

About LLMs or about Gaza? (2 July 2025)

Prompter

Here's a question that was put to me yesterday: Is this website principally about LLMs or about Gaza?

In the Prompter's view: for this website project it is inextricably both, building upon two hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: LLMs are communication or articulation facilitating devices. In quick strokes: They decode prompts to produce outputs drawing upon:

- largescale information garnered or searched from the internet;
- inferential processing (context determination, employing semantic principles, constructing responsive policies, etc.);
- pre-set norms, through the training data and in platform principles (insofar as explicitly declared for the LLMs used here, these are popular liberal ethical norms).

In ordinary or natural language outputs for prompts on a theme/issue (the reference point), information/arguments relevant to the reference point are effectively both represented and massaged/shaped. This occurs by aggregating and customising from general or dominant communication trends found in the relevant largescale data on the Internet. The question that arises is: to what extent do LLM outputs represent and massage/shape information/arguments for a reference point, by which means and how? To some degree, the question can be tackled simply by methodical and persistent prompting for a fixed reference point. Engaging with such prompting could give a reasonable accruing sense of:

- the extent to which representation and massaging/shaping of the reference point appears in LLM outputs;
- which aspects of the LLM processing and architecture are involved in this balance;
- what invisible determinants play a part (like training-data labelling, platform norms, relation of prompt to contextualisation).

Here, the fixed reference point is the prevailing situation in Gaza, which could be particularly productive in this regard.

*Hypothesis 2: The **situation in Gaza***, especially since the Hamas attack of 7 October 2023 and ongoing now in mid-2025, is plausibly understood as a genocide of Palestinians undertaken by the State of Israel. It is arguably the first genocide undertaken with global material support (at nation-state governmental level). It is a

genocide by the definition given in the [1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#) (the Genocide Convention). It is the *first to be globally supported* in that previous genocides, which fall under that definition, were undertaken by being discursively and governmentally confined within dominant spheres of interest (e.g. colonial genocides, the Holocaust) or have been materially, even if ineffectively, condemned by significant international alignments (e.g., in Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Myanmar). A few nation-states and transnational bodies aside, the ongoing genocide in Gaza is broadly materially supported by the great majority of nation-states around the world. Alongside rhetorical statements of doubts and condemnation, a majority of nation-state governments in the so-called East and West, the North and Global South, and indeed within the Middle East, have effectively supported the genocide materially. Such support for the State of Israel's undertaking of genocide in Gaza from nation-state governments is variously:

- *active*: taking an enabling diplomatic stance, supplying arms and logistical support, providing intelligence, opposing sanctions, manipulating public perception to mitigate unease about genocide, adjusting legal and security regimes to disable protests
- *passive*: maintaining diplomatic relations, maintaining trade and commercial relations, etc. on the grounds that pragmatic national interests override or have no relation to the perpetration of genocide and no bearing on the means for undertaking it.

Specific nation-states have been more or less active or passive in their material support, but the great majority have been so. As a fixed reference point, then, this is a particularly fraught one, of global scope, wherein representation and massaging of information/arguments are of critical significance.

The two hypotheses converge usefully in some respects, which enable both to be used to explore each other.

- The questions about representation and massaging/shaping for any reference point in Hypothesis 1 can be (partially) addressed by focalising the tensions between representation and massaging/shaping when that reference point concerns Hypothesis 2. The tacit or covert processing features in the LLM can be made visible, or at least discernibly implied, by persistent methodical prompting with regard to Gaza. Indicative observations can be obtained about the dominant patterns of training and searched data, patterns in inference-making and learning policies, and limits of pre-set tenets (particularly in relation to popular liberal norms). The glitches and slippages that appear in LLM processing are of particular interest.
- At the same time, such engagement with Hypothesis 1 also offers interrogations and rational consideration of Hypothesis 2. The tensions in real-world

representation and massaging/shaping in relation to Gaza (in mass media, political statements, legal proceedings, commercial activity, public attitudes and actions, etc.) can be tracked methodically. Those underpin Hypothesis 2 and could be informed, interrogated, mapped, and raised to awareness via engagement with Hypothesis 1. In particular, the dominant attitudes and proclivities referred to Gaza, and the coherences and contradictions therein, can be explored systematically. Globally prevalent social norms, practices, and functioning can be tracked; or, to put that otherwise, a global ideological, political and economic order might be traced.

This website's engagement of LLMs with regard to Gaza involves methodical and persistent prompting. The key prompting device adopted here is to start with one that elicits a brief narrative. This is a specific sort of narrative – one that would be thought of in ordinary terms as a '**true story**'. The popular, and, for that matter, well conceptualised notion of the 'true story' is precisely positioned at the junction of representing and moulding/shaping information which is factual or real-world. This opening prompting device lends itself readily to exploring the two hypotheses in a joined-up manner.