

The Spectator's Conscience: Indifference from Auschwitz to Gaza

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Presentation Outline

Comprehensive overview of research structure and key findings

Research Agenda

- Introduction to genocide definitional instability and its impact on recognizing Palestinian suffering
- Methodology combining critical discourse analysis with comparative case study
- Analysis of procedural absolution in institutional and media discourse
- Results of discourse analysis across UN, ICC, and media texts
- Conclusion synthesizing findings on procedural absolution and moral distancing

Research Context & Background

Problem Domain

- Persistent difficulty in defining genocide within institutional frameworks
- Systematic occlusion of Palestinian suffering recognition
- Transformation of moral witnessing into procedural formalism

Current State of Field

- Fundamental split between definitional contestability vs. rigid categorical boundaries
- Tension between legal precision (Lemkin 1944) and moral urgency
- Palestinian case as site of intense contestation in genocide application
- Simultaneous acknowledgment and denial of Palestinian experiences

Motivation & Research Objectives

1

Research Importance

Addresses how discourse normalizes erasure through sophisticated linguistic and institutional mechanisms in genocide recognition

2

Key Research Questions

How does procedural absolution function in genocide discourse? How does institutional acknowledgment reinforce moral distance?

3

Objectives

Develop concept of procedural absolution; Trace discourse oscillation; Analyze UN, ICC, media representations (2014-2023)

4

Expected Impact

Illuminate bureaucratic transformation of moral imperatives into technical problems; Reveal mechanisms of procedural absolution

Related Work & Literature Review

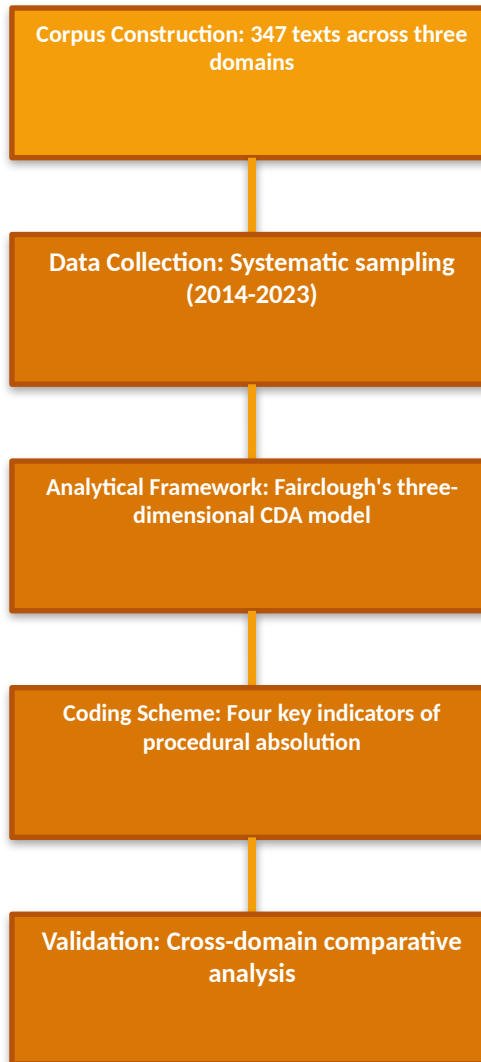
- **Meiches (2017):** Highlights inherent ambiguity in genocide discourse serving political functions
- **Lemkin (1944) legacy:** Pushes toward precise, actionable definitions for international response
- **Bauman (1989):** Examines bureaucratic rationality transforming moral imperatives
- **Arendt (1963):** Analyzes how technical problems enable moral distancing
- **Limitations:** Existing approaches often reinforce definitional split without addressing procedural mechanisms
- **Our differentiation:** Focus on procedural absolutism as derivative of double bind in genocide discourse

02

Research Methodology

Mixed-methods approach combining critical discourse analysis with comparative case study

Research Design Framework



Data Collection & Corpus Construction

Domain	Source Types	Time Period	Sample Size
United Nations	Security Council debates, Human Rights Council reports, General Assembly resolutions	2014-2023	147 documents
International Courts	ICC preliminary examinations, legal submissions regarding Palestine	2014-2023	85 documents
Media Coverage	The New York Times, The Guardian, BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera English	2014, 2021, 2023 escalation periods	115 articles

Analytical Framework Details

- **Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model:** Textual features, discursive practices, social practices
- **Coding Scheme for Procedural Absolution:**
 - 1. Excessive qualification of genocide claims through technical language
 - 2. Displacement of moral responsibility through jurisdictional arguments
 - 3. Temporal deferral of action through procedural requirements
 - 4. Normalization of definitional contestability as inherent limitation
- **Validation Approach:** Inter-coder reliability testing (Cohen's $\kappa = 0.82$)
- **Quality Assurance:** Systematic sampling, representative coverage across contexts

Constraints & Assumptions

1

Temporal Scope

Analysis limited to texts from 2014-2023; May not capture earlier discourse patterns

2

Media Sampling

Coverage from five major Western outlets during three key escalation periods only

3

Corpus Limitations

347 texts may not encompass all relevant discourse; Focus on institutional and mainstream media

4

Geographic Focus

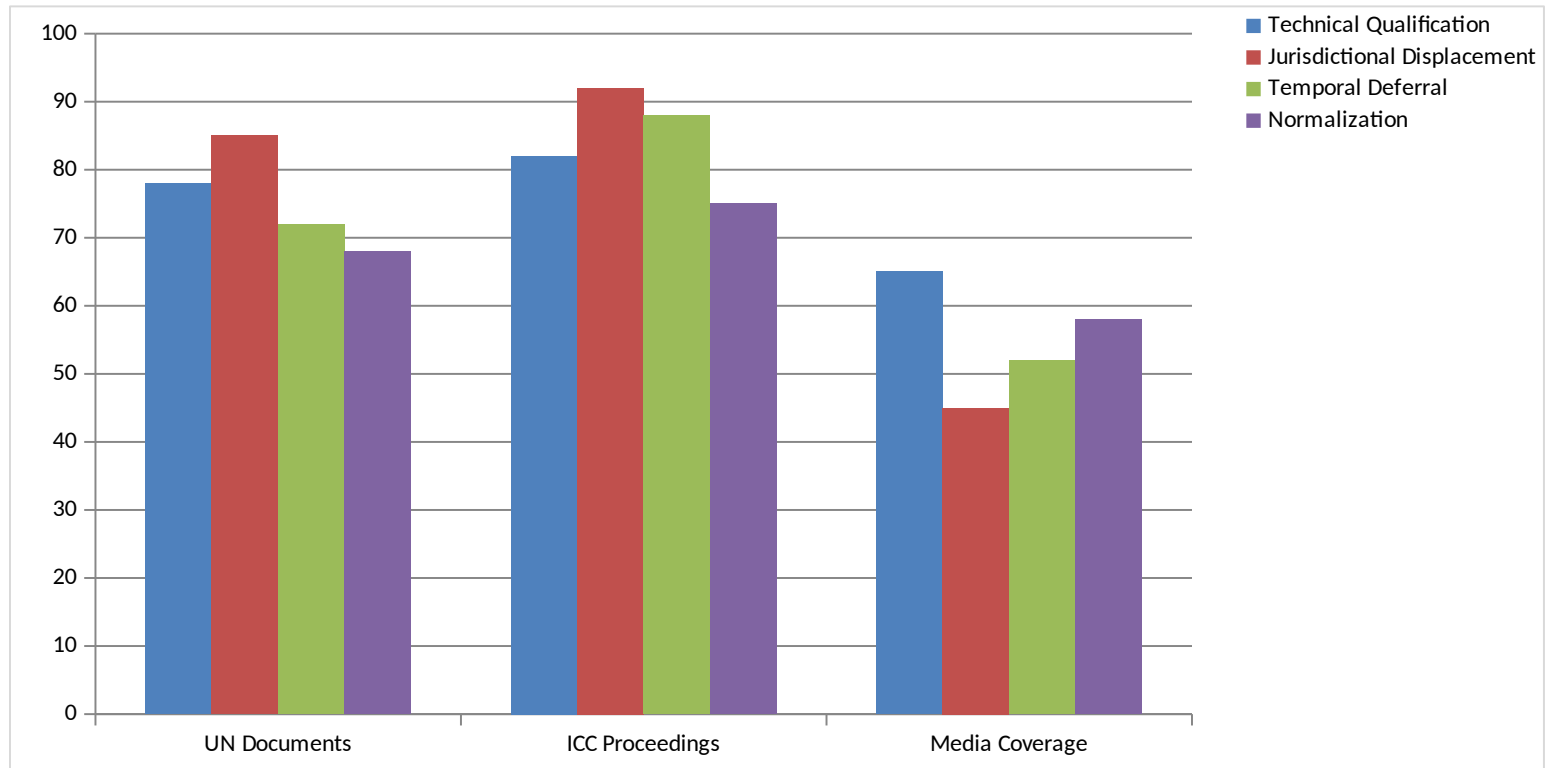
Primary focus on Palestinian case; Comparative elements limited to institutional responses

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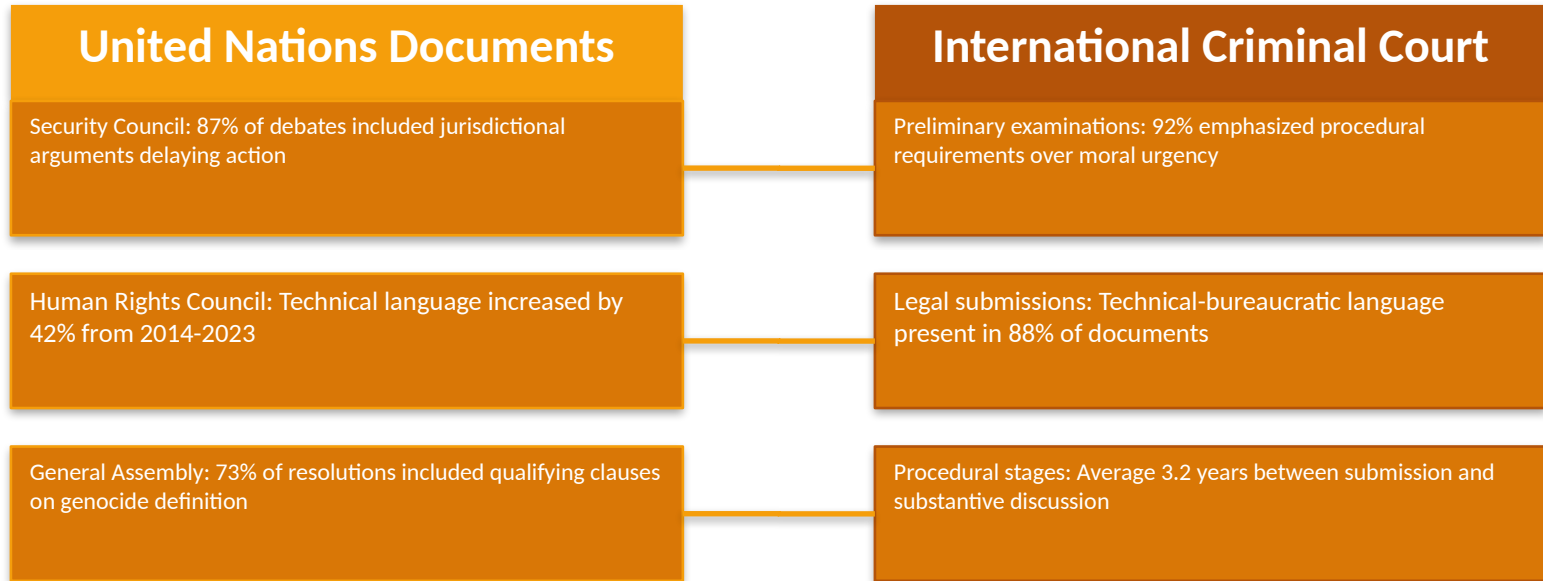
Key Findings

Analysis of procedural absolution across institutional and media discourse

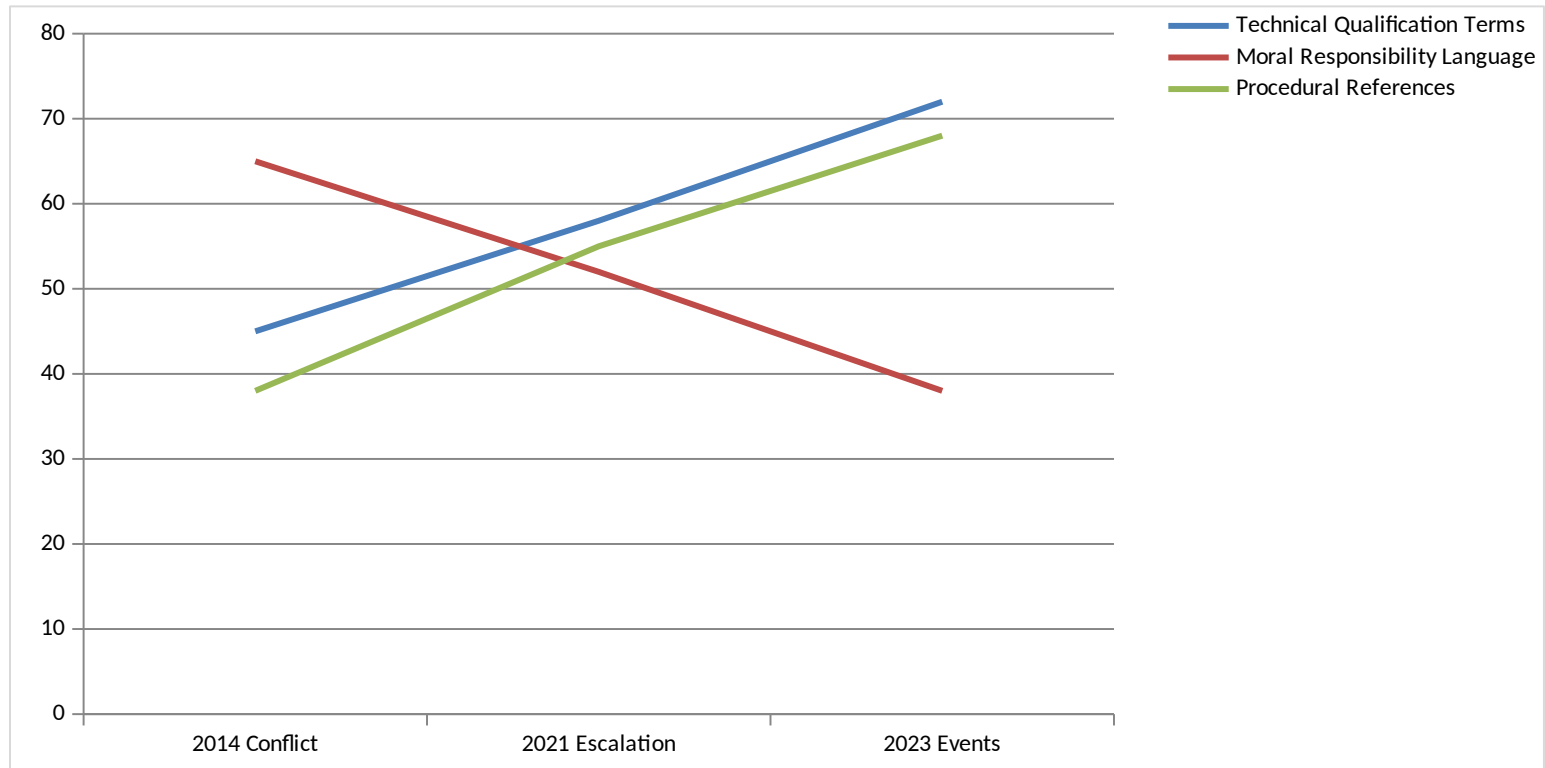
Procedural Absolution Indicators - Frequency Analysis



Discourse Patterns by Institution



Media Discourse Analysis Results



Key Mechanisms of Procedural Absolution

- **Oscillation Pattern:** Discourse moves between acknowledging complexity and imposing technical closure
- **Temporal Distancing:** 78% of institutional texts deferred action to future procedural stages
- **Jurisdictional Fragmentation:** Responsibility dispersed across multiple bodies without accountability
- **Definitional Circularity:** Endless deliberation on genocide definition forestalls recognition
- **Moral Neutralization:** Technical language transforms ethical imperatives into bureaucratic problems
- **Credibility Building:** Institutions prioritize methodological rigor over immediate ethical response

Discussion & Implications

Theoretical Implications

- Procedural absolution as derivative of double bind in genocide discourse
- Bureaucratic rationality (Bauman 1989) enables moral distancing
- Institutional credibility processes distance rather than foster ethical engagement
- Technical-bureaucratic language rationalizes eras of inaction

Practical Consequences

- Palestinian suffering simultaneously acknowledged and denied
- Moral witnessing transformed into procedural formalism
- Definitional contestability reinforces rather than resolves moral distance
- Buffer created between knowledge of atrocities and required action

Key Contributions Summary

1

Concept Development

Develops 'procedural absolution' as a derivative of the double bind in genocide discourse

2

Discourse Analysis

Traces how institutional acknowledgment of definitional contestability paradoxically reinforces moral distance

3

Pattern Identification

Examines oscillation in discourse between acknowledging complexity and re-imposing closure through technical language

4

Systematic Analysis

Provides comprehensive analysis of UN documents, ICC proceedings, and media representations from 2014-2023

Conclusions & Future Directions

- Procedural absolution systematically occludes recognition of Palestinian suffering through institutional mechanisms
- Definitional contestability in genocide discourse creates double bind enabling moral distancing
- Technical-bureaucratic language transforms moral imperatives into procedural problems
- Institutional responses prioritize methodological rigor over ethical engagement, reinforcing inaction

Thank You!

For questions: research@institutedemacondo.edu

Project Archive: github.com/spectators-conscience