

Unknown Paper

AI Reviewer 1 - Comprehensive Review

This reviewer provides a thorough and balanced assessment

****Review of "FROM WITNESS TO WORLD: HOW GLOBAL PROTEST SOLIDARITY CONSTRUCTS CREDIBILITY IN THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE WAR"****

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\\\ **** Step 1. Summary of the Paper****

This manuscript examines how global protest movements construct credibility and moral authority in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict (2017-2024). Using a mixed-methods approach, the authors analyze 26 protest events from the Global Protest Tracker dataset, combining quantitative analysis of temporal patterns, protest sizes, and government responses with qualitative thematic coding of protest frames. The paper claims to demonstrate that credibility emerges through witness testimony, statistical evidence of casualties, and embodied protest practices, with larger protests facing violent government responses achieving heightened visibility that amplifies their credibility claims. The authors position this as contributing to understanding epistemic trust construction in contentious political contexts.

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\\\ **** Step 2. Evaluation Criteria****

\\\\ ****1. Originality / Novelty** **Score: 6/10****

The application of epistemic trust frameworks (Fricker, Habermas) to protest movements in this specific conflict context represents a modest theoretical contribution. However, the core concept of how protests construct credibility through various forms of evidence is well-established in social movement literature. The mixed-methods approach to protest event analysis, while competently executed, follows established methodological traditions rather than breaking new ground. The finding that larger protests face more violent responses and achieve greater visibility is consistent with existing protest repression literature.

\\\\ ****2. Scientific Rigor / Methodology** **Score: 4/10****

****Major Concerns:**** - ****Sample Size:**** n=26 events over 7 years is insufficient for robust statistical analysis, especially given the global scope claimed. - ****Sampling Bias:**** Reliance on the Global Protest Tracker dataset without discussion of its completeness, verification procedures, or media bias corrections raises serious validity concerns. - ****Stance Coding:**** The rule-based classification

of protests as "pro-Palestinian" (73\ - **Missing Controls:** No discussion of counter-protests or pro-Israeli solidarity events beyond the minimal "Domestic-Israel" category (n=2). - **Statistical Limitations:** Correlation analysis with such a small sample and multiple binary variables produces unstable results (note the NaN values in correlation matrix).

\\\\ **3. Clarity \ Presentation** **Score: 7/10**

The paper is generally well-structured and clearly written, with appropriate theoretical framing. However: - Tables are poorly formatted and difficult to interpret (e.g., Table 5 correlation matrix with NaN values). - The abstract overstates findings given methodological limitations. - Some key terms ("credibility rituals," "epistemic performances") are used without sufficient operational definition.

\\\\ **4. Reproducibility \ Transparency** **Score: 3/10**

Critical Deficiencies: - No data/code availability statement. - Insufficient detail on text analysis procedures for stance coding. - Kaggle dataset referenced but no specific version or access information provided. - Qualitative coding procedures described only at high level without codebook or example coding decisions.

\\\\ **5. Significance \ Impact** **Score: 5/10**

The topic is undoubtedly important and timely. However, the methodological limitations severely constrain the potential impact. The findings are too tentative and context-specific to offer field-changing insights. The predominance of pro-Palestinian protests in the sample may reflect dataset limitations rather than actual protest landscapes, limiting generalizability.

\\\\ **6. Ethics \ Integrity** **Score: 6/10**

While the use of public data avoids direct ethical concerns, the stance coding approach raises questions about interpretive bias. The paper would benefit from more explicit discussion of researcher positionality and potential conflicts in interpreting contentious political material. No funding sources or conflicts of interest are declared.

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\\ **Step 3. Specific Suggestions for Improvement**

\\\\ **Major Revisions Required:**

1. **Expand Dataset:** Either substantially increase the sample size or clearly acknowledge the exploratory nature of this small-n study. Consider supplementing with additional data sources.
2. **Methodological Transparency:** Provide complete details on stance coding procedures, including example coding decisions and reliability measures. Address dataset limitations and potential biases explicitly.
3. **Statistical Reanalysis:** With current sample size, focus on descriptive statistics and qualitative insights rather than unstable correlations. Remove or substantially qualify the correlation analysis.
4. **Balance Analysis:** Address the apparent imbalance in protest stances by either justifying the sampling approach or expanding coverage of diverse perspectives.

\\\\ **Minor Revisions:**

1. Improve table formatting and readability. 2. Provide operational definitions for key theoretical constructs. 3. Strengthen the limitations section to more directly address methodological constraints. 4. Clarify the temporal coverage - the paper mentions 2017-2024 but data appears sparse in early years.

\\\\ **Additional Analyses to Consider:**

1. Comparative analysis with other conflict-related protest movements to establish specificity of findings. 2. More nuanced coding of protest stances beyond the three categories used. 3. Analysis of how digital media coverage varies across protest types and sizes.

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\\ ** Step 4. Final Decision \ Justification**

Overall Score: 5/10

Recommendation: REJECT

Justification:

While the topic is important and the theoretical framework shows promise, the manuscript suffers from fatal methodological flaws that cannot be addressed through minor revisions. The combination of extremely small sample size ($n=26$), questionable stance coding procedures, and reliance on a single dataset with unverified completeness fundamentally undermines the validity of the findings. The statistical analyses presented are inappropriate for the sample size and data characteristics.

The paper would require complete re-conceptualization with a substantially expanded dataset, more rigorous coding procedures, and appropriate statistical approaches to merit publication in a high-impact journal. The current version represents a preliminary exploration rather than a conclusive study.

The authors have identified an important research question and developed a reasonable theoretical approach, but the execution does not meet the standards of rigor required for publication in the venues referenced (Nature/BMI/CVPR level). I encourage the authors to substantially expand their data collection and methodological rigor before resubmitting elsewhere.

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Reviewer Confidence: High *I have expertise in social movement research, mixed methods, and political communication.*

AI Reviewer 2 - Critical Review

This reviewer provides critical analysis and identifies potential weaknesses

****Overall Assessment:**** ****Immediate Reaction:**** This manuscript presents an ambitious mixed-methods study on a highly relevant and complex socio-political topic. However, the execution is fundamentally flawed, raising serious concerns about methodological rigor, analytical depth, and the validity of its central claims. The paper feels like an overhyped, weak study that fails to meet the burden of proof required for its sweeping conclusions. The strengths lie in its topical relevance and theoretical ambition, but these are overshadowed by critical weaknesses in its empirical foundation and analysis.

****1. Overall Impression****

*** **Immediate Reaction:**** Skeptical and underwhelmed. The paper attempts to tackle a significant question but does so with a dataset and methodology that are insufficient to support its claims. The analysis feels superficial and the conclusions are overstated. *** **Breakthrough, Incremental, or Overhyped?**** Overhyped weak study. The topic is timely, but the research design and findings do not represent a meaningful advance. The core finding—that larger protests facing repression gain more visibility—is a near-tautology in social movement studies and is not novel. *** **First Impression Summary:**** *** **Strengths:**** Addresses a politically significant and theoretically rich topic (credibility construction, epistemic trust). Employs a mixed-methods framework, which is appropriate for the research questions. *** **Concerns:**** Critically small sample size (N=26), questionable data source and sampling, lack of methodological detail, weak quantitative analysis, and a failure to adequately address profound confounding variables and alternative explanations.

****2. Technical \ Scientific Assessment****

****A. Problem Definition: Score: 3/5**** * The research question is clearly motivated and non-trivial, situated within relevant literature on epistemic trust, social movements, and media. * The argument for why this problem matters in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict is reasonably well-articulated in the introduction.

****B. Methodological Soundness: Score: 1/5**** *** **Unacceptable Sample Size:**** N=26 events over 7 years for a *global* phenomenon is statistically and substantively inadequate. It cannot support generalizations about "global protest solidarity." This is a fatal flaw. *** **Data Source \ Sampling:**** The use of a single, non-peer-reviewed Kaggle dataset is a major weakness. The sampling strategy ("case-insensitive text matching") is crude and likely missed relevant events while including irrelevant ones. No information is provided on the original data collection methodology for the Global Protest Tracker, its reliability, or how it handles media bias. *** **Stance Coding:**** The "rule-based text analysis" for classifying protest stance (pro-Palestinian, etc.) is a critical and entirely un-validated heuristic. The method is not described in sufficient detail to be reproducible or assessed for bias. This undermines the entire quantitative analysis of "predominance." *** **Statistical Flaws:**** Presenting means for highly skewed protest size data (which includes an "over 1 million" category) is misleading; medians should be the primary measure. The correlation matrix (Table 5) is filled with 'nan' values and correlations based on tiny, unstable cell counts, rendering

it uninterpretable and meaningless.

C. Results \ Evidence: Score: 1/5 * **Lack of Compelling Evidence:** The central finding that larger protests face more violent responses is presented as a novel insight, but it is a well-documented correlation in the literature (which the authors cite, e.g., Davenport, 2007). The study does not provide compelling *new* evidence or a novel theoretical mechanism for this established pattern. * **Missing Baselines/Controls:** There is no attempt to control for confounding variables. For instance, are larger protests more likely in contexts with pre-existing state repression? Or in response to more severe conflict escalations? The analysis is bivariate and simplistic. * **Exaggerated Claims:** The claim that credibility is "co-produced" through the identified strategies is an interpretation, not a finding robustly demonstrated by the data. The qualitative analysis of 26 event descriptions is too thin to support such a strong theoretical claim.

D. Contribution to the Field: Score: 1/5 * The work does not meaningfully advance knowledge. It applies established theories (framing, epistemic trust) to a small, problematic dataset without generating new theoretical insights or robust empirical findings. * It is unlikely to be cited for its methodological or substantive contributions, though it might be cited as an example of a study on the topic.

E. Writing \ Presentation: Score: 3/5 * The paper is generally well-written and logically organized. * The tables are numerous but poorly explained and, in the case of Table 5, essentially useless. The qualitative findings section is descriptive and lacks the depth expected for a high-impact journal.

F. Ethical \ Transparency Standards: Score: 2/5 * The use of public data likely avoids IRB concerns. * **Major Transparency Failure:** The Kaggle dataset is cited, but the code for data filtering, stance coding, and statistical analysis is not available. This violates fundamental standards of reproducibility, especially given the ad-hoc nature of the stance coding. * The un-validated, heuristic stance coding approach borders on a questionable research practice, as it introduces immense potential for confirmation bias without transparency or robustness checks.

3. Strengths

* The research topic is highly relevant to contemporary political and media studies. * The attempt to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods is conceptually sound and appropriate for the research questions. * The theoretical framework draws from reputable and relevant scholarship.

4. Weaknesses

Major Flaws: 1. **Critically Small and Potentially Biased Sample (N=26):** Renders any generalization about global patterns invalid. 2. **Unvalidated and Opaque Stance Coding:** The core independent variable is constructed using an unreproducible, likely biased method, undermining all subsequent analysis. 3. **Inadequate Statistical Analysis:** Relies on inappropriate measures (means for skewed data) and presents uninterpretable correlations. 4. **Lack of Novelty:** The primary quantitative finding is a replication of a well-known correlation, presented as a new discovery. 5. **Failure to Address Confounding Variables:** The analysis is simplistic and does not rule out alternative explanations for the observed correlations.

Minor Flaws: * Poor labeling and explanation of tables (e.g., what do the "nan" values in Table 5 represent?). * Ambiguous phrasing, such as "credibility rituals," which is not operationalized clearly. * The qualitative analysis lacks depth and illustrative evidence (e.g., direct quotes from protest descriptions).

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5. Recommendations for Improvement

Required for Acceptance (Major Revisions): 1. **Substantially Expand the Dataset:** The sample size must be increased by at least an order of magnitude. The authors must use a more comprehensive and methodologically transparent source for protest events (e.g., integrating multiple databases like ACLED, GDELT, or a systematic analysis of news archives). 2. **Develop and Validate the Stance Coding:** The stance coding must be transformed from a heuristic into a rigorous, transparent, and validated method. This should involve: * A detailed codebook. * Inter-coder reliability tests. * Validation against an external benchmark. 3. **Conduct Robust Statistical Analysis:** Replace means with medians for size data. Employ multivariate regression models to control for key confounders such as country-level democracy indices, level of conflict intensity at the time of protest, and pre-existing state capacity for repression. 4. **Substantiate Qualitative Claims:** Deepen the qualitative analysis with more detailed case studies, direct quotes from source materials, and a more nuanced discussion of how frames are constructed and received.

What Would Make it Acceptable in a Future Submission: A completely new submission based on a robust dataset ($N \geq 500$ events), a transparent and validated coding scheme, rigorous multivariate analysis that controls for confounders, and a tempered discussion that accurately reflects the limitations of the evidence. The claims to novelty must be scaled back to what the evidence can actually support.

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6. Verdict

Overall Score: 1/5 - Strong Reject

Categorical Judgment: Strong Reject

Justification: This paper has serious, fundamental flaws that preclude publication in its current form and for which there is no straightforward path to revision. The combination of a critically small sample size ($N=26$), reliance on a single, non-transparent Kaggle dataset, an unvalidated and opaque method for coding the key independent variable (protest stance), and simplistic statistical analysis that fails to address confounding variables renders the findings unreliable and ungeneralizable. The claims made about "global" patterns and the "co-production" of credibility are not supported by the evidence presented. The burden of proof has not been met.

Human Reviewer

Expert human review providing domain-specific insights

Reviewer: Max Plank

Scores (out of 10): - Question 1: 1.5 - Question 2: 1 - Question 3: 0.5 - Question 4: 0.75 - Question 5: 1 - Question 6: 1 - Question 7: 1

Total Score: 6.75 / 10

Reviewer Notes:

Submitted at: 2025-12-24 18:41:23

Aggregate Review

Combined assessment from all reviewers

Aggregate Review Report

This report combines the assessments from all three reviewers:

Individual Scores: - AI Reviewer 1 (Comprehensive): 6.0 / 10 - AI Reviewer 2 (Critical): 0.0 / 10
- Human Reviewer (Max Plank): 6.75 / 10

Aggregate Score: 4.25 / 10

Overall Assessment: The paper received an average score of 4.25 out of 10 across all three reviewers.

Final Decision: Major Revision

Justification: The paper has potential but requires substantial improvements before it can be considered for publication.

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