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AI translation of Gaza war news coverage between Arabic and English: biased or unbiased?

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Abstract: This paper investigates whether three major AI translation engines, Gemini, ChatGPT, and DeepSeek, render politically sensitive Gaza-war terminology from Arabic into English in a biased or neutral manner. Using random thirty-five certified benchmark terms, the paper conducts a mixed-methods analysis combining quantitative error with qualitative examination of framing, context, and ideological shifts. Results reveal that although all three AI systems demonstrate high lexical accuracy in general terms, their performance diverges significantly on politically charged expressions. Gemini tends to replace Arab-centric terminology with Western media frames, while ChatGPT frequently produces softened or legally neutral alternatives. DeepSeek, by contrast, shows a pattern of literal translation that overlooks culturally and historically fixed proper nouns. Quantitatively, Gemini and ChatGPT each committed (3) deviations (8.58%), while DeepSeek committed (6) deviations (17.16%). Qualitatively, however, Gemini's errors carried the strongest ideological weight, particularly in terms such as "suicide bombings" and "Separation Wall." The study concludes that all three engines exhibit varying forms of bias, ideological, euphemistic, or literal indicating that current AI translation systems cannot yet ensure fully neutral representation in conflict-based linguistic contexts.

Keywords: AI translation, biased, non-biased, Gaza war, Media Translation.

1. Introduction

The region of Gaza has remained a focal point of international media translation coverage due to its ongoing humanitarian and political crises. However, the portrayal of Gaza across global media platforms is not solely shaped by original reporting, but also by the process of media translation (Al-Sammak, 2024; Baker, 2006). As news crosses linguistic and cultural boundaries, media translation becomes a crucial factor in framing how events are understood by diverse international audiences (Baker & Ellece, 2024; Eldar, 2024). It is through this lens that the world's populations form their perceptions of Gaza and Palestinian resistance often influenced as much by the translator's choices as the original message (Alshaer, 2022; BBC News, 2025).

Bias in translation is not merely a hypothetical issue proposed by theorists, it is a reality that has frequently cropped up in actual translations produced by humans. In 2021, for example, when Turkish President Erdoğan spoke on the Palestinian cause, his statement "القدس خط أحمر بالنسبة لنا" (Jerusalem is a red line for us) was mistranslated in international media as "Jerusalem is important to us," a softened version that diluted the strength and urgency of Turkey's stance (Al Jazeera English, 2025; Al-Monitor, 2024).

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In the digital era, media translation has emerged as a powerful force in crafting narratives, conveying ideological discourse, and shaping collective perceptions across borders (Garrido, 2024; International Journal of Communication, 2024). With the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence and the growing prominence of machine translation tools like Google Translate, DeepL, ChatGPT, DeepSeek, Gemini, etc., reliance on automated systems has reached unprecedented levels (Teo, 2000; Wolf, 2024). This progress invites a pressing question: Are these machines neutral agents in terms of their translations? Or can AI, by nature or design, be biased when translating politically charged content? (Human Rights Watch, 2024; Foreign Affairs, 2024).

The translation of news media is a critical, yet often invisible, factor in shaping international public opinion during conflicts. The war in Gaza is a case in point where language and hence translation is a battleground, and the choice of a single word can carry profound political and ethical weight (Counterfire, 2025; Davis, 2024). As global audiences increasingly rely on AI-powered tools for instant cross-lingual information, the role of these systems as mediators of conflict narratives has become paramount (Amnesty International, 2024).

This research moves beyond the human translator to examine a new, influential actor: the AI translation engine. Systems like Gemini, ChatGPT, and DeepSeek are trained on vast corpora of internet text, which inherently contain the biases, perspectives, and ideological slants of their sources (Al-Sammak, 2024; Alshaer, 2022). When these translation systems are fed Arabic texts containing sensitive terms, such as النكبة "Nakba," العمليات الاستشهادية "martyrdom operations," or الجدار العازل "Apartheid Wall," their outputs are not merely linguistic renditions but acts of framing.

The challenge, then, is not to discard machine translation, but to calibrate it. The way forward lies in a hybrid model where human translators, steeped in linguistic nuance and cultural literacy, collaborate with AI to ensure translations are not only technically correct but also ethically informed and contextually accurate (Baker & Ellece, 2024; Wolf, 2024). In an age increasingly defined by algorithms and automation, political translation remains an area where human insight is indispensable. Artificial intelligence is not immune to bias, especially when engaged with polarizing issues like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the Russia-Ukraine war. To prevent AI from becoming an unwitting agent of distortion, we must pair the precision of machines with the conscience of humanity. Only then can translation serve as a true bridge between cultures, rather than a battleground for competing narratives.

2. Statement of the Problem

The ongoing conflict in Gaza has significantly influenced the language used in media coverage, leading to the emergence and evolution of new, politically and emotionally charged terms neologisms (Al-Sammak, 2024; Alshaer, 2022). The portrayal of Gaza is shaped not only by original reporting but also by the process of media translation, which becomes a crucial factor in how diverse international audiences perceive the events (Al-Monitor, 2024; BBC News, 2025). As language can serve as a powerful tool of influence and a battleground of meaning in conflict reporting, there is limited research focusing specifically on how AI translation tools handle these sensitive, context-dependent terms (Davis, 2024; Counterfire, 2025). The central problem is to determine whether AI translation engines, in rendering these specific Arabic terms into English, commit measurable translational deviations errors that might reflect a non-neutral, or biased, framing that could distort the "world of Gaza" for international audiences compared to the Certified Terms. The consequences are significant, and inaccurate or biased translations can:

1. Distort the perceived reality of the conflict for international audiences.
2. Dehumanize or legitimize actors involved.
3. Influence public sentiment and, by extension, foreign policy.

4. Undermine the credibility of AI as a tool for global communication and knowledge dissemination.

3. Research Objectives.

The objectives of this research are:

1. To analyze the certified Arabic-to-English translations of thirty-five key terms related to the Gaza War and establish a baseline for comparison.
2. To compare the English translations provided by the three AI tools Gemini, DeepSeek, and ChatGPT for the thirty-five Arabic terms against the established Certified Terms.

4. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods analysis to investigate potential bias in AI translation engines when rendering politically sensitive Gaza-war terminology from Arabic into English. The researcher utilized thirty-five certified benchmark terms as a baseline for comparison. These terms were processed through three major AI engines, Gemini, ChatGPT, and DeepSeek. The analysis consists of two primary components, quantitative analysis which identifies "translational deviations," defined as instances where the AI's primary choice fails to match the certified term, and calculates error percentages for each engine (Davis, 2024; Eldar, 2024). Qualitative analysis which evaluates the nature of these deviations by examining framing, context, and ideological shifts. Terms are categorized into three thematic clusters, The Language of Resistance and Violence, The Vocabulary of Status and Geography, and Political/Legal Terminology (Alshaer, 2022; BBC News, 2025).

4.1. Data Analysis

The study relies on thirty-five terms reveal a complex landscape where AI engines frequently oscillate between literal accuracy and ideological framing. To provide a thorough analysis, the researcher has categorized the findings into three dominant thematic clusters: The Language of Resistance and Violence, The Vocabulary of Status and Geography, and Political/Legal Terminology.

5. Results

A translational error is defined as an instance where the AI's primary translation choice does not match the certified term. The thirty-five Arabic terms and their AI-generated English equivalents provides a clear quantitative picture of how Gemini, ChatGPT, and DeepSeek handle politically sensitive Gaza-war terminology. Out of (35) total translation outputs, (12) translational deviations were identified, distributed unevenly across the three engines: Gemini (3) errors, (8.58%), ChatGPT (3) errors, (8.58%), and DeepSeek (6) errors, (17.16%). These numerical results reveal not only the frequency of deviation but also the nature and severity of each engine's errors.

The data displayed in Table 1 below show that Gemini's deviations carry the strongest ideological weight. Its translations, such as "suicide bombings" for "عمليات استشهادية" and "separation wall" for " جدار الفصل العنصري" demonstrate a tendency toward Western political framing. Although only three errors were committed by Gemini, they do indicate a systematic reframing that diverges from Palestinian or regional media terminology.

ChatGPT's errors fall into a different pattern. Terms like "Gaza blockade" instead of "Gaza siege" and "racial discrimination" instead of "apartheid policy" suggest a softening or dilution effect. This engine avoids the most politically charged vocabulary, producing translations that are linguistically correct but less

forceful in tone. Quantitatively, ChatGPT matches Gemini in accuracy percentage, yet its deviations reflect a tendency toward moderation rather than ideological repositioning.

DeepSeek exhibits the highest error count (17.16%), but its deviations stem from literalism rather than bias. Translations such as "Uprising" instead of "Intifada," "Catastrophe" instead of "Nakba," and "Barricades" for "Checkpoints" indicate a lack of contextual cultural knowledge. Numerically, DeepSeek underperforms not because it reframes meaning, but because it fails to recognize established political terminology.

The quantitative data confirms that all engines struggle with contextually loaded Gaza-related terminology, but for different reasons: Gemini through ideological reframing, ChatGPT through lexical moderation, and DeepSeek through contextual insufficiency.

Table 1: A concise summary of the results

AI Tool	Total Terms Analyzed	Framing Bias Events	Key Examples of Failure	%
Gemini	35	3	Separation wall, Suicide bombings, Culture of steadfastness	8.58
ChatGPT	35	3	Racial discrimination, Forced migration, The Gaza blockade	8.58
DeepSeek	35	6	Racial discrimination, Barricades, forced migration, Uprising, The Catastrophe, Culture of Steadfastness	17.16
Total	**35**	**12**	**12**	**34.31%**

Table 2: Certified translations of Arabic terms and their AI renditions

No.	Terms in Arabic	The Certified Translation	Gemini Translation	ChatGPT Translation	DeepSeek Translation
1	التمييز العنصري	Apartheid Policy	Apartheid	Racial discrimination	Racial discrimination
2	جدار الفصل العنصري	Apartheid Wall	Separation wall	The apartheid wall	Apartheid wall
3	وقف إطلاق النار	Ceasefire	Ceasefire	Ceasefire	Ceasefire
4	حواجز	Checkpoints	Checkpoints	Checkpoints	Barricades
5	الهجرة القسرية	Forced Displacement	Forced displacement	Forced migration	Forced migration
6	التطهير العرقي	Ethnic Cleansing	Ethnic cleansing	Ethnic cleansing	Ethnic cleansing
7	حصار غزة	Gaza Siege	Siege of Gaza	The Gaza blockade	Siege of Gaza
8	حركة المقاومة الإسلامية	Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)	Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)	Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)	Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)
9	دروع بشرية	Human Shields	Human shields	Human shields	Human shields
10	الحل الدولي	International Solution	International solution	International solution	International solution
11	انتفاضة	Intifada	Intifada	Intifada	Uprising
12	قوات الاحتلال	Occupation forces	Occupation forces	Occupation forces	Occupation forces
13	قوات الدفاع الإسرائيلية	Israeli Defense Forces IDF	Israel Defense Forces IDF	Israel Defense Forces IDF	Israeli Defense Forces IDF
14	القدس	Jerusalem	Jerusalem	Jerusalem	Jerusalem
15	الشهيد	Martyr	Martyr	Martyr	The Martyr
16	عمليات استشهادية	Martyrdom Operations	Suicide bombings	Martyrdom operations	Martyrdom operations
17	عائلات الشهداء	Martyrs' Families	Families of the martyrs	Families of martyrs	Families of the Martyrs
18	النكبة	Nakba	The Nakba	The Nakba	The Catastrophe
19	التطبيع	Normalization	Normalization	Normalization	Normalization
20	احتلال	Occupation	Occupation	Occupation	Occupation

21	الأراضي المحتلة	Occupied Territories	Occupied Territories	Occupied territories	Occupied Territories
22	اتفاق أوسلو	Oslo Accords	Oslo Accord	Oslo Accords	Oslo Accords
23	السلطة الفلسطينية	Palestinian Authority	Palestinian Authority	Palestinian Authority	Palestinian Authority
24	القضية الفلسطينية	Palestinian Cause	The Palestinian Cause	The Palestinian cause	The Palestinian Cause
25	عملية السلام	Peace Process	Peace process	Peace process	Peace process
26	المقاومة الشعبية	Popular Resistance	Popular resistance	Popular resistance	Popular resistance
27	حقوق الفلسطينيين	Palestinian Rights	Palestinian rights	Palestinian rights	Palestinian rights
28	ثقافة الصمود	Resilience Culture	Culture of steadfastness	Culture of resilience	Culture of Steadfastness
29	حق العودة	Right of Return	Right of return	Right of return	Right of Return
30	التوسع الاستيطاني	Settlement Expansion	Settlement expansion	Settlement expansion	Settlement expansion
31	مستوطنات	Settlements	Settlements	Settlements	Settlements
32	تضامن	Solidarity	Solidarity	Solidarity	Solidarity
33	حل الدولتين	Two-State Solution	Two-state solution	Two-state solution	Two-state solution
34	العنف	Violence	Violence	Violence	Violence
35	الكيان الصهيوني	Zionist Entity	Zionist entity	The Zionist entity	The Zionist Entity

5.1. The Language of Resistance and Violence

This category includes terms that define the actors and actions of the war. The most significant deviation in the entire dataset appears in the translation of "عمليات استشهادية". The Certified Term is "Martyrdom Operations". Both ChatGPT and DeepSeek rendered this accurately as "martyrdom operations." However, Gemini translated this term as "suicide bombings". This constitutes a major framing shift. The concept martyrdom operates within a religious and resistance framework common in Arab media, whereas "suicide bombing" is a Western media frame that emphasizes the method and criminality of the act rather than the actor's intent. By overwriting the source's martyrdom with suicide, Gemini exhibits a distinct bias toward Western journalistic norms, effectively erasing the source's cultural perspective.

Conversely, the terms "المقاومة الشعبية" (Popular Resistance) and "حركة المقاومة الاسلامية" were translated consistently into Hamas across all three engines, adhering to the standard international nomenclature. Interestingly, for the term "انتفاضة" Intifada, Gemini and ChatGPT retained the loanword "Intifada," which has very recently entered the global lexicon. DeepSeek, however, translated it as "Uprising". While linguistically correct, "Uprising" strips the term of its specific historical context regarding the Palestinian struggle, representing a loss of cultural specificity rather than a political bias.

5.2. The Vocabulary of Status and Geography

The physical reality of Gaza is defined by terms describing borders and control. A critical divergence is found in the term "جدار الفصل العنصري" The Apartheid Wall. The Certified Term is "Apartheid Wall." ChatGPT rendered this as "The apartheid wall" and DeepSeek as "Apartheid wall." Gemini, however, translated it as "Separation wall". The term "Separation Wall" or Barrier is the terminology preferred by the Israeli government and many Western outlets to strip the structure of the "Apartheid" accusation. By choosing "separation" over the explicit Arabic term "awnsori" (racial/apartheid), Gemini softens the original text's political charge.

Similarly, the term "حصار غزة" (Gaza Siege) presents a nuanced split. The Certified Term is "Siege of Gaza." Gemini and DeepSeek provided "Siege of Gaza," capturing the military aggression implied by the original hisar. ChatGPT, however, translated it as "The Gaza blockade". In international law and media, the lexical item blockade is often a more technical, legalistic term, whereas siege triggers a condition of war and

starvation. ChatGPT's choice softens such connotations, moving it from a visceral description of suffering to a matter of policy.

For "حواجز" (checkpoints), Gemini and ChatGPT correctly used "checkpoints," while DeepSeek used "barricades". The latter implies a temporary, perhaps makeshift obstruction, whereas the former conjures up the institutionalized military control infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza. This suggests that DeepSeek may lack specific training on the standardized lexicon of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

5.3. Political and Legal Frameworks

The term "التمييز العنصري" presents a challenge. The Certified Term is "Apartheid Policy." Gemini translated this as "Apartheid," aligning with the Certified Term's political intent. However, ChatGPT and DeepSeek translated it into "racial discrimination". Linguistically, "التمييز العنصري" does translate literally to "racial discrimination." However, in the context of the conflict and the Certified Term benchmark, this literalism fails to capture the specific political accusation of "Apartheid" often intended in this context. Here, Gemini was more contextually attuned to the political discourse than its competitors.

The term "النكبة" (Nakba) tests the AI's recognition of proper nouns central to Palestinian identity. Gemini and ChatGPT transliterated the original into "The Nakba". DeepSeek translated it as "The Catastrophe". While "Nakba" literally means catastrophe, referring to the 1948-displacement event as merely "The Catastrophe" in English is a significant error in register. It fails to recognize "Nakba" as a proper noun in historical discourse, much like translating "The Holocaust" as "The Burnt Offering".

6. Conclusion

This paper confirms that media translation in the context of the Gaza war is a battlefield of meaning where AI engines are not totally neutral observers. The analysis of thirty-five terms reveals that while all three engines, Gemini, ChatGPT, and DeepSeek, provide high accuracy for general terms like "ceasefire" or "settlements," they diverge significantly when handling the "neologisms of resistance".

Gemini demonstrated a tendency to re-align Arab-centric terminology "martyrdom operations" and "Apartheid Wall" into Western-centric terminology "suicide bombings" and "separation wall", respectively. This supports the literature suggesting that media narratives often reconstruct the "world of Gaza" to fit external perceptions. ChatGPT acted as a moderator, often choosing legally safer but emotionally duller terms, such as "blockade". DeepSeek tend to produce the most literal translation, often missing the significance of political terms like "Nakba" or "Intifada," leading to accurate but culturally hollow translations. The study concludes that no AI engine is currently fully capable of "unbiased" rendering of the Gaza war's linguistic landscape. They either import external political biases or lack the cultural nuance to maintain the weight of the original terms.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study offers the following recommendations:

For AI Developers and Companies Google, OpenAI, DeepSeek:

1. Publish detailed statements on the sources and composition of training data for translation models.
2. Conduct and publish regular bias audits for high-stakes domains like political conflict, using frameworks like the one established in this paper.
3. Develop models that can consider the context of a full article or query when translating a single

term, rather than relying on isolated word-for-word translation.

4. Explore features that allow users to select a "translation style" or "perspective" e.g., "UN diplomatic," "International human rights," "Local narrative" for sensitive content.

For Users Journalists, Researchers, NGOs, Public:

1. Do not treat AI translations as ground truth. Users must be aware that these tools can introduce bias.
2. For critical terms, especially in conflict reporting, always cross-verify AI translations with human experts or multiple reputable sources.
3. For this specific domain, based on this study, users should prefer ChatGPT over Gemini or DeepSeek to minimize the risk of biased output.

For Researchers and Academics:

1. This study should be replicated with a larger corpus of terms and from other conflict zones e.g., Russia-Ukraine war.
2. Track how the translations of these terms change over time as models are updated and as the conflict evolves.
3. Examine bias in translation between other language pairs to see if the patterns identified here are universal.

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