* *"Do whatever is necessary to prevent Hezbollah from reestablishing its ability to threaten us."* (Guardian, 2025)

These statements frame Israeli actions as legitimate, preventive, and morally justified responses to a perceived terrorist threat. By invoking counterterrorism discourse, Israel portrays the strike as defensive rather than aggressive. In contrast, Hezbollah constructs a sharply critical moral evaluation, depicting the attack as unethical and unlawful: *"A treacherous Israeli attack on the Haret Hreik area."* (Guardian, 2025). The term *"treacherous"* emphasizes moral condemnation and underscores the civilian nature of the targeted area. Through this framing, Hezbollah seeks to portray Israel as acting immorally and in violation of ethical norms of warfare. *The Guardian* reinforces this moral critique by highlighting visual evidence of civilian harm: *"Videos showed damaged buildings in the densely populated Haret Hreik area."* (Guardian, 2025)

The inclusion of visual damage functions as moral amplification, directing readers' attention to humanitarian consequences rather than solely military objectives. This framing positions civilian suffering as central to the moral evaluation of the attack.

## Treatment Recommendation

In terms of solutions, *The Guardian* highlights contrasting approaches proposed by different actors. Israel frames continued military action as the primary means of addressing the Hezbollah threat: *"Israel is determined to act to achieve its objectives everywhere and at all times."* *"Continue to do whatever is necessary."* (Guardian, 2025)

This recommendation emphasizes sustained offensive operations over diplomatic engagement, suggesting that security objectives justify ongoing military pressure. Conversely, the Lebanese government promotes a diplomatic and humanitarian-oriented solution: *“Intervene firmly and seriously to stop the attacks on Lebanon and its people.”* (Guardian, 2025)

Lebanon’s stance frames Israeli actions as the root of instability, prioritizing civilian protection and international intervention to halt aggression. This approach reflects a belief that de-escalation depends on restraining Israeli military activity rather than disarming Hezbollah.

*The Guardian* also includes analytical perspectives that underscore the risk of wider conflict: *“The immediate flash point was now in Lebanon, not Gaza.”* *“A dramatic escalation against Hezbollah was ‘more likely than not.’”* (Guardian, 2025)

These assessments generate a sense of urgency and encourage international vigilance. By emphasizing the likelihood of escalation, *The Guardian* frames the situation as requiring global attention and potential intervention to prevent a broader regional war. In line with Entman's framework (2007), The proposed solutions reflect how the problem and its causes are defined, reinforcing *The Guardian’s* critical orientation toward Israeli military escalation and its humanitarian consequences.

<b>Framing Element (Entman)</b>	<b>AP News</b>	<b>Reuters</b>	<b>The Guardian</b>
<b>Defining Problems</b>	Problems are defined as threats to security from Hezbollah, which has the potential to strengthen its military, so that Israeli attack framed as preventive measures which is valid and oriented towards national security.	Problem understood As a threat Hezbollah's continued threat to regional stability risks triggering an escalation of conflict, particularly because the attack occurred even though the ceasefire is still in effect	The problem is defined as an escalation of conflict due to Israeli attacks that cause casualties and increase political-military tensions and the threat of a humanitarian crisis in the region.
<b>Diagnosing Causes</b>	Tension is seen as a result of Hezbollah's efforts, via Haytham Tabtabai, for rebuild its military strength, so that the conflict understood as Israel's response to the threat.	The causes of escalation are framed as stemming from Hezbollah's military consolidation and preparation, which are considered threats to Israel's security.	Escalation is understood as the result of two-way dynamics between Israeli attacks and Hezbollah's military strengthening, with emphasis on Israel's actions being triggered by Hezbollah's activities.
<b>Making Moral Judgement</b>	Israel justifies the attacks as threat prevention, while Lebanon and Hezbollah view them as violations of the ceasefire.	Israel is positioned as morally justified in self-defense, while Hezbollah and Lebanon regard the Israeli attacks as violations of law and sovereignty.	Israel frames the attacks as counterterrorism, while Hezbollah considers them immoral by highlighting their humanitarian impact.
<b>Treatment Recommendation</b>	Israel calls for military pressure and the disarmament of Hezbollah; Lebanon seeks international intervention, while Hezbollah chooses to continue armed resistance.	Israel emphasizes preventive actions and Hezbollah's disarmament; Lebanon proposes international pressure to halt Israeli attacks, and Hezbollah maintains military resistance.	Israel recommends continued military operations; Lebanon emphasizes international diplomacy, and the media highlight the risk of escalation that requires global vigilance.
<b>Overall Framing Orientation</b>	Pro-Israeli security	Neutral-security	Critical of Israel

Table (1) Framing Summary

Overall, the three media outlets frame the Israel-Hezbollah conflict within a security paradigm, recognizing military actors as central to the escalation dynamics. Hezbollah is consistently constructed as a key actor linked to military capacity,

while the Israeli attack is treated as a pivotal event triggering regional responses. All outlets also present competing narratives among Israeli actors, Hezbollah, and the Lebanese government, indicating that the conflict is framed not only as a military confrontation but also as a struggle over political and moral legitimacy.

Differences emerge in framing emphasis and orientation. AP News prioritizes Israeli national security, positioning Hezbollah as the primary threat and normalizing Israeli military action as preventive. Reuters adopts a more institutional and ostensibly neutral framing, situating Hezbollah's military activity within ceasefire fragility and risks of regional escalation. In contrast, The Guardian offers a more critical framing by portraying the Israeli attack as an escalation trigger and foregrounding civilian casualties, humanitarian consequences, and regional instability.

These variations demonstrate that while all outlets acknowledge the security dimension of the conflict, they differ in defining the core problem, assigning responsibility, constructing moral legitimacy, and emphasizing humanitarian impacts. This confirms that news framing operates as a selective and discursive process that shapes public perception and legitimizes particular political positions rather than merely presenting events as neutral facts.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research demonstrates that coverage of the Israel-Hezbollah conflict is shaped by distinct framing orientations rather than journalistic neutrality, resulting in divergent constructions of security, legitimacy, and humanitarian concern. These differences indicate that media do not merely report conflict events but actively participate in structuring the discursive conditions under which political interpretations and responses become meaningful. While this study does not claim direct causal effects, it identifies how framing functions as a form of discursive conditioning that expands or constrains what can be seen as reasonable, legitimate, or urgent within international public debate.

Security-oriented framing, as exemplified by AP News, tends to normalize Israeli military action by defining the conflict primarily through the logic of threat prevention and deterrence. By privileging official Israeli political and military sources and marginalizing civilian or humanitarian perspectives, such framing may contribute to a political environment in which military escalation is rendered intelligible and defensible, while alternative responses such as diplomatic de-escalation, ceasefire accountability, or humanitarian prioritization are discursively subordinated. In this sense, framing does not determine policy outcomes, but it conditions the symbolic space within which policymakers justify the use of force and delimit the scope of acceptable action.

In contrast, humanitarian-oriented framing, as observed in The Guardian, foregrounds civilian casualties, escalation risks, and the ethical costs of military operations. By re-centering civilian suffering and visual evidence of destruction, this framing potentially disrupts purely security-based justifications and strengthens discourses of restraint, accountability, and international intervention. Rather than rejecting security concerns outright, such framing reorders their moral hierarchy by insisting that humanitarian consequences remain central to evaluations of legitimacy.

Reuters' institutional framing occupies an intermediary position that appears balanced through the symmetrical inclusion of elite sources. However, this balance functions as a framing strategy in its own right by confining contestation within official and state-centered narratives. As a result, Reuters' coverage may stabilize dominant security paradigms and geopolitical alignments without explicitly endorsing them, limiting the visibility of structural power asymmetries and non-elite perspectives.

Using Robert Entman's framing theory, this study confirms that framing operates as a mechanism for selecting and organizing meaning that produces hierarchies of interests, moral evaluations, and proposed responses. Although

limited to early-stage textual coverage, the findings underscore how journalistic discourse participates in shaping the discursive horizons within which conflict-related actions become thinkable, legitimate, or contestable in global politics.

### **AI Declaration**

The author declares that the Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools used are ChatGPT and DeepL Translate, and were used to a limited extent as aids in the preparation of this manuscript. The use of these two AI tools was to assist with language clarity, translation, grammar, and editorial editing. The use of AI does not include the creation, falsification, or manipulation of research data, analysis, interpretation, or references. All AI-assisted results have been reviewed and edited by the author, who is fully responsible for the content of the manuscript.

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