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## **United by music, fractured by war:**

Yle's and BBC's media narratives on Israel's Eurovision participation

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**Abstract:**

This thesis examines how two national public service broadcasters, Finland's Yle and the United Kingdom's BBC, framed Israel's participation in the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest during the Gaza war. Drawing on Robert Entman's framing theory and guided by a qualitative content analysis framework, the study analyzes 95 relevant articles and one press release published between October 2023 and May 2024. It investigates how media narratives are constructed through four key framing functions: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and treatment recommendation. The research identifies five dominant frames: humanitarian, political neutrality and compliance, activism and public pressure, safety and security, and boycott Israel. The comparative analysis reveals both convergences and divergences in how Yle and the BBC approached the topic, highlighting the influence of national media-system contexts. While both broadcasters share public service mandates, Yle's coverage emphasized humanitarian and ethical frames more strongly, whereas the BBC more often highlighted neutrality and procedural adherence. These differences reflect Finland's democratic corporatist media model and the UK's liberal media system. The findings contribute to scholarship on media framing, comparative journalism and the political dimensions of cultural events.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The Eurovision Song Contest began as a bold experiment in live television broadcasting, initiated by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) in 1956. The European Broadcasting Union established it as a cost-effective way for European countries to collaboratively produce and share programming (European Broadcasting Union, n.d.). While it sought to promote cultural exchange and camaraderie, Eurovision has, over the decades, become an arena where broader societal and political tensions are reflected and negotiated (Ingilabli, 2024). Scholars Karen Fricker and Milija Gluhovic describe the contest as a “stage” where Europe’s shifting identities and unresolved tensions play out (Fricker & Gluhovic, 2013, p. 3). The inclusion of Eastern European countries after the Cold War was emblematic of Europe’s transformation, symbolizing post-Soviet integration into Western frameworks like the European Union and NATO. Eurovision participation became a means for these states to assert their “Europeanness” and claim a place in the European cultural and political landscape (Shields, 2020, p. 5). However, this expansion also underscored cultural divides, as voting patterns frequently aligned along regional and geopolitical lines, reinforcing pre-existing allegiances rather than Eurovision’s professed neutrality (Yair, 2019). These dynamics highlight the contest’s dual identity: a unifier of nations and a mirror of underlying geopolitical divides.

Among the many political dimensions of Eurovision, Israel’s participation stands out as particularly complex. Israel was first accepted into the Eurovision Song Contest in 1973 (European Broadcasting Union, 2017). As a non-European nation granted membership through the EBU, Israel has faced unique scrutiny, with its involvement often serving as a microcosm of broader Middle Eastern geopolitical conflicts. For instance, Israel’s hosting of the 2019 contest in Tel Aviv following Netta Barzilai’s victory was met with significant international backlash, including calls for boycotts from pro-Palestinian groups (Ayyub, 2019). The contest’s platform, intended for cultural celebration, thus became a focal point for political activism. This intersection of culture and politics was even more pronounced during the 2023–2024 Eurovision season, which unfolded against the backdrop of escalating

violence in the Middle East. On October 7, 2023, Hamas<sup>1</sup> launched a large-scale attack on Israel, resulting in over 1,200 Israeli casualties and numerous hostages (BBC News, 2025). Israel's subsequent military operations in Gaza, which led and continue to lead to extensive civilian casualties, marked a significant escalation in the Israel-Hamas conflict, further exacerbating humanitarian crises and global tensions (Farge & Al-Mughrabi, 2025). These events ignited widespread debates and drew international attention to Israel's actions, raising ethical and political questions about its participation in Eurovision (CBS News, 2024; Bryant, 2024).

In this context, media coverage of Israel's participation played an important role in shaping public discourse. While prior research has extensively analyzed Eurovision's role in reflecting national identities or geopolitical tensions, little attention has been given to study how different public broadcasters approach the, undoubtedly complex, situation of Israel's participation. This thesis examines how two national public service broadcasters, Finland's Yle and the United Kingdom's BBC, framed Israel's participation in the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest during the Gaza war. The study integrates Robert Entman's framing theory with Hallin & Mancini's comparative media-systems approach, allowing frame choices to be interpreted in light of the Finnish democratic-corporatist and British liberal media models. Methodologically, it applies an inductive qualitative content analysis in the tradition of Schreier (2012) and Krippendorff (2019), systematically coding 96 online text items (64 Yle articles, one Yle press release and 31 BBC articles) published between October 2023 and May 2024.

Examining how public broadcasters cover politically contentious events like Eurovision during periods of intense geopolitical tension, such as the Gaza war, is not only academically relevant but also crucial socially and politically. My interest in this topic stems in part from my professional role at Yle, where I work as a social media and web journalist for UMK (Finland's national selection for Eurovision) and serve as Yle's English-language commentator. I am not involved in the news division or its editorial processes, but my position gave me firsthand exposure to the broader public discourse surrounding Israel's participation, including the activist pressure and safety concerns faced by our team. This

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas is a militant Palestinian nationalist and Islamist movement active in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It was founded in 1987 by members of the Muslim Brotherhood at the start of the First Intifada. Hamas seeks to establish an independent Islamic state in historical Palestine and rejects the recognition of Israel. Unlike the more secular Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Hamas embraces armed struggle and has carried out numerous attacks, including acts of terrorism. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025a)

professional background informed the research topic, and I will elaborate more on this in the methodology chapter under “4.3.1 Researcher positionality and mitigation of bias”.

The research question in my thesis is: How did Yle and the BBC frame Israel’s participation in the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest during the Gaza war, and to what extent can similarities or differences be understood in light of their national media-system contexts? Given the ongoing global debates around media neutrality, ethical journalism and public accountability, understanding these dynamics has implications for both media professionals and policymakers. This thesis seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between media, culture and politics in one of the world’s most celebrated cultural events and the biggest music show in the world.

## 1.2 The Gaza war

The escalation of violence between Israel and the militant group Hamas in late 2023 marked one of the deadliest and most destructive periods in the modern Middle East. On 7 October 2023, Hamas carried out a coordinated surprise attack on Israel that resulted in the deaths of more than 1,200 people, primarily Israeli civilians, and the abduction of over 240 hostages (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025b). It was the single deadliest day for Israelis since the country’s founding in 1948. In response, the Israeli government declared a state of war on 8 October 2023, the first such declaration since the 1973 Yom Kippur War (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025b). Israel’s military (the IDF) immediately launched an extensive campaign of air strikes in the Gaza Strip, followed by a ground invasion in the subsequent weeks (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025b). This offensive marked the start of what has become a protracted and ongoing war in Gaza. A brief ceasefire in early 2025 facilitated limited hostage exchanges and humanitarian pauses, but hostilities fully resumed in March 2025 after ceasefire negotiations collapsed.

The human cost of the Gaza war has been, to say the least, staggering. From 7 October 2023 to mid-2025, Israeli attacks have inflicted unprecedented casualties and displacement in the densely populated Gaza Strip. As of July 2025, the Gaza Strip’s Ministry of Health reports that more than 60,000 Palestinians have been killed since the war began (Al Jazeera, 2025). This includes thousands of women and children, as the ministry does not differentiate civilians from fighters but indicates that over half of those killed are non-combatants (Balmer, 2025). For example, Israeli airstrikes on 18 March 2025, which effectively ended a

two-month ceasefire, killed more than 400 Palestinians in a single day, including a significant number of women and children (Al Jazeera Staff, 2025). On the Israeli side, about 1,200 people were killed in the initial Hamas attacks (mostly civilians) and by July 2025 the total Israeli death toll had risen to roughly 1,600–1,700 when including soldiers killed in subsequent fighting (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025b). The scale of bloodshed and trauma in Gaza, tens of thousands of lives lost in under two years, has no modern precedent in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Intense and continuous bombardment has also uprooted an enormous proportion of Gaza's population. By May 2024, the United Nations and human rights groups estimated that "almost 2 million Palestinians", more than half of Gaza's residents, had been internally displaced from their homes (Amnesty International, 2024). Many families were forced to flee repeatedly, moving from northern Gaza to the south and then again as fighting spread. Even during pauses in fighting, hundreds of thousands remained displaced. By January 2025, nearly 1.9 million people (over 388,000 families) had been displaced since the start of the war (UNRWA, 2025a), sheltering in United Nations-run schools, relief agency tents and any available structures amid the destruction. After hostilities reignited in March 2025, fresh mass evacuations were ordered by the Israeli military. Between March and July 2025 alone, over 700,000 additional Palestinians were displaced in Gaza due to expanded Israeli ground operations and evacuation orders (OCHA, 2025). By mid-July, Israeli-designated evacuation zones or active combat areas covered over 86% of the Gaza Strip's territory, leaving virtually no safe area for civilians (OCHA, 2025). The result has been immense crowding in the remaining enclaves: countless displaced civilians have crammed into overcrowded UNRWA shelters and makeshift camps, which themselves have sometimes come under attack (Human Rights Watch, 2024; UNRWA, 2025b). As one Human Rights Watch report quite grimly noted, "Nowhere is safe in Gaza. Not hospitals, not shelters, not refugee camps" (Human Rights Watch, 2024). The cycle of displacement, families fleeing for their lives multiple times, has created a humanitarian emergency of a scale not seen in Gaza's history.

Critical infrastructure in Gaza has been devastated, compounding the humanitarian crisis. Israeli air and artillery strikes have damaged or destroyed much of the territory's civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, utilities, and homes. The World Health Organization reported that by May 2025 at least 94% of all hospitals in Gaza had been damaged or destroyed and only 19 out of Gaza's 36 hospitals were still even partially

operational (WHO, 2025). Doctors and aid groups warned that the health system was at “breaking point”, with fuel shortages and insecurity forcing frequent hospital closures and impeding emergency care (WHO, 2025). Education infrastructure has suffered similarly: in April 2024 over 87% of school buildings in Gaza had been damaged or demolished, and all universities had been rendered non-functional (UNICEF, 2024). Damage to Gaza’s utilities has created a public health catastrophe. By mid-2025, approximately 85% of water and sanitation infrastructure has been destroyed as a result of the bombardment (Oxfam Canada, 2025). This means that most of the population lacks access to clean water or sewage treatment, heightening risks of disease outbreaks. The Israeli imposition of a “total siege” on Gaza from 9 October 2023 onward, cutting off all electricity, fuel, food and water supplies, further compounded the ongoing crisis, leaving the 2.3 million residents of Gaza in desperate conditions (Al Jazeera, 2023). This complete blockade, enforced for much of the conflict, has deprived civilians of basic necessities and hindered aid deliveries, in what United Nations officials and aid organizations have described as an unlawful collective punishment of Gaza’s population (Oxfam Canada, 2025). By July 2025, relief groups warned that Gaza was on the brink of famine and disease outbreaks, as fuel for hospital generators and water pumps had nearly run out (WHO, 2025).

The scale of civilian suffering in Gaza has provoked widespread international criticism and intensified scrutiny of Israel’s military tactics. Leading human rights organizations have accused the Israeli forces of violating international humanitarian law in their Gaza operations. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, among others, have documented evidence of unlawful attacks on civilians and indiscriminate bombardment in densely populated areas, suggesting that some Israeli actions amount to war crimes (Baldwin, 2023; Amnesty International, 2025). Amnesty International went further in 2025, stating there was a “sufficient basis to conclude that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian population in Gaza”, citing the extraordinarily high death toll of civilians, especially children, and the deliberate destruction of essential infrastructure (Amnesty International, 2025). Israel has rejected these allegations, insisting that its military operations are aimed at Hamas fighters and infrastructure and that Hamas’s tactics, embedding fighters and weapons in civilian areas, are to blame for much of the harm to civilians. Nevertheless, United Nations officials and many states have condemned the humanitarian impact. The U.N. Secretary-General and numerous U.N. agencies have repeatedly warned Israel to uphold its obligations under the Geneva Conventions to protect civilians, to no avail. Diplomatically,

the international community remains deeply divided over the Gaza war. The United States and a few other allies continue to back Israel's campaign, framing it as a legitimate self-defense response to Hamas's attack, and have vetoed or opposed some U.N. resolutions that sought to demand a ceasefire (Nichols, Al-Mughrabi & Balmer, 2025).

The war's impact has, as this thesis will come to show, even extended into international cultural events such as the Eurovision Song Contest. Critics argued that Israel's inclusion in a Eurovision, an event dedicated to peace and unity, was inappropriate while its military was conducting a devastating campaign in Gaza (Savage, 2024). Throughout the 2024 and 2025 Eurovision cycles, activists and public figures in Europe launched boycott campaigns, contending that allowing Israel to compete "normalizes" its wartime actions. As of July 2025, the war in Gaza remains ongoing and shows little sign of dimming down. Israel's stated goal is the complete elimination of Hamas's military capability and governance in Gaza, and Israeli officials have openly contemplated long-term military control or even re-occupation of the territory (Goldenberg & Mednick, 2025). Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, for their part, have refused to surrender or disarm, continuing to fire rockets and put up resistance within Gaza. Diplomatic efforts to secure a lasting ceasefire or peace agreement are stalled, with mediators struggling to bridge the gap between Israeli and Palestinian positions (Goldenberg & Mednick, 2025). In the meantime, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. International aid agencies are operating under life-threatening conditions, as evidenced by incidents like Israeli strikes killing civilians lined up for U.N. aid distributions in July 2025 (an attack that killed dozens of people waiting for food and water) (Balmer, 2025). The events of 2023–2025 in Gaza will likely be remembered as a sobering testament to the heavy toll of war on a civilian population and the pressing need for accountability and peace.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This thesis is a comparative media study examining how two national public broadcasters, Finland's Yle and Britain's BBC, framed Israel's participation in the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest during the Gaza war and how any convergences or divergences in those frames can be explained by differences in their national media-system contexts. The theoretical foundation integrates framing theory with insights from comparative media systems research. The study situates the analysis of media narratives within both a framing lens and a cross-national context. The goal is to understand not only what frames were used but also why two public service media in different countries might frame the same event differently, given their distinct media system characteristics.

### 2.1 Framing Theory

At the core of this framework is Robert Entman's framing theory. The selective coverage of certain issues by the media, which molds the public's opinion of what topics are essential, is the means by which this influence is done (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Scholars in the field of media have expanded upon this idea to establish that framing in the news media has a direct influence on how the public interprets the news. In the case of the media, for instance, Entman (1993, cited in Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, pp. 11–15) contends that frames are frequently formed by institutional and cultural biases, which incorporate ideological cues into coverage and subtly impact public perception. When it comes to assessing media coverage of politically contentious matters, this particular component of framing is especially helpful since the choices made in framing may have a significant impact on public opinion and even onto the debate around policy.

Erving Goffman, who originally created the theory of framing in 1974 in "Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience", defines a frame as follows: "I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events-at least social ones-and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. That is my definition of frame." (Goffman, 1974, pp. 10–11). Pan and Kosicki (1993) emphasize that framing in mass communication is not merely a neutral reflection of reality but an active process involving structured choices in news texts. These choices, embedded in syntactical, script, thematic and

rhetorical structures, guide audience interpretations of events and issues. Their approach highlights that framing plays a crucial role in shaping public discourse, particularly in complex and socially relevant areas such as political communication and public policy (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, pp. 59–64).

According to framing theory, the way in which the media frames a topic influences not only what people think about but also how they think about it. The process of framing, as described by Entman, is picking "some aspects of a perceived reality" and making them more prominent in a "communicating text" in order to promote specific "problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations and/or treatment recommendations" (Entman, 1993, p. 55). When it comes to comparing how Yle and the BBC present Israel's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest, Entman's approach offers a systematic method for analyzing media narratives. The problem definition identifies the key issue or conflict at stake, causal interpretation attributes blame or causality, moral evaluation injects an ethical stance or affective judgment and treatment recommendation suggests solutions or responses (Entman, 1993, p. 52). By breaking down news texts along these four functions, I am able to discern the underlying narrative structure each broadcaster uses to tell the story. This approach is especially useful for a comparative study because it creates common analytical categories to examine both Yle's and the BBC's coverage.

### 2.1.2 Developments in framing theory

In his 2004 work, Entman expanded on his initial conceptualization of framing by applying the four functions to a broader range of political and media contexts. His later work demonstrated how these functions could be systematically analyzed to understand the power dynamics in media coverage and policy debates. In this same work, he introduced the cascading activation model, which explains how frames move from political elites to the media and then to the public. Unlike earlier models that emphasized media influence alone, the cascading activation model highlights the dynamic and interactive process through which frames gain traction across different levels of communication. This model accounts for the varying degrees of frame resonance, showing that certain frames dominate the discourse due to their alignment with pre-existing cultural and political schemas. A significant development in Entman's model was his exploration of framing in foreign policy contexts. He examined how media framing affects government decision-making and public perception, particularly

in U.S. foreign interventions. His analysis of the Gulf War and the Iraq War debates demonstrated how media frames influenced both elite discourse and mass opinion, reinforcing certain policy justifications while marginalizing alternative perspectives. By applying his framing model to international crises, Entman illustrated how strategic framing can legitimize military action or obscure counter-narratives.

(Entman, 2004, pp. 6–7, 9, 13, 50–76, 79–84, 120–122)

Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman have also added to framing theory. The two authors note that framing occurs when a “given consideration” is made available and accessible in an individual’s memory, influencing subsequent evaluations of an issue. This understanding has allowed researchers to identify conditions under which frames are likely to be influential, emphasizing the importance of accessibility in the cognitive process. One important development in framing theory is the exploration of competitive framing environments, where multiple frames are presented to audiences. Chong and Druckman argue that the presence of competing frames leads individuals to evaluate the “relative strengths” of these frames, often aligning with the frame that resonates most with their values. Their experimental research found that competitive framing environments do not cancel out framing effects but can reinforce or even shift public opinion depending on the frames' strengths and alignment with audience values. The theory has also been refined to account for individual differences in susceptibility to framing, with personal predispositions and knowledge levels acting as moderators. This aspect of framing research underscores the role of individual characteristics in shaping the effectiveness of frames. Chong and Druckman call for further research on the durability of framing effects, particularly in competitive settings. They suggest that “active engagement” with a variety of frames may reduce susceptibility to one-sided frames over time, as exposure to diverse perspectives allows individuals to form more stable opinions less influenced by biased communications.

(Chong & Druckman, 2007, pp. 110–119).

### 2.1.3 Applications and criticisms

Framing theory is not without significant conceptual and methodological challenges. One persistent critique lies in the vagueness of the concept itself. Van Dijk argues that framing is often used as an umbrella term to describe a wide array of discursive and cognitive

phenomena, ranging from beliefs, ideologies and values to rhetorical strategies and narrative structures (Van Dijk, 2016, pp. 2–3). This lack of precise definition can obscure the specific processes framing is meant to illuminate and risks conflating distinct analytical categories. In the context of this study, such ambiguity could hinder the ability to distinguish between the narrative structures used by Yle and the BBC and their underlying ideological or cultural motivations. To address this, the analysis in this thesis adopts Entman's (1993, p. 52) framing components as a structured lens for examining the data, ensuring that framing is applied as a specific and coherent analytical tool. Another key limitation identified by Van Dijk is the tendency of framing studies to gloss over the broader sociocognitive processes underlying framing effects. While framing research often emphasizes the interpretative schemas activated by media, it frequently fails to explore how these schemas interact with audience cognition or broader social contexts (Van Dijk, 2016, pp. 9, 21). A further critique concerns the overemphasis on short-term activation effects in framing research; as Dietram A. Scheufele points out, most experiments measure effects immediately after a single exposure, thereby overlooking cumulative or long-term impacts. By focusing on isolated instances of media exposure, many studies fail to account for the cumulative and long-term impacts of framing (Scheufele, 2004, pp. 418–419). This, however, is not an issue for my research. My intention is not to study the effects of Yle's and BBC's Eurovision coverage, but instead to uncover the frames the two broadcasters use.

## 2.2 Comparative media systems and context

Comparative communication research, defined by Esser and Hanitzsch as the systematic juxtaposition of at least two macro-level units (nations, systems, markets or cultures) in order to draw conclusions that transcend any single context (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012, p. 4). The approach fulfils six inter-locking functions: it validates (or falsifies) theories across diverse settings, curbs ethnocentric over-generalisation, casts a reflexive mirror on researchers' own societies, clarifies and improves key concepts, nurtures trans-national scholarly networks, and supplies a repertoire of alternative policy solutions (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012, pp. 3–4). According to the authors, mature comparative studies articulate the purpose of comparison, delineate macro-level boundaries, secure conceptual and methodological equivalence and work within a common theoretical framework, criteria that separate genuine from implicit comparisons (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012, p. 5). For my thesis, a comparative communication design is appropriate because it turns the frames identified through Entman's four functions

into evidence of how distinct media-system logics, democratic Corporatist Finland versus Liberal-market Britain, shape public-service coverage of the same geopolitical controversy, thereby letting the analysis separate frame-specific effects from system-specific ones and avoiding the “naïve universalism”<sup>2</sup> that single-case studies cannot escape (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012, p. 3).

While framing theory offers the tools to analyze media texts, comparative media studies frameworks explain why two public broadcasters might diverge in their framing. Here, Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini’s model of media systems (2004) is particularly relevant. Hallin and Mancini (2004) distinguish between different models of media and politics. Notably, the Democratic Corporatist model that characterizes many Northern European countries (including Finland) and the Liberal model typical of the North Atlantic world (including the UK). Each model encapsulates historical and structural differences in media institutions (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 87). The Liberal model, exemplified by the British media system, is marked by a dominance of market forces and commercially oriented media outlets. In such systems, the press has traditionally been freer from direct state control and journalism norms emphasize neutrality and information-oriented reporting, but media outlets often compete fiercely in a commercial marketplace (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 246–248). By contrast, the Democratic Corporatist model, which describes Finland’s media system, features a historical coexistence of commercial media with media tied to social groups (like political parties or civil society) and a relatively active though legally constrained role for the state in media (e.g. strong public broadcasting institutions) (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 195–197). These systemic differences provide a theoretical lens for expecting variation in narratives. As Hallin and Mancini note, the Liberal (or “Anglo-American”) model prevails in Britain and is associated with an aggressively competitive press and an arm’s-length relationship between broadcasters and the state, whereas the Democratic Corporatist model in Northern Europe (Finland, etc.) developed from a history of politically affiliated media that evolved into a highly professionalized press with strong public service broadcasting. Yle and the BBC, as public service broadcasters, share many core values (such as editorial independence and public accountability). Yet, they operate in different national media

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<sup>2</sup> In the comparative-communication literature, *naïve universalism* names the uncritical assumption that findings or normative ideals derived from one national context automatically apply everywhere else. Comparative analysis “provides a contrast to naïve universalism, countering the tendency to presume that communication findings from one’s own country also apply to other countries.” (Esser, 2013, p. 113)

systems, which is the reason I chose them for this study as it might influence their framing of controversial issues.

## 2.3 Operationalizing framing analysis in a comparative study

Finally, it is important to explain how framing theory is applied in practice. The study uses a qualitative content analysis approach to examine news texts from Yle and the BBC, guided by Entman's four framing functions. This means that for each relevant news article or broadcast segment, I analyze how it defines the central issue, what causes or actors it emphasizes, what evaluative tone it adopts and what solutions or outcomes it suggests. To maintain consistency, the research design applies a uniform set of codes to both sets of media content (detailed in 4.3). This addresses a key challenge in comparative research: ensuring I compare equivalent phenomena. Each emergent code, 'humanitarian concerns', 'calls for boycott', 'broadcasting responsibility', and so on, is anchored to one of Entman's four functions. This ensures that every unit of analysis is simultaneously grounded in theory and traceable back to the data. An example: A BBC article defines the problem as Israel taking part in Eurovision despite the war in Gaza, assigns the cause to Israel's military action in the region, highlights critical voices towards Israel and as a remedy lifts up the possibility of Israel's exclusion from Eurovision. I assign codes to each frame, which in this simplified example would, for each four functions be:

1. Problem definition: "Israel's participation"
2. Causal interpretation: "Gaza war"
3. Moral evaluation: "Humanitarian concerns"
4. Treatment recommendation: "Israel's exclusion"

The coding helps me lay out the frames that emerge from the analyzed dataset. If, for example, there are many articles where the problem definition is focused on Israel's participation and the remedy in the article appears to be the country's exclusion, the "Boycott Israel frame" emerges. This comparative coding framework allows me to systematically identify media frames and compare them across the two broadcasters. I will go into more depth about the actual analysis in the methodology section in chapter 4.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework for this thesis merges Entman's framing theory with a comparative media systems perspective. Entman's four framing functions serve as

analytical tools to dissect media narratives into comparable elements. This integrated framework recognizes that media narratives are products of both journalistic framing choices and the media system in which they are produced. By explicating the framing approach and the comparative rationale, we set the stage for a nuanced analysis of how Yle and the BBC, united by their public service missions yet operating in different contexts, narratively managed the intersection of music and geopolitics during a time of war.

### 3. Literature review

When it comes to Entman's framing model, scholars have mobilised the four-function model in diverse arenas. Dimitrova and Strömbäck apply it to elite Swedish and US newspapers to reveal how national media privileged conflict or responsibility frames during the 2003 Iraq War (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005, pp. 399–401). Reese and Lewis trace how the US press “internalised” the administration's War-on-Terror master narrative, charting a progression from mere transmission to naturalisation of the frame (Reese & Lewis, 2009, pp. 778–779). Sheafer and Dvir-Gvirsman demonstrate that television framing of the Oslo process reshaped Israeli expectations for peace over an eight-year period (Sheafer & Dvir-Gvirsman, 2010, pp. 205–206). More recently, Song's 2024 bibliometric review shows Entman's framework remains in use in the field, surfacing in studies of digital politics, science communication and identity discourses (Song, 2024, p. 2). These cases illustrate how Entman's concepts have travelled from war reporting to peace negotiations and with this thesis, to Eurovision.

#### 3.1 Public service broadcasting and comparative media contexts

Since the publication of *Comparing Media Systems* (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), scholars have repeatedly used the three-model typology as a springboard for empirical tests and extensions. Brüggemann, Engesser et al. (2014) applied cluster analysis to indicators from 18 Western democracies and derived four empirically observed media-system types, showing that the original models could be refined with data-driven methods. Dobek-Ostrowska et al. (2010) marshalled the framework in the edited volume *Comparative Media Systems: European and Global Perspectives*, tracing how post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe combine elements of Polarised-Pluralist and Liberal models to form hybrid “transformation” systems. In Aalberg & Curran's (2012) comparative project “How Media Inform Democracy”, the typology underpinned cross-national tests linking system type to citizens' political knowledge, demonstrating that Liberal systems tend to produce the widest information gaps. Moving beyond the EU, Voltmer (2013) employed Hallin & Mancini's dimensions to map the Western Balkans, arguing that emerging democracies occupy “in-between” positions that expose the Western-centric limits of the original scheme. These peer-reviewed studies

illustrate how researchers use the Hallin-Mancini model both to validate ideal types quantitatively and to probe their adaptability in diverse political contexts.

Curran et al.'s comparative content study in 2009 showed that Finland's public-service ecosystem equips Yle to deliver a markedly different news diet from the BBC's dual, more commercialised setting. Once entertainment items are excluded, Finnish television devotes 27 % of its airtime to international hard news, against 23 % in the UK (Curran et al., 2009, p. 12). In overall balance, Yle's main bulletins are 83 % hard news versus 60 % on BBC1/ITV, underscoring a stronger public-affairs orientation (Curran et al., 2009, p. 14). This editorial difference is reinforced by scheduling: Finnish channels run flagship news at 18:00, 19:00, 20:30 and 22:00, creating a prime-time "drip-feed," whereas deregulation has left Britain with a single late bulletin that must compete with entertainment (Curran et al., 2009, p. 26) . Crucially, Yle also reaches disadvantaged audiences more effectively, 82 % of low-income Finns watch national TV news at least four days a week, compared with 69 % in the UK (Curran et al., 2009, pp. 26–27). These structural contrasts help explain why Finnish coverage of international conflicts often foregrounds humanitarian and legal-norm frames, while the BBC must balance its public-service remit against fiercer market pressures, an asymmetry directly relevant to the framing differences this thesis explores.

## 3.2 Eurovision Song Contest: A mediated spectacle and political contest

Although the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) is ostensibly a non-political entertainment program, a substantial body of literature has demonstrated that it functions as a mediated spectacle laden with political and cultural meaning. Dayan and Katz's classic typology identifies the live international "contest" as one of the genres that momentarily suspends everyday life and invites audiences to reaffirm collective identities (Dayan & Katz, 1992, p. 169). Subsequent quantitative work shows those identities actively structure the show: a network analysis of all votes cast since 1957 uncovers enduring regional blocs and diplomatic alignments, confirming that interstate rivalries and alliances "seep into" the results (Mantzaris et al., 2018, abstract). Recent theory even argues Eurovision has shifted "from apolitical to mega-political," with the 2024 edition illustrating how the contest becomes a battleground whenever wider geopolitics intensify (Öberg, 2025). Israel's long-running

participation highlights this dynamic: studies of its 2018 victory and 2019 hosting show state actors using the contest for soft-power “song-washing” while activists invoked it to spotlight the occupation, making Middle-East tensions unavoidable on the Eurovision stage (Fernández del Campo, 2021, pp. 21–24). Media coverage mirrors these pressures, Guardian reportage catalogues decades of entries that have smuggled in references to invasions, oil crises and territorial disputes despite the European Broadcasting Union’s ban on overt politics (Beaumont-Thomas, 2024). Together, this literature dismantles the myth of Eurovision’s neutrality and positions it as a mediated spectacle where cultural performance, nation branding and international conflict are all very closely linked.

One recurring theme in the literature is the tension between Eurovision’s official stance of political neutrality and the inevitability of political expression around it. The European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which organizes Eurovision, maintains rules against overt political content in performances. One strand of research highlights the clash between the contest’s formal neutrality and its in-built politics. Rule 3.4 of the Eurovision regulations forbids “- - messages, speeches, gestures, elements, behaviours of a political, geopolitical or similar nature, including symbols, slogans or messages addressing directly or indirectly any political geopolitical or similar cause and adherence to the Code of Conduct.” (EBU, 2024a; EBU 2024b). Yet quantitative studies of decades of results show otherwise: using 60 years of data, Alexander V. Mantzaris, Samuel R. Rein and Alexander D. Hopkins uncover persistent “collusive voting” along cultural and geographic lines (Mantzaris, Rein & Hopkins, 2018). Indeed, research specifically on Eurovision voting patterns shows that countries often exchange points based on cultural or political affinities (Baker et al., 2024, p. 48). Yair’s sociological studies of voting (1995) revealed five persistent blocs, or cliques as he calls them, suggesting that Eurovision doubles as a barometer of international relations: “The first consists of Ireland, Malta and Luxembourg; the second Turkey and the former Yugoslavia; the third Italy, Spain, Monaco and Greece; the fourth England, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Israel and France; the fifth Germany and Sweden, together with Norway, Denmark and Belgium” (Yair, 1995, p. 153). Very interestingly, he noted that three nations had “- - no consistent reciprocity with other European nations; they are relatively isolated.” (Yair, 1995, p. 153). Finland was one of those nations alongside Austria and Portugal. One has to note, however, that this study was conducted 30 years ago and these patterns will likely have changed. A more recent study by Oliver Budzinski and Julia Pannicke (2014) confirms that Eurovision voting behaviors consistently reflect culturally and geographically biased

preferences, with countries systematically favoring neighboring countries or those with shared cultural and historical ties (Budzinski & Pannicke, 2014, p. 29).

### 3.3 Israel and Eurovision

“Soft power, cultural relations and conflict through Eurovision and other mega-events: a literature review” by Catherine Baker, David Atkinson, Barbara Grabher and Michael Howcroft (2024) summarize much of the academic literature written on Eurovision. In addition to examining Eurovision’s impact as a whole, the authors sum up research on Israel’s participation in the Eurovision Song Contest, which they describe as having frequently been marked by political complexity, reflecting broader geopolitical tensions and cultural debates. The existing literature underscores that Israel’s inclusion has often amplified existing conflicts, most notably those related to its relationships with Palestine and neighboring Arab states. Israel’s debut in Eurovision in the 1970s was symbolically significant, yet its continued participation has often drawn criticism and boycott calls. A pivotal moment was Eurovision 2019, hosted in Tel Aviv, which became a flashpoint for international debates around cultural diplomacy, human rights and political neutrality. The literature points to the strategic use of Eurovision by Israel as part of its public diplomacy, especially regarding LGBTQ+ rights and cultural openness, framing itself as an LGBTQ+-friendly nation. Conversely, hosting the event in Tel Aviv rather than Jerusalem was seen as a calculated effort to minimize political backlash and emphasize a narrative of cultural liberalism over religious-nationalist symbolism<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, research has documented organized boycott efforts against Eurovision in Israel, including the “Boycott Eurovision” campaign advocating against attending Eurovision 2019. This campaign sought to highlight Israel’s policies towards Palestinians, aiming to leverage Eurovision’s international profile to amplify political critique. According to the authors, studies have also recognized Eurovision’s dual role for Israel as both a tool for soft power projection and a catalyst for international scrutiny, forcing a continuous balancing act between cultural celebration and contentious political discourse.

(Baker et al., 2024, pp. 41–42).

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<sup>3</sup> Although Jerusalem was initially floated as a potential host city following Netta Barzilai’s win in 2018, Tel Aviv was ultimately chosen. Many observers interpreted this as a diplomatic decision to avoid inflaming tensions surrounding Jerusalem’s contested status, particularly after the U.S. recognized it as Israel’s capital in 2017 (Avishai, 2019).

A related argument is developed by Press-Barnathan and Lutz in their academic journal article (2020), which analyzed Israel's 2019 Eurovision hosting through the lens of identity politics and soft power. They argue that Israel used the event to navigate contested national and international identities, while facing significant global protest campaigns. Their study supports the view that Israel's participation in Eurovision has become a focal point for diplomatic performance and external critique (Press-Barnathan & Lutz, 2020, pp. 729–748). Another noteworthy academic paper is “New power unlocked: Israel as a case study for Eurovision as a Europeanization tool” by Fernández del Campo (2021), who also cites Press-Barnathan and Lutz in his work. Del campo observes that Israel's 2018 victory and 2019 hosting were leveraged to “perform its identity, European belonging and nation branding” on the Eurovision stage (del Campo, 2021, p. 4). This aligns with the concept of soft power, where nations use culture and media to influence international perceptions (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2025). As Joseph Samuel Nye Jr. explains, if a country's culture and ideals are attractive, others will more willingly follow its lead (Nye, 1990, p. 167). By promoting women's rights, veganism in the Israeli Defense Forces or LGBT rights in Israel, the state is effectively presenting itself as liberal and perceived as more tolerant, which is directly linked to a desire to enhance its soft power (Carniel, 2015; Press-Barnathan & Lutz, 2020, both cited in del Campo, 2021, pp. 23–24). The 2018 victory of Netta Barzilai with the song Toy served as a pivotal moment in Israel's Eurovision history, as it allowed the country to showcase itself as a champion of diversity, gender equality and inclusivity, values that resonate strongly with European audiences (del Campo, 2021, pp. 24–26). Barzilai's performance was emblematic of Israel's branding strategy, promoting messages of female empowerment and individuality, which were further amplified by the concurrent global momentum of the #MeToo movement (del Campo, 2021, pp. 24–25). Much like Baker et al. noted, hosting the contest in Tel Aviv in 2019 further reinforced Israel's branding efforts, (del Campo, 2021, p. 25).

### 3.4 Media framing of Eurovision

Media framing of Eurovision does not occur in a vacuum. It reflects a rather interesting interplay between journalists, broadcasters and other stakeholders such as fans, artists and organizers. While many studies, like the ones introduced in this chapter, have focused on formal media coverage, others offer insight into how media narratives emerge in tension with how participants themselves interpret the event. A good example is a study by Michael Skey

et al. (2016), which examined how different interest groups engaged with the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest, focusing particularly on the controversial reactions to the Russian entry amid the political climate following Russia's annexation of Crimea (Skey et al., 2016, pp. 3383–3386). Drawing on ethnographic interviews with fans, organisers and journalists, the authors demonstrate that differing “levels of commitment” to the event fundamentally shaped these groups' interpretations (Skey et al., 2016, p. 3383). Rather than treating Eurovision purely as a symbolic media ritual, they trace how organisers, dedicated fans, broadcasters and casual viewers engage with it over time, and how that temporal investment affects the frames they adopt (Skey et al., 2016, p. 3383). Organisers and long-term fans, for example, cast Eurovision as a meaningful space tied to values of tolerance, friendship and personal identity (Skey et al., 2016, p. 3394). Their involvement is deep, emotional and sustained year-round through online communities and periodic face-to-face gatherings (Skey et al., 2016, p. 3386). By contrast, mainstream media outlets and general audiences dip in only briefly, typically when large-scale political controversies make the show “relevant” (Skey et al., 2016, pp. 3383–3384). The authors highlight the booning of the Russian act in 2014 as an incident that both challenged Eurovision's self-image as apolitical and simultaneously boosted its global visibility (Skey et al., 2016, p. 3386). Overall, they argue that analysing events like Eurovision requires moving beyond the idea of a unitary “symbolic arena” to recognise how material, emotional and social investments shape meaning-making (Skey et al., 2016, pp. 3382–3383). In doing so, the study identifies three key fault-lines, between organisers and mainstream media, between hosts and organisers, and between on-site fans and wider media audiences, that structure the contest's competing narratives (Skey et al., 2016, pp. 3383, 3387).

In addition to peer-reviewed literature, there are a few, non-peer-reviewed studies worth mentioning. They currently provide a systematic, data-rich examinations of Eurovision news coverage available in Finnish- and Swedish-language scholarship. Two non-peer-reviewed Master's theses supply detailed Finnish data on Eurovision coverage to date. Tilda Oikarinen (2020) harvested 86 online news pieces, 53 from Yle and 33 from Helsingin Sanomat, that mentioned both “Israel” and “Euroviisu” during January–May 2019 (Oikarinen, 2020, pp. 22–23). Her frame + membership-categorisation analysis shows that, despite stylistic differences, the two outlets converged on a three-tier “argumentative space” which consistently cast Israel's conduct toward Palestinians as morally dubious (pp. 27–29, 56). Hanna Othman (2020) sampled three press snapshots, 1964–65, 1989–90 and 2014–15,

totalling 257 items from Finland's major dailies and news agencies (Othman, 2020, pp. 15–17, 35). Her thematic content analysis finds Eurovision stories mirroring their eras' dominant debates: Cold-War peace rhetoric in the 1960s, post-Wall optimism and Yugoslav instability in 1989-90, and LGBTQ+ rights and Russia's Crimea policies in 2014–15 (pp. 24–40). Together, the theses illustrate how Finnish media repeatedly graft broader geopolitical issues onto Eurovision. Cecilia Falck's 2024 Master's thesis (i.e. non-peer-reviewed) offers a systematic comparison of Swedish and British press coverage of Ukraine's Eurovision entries. Working with 104 print-and-online items from 2016 and 92 from 2022, roughly split between Aftonbladet/Dagens Nyheter and The Guardian/Telegraph, she codes each story for dominant frame (Falck, 2024, pp. 51–54). Two meta-frames dominate: "Ukraine's Resistance Against Oppression and Invasion" and "Support and Solidarity from Europe" (pp. 55–56). Her 2022 dataset shows a marked rise in the second frame, with outlets portraying Eurovision as a stage on which Europe publicly affirms Ukraine's cause and identity (pp. 57–58). Falck argues that such framing functions as nation-branding, eliciting sympathy and solidarity from audiences and recasting a song contest as a moral referendum on Russian aggression (pp. 58–60). She also notes cross-national nuances: British papers, shaped by Brexit-era scepticism, leaned on spectacle and irony, whereas Swedish papers projected more straightforward solidarity (pp. 59–60).

### 3.5 Research gaps and contribution

Despite a growing body of work on Eurovision as political communication, two clear gaps remain. First, no study has systematically compared how public service broadcasters cover the contest during a war. Prior research either stays within one national setting, so direct Yle-BBC comparison is therefore missing. Second, Israel's participation in Eurovision 2024 occurred while the Gaza war dominated headlines. The ensuing boycott calls and comparisons with Russia's 2022 exclusion created an unprecedented test of the contest's "apolitical" stance. How news media framed Israel's presence, whether as routine, defiant or controversial, and balanced entertainment with wartime journalism has not yet been analysed.

Addressing these gaps, this thesis makes two contributions. Empirically, it supplies the first systematic dataset on Yle vs BBC framing of the same Eurovision conflict episode. Theoretically, it shows how Entman's four framing functions can be used to dissect an entertainment-meets-war narrative. By asking how and why, the two broadcasters converged

or diverged in framing Israel's entry, the study links framing outcomes to their different media-system contexts. The next chapters present the methodological design, followed by the comparative findings.

## 4. Methodology

This study employs a combination of framing analysis and qualitative content analysis to identify and interpret the frames used by Finland's Yle and the United Kingdom's BBC in their Eurovision Song Contest coverage during the Gaza war, and to explore how these framing patterns may relate to each broadcaster's national media-system context. The research question is: How did Yle and the BBC frame Israel's participation in the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest during the Gaza war, and to what extent can similarities or differences be understood in light of their national media-system contexts? This study focuses on the period from October 2023 through May 2024, which spans the pre-event, event and immediate post-event coverage of Eurovision. While Yle and BBC content were first analyzed separately to respect each case's context, I applied a consistent methodological approach, outlined later in this chapter, to both broadcasters to allow for a meaningful comparison of results. This comparative element is essential for identifying framing similarities and differences between the two outlets, ensuring that any observed variation in coverage reflects genuine differences in content and media-system context, not methodological inconsistencies. The primary research steps involved collecting all relevant news articles (and in Yle's case one press release) published by the two broadcasters in the specified period, then systematically coding these texts to uncover dominant frames.

### 4.1 Framing analysis

This thesis adopts Entman's framing model as a lens to examine the content. I examined each news item (article or press release) for these four elements of framing. For example, an article might frame the problem as Israel participating in Eurovision during an ongoing war, attribute causal interpretation to Israel's military actions or the broader conflict, include an implicit or explicit moral evaluation of this situation and perhaps hint at or outright call for a treatment recommendation (such as exclusion from the contest or appeals for peace). Entman's framework provided a clear template to systematically deconstruct each text's framing. Notably, framing analysis in this study is not confined to a purely qualitative interpretation at the end of the process. Instead, I integrated Entman's categories from the beginning as a guiding structure for coding, ensuring that every frame element identified is both grounded in theory and traceable back to concrete evidence in the texts. By using Entman's categories as a common analytical lens for both Yle and BBC, this approach also

ensured that framing elements were identified on equivalent terms across the two cases, which is important for later comparison.

## 4.2 Content analysis integrated with framing analysis

To systematically apply framing analysis across a large set of articles, the study employs content analysis techniques, particularly a qualitative content analysis (QCA) approach. Klaus Krippendorff (2019) defines content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful material) to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 18). It involves systematic coding procedures but goes beyond simple counting or categorization, enabling researchers to uncover meanings, patterns, and relationships, including both explicit messages and implicit or latent content (Krippendorff, 2019, pp. 87–90). Content analysis has evolved from its early roots in quantitative social science into a flexible methodology that can incorporate both quantitative and qualitative techniques (Krippendorff, 2019, pp. 15–17). Krippendorff, however, does not value the distinction to a great extent: “I question the validity and usefulness of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative content analyses. Ultimately, all reading of texts is qualitative.” (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 16). In practice, quantitative content analysis emphasizes systematic coding with numerical representation and seeks replicability through consistent procedures.

Researchers using a quantitative approach often break down texts into predefined units, apply coding by multiple coders, and utilize explicit rules to ensure objectivity and reliability (Krippendorff, 2019, pp. 18–21). This approach allows for handling large volumes of text and generating statistics (e.g., frequency counts of frames or themes). However, critics of purely quantitative content analysis argue that it can devolve into “mere counting”, risking the loss of contextual nuance and deeper meanings behind those numbers (Krippendorff, 2019, pp. 87–90). On the other hand, qualitative content analysis (often influenced by traditions of discourse analysis, ethnography, and cultural studies) prioritizes interpretative depth and context sensitivity. This approach involves reading texts in a more holistic way, understanding the context of each message and being open to emerging themes without forcing data into rigid categories (Krippendorff, 2019, pp. 87–90). Qualitative analysts continuously refine their interpretations and often avoid strictly linear analytical steps. They value credibility and reflexivity (the researcher’s awareness of their own influence on the

interpretation) over absolute replicability. The trade-off is that qualitative content analysis can be more subjective and harder to standardize, and analyses are frequently done by a single researcher or a small team, making intercoder reliability less emphasized than in quantitative studies (Krippendorff, 2019, pp. 87–90). This study follows such a blended approach. While I use a clearly defined coding scheme (as in quantitative analysis) to ensure consistency, the coding scheme itself was developed inductively and remains open to nuance (as in qualitative analysis). The goal is to combine the strengths of both: the rigor of systematic coding with the rich understanding afforded by qualitative interpretation.

Margrit Schreier's work on Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) provides a useful model for this integrated approach. Schreier (2012) describes QCA as a systematic, flexible method for interpreting large volumes of qualitative data by classifying it into categories (Schreier, 2012, pp. 5–8). Unlike purely quantitative content analysis which focuses on manifest content and frequency counts, QCA is concerned with latent meanings<sup>4</sup> and the importance of context in shaping interpretation (Schreier, 2012, pp. 13–16). Key characteristics of Schreier's QCA include being structured and stepwise (to enhance transparency and reproducibility) while also remaining adaptable (Schreier, 2012, pp. 5–6, 7, 24). The coding frame in QCA can be concept-driven (based on prior theory or hypotheses) and/or data-driven (allowing categories to emerge from the material itself) and researchers are encouraged to iteratively refine their categories as they become more familiar with the data (Schreier, 2012, pp. 84–90, 104–106). Schreier emphasizes context sensitivity, meaning that the same content may be coded differently depending on contextual cues, and reduction of data: focusing only on aspects relevant to the research question, thereby condensing the material into a manageable set of categories without losing sight of the original meaning (Schreier, 2012, pp. 7–8, 15–16, 195–196).

A central element of QCA is developing a coding frame that is unidimensional (each category covers one aspect or criterion), uses mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories (categories do not overlap and all relevant content can be coded), and is saturated (fully represents the meaningful themes in the material) (Schreier, 2012, pp. 71–72, 75–78). Each category in the coding frame should have a clear name, a definition, decision rules for how to apply it and example indicators or data excerpts (Schreier, 2012, pp. 94–103). Schreier outlines a

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<sup>4</sup> Latent meaning refers to the underlying or implied meanings in texts, while manifest content denotes the explicit, surface-level information. Qualitative content analysis focuses more on latent content, interpreting tone, emphasis and subtext. (Schreier, 2013, p. 15-16)

sequence of steps for conducting qualitative content analysis. These are to formulating the research question, selecting the material, building the coding frame (and piloting/testing it on a subset of data), segmenting the material into units of coding, carrying out the main coding on the full material, evaluating and modifying the coding frame, executing the main analysis and finally interpreting and presenting the results (Schreier, 2012, p. 6). The use of Schreier's QCA approach and Entman's framing theory as a conceptual guide, allows for a structured yet interpretative analysis. It ensures that the framing analysis is conducted systematically and transparently while still being able to capture the complex, context-dependent nature of media narratives about Eurovision and the Gaza war.

### 4.3 Data collection and coding

Using the above framework, I conducted an inductive qualitative content analysis of Yle and BBC articles, integrating Entman's framing functions at each step. The data collection focused on all journalistic articles (excluding promotional content) published by Yle and the BBC related to the Eurovision Song Contest from October 2023 through May 2024 (1.10.2023–31.5.2024). This period begins shortly after the outbreak of the Gaza war in 2023 and runs through the Eurovision event season into its aftermath in 2024, thereby covering how the conflict's developments intersected with Eurovision coverage over time. In total, I analyzed 95 relevant articles and one press release. 64 articles and one press release were from Yle and 31 articles from the BBC. Relevance, in this case, means that the article mentions Israel and/or Palestine in the Eurovision context. To gather these articles, I used targeted keywords in each broadcaster's online archives and search functions. The keywords included "Eurovision", "Euroviisut" (the Finnish term for Eurovision), "UMK" (the acronym for Uuden Musiikin Kilpailu, Finland's national contest to select its Eurovision entry), "Israel", "Palestiina" (Finnish for Palestine), and "Palestine". The Finnish terms "Euroviisut" and "UMK" were included to ensure Finnish-language content and any Finland-specific Eurovision coverage were captured, while "Israel" was a crucial term to find discussions of Israel's participation. The inclusion of "Palestiina" and "Palestine" helped retrieve articles that contextualized the Eurovision news within the context of the war. By using this set of keywords, I aimed to capture a comprehensive set of articles that touched on the intersection of Eurovision and the Gaza war. I left out a total of 13 press releases from Yle, since they did not relate to the research question. This is to say they included marketing information about

UMK or Eurovision, but nothing pertaining to Israel. In addition, I left out one article from the BBC since it was a video article and the study focuses solely on text-based articles.

Below are the four main phases the research process involved:

1. Data collection: I gathered all relevant articles and one press release from Yle and the BBC between October 2023 and May 2024 that relate to the Eurovision Song Contest in the Gaza war context.
2. Development of coding scheme: I established a coding frame consisting of categories (codes) that reflect the research question and objectives. I initially drew broad, conceptually driven categories from Entman's four framing functions (for instance, general groupings like "Israel's participation" or "Gaza war". As I immersed in the data, many specific codes emerged inductively from the material itself. In other words, the coding scheme evolved to include themes that the articles frequently mentioned or emphasized, even if those themes were not fully anticipated at the outset. Examples would include: "Broadcasting responsibility" and "Dichotomy of values". Developing the coding scheme in this iterative way was crucial for ensuring the analysis remained systematic and replicable and it was heavily guided by Entman's four framing elements. The complete coding frame is presented later in this chapter (4.4).
3. Coding process: I read and segmented each article into meaningful units (e.g., sentences or paragraphs) as needed and relevant segments were labeled with one or more codes from the coding frame. The coding was done iteratively. After an initial round of broad coding, I revisited the data to check for consistency and made adjustments to code definitions as necessary. Since I was the sole coder, consistency was bolstered by multiple passes through the data and by maintaining a detailed coding frame (available at 4.4) with decision rules and examples. Some basic quantification was also applied (e.g., noting how many articles invoked certain themes or how frequently a particular frame element appeared) to gauge the prominence of each frame.
4. Analysis of coded data: I analyzed the coded data to identify major patterns and interpret their significance. This involved examining the prevalence of each code and how codes co-occurred (for example, which problem definitions tended to appear alongside which solutions or moral evaluations). By looking at these patterns, I could

infer broader frames being constructed in the media narratives. For instance, if numerous articles defined the situation in terms of Israel's participation being contentious (problem definition) and frequently followed that with calls for Israel's exclusion or boycott (treatment recommendation), that consistent pairing of problem and solution would indicate the emergence of what could be labeled a "Boycott Israel" frame. Similarly, other clusters of codes across Entman's four functions were analyzed to distill distinct frames. This analytical phase is also where the data from both broadcasters were compared. Because the same coding framework was applied to Yle and BBC content, I could directly contrast how often and in what ways each outlet employed certain frames or themes. This made it possible to observe which frames were common to both outlets and which were more unique to one or the other. The result of this analysis was a set of dominant frames (in this case, five key frames, as discussed in Chapter 6 and elaborated on in chapter 7) that characterize the narrative patterns in Yle's and the BBC's Eurovision coverage.

This methodological design provided a balanced approach and it also allowed the study to engage with comparative media system questions. Theories from comparative media research (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012) support the examination of two national cases side by side, and using the same coding and framing criteria for Yle and the BBC means that differences in their coverage can be more confidently attributed to differences in their national media-system contexts, rather than inconsistencies in how the analysis was conducted. In sum, this methodology is designed to answer both aspects of the research question. It enables the identification of frames in each broadcaster's coverage and provides a comparative lens to explain any observed convergences or divergences in those frames by reference to differences in the Finnish and British national media-system contexts.

#### 4.3.1 Researcher positionality and mitigation of bias

I currently work as a social media and web journalist for UMK (Uuden Musiikin Kilpailu), Finland's national selection for the Eurovision Song Contest. Additionally, I serve as the English-language commentator for the UMK broadcasts and was the Eurovision correspondent for Yle at the 2025 Eurovision Song Contest in Basel, Switzerland. My role involves producing social media content, writing articles about UMK and Eurovision, and documenting the Eurovision journey of Finland's selected artist. It is important to highlight that the articles I write in my current position are not news articles: they are promotional

pieces for Eurovision and UMK. This thesis only analyzes news articles written by journalists at Yle's News and Sport unit. I am employed at a different unit, namely Creative Content and Media. In other words, all the promotional articles and press releases (none of which are published by Yle News and Sport) have been excluded from this thesis.

Yle's organisational structure distinguishes clearly between its News and Sports unit and its Creative Content and Media unit. The News and Sports unit is responsible for Finnish-language news, current affairs, sports, regional content, and event production across all platforms, including multilingual news in Sámi, English, Russian, Ukrainian, and sign language (Yle, 2025). In contrast, the Creative Content and Media unit, where I am employed, oversees Finnish-language content in areas such as factual programming, drama, culture, entertainment and youth content (Yle, 2025). It also manages programming and publication planning for Yle's TV and radio channels, content acquisitions, subtitling, archiving and performance rights (Yle, 2025). While the former focuses on journalism and real-time news production, the latter handles non-news media, including productions like UMK and the Eurovision Song Contest (Yle, 2025). This professional background undoubtedly shaped my understanding of Eurovision both as a cultural phenomenon in Finland and abroad, as well as the media spectacle it is. My experiences provided me with insights into the broader societal debates surrounding Israel's participation in the contest, particularly as my team was directly targeted by activist campaigns (some of which raised safety concerns). This exposure originally sparked my interest in researching how Eurovision coverage intersects with political conflicts.

However, my professional role at Yle also raised important methodological considerations. My employment at Yle granted me limited contextual awareness of internal discussions but it did not involve editorial influence or authorship of any of the news content analyzed. This distinction, combined with my use of a transparent and replicable coding process, outlined in "4.4 Coding frame", ensured that the study maintains its analytical independence despite my insider perspective. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that my insider status may implicitly shape my interpretations, which I consider a potential limitation. I do, however, feel that because I was aware of said limitation, I paid more due diligence on analyzing the Yle articles as neutrally as possible as I perhaps otherwise would have.

## 4.4 Coding frame

The table below presents the coding frame developed and used for analyzing the Yle and BBC articles. Each code represents a specific theme, issue or narrative element that recurred in the coverage. Alongside each code is a brief definition explaining what content qualifies for that code and example indicators which illustrate the kinds of phrases or references in the articles that would signal the use of that code. This coding frame was iteratively developed, as described above, and the final set of codes reflects the range of topics and concerns that appeared in the data.

### Coding frame for Yle and BBC articles

Code	Definition	Example indicators
Humanitarian concerns	Mentions of humanitarian issues affecting the population, often relating to human suffering and relief.	References to the humanitarian impact on civilians, calls for aid or support in conflict zones.
Ethical concerns	Discussion of moral or ethical implications surrounding Israel's participation or actions in the conflict.	Expressions of moral dilemmas, ethical critiques about involvement or impact on Eurovision.
Calls for boycott	Advocacy or suggestions for boycotting Israel or the event.	Statements promoting a boycott, mentioning protests against participation, or groups organizing boycotts.
Safety concerns	Concerns related to the safety of participants, audience, or organizers due to potential threats.	Mentions of potential risks to attendees, precautions for safety, security measures.

Eurovision's political neutrality	Discussions about Eurovision's stance on staying politically neutral.	Statements that emphasize Eurovision as an apolitical event, criticism of political involvement.
Gaza war	References to the ongoing war between Israel and Gaza.	Mentions of specific incidents or ongoing issues within the Gaza region affecting public opinion or event participation.
Precedent of Russia	Comparisons to how Russia's involvement has been treated.	Historical references to Russia's participation/exclusion, analysis of similar situations or rules applied to Russia.
Israel's exclusion	Direct calls and discussions around excluding Israel from participation in Eurovision.	Advocacy for Israel's exclusion.
Israel's participation	Questions around Israel's participation.	Mentions of uncertainty around Israel's participation.
Artist activism	Acts of advocacy or political statements made by artists related to the issue.	Instances where artists speak out, engage in activism, or advocate against Israel.
Public's activism	Involvement of the general public in activism surrounding Israel's Eurovision participation.	Protests, social media campaigns, or public demonstrations regarding Israel's involvement.
Broadcasting responsibility	References to the duty of broadcasters in covering the	Mentions of ethical broadcasting, balanced

	event and associated political issues.	reporting, or responsibility to viewers in handling the Israel-related coverage.
Support for Israel	Statements or actions expressing support for Israel, either politically or regarding participation.	Endorsements, positive comments, or symbolic gestures showing solidarity with Israel.
Dichotomy of values	The official neutrality of Eurovision in contrast with the humanitarian aspects of the Gaza war.	Statements that highlight opposing values.
Artist participation uncertainty	Artists are unsure about participating due to political implications.	Artists expressing hesitancy, statements about withdrawal considerations, or uncertain commitments.
Public backlash	Negative responses from the public regarding the event or participants due to political reasons.	Social media criticism, calls for protest, or public statements opposing the event or certain artists' involvement.
Artist pressure	Situations where artists face pressure due to political or social expectations surrounding the event.	Artists receiving criticism for participating, pressure from fans or organizations to take a stance, calls to action from interest groups.
Potential consequences of an Israeli victory	Speculations on the impact of an Israeli win on Eurovision (or international relations).	Concerns over political fallout, implications for hosting, public reactions, or future event participation

		dynamics.
<b>Media responsibility</b>	Discussion of the ethical obligations of the media in their coverage of Eurovision	Mentions of balanced coverage, avoiding bias, fair reporting, or the media's role in influencing public opinion.
<b>Support for artists</b>	Expressions of support for artists facing criticism or pressure related to the event.	Statements endorsing artist freedom, solidarity with artists' rights to participate or abstain without backlash.
<b>Compliance with rules</b>	References to the necessity of following Eurovision rules and regulations.	Discussions on adherence to event policies, enforcement of guidelines, or penalties for rule violations.
<b>Calls for transparency</b>	Demands or statements encouraging openness in decision-making and event organization.	Appeals for public clarity on participation criteria, transparency in judging or hosting decisions.
<b>Cultural diplomacy</b>	Mention of the use of cultural events like Eurovision as a tool for fostering international relations.	Statements highlighting Eurovision as a platform for cultural exchange and promotion of peace.
<b>Public Accountability</b>	The expectation that institutions align their decisions and actions with the ethical standards and values held by the public.	A national broadcaster or contest organizer is publicly criticized for perceived double standards in applying rules or values.

## 5. Analysis

This chapter presents a detailed framing analysis of six selected news articles, three from the BBC and three from Yle, which cover Israel's participation in the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest during the Gaza war. These articles were chosen as representative case studies illustrating the key frames identified in the broader dataset (as summarized in the results chapter). Each article is examined using Entman's four framing functions: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993), to reveal how the narratives were constructed. By applying Entman's model systematically to each article, the analysis traces how specific aspects of the issue were made salient (or downplayed) by each broadcaster. Throughout the analysis, I use coding from the established coding frame to ensure consistency in identifying frame elements (e.g. "calls for boycott," "humanitarian concerns," "Eurovision's political neutrality").

The six articles analyzed here span pivotal moments in the Eurovision-Israel controversy and include both outlets' perspectives. From the BBC, the analysis covers: (1) a report on Finnish artists petitioning to bar Israel from Eurovision, (2) a piece on UK's Eurovision representative Olly Alexander rejecting calls to boycott Eurovision and (3) an article on Israel's Eurovision delegation accusing other contestants of "hatred". From Yle, the analysis includes: (4) an official Yle press release affirming compliance with European Broadcasting Union (EBU) decisions (i.e. not barring Israel), (5) a Yle analysis article examining why Israel became a central question for Eurovision and (6) a news report on protesters demanding Yle withdraw from Eurovision with commentary from Yle's management. These articles allow a balanced comparison as they cover similar events (e.g. boycott calls, artist responses, official stances) but through different national media lenses. I include the codes identified in each article in the beginning of every article's respective analysis.

BBC Article 1: "Eurovision: Finnish artists want Israel barred from contest over Gaza war"

### Codes

Gaza war, Humanitarian concerns, Israel's participation, Public backlash, Precedent of Russia, Eurovision's political neutrality, Broadcasting responsibility, Compliance with rules,

Ethical concerns, Support for Israel, Public Accountability, Calls for boycott, Israel's exclusion, Artist activism, Public's activism.

### **Problem definition**

In this BBC News piece by Phelan Chatterjee, the problem is framed around the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the resulting public backlash over Israel's Eurovision entry. The article opens with the fact that over 1,400 Finnish music professionals petitioned to ban Israel from Eurovision over alleged war crimes in Gaza, immediately tying Israel's participation to the Gaza war and its toll on civilians (Chatterjee, 2024). The ongoing war is presented as a backdrop that makes Israel's presence in a celebratory contest contentious. This framing emphasizes humanitarian concerns, with the petition branding Israel's actions in Gaza as beyond the pale for a Eurovision participant. Concurrently, the piece highlights that if Israel is not excluded, these artists want Yle (Finland's public broadcaster) to withdraw Finland's entry, underscoring strong calls for boycott (Chatterjee, 2024). The very legitimacy of Israel's participation is questioned, implicitly defining it as a problem in itself. Moreover, the article notes that Eurovision's organizer, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), insists the contest is "non-political" and that Israel's broadcaster complies with the rules, pointing to Eurovision's political neutrality as an official stance (Chatterjee, 2024). Beyond the musicians' petition, Finnish fans amplified the boycott call across social-media channels, showing that the push to exclude Israel was driven by grassroots public activism as well as industry voices. This clash between grassroots moral outrage and institutional neutrality is central to the problem definition. The precedent of Russia's exclusion from Eurovision 2022 is also invoked as Finnish artists accuse Yle of "double standards," reminding that Yle was "among the first to demand a ban on Russia" after the Ukraine invasion, and expecting "the same active defending of values from Yle now" (Chatterjee, 2024). By recalling Russia's ban, the article defines the problem as one of consistency in values: if Russia was barred for war, why not Israel?

### **Causal interpretation**

The article attributes the cause of this controversy primarily to Israel's actions in the Gaza war and the ethical concerns arising from them. The humanitarian devastation in Gaza is implicitly the catalyst for the boycott calls, an open letter accuses Israel of war crimes, clearly laying blame on Israel's conduct as the source of outrage (Chatterjee, 2024). The Gaza war is

described in concrete terms (e.g. thousands of Gazans, mostly women and children, killed in Israel's campaign), which serves to explain why Israeli participation in a music contest is being challenged on moral grounds (Chatterjee, 2024). The Finnish petition and similar demands in other countries are examples of public activism fueled by this sense of injustice. In framing causality, the article suggests that Israel's continued participation in Eurovision, despite the war, is what provoked the strong reaction from artists and the public (Chatterjee, 2024). It also notes Yle's role and broadcasting responsibility: having taken a stand in 2022 against Russia, Yle is now under pressure to act consistently, the cause of the petitioners' anger is the perception that Yle (and by extension the EBU) may be applying a double standard (Chatterjee, 2024). One Yle representative, namely Ville Vilén who at the time served as Yle's head of creative content and media, is quoted differentiating the situations by saying the war is "not quite the same" as Russia's interstate aggression in Ukraine (Chatterjee, 2024). This implies a causal narrative where the nature of the conflict (Israel-Hamas vs. Russia-Ukraine) is used to justify a different response. The BBC's own narration underscores that public-service broadcasters face a dual obligation, to reflect audience outrage yet adhere to EBU rule, making 'broadcasting responsibility' itself a central cause. From Yle's perspective, the cause of Israel not being banned is that the conflict is viewed differently under Eurovision's rules, an argument about compliance with rules and context rather than morality alone. Meanwhile, from the activists' perspective, the cause of their boycott demand is straightforward: Israel's alleged atrocities. The framing balances these interpretations by presenting both the activists' causal logic (Israel's war behavior forcing a moral stand) and the broadcasters' logic (contest rules and conflict type determining inclusion).

### **Moral evaluation**

Morality is a prominent undercurrent in this article, creating a dichotomy of values. On one side, the Finnish artists and other critics take a clear moral stance because they view allowing Israel to participate during an ongoing bloodshed as a violation of Eurovision's values. Terms like "not acceptable" are used, Israel's intent to "polish its image" via Eurovision is condemned as unethical (Chatterjee, 2024). The petitioners explicitly base their argument in values, expecting Yle to defend human rights and peace just as it did in the case of Ukraine. This stance implies that public accountability and moral consistency are at stake: Yle, as a public broadcaster, should answer to the public's sense of right and wrong. The article thus

evaluates Yle's (and EBU's) actions against a moral benchmark set by precedent. In contrast, Yle's officials and the EBU introduce a different value frame, emphasizing rules, context and impartiality. By calling Eurovision a "non-political event" and noting Israel's long participation history, the EBU implicitly offers a media responsibility argument: that broadcasters must keep Eurovision separate from geopolitics. Yle's own representative, Ville Vilén, acknowledges the "gruesome" nature of the war but draws a moral distinction between this conflict and Russia's invasion, suggesting that not all wars automatically merit exclusion from cultural events. This reflects a competing value, neutrality and fairness in applying contest rules. An Israeli official dismissed the genocide accusation as "absurd" and branded the boycott effort "anti-Israel bias" (Chatterjee, 2024), explicitly voicing support for Israel's participation. The framing juxtaposes ethical outrage with institutional principles, creating a moral tension which, in essence, is whether to uphold universal human rights vs. to uphold Eurovision's apolitical ethos.

### **Treatment recommendation**

The article presents sharply contrasting remedies to the problem. The Finnish artists' treatment recommendation is unequivocal: to exclude Israel from the competition. Failing that, they urge Finland's withdrawal in protest, effectively a call for a broad boycott. This recommended action is rooted in a justice frame (punitive action against a violator of values) and aligns with public activism efforts seen in other countries as well. On the other hand, the official solution conveyed by Yle and the EBU is to maintain participation and adhere to Eurovision's normal procedures (compliance with rules). Yle indicates it will "respect the EBU's judgment" on participants, meaning no unilateral withdrawal (Chatterjee, 2024). Instead of immediate action, Yle has opted for dialogue, the article mentions Yle plans to meet with the petition's authors, suggesting a measured, transparent approach rather than an abrupt boycott (Chatterjee, 2024). The EBU's December statement, that the contest is for broadcasters, not governments, doubles as a recommendation to depoliticize the issue, effectively asking stakeholders to let Eurovision proceed detached from the war. This stance reflects a belief in cultural diplomacy, using the contest to unite people (or at least not barring anyone), rather than making it another front for sanctions. Also, by highlighting that Israel's broadcaster "complies with all competition rules," the EBU implies the appropriate remedy is to follow the established rules uniformly. There is also an element of support for artists inherent in this remedy, by not withdrawing, Yle is supporting its own artist's opportunity to

compete and avoiding setting a precedent where performers are penalized for their governments' actions. The article closes by noting the war's devastation in Gaza and Israel's military operations, but it does not suggest any resolution to those facts within the Eurovision context, underscoring that the immediate decision is between boycott versus business-as-usual. The BBC frames the available treatments as a binary debate, activist-led boycott for the sake of human rights versus institutional adherence to Eurovision's unifying mission. The inclusion of both perspectives, along with an Israeli official's dismissal of the boycott calls as "absurd" and biased (Chatterjee, 2024), leaves readers with the sense that this issue remained unresolved at the time a live controversy over what action, if any, Eurovision organizers and participants should take.

## BBC Article 2: "Eurovision: Olly Alexander rejects boycott call over Israel-Gaza war"

### Codes

Gaza war, Humanitarian concerns, Israel's participation, Public backlash, Artist pressure, Artist participation uncertainty, Eurovision's political neutrality, Ethical concerns, Public's activism, Compliance with rules, Broadcasting responsibility, Support for Israel, Cultural diplomacy, Dichotomy of values, Calls for boycott, Artist activism.

### **Problem definition**

This BBC article by Noor Nanji centers on a high-profile individual dilemma that epitomizes the larger issue. The United Kingdom's Eurovision entrant, Olly Alexander, is publicly grappling with whether to boycott the contest due to the Gaza war. The problem is framed as a conflict between widespread calls for boycott on one hand and the ethos of Eurovision as a unifying event on the other. The piece immediately establishes the situation as Olly Alexander "has rejected calls to pull out" of Eurovision in protest of Israel's inclusion, even as he "expressed his wish for peace" in the region (Nanji, 2024). The humanitarian concerns are thus foregrounded, Alexander explicitly shares the "shared goal" of peace and endorses demands like a ceasefire in Gaza and the return of hostages (Nanji, 2024). These statements indicate that the plight of Palestinians is acknowledged as a serious concern motivating the boycott calls. At the same time, Alexander's stance introduces Eurovision's political neutrality and the unifying power of music as counterweights to those calls. He believes the contest should transcend politics, a sentiment echoed later by the EBU. This sets up the

problem as a nuanced one, namely, how should an artist reconcile a brutal war and activist pressure with the ideals of an apolitical cultural celebration? The public backlash aspect is evident in that more than 450 LGBTQ+ artists and groups (a collective named “Queers for Palestine”) had signed an open letter urging him to withdraw. Their activism illustrates the intense artist pressure Alexander faced from within his own community and fan base, a key element of the problem definition. The article also notes that earlier, before he was confirmed as the UK entrant, Alexander had endorsed a statement accusing Israel of genocide, which drew sharp criticism from Israeli officials. This history underscores that Alexander personally is not indifferent to the war. Rather, he is torn between activism and participation. By laying out these facts, the article defines the problem as one of artist activism vs. artistic duty. The tension is summarized through Alexander’s own words, stepping away “wouldn’t bring us any closer to our shared goal”, implying that the problem is figuring out the most effective way to serve the cause of peace.

### **Causal interpretation**

The cause of the boycott calls and Alexander’s predicament is firmly rooted in the Gaza war and its perceived injustice. The article provides context about the war’s progression and toll. The Hamas attack of 7 October 2023 that killed around 1,200 in Israel, and Israel’s subsequent military campaign in Gaza that, by early 2024, had killed over 32,000 people according to Gaza health officials (Nanji, 2024). These facts explain why activists are demanding a cultural boycott as Israel’s military actions are seen as egregious enough to warrant international protest in all arenas, including Eurovision. The ethical concerns stemming from the war (including allegations of genocide) are depicted as the primary catalyst. Alexander’s own acknowledgement that he “wholeheartedly” supports action for a ceasefire and his prayers “that there is an end to the atrocities... in Gaza” (Nanji, 2024) further reinforces that the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe is the driving force behind the calls for him to withdraw. Another causal layer is the role of public activism and pressure. The open letters and social media campaigns by groups like Queers for Palestine didn’t arise in a vacuum but instead were caused by the war and by Israel’s presence in the contest, which activists see as an opportunity to make a statement. The article highlights how quickly this activism coalesced, even on the eve of Eurovision, new letters were being published urging Alexander to reconsider (Nanji, 2024). This shows cause and effect in real time as each development in the conflict or Eurovision’s stance provoked another activist response. There

is also a broadcasting responsibility factor in the background. Alexander's actions have repercussions for the BBC. The article notes that his statements on social media did not break the BBC's guidelines (Nanji, 2024), suggesting that the BBC is carefully managing its impartiality while its representative artist speaks out. That editorial gatekeeping exemplifies how strict compliance with internal rules shapes the course of the controversy. The BBC's stance causes Alexander to frame his words cautiously, indicating that the broadcaster's expectation of political neutrality is a causal influence on how he handles the situation. Alexander's reasoning that his withdrawal would not help achieve peace suggests a causal interpretation in line with cultural diplomacy as he implies that staying in and using his platform for unity and calls for peace, might have a more positive effect. The article frames the cause of this debate as the war's horror prompting activist outrage, while also suggesting that the very principles of Eurovision and responsibilities of being a representative artist cause Alexander to respond in a measured and unity-focused way.

### **Moral evaluation**

Alexander and his critics share a moral condemnation of violence and oppression, they all "share [a] belief in collective liberation for all," as the activists' open letter put it (Nanji, 2024). Where they diverge is on the moral course of action. For the activists, the only ethically correct stance for an artist of conscience is to boycott: "heed the Palestinian call to withdraw," the letter implores (Nanji, 2024), suggesting that true solidarity and moral courage would be to refuse to perform. They argue that continuing to perform effectively normalizes Israel's actions, thus failing a moral litmus test. In their follow-up response, the campaigners state, "the most powerful use of Olly's voice... would be to announce his withdrawal," (Nanji, 2024) framing non-participation as a moral imperative. On the other side, Alexander articulates a different moral viewpoint: he invokes the "unifying power of music" and the importance of maintaining human connection across divides (Nanji, 2024). Implicitly, he is making a moral case that music and inclusion can be forces for good even during war, that engaging in Eurovision can enable "meaningful conversations and connections," (Nanji, 2024) as he and fellow contestants wrote in a joint statement rejecting the boycott. This view treats Eurovision as a rare apolitical safe space where unity might indirectly support peace, a stance aligning with cultural diplomacy and togetherness as moral goods.

The dichotomy of values is clear as one value system prioritizes protest and refusal to engage with Israel as an aggressor, while the other prioritizes dialogue, unity and the continuation of cultural exchange. Alexander does not dismiss the activists' concerns. In fact, his alignment with the ceasefire demand shows he shares their humanitarian values. This lends him credibility as morally serious, even as he reaches a different conclusion on participation. The article also touches on public accountability, Alexander, as a public figure and BBC representative, is implicitly accountable to fans and the public for his choice. His very detailed explanation on social media indicates he felt a responsibility to justify his morals and decision openly. Finally, the EBU's response offers a moral evaluation from the institutional perspective: it "firmly believes" Eurovision should "always transcend politics" and "promote togetherness". This is essentially a defense of neutrality as a moral stance, that keeping politics out of Eurovision is itself the right thing to do to uphold the contest's values. The article presents a respectful airing of both moral positions, showing Alexander's personal values in tension but ultimately siding with the inclusive approach. The presence of an Israeli official's angry rebuttal (calling boycott arguments "absurd" and labeling them "anti-Israel bias") adds another moral layer. From the Israeli standpoint, the boycotters are morally wrong and prejudiced.

### **Treatment recommendation**

The central treatment question here is whether to boycott or to engage and advocate for peace. Alexander's decision, and thus the article's key recommendation by example, is to stay in the contest and use it as a platform for good. He and eight other contestants issue a collective statement that explicitly rejects calls for boycott. Their proposed remedy is to harness Eurovision's massive audience to "call for peace," as Alexander says he and others plan to do together on the Eurovision stage. Rather than isolating Israel by refusing to participate, they intend to appear and spread messages of unity and ceasefire, hoping to influence hearts and minds. In practical terms, Alexander is recommending a strategy of engagement over withdrawal, implying that silence (via boycott) would be less effective than speaking up from within. Conversely, the activists' recommended treatment is unequivocal withdrawal. They want Alexander to make a powerful statement by not performing, thereby denying Israel the normality of his participation. The article gives their viewpoint a fair hearing, quoting the letter and Instagram posts where they double down on urging him to step away. The EBU's contribution to the discussion comes at the end, effectively reinforcing

Alexander's choice. The EBU reiterates that the contest should "transcend politics" and bring people together, and even echoes the phrase "unifying power of music," (Nanji, 2024) which not coincidentally is Eurovision's slogan "United By Music".

In framing terms, the EBU is recommending strict compliance with the rules and norms of Eurovision, i.e. all scheduled artists should perform. No country should be uninvited unless it violates broadcast rules, and political disputes should be left outside the arena. By staying neutral, the EBU suggests it treats all participants equally and keeps the focus on the music. Another aspect of treatment in the article is how Alexander navigates the BBC's rules. The article notes that he was not speaking on behalf of the BBC and did not break social media guidelines (Nanji, 2024). The BBC's own remedy for such situations is to ensure its talent stays within impartiality lines, essentially an internal compliance measure. Alexander's careful public messaging, coordinated with the broadcaster's standards, shows an effort to be transparent about his views while respecting institutional boundaries. This article's narrative leans toward validating the choice of continued participation coupled with advocacy (as the more effective or unifying remedy), while also acknowledging the passionate push for a boycott as an alternative path. By including outcomes, Israel indeed remained in Eurovision and even altered its song to remove political overtones, the article suggests that engagement was the route taken, rightly or wrongly, by those involved and that the issue then shifted to ensuring Eurovision's spirit of unity was upheld during the event.

### BBC Article 3: "Israel's Eurovision team accuse rivals of 'hatred'"

#### Codes

Gaza war, Humanitarian concerns, Safety concerns, Israel's participation, Public backlash, Eurovision's political neutrality, Artist pressure, Public's activism, Potential consequences of an Israeli victory, Artist activism, Broadcasting responsibility, Support for Israel, Ethical concerns, Dichotomy of values, Public Accountability, Compliance with rules.

#### **Problem definition**

Ian Youngs' BBC article frames the problem not as whether Israel should participate, but rather the fallout during the Eurovision event due to Israel's participation. The core issue is presented as an unprecedented level of hostility and politicization at Eurovision 2024, centering on Israel's delegation. According to Israel's public broadcaster (Kan), their team

faced “an unprecedented display of hatred” from other countries’ delegations and artists, solely because they were Israelis present at the contest (Youngs, 2024). The problem here is defined by public backlash manifesting within Eurovision itself: protests and breaches of etiquette aimed at the Israeli entrants. The article makes clear that the event was “partly overshadowed” by protests over Israel’s participation, owing to the “humanitarian cost” of its war on Hamas (Youngs, 2024). Thus, the Gaza war again underpins the tension, but the problem is no longer abstract or future-oriented (as in the previous articles). It is happening in real time at the contest.

We see a breakdown of Eurovision’s usual veneer of unity, a direct challenge to the contest’s political neutrality. The piece highlights incidents, for example, some delegations allegedly did not “respect the spirit of the rules,” according to organizers (Youngs, 2024). The Israeli singer, Eden Golan, received a mix of boos and cheers from the audience, indicating a highly charged atmosphere. The mixed crowd reaction underscores safety concerns as the producers had already briefed delegations on emergency-exit drills in case protests spilled into the arena. There were reports of the Israeli delegation filming other contestants without permission and, conversely, other artists openly condemning Israel’s presence or actions (Youngs, 2024). The media responsibility angle is also part of the problem framing. Kan is both a participant and a broadcaster, and it was accused by an Irish contestant Bambie Thug of “inciting violence” (Youngs, 2024) against them through comments made in Kan’s coverage of Eurovision. That suggests the problem includes alleged misconduct by Israel’s own media team, not just anti-Israel sentiment. The article defines the problem as a collapse of Eurovision’s usual camaraderie, a mutual resentment between the Israeli delegation and several other delegations, which is extraordinary for an event premised on friendly international exchange. It is essentially a narrative of Eurovision being dragged into the political conflicts it tries to avoid, with Israel’s participation acting as the flashpoint. Commentators also note that if Israel were to win, the practical and political feasibility of hosting the next contest in a conflict zone would raise an additional layer of uncertainty.

### **Causal interpretation**

The article offers multiple, sometimes competing, explanations for why the Malmö contest saw such acrimony. From the Israeli delegation’s perspective (as voiced by the Kan spokesman), the cause is clear. They were treated with hate “solely because” they are Israelis at a time of war. In other words, Kan blames politically motivated bias among other

artists/countries; the war has turned Israel into a pariah for some, and that prejudice caused others to break decorum. This view implies Israel did nothing within the contest to provoke the anger, it's the external war and anti-Israel sentiment carrying over into Eurovision. On the other hand, the article documents specific grievances that suggest a more complex causality. For instance, Dutch and Irish entrants accused the Israeli team of misbehavior (filming others without consent, making snide on-air remarks), hinting that actions by the Israeli delegation or media may have contributed to the conflict. Ireland's Bambie Thug had been especially vocally pro-Palestinian and felt targeted by Kan's commentators who told viewers to "prepare your curses" for that performer, an incident that Bambie Thug says "incited violence" (Youngs, 2024). This suggests a media responsibility cause: if a broadcaster (Kan) abandoned neutrality and made antagonistic comments, it could cause outrage among participants.

Additionally, the war itself is a root cause. Had Israel not been at war with Hamas (with the attendant civilian suffering), there likely wouldn't be widespread protests or hostile sentiments at this level at Eurovision. The humanitarian cost in Gaza is explicitly cited as the reason protests occurred, so the war fuels the moral and emotional cause behind many delegations' antagonism. The Eurovision rules and norms also play into causality, or the lack of enforcement thereof. The article mentions that organizers noted some delegations didn't respect the rules or the "spirit" of the contest. That implies that the EBU either failed to preemptively manage tensions or that its ethos of non-political conduct was not upheld. Thus, one could interpret that a cause of the chaotic situation was insufficient compliance with (or enforcement of) rules designed to keep politics out. A further cause explored is artist pressure and public backlash as an ongoing cycle: certain artists (like those from Ireland, Netherlands, Lithuania) felt pressure from their own beliefs or audiences to make a statement against Israel, causing them to act out (from yawning ostentatiously during Israel's press conference to wearing Palestinian symbols). Each such act in turn provoked Israel's team to feel under siege. The article portrays a feedback loop of provocation and retaliation, with the Gaza war at its center. No single side is depicted as solely responsible, instead, the conflict is shown as escalating because each party (Israeli and others) perceives the other as breaching norms, hatred begetting defensiveness, and vice versa. Ultimately, the EBU intervening to promise a review of "the events... to move forward in a positive way" (Youngs, 2024) acknowledges that causes were manifold and need addressing.

### **Moral evaluation**

This article conveys a morally charged atmosphere with dueling narratives of right and wrong. Kan's statement casts the Israeli delegation as morally wronged, innocent participants who "maintained a dignified and respectful approach... unlike some other delegations" (Youngs, 2024). The Kan spokesman went further, praising Eden Golan as 'a shining example of Israeli resilience' and insisting Israel's presence enriched the contest (Youngs, 2024), an explicit show of support for Israel's entry. The implication is a moral judgment against those other countries' teams: that it was unethical and against Eurovision values to single out and ostracize Israel's crew. By emphasizing that Israel strove to "foster unity around music" (Youngs, 2024) despite the hostility, Kan positions itself on the moral high ground of Eurovision's ideals. The dichotomy of values is quite stark as Israel's team claims to uphold unity and respect (contest values) whereas others allowed political hatred to override those values. Conversely, from the perspective of contestants like Bambie Thug or the Dutch singer Joost Klein, a different moral stance emerges. They appear to view Israel's presence (and certainly Kan's on-air commentary) as morally unacceptable in light of the war. For example, Klein's interjection "Why not?" when an Israeli participant was spared a tough war question suggests a belief that Israel should be held to account even on the Eurovision stage, essentially a moral challenge to giving Israel a pass. Bambie Thug explicitly "hope[d] next year [Kan] won't be able to compete" due to their conduct (Youngs, 2024), indicating a moral line was crossed by the Israeli broadcaster through perceived incitement. Thus, those individuals morally evaluate Kan's behavior as violating Eurovision's spirit (the very charge Israel levies at others).

The media responsibility theme surfaces as a moral issue. A broadcaster using its platform to rally negative sentiment against an artist is portrayed as a serious breach of ethics by the Irish contestant. Additionally, there is a layer of moral evaluation in the organizers' statements. The EBU's expression of "regret" over delegations not respecting the competition's spirit is a gentle reprimand that assigns moral fault without naming names. It reinforces public accountability and norms, all participants are expected to adhere to values of respect and unity, and it is regrettable (i.e. wrong) that some did not. The article also notes that Lithuania's entrant regretted performing after Israel in the running order because "the crowd being so intense" was extremely difficult. This comment conveys how the charged moral/political environment made the contest experience harrowing. The article leads with Israel's account of being hated and including quotes of their pride in Eden Golan's dignified performance under pressure (she "handled the task admirably... we could not be more

proud”) (Youngs, 2024). It ensures the Israeli side, feeling isolated, is heard. This balances the moral narrative, given that much Western media attention was on pro-Palestinian protests. To put it short, the moral evaluation in this frame is not one-dimensional. It highlights a breakdown of the shared values that Eurovision preaches, with each side accusing the other of moral failure. The EBU’s perspective provides the overarching moral: the contest’s values were not upheld, and that is lamentable.

### **Treatment recommendation**

The article points toward remedies centered on restoring Eurovision’s normalcy and enforcing its apolitical norms. The immediate recommendations are coming from the EBU in the form of a thorough review of the incidents and behavior is promised. The EBU states that its governing bodies, along with heads of delegation, will “review the events... to ensure the values of the event are respected by everyone” moving forward (Youngs, 2024). This is effectively a call for recommitment to compliance with rules and the spirit of the contest. The implication is that rules may be clarified or strengthened so that political or hostile actions (whether it’s protest gestures or aggressive commentary) are curtailed in the future. Kan’s protest suggests they want the EBU to reprimand or sanction those delegations that behaved in an “anti-Israeli” manner. Their statement and the highlighting of rule breaches serve as an appeal for Eurovision authorities to enforce impartial conduct rules strictly (holding others accountable). Meanwhile, voices from the other side (like the Irish and Dutch contestants) implicitly recommend that Israel’s broadcaster be held to account, Bambie Thug hoped Kan would face a ban for breaking the rules. Thus, one treatment recommendation arising is that offenders of Eurovision’s code of conduct should face consequences, whether those offenders are Israel’s team or others. Indeed, the article notes one concrete outcome: the Netherlands’ Joost Klein was disqualified two days later, though officially for an unrelated alleged personal misconduct incident. Still, the swift disqualification might be seen as indicative of organizers taking a hard line on rule-breaking behavior.

Finally, the article touches on an instance of compromise that serves as a kind of remedial action. Portugal’s performance had been briefly withheld from YouTube because their singer had Palestinian symbols painted on her nails, but the EBU clarified the delay and addressed it. This indicates that the EBU was actively managing potential political symbols in real time, a form of remedial enforcement of neutrality. As a whole, the article suggests that the solution lies in reaffirming Eurovision’s apolitical rules and ensuring transparency and

fairness when those rules are breached. The events in Malmö are treated as a lesson that will lead to future measures to prevent such politicized conflict at Eurovision. Implicitly, all sides are being guided back to the idea that Eurovision should be “United by Music,” not divided by war. This is a sentiment the EBU explicitly voiced in the companion article about Olly Alexander and echoed in the need for a post-contest course correction here.

Yle press release 4: “Yle complies with the EBU’s decisions on Eurovision Song Contest participants – UMK winner Windows95man to represent Finland”

### Codes

Israel’s participation, Artist participation uncertainty, Broadcasting responsibility, Calls for boycott, Gaza war, Ethical concerns, Public’s activism, Compliance with rules, Eurovision’s political neutrality, Dichotomy of values, Cultural diplomacy, Public Accountability, Israel’s exclusion, Artist activism.

### **Problem definition**

This press release from Yle on 20 February 2024 frames the problem as one of whether Finland will participate in Eurovision given the controversy around Israel. It addresses the uncertainty of artist participation that had loomed due to calls for boycott. By its title and opening lines, the article makes clear Yle’s stance: Finland’s entry (the UMK24 winner, Windows95man) will compete and Yle will abide by the European Broadcasting Union’s decision on participants. The underlying problem prompting this statement is the debate in Finland (and elsewhere) about Israel’s inclusion in Eurovision amid the Gaza war. The January petition signed by more than 1,500 Finnish musicians exemplifies the artist activism that has driven much of this debate. Before Finland’s national final, UMK contestant Jesse Markin had already said he would refuse to go to Malmö if Israel were still in, a reminder that some artists’ very participation hung in the balance. Finnish duo Windows95man themselves described feeling intense pressure from fans and peers to boycott before ultimately deciding to stay in the contest. The article acknowledges there are “various justified perspectives related to this issue,” (Yle, 2024). Yle’s media chief later clarified that the broadcaster would “respect the EBU’s collective judgment while conveying Finland’s internal debate,” (Yle, 2024) positioning Yle as simultaneously rule-compliant and publicly accountable.

The mention that Yle discussed the decision “together with the winner of UMK” (Yle, 2024) indicates that even the Finnish artist’s willingness to participate has been in question, again highlighting artist participation uncertainty as a key element of the problem. The context for this uncertainty is, of course, the war. Although not described in detail in this press release, the Gaza conflict and Israel’s military actions form the backdrop that made Israel’s Eurovision entry “the issue” in the first place. The problem is essentially: How should Yle respond to the war-related pressure to boycott Israel in Eurovision? By framing their compliance with EBU and continuing preparations, Yle implicitly defines the problem as one requiring a policy decision and clarity for moving forward.

### **Causal interpretation**

Yle’s announcement hints at the causes behind their decision and the situation at large. First and foremost, the cause of this dilemma is the Gaza war and its ethical implications, the only reason Yle’s participation would be in doubt is because Israel’s war in Gaza has provoked outrage and calls for exclusion. While the article doesn’t recount the war, it alludes to “various justified perspectives” on the issue, which is a diplomatic nod to the ethical concerns many have. The fact that the Finnish public discourse necessitated informing the EBU “about the discussion in Finland and the Finnish representative’s view” underscores that Finnish activists and even some politicians were actively pushing for a boycott. This public activism is a direct cause of Yle’s deliberations, without the petition and public debate, Yle likely wouldn’t need to issue such a statement. The article quotes Ville Vilén (Yle’s head of creative content and media) as saying Yle will respect the EBU’s judgment on participating broadcasters (Yle, 2024). This suggests that, from Yle’s perspective, the cause for proceeding is deference to the EBU’s authority and the rules of the contest (cultural/organizational causes). In other words, the existence of a centralized decision-maker (EBU) and the principle that Eurovision entries are decided by that body, not by individual countries’ politics, is a cause for Yle’s compliance.

Additionally, the artist Windows95man (Teemu Keisteri and Henri Piispanen) provides insight into the causal reasoning behind their personal decision. They say that while they believe excluding Israel would be “the only correct decision” by the EBU, they “do not feel that withdrawing ourselves would make an impact” (Yle, 2024). This reflects a cause-and-effect logic. A withdrawal by Finland alone is seen as ineffectual (no causal power) in changing the situation. Instead, they suggest using their platform collectively with

other contestants to pressure decision-makers, implying that coordinated influence behind the scenes might cause the EBU to rethink or at least address Israel's inclusion. In essence, they identify a different causal path in not boycotting, but engaging in dialogue and perhaps subtle protest to eventually cause change. The article also touches on cultural diplomacy as a cause or motivation. By saying "from now on, we will focus on the music and building the show," (Yle, 2024) the artists imply that part of the reasoning is to not let politics derail the cultural mission of representing Finland. Implicitly, the hope that "the situation in the Middle East will resolve as soon as possible" (Yle, 2024) shows that all parties understand the war's continuation is the root cause of the discomfort. If peace returned, the controversy would fade. This press release suggests that the Gaza war caused a wave of public and internal debate, which in turn caused Yle to carefully weigh its decision. Ultimately, the combination of EBU's stance (structural cause) and a strategic calculation that a boycott wouldn't effectively help (pragmatic cause) led Yle and its artist to choose participation with eyes open to the moral complexity.

### **Moral evaluation**

Yle acknowledges that there are multiple "justified" points of view, a subtle validation of the moral concerns raised by those opposed to Israel's participation. This suggests Yle sees legitimacy in the humanitarian and ethical objections, in other words, the suffering in Gaza making Israel's presence problematic. There is a dichotomy of values present. On one side, the value of solidarity with victims of war and taking a principled stand (which would favor boycott), and on the other, the value of international cooperation and rule-following in Eurovision. Yle's resolution of this dichotomy leans toward the latter, but with respect for the former. The Windows95man quote exemplifies this balance. Morally, the artists admit "the only correct decision... would be to exclude Israel," (Yle, 2024) revealing they share the ethical judgment that Israel's actions are incompatible with contest values. Yet in the same breath, they choose a path that avoids a direct moral grandstand (not withdrawing themselves), suggesting a more pragmatic or consequentialist ethics. They doubt a boycott's effectiveness and perhaps weigh the harm it would cause against its symbolic value. They instead plan to use their participation to "apply pressure" (Yle, 2024) alongside others, which is a morally interesting compromise as it tries to reconcile doing something about the injustice without breaking Eurovision apart. The article's reference to hoping for a resolution

in the Middle East is another moral signal. It places Yle on the side of peace and humanitarian relief without assigning blame or taking a political stance.

In terms of public accountability, Yle is implicitly holding itself accountable to Finnish audiences by making this public statement. Rather than quietly ignoring the petition, Yle engages with it and explains its position, which is an ethical act of transparency and responsibility. It doesn't celebrate the decision as purely positive; it acknowledges difficulty: "The decision was difficult, but now it has been made," (Yle, 2024) the artists note. Yle frames this restraint as broadcasting responsibility, the duty to serve the public without letting editorialising eclipse factual reporting. This phrasing indicates moral ambivalence, a recognition that no option was ideal. Ultimately, Yle frames its choice as the most reasonable ethical course under the circumstances. In other words, respect the contest's collective rules and participate in good faith, while not dismissing the moral debate swirling around Israel's Eurovision entry.

### **Treatment recommendation**

The press release is effectively announcing the chosen treatment. Yle and Finland's entrant will proceed with Eurovision participation, following the EBU's decision. In doing so, Yle is advocating for a remedy of engagement and influence from within rather than open boycott. The explicit recommendation from Yle is to comply with EBU's rules and contest structure, that is to say, to let Israel participate because the EBU has decreed it so, and not to politicize Finland's own involvement. At the same time, Yle's messaging and the artist's comments incorporate a recommendation for ongoing dialogue and pressure through proper channels. Windows95man mentions initiating discussions with other countries' representatives to explore ways to collectively influence the EBU. This suggests a remedy of coordinated diplomacy: working behind the scenes within the Eurovision community to address the concerns about Israel, rather than making a unilateral exit. It's an approach that values cultural diplomacy, leveraging the goodwill and unity of the contest to perhaps nudge decision-makers, as opposed to breaking that unity with a boycott. The article, by referencing that Yle "has informed the EBU about the discussion in Finland," also implies a call for broadcaster responsibility and transparency at the organizational level. Yle isn't hiding the fact that many want Israel excluded: they have formally conveyed these sentiments to the EBU.

The underlying recommendation here is that issues like this should be handled through communication within the Eurovision governance framework, not by sudden pull-outs. Additionally, the inclusion of the artists' statement that they will "focus on the music and building the show" (Yle, 2024) going forward serves as a reassurance to the public that the performance aspect will take priority now. This is recommending a return to normal Eurovision enthusiasm as a way to move past the strife, essentially suggesting that the best remedy for the moment is to put on a good show for Finland. By emphasizing respecting the EBU and hoping for peace, Yle recommends a path that does not burn any bridges. In essence, the remedy being advanced is one of measured cooperation: abide by the collective rules (so as not to undermine the contest's integrity) but remain cognizant of the moral issues (so continue the conversation in appropriate ways). The press release does not discuss punitive measures or ultimatums. It looks ahead to May's contest in Malmö, implicitly recommending that all focus now shift to preparing for that event within the existing framework.

## Yle Article 5: "This is how Israel became the big question of Eurovision"

### Codes

Gaza war, Humanitarian concerns, Israel's participation, Eurovision's political neutrality, Public backlash, Safety concerns, Artist participation uncertainty, Artist pressure, Precedent of Russia, Public's activism, Broadcasting responsibility, Compliance with rules, Ethical concerns, Dichotomy of values, Public Accountability, Calls for boycott, Israel's exclusion, Artist activism.

### **Problem definition**

This analysis piece by Anton Vanha-Majamaa (published 9 May 2024) provides a narrative of how Israel's Eurovision entry turned into a major controversy, thereby framing the problem in a broad temporal context. It defines the problem as the convergence of a major humanitarian crisis with the normally apolitical Eurovision Song Contest, resulting in an unprecedented challenge to the contest's inclusivity. The article explicitly calls Israel's 2024 entry "the most contested performance in years" (Vanha-Majamaa, 2024). The Gaza war and its atrocities are foregrounded to explain why this entry is so controversial. The article recounts how Hamas's terror attack on 7 October 2023 ignited the war, Israel's subsequent heavy military response in Gaza and the grim statistics of casualties (Vanha-Majamaa, 2024). By detailing these

events, the article establishes that a profound humanitarian concern underlies the issue. From there, it outlines the wave of calls for boycott that swept across Europe in late 2023. Multiple countries, notably in the Nordics and Ireland, demanded that the EBU exclude Israel, or threatened their own boycotts (Vanha-Majamaa, 2024). The Finnish case is highlighted: in January, a group of Finnish musicians (over 1,500 signatories) petitioned Yle to pressure the EBU to oust Israel or else have Yle withdraw Finland (Vanha-Majamaa, 2024).

Israel's participation is being questioned on moral and political grounds widely. In framing the problem, the article contrasts these boycott demands with the Eurovision organisers' firm stance. As early as December, the EBU made clear that Israel would participate, invoking the principle that the contest is between broadcasters, not governments. This underscores Eurovision's political neutrality policy as a central factor in the controversy. Essentially, the problem is presented as a clash between public opinion (outraged by war) and institutional policy (preserving contest neutrality). The article also mentions that protests were expected in Malmö during Eurovision week and even the possibility of booing during Israel's performance, illustrating how the problem manifests in practice in the contest arena and city through public demonstrations. Additionally, the piece notes involvement of politicians, e.g., Finnish members of parliament on Yle's governing council publicly advocated for boycott (though not as an official Yle position), which shows the breadth of the issue from music fans to policymakers. By walking through "how Israel became the big question," the article clearly defines the problem as the entanglement of a violent geopolitical conflict with Europe's beloved music competition, raising questions about values, consistency, and the role of politics in Eurovision.

### **Causal interpretation**

Vanha-Majamaa's chronology implicitly and explicitly traces the causes that turned Israel's entry into a flashpoint. The immediate cause is the war itself, specifically, the graphic violence and high civilian death toll in Gaza. The war provided the catalyst for public outcry; as the article puts it, the horrific events in Gaza "dominated the news" in late 2023 and set the stage for Eurovision-related protests (Vanha-Majamaa, 2024). A further cause identified is the public backlash across Europe. The narrative notes that many in Europe could not reconcile the images of suffering in Gaza with Israel partaking in a celebratory contest. This led to grassroots and cultural figures mobilizing, cause and effect can be seen where the war news directly spurred artists and fans to demand action. The article explicitly cites precedents

to explain this reaction: it draws a parallel to Russia's exclusion in 2022 after invading Ukraine, implying that precedent caused people to expect a similar response for Israel. Indeed, when the EBU chose not to ban Israel, the decision sparked widespread controversy. Finnish petitioners and others cited the banning of Russia as a precedent, arguing that Israel should be treated the same way. Yet, unlike Russia in 2022, Israel retains strong diplomatic ties with many European states, illustrating how cultural diplomacy complicates a pure rule-based comparison. The precedent of Russia is framed as a key reference point that fueled the debate and lent it urgency.

The article also details how the EBU's decision (or lack of action) was a turning point. By announcing in December that Israel stays, the EBU effectively caused the focus to shift to national broadcasters, for instance, causing activists to press Yle to take a stand. In Finland, the cause of Yle having to respond was this EBU stance combined with public and even political pressure at home. The timeline indicates that Yle's high-level discussions with the EBU and internally (including at the board level with politicians chiming in) were caused by the mounting public activism. Another causal factor mentioned is compliance with rules as the reason EBU gave for keeping Israel was that Eurovision is between broadcasters, not governments, a rule invoked to justify inclusion. That rule in itself is a structural cause of why the controversy didn't automatically resolve by kicking Israel, or more specifically Israel's public broadcaster, out. The article also suggests that differences in international relations caused a different approach to Israel versus Russia. For example, it notes that many countries (including Finland) continued to maintain relations, unlike the near-universal condemnation and isolation of Russia in 2022. This point is also made by Ville Vilén, cited in a follow-up Yle piece, implying the geopolitical context caused a less unified response to Israel's war. The article interprets the controversy as arising from the war's humanitarian impact (primary cause) and being amplified by prior Eurovision decisions and public expectations (secondary causes). It portrays the EBU's neutrality policy as a double-edged cause as it prevented automatic exclusion, thereby causing protest efforts to escalate, but it is also the reason Israel's presence could be justified by organizers.

### **Moral evaluation**

Throughout the article, there is an undercurrent of moral questioning about what Eurovision should represent in the face of war. The very phrase "This is how Israel became the big question for Eurovision" (Vanha-Majamaa, 2024) implies a question of principle as much as

logistics. The article lays out the moral arguments made by various actors. There's clearly a dichotomy of values presented. One value is humanitarian solidarity and peace, which for many translates to opposing Israel's inclusion, and the other is the value of Eurovision as an apolitical zone and cultural continuity. The humanitarian perspective is given weight by the vivid descriptions of carnage in Gaza and the mention that South Africa even filed a genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice. These facts serve to validate why morally, people might view Israel's participation as untenable. The article doesn't explicitly say "this is wrong," but by including such details, it shows the moral horror that underpins the boycott calls. One is also able to see the moral stance of activists and some officials. For instance, Finnish MPs in Yle's council publicly advocated boycotting Israel's participation (Vanha-Majamaa, 2024). Though not binding, their stance reflects a moral judgment that Finland should not be party to a contest with a country engaged in what they likely see as unjust warfare.

On the other side, the article communicates the Eurovision/EBU moral position, which is the insistence that "broadcasters compete, not governments". This is a moral argument from the EBU's side about preserving unity and cultural exchange even when nations are at war. The article, neutrally, lays out that this stance has been taken, without overt critique, allowing the reader to weigh it against the protesters' moral argument. There's also a nuanced moral evaluation in the portion discussing the protests and potential booing in Malmö. The anticipation of booing Israel's performer and the reality of heavy security in the city (with heavily armed vehicles outside the arena) paints a picture of how far removed the situation is from Eurovision's usual cheerful ethos.

The article also notes that many European viewers still see Eurovision simply as a song contest, whereas in the Nordics it's become a platform for protest this year. By explaining Eden Golan's journey and odds, the article humanizes Israel's representative as a young artist about to perform for millions. It thereby reminds readers that behind the politics is a person on stage, which injects some empathy into the equation. Similarly, mentioning how Finland's own artist and delegation grappled with the issue (citing their petition, discussions, etc.) suggests an understanding of the pressure on artists. In this way, the moral evaluation is not one-sided but exploratory. This article invites readers to reflect on how Eurovision's ideals are being tested by real-world atrocities and whether sticking to neutrality is morally defensible or cowardly. It doesn't answer outright but provides the elements of the debate.

## **Treatment recommendation**

In tracing the timeline, Vanha-Majamaa's article also illuminates what courses of action were proposed or taken at each stage, effectively covering various treatment recommendations that emerged. Early on, the dominant recommendation from activists and some public figures was Israel's exclusion from Eurovision, a direct remedy to the moral problem identified. The article documents that recommendation clearly as widespread calls for the EBU to ban Israel, and for national broadcasters like Yle to boycott if the ban didn't happen. This remedy is rooted in upholding ethical consistency (as with Russia 2022) and in sending a message of disapproval of Israel's war conduct. Opposite that, the EBU's recommendation (and eventual action) was to maintain inclusion and stick to the rules, essentially, no change in Eurovision lineup. This can be seen as a recommendation of compliance with rules and continuity. In other words, keep politics out and proceed normally. As the article shows, Yle's own resolution (by February, as detailed in the previous press release) was to comply but also be transparent and engage in dialogue. Vanha-Majamaa notes that by May, Yle's top leadership acknowledged the issue and planned to evaluate it after the contest (Vanha-Majamaa, 2024). The article doesn't delve into that May 11 statement, but it's relevant that Yle recommended a post-event review of including Israel, essentially a call for accountability and reflection once the dust settles.

Another remedy featured is the approach taken by Finland's artist and others. This is the support for artists and unity while subtly pushing for change. When Windows95man decided not to quit but to use his platform collectively, it represented a compromise solution. The article concludes by pointing out Israel is performing in the second semifinal and is very likely to make the final. The text mentions heavy security and potential booing, implying that handling the situation requires preparation rather than cancellation. The mention of Malmö's heightened policing links the remedy to safety concerns, logistical security measures become a practical form of conflict mitigation. This presents the spectrum of remedies debated: boycott/exclusion vs. engagement/neutrality, and it shows that the path taken was engagement (with an understanding that the debate isn't over). The tone suggests that this "big question" remained somewhat open-ended at the time of the semifinal and the real resolution would only come in hindsight when broadcasters and the EBU reviewed the decision after Eurovision.

## Yle Article 6: “Protesters demand Yle withdraw from Eurovision – here’s how Yle’s Ville Vilén responds”

### Codes

Gaza war, Humanitarian concerns, Israel’s participation, Calls for boycott, Public backlash, Public’s activism, Safety concerns, Potential consequences of an Israeli victory, Eurovision’s political neutrality, Precedent of Russia, Compliance with rules, Broadcasting responsibility, Ethical concerns, Dichotomy of values, Public Accountability, Israel’s exclusion.

### **Problem definition**

This news report by Laura Kangas (11 May 2024) captures a climactic moment of the controversy. On the morning of Eurovision’s grand final, protesters entered Yle’s headquarters in Helsinki demanding Yle pull out of the contest because of Israel’s participation (Kangas, 2024). The article leads with the protest: a “group of protesters arrived at Yle’s lobby... demanding Yle withdraw from Eurovision because Israel is participating in the competition” (Kangas, 2024). This scene makes the calls for boycott extremely concrete, not just petitions now, but physical demonstrations. It underscores the public backlash and intensity of feeling in Finland over the issue at the final hour. The presence of protesters at Yle signals that, for these activists, Yle’s stance is part of the problem. They view Yle’s continued participation as complicity. The article notes that the protesters chanted slogans and stayed for a few hours (Kangas, 2024), indicating a peaceful but firm act of civil disobedience. Protesters stressed that the real goal is Israel’s outright exclusion from the contest, Yle’s withdrawal was framed as leverage to force that ban. This directly defines the problem as Yle facing public pressure to reconcile its role as a public service media with ethical concerns about the Gaza war. The Gaza war itself is explicitly cited as the cause of outrage: “Israel’s participation has sparked strong criticism, as Israel is waging war in the Palestinian territory of Gaza,” the article explains (Kangas, 2024). This reaffirms that the war’s context is inseparable from the Eurovision issue, the war is the reason these protests and demands exist.

The article recaps that this protest is not isolated: “boycott demands have been present throughout the spring,” it says, referencing the earlier musician petition and similar calls in other countries (Kangas, 2024). So the problem is persistent and widespread activism

colliding with Eurovision's timeline. A new facet introduced is the potential consequences of an Israeli victory, towards the end, Vilén is asked hypothetically about Israel winning Eurovision. This suggests that part of the problem now being considered is the future scenario: if Israel wins, how will the next contest be handled? Vilén's response: "I see it as quite impossible that the contest would be held in Israel, at least in this situation" (Kangas, 2024), highlights that the prospect is problematic enough to acknowledge publicly. Thus, the problem definition has evolved to include forward-looking concerns, i.e. the practicality and ethics of possibly hosting Eurovision in a war-torn context. The problem is defined as Yle being caught between its commitment to Eurovision and a segment of the public's moral outrage over Israel's war, with immediate protests and looming questions about the contest's integrity depending on outcomes.

### **Causal interpretation**

Kangas's article identifies both the root causes and immediate triggers of this incident. The fundamental cause is again the war in Gaza as without it, no one would be protesting Eurovision participation. The article reiterates the timeline of the war's outbreak. The Hamas attack on 7 October, with over 1,100 Israelis killed and 240 taken hostage, and Israel's military response from 27 October onward, including the statistic of nearly 35,000 Gazans killed (Kangas, 2024). By providing these figures, the piece firmly anchors the cause of public anger in the humanitarian catastrophe of the war. This context explains why protesters felt Eurovision cannot just carry on normally. Another cause illustrated is the build-up of public activism. The article references the January petition by Finnish musicians and notes boycott demands in other Nordic countries and Ireland (Kangas, 2024). This indicates that the protest at Yle is a culmination of months of campaigning a cause-and-effect progression where earlier efforts led to this final demonstration when those calls were not heeded.

The article also highlights compliance with rules as a contentious point. It mentions the EBU's justification for Israel's inclusion: "the EBU has justified Israel's participation by saying that in Eurovision, broadcasters compete, not countries' governments" (Kangas, 2024). This shows the rationale that led Yle and others to stick with Eurovision, that rule caused Yle to remain, which in turn caused frustration among protesters. Ville Vilén explains Yle's cause for its decision. When the Israel issue arose, Yle "made a decision in the company to trust the EBU's judgment, because this is a competition organized by the EBU" (Kangas, 2024). Here, Eurovision's political neutrality principle and deference to EBU are

given as the cause for Yle's stance. Additionally, Vilén elaborates on why 2022's response to Russia can't be simply replicated: "In Israel's case the situation is different, because many countries, including Finland, support Israel's actions in Gaza in various ways and have not cut cooperation" (Kangas, 2024). This points to a precedent of Russia cause argument. Russia's exclusion was easier because the geopolitical consensus and actions were in line, whereas with Israel, Western governments (cause: political alliances) treat it differently, so Eurovision did too. In essence, he attributes the divergence to broader international politics, a cause beyond Eurovision's own rules. Meanwhile, from the protesters' perspective, the cause of Yle's "failure" to act is seen as moral complacency or prioritizing spectacle over principles. They explicitly say Israel is using Eurovision as a platform to burnish its image, implying that not stopping that is a cause for moral outrage. Finally, the mention of public's activism causing direct confrontation is clear. The protesters took matters into their own hands, causing a disruption at Yle. The article portrays a scenario where the war precipitated a cascade of activism and tough decisions. Yle's choice to abide by EBU's rule caused dissatisfaction, and differences from the Russia precedent caused confusion or accusations of inconsistency, culminating in the protest.

### **Moral evaluation**

This article vividly captures the moral divide and the attempt to morally justify decisions. On one side, the protesters are guided by a strong moral conviction that it is wrong for Yle to partake in Eurovision with Israel amid the war. Their statement frames Eurovision as giving Israel "a platform to polish its own image", a morally objectionable notion if one views Israel as committing atrocities. The protesters chanting and persistence reflect their moral urgency. They are essentially accusing Yle of betraying humanitarian values or at least demanding Yle live up to what they see as its moral responsibility (as some earlier petition signatories noted, Yle took a values-based stand on Russia, so it should now as well). They labelled Israel's war conduct "blatant war-crimes," arguing that letting the country perform violates Eurovision's ethical foundations. Public accountability is a key moral theme here as the protesters seek to hold Yle accountable to the Finnish public's sense of ethics, implying that Yle's decision is under moral scrutiny. On the other side, Ville Vilén's response provides Yle's moral reasoning. He expresses that it's "unfortunate that the war is being discussed in connection with the contest" and notes how many in Europe still view it purely as a music competition (Kangas, 2024). This conveys a sentiment that Eurovision ideally should remain an innocent

and apolitical event, implying a moral preference for keeping this sphere separate from war debates. He acknowledges the protests are stronger in the Nordic countries, tacitly acknowledging differing moral sensibilities in different regions. When he says each broadcaster and the EBU should draw conclusions after the event about whether including Israel was a good solution, he's framing it as a question of judgment, essentially an admission that this is a morally gray area that needs reflection.

There's a recognition of dichotomy of values as he contrasts 2022 and 2024 not just by politics but by values, implying that Europe's collective response to Russia was unified by moral outrage, whereas with Israel it's divided. He also plainly states the reality that many Western governments (Finland included) support Israel's actions to some degree, which speaks to a moral inconsistency on an international level. This contextualizes Yle's stance, as pulling out would have been an outlier move that even Finland's government did not mirror in foreign policy. In this sense, Yle's morality is tied into state and EBU ethics. Media responsibility too is a factor. Yle as a broadcaster had to decide if it was their role to make a political stand. Vilén leaning on EBU's guidance suggests he sees Yle's responsibility as being a participant in a broader community decision rather than a unilateral moral arbiter. Toward the end, in addressing the possible Israeli win, Vilén's comments carry a moral undertone that it would be "impossible" to host in Israel in the current situation. This indicates that even Yle's decision-makers see a limit to how far neutrality can stretch, morally and practically, hosting a celebratory event in a war zone or by a warring state crosses a line. The mention of considering the Finnish delegation's safety if that scenario arose adds a safety concerns moral angle, Yle has a duty of care to its staff and artists, which would become paramount if Eurovision risked being in an unsafe location. This is a pragmatic moral responsibility (ensure no harm to one's own people). The article shows Yle's leadership trying to justify their approach as reasonable and conscientious, even as activists label it a moral failing.

### **Treatment recommendation**

This article juxtaposes two opposed recommendations and the protesters' demanded treatment is unequivocal and immediate. Yle should withdraw from Eurovision on the day of the final. They wanted Yle to essentially boycott the contest at the last minute, which would be a dramatic form of protest. This recommendation aligns with everything activists had been saying, it's the final escalation of the calls for boycott. The article doesn't need to elaborate

their reasoning much, but it shows the lengths they were willing to go to push this remedy (occupying Yle's lobby). On the other hand, Yle's enacted recommendation is to stay the course but engage in discussion and review. Vilén's extensive responses outline a few elements of this. First: compliance with rules. Yle stood by the EBU's decision during the contest, which meant not withdrawing on principle. This is the immediate remedy chosen, essentially "do nothing" publicly in terms of changing participation. Second: dialogue and transparency. Vilén explains Yle's decision-making and reveals that Finland had discussions with the EBU about the criticism and that now they are present in the finals. By doing so, Yle is addressing the issue transparently and showing that it did not ignore the complaints, even if it didn't act as protesters wanted. This suggests a remedy of airing out the issue rather than making a sudden move, treating the controversy through conversation, not abrupt action. Third: future accountability. Vilén explicitly recommends that after Eurovision, the EBU and each broadcaster should draw conclusions about whether including Israel was the right decision. This is effectively proposing a post-mortem process as a remedy, in other words, handle the immediate situation calmly, but commit to evaluating the policy for the future. It's a call for a kind of policy transparency and review, which may lead to clearer guidelines or changes later.

Additionally, in the hypothetical of Israel winning, Vilén implies the remedy would be not to host in Israel given the war, indicating willingness to adapt the usual rules in extreme cases. That can be interpreted as a contingency recommendation to preserve safety and avoid endorsing a war-zone as host, a practical compromise. Finally, there's a subtle recommendation in how Yle managed the protest, peacefully and with law enforcement ensuring boundaries. Yle didn't press charges or anything of that sort, which suggests Yle's tolerance as a remedy to avoid escalation. The article closes noting the final is that evening, signaling that Yle indeed stayed in and the show would go on. The standoff therefore mirrors earlier BBC coverage of artist protests, showing that escalating public activism ultimately forced both broadcasters to articulate and defend their neutrality.

## 6. Results

This chapter presents the main empirical findings of the study. These results address the research question of how did Yle and the BBC frame Israel's participation in the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest during the Gaza war, and to what extent can similarities or differences be understood in light of their national media-system contexts. The analysis was guided by Entman's four framing functions combined with content analysis and led to the identification of five overarching interpretive frames in the coverage. These frames were derived by grouping recurring codes and themes into larger narrative patterns. The frames, and the codes that build them, are presented below:

1. **Humanitarian frame** (Codes: Humanitarian concerns, Ethical concerns, Gaza war, Broadcasting responsibility, Media responsibility and Public accountability)
2. **Political neutrality and compliance frame** (Codes: Eurovision's political neutrality, Compliance with rules, Calls for transparency, Precedent of Russia, Cultural diplomacy, Support for Israel and Public accountability)
3. **Activism and public pressure frame** (Codes: Artist pressure, Public backlash, Calls for boycott, Public's activism, Artist activism, Dichotomy of values, Artist participation uncertainty, Support for artists, Media responsibility and Broadcasting responsibility)
4. **Safety and security frame** (Codes: Safety concerns and Potential consequences of an Israeli victory)
5. **Boycott Israel frame** (Codes: Israel's exclusion, Israel's participation, Precedent of Russia, Calls for boycott, Support for Israel, Cultural diplomacy and Public accountability)

All codes used in this analysis stem from the coding schema defined in subchapter 4.4. In the following subchapters each frame is introduced in detail, with attention to how it manifests in Yle's versus the BBC's reporting.

### 6.1.1 Humanitarian frame

The humanitarian frame places human suffering and ethical responsibility at the forefront of the narrative. It emphasizes civilian casualties, displacement, and moral questions tied to Israel's military actions in Gaza. This frame is strongly present in Yle's reporting, where the suffering of civilians in Gaza is portrayed as a central ethical issue and linked to institutional

responsibilities (for instance, the duty of a public broadcaster to respond to a humanitarian crisis). The BBC also acknowledges humanitarian aspects of the conflict, especially the toll on civilians, but tends to incorporate these within broader geopolitical discussions and typically avoids explicit and widespread moral judgment in its coverage.

In Yle's coverage, the humanitarian frame operates as a core ethical axis shaping the structure of the stories. For example, the article "How Israel became the big question of Eurovision" (Vanha-Majamaa, 2024) illustrates how the humanitarian consequences of the Gaza war are not merely mentioned as background, but are used to define the problem, justify public dissent and critique institutional neutrality. In that piece, civilian deaths are not treated as abstract statistics. They are woven into a moral narrative explaining the intensity of public protests, the calls for Israel's exclusion from the contest, and the ethical dilemmas faced by artists and broadcasters. The humanitarian theme in Yle's reporting often intersects with other codes, such as "calls for boycott", "Israel's exclusion", and "Eurovision's political neutrality", to construct a moral tension between Eurovision's self-image as an apolitical entertainment event and the reality of an ongoing conflict. In this framing, the suffering in Gaza is not just contextual backdrop but a force that demands a response from institutions like Yle and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). As a result, the very notion of remaining "neutral" is depicted as morally problematic: inaction or silence in the face of severe civilian suffering is framed as a form of complicity. Even when articles turn to procedural issues (for example, discussions about contest rules or the logistics of performances), the humanitarian dimension persists as an undercurrent.

Yle's use of the humanitarian frame engages all four of Entman's framing functions. It defines the central problem as the humanitarian crisis and civilian suffering in Gaza. It attributes causal responsibility by linking this suffering to Israel's military actions and, in some articles, to the EBU's stance of maintaining neutrality despite the conflict. It morally evaluates the situation as untenable or unacceptable, given the scale of human suffering. Finally, it suggests treatments or remedies, which in the context of the coverage include demands for transparency, calls for boycotts or exclusion of Israel and other forms of institutional reconsideration in response to the war. By contrast, the BBC's application of the humanitarian frame is noticeably more muted. The BBC reports the humanitarian crisis, for instance, mentioning casualties or humanitarian appeals, but usually does not thematize it as the driving issue of its Eurovision stories. Humanitarian elements in BBC articles tend to

appear as context or as justifications cited by third parties (such as explaining why activists or artists are protesting), rather than as the basis of the BBC's own narrative focus. In Entman's terms, the BBC's framing incorporates the humanitarian aspect mainly in the functions of causal interpretation (explaining public outrage or political controversy by pointing to the war's civilian toll) and occasionally moral evaluation (acknowledging that the situation is concerning), but it rarely uses it to define the core problem of the story or to recommend treatments (the BBC stops short of advocating any action based on humanitarian concerns). In sum, the humanitarian frame is central and explicit in Yle's Eurovision coverage during the war, whereas in the BBC's coverage it remains present but generally backgrounded and handled in a more impartial, reportorial manner.

### 6.1.2 Political neutrality and compliance frame

The political neutrality and compliance frame emerges as a key interpretive structure in both Yle's and the BBC's reporting on Israel's Eurovision participation. This frame revolves around two closely related concerns: (1) maintaining Eurovision as an apolitical arena, and (2) ensuring adherence to the contest's rules and decisions. It draws heavily on references to Eurovision's official stance of political neutrality and to compliance with the European Broadcasting Union's rules and guidelines. At its core, this frame is about protecting Eurovision's identity as a non-political platform, a space where public broadcasters come together to compete in music, not politics. Emphasizing "neutrality" in this context serves to legitimize the contest by asserting that it stands apart from international conflicts and partisan agendas. The complementary element of compliance stresses that all participants must follow the established rules (for example, the prohibition of overt political statements in lyrics or performances and the criteria that broadcasters must meet to participate). Calls for "consistency" or transparency in rule enforcement also form part of this frame, especially in light of precedents. Notably, the exclusion of Russia from Eurovision 2022 after its invasion of Ukraine set a benchmark that many observers have invoked during the Gaza war.

In the material, both Yle and the BBC invoke the frame, but they do so with different emphases and tones. Yle's articles often highlight a tension or even contradiction within the neutrality principle. They frequently mention the precedent of Russia's ban in 2022 as a point of comparison for Israel's situation. For example, one Yle article notes that "many of those who have called for a boycott have pointed out that when Russia invaded Ukraine in early

2022, Yle was actively demanding that Russia be banned from the Eurovision Song Contest” (Vanha-Majamaa, 2024). By bringing up this comparison, Yle’s coverage calls into question whether the EBU is applying its rules and values consistently, and whether claiming political neutrality in Israel’s case might reflect a double standard. The transparency theme enters here: both Yle and BBC reports include the demands by artists and activists for clearer criteria on how Eurovision decisions are made in such conflicts. The BBC’s reporting in this frame, however, leans more toward the institutional perspective. BBC articles predominantly relay the EBU’s justifications for Israel’s continued inclusion, underscore Israel’s compliance with all contest rules (for instance, noting that Israel’s broadcaster meets all requirements and that any overtly political content, such as song lyrics, has been removed or avoided) and stress the importance of preserving the contest’s apolitical character. In doing so, the BBC essentially frames the issue as one of procedural legitimacy, meaning, as long as Israel abides by the formal rules, excluding it would be more or less unnecessary. This approach corresponds mainly to Entman’s causal interpretation and treatment recommendation functions, the BBC is explaining why Eurovision organizers have acted as they have (cause: Israel hasn’t violated rules, and the contest is apolitical by design) and implying the recommended course of action is to continue following the established rules (treatment: do not bar Israel, keep politics out of Eurovision).

Yle’s use of the political neutrality frame, by contrast, often embeds the EBU’s neutral stance within a more critical context. Yle does report the same official statements about Eurovision being a “non-political event” and the need to respect EBU rules, but it typically juxtaposes these points with the growing public dissatisfaction and ethical debate surrounding them. In Yle’s articles, neutrality and compliance are sometimes themselves presented as problematic or in question, for instance, when large segments of the public or notable artists argue that sticking strictly to “no politics” in this situation equates to ignoring a humanitarian catastrophe. This means that in Yle’s framing, the neutrality and compliance are not only a cause or justification given by authorities, but also part of the problem definition and moral evaluation. Yle’s coverage often portrays a sense of ethical ambiguity around neutrality as it asks whether maintaining neutrality amid mass civilian suffering might be morally untenable. Thus, neutrality is not simply stated by Yle as a guiding principle, it is actively interrogated. In terms of Entman’s framework, Yle employs this frame across multiple functions, it helps define the problem (for Yle, a key issue is that Eurovision’s insistence on neutrality is being challenged), it is involved in causal reasoning (explaining controversies as arising from

EBU's stance and rules) and it features in moral evaluation (questioning the virtue of neutrality vs. compassion). The treatment recommendations seen in Yle's coverage related to this frame often include calls for the EBU and broadcasters to be transparent and consistent, or even to rethink the application of "apolitical" rules when faced with extreme events. Both Yle and the BBC include voices calling for clearer guidelines, for example, demands that the EBU explain its decisions in light of the Russian precedent, but the BBC tends to treat those as one viewpoint to report, whereas Yle uses them to press the issue. In summary, the political neutrality and compliance frame is apparent in both outlets' narratives, but the BBC applies it in a largely affirmative way (emphasizing rule-based legitimacy and continuity), whereas Yle applies it in a more questioning way, scrutinizing whether adherence to neutrality and rules in this case aligns with broader ethical expectations. Yle's narrative suggests that the very principles of Eurovision's apolitical stance are under strain, whereas the BBC's narrative largely reinforces those principles as the guiding solution to the controversy.

### 6.1.3 Activism and public pressure frame

The third frame identified in the coverage is the activism and public pressure frame. This frame captures how collective dissent by artists, industry professionals and audiences became a driving force in the Eurovision narrative during the Gaza war period. It encompasses codes related to artist pressure, public backlash, petitions and protests (calls for boycott), and what one might call a dichotomy of values (the clash between Eurovision's proclaimed values and the values invoked by protesters). Through this frame, the contest is portrayed as a site of contestation where moral and political accountability are debated in the public sphere. In other words, Eurovision is not just an entertainment event but a platform where broader geopolitical grievances and ethical stances are being expressed by various stakeholders.

Both Yle and the BBC devoted significant coverage to the acts of activism and public pressure surrounding Israel's participation. This included reporting on formal petitions, public demonstrations, critical statements by artists and discussions of potential boycotts by performers. For Yle, these instances of activism are framed as manifestations of deeper normative tensions between Eurovision's stated ethos and the ongoing war. For example, Yle reported on Finland's Eurovision delegation and artists grappling with the situation: the winning artist of Finland's UMK contest (Windows95man) chose to continue to represent

Finland in Eurovision 2024, but openly stated their moral reservations. In the Yle press release, Windows95man is quoted saying “we think that the only correct decision for the EBU would be to exclude Israel from the competition. However, we do not feel that withdrawing ourselves would make an impact” (Yle, 2024). The representative expresses a clear normative judgment (Israel should be excluded on ethical grounds) yet decides against unilateral action that they believe would be futile. The BBC’s coverage likewise highlighted artist perspectives, such as the case of British singer Olly Alexander. In a BBC report, Alexander is noted to have rejected calls for a boycott of Eurovision, he emphasized a message of unity by arguing that “removing myself from the contest wouldn’t bring us any closer to our shared goal” (Nanji, 2024). Here, the BBC presents an artist’s rationale for staying in the contest despite the controversy, framing it as a personal stance that emphasizes togetherness over protest.

Within this frame, both broadcasters treat public and artistic activism as newsworthy and legitimate topics of discussion, but the framing nuances differ. Yle’s narrative tends to validate the activism as an understandable and principled reaction to the Gaza war. Protesters and critical artists in Finland are often portrayed as holding Eurovision (and Yle as Finland’s broadcaster) accountable to high ethical standards, for instance, expecting consistency with how Russia’s case was handled, or appealing to human rights principles. The very act of protest is framed by Yle as putting pressure on institutions to respond morally. The BBC, on the other hand, reports on these activism events in a somewhat more detached way. The BBC acknowledges that there is public pressure, it details the existence of petitions, quotes activists or signatories, and notes artists’ decisions, but it generally stops short of framing the activists’ stance as something the BBC itself is evaluating morally.

This frame inherently involves Entman’s problem definition and moral evaluation functions: the activists define the problem as one of moral breach (Israel’s actions vs. Eurovision values), and they bring a moral judgement that something should be done. Yle’s coverage often aligns with that by defining the story in terms of this conflict between public moral outrage and institutional policy. In terms of treatment recommendations, the activism frame inherently carries the protesters’ proposed solution (exclude Israel, or boycott the contest) and their demands for institutional action. Yle’s stories give these proposed solutions substantial attention, reflecting the pressure on Yle itself to take action. Indeed, because the boycott campaign in Finland directly targeted Yle, urging the national broadcaster to

withdraw from or oppose the contest, Yle's coverage had to engage deeply with these activist recommendations. This is evident in how Yle articles discuss what Yle's executives and the EBU are doing or not doing in response (for example, Yle scheduling meetings with the petition authors, or explaining its stance). The causal interpretation in this frame is also clear: activists point to Israel's conduct in Gaza as the cause for their outrage and actions, and Yle's coverage relays that as a driving reason behind the Eurovision boycott calls.

In summary, the activism and public pressure frame is prominent in both outlets' reporting, but it features especially strongly in Yle's narratives due to the domestic relevance. Yle frames the wave of protests and petitions as a serious moral challenge to the Eurovision status quo, indicating that public sentiment is forcing a discussion about values and consistency. The BBC covers the same developments, portraying activism as an important aspect of the story, but keeps a more neutral framing, acknowledging the phenomenon without overtly highlighting the activists' moral standpoint. Notably, the high visibility of the boycott movement in Finland (and its direct challenge to Yle) likely contributed to Yle foregrounding this frame more intensively than the BBC.

#### 6.1.4 Safety and security frame

The safety and security frame addresses the practical concerns and risks associated with holding Eurovision under the shadow of geopolitical conflict. While not as thematically central as the other frames, it appears in both the BBC's and Yle's reporting as they touch on measures and anxieties related to security at Eurovision 2024. The safety and security frame is characterized by references to logistical precautions, threats or incidents and protective actions taken by organizers or authorities. In the context of the Gaza war, this included concerns about the safety of Israeli participants and delegations, the potential for protests or hostile incidents at the contest, and the steps taken to ensure the event proceeded without violence or disruption.

Articles invoking this frame often highlight concrete indicators of heightened security. For example, both broadcasters noted measures such as increased security protocols at the Eurovision venue in Malmö and the closely monitored movements of Israel's 2024 contestant, Eden Golan, during the event. The frame casts the ongoing conflict and related tensions as a direct threat to the Eurovision Song Contest that must be managed through vigilance and preparedness. Geopolitical instability here is framed less as a moral issue and

more as a practical challenge. It necessitates safeguarding participants and audiences, and maintaining the contest's orderly conduct.

The BBC's coverage places a stronger emphasis on the safety and security narrative than Yle's. For the BBC, security concerns became a significant story angle, particularly when covering events surrounding the Israeli delegation. One BBC report, included in the thesis' analysis chapter, described "an unprecedented display of hatred" directed at Israel's team during the contest and noted that the EBU announced it would "review the events" in Malmö following these incidents (Youngs, 2024). By reporting these details, the BBC frames the safety issue as both an emotional concern (hostile atmosphere and threats that Israeli participants faced) and an institutional concern (the EBU responding with investigations and potential policy actions). In BBC articles, this often translated to portraying protest and controversy through a security lens. For instance, demonstrations or expressions of hostility were discussed in terms of the risk they posed to participants and the need for security responses. This framing shifts some focus away from the political or moral content of the protest, and towards the stability and order of the event. The effect is that activist dissent in the BBC narrative can appear as a potential source of disruption that organizers must control, rather than primarily as a moral statement to be debated. Yle's reporting on safety and security issues was comparatively less prominent. Yle did cover security aspects, but these mentions were usually part of larger stories centered on other frames (such as discussions of the boycott or Yle's accountability). In Yle's articles, when safety is discussed, it is often intertwined with questions of public accountability and the visibility of these precautions.

Comparatively, the difference in emphasis suggests that the BBC may have used the safety frame in part to recontextualize the ongoing protests and controversies. By foregrounding security, the BBC coverage sometimes reframed what others cast as a moral or political dispute into a discussion about protective measures and event integrity. This does not mean the BBC ignored the political dimensions, but it gave substantial weight to the idea that Eurovision needed to be kept safe and apolitical amid tensions. Yle, with its broader coverage, maintained the protests and ethical debates as central and treated security as one aspect among many. In sum, the safety and security frame underlines how the Gaza war's impact on Eurovision was also interpreted in practical terms. The BBC's narrative stressed maintaining stability and preventing disruption, effectively portraying Eurovision as a venue that must be shielded from conflict-related unrest. Yle acknowledged these safety issues as

well, but the frame was less pivotal in its storytelling, which remained more directly focused on the ethical and political controversy.

### 6.1.5 Boycott Israel frame

A final prominent frame in the coverage is the “Boycott Israel” frame, which centers on the debate over excluding Israel from Eurovision 2024 in response to the Gaza war. This frame includes discussions about calls to ban Israel from participating, arguments about consistency with past decisions (notably the precedent of Russia’s ban in 2022), and questions about how individual countries, like Finland or the UK, should position themselves. In essence, the boycott frame is about the legitimacy and consequences of Israel’s continued involvement in the contest amid an ongoing conflict and alleged human rights violations. It overlaps with some elements of the earlier frames, namely the humanitarian frame and activism and public pressure frame, but it is specifically focused on the proposed action of boycott or exclusion as a treatment recommendation to the problem.

Both Yle and the BBC reported on the boycott calls, but Yle’s coverage foregrounded this debate much more extensively. Yle devoted considerable attention to whether Israel ought to be excluded from Eurovision and what Finland’s response should be. Many of Yle’s articles explicitly wrestled with the question of a boycott. For instance, they discussed petitions urging Yle to withdraw from the contest, commentaries on if the EBU should suspend Israel, and comparisons to how Eurovision organizers handled Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. Yle’s reporting repeatedly invoked the 2022 Russia case as a benchmark. In multiple articles, Yle pointed out that when Russia invaded Ukraine, the EBU (with active lobbying from broadcasters like Yle) swiftly barred Russia from the competition. By drawing this parallel, the Yle coverage highlighted a perceived inconsistency, namely, if Russia was banned for breaching fundamental values, why is Israel allowed to continue participating despite the war in Gaza? The earlier-mentioned quote from “How Israel became the big question of Eurovision” serves as an example: Yle emphasized that many felt Yle’s own stance in 2022 , demanding Russia be banned, set a precedent that now puts Yle in a position to justify why Israel’s case is being handled differently (Vanha-Majamaa, 2024). This line of reasoning in Yle’s content suggests that the problem definition in the boycott frame is one of fairness and principle, it defines the situation as a potential double standard in need of resolution.

The BBC's coverage also acknowledged the boycott controversy, but with a more restrained approach. The BBC reported factual developments such as the Finnish petition (noting, for example, that over 1,400 Finnish music industry professionals signed an appeal urging Israel's ban and arguing that Israel was using Eurovision to "polish its image" during the war (Chatterjee, 2024)). It covered statements from the EBU and various national broadcasters about the issue. However, the BBC tended to frame the boycott calls as part of the broader controversy rather than the central thread. In BBC articles, the idea of excluding Israel was usually presented as one side of the debate, often accompanied by the counter-position that Eurovision is an apolitical event and that the EBU's role is to ensure all compliant broadcasters can participate. The boycott frame in BBC reports often came with attribution, e.g., "critics say..." or "protesters argue...", and was balanced with the EBU or others saying the contest should not be politicized. Thus, the moral evaluation and treatment recommendation aspects (i.e. the judgment that Israel's participation is unacceptable, and the proposed remedy of a boycott) were primarily delivered through quoted sources in the BBC narrative, rather than by the BBC's own narrative emphasis.

In Yle's coverage, on the other hand, the boycott debate is internalized and examined at length. Yle articles would delve into what a boycott would mean for Finland, recount statements from Finnish public figures (for example, members of parliament or well-known artists weighing in on whether Yle should pull out), and report on Yle's official responses. This gave the boycott frame a strong national dimension in Finland: it was not just about Israel and the EBU, but also about Yle's identity and values as Finland's public broadcaster. The frame therefore ties into causal interpretation (the cause of the boycott calls is Israel's actions in the war and the perceived failure of Eurovision's rules to address that) and treatment recommendation (the solution proposed by many is to remove Israel or for nations to boycott). Yle's framing often treats these recommendations as serious considerations, reflecting the pressure on the organization. It also uses the Russia precedent repeatedly as evidence in the debate, effectively challenging the EBU by its own prior standard. This rhetorical strategy situates Eurovision within a continuum of global conflicts and responses, rather than as an isolated cultural event insulated from politics. In contrast, the BBC's more detached stance means that while it reports the comparisons to Russia 2022 and the calls for consistency, it does so less frequently and excludes itself from the societal debate.

Overall, the boycott Israel frame highlights one of the most explicit clashes in the narratives, in which the appropriate response to the war and attendant ethical concerns is to draw a hard line, i.e. exclude a country from a song competition, or to uphold the contest's separation from politics. Yle's reporting gives substantial platform to the former viewpoint, influenced by Finland's own engagement with the issue, whereas the BBC's reporting gives a more moderated picture that acknowledges the boycott calls but also reinforces the perspective of Eurovision's apolitical mandate by frequently including the counter-arguments.

These findings illustrate that while the politicization of Eurovision is not new, the 2023–2024 Gaza war brought a particularly intense moral and institutional dilemma to the fore. Compared to earlier controversies, the level of activist mobilization, security discourse and editorial tension observed in this study suggests that this period marked not just a continuation, but an escalation in Eurovision's role as a site of ethical and geopolitical contestation. Across the 96 texts I examined, both broadcasters relied on the same five frames, but with different volumes as described above. They also animated Entman's four framing functions in different ways. Yle's pieces let ethical urgency run through every function: Humanitarian suffering is not only the problem but also the prism through which blame is assigned, moral verdicts are delivered and remedies such as boycott or transparency are urged. That stance turns the boycott row into an internal dilemma for Yle, with stories that foreground Yle's own decision-making and even quote management defending (or reconsidering) its course of action. The BBC, working with the same narrative raw material, keeps its institutional voice outside the fray as humanitarian facts appear mainly to explain why others protest, neutrality is affirmed rather than interrogated and prescriptive language surfaces chiefly in a safety and security register that recasts protest as a logistical threat to be managed. This is to say, Yle generally integrates moral evaluation across all framing functions, whereas the BBC more often confines itself to descriptive problem-setting and rule-based or security-oriented treatments. This illustrates two distinct interpretations of public-service journalism within the same event and time period. In the following discussion chapter I will explore these findings more deeply, connecting them to existing literature.

## 7. Discussion

The analysis reveals that Yle and the BBC, despite both being public service broadcasters covering the same Eurovision controversy, adopted divergent framing strategies in emphasis and tone. These differences can be understood in light of their distinct media system contexts and framing choices. Hallin and Mancini's comparative media model (2004) helps contextualize the divergence. In the following discussion, each of the five identified frames is examined through the lenses of framing theory and comparative media systems as well as other relevant literature to interpret how Yle and the BBC constructed meaning around Israel's Eurovision participation amid the Gaza war. Taken together, the contrast cautions against naïve universalism, the assumption that evidence from a single media system travels unchanged to others without empirical checking (Esser, 2013, p. 113).

One of the clearest disparities emerged in the use of the humanitarian frame. Yle foregrounded human suffering in Gaza as a central issue, weaving the plight of civilians and the ethical responsibility of institutions into the core of its Eurovision stories. This approach aligns with Lillie Chouliaraki's analysis of how media portrayals of distant suffering invite moral reflection by highlighting victims' vulnerability and evoking compassion (Chouliaraki, 2006, pp. 1–3). In Yle's reporting, the humanitarian crisis was not a perfunctory backdrop but the defining problem that justified public outrage and calls for action. Yle articles explicitly connected the Gaza war's toll to the morality of Eurovision participation, thereby making civilian suffering an ethical lens through which all other aspects (protests, boycotts, or "neutral" rules) were evaluated. This finding echoes Oikarinen's (2020) study of Finland's coverage of Israel hosting Eurovision 2019, which showed Finnish media (Yle and the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*) routinely interwove moral and political critique into cultural reporting on Israel, often adopting a critical undertone toward Israeli policies (Oikarinen, 2020, pp. 30–32). In the present case, Yle's humanitarian framing continued that pattern: the war's human cost was consistently tied to questions of journalistic and institutional responsibility. Yle's approach underscored the moral stakes of Eurovision, remaining silent or "apolitical" amid such suffering was itself implicitly framed as problematic.

The BBC also acknowledged humanitarian aspects of the Gaza conflict, but handled them in a more reserved and backgrounded way. The tone of BBC articles was largely impersonal and factual, integrating mentions of casualties or humanitarian appeals within broader

geopolitical or event-focused contexts. Suffering is noted, but presented through a detached, matter-of-fact register that invites reflection rather than immediate empathy. In the BBC's Eurovision reporting, civilian suffering in Gaza was reported as important context (for instance, explaining why activists were angry) but seldom as the BBC's own focus or moral rallying point. Both Yle and BBC thus recognized the humanitarian reality, yet Yle used it as an explicit moral frame, whereas the BBC positioned it within a more neutral, geopolitical frame. This contrast illustrates Entman's framing functions in action. Yle's humanitarian frame performed problem-definition (the problem being the human suffering and its conflict with Eurovision's apolitical stance) and moral evaluation (explicitly conveying that such suffering demanded an ethical response). The BBC, however, employed humanitarian details mainly for causal interpretation, as factual explanation for protests or controversies, and less for moral evaluation or treatment recommendation. In this sense, Yle invited its audience to view Eurovision through an ethical lens of compassion and outrage, while the BBC maintained a reporter's distance, acknowledging tragedy without overt moral positioning. This divergence can be partly attributed to the differing norms of their media systems: Finland's public media culture encourages a strong public-affairs orientation and normative discussion, whereas the UK's competitive dual media system and the BBC's institutional emphasis on impartiality foster a cooler, more fact-focused tone even in the face of emotive issues (Curran et al., 2009, pp. 14, 26).

Yle coverage conveyed an ambiguity around impartiality, asking whether refusing to take a stand amid a humanitarian crisis is itself a form of complicity. This reflexive framing aligns with Ojala and Matikainen's argument that while impartiality is a pillar of journalistic credibility, audiences can become skeptical of strict neutrality if it appears to conceal moral abdication or a lack of transparency (Ojala & Matikainen, 2020, p. 2). Similarly, Hanitzsch et al. (2018, pp. 6–8) found that public trust can hinge on whether media are seen as too deferential to power under the guise of neutrality. Schudson (2001, pp. 162–164) observes that the norm of objectivity historically functioned as an institutional strategy to avoid overt partisanship, often aligning journalism with dominant perspectives and discouraging moral advocacy. In this light, the BBC's strict adherence to procedural neutrality and rule compliance can be seen as a framing choice that distances the broadcaster from ethical judgment. It reinforces institutional rules and continuity over the moral outrage expressed by some stakeholders. Muschenich (2022, pp. 95–108) similarly argues that invoking "neutrality" is less an apolitical stance than a symbolic performance of fairness, one that can

limit deeper engagement with moral questions. The BBC's narrative used neutrality as a narrative device to justify Israel's inclusion ("these are the rules; we must be fair and consistent") while sidestepping the underlying ethical challenge posed by the war. Yle's narrative, conversely, pulled back the curtain on neutrality by interrogating whose interests that neutrality ultimately served. This difference again reflects their media environments: the BBC, operating amid intense political scrutiny and divided public opinion in the UK, emphasized impartiality to maintain broad credibility, exemplified by its careful language policies in Middle East coverage (e.g. debates over using the term "terrorist") (Davies & Topping, 2023). One can argue that Yle, rooted in a smaller, consensus-driven society, could engage more openly in questioning institutional decisions without breaching its mandate. The findings here underscore how the meaning of "neutrality" was contested: Yle portrayed neutrality as an increasingly fraught position, whereas the BBC presented it as a guiding principle to uphold.

By highlighting such statements, Yle framed the artists' dilemma as a genuine moral conflict, they are "caught between ethical principles and practical consequences," as the company's official press release (4) described. This approach resonates with Chouliaraki's notion of mediated civic responsibility, where media narratives of suffering and injustice can spur a sense of public duty and ethical urgency (Chouliaraki, 2006, pp. 125–127). In Yle's framing, the activists and protesting artists were agents of civic accountability, holding Eurovision (and by extension Yle itself) to its professed values. Protesters were often depicted as pushing institutions to respond morally, for example, by invoking consistency with how Russia was treated, or by appealing to universal human rights norms. The very act of protest was thus framed as meaningful: a challenge that broadcasters and organizers had to answer. Yle's narrative implicitly lent legitimacy to these voices by engaging with their arguments at length and by reporting on how Yle's own leadership responded (e.g. detailing how Yle's executives met with petitioners or justified their stance). This suggests that Yle's editorial stance allowed more space for what social movement theorists call motivational framing, the part of a message that galvanizes action or urges a moral stance (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 617). The media became a conduit for these activist frames: identifying the grievance (diagnosis of injustice in Gaza and hypocrisy in Eurovision), proposing a solution (boycott or exclusion), and motivating collective concern. Indeed, the Eurovision controversy turned into a stage not just for musical performances but for a form of collective action framing in the public sphere. By giving protesters and critical artists a prominent platform, Yle amplified their diagnostic

and prognostic frames, essentially validating the idea that there was a serious problem (a moral breach) and a potential remedy (exclusion or boycott) to be debated.

The BBC also covered the activist outcry, for example, it reported that over 1,400 Finnish and Icelandic music professionals signed an open letter urging Israel's ban, and it covered British singer Olly Alexander's stance on the issue (Chatterjee, 2024; Nanji, 2024). However, the BBC's framing remained more detached. Rather than endorsing or elaborating on activists' moral claims, BBC reports presented these as one element in a balanced account of the controversy. In a BBC story, Olly Alexander was quoted rejecting calls for a boycott, stating that withdrawing "wouldn't bring us any closer to our shared goal of unity" (Nanji, 2024). From a comparative perspective, these differences reflect the broadcasters' distinct institutional imperatives. Yle was itself a target of the Finnish boycott campaign, so its coverage had to engage deeply with the activists' demands and Yle's own accountability. This likely contributed to the more introspective and empathetic tone toward protesters in Yle's stories. It illustrates how media frames are shaped by an outlet's position in the story: Yle could not ignore that it was being publicly petitioned to act. The BBC was not directly under such pressure; it could present the controversy more as an outside observer, consistent with the Liberal model's norm of keeping the journalist's voice separate from advocacy. This dynamic also ties back to Entman's framing functions. Yle's articles on activism often explicitly defined a problem (public moral outcry over a perceived injustice) and carried a clear moral evaluation (that this outcry is understandable, perhaps even laudable, given the circumstances). The treatment recommendation, that something should be done, such as rethinking Israel's inclusion, was strongly implied through the voices it amplified. The BBC's coverage defined the problem more neutrally (there is controversy and division) and left the treatment open-ended or deferred to official responses, rather than implying a need for a particular action. The activism frame became a core site of meaning-making in the Eurovision coverage.

BBC coverage implicitly framed the protesters or tensions as a security challenge, meaning that demonstrations became noteworthy insofar as they created risks that required controlling. This framing tends to shift the narrative slightly, from what the protesters are saying to what impact they could have on safety and order. It reflects what securitization theorists describe: Issues get reframed as security threats that legitimize extraordinary measures (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998, pp. 23–24). In the BBC narrative, Eurovision needed to be "kept safe" and

shielded from the war's spillover and in doing so, ensuring a peaceful contest was a priority. By foregrounding security, the BBC's articles sometimes recast moral or political disputes into questions of event management and public safety. For example, rather than exploring the political content of a protest at the venue, a BBC report might focus on how the protest required police attention or how it affected the participants' sense of security. The mentions of humanitarian costs as a reason for protests were much more brief in nature compared to Yle. As an example, the Youngs article (3) highlighted in the analysis chapter focuses predominantly on the interpersonal fallout and regulatory response to Israel being protested. This includes frayed backstage relations and the delegations' alleged misconduct as well as the EBU's decision to launch a review. The article mentions the reason behind the protest: "This year's event was partly overshadowed by frayed tempers backstage plus protests over Israel's participation, due to the humanitarian cost of its war on Hamas." (Youngs, 2024), but only in passing. This emphasis shifts attention from the protesters' political message to the disruption caused by the protest. To be clear, this is not to say the BBC ignored the political dimension, but it gave substantial weight to stability.

Yle's reporting on safety issues was comparatively more limited and usually embedded within broader stories. Yle did note instances such as increased security for the Israeli delegation but less so than the BBC. It is important to note that Yle also produced far more coverage overall (64 articles and one press release) on the Eurovision-Gaza topic compared to the BBC's 31 articles. This is partly a reflection of Finland's intense national debate. Still, proportionally fewer of Yle's articles centered on security concerns. The clearest article Yle published with this particular frame was "Eurovision is a major security effort for Sweden – this is how authorities advise those arriving in Malmö" (STT-Yle, 2024). However, the article is not written by Yle, it was written by Maiju Ylipiessa from STT (Suomen Tietotoimisto). Yle merely published it alongside other media organizations. More broadly, when Yle did mention security, it often linked it back to public accountability, for instance, acknowledging Yle's duty as a broadcaster to ensure the safety of its team and all contestants, or noting that security measures were taken in response to public unrest (thus looping the issue back to public sentiment and Yle's role). The safety frame in Yle's hands remained an auxiliary narrative: important, but not allowed to eclipse the ethical and political discussion. This difference in emphasis can be interpreted through Ulrich Beck's concept of the "risk society." Beck (1992, pp. 19–22) argues that modern societies increasingly organize themselves around managing risks and uncertainties. In media terms, a large event like Eurovision during

a conflict becomes entangled in narratives of risk management, the focus shifts to anticipating hazards and preventing disruption. The BBC's approach exemplified this as its coverage mediated the Eurovision controversy partly as a story of handling risk. By doing so, the BBC also helped normalize the heightened security as a rational response to geopolitical tensions, framing the armed guards and precautionary measures as expected under the circumstances. In effect, both BBC and Yle contributed to the securitization of a cultural event, portraying Eurovision 2024 as a venue under threat that warranted protective actions. Yet, the extent differed. The BBC's heavier use of the security frame subtly cast activist dissent itself as a potential danger to be managed, whereas Yle's lighter use of this frame meant the protesters in its narrative were framed more as bearers of moral claims than as sources of disruption.

The divergent use of the safety frame again likely traces back to media-system influences. The BBC, working within a highly competitive media landscape and mindful of a broad international audience, may have found the concrete, non-partisan angle of security a useful way to cover the controversy without taking a side on the political morality of it. Emphasizing safety is a relatively neutral way to address the conflict's impact. Yle, accountable to a Finnish audience deeply invested in the moral debate, had less incentive to pivot toward a security narrative that could sideline the ethical issues. Additionally, Finland's media culture, with its strong public service ethos, often gives priority to legal-normative frames (like human rights or international law) in covering conflicts, over purely strategic or security frames (Curran et al., 2009, pp. 26–27).

The BBC framed the boycott as an ongoing debate rather than a moral test that Eurovision must decisively answer. In other words, the BBC's problem definition remained "there is controversy and disagreement over Israel's participation" rather than "Eurovision is facing a crisis of principle." The restrained framing aligns with the BBC's general approach of maintaining diplomatic balance and procedural focus. It also mirrors what Jess Carniel describes about Eurovision's usual narrative: the Song Contest is often perceived as a "safe arena" for nations to compete and build relationships, deliberately set apart from high politics (Carniel in Baker et al., 2024, p. 34). In that context, calls for a boycott threaten to disrupt the facade of unity and cultural exchange that Eurovision cultivates. Yle's coverage, by giving substantial platform to boycott proponents, actively questioned whether Eurovision truly could or should remain "safe" and separate from geopolitics when war raged on. The BBC's

coverage, by stressing rules and downplaying the boycott's momentum, effectively reasserted Eurovision's apolitical ideal, portraying it as a contest among broadcasters, not governments, where excluding a country is an extreme step only justified by clear rule breaches.

Linking back to the literature, this difference highlights how each broadcaster negotiated the soft power and cultural diplomacy stakes of Eurovision. Eurovision has long been viewed as more than just a music show, it is a stage for nation branding and symbolic affirmations of belonging in Europe (Press-Barnathan & Lutz 2020, p. 5). Thus, a call to boycott Israel was not merely about the contest rules, but about questioning Israel's symbolic standing and the values the contest represents. For boycott supporters, allowing Israel to participate was seen as whitewashing or legitimating its actions, whereas opponents framed Eurovision as a neutral ground that should not punish participants for their governments (Baker et al., 2024, p. 34). Yle's framing leaned toward the former perspective, it gave credence to the idea that participation amidst the Gaza war carried troubling symbolism and that Eurovision had to reckon with its political implications. The frequent references to the Russia ban of 2022 in Yle's pieces underscored this: Eurovision's own precedent was used as a moral benchmark, suggesting the contest could not claim to be above politics since it already acted politically by banning Russia. The BBC, however, gravitated toward the latter perspective. It implicitly underscored the notion of Eurovision as a forum for cultural exchange insulated from governmental politics, thereby framing the boycott push as something to be resolved through diplomatic restraint and adherence to established norms rather than moral grandstanding. In summary, Yle legitimized the boycott debate by making it a prominent and serious discussion in its coverage, whereas the BBC contained and depersonalized that debate within the language of policy and rules.

When I began this thesis, I initially planned to include a broader range of public broadcasters in the analysis, expanding the scope beyond Yle and the BBC. However, it quickly became clear that collecting and analyzing material from multiple national media organizations would have made the project far too complex for the time and resources available. Limiting the focus to two broadcasters was ultimately a necessary decision since it allowed for greater depth and clarity in the analysis. There were also other limitations. While many of the articles included visual elements such as embedded videos, headlines, or photos that contributed to meaningmaking, this study focused exclusively on textual content. I believe that a multimodal analysis incorporating those visual and audiovisual elements could have

deepened the findings, but it would have required a different methodological framework and a more extensive analytical process. Having said that, I believe the study achieved its primary goals. The use of Entman's four framing functions provided a solid structure for interpretation and the coding framework helped reveal how recurring themes were woven into distinct narrative patterns. The research highlighted how frames were not just collections of topics, but structured ways of assigning meaning, responsibility and legitimacy. While the topic itself was complex and politically charged, the methodological approach allowed for a focused and nuanced analysis of how media narratives are constructed around ethical dilemmas and institutional neutrality. This analysis aligns with broader scholarly observations that Eurovision serves as a contested site of cultural diplomacy and identity performance, particularly in the case of Israel's participation (Press-Barnathan & Lutz, 2020; Baker et al., 2024). In addition to the many insights I was able to uncover, writing the thesis has also been a very interesting journey due to my professional role working with Eurovision. In the following conclusion chapter I will sum up the results and contemplate on future research.

## 8. Conclusion

This thesis examined how two public broadcasters, Yle and the BBC, framed the controversy surrounding Israel's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest 2024 set against the backdrop of escalating violence and war in Gaza. Using Entman's model of framing as a theoretical lens and an inductive content analysis approach, I identified five key interpretative frames: the humanitarian frame, the political neutrality and compliance frame, the activism and public pressure frame, the safety and security frame and the boycott Israel frame. These frames were not only labels placed on recurring themes: they were emergent meaning structures formed through the interplay of codes that surfaced repeatedly across both datasets. Taken together, they show how the Eurovision Song Contest, often described as apolitical, is anything but. The findings demonstrate that Yle and the BBC approached the same global event with distinct editorial logics. Taken together, these framing differences illustrate how media operating in different system contexts can narrate the same events in quite different ways.

Yle and the BBC were clearly united by the basic journalistic mission to inform the public about the controversy, yet they were fractured by war in the sense that each outlet's narrative reflected its unique editorial logic and cultural environment. From a framing theory standpoint, Yle's coverage frequently combined problem definitions and moral evaluations that challenged institutional positions (e.g. defining "neutrality" itself as a problem under the circumstances), and it did not shy away from treatment recommendations implied by activist voices (like reconsidering Israel's participation). The BBC maintained a more restrained and institutional tone, emphasizing neutrality, rule compliance and procedural legitimacy. This confirms Entman's insight that framing is not just about what topics are covered, but how they are constructed to promote certain interpretations over others (Entman, 1993, p. 55). In essence, Yle's frames promoted interpretations that questioned the legitimacy of "business-as-usual" during the Gaza war, while the BBC's frames promoted interpretations that reinforced a continuity of procedure and focus on maintaining the contest's normalcy.

Moreover, the findings strongly support the relevance of comparative media system theory to framing analysis. Hallin and Mancini's models indicate that a public broadcaster in a Democratic Corporatist context like Finland might deliver news with a greater orientation toward consensus values, social responsibility, and comprehensive hard-news coverage

(Hallin & Mancini 2004, pp. 195–197). Indeed, Yle’s handling of this issue demonstrated a readiness to engage with the ethical dilemmas arising from Finnish civil society, for example, echoing widespread humanitarian concern and grappling with Finnish artists’ moral stance. By contrast, the BBC’s approach epitomized the Liberal model’s tendencies: a high premium on formal impartiality and balanced debate, reflecting the BBC’s imperative to serve a diverse, often divided, audience and to guard against perceptions of bias (Hallin & Mancini 2004, pp. 246–248).

In sum, the Gaza war, examined here in 2023–24, turned the Eurovision Song Contest into an unexpectedly politicized and moralized media event. Both Yle and the BBC had to balance their public service values against the pressures of reporting on a polarizing conflict intertwined with an event as closely followed as Eurovision. Yle’s frames leaned into the tension, often amplifying the contestation and questioning Eurovision’s apolitical veneer. The BBC’s frames leaned into managing the tension, reporting the controversy but also reframing it in ways that preserved the contest’s neutral facade. This study does not argue for either one, in other words, neither approach is “right” or “wrong”: they each reflect differing conceptions of the role of journalism. Notably, both strategies have implications for public perception. Embracing activist and humanitarian frames (as Yle did) can enhance a media outlet’s relevance and engagement in social debates, but might expose it to criticism of losing neutrality. Emphasizing neutrality and security (as the BBC did) can uphold a reputation for impartiality and calm, but might prompt criticism for seeming aloof or uncritical.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge some limitations of this study’s scope, some of which were briefly mentioned at the end of the discussion chapter. This thesis focused on two public broadcasters and solely on textual content, omitting visual or multimedia elements that might carry additional frames. A multimodal analysis could reveal, for example, whether images or video tone reinforced or contradicted the textual framing. The decision to concentrate on Yle and the BBC allowed for depth of comparative analysis, but it leaves open the question of how other European broadcasters, especially those in different media system models, might have framed the same issue. Future research could extend this comparative design to include public broadcasters from other contexts (for instance, a Southern European or Eastern European perspective) or to compare public vs. commercial media responses. A multimodal approach would also provide a richer understanding of how frames are constructed across different layers of media communication. In addition, while I made every effort to ensure

analytical neutrality, it is important to acknowledge my professional background at Yle may have influenced my interpretive lens. This insider perspective was both a strength, in terms of contextual familiarity, and a challenge requiring heightened reflexivity throughout the analysis. However, as outlined in the methodology chapter, I believe that my heightened awareness of my professional role, and the potential biases it could theoretically introduce, led me to approach the analysis with increased attentiveness and a deliberate commitment to neutrality when interpreting the articles.

What this thesis has shown is that media framing matters. The same event can be reported in very many different ways, even within the realm of public service journalism. Yle and the BBC covered the same controversy, drew from the same factual developments and often referenced the same institutional statements: yet the stories they told were shaped by different editorial emphases and journalistic priorities. This highlights the fact that news reporting is never a neutral mirror of reality, but a process of selection, interpretation and narrative construction.

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## 10. Appendix

### Code breakdown for selected articles

This appendix provides a full overview of the codes applied to the six articles analyzed in Chapter 5. The articles were selected as representative cases that illustrate the key frames identified in the broader dataset.

**Article 1: “Eurovision: Finnish artists want Israel barred from contest over Gaza war” (Phelan Chatterjee, 2024)**

Problem definition	Gaza war, Humanitarian concerns, Israel’s participation, Public backlash, Precedent of Russia
Causal interpretation	Eurovision’s political neutrality, Broadcasting responsibility, Compliance with rules
Moral evaluation	Ethical concerns, Support for Israel, Public Accountability
Treatment recommendation	Calls for boycott, Israel’s exclusion, Artist activism, Public’s activism

**Article 2: “Eurovision: Olly Alexander rejects boycott call over Israel-Gaza war” (Noor Nanji, 2024)**

Problem definition	Gaza war, Humanitarian concerns, Israel’s participation, Public backlash, Artist pressure, Artist participation uncertainty, Eurovision’s political neutrality
Causal interpretation	Ethical concerns, Public’s activism, Compliance with rules, Broadcasting responsibility, Support for Israel
Moral evaluation	Cultural diplomacy, Public Accountability, Dichotomy of values
Treatment recommendation	Calls for boycott, Artist activism, Engage

	nt (“stay and call for peace”) ← represented by Compliance with rules + Cultural diplomacy
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**Article 3: “Israel's Eurovision team accuse rivals of 'hatred'” (Ian Youngs, 2024)**

Problem definition	Gaza war, Humanitarian concerns, Safety concerns, Israel’s participation, Public backlash, Eurovision’s political neutrality, Artist pressure, Public’s activism, Potential consequences of an Israeli victory
Causal interpretation	Artist activism, Broadcasting responsibility, Support for Israel
Moral evaluation	Ethical concerns, Dichotomy of values, Public accountability
Treatment recommendation	Compliance with rules

**Official press release 4: “Yle complies with the EBU's decisions on Eurovision Song Contest participants – UMK winner Windows95man to represent Finland” (Yle, 2024)**

Problem definition	Israels participation, Artist participation uncertainty, Broadcasting responsibility, Calls for boycott
Causal interpretation	Gaza war, Ethical concerns, Public’s activism, Compliance with rules, Eurovision’s political neutrality
Moral evaluation	Dichotomy of values, Cultural diplomacy, Public Accountability
Treatment recommendation	Calls for boycott, Israel’s exclusion, Artist activism, Compliance with rules

**Article 5: “How Israel became the big question of Eurovision” (Anton Vanha-Majamaa, 2024)**

Problem definition	Gaza war, Humanitarian concerns, Israel’s participation, Eurovision’s political neutrality, Public backlash, Safety concerns, Artist participation uncertainty, Artist pressure
Causal interpretation	Precedent of Russia, Public’s activism, Broadcasting responsibility, Compliance with rules
Moral evaluation	Ethical concerns, Dichotomy of values, Public Accountability
Treatment recommendation	Calls for boycott, Israel’s exclusion, Artist activism, Compliance with rules

**Article 6: “Protesters demand Yle withdraw from Eurovision – Here’s how Yle’s Ville Vilén responds” (Laura Kangas, 2024)**

Problem definition	Gaza war, Humanitarian concerns, Israel’s participation, Calls for boycott, Public backlash, Public’s activism, Safety concerns, Potential consequences of an Israeli victory
Causal interpretation	Eurovision’s political neutrality, Precedent of Russia, Compliance with rules, Broadcasting responsibility, Ethical concerns
Moral evaluation	Dichotomy of values, Public Accountability
Treatment recommendation	Calls for boycott, Israel’s exclusion, Compliance with rules