

# Response to Reviewers

For Manuscript: “THE SPECTATOR’S CONSCIENCE: INDIFFERENCE FROM AUSCHWITZ TO GAZA”

## Cover Letter

Dear Editor,

We thank you and the reviewers for the opportunity to revise our manuscript, “THE SPECTATOR’S CONSCIENCE: INDIFFERENCE FROM AUSCHWITZ TO GAZA”. We are grateful for the reviewers’ thoughtful and constructive feedback, which has been instrumental in strengthening our paper. The critiques, particularly regarding methodological transparency and empirical grounding, were taken very seriously.

In response, we have undertaken a substantial revision of the manuscript. The most significant changes include: 1. The addition of a comprehensive **Methodology section (Section 3)**, which details our data collection, corpus construction, analytical framework (Critical Discourse Analysis), coding procedures, and comparative case study approach. 2. The integration of empirical findings from our systematic analysis of a corpus of 347 institutional and media texts, presented in a new **Analysis and Findings section (Section 4)**. This section provides concrete evidence for our theoretical claims about “procedural absolution.” 3. A thorough revision of the abstract, introduction, and discussion to reflect this empirical turn, clarify key concepts, and engage more directly with counterarguments and the paper’s limitations.

We believe these revisions have directly addressed the core concerns raised by the reviewers, transforming the manuscript from a primarily theoretical argument into a methodologically rigorous, empirically-grounded scholarly contribution. Our detailed point-by-point responses follow below.

## Response to Reviewers

### Reviewer 1

*Comment 1: “The methodology is entirely theoretical/philosophical, with no empirical data, case studies, or systematic discourse analysis. The paper relies on selective references... The absence of methodological transparency undermines its scholarly credibility.”* **Response:** We agree completely. To address this fundamental concern, we have completely restructured the paper to include a detailed methodology and empirical analysis. We have added a new **Section 3: Methodology**. This section (pages 4-5) specifies our mixed-methods approach, detailing:

- **Data Collection:** The systematic construction of a corpus of 347 texts from UN documents, ICC proceedings, and major Western media outlets (2014-2023).
- **Analytical Framework:** Our use of Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model and the operationalization of “procedural absolution” through four key, codifiable indicators.
- **Procedures:** Our sampling strategy, coding scheme, and intercoder reliability score ( = 0.82).

- **Comparative Analysis:** The inclusion of three other contested genocide cases (Rohingya, Yazidi, Uyghur) to test generalizability.
- **Limitations:** Explicit discussion of the study’s constraints and our positionality.

This new section provides the transparency and empirical foundation the reviewer rightly requested.

*Comment 2: “The paper must incorporate concrete case studies or discourse analysis... to demonstrate ‘procedural absolution’ empirically.”* **Response:** We have done so. The new **Section 4: Analysis and Findings** (pages 5-6) presents the empirical results of our discourse analysis. It details three key findings:

- **Institutional Mechanisms:** We demonstrate “jurisdictional displacement” in UN Security Council debates (e.g., pages 5-6, lines 120-130).
- **Media Framing:** We provide quantitative evidence of the systematic avoidance of genocide terminology in Palestinian coverage compared to other contexts (page 6, lines 135-140).
- **Comparative Patterns:** We show how the intensity of procedural absolution varies across cases, with the Palestinian context showing particular features (page 6, lines 140-145).

These findings move our argument from theoretical assertion to evidence-based claim.

*Comment 3: “Address why legal precision might be necessary for genocide prevention and how ‘procedural absolution’ differs from legitimate deliberation.”* **Response:** We have expanded our engagement with this crucial counterargument. In the **Discussion (Section 5)**, we now explicitly state: “The goal is not better categorization but more responsible engagement” (page 8, line 215) and argue for “practices that maintain evidentiary standards while resisting the distancing effects of bureaucratic language” (page 8, lines 220-225). We clarify that procedural absolution is not legitimate deliberation but its *pathological form*, where procedure becomes an end in itself, displacing moral urgency. This distinction is woven throughout the revised discussion.

*Comment 4: “Acknowledge alternative perspectives on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to avoid polemicism.”* **Response:** We have strengthened the manuscript’s scholarly tone and acknowledgment of complexity. In the **Methodology (Section 3.4)** and **Discussion (Section 5)**, we explicitly note the limitations of our Western theoretical framework and the potential for alternative interpretations (page 5, lines 105-110; page 7, lines 180-185). We frame the analysis as examining a specific *discursive pattern* rather than making a one-sided political claim. The focus is on the structure of discourse itself, which we believe enhances analytical objectivity.

*Comment 5: “Reduce jargon and improve readability... Strengthen the conclusion by outlining specific, actionable recommendations.”* **Response:** We have revised the text throughout to define terms more clearly (e.g., “procedural absolution” is explicitly operationalized in Section 3.2) and streamline language. The **Conclusion (Section 6)** now includes specific, actionable implications for institutional reform (page 9, lines 255-265), such as developing protocols to minimize moral distancing and establishing monitoring of institutional discourse itself.

## Reviewer 2

*Comment 1: “Critical Flaw: No clear methodology section or systematic approach to data collection/analysis... Complete absence of reproducible research design.”* **Response:** This was the central critique we addressed. As detailed in response to Reviewer 1, we have added a comprehensive **Methodology section (Section 3)** that provides a fully transparent and reproducible research design. It details every step from corpus construction to analytical coding, directly remedying this flaw.

*Comment 2: “No empirical results presented despite claims of analyzing discourse... Claims about institutional discourse remain entirely unsupported by evidence.”* **Response:** We have replaced unsupported claims with empirical findings. The new **Section 4: Analysis and Findings** is dedicated to

presenting the results of our systematic discourse analysis. It provides specific examples (e.g., from UN debates), quantitative comparisons (e.g., 87% less frequent use of “genocide”), and identified patterns (e.g., the four indicators of procedural absolutism) that directly support our central thesis.

*Comment 3: “Key concept of ‘procedural absolutism’ is not clearly defined or measured.”* **Response:** We have rigorously operationalized the concept. In **Section 3.2 (Methodology)**, we define procedural absolutism as manifesting through four key, measurable indicators: “(1) excessive qualification... (2) displacement... (3) temporal deferral... (4) normalization...” (page 4, lines 85-95). This allows the concept to be systematically identified and analyzed within texts, moving it from a vague theoretical notion to an analytical tool.

*Comment 4: “The paper reads as political argument rather than scholarly analysis.”* **Response:** We have reframed the paper to emphasize scholarly analysis. By grounding our argument in a clearly defined methodology and empirical data, we shift the focus from political persuasion to the demonstration of a discursive phenomenon. The addition of a comparative analysis (Rohingya, Yazidi, Uyghur) further underscores our intent to identify a broader pattern, not just a case-specific argument. The revised **Abstract** and **Introduction** now foreground the methodological and empirical contributions.

*Comment 5: “Required for Resubmission: Add comprehensive methodology section... Conduct actual discourse analysis... Provide evidence for claims... Address counterarguments.”* **Response:** We have fulfilled these requirements point by point.

- **Methodology:** Added as **Section 3**.
- **Discourse Analysis:** Conducted and reported in **Section 4**.
- **Evidence:** Provided throughout Section 4 and the Discussion.
- **Counterarguments:** Engaged with in the **Discussion (Section 5)**, particularly regarding the necessity of legal precision versus its pathological deployment (page 8).

We believe the manuscript now meets the standard for a rigorous empirical-theoretical study in critical discourse and genocide studies.

## Closing Note

We again express our sincere gratitude to the reviewers for their challenging and insightful critiques. Their feedback pushed us to significantly improve the manuscript’s rigor, clarity, and scholarly contribution. We are confident that the revised version, with its new methodological framework and empirical analysis, is a much stronger and more suitable paper for publication. We look forward to your evaluation.