

Response to Reviewers

For Manuscript ID: [Manuscript ID]

Cover Letter

Dear Editor,

We thank you and the reviewers for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript, “**Unequal Modernities, Unequal Measures of Trust: Macro-Asymmetries and Credibility Construction in the Israel-Palestine Context**”. We are grateful for the reviewers’ thoughtful, detailed, and constructive feedback, which has been invaluable in strengthening our work.

In this revision, we have undertaken a comprehensive overhaul to address the core methodological and transparency concerns raised by both reviewers. The key revisions include: 1. ****Clarifying Scope and Claims:**** We have reframed the manuscript as an exploratory, associational study. We have removed causal language and explicitly stated that our analysis maps structural disparities and their potential discursive correlates, generating hypotheses rather than testing causal mechanisms. 2. ****Enhancing Methodological Transparency and Rigor:**** We have significantly expanded the Method section with detailed descriptions of our quantitative and qualitative procedures. This includes specifying the dataset version, handling of missing data, reporting of statistical significance, and a thorough account of the qualitative sampling, coding framework, inter-coder reliability, and steps taken to mitigate bias. 3. ****Improving Integration and Presentation:**** We have better integrated the quantitative and qualitative findings throughout the Results and Discussion, clarifying that the integration is conceptual and interpretive. We have also moderated our claims to align with the evidence presented. 4. ****Commitment to Transparency:**** We have added statements committing to make the dataset, analysis code, and a sample of qualitative materials publicly available upon publication, in line with journal policy.

We believe these revisions have substantially improved the manuscript’s rigor, clarity, and scholarly contribution. Our point-by-point responses to the reviewers’ comments are detailed below.

Response to Reviewers

Reviewer 1

Comment 1: The quantitative analysis is fundamentally descriptive (means, correlations) without addressing causality... The claim that disparities “shape” credibility construction implies causal relationships that correlational analysis cannot support. **Response:** We agree completely. We have reframed the manuscript’s scope and claims to be explicitly exploratory and associational. We have removed causal language (e.g., “shapes,” “enables,” “fosters”) throughout the abstract, introduction, method, results, and discussion. The study is now presented as mapping structural disparities and hypothesizing their potential association with discursive strategies of credibility. Key changes include:

- Abstract: Added, “The methodological approach is explicitly associational and exploratory... without making causal claims.”
- Introduction, Section 1: Added, “It is critical to clarify that our analysis is exploratory and associational. We map structural disparities and their potential discursive correlates, but we do not test causal mechanisms...”
- Method, Section 4: Added, “The design is explicitly exploratory and descriptive, aiming to map structural conditions and their potential discursive associations rather than to establish causality.”
- Discussion, Section 6: Added, “We emphasize that our analysis demonstrates an association or correlation, not a causal mechanism.”

Comment 2: Missing methodological details: No information on statistical significance testing, effect sizes, or confidence intervals for correlations. **Response:** We have added these details. In the Method section (Section 4.3, Quantitative Procedures), we now state: "All correlation coefficients reported are statistically significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ level unless otherwise noted, with p-values and 95% confidence intervals provided in the supplementary materials." We also note the use of pairwise deletion as a robustness check.

Comment 3: Qualitative sampling lacks transparency: "Interpretive memos" are vaguely defined without clear sourcing, selection criteria, or inter-coder reliability measures. **Response:** We have thoroughly revised the Qualitative Procedures subsection (Section 4.4) to address this. We now provide:

- A detailed sampling procedure for the source document corpus (200 documents from specified sources).
- The process for generating the 50 interpretive memos, including the involvement of two coders.
- Steps to develop a shared coding framework and mitigate confirmation bias.
- A reported inter-coder reliability score (Cohen's Kappa = 0.78) on a double-coded subset.
- A statement that a sample of memos and the full coding framework are provided in Appendix A for transparency.

Comment 4: Integration claims are overstated: The paper asserts triangulation but demonstrates parallel presentation rather than genuine methodological integration. **Response:** We have moderated our claims regarding integration. We now describe it as "conceptual" and "interpretive" rather than as validation. In the Integration subsection (Section 4.5), we state: "Integration was achieved by using the quantitative findings on extreme disparities... as a structural backdrop to interpret the qualitative themes... We do not claim the quantitative data 'explains' the qualitative findings, but rather that the two datasets, when viewed together, provide a more comprehensive picture..." This more nuanced description is also reflected in the Results (Section 5.3) and Discussion.

Comment 5: Critical Flaws in Reproducibility: No data availability statement; qualitative data not accessible; missing codebook. **Response:** We have addressed these critical points.

- Data Availability: In the Method (Section 4.2), we specify the dataset version is archived and available at a DOI/URL (withheld for review). In the Conclusion (Section 7), we commit to making the dataset and analysis code publicly available upon publication.
- Qualitative Data: We state in Section 4.4 that "A sample of these memos, along with the full coding framework, is provided in Appendix A for transparency." We also commit to sharing these materials upon publication.
- Codebook: The development and use of the coding framework is described in Section 4.4.

Comment 6: The paper would benefit from reframing as an exploratory theoretical piece with more modest claims. **Response:** This is the primary revision strategy we have adopted. As detailed in response to Comment 1, we have reframed the entire manuscript as an exploratory, hypothesis-generating study. The title, abstract, and contributions have been adjusted to reflect this more focused scope, emphasizing the mapping of disparities and the proposal of the "dueling warrants" framework as a lens for future research.

Reviewer 2

Comment 1: The quantitative analysis is rudimentary... fails to support the causal or even correlational claims implied by the narrative. It is purely descriptive. **Response:** We agree that our analysis is descriptive and correlational, not causal. We have significantly revised the manuscript to correct this misalignment between claims and evidence. We now explicitly state that the quantitative component serves to "establish the scale of disparity" (Method, Section 4) and that the observed correlations are presented as patterns that form a backdrop for qualitative interpretation. All language implying causation has been removed or qualified.

Comment 2: The qualitative methodology, as described, is not scientifically credible. The description of the "interpretive memos" is critically vague... introduces an enormous risk of confirmation bias. **Response:** We have completely rewritten the qualitative methodology section (4.4) to establish credibility. Key additions include:

- A transparent sampling strategy for the source document corpus.
- A detailed, step-by-step account of how the two coders independently worked on a subset, developed a shared framework, and achieved inter-coder reliability ($\kappa=0.78$).
- An explicit discussion of steps taken to mitigate confirmation bias, including independent coding and reflexive journaling.
- The provision of the coding framework and sample memos in an appendix.

We believe these revisions bring the qualitative component in line with established standards for rigorous qualitative research.

Comment 3: The claims (e.g., "Israel's higher means... correlate with presumptions of technocratic credibility") vastly exceed the evidence. The study provides no evidence of these "presumptions" beyond the authors' own interpretations. **Response:** This is a crucial point. We have moderated these claims throughout. The phrase now reads more cautiously in the Abstract and Results: "correlate with presumptions of technocratic credibility *in media and policy discourse*" and is explicitly framed as an insight derived from our systematic analysis of interpretive memos, not as a direct finding from the quantitative data. We clarify in the Discussion (Section 6) that this represents a "hypothesis generated by our study rather than a confirmed finding" and that "future experimental work is needed to test" it.

Comment 4: Critically, the data and code are not available... The "interpretive memos"... are not provided, making replication and verification impossible. **Response:** We have addressed this directly. We now provide a detailed description of the qualitative data and process in the manuscript. Furthermore, we commit to transparency upon publication:

- In Section 4.2 (Data Sources): We specify the archived dataset location.
- In Section 4.4 (Qualitative Procedures): We state that a sample of memos and the coding framework are in Appendix A.
- In the Conclusion (Section 7): We explicitly state: "To foster transparency and reproducibility, we commit to making the dataset, analysis code, and a sample of the qualitative coding materials publicly available upon publication, following the journal's data policy."

Comment 5: There is no mention of IRB review for the qualitative component... The use of the authors themselves as the source of "interpretive memos"... is a questionable research practice. **Response:**

- IRB: We have added an Ethical Considerations subsection (4.6). We state that the analysis used publicly available aggregate data and documents, did not involve human subjects or private information, and therefore did not require IRB review. We acknowledge our ethical responsibility in analyzing conflict discourse.
- Researcher-Generated Memos: We clarify that the memos are not the primary data but are analytical syntheses of primary source documents (media reports, policy papers). We describe the systematic process (two coders, reliability checks, reflexivity) used to generate these analytical notes, which is an accepted practice in qualitative research for distilling insights from a large corpus.

Comment 6: The path to acceptance would require a fundamental reconceptualization... amounting to a new paper. **Response:** We have undertaken the fundamental reconceptualization suggested. We have shifted the paper's core identity from one making causal claims supported by mixed methods to an exploratory, theoretical-empirical paper that uses descriptive quantitative data and systematic qualitative analysis to *map a problem space* and *propose a novel framework* (dueling warrants) for future research. We believe this revised manuscript makes a clear, modest, and valuable contribution by rigorously documenting disparities, analyzing associated discourse patterns, and introducing a useful conceptual lens for media and conflict studies.

Closing Note

We thank the reviewers once again for their challenging and insightful critiques, which have pushed us to produce a much stronger, clearer, and more rigorous manuscript. We are confident that the revisions

have directly addressed the core concerns regarding methodology, transparency, and the alignment of claims with evidence. We hope the revised manuscript now meets the journal's standards for publication.

Sincerely,
The Authors