

**Media Framing of the Syrian Conflict: *Aljazeera*, *BBC*, and *ETV* in
Comparative Perspective**

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Mohammed Salih, entitled *Media Framing of the Syrian Conflict: Aljazeera, BBC, and ETV in Comparative Perspective* and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication complies with the regulations of the University and notes the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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List of Acronyms & Abbreviations

EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front
EU	European Union
FSA	Free Syrian Army
HWR	Human Rights Watch
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ISIS	Islamic State in Syria and al-Sham [the Levant]
JN	Jabhat al-Nusra
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MNF	Multinational Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NWICO	New World Information Communication Order
OAU	Organization for African Unity
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PYD	Democratic Union Party
SANA	Syria Arab News Agency
SNC	Syrian National Council
SOHR	Syrian Observatory for Human Rights
UAR	United Arab Republic
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States
USA	United States of America

USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republic

WMD Weapon of Mass Destruction

WWII World War II [Two]

Sr. Senior

Jr. Junior

ABSTRACT

Media framing of the Syrian conflict: Aljazeera, BBC, and ETV in comparative perspective

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This study entitled *Media framing of the Syrian conflict: Aljazeera, BBC, and ETV in comparative perspective* was conducted to investigate how these media institutions framed the conflict in Syria. Guided by framing and political economy theory of the mass media, this study was carried out to answer three research questions. To do so, articles that explicitly entertain the Syrian conflict were downloaded from their respective websites: *www.aljazeera.com*, *www.bbc.com/news*, and *www.erta.gov.et*.

With the aim to answer the research questions, a three month time frame was purposely chosen and qualitative content analysis (textual analysis) method was employed. Purposive sampling technique was also used to select articles which were relevant to answer the research questions. By thorough reading, analytical frames were finally identified to analyze how the selected media organizations framed the conflict during the time frame. These were diagnostic frame, responsibility frame, portrayal frame, solution frame, and prognostic frame.

The study revealed that differing only in portraying of ISIS and al-Nusra Front, and in the prognostic frame, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* framed the Syrian conflict almost the same way, while *ETV*, except in few frames, framed the Syrian conflict in a different manner. In the diagnostic frame, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* reported that the Assad family rule and the authoritarian nature of the government (emergency law and its repressiveness) were sole causes for the initial protests. In addition, all three similarly stated that the excessive force the government used on the demonstrators was a cause for the conflict to spread to other areas. In the responsibility frame,

Aljazeera and *BBC* blamed government forces for killing civilians by chemical weapon but *ETV* took a neutral position. In portraying the government and the opposition forces, all three depicted government forces as killers of innocents, and, with the exception of *ETV*, portrayed the opposition forces as Victorious and caring of civilians. Within the opposition group, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* reported different attitude towards the two powerful groups of the FSA, ISIS and al-Nusra Front. While *Aljazeera* represented the two groups positively, *BBC* described them negatively. Western, particularly U.S, military intervention was reported by *Aljazeera* and *BBC* as a solution to end the conflict. But *ETV* stood on the side of peaceful solution. In the prognostic frame, while *Aljazeera* predicted state disintegration, *BBC* reported that the transformation of the country into an Islamic state.

Finally, the study found that *Aljazeera* and *BBC* were working toward their elite preferences rather than sticking to journalism profession in reporting objectively facts on the ground. Because of ownership and political positions, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* treated the Assad government unfairly. In contrast to the above two, *ETV* generally showed a neutral position.

Chapter one: Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

1.1.1. A Brief Overview of the Arab uprising

The Arab uprising was first started in Tunisia in December 2010, following the death of a street vendor called Mohammed Bouaziz. This young Tunisian citizen was leading his life by selling vegetables on the streets of Sidi Bouzid, Tunisian provincial town. After he was prohibited not to sell on the street by the police, he burned himself alive, and died immediately. Even if it was economic questions of the poor, like Bouzid, the people started to demand the resignation of President Ben Ali's administration. In only few days, the Tunisian people overthrew Ben Ali's government in a popular uprising. This popular uprising, known as "an Arab Spring" or "the Arab Uprising", was later spread to other countries of the Arab world. In the Arab uprising, the people of the Arab world in general started to ask for democracy, dignity, and freedom (Pollack et.al, 2011, p.16). The Arab world, where, as Pollack et.al, (2011, p.21) write "not a single Arab regime could be said to be fully democratic," engaged in regime changes, reforms, and violence for the first time in its history. While the peoples of Tunisia and Egypt successfully toppled their repressive regimes, other Arab countries like Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia silenced the uprising by making promises for reforms. Unlike the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, which ended shortly, the Libyan people ousted its age-long ruler, Muammar Gaddafi, by the help of NATO after months of violence. Syria, however, remains in the near-insoluble conflict which the Arab uprising brought to the Middle East.

1.1.2. An overview of the Syrian conflict

Like Gaddafi, the Assad family has ruled Syria for over 40 years. Hafez al-Assad ruled Syria with an iron fist, suppressing any competitive political opposition. When Hafez al-Assad passed away in June 2000, his son Bashar al-Assad took power, and, then, "the regime moved into its second generation in what has been described as a quasi-monarchical change" (Lundgren, 2012, p.12). In his inauguration speech, Bashar al-Assad stressed the need for reforms (ibid, 2012). Taking this as an opportunity, intellectuals and academicians established a Damascus Spring, a name given by the intellectuals in order to initiate reforms. And they moved to arrange dialogues and discussions with the government on how to improve human rights and on how to release political prisoners. However, "The Damascus Spring came to an abrupt end with the arrest of a large number of activists during summer and autumn 2001" (Lundgren, 2012, p.13). After ten years, the government of Bashar al-Assad has seen a popular uprising, part of an Arab uprising in which the majority of Syrians sought to end a one family rule.

Before the initial popular uprising in Syria, President Bashar al-Assad was certain that the Arab spring would not happen in Syria. His claim was that Syrians, unlike Tunisians and Egyptians, were happy at the actions of their government. He justified the popular uprisings (the Arab springs) that struck North African Arab countries because, according to him, their governments lacked wills of their people. Lundgren (2012: 11) notes:

...In his view, Syria shared many of the problems that had led to demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt. Unlike these two countries, however, Syria would not see an uprising. It had staunchly challenged US and Israeli schemes for the region and the Syrian leadership was thereby, according to al-Assad, closely linked to the beliefs of the Syrian people.

However, in March 2011, only three months after the Tunisian uprising, a group of school children who had shown anti-regime graffiti in the southern town of Deraa sparked a nationwide protests (ibid, 2012). Contrary to his belief, Bashar al-Assad has been experiencing what the Arab uprising has brought to the Middle East. Athamneh et.al, (2013, p.173) wrote “The embattled leader found himself in the middle of a bloody uprising that quickly evolved into a brutal civil war.”

In addition, the Syrian conflict has paved the way for the involvement of foreign countries that have their own national interests, particularly, the U.S. on one hand, and Russia on the other. These countries are not only engaging in what is called the proxy war, but also intensifying the propaganda war on the media.

Western countries, especially the U.S. want to see the end of the Assad era and its political positions in the Middle East. The reason for this is not only the Assad regime's deeply-held hatred of the West, but also is an ally of Iran, which is another regional hegemony. The west, especially the U.S., is inspecting the formidable duos because they fear that they [Syria and Iran] will pose a threat to their historical and strategic allies: Israel and Saudi Arabia (Goodarzi, 2006, p.290). Heydemann (2013) clearly stated the support the U.S. and its allies provide for the FSA factions in Syria:

Western governments have gradually expanded their engagement in Syria. By April 2013, the US was providing logistical support for the transfer of weapons purchased by Saudi Arabia and Qatar to opposition units deemed ‘moderate’. Further shifts in policy are likely in the coming months, including potentially the direct provision of arms to some elements of the FSA, and endorsement of some form of no fly zone. (p. 4).

Russia, on the other hand, has a historic, political and economic tie with the Assad regime. Because of the Assad regime's anti-Western stand, Russia has considered Syria as a staunch ally. Furthermore, to regain its former status and to deter the rapid expansion of NATO, Russia is now actively participating in world politics. In this regard, Heydemann (2013) clearly stated the reason why Russia has been supporting the Syrian government:

Russia views the possible overthrow of the regime as a major threat to its own regional interests. Such an outcome would weaken its regional allies, bolster the US's position, and expand the influence of Islamist movements that Moscow views as a potential challenge to its position not only in the greater Middle East but also in the Caucasus and Central Asia ... In response, Russia has insisted that the only acceptable path out of the conflict must be through negotiations between regime representatives and the opposition, as defined in the Geneva Framework of June 2012. (p. 5).

1.1.3. Media and the Arab uprisings: *an overview*

The uprisings in North Africa were known as “Facebook Revolution”, or “Twitter Revolution”. These names were given due to the roles these media played during the Arab uprisings. Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs played a pivotal role in communicating up-to-date information, and helped the protesters to achieve their goals. Asmeret (2013, p.2), for example, writes “Social media like Facebook, Twitter and You tube helped people to organize and communicate the heats of the revolutions. Youths in Egypt have manipulated the benefits of this social media to encourage people to participate in the demonstrations”. Apart from serving as organizing of protests, these media types were providing news to global media organizations like Aljazeera, BBC, CNN, and so forth.

Having the power of communicating to a wider people world-wide, these global media organizations revealed significant happenings of the uprising to the outside world. They reported each and every aspect of the uprising. Cottle (2011, p.654) says, “Media and communications also enter the frame of political uprisings and mass protests in terms of how they become defined and deliberated in the international arena, especially as mass demonstrations destabilize the regimes in question.” Thus, media organizations helped expose events of the Arab uprising and gave political meanings, so that their audience became aware with what the protests meant to the revolting people and peoples outside of it.

Although mass media played great role in informing people globally about the uprisings that took place in the Arab world, it becomes natural now a days for some media organizations to report conflicts, like the Arab springs, differently from facts on the ground, or worse in a distorted way. Perhaps because of the political context in which they operate, most powerful media organizations vary in great degree in reporting conflicts. Mostefaoui (as cited in Hafez, 2001, p. 2) said “Although Western and international programs are often welcomed as alternative sources of information, there is also considerable skepticism regarding the quality of Western foreign reports and the image of Asians and of Islam they depict”. Likewise, the Syrian conflict, as of the other uprisings, was reported in various ways across several media outlets in the world. This variation in reporting can be observed in their news reports they publish.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Before the Arab uprising, the Middle East attracted relatively little media attention, especially Western media. In fact, there were times when the region received much more western media attention, for instance, Gulf War I, Gulf War II, and Muslim fundamentalism and terrorism.

Terrorism in particular has made the region a spring of media news stories after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Hafez (2001, p.2) indicated, “ Western media rarely cover the Middle East, with the exception of, for example, certain crisis periods and special aspects such as Muslim fundamentalism.” When the Arab uprising erupted at the beginning of 2011 in most of North Africa and the Middle East Arab countries, all media in the world began to entertain the turmoil. Media attention to the Arab Spring is an example of a news topic that suddenly gained momentum (Eskjær, 2012, p.2).

However, the Arab uprisings that swept the Arab region were not covered equally by various media outlets across the world. Given that the disparate political ideologies they adhere to, media outlets have framed these uprisings in different ways. For example, Eskjaer (2012) conducted a study on four ideologically different Danish newspapers’ coverage of the uprisings in Tunisia and Syria. He discovered that apart from a fast increment of news coverage of the Arab uprising in the newspapers, there were extremely different images given to the two countries. Hence, the uprising in Tunisia was depicted as a potential threat to bilateral relations of Denmark and Tunisia. Two reasons led for the papers to frame the uprising in Tunisia in this way; first, Tunisia was a choice for many Danish investors and tourists; second, the former Tunisian President Ben Ali had had good relations with Western countries; whereas the Uprising in Syria was framed as an opportunity for the West and Israel to overthrow the Assad regime. Explaining his findings, Ekjaer (2012, p.9) indicated, “When it comes to interpreting the consequences of the popular uprising in Syria, the press is less concerned with the effects on Syrians and more concerned with some of Syria’s neighboring countries (Israel and Lebanon)”. What is more, Eskjaer (2012) and Heydemann (2013), who also carried-out recent studies on the Syrian conflict, framed the

conflict as sectarianism in which different religious groups fight to achieve their own (albeit different) objectives.

The differences in framing of the same event in different media outlets could be the constraints, such as social, political, and economic, under which any media organization operates. These constraints can be reflected in the media's final product. By employing framing techniques, journalists or the media organization for which they work cover events in the owner's interest, for example. Tohme (n.d), for example, has conducted a mini-research on how ownership and interest affect in framing the Syrian conflict, particularly in portraying Assad and the opposition. Purposely selecting five ideologically and politically different media organizations, namely *Aljazeera* (Qatar), *al-Manar* (Hezbollah's mouthpiece in Lebanon), *al-Akhbar* (a Lebanese newspaper that espouses a pro-resistance leftist political line), *al- Arabia* (Saudi Arabia), and *Euro news* (Europe), Tohme (n.d.) found out that *al-Manar*, being financed by Hezbollah, an armed group fighting together with the Assad forces, became biased towards the Assad regime. Opposite to *al- Manar*, and in line with its position in the conflict, *al-Akhbar* openly supported the rebels. While *Aljazeera* and *al- Arabia*, being owned by the Emir and the king respectively, and given the two countries (Qatar & Saudi Arabia) enmity with the Shia leader of Syria, became biased towards the opposition, *Euro news*, according to him, took a neutral position.

These differences among the media outlets, as indicated above, stem from various factors that impact media routines. Basically, media organizations operate under broad political, economic, cultural, and social contexts through which media topics inevitably be shaped. Constituency groups, elites, and financing organizations depend on the media to realize their interest and to get positive image from the public. To do so, they have to provide sources, and, in fact, the media demand competing sources to maintain balance (Fortunato, 2005, p.149). The winner will have

its points of view published or broadcast even though that source's idea is distorted or inclined towards the provider's specific objective. That is why media people have different interpretations of the same event, not least to mention journalist's attitude towards that event. Pointing out the reasons for exhibiting of different treatments of the same conflict by the media outlets discussed above, Tohme(n.d) writes,

When considering the Syrian case, we notice that the manipulation of information has become more flagrant than in usual news reporting where it normally is a dormant factor that is shaped by the preferences and sensitivities of the journalist, whether cultural, political, economic, or social. The Media have indeed taken sides in this conflict and have become propaganda tools for each of the belligerents. (p. 16).

As has been indicated, this difference in reporting the same event is the result of framing techniques employed by the media organizations. Any media organization may deliberately utilize framing techniques which will help it to magnify certain aspects of that particular event over the other(s) (Entman, 1993, p.52). Taking framing as its core guiding framework along with political economy theory of the mass media, a framework which is mainly used in this study to investigate forces that drive the media organizations to frame the conflict the way they did, this study investigated how the national and international media organizations framed the conflict in Syria. In addition, it is concerned with how *ETV*, *Aljazeera*, and *BBC* alike or differ in framing the Syrian conflict. It is also equally concerned with why these media organizations frame the conflict differently. In other words, it examined factors that might have affected journalists or those media organizations in framing the Syrian conflict in such manner.

1.3. Objective of the study

1.3.1. General objective

The general objective of the study is to investigate how *ETV*, *Aljazeera*, and *BBC* framed the conflict in Syria during the period from July 1st- September 30th, 2013.

1.3.2. Specific objectives

1. To explore how *Aljazeera*, *BBC* and *ETV* frame the Syrian conflict.
2. To understand the similarities and differences among the media organizations in framing the conflict.
3. To investigate factors that might have affected in framing the conflict in such manner.

1.4. Research questions

1. How did *Al-Jazeera*, *BBC*, and *ETV* frame the conflict in Syria during July, August and September of 2013?
2. What were the similarities and differences among the media organizations in framing the conflict in Syria?
3. What were the factors that influence the media outlets to frame the Syrian conflict in such a way?

1.5. Scope of the study

The study dealt with the comparative investigation of media framing of the Syrian conflict. To conduct the study, two international and one national media outlets were selected. *Aljazeera* and *BBC* were selected due to their easily accessible nature. In addition, these two international media organizations represent different geographical locations and political orientations, and

espouse their respective country's social, historical, political, and economic leanings. Likewise, Ethiopia is found in a different geographical location and has its own social-economic levels and national interests. Hence, *ETV* is selected. Regarding the sample time, a three month data, from July-September, 2013, will be collected and analyzed.

1.6. Significance of the study

This study will provide a significant insight on how different media organizations incorporate different organizing mechanisms (frames) into their texts when they report an event. Media messages usually have impact on the audience, who select from among media topics, and, consequently, will become informed and react based on it. That is to say, media organizations employ frame types which suit them most, and, at the same time, they can easily drive public opinion. In addition, the study will shed some light on how certain aspects of perceived reality are framed across media organizations. Media organizations greatly differ on selection of an angle of a story and their frames. Thus, the study will give some remedies for the common weaknesses committed in treating the Syrian conflict.

Moreover, the study will have a viable output for those media organizations in general and *ETV* in particular, since it can easily be contacted, to adjust their news makings regarding the conflict. In addition, the study will pave the way for similar studies of global significance, and will serve as a springboard for researchers who are interested to study the Syrian conflict any further. What is more, the study will add new knowledge on framing research provided that it is mostly done with national based media outlets, especially in Ethiopia.

1.7. Limitation of the study

The researcher selected these media outlets because of their easily accessible nature online; however, the findings from this study cannot be generalized to other media outlets. In addition, the study would have been comprehensive if the researcher had had the possibility of incorporating other media outlets from Syria itself and from its neighboring countries for an interesting comparison. But time and material limitation do not allow going further.

1.8. Organization of the study

The study is divided in to five chapters. The first chapter deals with the preliminary topics, and lays the basis upon which the subsequent chapters develop. The second chapter links the topic under discussion to the broader works of literature, and helps to provide scholarly insights into the study. The third chapter discusses the methodology, which guides the researcher to use appropriate methods to investigate the problem, as well as the research questions. The fourth chapter, as the body of the research, critically analyzes the data gathered. Here, this study's main concern and the research questions will be answered. Finally, the fifth chapter concludes by providing conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

2.1. The Arab Spring

A young Tunisian vegetable vender named Mohammed Bouazizi, who set himself afire on December 17, 2010, became a sudden cause for the widespread popular uprisings in the Arab world. These uprisings, dubbed as “the Arab Spring” or “the Arab Uprising,” resulted in ousting of four countries’ leaders: Tunisia’s Ben Ali, Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak, Libya’s Gaddafi, and Yemen’s Abdella Salah (Magen, 2012).

Economic, social, political, juridical, and diplomatic problems were causes for the widespread popular upheavals in the Arab world. Economy, as the main cause, has shown stagnation since 1970 (Pollack et.al, 2011). Pollack et.al, (2011, p.2) further said “While other countries in the world evolved from agrarian economies to industrial economies to information economies, the Arab world lagged far behind.” In addition, investments, with so little human capital, have benefited the regimes and their families, but not the mass population (ibid). Even if economy became the driving force for the young Bouazizi to make a suicide, lack of good governance, government lengthy bureaucracies, unemployment, corruption and absence of democracy were also reasons for the Arabs to revolt. Pollack et.al, (2011, p.2) wrote a summary of the causes of the Arab uprising.

Before 2011 the Middle East was a democratic desert: only Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories could lay any claim to democracy, and all these efforts were deeply imperfect. These autocratic regimes added to the misery of their people by tolerating, and even encouraging, widespread corruption and sketchy legal systems that frightened away legitimate investors.

The interconnection nature of the Arab people also helped the Arab uprising to touch every Arab country. The Arab world is characterized by same religious [predominantly Islam] and political systems. In Egypt and Tunisia, where the people are largely followers of Sunni sect of Islam, the people easily ousted the rulers of the two countries (Pollack et.al, 2011, p.5). Regarding the political system, the Arab people are not accustomed to throne leaders in a democratic way. The Gulf States, for instance, have no formal parties and still "maintained a pattern of direct family rule" (Owen, 2006, p.131). These two factors precipitated the Arab uprising. However, in countries where Sunni and Shi'a sects have approximate number of followers, the Arab uprising couldn't be able to meet its objective in overthrowing a regime. For example, in Libya, Jordan, Bahrain, and notably Syria, the rulers were able to get support from their nationals and religious sects (Pollack et.al, 2011,p.5). Especially, the Arab uprising in Syria has turned into a sectarian civil war, dividing and involving neighboring countries into Sunni-Shia lines. Magen (2012) clearly stated the impact of the Syrian conflict on the whole region; thus, he indicates how the Arab countries are highly interconnected to each other. Magen (2012, p.18) writes, "state failure in one or two Arab countries, particularly in strategic ones such as Iraq or Syria, are likely to produce dire spill-over effects for neighboring countries, resulting in a possible cascade of failures across the region." Similarly, Pollack et.al, (2011) stated that because of the sectarian strife, post-uprising Middle East may devolve into a civil war.

The Arab spring has far reaching effects on the geopolitics of the region and out of it. Powerful countries with different national interests are reshaping their foreign policies (Pollack et.al, 2011). Pollack et.al, (2011, p.243) further stated "The events of 2011 have shattered important geopolitical alignments, causing new ones to emerge. Diplomatic relationships, such as those between Turkey and Syria and between Egypt and Israel, are under strain." Countries like Egypt

and Saudi Arabia are struggling to regain their former status- leader of the Arab League and Islamic religious leader, respectively. Moreover, one essential effect the Arab spring has brought into the Arab world is Arab countries start to depend on domestic politics and public opinion (Pollack et.al, p.244).

2.1.1. The Syrian conflict

The fast moving mass protests of the Arab population reached almost all countries of the Arab world. Syria, being ruled by a family [clan] based system, has been hit by mass protests. Protests that call for the resignation of Bashar al Assad have started to be heard since March 2011. The first Arab uprising in Syria began in the town called Daraa by a group of students who demanded for the stepping down of the regime (Heydemann, 2013). The government quickly reacted with shootings and arrests, but the protests went out of the government's control. Heydemann (2013, p. 62) writes, "As more protestors took up arms to defend themselves, the regime escalated its violence to the level of large-scale military offensives involving armored units and heavy artillery against major urban centers." But what was started as a peaceful popular uprising against the four decades of the Assad family rule has "gradually transformed into a full-fledged and increasingly sectarian civil war" (Heydemann, 2013, p.62).

Like the other Arab uprisings, economic and political grievances were reasons for the Syrians to rise up against the government. Absence of democracy and the increasing level of poverty were among the major reasons for the Syrians to seek the end of the Assad era. Magen (2012, p.14) ranked the Middle Eastern region, where Syria is also part of it, the lowest in respecting human rights and rule of law.

The nationwide protest, although still fails to meet the aspirations of the people, forced the regime, especially at the earlier months of the protest, to make promises for reforms. But, as the protesters demanded the stepping down of Bashar al-Assad, the conflict has continued unabated, turning into a sectarian civil war. To some extent similar to Libya, where the people ousted Gadhafi by the help of NATO, Syrians have also received ammunitions from the west and from some Sunni Arab countries to help them overthrow the government (Pollack et.al, 2011, p.214-15).

According to Heydemann (2013), two important strategic alliances of the Assad regime are held accountable for his survival and adaptation in the war. The strong alliance the regime build with Hezbollah and Iran help him to get military and financial support. Especially, Hezbollah is directly involving in the war alongside with the Assad forces. In the international arena, the regime does have a loyal ally, Russia. Russia, one of the five permanent Security Council members in the UN, has successively banned military resolutions passed over the regime (ibid, p.63).

2.2. An overview of modern history of Syria

Greater Syria, comprising the modern states of Syria, Jordan, Israel/Palestine, and Lebanon, became under Ottoman Empire rule in 1516. In the 400 years of Ottoman rule, Greater Syria was ruled by provincial ruling classes (local elites) (Provence, 2005). Like ruling classes of the state center, these local elites were Sunni Muslims. The top political families first got their start in government services like military, and, then, tax brokers and landlords (ibid, p.7).

In the late nineteenth century, farmers all over the provinces started to revolt against the state. This was because farmers began to lead a subsistence way of life, and their agricultural lands

were constricted by the land lords. Moreover, the landlord's continuous impositions of tax over their farmlands, forced the farmers to form a frontier to claim independence from the state (ibid). The state assured them with land reforms. But, helped by Britain in the First World War, nationalist and separatist movements destroyed the Great Ottoman Empire towards the end of the war (Provence, 2005 and Darraj, 2005).

But the Arabs who were freed by the help of Great Britain were soon given to French colony in 1920. According to an agreement (known as Sykes-Picot Agreement) signed between Britain and France, Syria and Lebanon were given to France while Palestine (modern-day Israel and the Palestinian territories) became a British colony (Darraj, 2005, p.17).

French followed divide-and-rule strategy in Syria. It easily exploited the ethnic and religious differences exist within the Syrian population (ibid). "In the south, they carved out an independent region for the Druze, a sect of Shiite Islam. The Alawites, another, more extreme sect of Shiite Islam, were given a separate area of their country on the coast", stated Darraj (2005, p.19). On April 17, 1946, after some 26 years of colonization, the French ended their mandate over Syria, and the last French soldier departed, making Syria the first Arab nation to become independent from foreign rule (ibid, p.28). After independence, Syria involved in all the Arab-Israeli wars and the war in Lebanon in 1982, a war waged by Israel to demolish PLO bases in the country.

2.2.1. The Ba'ath party

In Arabic, Ba'ath means "rebirth" or "resurrection". Ba'ath party was established in 1940 by Michael Aflaq and Salah ad Din al Bittar (Darraj, 2005). Michael Aflaq was an Arab Christian, and studied at University of Paris in 1920s. While he was a student, he learned the French style

of government. He later came with an idea that “the Arabs should reject foreign occupiers while they worked to establish socioeconomic equality among their citizens” (ibid, p.29). In contrast to capitalism, the Ba'ath party allows the government to own businesses and to control the economy of the country. In addition, since the party evolved from the poor lower class, the Ba'athists worked to narrow the gap between the wealthy and the poor (ibid).

In 1953, the Ba'ath party joined with the Syrian Socialist Party, then, formed the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party (ibid). The Ba'ath party's motto was “Unity, Freedom, and Socialism- Unity- referred to the Arab unity and the pan-Arab movement, Freedom- freedom from the French and all foreign occupiers and influences, and Socialism- as the core of its government structure” (Darrai, 2005, p.30). Although the Ba'athists formed an alliance with the communist Russia, which was against the party's motto, they planned to create a secular state in which the religious minorities like the Alawites and Christian Druzes secure equal status (ibid).

Before the Ba'ath party took power in 1963, the country was ruled by National Bloc party. The National Bloc had preferred the wealthy upper class than the lower class (ibid). Since the Syrian society were dominated by lower and middle classes, the Ba'athists were easily getting acceptance from these group of society even before they took power. After taking power, as Hinnebusch (2008:268) indicated, the Ba'ath party has formed clan-based politics to rule the country. He writes that

Sectarianism became a tool of solidarity in power struggles before 1970 and in regime consolidation thereafter. How Ba'thist officers from one minority sect, the Alawis, emerged as a seemingly dominant clique, most manifest after 1970 under Hafiz al-Asad, was explained by factors such as their disproportionate recruitment into the army and party before 1963 and class and regional divisions among the majority Sunni actors.

2.3. The Arab - Israel war of 1973

Immediately after Syria gained its independence, it started backing the Palestinian refugees and the PLO, which was established in 1964 to expel Israel from the Palestinian Arab lands. Syria's support for the PLO fighters annoyed the Israelis and threatened to overthrow the Ba'athist party. Darraj (2005, p.41) writes "The threat prompted the Ba'athists to sign an agreement with Nasser in 1966, vowing that Syria and Egypt would defend one another in the case of an attack." The treaty that was signed between Syria and Egypt yielded no fruit in the 1967 Yom Kippur war. Unlike the 1967 war, declared to destroy Israel from the Palestine Arab land, the 1973 war was mainly waged by Egypt and Syria to liberate their territories occupied by Israel in 1967. In the 1967 war, Israel captured Sinai from Egypt, Golan Heights from Syria, and Gaza from Palestine (Khalidi, 2009).

The 1973 war was critical of all the other Arab-Israel wars in terms of the degree of superpower involvement. Since the 1973 war was fought at the peak of the Cold war period, the US and the USSR heavily engaged in the war to control the geostrategic importance of the region. Halliday, (2005, p. 175) asserts "The Arab-Israeli war of 1973 in particular came at a very dangerous moment in world history: in its final hours the USA went on a calibrated nuclear alert, DEFCON 3, while the USSR was believed to be preparing to send troops to protect Egypt from Israeli advances." The two superpowers armed their respective allies with latest military technologies. The USSR supported Syria and Egypt, whereas the US supported Israel. Apart from the intention of controlling the geostrategic importance of the region, the US and the USSR deeply involved in the proxy war to come out victorious at the expense of the other. In line with this idea, Khalidi (2009:129) pointed out the reasons for the engagement of the superpowers in the war.

The first, which was evident as the 1973 war drew to an end, was the way each superpower made mighty efforts to exploit the conflict to achieve advantage for itself at the expense of the other, and to prevent its rival from being able to portray an outcome in the Middle East as a triumph for its Cold War policy. October 1973 is indeed one of the most perfect illustrations of this phenomenon. In the very last days of the war, the two superpowers were simultaneously deeply engaged in resupplying their respective clients with weapons and ammunition.

The 1973 Arab-Israel war was ended up bringing many effects, especially on the defeated Arab countries. Syria, like Egypt, felt morally and economically humiliated. In addition, as the consequence of the war, the Palestinian refugees became a burden for neighboring countries including Syria. “The issue of the refugees was also a controversial one at the time because thousands of displaced Palestinians had temporarily settled in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria... In Syria, the war shattered national morale, and before long, the various factions within the government were at war with one another,” proclaimed Darraj (2005, p.35-36). After the 1973 Arab-Israel war, except Syria’s direct involvement in the 1982 war with Israel in Lebanon, the Arab countries have fought Israel by supporting non-state actors like the PLO, Hamas, and Hezbollah (Khalidi, 2009).

2.3.1 Hezbollah

Hezbollah, literally means the party of God, was formed by Palestinian refugees in southern Lebanon. Palestinians who fled into Lebanon after the first Arab-Israel war of 1948-49 became members in great numbers (Deep, 2003, and Norton, 2007). Hezbollah was established as a guerilla group with the aim to evacuate Israel from the Arab land (ibid). Hezbollah is based on Shia sect of Islam, which says Ali, the husband of Prophet Muhammad’s Daughter, Fatimah, should succeed Muhammad up on the Prophet’s death. Hussein Nasrallah, the brother of Hassen

Nasrallah, was a founder of Hezbollah. As a party, it became well known in 1990s, and became strong militarily (Norton, 2007). In 1982, when Israel occupied Lebanon, Hezbollah showed strong resistance, and became a major cause for Israeli's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000. Since then, Hezbollah has gained popular support even from Sunni Arab countries (ibid).

Starting from the year 1980, Hezbollah has conducted military operations on the Western countries in general and Israel in particular. In 1983, a group of Shia militants killed all US citizens; 220 marines, 18 sailors, and 3 soldiers. These US marines together with French paratroopers were dispatched under the umbrella of Multinational Force (MNF) to bring stability to Lebanon in the wake of the June 1982 Israeli invasion of the country (Deep, 2003 p. 84). In the second bomb laden truck explosion, 58 French paratroopers were also killed in the same year. After these attacks, the US marines left Lebanon in 1984, and the MNF ceased to exist. As a result, Hezbollah ensured full control of the country (ibid). Above all, Israeli's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 made Hezbollah grow morally and militarily. Norton (2007, p.136) writes "Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon six years earlier allowed it some moral superiority on this score".

The July 30, 2006 war fought between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon was known for its devastating effect on the capital, Beirut. The attack of Hezbollah on Israeli soldiers was believed to be a cause for the hostility (ibid). Israel struck not only gasoline stations and possible militia positions, but also food stores. In response, Hezbollah struck the city of Haifa, the third largest city of Israel, with long-range rockets. Norton (2007:139) writes:

Hezbollah struck the city of Haifa, home to nearly 275,000 people with longer-range rockets provided by Syria and Iran. Eight people died in the first attack on Israel's third largest city. Hezbollah's Zelzal-2 rockets could strike Tel Aviv,

although none were fired, and the Israeli army claims to have destroyed most of them in the first days of the war.

In the war, although Israel gained an upper hand in air strikes, she lost to Hezbollah on the ground battle. As a result, after the July war was over, there were celebrations in the Arab world, especially in Damascus, Syria (ibid). Nasrallah, Hezbollah's secretary-general, became a popular figure and "praised Salah al-Din (Saladin), the Kurdish general widely seen as a great Arab hero for his liberation of Jerusalem from the crusaders in 1187," stated Norton (2007, p.149).

Behind all these successes of Hezbollah were Syria and Iran. Especially Syria, considering the very strategic importance of Lebanon, influenced the country for decades. In coordination with Hezbollah, Syria, until al-Hariri's assassination, indirectly ruled the country. Hezbollah served as a means to realize Syria's ambition (Edwards et al, 2008). Similarly, Norton (2007, p.128) said, "Syria's influence over the country remains pervasive through its strategic coordination with Hezbollah." Because of Syria's involvement in the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Harir, the Security Council passed a resolution on Syria to withdraw her forces from Lebanon. In 2005, Syria completely withdrew its forces and began to lose its hold in the country (Azani, 2009).

After 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US, European Union, and Canada have enlisted Hezbollah as a global terrorist organization. "In December 2002, Canada declared Hezbollah a terrorist organization and acted like the United States, thwarting the recruitment of finances for the movement from among Shiite communities in the country," writes Azani (2009, p.204). In addition to this, U.S. and its allies warned Syria and Iran not to equip Hezbollah with armaments, and called on the two countries to cooperate with the agreements signed to disarm Hezbollah (Azani, 2009, & Richards, 2007).

2.4. Superpower interests in the Middle East

2.4.1. U.S. interests in the Middle East

The strategic importance of the Middle East, which serves as a corridor for movement between America and Europe on one hand; South and East Asia on the other, has been a considerable national concern for European countries since eighteenth century. Particularly after WWII, the Middle East region has become a place of contention for the U.S. and USSR (later Russia) (Khalidi, 2009). Khalidi (2009, p. 113) further states why American planners placed the middle east region at the top of their policies; “American planners appreciated the vital importance of the Middle East for their worldwide projection of their air and sea power, it also constituted a potential cork blocking the expansion of Soviet sea power and seaborne influence southward, a role this region had played vis-à-vis Russia since the eighteenth century”. In the Cold War era, these belligerent countries understood that controlling the Middle East means controlling three continents of the world; Asia-particularly central Asia, Africa –mainly its Northern part, and Europe (ibid).

With huge military presence and global hegemony, the U.S. has undermined the political, economic and religious matters of the region. Since George Bush’s (Sr.) administration, the region has faced a series of military attacks (ibid). Even if all these military expeditions had national interests, the U.S. administrations who took office in different times spoke different reasons to wage war. For example, the Operation Desert Storm, the name given to avenge Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, was fought mainly to ensure the continued flow of oil to the international market, and to protect the friendly monarchy in Saudi Arabia

(McAlister, 2001). McAlister (2001:235) quoted George Bush (Sr.) speaking why his administration waged war in Iraq in 1991.

My administration, as has been the case with every president from President Roosevelt to President Reagan, is committed to the security and stability of the Persian Gulf. . . . Our country now imports nearly half the oil it consumes and could face a major threat to its economic independence. Much of the world is even more dependent upon imported oil and is even more vulnerable to Iraqi threats. . . . Let us be clear, the sovereign independence of Saudi Arabia is of vital interest to the United States.

Terrorist attacks of 9/11, forced the U.S. to continue its military interventions in the Middle East particularly in Iraq. In George Bush's (Jr.) administration, the reasons for waging war on Iraq in 2003 was Saddam's possession of WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) and sponsoring terrorists, but many agree that it was operated to protect US interests in the middle east (that is, the security of Israel and of the oil-exporting countries) Halabi (2009). Halabi (2009, p. 97) further writes "Following 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US placed a premium on fighting terrorist groups and states that harbor terrorism, while every other interest became subordinated to this drive, including the steady supply of oil from the Middle East."

In contrast to pre-terrorist attacks, during which US foreign policy stated that pro-western Arab countries should be encouraged and assisted, considered dangerous with the advent of terrorist attacks of 9/11. These states, including Saudi Arabia, a stable ally of the U.S., were asked to "clean their house by uprooting terrorism and creating an adequate rule of law that respected human rights, in order to make lives safer inside Western nations" (Halabi, 2009, p.98).

According to Khalidi (2009, p.99), the strategic importance of the Middle East region and its oil reserves will continue to be a place of contention "not only for U.S. and Russia, but also for the

emerging new powers of China and India". As growing economies, China and India demands energy sources to meet their fast growing industries.

2.4.2. Russia's interests in the Middle East

Having a long time military and diplomatic cooperation with Middle East countries, especially with Syria and Iran, Russia tightens its relations with Middle East Arab countries as its core policy to take back its former status. Following the USSR's disintegration after the cold war period, Russia shrinks to its present shape, and its hegemony was overtaken by the U.S. With the intention to regain its former status, Russia starts to build its presence in the Middle East region (Brown, 2004). Brown (2004) also indicated that to change the unipolar system of world politics into bipolar is what initiates Russia to bolster its involvement in world politics. As a plan to change this system, Russia forms a strong friendship with countries that are labeled "rogue" by the U.S. (ibid). For example, Iran and Syria are among the states that are labeled "axis of evil" or "countries that sponsor terrorists" by the Bush (jr.) administration. But these countries are accepted as loyal allies of Russia by the Kremlin administration. Kreutz (2007, p.31) says "Since the beginning of 2005, Moscow has been badly frustrated by American encroachment into the former-Soviet region looking for political and financial support from Arab nations. Moscow has signaled that it wants to return to the Middle East as an active player". Like the U.S., Russia is deeply engaging in the Middle East region because, according to Kreutz (2007, p.37), "it is located in one of the most central points in Eurasia, its enormous energy resources, and its political instability."

In addition, Russia is frustrated by the encroachment of NATO into the former USSR member states. Russia has felt lost its power influence by the in enlargement of NATO into East

European countries, including neighboring countries Ukraine & Georgia. Furthermore, the continuous enlargement of NATO is seen by Russia as an attempt to squeeze Russia out of Europe (Brown, 2004). “Even less critical assessments acknowledge that Russia is being excluded from Europe, “Asianized,” with implications of inferiority that are far from complimentary” (ibid, p.91). This sense of isolation forced Russia to strengthen its relations with non-Western countries like China, India, Japan, and Arab countries (ibid).

To minimize U.S. influence in the world, particularly in the Middle East, Russia could rely on the power it possesses in the international arena. The status as permanent member of the UN Security Council and early membership in the world's nuclear club could benefit Russia in gathering countries hostile to the U.S. In addition to that, the geopolitical position of Russia and its growing economy could help her form partnerships (Brown, 2004).

Russia is the fourth exporter of weapons (behind the United States, Germany and Britain), military technology, and skilled engineers and technicians to the international market (ibid). Russia sells its military products to Syria, Iran, Iraq (under Saddam's rule), and also to China and India. Syria is leading these countries in importing Russian made weapons (Halliday, 2005).

2.5. Power Struggles in the Middle East

2.5.1. Saudi Arabia

Being the richest in oil resource and leading exporter of oil to the international market, Saudi Arabia has given priority to defend its oil infrastructure from any attack. “Entities, whether state or terrorists sponsored by other states, may wish to seize control of Saudi oil” Russell (2006, p.135). This fear comes to the minds of Saudi kings mainly after Saddam's failed attempt to invade the country in 1991. Since then, Saudi kings have become active participants in the

overall political issues of the region. After the down fall of Saddam, Iran, Syria, and Israel have become a potential danger to Saudi Arabia's economic and religious status in the region (ibid). Above all, Iran and its nuclear program have put Saudi Arabia in fear. The solid stand of Iran in continuing its nuclear program, despite international pressure, may push Saudi Arabia to acquire nuclear weapon to defend itself (Russell, 2006, p.134).

In addition, Saudi Arabia was in competition with Iran over which Islamic sect should take power in Iraq. Chanin and Gause (2003) as cited in Halabi (2009, p. 103) indicate "The US expressed concerns that Saudi Arabia had been using its oil wealth to compete with Shia's Iran to promulgate its Wahhabi Sunni version of Islam." The Sunni states like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Kuwait, and Jordan are extremely concerned about the support Iran provides for the Shi'ites to take power in Iraq. But these Sunni states would like to see "Iraq unified under a Sunni regime as a bulwark against Iran," writes Halabi (2009, p.102).

Thus, religious sects have become an essential tool for these two countries to realize their interest. Saudi Arabia wants to see the dominance of Sunnis in the Middle East, and needs the Sunni Arab countries to weaken Iran's influence in the region.

2.5.2. Iran

As a regional hegemony, Iran has been defending itself from possible threats from the west and Middle East Sunni Arab countries. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iran has recognized that the next target could be her, and, as a result, it has increased the support it provides for the Shi'a faction in Iraq and Hezbollah in Lebanon. In line with this idea, Richard (2007, p. 137) noted "all these forces (Hezbollah and Shi'a faction of Iraq) might well inspire domestic opposition forces in their own countries (Sunni Arab countries), especially as Hezbollah gained

enthusiastic support even among the vast Sunni population of the Arab world". These Shi'a groups especially Hezbollah is defending the only shia non-Arab country in the Sunni dominated Middle east.

Iran wants to see the diminution in power of Sunni Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. To this end, it supports Shi'ites in the shi'a-dominated countries to take power. For example, Iran supported the Iraqi Shi'ites in Iraq, who are majorities, to seize power. Halabi (2009, p.122) clearly pointed out that after the down fall of Saddam Iran encouraged the shi'ites in Iraq to ask for election. If election were to take place, the shi'ites, as a majority, could take power. This, in turn, could to some extent alleviate the influence of Sunni Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. In addition to that, "This strategy will help her ease the fear of "encirclement" by the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and Iraq" (Russell, 2006, p.54). Samii (2008) as cited in Halabi (2009:122) further explains the reason why Iran and Saudi Arabia were supporting their respective sects in Iraq;

The worst-case scenario for Iran is for the US to withdraw without leaving behind a stable Iraqi government that would allow the Sunnis, with the help of Saudi Arabia, to regain the upper hand, while the US would be free to turn its attention to Iran. Iran's best scenario is the establishment of an axis that would include a Shi'ite Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, in which Tehran is the predominant power.

Equally important also is the strategic importance of the Persian Gulf for Iran. Iran uses the Persian Gulf to export petroleum to international market. Therefore, Iran wants the Persian Gulf free of any influence of Western and Middle East countries and wants it to be remained under its control (Russell, 2006).

2.5.3. Syria

As the beginner of pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism, Syria sees itself as the protector of the Arab world and Arab culture. Both Gamal Abdel Nasr of Egypt and Hafez al-Assad of Syria formed the UAR (United Arab Republic) (Darraj, 2005). The UAR, established in 1958, had the purpose of creating an Arab republic with a common Arab culture. With no more additional member states, the UAR was shortly dissolved. But Syria's feeling of centeredness of the Arab world or in Goodarzi's (2006, p.9) words "the beating heart of the Arabism" still continues. For example, the Arab- Israeli wars, in which Syria was a major actor, the support it provides for the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) and Hezbollah are actions taken by the Ba'athists to show the Arab world that its centeredness has not been overtaken (Darraj, 2005).

The influence of Syria in the Middle East takes on two forms of alliance: regional alliance and foreign alliance. The former is created with Iran, which is Muslim but not Arab state. Since the fall of the Shah, who was pro-western, and with the coming in power of the Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, who is anti-western, Syria forms a very solid regional alliance with Iran (Goodarzi, 2006). One typical example is the eight years Iran-Iraq war, when the Ba'athist Syria had shown support for the non-Arab than the Arab state. This is because of the Alawis origin from the Shi'a sect. Alawite is a clan and a minority in Syria to which the Assad family belong (Azani, 2009). In addition, to decrease the influence of Sunni Arab countries, Syria and Iran provides arms support to Hezbollah. Moreover, with the ambition to create Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon Shi'a allies, Syria orders Hezbollah to throne shi'a in Lebanon (ibid). The goal of the alliance would be to defend one another from external attack, especially from the U.S. and Israel, and to decrease the insignificant feeling of the shi'ites in the Sunni dominated Middle East (Richard, 2007).

2.6. Theoretical Frame works

2.6.1. Political economy theory of the mass media

Political economy "is the study of social relations, particularly the power relations that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources including communication resources" (Mosco, 2009, p.2). Since the above definition is narrow, Mosco (2009, p.3) offers more general definition- "Political economy is the study of control and survival in social life." As for Street (2001, p.103), political economy studies "the conditions and constraints under which journalism is practiced". It is more interested in how ownership, power, and wealth impact media content (ibid).

Political economy also studies the involvement of the government/state in production, distribution, consumption and regulation of media communications and telecommunications. The state controls conflicts or rivalries in the market by imposing various kinds of regulations. The reasons for the government to regulate media industry are many and vary from country to country. To mention some of them are; market problems, the presence of natural monopoly conditions, industry pressures on the political apparatus, public interest pressures from citizen groups, etc. (Mosco, 2011, p. 175).

Political economy studies grew from the unequal distribution of information flow across the globe. Information flow across the world was controlled by few Western countries' transnational media industries. These media industries, especially the U.S-based communication industries, were unevenly distributing news across the world. This monopoly of information was challenged by Non-Aligned movements in the 1960s (Mosco, 2011). Countries from Asia, Africa, and Latin America established the Non-Aligned movement with the aim to prevent media imperialism and

to liberate the Third world countries from colonization (ibid). Part of the movement, these countries formed a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), a social movement established to achieve the participation of the Third world countries in the production, distribution, and consumption of communications and information in the world (ibid). Mosco (2011:72) said, “This movement, a genuine call for global communication democracy, including universal access to communication media, control over decisions about the production and distribution of communication, and the basic human right to communicate, gave a political purpose to a dynamic new research agenda for the political economy of communication.”

In addition, political economists criticized the Western countries framework of modernization theory. They said that this theory of development helped developed countries to put control over the developing countries’ corporate media organizations (ibid). Instead of naming modernization theory, political economists use the name cultural imperialism. This is to indicate that the developed countries’ monopoly of the market in distribution of films, advertisement clips, and programs to the developing countries have undermined the developing countries’ indigenous culture. Mosco (2011:73) also writes;

The undermining of domestically produced news and entertainment in emerging and poor nations, via the dumping of US-made films and television programs at below market prices, underlay a one-way flow of culture and information from center to periphery. One of central goals of transnationalized companies and their government supporters was to press for the introduction of commercial media systems to permit advertising and programming that would cultivate consumerism.

Political economy of the mass media also studies the relationship between media institutions and powerful elites. Powerful elites influence media houses through various connections like

corporate boards, business associations, civic organizations, and private clubs (Mosco, 2011, p.190). In addition, it is also concerned with the power the media organizations apply in influencing government policies and its decision making process. Mosco (2011, p.190-91) says, "Political economy of mass communication describes how media moguls like the Asper family in Canada are able to build a media empire and influence governments."

For Herman and Chomsky (1988), the political economy of mass media is seen by its propaganda means by which the wealthiest and the powerful, like the government, manipulate media institutions to achieve their interests. Formal and informal censorships are, according to them, mechanisms that help the powerful to suppress dissent and to maintain the dominant view. They stressed the fact that the impacts of wealth and power are demonstrated in the media organization's daily activities, for example, selection of sources. Herman and Chomsky (1988, p. 2) writes, "Money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public." Including this mechanism, Herman & Chomsky (1988, p.2) identified five news "filters," mechanisms used by the powerful: elites, government, and the wealthy to dominate the media and to marginalize dissidents. These are: (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) "anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism.

As far as size, ownership, and profit orientation of mass media (the first filter) is concerned, the main reason for the growth in size of media organizations is the profits they get from advertising.

The increment in consumerism of households, especially in developed countries, makes the large media organizations to accumulate great wealth. The profitability nature of mass media organization also attracts bankers and other institutional investors (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). Bankers help media companies in receiving loans and giving advice on opportunities of takeovers and threats. Government takes a lion's share advantage in this filter. All media companies and networks require government licenses and franchises; thus, they become subject to government control and harassment (ibid). The media, in turn, protect themselves by forming friendly relationships with the government. Herman and Chomsky (1988, p. 13) stated, "The media protect themselves from this contingency by lobbying and other political expenditures, the cultivation of political relationships, and care in policy".

Advertising and free market economy system also serve as a powerful filter by which ad-based newspapers can survive the pressures of market competition and sell their copy below production costs. Ad-free newspapers withdraw from market because they cannot be able to pay salary of their workers, and incur production costs (ibid). (Herman &Chomsky (1988:14) noted,

With advertising, the free market does not yield a neutral system in which final buyer choice decides. The advertisers' choices influence media prosperity and survival. The ad-based media receive an advertising subsidy that gives them a price-marketing-quality edge, which allows them to encroach on and further weaken their ad-free (or ad-disadvantaged) rivals.

Advertising also impedes the media's role in building democracy. Nowadays, big media organizations allocate a lot of time and space for advertising purpose, ignoring public affairs (ibid, p.17).

The third very important filter is the symbiotic relationship between sourcing organizations and the media. Media organizations need credible and reliable sources in order to avoid bias; hence, they create relations with those powerful because of economic reasons. Media houses cannot send reporters and cameras to every corner of the world. Instead, they “concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs, where important rumors and leaks abound, and where regular press conference are held” (ibid, p.18-19). Above all, government sources have a great advantage of “being recognizable and credible because of their status and prestige” (ibid, p.19). The main reason for the media officials to heavily depend on the government’s source is to claim that their news is “objective”. In addition, it helps them to protect themselves from the suits of libel and defamation (ibid).

The fourth filter is “Flak”. “Flak” refers to negative responses to a media statement or program. This negative response from a reader/viewer may take the form of letters, telegrams, phone calls, petitions, law suits, speeches and bills before congress, and other modes of complaint, threat, and punitive action (ibid, p.26). Flak may be produced from government officials and advertising companies. If it is produced from government officials on substantial evidence, the accused media should defend its position in court. Apart from this legal procedure, the media may also face threats (letters or phone calls) directly from the government or indirectly (e.g. by generating institutional advertisement that do the same). Advertisers may also pullout their patronage from that particular media organization (ibid, p.26).

The fifth and final filter is labeling somebody who is critical of the government as communist, and anyone who is uncritical as anti-communist. In this regard, the ideology of anti-communism serves as a news filter. Moreover, the term was generally used in almost all working places and

in election campaigns in the U.S. during the 1960s and 1970s (ibid). This mechanism, even if it is not applied in the contemporary politics, it was used to marginalize dissent views.

2.6.2. Framing Theory

Framing is defined by various scholars differently. Gitlin (1980) as cited in Scheufele (1999) defined a frame in terms of the function they provide to the journalist and to the audience. He (1999, p.106) says, “Frames largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports.”

Tuchman is another scholar who defined framing as important references set by the media to interpret public events. Tuchman (1978) as cited in Scheufele (1999, p.105) states “Mass media actively set the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events.” For Entman, who is the most cited scholar in framing research, defines framing in terms of selection and salience. Entman (1993, p.55) writes, "To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in the communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described."

Entman (1993) clearly indicates that frames perform four functions for the media organization when reporting a certain issue or event. These are problem definition, causal interpretation (diagnostic causes), moral evaluation, and suggesting remedies (solutions). Entman (1993, p.55) defines these functions of frames as the following;

Frames, then, define problems—determine what a causal agent is doing and costs and benefits usually measured in terms of cultural values; diagnose causes—identify the forces creating the problem; make moral judgments—evaluate causal

agents and their effects; and suggest remedies—offer and justify treatments for the problem and predict their likely effects. (p. 55)

According to Entman (1993), frames have four locations in the communication process: the communicator- often guided by his mental organizations, perceptions and belief systems called schemata, the communicator consciously or unconsciously decides what to include or exclude in framing an issue. The text- consist of frames which are manifested by the inclusion/exclusion or presence/absence, "of certain key words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentence that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments" (Entman, 93, p.52). The receiver- who may have his own frames of an issue or frames that arise from internal structures of the mind/schemata, but this may or may not be reflected in the text. The culture- is demonstrated in executing common frames among the society (ibid, p.52-53). According to Entman (1993), framing in all four locations carry out similar functions- selection and salience. These functions of framing are essential to construct arguments about problems, causation, evaluation, and/or solution (ibid).

Framing is not a clearly explicated and generally applicable concept. In media studies, there is a wide gap on how framing should work. Entman (1993, p.51) has named framing as “a scattered conceptualization,” and calls on scholars to reach a common understanding. Similarly, Matthes (2009) in his exploratory study also found that most of the studies done on framing from 1999-2005 lacked either clear operational definitions or weaknesses of translating framing definitions into operational steps. Giving solutions for the common mistakes, D’Angelo (2002) and Matthes (2009) agree that a broad definition of framing at the initial stage of a research is acceptable, but they emphasize the idea that a researcher must be clear in specifics of a frame, both conceptually

and operationally, or in Matthes (2009, p.359) words, “the translation of a definition to the exact operationalization- must be explicitly stated.”

The other very important part of framing is process of framing. These processes of framing are; frame building, frame setting, and individual and societal level consequences of framing. Frame building refers to the factors that influence media institutions or journalists in the process of creating news frames. These factors can be internal or external to journalism. Factors internal to journalism can be journalists’ ideology and organizational culture (Fortunato, 2005). Factors external to journalism, for example, the continuous interaction that journalists form with elites may influence journalists’ judgment in constructing frames (ibid). Frame setting refers to the interaction between media frames and individuals’ prior knowledge and predispositions (de Vreese, 2005). In short, it deals with the effects of media frames on the audience. The consequence of framing refers to the impact of media frames on the individual’s attitudes towards a certain issue. On the societal level, frames may contribute to shaping society’s political actions and decision making processes (ibid).

Typology of framing theory

There are two approaches that help to identify frames in the news: inductive and deductive approaches. An inductive approach of analyzing news texts helps create frames in due course of analyzing news texts. This analyzing process allows the researcher to come up with his own inclusive frames of the data available at hand. But, the drawback of relying on inductive method is it requires small amount of data and the frames created by this method are difficult to replicate (de Vreese, 2005). The deductive approach, on the other hand, works with a priori defined frames that are formed and operationalized prior to the investigation (ibid). Most scholars are in

favor of applying deductive approach than inductive because deductive approach is reliable and can be replicated. Moreover, deductive approach works in line with journalism practice. However, its drawback is that it excludes frames that could otherwise be identified in the inductive approach.

Parallel with the above approaches, a researcher needs to know the devices that help to identify frames in a news story. Entman (1993, p. 52) suggested that frames in the news can be identified by “the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments.” Also, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) identify framing devices that help journalists to package media issues. These are: (1) metaphors, (2) exemplars, (3) catch-phrases, (4) depictions, and (5) visual images. Including some of the mechanisms mentioned above, Tankard (2001) as cited in de Vreese (2005, p. 54) offers more comprehensive mechanisms or focal points to identify frames. These are;

1. Headlines
2. Subheads
3. Photos
4. Photo captions
5. Leads
6. Source selection
7. Quotes selection

8. Pull quotes

9. Logos

10. Statistics and charts, and

11. Concluding statements and paragraphs

In addition, Iyengar (1991) discusses the difference between episodic and thematic framing. Episodic framing defines public issues as concrete or specific events that are the result of actions by individuals. Thematic framing, on the other hand, defines public issues/problems as abstract instances and put responsibility on abstract societal systems.

Scholars have also distinguished between media frames and individual frames. Media frames are frames that serve as, in Kinder and Sanders (1990) phrase as cited in Scheufele (1999, p. 106), “devices embedded in political discourse,” and individual frames are frames that are orderly stored classification of ideas in the mind of the individual or “internal structures of the mind” (ibid).

Based on characteristics, nature, and content of frames, framing researchers categorize frames in to two broad classifications: Issue-specific frames and generic frames. Issue-specific frames are found only in specific topics/issues that do not have broad socio-cultural implications. These kinds of frames are utilized to different issues/topics differently; thus, making framing researches difficult to generalize, compare, and to make an all-inclusive theory (de Vreese, 2005). Generic frames are applicable to different topics at different times and even with different cultural contexts (ibid). Furthermore, generic frames are used at two levels of study. One group of study

contains coverage of politics, particularly election campaigns. A second group focuses on generic news frames that are basically related to journalism profession (ibid).

Semetko and valkenburg (2000) as cited in de Vreese (2005, p. 56) have identified five generic frames: 'conflict', 'human interest', 'attribution of responsibility', 'morality', and 'economic consequences'. The conflict frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, institutions or countries. The human interest frame brings a human face, an individual's story, or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue or problem. The responsibility frame presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for causing or solving to either the government or to an individual or group. The morality frame interprets an event or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions. The economic consequences frame, finally, presents an event, problem or issue in terms of the economic consequences it will have on an individual, group, institution, region or country (de Vreese, 2005, p.56).

The final typology is concerned with researches examining frames as independent and dependent variables (Scheufele, 1999). Studies of frames as independent variables are more interested in the effect of framing. It is concerned with the effect of media frames on the attitudes of an individual or audience. Studies in which frames serve as dependent variables are concerned with various factors that influence the creation and modification of frames in the news media (ibid).

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1. Research Method

This study was conducted to explore how *Aljazeera*, *BBC* and *ETV* framed the Syrian conflict from July 1st to September 30th, 2013. Specifically, the study was undertaken to answer three research questions. Research question number one concerned with how the three media outlets framed the conflict in Syria. Research question two intended to answer their similarities and differences among the media institutions in framing the conflict. Finally, research question three focused on examining factors that influenced the media organizations in framing in such manner. To answer these research questions and the thesis problem in general, the researcher used qualitative content analysis. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify data that can answer the research questions. In addition to these, this chapter discusses basic methods such as media selection, story selection, time frame, unit of analysis, and data coding and analytical categories.

3.1.1. Content analysis

Content analysis is defined as “any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages” (Holsti (1968) as cited in Berg (2001:241). According to Berg (2001), content analysis as a research technique is applied to any type of communication. It is often associated with counting of the frequency of a content (a word, meanings, pictures) which describes something (violence, negative portrayal of women) in a mass mediated communication. Content analysis can be used to study media content produced at different times and helps to compare its trends or developments over time (Babbie, 1998) as

cited in Berg (2001). Content analysis is methodical: all data in a chosen sample must be assigned into categories. Thus, it ensures a degree of reliability.

However, Content analysis is criticized for reducing a text into numbers. Since it gives more focus for the manifest than latent meaning, it decontextualizes the meaning of the text. In addition, it doesn't give causal relationships between variables (Berg, 2001).

Since this study is based on media texts, it is viable to employ content analysis especially its qualitative form to investigate the thesis problem.

3.1.1.1. Qualitative (textual) content analysis

Qualitative (textual) content analysis is a systematic approach which deals with analyzing, categorizing, and evaluating media texts. It is an interpretive approach which basically deals with extracting meaning. In addition, qualitative content analysis can give an opportunity to examine how the producers of the text view their social world (Berg, 2001). It helps to better understand the author's perspectives through his words in the text. Moreover, qualitative method allows the researcher to examine the ideological mindsets of producers of a text: themes, topics, and symbols (ibid).

Qualitative (textual) analysis mostly uses an inductive approach to form categories of data analysis (dornyei, 2007). Thus, since qualitative analysis takes small amounts of sample data, the categories set will be all-inclusive. What is more, "it is capable of providing a highly valid source of detailed or deep information about a text" (Neuendorf, 2002, p.15).

Neuendorf (2002) and Krippendorff (2004) argue that qualitative analysis of texts is more appropriately described and categorized as rhetorical analysis, narrative analysis, discourse

analysis, structuralist or semiotic analysis, interpretative analysis or critical analysis. These interpretive methods including qualitative content analysis commonly shared the following characteristics: (1) they require a close reading of relatively small amounts of textual matter, (2) they involve the interpreting of given texts in to new (analytical, deconstructive, emancipatory, or critical) narratives that are accepted with in particular scholarly communities, and (3) the analysts acknowledge working with in hermeneutic circles in which their own socially or culturally conditioned understandings constitutively participate (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 17).

While working with qualitative content analysis, the researcher needs to be systematic in dealing with his/her texts. Krippendorff (2004) asserts that qualitative researchers should support their interpretations by providing enough quotes from their sample data. While emphasizing the idea that researchers should offer detailed examples from relevant statements, Berg (2001) proclaimed that the researcher should incorporate independent coders to avoid subjective interpretation.

Taking qualitative (textual) analysis technique, the researcher chose a small amount of texts of the media outlets [*Aljazeera, BBC, and ETV*] to carry out the study. The sample data for the study was chosen by employing a sampling technique.

3.1.2. Sampling strategy

Given that a researcher cannot undertake his/her study on a large number of population because of time and resource limitations, a researcher uses various sampling techniques to make his population manageable and representative. There are two broad classifications of sampling technique: random (probability) sampling and non-random (non-probability) sampling. In random sampling, all population for the study has equal chance of being selected and uses

mathematical procedures (Berg, 2001). Thus, samples chosen by this method should be representative of the whole population. Simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified random sampling and cluster sampling are kinds of probability sampling. In the non-random (non-probability) sampling, the researcher selects samples consciously and purposely in order to answer the research questions. This kind of sampling is utilized mostly in social science research. Convenience sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling, and purposive (judgmental) sampling are types of this method (ibid).

In content analysis research, the researcher should be guided by his research question in selecting sample texts (Krippendorff, 2004). Likewise, for this study, the researcher employed non-probability sampling in general and purposive sampling in particular. In purposive (judgmental) sampling, samples are selected based on the researcher's special knowledge or expertise. Or samples are selected from the whole population that display certain attributes (Berg, 2001). With the intention of answering the research questions, the researcher found it appropriate to select samples from the population by using purposive sampling technique.

3.1.3. Selection of Media Outlets

Three media organizations, *Aljazeera*, *BBC*, and *ETV* were purposely chosen for this study. These media outlets are selected for the study because they are easily available online; especially the global media outlets have a well-developed website through which news articles about the conflict can be accessed. These media outlets are also selected based on the assumption that they would have different treatments of the conflict because of the differences in ideology and the political orientations under which they operate. Below is a brief history of the media organizations selected for the study;

Aljazeera

Aljazeera was established on November 1, 1996 by the Qatari Emir, Hamid bin Khalifa. Succeeding his father, the Emir, with the intention to make Qatar a Switzerland, needed an informed populace. “*Aljazeera*” is Arabic for “the Peninsula” or “the Island” – the name given in relation to the country’s location in the Arab peninsula. *Aljazeera* was installed at the cost of 140 million US dollar. It started its transmission by hiring 120 *BBC*-trained journalists. Its English language transmission began in November 2006 (EL Zein, 2012).

Aljazeera network has a total number of 2500 staff members and journalists from 40 countries. In addition to its center of transmission in Doha, it has centers of transmission in Kuala Lumpur, London and Washington Dc. It has bureaus around the world. The station states that its English language service reaches 100 million homes. *Aljazeera* Arabic has gained reputation from the Arabs, and has an audience of about 40 million to 50 million in the Arab countries (<http://middleeast.about.com/od/mediacultureandthearts/a/me0080313.htm>).

With the start of *Aljazeera*, TV channels of the Middle East Arab countries have experienced in decreasing number of viewers. Before *Aljazeera* came in to being, these TV channels only transmitted their respective leader's point of view. Even though *Aljazeera* has been criticized for its anti-western stance, at times, it became critical of regimes of the Saudis and Bahrain (Ramdane et al, 2011). aljazeera.com is its website through which its online news can be read.

BBC World News

British Broadcasting Corporation (*BBC*) was established in 1922. John Reith (later Lord Reith) became its first general manager from 1922-1927. *BBC* television service started its transmission on November 2, 1936. When the Second World War broke out in Europe; moreover, when

Germany exploded bombs at the gates of the *BBC* building, it interrupted its transmission from 1939-1946. After the war was over, *BBC* resumed its transmission. In 1967, *BBC* introduced color television (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/1231593.stm>).

From its inauguration, *BBC* has passed through two kinds of ownership. When it was commenced in 1922, it was known as British Broadcasting Company Ltd.-privately owned by British origin shareholders. But in 1927, it became under the British parliament by the name British Broadcasting Corporation. Since then, it has been funded by tax revenues collected from the public (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/1231593.stm>)

Now, *BBC* becomes among one of the largest and internationally viewed global media organization. *BBC* globally has around 170,000 million viewers per day. It is working with 7,255 journalists, and with 33 language transmissions. In addition, the organization now has 9 television channels; *BBC* one, two, three, four. bbc.com/news is used to read its latest news online.

ETV

ETV (Ethiopian Television) was established on November 2, 1964, a year after the establishment of the Organization of African Union (OAU). Emperor H/Selassie I with the help of British firm, Thomson, established Ethiopian television to show the OAU attendants that Ethiopia was also running parallel to the rest of the world in information technology (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ETV_%28Ethiopia%29). Apart from serving as disseminating of information to the public, *ETV* was used to build the Emperor's personality cult (Birhanu Olana, 2009:187).

During the Derg regime, in 1982, Color television broadcast began in commemoration of the founding of Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE). The military junta firmly controlled its everyday activities (Leena, 2012).

With the coming of the EPRDF in 1991, *ETV* has seen restructuring processes. It is shifted from monolingual to multilingual transmissions. All regions have transmissions through their own languages, but depend on *ETV's* network for transmission (Skjerdal, 2012). Although *ETV1* becomes the national provider of news, *ETV2* has been introduced to be used by the Addis Ababa city administration (ibid). Even though the current government allows the regions to transmit through their respective languages, it bans any propositions of ownership from the private (ibid). Skjerdal (2012) added that *ETV* covers 42% of the geographical area of the country. www.erta.gov.et is its website through which its online news can be read.

Purposely selected to carry-out the study, these media outlets have gone through different historical developments. In terms of ownership, *ETV* and *Aljazeera* are working under control of their governments, whereas, *BBC* claimed that it is publicly owned media. Moreover, since they are operating under different geographical, societal, political and religious conditions, these media outlets could show various treatments in reporting the conflict in Syria.

3.1.4. Time frame

Because of time and material limitation, the study is restricted to media coverage of the Syrian conflict from July 1st, to September 30th, 2013. There are two reasons for the researcher to base its study on the three month time frame. First, the internationally prohibited chemical weapon/ Sarin Gas were used on civilians near Damascus. Although no one has taken responsibility for the deadly attack, the government and its oppositions heavily engaged in assigning blame on

each other. Second, and consequently, the west especially the U.S. threatened to take military solution to oust Assad. On the other hand, Russia showed a strong opposition for the U.S. military solution, and proposed a peaceful solution. In early October, 2013, U.S and Russia agreed to arrange peace talks between Assad and his opposition in Geneva.

During these months, the Syrian conflict reached at its climax, and received daily media coverage all over the world. Taking this into account, this study attempts to explore how the media outlets chosen framed the Syrian conflict during the aforementioned months.

3.1.5. Story selection

All news articles and comments/viewpoints on the Syrian conflict were downloaded by using their online websites. By using Lexis-Nexis, 228 articles from *Aljazeera*, 233 from *BBC*, and 24 from *ETV*, a total of 485 articles were collected in the three month time frame. Since the data is very big and very difficult to manage, the researcher used purposive sampling technique to reduce the data in to a manageable size. Through close reading, the researcher finally identified a total of 86 articles from the three media organizations- 39 articles from *Aljazeera*, 34 articles from *BBC*, and 13 articles from *ETV*. This finally selected sample data were analyzed to investigate the study.

3.1.6. Unit of Analysis

All online articles (news, comments and viewpoints) that explicitly entertain the Syrian conflict were taken as source of data for this study. Each article was analyzed and only specific relevant information was taken to show how they framed the conflict in Syria. Put differently, articles which covered the Syrian conflict explicitly were taken as unit of analysis for this study.

3.1.7. Data coding and Analytical categories

Coding refers to identifying important evidences/ samples from the population. It helps researchers to reduce and simplify the evidence in order to begin to make sense of it (Daymon et al, 2002). Coding starts after thorough reading of all the data and when the researcher begins to have an overall idea of the big picture. Moreover, coding is utilized to identify commonalities and differences in the data in order to formulate analytical categories (ibid). In addition, coding is used especially when the data is big and inconvenient (Kothari, 2004). So, researchers can manage their data by applying coding to reduce the data and thereby to group them in a meaningful way.

Therefore, the researcher identified five analytical categories or frame types that would help to examine how the Syrian conflict was framed by the media outlets selected:

1. **Diagnostic frame:** provides background for the causes of the conflict (who or what causes the conflict).
2. **Attribution of responsibility frame:** This particularly discusses the media's blame and attribution of responsibility for the chemical attack (who is blamed for killing innocent people by chemical weapon, and who is made responsible, the government forces or the rebels)
3. **Portrayal frame:** refers to media depictions of the warring groups (Assad and/or forces and rebel forces), and how are the two powerful FSA groups (ISIS and al-Nusra fighters) are depicted by the media.
4. **Solution frame:** focuses on the possible solutions to the conflict (what solutions are reported by the media to end the war)

5. **Prognostic frame:** discusses the consequences of actions or events (what will happen if the Assad government is overthrown). It focuses on the future of Syria.

Parallel with the above discussed analytical tools, Harman and Chomsky's political economy theory of mass media is also employed to explore whether effects of ownership is observed on the output of the media institutions selected. In other words, political economy theory of the media is used in this study to examine whether outside force was exerted on the media institutions or on their respective journalists in their coverage of the conflict. Therefore, it is applied to explicate issues concerning what led them to portray one group favorably over the other, and what factors affect them to frame the same topic (the Syrian conflict) differently.

Since Harman and Chomsky's (1988) "Manufacturing Consent" is broad, but comprises specific models which could easily be applied to studies, the researcher selected the news filters or mechanisms by which elites or powerful groups use to make the news item fit to print. Five filter mechanisms have been identified and discussed in chapter two. Again, since these are also very difficult to incorporate in one study, the researcher selected filters one and three, according to the order given in the afore-mentioned book. Hence, the filter mechanisms selected are;

- 1. Size, ownership, and profit orientation of the mass media: the first filter**

From which ownership is selected to see whether the powerful groups, such as the government, the powerful elites, and wealthy peoples influence the outcome of the media institutions in reporting an event (in this case the Syrian conflict).

- 2. Sourcing mass-media news: the third filter**

This mechanism discusses the suppression of unfriendly news sources, which are considered by a certain media organization as ideologically unfit to elite preferences or to editorial policies of

that particular media outlet. News organizations deliberately select news sources to say what the media institution wants to be said (ibid, 1988).

Chapter Four

Data Presentation, Analysis and Findings

This study was conducted to investigate how *Aljazeera*, *BBC* and *ETV* online reports framed the Syrian conflict. Articles that explicitly entertain the Syrian conflict were collected from their respective websites. By employing purposive sampling technique, sample data for the study were finally chosen.

Through close reading, the researcher identified five types of news frames used by the media institutions to frame the Syrian conflict. These were diagnostic frame, responsibility frame, portrayal frame, solution frame and prognostic frame. These news frames (analytical tools) were identified to carry-out the analysis.

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the study. In this chapter, the research questions of the study will be answered.

4.1. Data presentation

4.1.1. Similarities of the media institutions in framing the Syrian conflict

Diagnostic Frame

The main reason for the conflict, *Aljazeera* said that the four decades of the Assad family rule was a cause for the Syrians to begin an Arab-like revolt against their government. It writes, “The conflict in Syria started with peaceful protests against four decades of the Assad family rule but turned violent in the face of a security crackdown (July 25, 2013)”. In the extract below, *Aljazeera* stated that government forces equipped with tanks and snipers entered the southern

city of Deraa and opened fire on the protesters. It also said that government forces were accused of using fighter jets for the first time against rebel forces. What is more, *Aljazeera* indicates that the first protests in Syria were part of the Arab uprisings sweeping the Arab world.

The Syrian conflict was begun in March 2011, when activists, inspired by other popular uprisings across the Arab world, called for a 'Day of Rage'. Assad tried to appease them, but by May, tanks and snipers had entered the southern city of Daraa and opened fire on protesters. On July 2012, the crisis escalated further. Assad's forces were accused of using fighter jets for the first time against rebel forces in Aleppo. (*Aljazeera*, Sep. 10, 2013)

Furthermore, *Aljazeera* stated that the popular uprising was started against the authoritarian rule of the Assad government. It writes that

When the Syrian uprising began in March 2011, it was a popular protest against an authoritarian regime, not a Sunni fight against the country's Alawite leader, but it has morphed into a civil war with an increasingly sectarian tone. (*Aljazeera*, Aug. 28, 2013)

BBC, for its part, demonstrated that absence of democracy and freedom were the reasons for the Syrians to protest against their government. *BBC* described Syria as one of the Arab country ruled by the most repressive regime. It said that the first demonstrations in Syria, specifically in the city Daraa, were started by teenagers who called for freedom and democracy. According to *BBC*, the protesters were arrested, and the unrest spread to other areas. In addition, *BBC* indicated that because of the continued killing of the government, the protesters wanted Bashar al-Assad to step down. The excerpt reads

Demonstrations began shortly after anti-government uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt in mid-march 2011. A group of teenagers spray-painted a revolutionary slogan on a wall in the southern city of Daraa. They were arrested and soon the

unrest spread to other areas. Protesters started by calling for democracy and freedom in what is one of the most repressive countries in the Arab world. Syria president has promised some changes but protesters say the killing is continuing so they want him to step down. (*BBC*, Sep. 19, 2013)

In addition to the aforementioned reasons, *BBC* wrote that emergency laws were also causes of the Syrian uprising. It says, “There are emergency laws which allow people to be arrested without warrants and imprisoned without trials (Sep. 19, 2013)”.

On the part of *ETV*, it did not clearly state what reasons led the people to revolt against their government, but admitted that the uprising was a popular one against their government. In the news article below, *ETV* stated that the use of military force by the government to suppress the popular uprising resulted in civilian casualties to increase. So, *ETV* indicated that the government forces made the uprising to become worse. It writes;

President Bashar al-Assad’s forces have been using military forces to quell the fast spreading popular uprising. This is causing the number of civilian casualties to mount from day to day while the conflict is continuing severely. (*ETV*, July 18, 2013)¹

Responsibility frame

Under this news frame, the researcher analyzed the chemical attack taken place in the suburb of Damascus on August 21, 2013. Three important reasons have led the researcher to include the chemical attack to be studied under this news frame. First, in terms of civilian casualties, the chemical attack claimed lives of over 1429 innocent people overnight. Second, as a result of the chemical attack, the Syrian conflict received every-hour-of-the-day coverage of the media. In addition to this, the chemical attack was used as a build-up to war by the West to overthrow Bashar al-Assad. Third, the chemical attack was a very complicated event as to which group

committed the inhumane deed. In relation to this, the unwillingness of the UN to officially announce the perpetrator led the media institutions to be differed significantly in attributing blame on both sides (Assad forces and rebel forces).

To start with, *Aljazeera* held the Assad government responsible for carrying out the chemical attack. In its *Inside Story*, *Aljazeera* presented an opinion of Firas Abi Ali, head of the Middle East and North Africa country risk team for IHS Global, saying that the chemical attack could be carried out by one of government's forces. By underestimating the rebel's capability to launch such an attack, or in his words, "I have seen no evidence that they [have] got this kind of capability," Firas laid the blame on Bashar al- Assad forces. Quoted Firas, *Aljazeera* wrote;

The third explanation, which is the one that I am partial to, is that this was somebody within Assad's inner circle, worrying that Assad was willing to negotiate and wanting to force him into a hard line, therefore choosing to conduct these attacks at these time. (*Aljazeera*, Aug. 23, 2013)

Similarly, quoted Patrick Cockburn, Independent's Middle East specialist, as saying "The Syrian army fired rockets or shells containing poison gas which killed hundreds of people in the east of the city" (Aug. 26, 2013), *Aljazeera* made the government responsible for committing the crime.

BBC, for its part, made the Assad forces responsible for killing hundreds of people by chemical weapon. *BBC* wrote in one of its news article below saying that even though the UN report did not attribute responsibility on any group, it said, the report seemed to point at President Assad's forces.

The substance concerned was the nerve agent Sarin and the delivery system was ground-to-ground rockets. Note that the UN inspectors do not anywhere in the report explicitly lay the blame for carrying out the attack at the door of Syrian

president Bashar al-Assad. That was beyond the scope of their study, but as we will see a little later, there are strong indicators from their evidence that point the finger at forces loyal to the Assad regime. (*BBC*, Sep. 17, 2013)

ETV, on the other hand, did not attribute responsibility on any group for the chemical attack. It used the technique of presenting accusations and counter-accusations of both sides (the government and the opposition). Or it simply said those responsible are still unknown. Below is an excerpt;

Last Wednesday, a chemical attack was carried out in Syria near the capital Damascus. Still unknown who was behind the attack, the chemical weapons attack killed, according to western media, over 1000 people. In Syria, adding this recent attack, many other conflicts have taken place killing many people over the past two years. (*ETV*, Aug. 23, 2013)².

Another article continues;

UN chemical weapons inspectors group enter Damascus, Syria. The 20 members group enter Syria to investigate the accusation and counter-accusation of the Assad government and its opponents over the chemical weapon used last Wednesday (*ETV*, Aug. 19, 2013)³.

With regard to the final findings of the UN chemical investigators group, *ETV* put the UN report as it is. In conformity with the report of the team, sent to investigate whether chemical weapon was used or not, *ETV* indicated, as written below, that the chemical weapon was used in the suburbs of Damascus.

The UN chemical weapons inspectors group left Syria completed its mission. The UN inspectors were investigating whether the chemical weapon was used or not in Syria. They found that the chemical weapon was used and hundreds of people were killed by the chemical Sarin. According to Reuters, in relation to the

chemical attacks in Damascus, the UN inspectors also found other six issues concerning the attack. (ETV, Sep.19, 2013)⁴

Media Portrayal of the Assad forces and the armed rebel (opposition) forces

Under this frame type, the researcher examined how the three media outlets portrayed the warring groups (Assad forces and the armed rebel (opposition) forces). Below are two portrayal frames that are often used by the media outlets to portray the warring groups. These are:

Murdering/killing of civilians for the Assad forces

Aljazeera used the same sources which, through out their news articles, unfavorably describe the Assad government and its forces. In fact, it informed the reader that independent media is prohibited from entering the country, and that it could not cross check reports from the government-held areas. In this respect, the government failed in fulfilling its responsibility. But this allows *Aljazeera* to systematically manipulate the conflict to its own sake. One mechanism by which *Aljazeera* reports the conflict is by employing unidentified sources of information, which at face value looks unbiased. In the article below, for example, *Aljazeera* uses residents, with no reference to their sects and political affiliation, as a source to depict the Assad forces as killers of innocent people.

Seven bodies were discovered rooting in a well located in the town of Junaid in the suburbs of Aleppo. The corpses were found a few weeks after residents in the nearby village of Om Amoud recovered tens of bodies from six wells there. Residents accused forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad of killing both townsfolk and passers-by and throwing their bodies into wells, during ten days of intense battles with rebel forces. (*Aljazeera*, Sep. 10, 2013)

Another news article, cited the most frequently used source-the SOHR, abbreviated for Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, saying government forces killed 13 family members in the Sunni dominated village called Bayda.

Forces loyal to Assad have killed at least 13 members of a family in the Sunni Muslim village of Bayda, according to activists. The SOHR said four women and six children were among those killed on Saturday in the central village.
(*Aljazeera*, July 21, 2013)

The SOHR is a London based network. It is funded by the EU, especially by the UK. Head of the network is Rami Abdul Rahman, who fled Syria 13 years ago. He was imprisoned three times by Hafez al-Assad, predecessor of Bashar al-Assad, for pro-democracy activism (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-syrian-observatory-for-human-rights-is-a-propaganda-front-funded-by-the-eu->). “Abdul Rahman admits he is a member of the so-called “Syrian opposition” and seeks the ouster of Syrian President Bashar Al Assad” (ibid).

By completely ignoring SANA (Syria Arab News Agency), a government-owned Syrian media, which could serve as an alternative source in this particular case and in all the other cases, *Aljazeera* entirely depends on the SOHR for sources of information. In compliance with this mechanism of the media, Harman and Chomsky (1988:lxiii) noted, “suppression of shading and emphasis, and selection of context, premises, and general agenda is highly functional for established power and responsive to the needs of the government and major power groups”. This overdependence of the media on the SOHR helped portray government forces as killers of civilians.

Similarly, another article from *Aljazeera* continues;

In May, pro-Assad armed groups killed more than 50 residents of Bayda and over 60 locals in the nearby town of Baniyas. In those killings, some bodies, many of them children, were found burned and mutilated. (Aljazeera, 21 July, 2013)

Like *Aljazeera*, *BBC* also overly relies on the SOHR in reporting the war in Syria. In addition, it employs unidentified “reports” and “local residents” as a source in their news narratives. The over-dependence of *BBC* on the SOHR is not surprising given the fact that the SOHR is resided in London, and the fund it received from the British government. This proximity and interest are also discussed in Harman and Chomsky (1988:18). They write, “The mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest”. Unlike *Aljazeera*, *BBC* had a correspondent in Damascus whose name is Jeremy Bowen, *BBC*’s Middle East Editor, who continuously feed *BBC* with latest events happened inside the capital, Damascus. Even if it had a correspondent in the regime-held areas, *BBC*, chose the SOHR for source.

In the following news narrative, *BBC* presented a tragic history of a Syrian kid, who suffered a long-lasting injury from a strike of government fighter jet. In addition, it noted that fourteen other people were killed in a series of strikes by government fighter jet at the time when the 14-month-old boy was seriously injured.

Abdul Majid’s face was a testament to the random brutality of the Syrian war. The 14-month-old had been playing in the corridor of his home when a bomb from a government fighter jet smashed in to the building. That he is alive at all is no small miracle. His cheeks are bruised and scarred from the shrapnel, his eyes bloodshot. The boy’s mother and sister were also injured in the attack. Fourteen people are believed to have been killed in a series of strikes by government forces on his home town of Taffanaz on 5 September. (*BBC*, Sep. 10, 2013)

Taking the same news text examined in *Aljazeera* above, *BBC* sticks to the inhumane means with which they were killed. Of course, there are other elements which are left out, For example, the number of casualties (13 members of a family) and their sectarian origin (that they are Sunni). But other elements of the news remain the same. This is the result of their dependence on the SOHR for source.

At least three men from the Fattouh family in Bayda were shot dead by government forces and militia in the latest violence. Women and children from same family were then crowded in to one room in a house, where they were all killed, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Some reports said they were burnt alive when the house was set on fire, others that they were shot beforehand. (*BBC*, July 21, 2013)

Another article continues;

At least six mediators have been killed by pro-regime militiamen in the Syria province of Homs, reports say. The men were reportedly trying to broker talks between Sunni Muslims and members of the minority Alawite sect in the area when they were shot dead. Most locals believed the team was killed with tacit approval from local government officials. (*BBC*, July 16, 2013)

Surprisingly, *ETV* appears to have described government forces as killers of civilians. Like the other two media organizations, *ETV* also depends on the SOHR for source. Quoted Rami Sbdel Rahman, head of the SOHR, *ETV* said that nineteen people were killed by government fighter helicopters in Homs. It noted,

Government fighter helicopters killed 19 people in Homs, a town considered epicenter for the uprising, Human Rights Organizations Representatives told Associated Press. Rami Abdel Rahman, one of the Human Rights Representatives

in Syria, said regime forces also shelled other Syrian towns of Idlib, Rastan, and Talbisa. (*ETV*, July 3, 2013)⁵

In addition, quoted William Hague, UK foreign minister, *ETV* wrote that the international community should take a strong measure over the Syrian government. Moreover, *ETV* noted that 100 innocents were killed in a massacre by militias loyal to the government. Cited Reuters, *ETV* indicated that the massacre was taken place before four months and the corpses were found buried in one grave. Its narrative reads;

UK foreign minister William Hague said in a speech to the parliament that the international community should take a strong measure over Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. The statement came after reports revealing [that] militias loyal to president Bashar al-Assad had massacred over 100 innocent people in the town called Hawla. According to Reuters, the massacre was taken place before four months and their corpses were found buried in one grave. (*ETV*, Aug. 13, 2013)⁶

Another article continues;

According to some human rights organizations in Syria, regime forces are using torture on the captured suspects and innocent civilians (*ETV*, July 7, 2013)⁷

Victory in the Battlefield for the opposition/rebel forces

In the above, all the three media organizations depicted the Assad forces as killers of civilians. Whereas, the media organizations, with the exception of *ETV*, described the rebel forces as victorious in the battlefield. On the part of *ETV*, the researcher could not find articles that entertain victories of the rebel forces.

Aljazeera, depending once again on the SOHR for source, reported that the entire western area of Aleppo and its adjacent villages have fallen under the control of rebel fighters. It notes;

Syrian rebels claim they have captured the entire western area of Aleppo, a northern province that has seen harsh clashes between the forces of President Bashar al-Assad and opposition fighters for months. The rebels also seized the village of Obeida and Hajireh, southeast of Aleppo city on Monday, the Observatory said. (*Aljazeera*, July 24, 2013)

The following news article also stated rebel fighters seized an ammunition depot. According to *Aljazeera*, the capture of the ammunition depot could help alleviate their shortage of firepower. Citing activists, *Aljazeera* notes;

Syrian rebels have captured an ammunition depot north of Damascus from government forces, activists said, seizing a hoard of anti-tank missiles and rockets which could strengthen their firepower. (*Aljazeera*, Aug. 3, 2013)

Aljazeera posted another news article heralding military post near border with Jordan is overtaken by the rebel forces.

Syrian rebels have captured a military post on the border with Jordan after four days of fighting, according to an activist group.

And adds;

Aljazeera's Nisren El-Shamayleh, reporting from Jordan, said the importance of the rebels' victory remained merely symbolic. (*Aljazeera*, 28 September, 2013)

BBC also portrayed the rebel forces as victorious. *BBC*, as it was stated, was allowed to enter Damascus to report events in government-controlled areas. In this respect, *BBC* would have cross-checked reports coming out from both sides had it used sources from government held areas. But, *BBC* used the SOHR as a primary source of information.

Citing the SOHR, *BBC* reported that Khan al-Assal has been captured by the rebels;

A strategic town close to the northern city of Aleppo has fallen to Syria rebels, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Khan al-Assal was considered the last regime stronghold in the west of Aleppo province. The town lies on a route that links the province to the city of Aleppo. (BBC, July 22, 2013)

The following extract also reports rebel forces seized a key airbase in Aleppo.

On Tuesday rebels captured a key airbase in Aleppo province, near the Turkish border. The Magah base lies in a major rebel supply route from Turkey. (BBC, Aug. 7, 2013)

Another continues;

Rebels have also recently taken several villages in Latakia province the heartland of president Bashar al-Assad's minority Alawite sect. (BBC, August 7, 2013)

Solution Frame

This news frame discusses issues concerning what the selected media organizations said should be done to bring the conflict to an end. Under this frame type, the researcher critically examined articles that entertain solutions to end the conflict that has elapsed three years. Thus, the researcher found two thematic subtopics; military intervention frame and political/peaceful solution frame.

Military intervention frame

In most of the articles examined, *Aljazeera* formed a strong link between the guilty group in the chemical attack and the justifiability of military strike by the US and its allies. As pointed out in the responsibility frame, *Aljazeera* held the Assad forces responsible for killing civilians by chemical weapon; therefore, supports western intervention to overthrow the Assad government.

Below is an article stating the Assad government is responsible for the attack; therefore, it should be removed militarily.

The world community, with the exception of countries such as Iran and Russia, want to see the Assad gone... with the culpability of the Assad regime in the chemical attack, and with all the peaceful means deteriorated, what we have now is a very determined American administration which is seeking intervention or involvement in Syria. (*Aljazeera*, Aug. 24, 2013)

In the following news text, *Aljazeera* predicted that the U.S. military attack in Syria could target the government's air force and air bases. According to it, the reason for this is government air force has gained advantages over the rebels so far in the conflict. Put differently, taking away government air force means the military capability of the two groups would be balanced.

Syria's air force has been a dominant force in the war so far as rebel fighters have few resources to bring down the planes. Taking out the country's air bases would remove one of the regimes biggest advantages. This is certainly one of the ways NATO was able to chip away at Muammar Gaddafi's forces in the air campaign on Libya in 2011. (*Aljazeera*, Sep. 7, 2013)

Similarly, *BBC* supported U.S. military intervention in Syria. In the article below, it criticized Prime Minister David Cameron's inability to persuade the public that action against Syria is in the UK's national interest. Furthermore, quoted a senior military figure in the UK, *BBC* wrote that the limited strike in Syria is too small to have an effect on the government.

Mr. Cameron's potential inability to deliver UK support reflects a failure to convince people, experts and public alike, that action against Syria is in the UK national interest. On Wednesday a senior military figure described to me the proposed limited cruise missiles and air strikes as "naïve and childlike",

suggesting they would be too small to have any major effect on the regime and could produce all kinds of unintended consequence. (*BBC*, Aug. 29, 2013)

Another article continues quoting the idea of Syrian resident called Mohammed, who lost his two little daughters and his mother in the war. Quoted Mohammed, *BBC* wrote that American intervention could help stop Assad from killing people by chemical weapon, and could help end the suffering of the Syrian people. More importantly, *BBC* indicated, towards the end of the article, that most Syrians did want American military intervention to end the conflict.

In this round, he killed 1,000. Next time he may kill 5,000 using the same chemical weapon. He will not stop unless [compelled] by military forces. We protested peacefully. We called for freedom and dignity. And all we get is killing and now chemical weapons. Enough, he said.

Then it adds;

This is a view that is reflected in many areas across the country that suffered human loss and destruction. (*BBC*, August 30, 2013)

Political/ peaceful solution frame

ETV is the only media organization that has criticized the West's threat of military strike in Syria. It used two techniques to denounce the west's threat of military strike. One is by evaluating the military interventions made across the world in the past. The second technique is by giving emphasis to demonstrations took place in different towns in protesting the threat of military strike. By doing so, *ETV* shows allegiance to the peaceful solution of the conflict.

In the following news narrative, *ETV* assessed the results found from outside interventions made in matters of other countries. Therefore, it stated that the military interventions made in the past have not solved any problem; rather, they exacerbate the situation.

The military interventions made on parts of the world over the past years did nothing to solve a problem; rather, it is said, it has caused loss of human lives and material destruction. (*ETV*, Aug. 31, 2013)⁸

In the following news extract, *ETV* stated that the reason for the war fought in Iraq in 2003 also looms over Syria. It tries to make them alike. *ETV* reminds the reader that the main reason for the US-led invasion of Iraq was the baseless accusations of the West on Saddam's possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction [WMD]. In a similar way, *ETV* provided allegations of John Kerry saying U.S. has evidence showing that the government carried out the August 21 chemical attack.

Syrian government said it did not use chemical weapon and dismissed allegations made by John Kerry, US foreign minister, who said that US has evidence that shows the Assad government carries out the attack. The reason that we have evidence [that Saddam possess WMD] was used by the U.S. to occupy Iraq in 2003. This intervention did nothing better for the Iraqis; rather, this has caused many Iraqis to die and the country to unstable. Now, taking this as an example, many are protesting the threat of military intervention in Syria. (*ETV*, Sep. 2, 2013)⁹

The demonstrations that took place in different countries in protesting the threat of military strike in Syria were also given top priority in the news. *ETV* states;

Demonstrations that protest the threat of military intervention in Syria were taken place including in New York and Washington, in South America continent and in different towns around the world. (*ETV*, Aug. 31, 2013)¹⁰

Moreover, *ETV* said that the plan agreed by U.S. and Russia should be worked out on the ground to avoid the West's military strike in Syria. Quoting MoFA, *ETV* says, "The Government of Ethiopia believes no effort should be spared to ensure that a political solution is found for the tragedy in Syria" (*ETV*, Sep. 20, 2013)¹¹. In accord with the agreement reached between U.S.

and Russia, which says that Syria must submit its chemical stockpile to UN inspectors, and, accordingly, Assad should cooperate to completely destroy them, *ETV* calls on the two warring sides to provide their support in changing the plan into practice. It also adds:

Ethiopia calls on all the parties to the conflict to cooperate with the framework agreed by the Russian Federation and the United States to provide for the eventual destruction of Syria's chemical weapon. (*ETV*, Sep. 20, 2013)¹²

4.2. Data analysis and findings of the similarities among the media institutions in framing the Syrian conflict

Under this section, the news frames presented above will be analyzed and the findings will be compared and contrasted.

BBC and *Aljazeera* generally stated that the authoritarian rule of the Assad family was a principal cause for the conflict in Syria. While *BBC* demonstrated that absence of democracy and freedom, and emergency laws were some causes for the people to revolt, *Aljazeera* generally believed that the four decades of the authoritarian rule of the Assad family was a cause for the initial protests. In addition, the global media institutions stated that the government's use of force on the protesters was also a cause for the conflict. Similarly, *ETV* indicated that the government's use of excessive force on the civilians was a cause for the uprising to spread to other areas.

The chemical attack which claimed hundreds of lives of innocent people was also presented above. With the exception of *ETV*, which made none of the parties responsible for the attack, the global media organizations become alike in blaming the Assad government for killing people by chemical weapon. *Aljazeera* and *BBC* believed, not based on facts, the Assad/ forces carried out the attack. *Aljazeera* seemed to deliberately select think-tank experts who said that Assad was a

perpetrator. Some of the experts who express their opinion on this case were; Mark Le Vine, Patrick Cockburn, Firas Abi Ali, and Saleh Mubarer.

With the aim to investigate the identities, such as their citizenry, current living place, and work status, the researcher visited the online LinkedIn (<http://lnkd.in/app>). This is because *Aljazeera*, despite their job and for whom they work, could not give full description of identities of the experts. When we investigate the identities of the individuals listed above, except Saleh Mubarek who is a member of Syrian National Council (SNC), all are UK/US- based scholars. Patrick Cockburn is a journalist for the UK-based Independent newspaper, particularly well known for his commentary on foreign news especially in Middle East. Firas Abi Ali is also a London-based Middle East analyst and head of the IHS global for Middle East and North African countries. Moreover, Faris had previously worked in Reuters. Mark le vine is a professor of Middle East history at University of California, Irvine, and a distinguished visiting professor at Lund University, Sweden. According to the website, Mark Le Vine has had a strong relationship with Mathias Mossberg, ambassador at Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm, Sweden. Furthermore, they are the co-author of the book entitled *One Land, Two States: Israel and Palestine as Parallel States*.

One can understand that all four experts appeared on the media are selected intentionally because their views are congenial to the mainstream media. Compliant with this mechanism, Harman and Chomsky (1988:23) note “this process of creating the needed body of experts has been carried out on a deliberate basis and a massive scale”. *Aljazeera* did not choose persons from Russia, Iran, or Lebanon, or ex-members, if not current members, of the Ba’ath party.

Through judgments and arguments, *BBC* also laid the responsibility of gassing civilians on the government forces. In addition to selecting think-tank experts, *BBC* institutionally believed that the Assad was responsible. Quoting HRW and other “independent experts”, *BBC* laid responsibility on the Assad forces. By examining the UN inspector’s (that blames no one) report, *BBC* noted,

But more importantly the two types of rocket used - a Russian-supplied 140mm system and especially the larger 330mm weapon of unknown origin - are significant since according to both Human Rights Watch and a number of independent arms experts - these are weapons that have only been observed in use by Syrian government forces during this conflict. (Sep. 17, 2013)

In this news report, *BBC* not only presented instinctively driven views, but also reminds the reader that Syria has officially unannounced stockpiles of chemical weapon. It writes, “experts believe the country has large undeclared stockpiles of mustard gas and Sarin nerve agent (Aug. 27)”. In the same token, *Aljazeera* also declared, “Syria is said to have one of the world’s largest stockpiles of chemical weapon (Aug. 21)”. Both *Aljazeera* and *BBC* systematically utilized the above technique in all their news articles (often toward the end of their stories) pertinent to this case to make the government forces responsible.

As it is clearly shown in the portrayal frame discussed earlier, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* represented, throughout their news articles selected, that Assad and its forces as criminals while the opposition forces as innocent and caring. In all the articles examined, no single story that put Assad and its forces in a positive image was published. Nor were its actions to defend itself from the armed opposition forces. *Aljazeera* quoted UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, as saying “Assad has carried out many crimes against humanity” (Sep. 13, 2013). It also allowed leaders of rebel forces to rely their ideas to the audience. For example, Saleh Mubarek is an SNC who

appeared on the channel to blame Assad of murdering people, he claims, “Assad is killing civilians in Syria” (Sep. 8, 2013).

BBC is far more critical of the Assad and/or forces than *Aljazeera*. In addition to what *Aljazeera* used to describe Assad and its forces, *BBC* employed words like repressive as in, for example, “protestors started by calling for democracy and freedom in what is one of the most repressive countries in the world (Sep. 19, 2013)”, corrupt – “freedom from corruption and the family that has ruled the country for over 40 years (Aug. 9, 2013)”, and indiscriminate killer- “the pilot indiscriminately bombed the school kids (Sep. 30, 2013)”. Like *Aljazeera*, *BBC* also nowhere in its news article issued a positive report toward the government.

The opposition forces, on the other hand, were depicted as caring/saviors of innocent peoples. *Aljazeera* posted an article on September 19 which said that the FSA fighters “have been doing their best to try to evacuate civilians from the western front of the town because they are now exposed to shelling and tank fire”. Another article quoting Syrian main opposition bloc (SNC) writes, “SNC has urged the international community to take action to protect civilians in the embattled city of Homs (July 5, 2013)”. In exactly similar way, *BBC* depicted the opposition forces as saviors of people who live in and outside of their controlled areas. For instance, in a news report *BBC*, quoted FSA spokesman, writes, “To ensure no blood is spilt and that the properties of the people of Maaloula are kept safe, the FSA announces that the town of Maaloula will be kept out of the struggle between the FSA and the regime army.” (Sep. 11, 2013). Thus, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* showed positive attitude toward the opposition forces.

When they dealt with the two belligerent sides’ achievements in the battlefield, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* tend to become biased toward the opposition forces. Even if the Assad forces controlled

areas which previously were under the opposition forces, they did not want to give emphasis as they did to the rebels. They never published a single story which heralded the victory of Assad forces by its own. It became known of the Assad's victory when the rebel forces regain towns or provinces, or when the rebels became victorious in a series of defeats by the Assad forces. For instance, *BBC* notes, "the rebel victory comes after several defeats at the hands of Syrian armed forces" (July 22). In a similar fashion, *Aljazeera*, showing allegiance to the rebel forces, writes, "still largely outgunned by Assad forces, who have gained underground, the rebels have sought arms to tip the balance of power in the two year conflict that has killed at least 100, 000" (Aug. 3, 2013).

In a similar way, *ETV* also appeared negative in depicting the Assad forces. In fact, *ETV* did not provide as much coverage as the global media organizations. But in the little coverage it devoted to the case, *ETV* showed a negative outlook toward the Assad forces. Like the other two media institutions, *ETV* depends on the SOHR, Associated Press, and Reuters as a source in portraying government forces.

Interestingly, the depictions exist in these media outlets especially in *BBC* also existed in a video by Barrack Obama on Syria chemical attack case on 10 Sep. 2013. Obama says, "Over the past two years, what began as a series of peaceful protests against the repressive regime of Bashar al-Assad has turned into a brutal civil war." This complete agreement between Obama's word (repressive) to describe Assad and the media's portrayal of Assad as repressive regime is a very important clue that the media has become a tool for the western politics. Conforming this idea, Harman and Chomsky (1988: Xlii) also stated, "Media editorials, news coverage, and selection of "excerpts" in opinion columns were heavily skewed toward the elite preference." From this,

one can infer that the commonly held unfavorable outlook of the West toward the Assad regime is also reflected in the media's treatment of the war in Syria.

With regard to the solutions to end the conflict, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* demonstrated that the Assad government should be ousted by the West particularly by the U.S. military intervention to end the human suffering. *Aljazeera* has again used experts who share the values or policies of the station. It hosted, for example, Richard Murphy, a former US ambassador to Syria and Saudi Arabia, and Hisham Jaber, a retired Lebanese army general, both entertained the military intervention than the peaceful solution to end the conflict. For example, concerning Obama's seeking for vote of approval, Richard Murphy asserted, "I don't believe they are going down the road of seeking a Congressional vote of approval, but they recognize they have to keep the Congress involved (Aug. 30, 2013)". *Aljazeera* quoted Hisham Jaber as saying that the military attack could target government air bases, and this could help the rebels to maintain balance. Quoting Hisham, *Aljazeera* writes;

I do understand by this that only 30- more or less- Tomahawk cruise missiles will be launched on very specific targets in Syria. The targets, I suppose, will be the air force bases because air force in Syria has priority. If they want to maintain the balance between the government and the opposition...the Syrian air force will be the target. (Sep. 7, 2013).

BBC institutionally supported U.S. military intervention in Syria. In addition, *BBC* reported issues which can be considered morally correct for the U.S. to intervene militarily. Mark Mardell, North America Editor, writes that the world needs a police to punish whenever international norms are violated. According to him, it is America that should take this role. In relation to the chemical attack and the U.S role as a police in world affairs, Mardell notes; "... Obama has decided now that even if no one else (apart from France) is willing to step up to the

plate, it is America's job to do so (to defend norms when violated). Few at home or abroad seem to agree with him- but they don't have any other answer either" (Sep. 7, 2013). Jeremy Bowen, *BBC's* Middle East Editor, also writes that the delay of Obama's administration in seeking congressional support could give Assad time to move its military equipment, "the delay could give the government time to move some sensitive military equipment" (Sep. 1, 2013).

ETV, for its part, makes its stand clear by suggesting a peaceful solution to end the conflict. Even if it overly depended on *BBC* and Reuters for source of news, it entertained issues which denounce the threat of military strike in Syria. Distinctively, it allocated a large space and time to demonstrations protesting the threat of U.S-led Western military intervention in Syria. In addition, it broadcast the failed outside interventions in the past in countries around the world.

In sum, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* appeared the same in framing the Syrian conflict. Both blamed the government for instigating the conflict and for killing civilians by chemical weapon. In the later, which is very complicated case, both the international media organizations made the Assad forces responsible. In the absence of facts and neutral organization to officially announce the responsible group, both *Aljazeera* and *BBC* became biased in their reporting. *ETV*, however, remained neutral. Furthermore, the global media institutions become biased toward the opposition forces. The three media organizations selected represented the Assad forces as killers while, with the exception of *ETV*, the opposition as saviors of innocent people. Also, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* represented the rebel forces as victorious. Again, concerning the solution to the conflict, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* became alike- they supported U.S. military strike to end the catastrophe in Syria, whereas, *ETV* showed a peaceful or political solution.

4.3. Data presentation

4.3.1. Differences between the media institutions in framing the Syrian conflict

So far, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* have similarly framed the conflict in Syria. They differed with *ETV*, which often took a neutral position in dealing with the conflict. Under this section, both the international media outlets took a different position with regard to the two powerful FSA groups fighting to overthrow the Assad regime. These groups (factions) are the al-Nusra Front and the ISIS, abbreviated for the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (the Levant). Also, included under this section, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* are heavily contrasted concerning the future of Syria. On part of *ETV*, the researcher couldn't find articles pertinent to the groups named above and the consequences of the war on Syria's future.

Media portrayal of ISIS and al-Nusra Front (two powerful groups of the FSA)

Jabhat al-Nusra and the ISIS are operating under the umbrella of the FSA to form an Islamic State in post-Assad Syria. Moreover, ISIS, as the name indicates, is thriving to form an Islamic state by combining the post- Assad Syria and the state of Iraq. Both are established by Sunni adherents of Islam. While ISIS is an Iraqi origin group, al-Nusra is formed by foreign fighters coming in to Syria to overthrow Bashar al-Assad. In relation to this, Gulmohamad (2014: 2-3) writes;

ISIS is based in Iraq with affiliations in Syria. ISIS mainly targets the Shias, Kurds and Christians, while its prime targets are of course the Western facilities and government institutions in these countries. JN (Jabhat al-Nusra) is an ultra-radical resistance group aiming to establish an Islamic state (Caliphate) in Syria (Bilad al-Sham or Levant). The outfit has a Salafi-Jihadist ideology with its leader, al-Julani, being a Jihadist of Syrian origin.

These two groups are depicted differently by the global media organizations. *Aljazeera* showed positive outlook toward the two rebel groups fighting to overthrow the Assad government. Aaron Zelin of the Washington institute, whose research focuses on jihadist groups and networks, is one who appeared on *Aljazeera* to positively describe the Syrian jihadists by comparing them with the Iraqi jihadists who were operating in Iraq a decade ago. Quoting Zelin, *Aljazeera* wrote that

The Jihadists in Syria had learned from the mistakes of the Iraqi's Jihadists a decade ago, he said. Those who operated in Iraq used excessive violence, targeted Sunni Muslims and tried to institute a narrow interpretation of Sharia.

And it continues;

Meanwhile, Jihadist groups in Syria, especially Jabhat al-Nusra, have developed a measure of popular support among residents in areas under their control by providing social services. They are seen as fair and honest, especially when other groups resorted to looting and banditry. (*Aljazeera*, Sep.14, 2013)

In the news article below, *Aljazeera* presents viewpoints of Omar, al-Nusra front fighter from Syria, saying that the FSA are impeding their operations in overthrowing the regime. "Men like Omar, a Syrian member of Jabhat al-Nusra from Latakia, view the FSA as an obstacle (Aug. 28, 2013)". Furthermore, quoting the fighter named above, *Aljazeera* represents al-Nusra Front as a true rebel group fighting to overthrow Bashar al-Assad. The great part of the news article talks about the obstacles put by the FSA rebel fighters on al-Nusra front. The extract reads;

"We wanted to work. They wouldn't let us", he said. "I can't go to Battle and have the free Syrian Army telling the regime my plans. We work alone [without the FSA], but we are not living on our own planet. There are others. News gets out. You have people like Abu Basir [a member of the FSA's Supreme Military

Council representing Latakia], who try to stop our fight. (*Aljazeera*, Aug. 28, 2013)

In stark contrast to *Aljazeera*, *BBC* appeared negative in depicting the rebel groups. In the following news extract, quoting a moderate female activist of the FSA, *BBC* asserts that the foreign fighters who have joined jihadists [a term often used to refer to al-Nusra Front and ISIS] should leave the country. The extract reads;

“We do not want these people,” she went on, referring to the foreign fighters who have joined jihadi brigades. “This is not Syria.” She admitted that the jihadi had grown in popularity because of corruption and infighting among the FSA. Many rebel groups were preying on the people they are supposed to be fighting for, she conceded. (*BBC*, July 12, 2013)

Furthermore, *BBC* writes, “many civilians, activists and journalists have also been detained by al-Nusra, and the group is accused of responsibility for many of the atrocities carried out by the rebel forces during the conflict in Azaz (Sept. 25, 2013)”. In addition, quoting an FSA activist, *BBC* blames al-Nusra fighters for damaging the image of the revolution.

“al-Nusra has a clear sectarian agenda,” says Mezar, an activist in Raqqa. “They kill and slaughter anyone who is not like them. They definitely do not represent our revolution, but they are damaging its image and values.” (*BBC*, Sep. 25, 2013)

Future of Syria (prognostic frame)

Under this news frame, both *Aljazeera* and *BBC* entertain issues about what the post- Assad Syria will look like and, given the current situation, what the fate of the country will be in the future. *Aljazeera* gives more focus to the separatist agendas of the groups fighting in Syria. In the article that follows, for example, *Aljazeera* predicts that Syria will be partitioned in to three

regions; a Kurdish region, a region dominated by the Assad regime, and a region dominated by the various militias. The whole excerpt reads;

Syria is descending in to suicide. It's a horror story and getting worse and worse. There is no bright spot on the horizon. What will probably happen, if this continues, is that Syria will be partitioned in to probably three regions; a Kurdish region- which is already forming –that could pull out and join in some fashion the semi-autonomous Iraq Kurdistan, may be with some kind of deal with the turkey. The rest of the country will be divided between a region dominated by the Assad regime- a brutal, horrifying regime-and another section dominated by the various militias, which range from the extremely malicious and violent to the secular and democratic. (*Aljazeera*, Sep.10, 2013)

In addition to the Kurd's attempt of forming a separate state in the Northern part of Syria, *Aljazeera* writes, "It is not very clear what a post-Assad Syria will look like- but already one divided on geographic lines seems to be emerging (Aug. 11, 2013). In addition, giving more concern for the Kurdish party's [PYD] separatist agenda, *Aljazeera* further notes;

Aljazeera's Khodir said that there are worries now of the possibility of the country disintegrating, with no political solution in sight. She said that rebel groups have declared war on the Kurdish party, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which has long identified its support for Assad. (*Aljazeera*, Aug.11, 2013)

Similarly, in the news text that follows, *Aljazeera* predicts that Bashar al-Assad would set up an Alawite state should he leave Damascus. Alawites are one of the minorities in Syria to which the Assad family belongs to. It writes;

These Alawite Mountains are where many believe Assad might not only retreat to- should he leave the capital, Damascus- but also try to establish a breakaway Alawite state. That state would include the rounded spine of mountaintops. (*Aljazeera*, Aug.28, 2013).

But *BBC* seems to be more concerned with the establishment of the Islamic state in Syria than the disintegration of the country. It gives more focus for the jihadists' indication of forming an Islamic state in Syria. It reports signs of an Islamic state, such as the establishment of sharia law in rebel-held areas, the prohibition of smoking, etc. For example, in the following news article *BBC* writes;

The spread of sharia in rebel-held areas has alarmed the moderate members of the opposition, who though Muslim, do not want a religious state. (*BBC*, July 12, 2013)

Another continues quoting a moderate Muslim rebel fighter;

She was complaining about Islamist gunmen telling her not to smoke, to cover her head, and to leave meetings where she was the only woman. (*BBC*, July 12, 2013)

In an interview with a Syrian Facebook activist, *BBC* demonstrated that post-Assad Syria should not be an Islamic state; rather, it wants the people to elect a democratic government through free and fair election. Here is its excerpt;

Though a practicing Muslim, Mohammed does not express any particular desire for an Islamic government to control Syria. He wants the people to choose for themselves through a free and fair election. (*BBC*, Aug. 9, 2013)

4.4. Data analysis and findings of the differences between the media institutions in framing the Syrian conflict

This section will analyze the differences of the global media organizations further. In addition to drawing findings from the news frames presented above, the researcher attempts to clearly show the factors that influence *Aljazeera* and *BBC* to frame the Syrian conflict the way they did in this particular section and in the study as a whole.

Aljazeera treated al-Nusra Front and ISIS as equal as the other moderate groups fighting to overthrow the Assad government. When describing these groups *Aljazeera* used phrases like, “The U.S. designated al-Qaeda linked group” and “some with alleged links to al-Qaeda” to indicate that their linkages are only known by the U.S., and to show that their linkages are not proofed yet respectively. Furthermore, while the word “Jihadists” is used by both of them, *Aljazeera* contrarily used “an armed group”, “the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), an armed group operating in Syria...” In contrary to *Aljazeera*, *BBC* used words like, “al- Qaeda linked al-Nusra Front”, “al-Qaeda affiliated groups”, and “Islamists” to describe these groups.

Moreover, *Aljazeera*, as discussed earlier, portrayed/depicted al-Nusra and the ISIS positively, that they are true and devoted fighters fighting to overthrow the Assad government and, as opposed to the Iraqis, support the community in providing social services. In the following article, for example, *Aljazeera* seemed to blame the other moderate factions of the FSA for keeping the front frozen. It notes;

Many of the other groups also include foreign fighters within their ranks; some are even led by foreigners. All are not merely outside the broad, loose umbrella of the more moderate rebels Free Syrian Army (FSA) but in some cases openly antagonistic to it, accusing it, among other things, of keeping the front frozen to protect the minority Alawites. (*Aljazeera*, Aug.28, 2013)

But *BBC* portrayed al-Nusra Front and the ISIS negatively. As noted earlier, *BBC* depicted these two groups as killers of civilians and moderate commanders of the FSA. Including the latter, *BBC* writes; “The al-Qaeda linked Nusra Front has been accused of atrocities, including bombing civilians, killing moderate FSA commanders and kidnapping aid workers. (Sept. 25, 2013)”. Another continues, saying, “As the fighting escalated at the end of July, Jihadists also reportedly killed hundreds of Kurdish civilians (*BBC*, Aug.18, 2013)”.

This difference in portraying the two powerful rebel groups is because of influence of ownership on part of *Aljazeera*, and allegiance with political elites or, according to Harman and Chomsky's (1988) the media's role as a propaganda machine, on the part of *BBC*.

From the start, Qatar was supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, later the FSA, who are fighting to overthrow the Assad regime. More important, unlike the West, Qatar has been providing arms support to all the factions of the FSA, including al- Nusra Front. Comparing the two Sunni countries: Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the only Middle East Arab countries who greatly support the opposition rebel groups, *BBC* writes;

Qatar openly supports the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, and is thought to provide money and arms to many different groups inside Syria- including al-Qaeda affiliated jabhat al- Nusra. Saudi Arabia meanwhile has been chiefly concerned about Iran's role, and has been much more cautious, choosing instead to back its own carefully selected groups so as not to help Islamists that may pose a threat to its own security. (*BBC*, July 1, 2013)

In addition, *BBC* reveals that Qatar and Saudi Arabia have been sending arms to the FSA. It says,

Saudi Arabia and Qatar have been sending weapons to the FSA for some time. The U.S. is moving towards sending small arms. The U.K. is contemplating such a step, but would only do so after a vote in parliament. (*BBC*, July 29, 2013)

These two Sunni Arab countries want the Shia leader, Bashar al-Assad, to be defeated. Particularly, Qatar is not concerned about the Islamist groups it supports. This is because, as *BBC* indicated, Qatar is not worried about "placating or managing an angry Shia population as the Saudis or Bahrainis do (July 1, 2013)". Also,

Its internal dynamics are not being rocked by sectarian divides, and the dangers of political Islam and religious extremism are much more acute elsewhere in the gulf. (*BBC*, July 1, 2013)

As clearly shown above, Qatar has been sending arms to the FSA including the groups labeled by the U.S. and *BBC* as al-Qaeda linked or, in other words, terrorists. *Aljazeera*, being a Qatari-based media organization and owned by the Emir, inclined to depict the groups positively, given the fact that Qatar has been supporting the two groups. Therefore, *Aljazeera* worked to the interest of its owner, or served as a tool to realize the country's ambition- to overthrow Bashar al-Assad.

On the other hand, the West, unlike Qatar, has been providing support only to the moderate FSA groups. The West, Particularly the U.S., have worried about the growing in power of the Islamist groups. *BBC*, in one of its articles, stated, "the statement [an increasing influence of the Islamist rebel movements within the coalition] is an attempt to shift the political balance of power in favor of those doing the fighting on the ground and is also an indication that jihadist groups like the al-Nusra Front are very much center stage in the conflict, an awkward reality for western powers" (Sep.25, 2013).

These Islamists, al-Nusra and ISIS, according to *BBC*, are dominating the moderate rebel fighters. This in turn, as discussed in the prognostic frame, will help them establish an Islamic state. Given this concern, the West, particularly the U.S., is carefully arming the moderates only. *BBC* further writes;

Analysts say there is more chance that the U.S. and other western powers may arm the Free Syrian Army (FSA) if it shows a distinct separation from the Islamists. (*BBC*, Sep. 20, 2013)

In the following article, *BBC* declared that the Western countries and the Arabs have agreed to step up the support they provide to the moderate Syrian rebels. It states;

In recent months, western and Arab nations have agreed to step up support for moderate Syrian rebels in their battle against president Bashar al- Assad forces (*BBC*, July 12, 2013)”

Therefore, like *Aljazeera*, *BBC* is also influenced by the political elites’ interest. It showed a complete allegiance to the political position of the country in the conflict. Meaning, being a U.K-based media institution, and with no country in the West wants the Assad government to remain in power, and the Islamists to control power, *BBC* reported the political elites interest. So, *BBC* worked as propaganda tool for the west, particularly for the UK government. In compliance with the media’s support toward the moderate rebels, President Barack Obama, in the video he released on Sept. 10, 2013, has also clearly spoken the support his administration provides to the moderate rebels in Syria. He said;

Over the past two years, what began as a series of peaceful protests against the repressive regime of Bashar al-Assad has turned into a brutal civil war. Over 100,000 people have been killed. Millions have fled the country. In that time, America has worked with allies to provide humanitarian support, to help the moderate opposition, and to shape a political settlement. (President Barack Obama, Sept. 10, 2013)

Concerning the future of Syria (prognostic frame), *Aljazeera* reported that post-Assad Syria will be disintegrated in to different regions. Also, given contemporary situation (even Assad remains in power); *Aljazeera* demonstrated that the partition of the country will be inevitable. The station seemed to be concerned with the partition of the country than the formation of an Islamic state. For example, *Aljazeera* states;

The attacks follow days of fighting in Latakia province, which borders Idlib, with concerns growing about the country disintegrating along sectarian lines. (*Aljazeera*, Aug. 11, 2013).

But *BBC* made a linkage between the Islamists and their ambition to form an Islamic state in Syria. It is concerned more with attempts of the Islamists in establishing an Islamic state than the partition of the country. *BBC*, in the following article, for example, asserts that the extremist Sunni jihadist rebels could extinguish Syria Christian minorities if President Assad is ousted. Likening Syria's fate to Iraq, *BBC* writes;

Many fear that if the secular government is overthrown, they will be targeted by Sunni jihadist rebels calling for the establishment of an Islamic state and that Christian communities will be destroyed, as many were in Iraq after the US-led invasion in 2003. (*BBC*, Sep. 11, 2013)

In general, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* differed in portraying the two groups of the FSA: al-Nusra and the Islamic State (ISIS). While *Aljazeera* depicted the two groups positively, *BBC* negatively portrayed them. More importantly, the two media institutions are different in predicting the outcome of the conflict. While *Aljazeera* predicted that the conflict would have the consequence of dividing the country into small states, *BBC* wrote that the powerful Islamist groups would create an Islamic State. It is also important to note that these global media institutions deliberately select sources that are congenial to the propaganda line of their respective government. Both of them deliberately selected FSA activists and groups to say what the media outlet wanted to be said. For example, *Aljazeera* chose activists from al-Nusra and ISIS, which is in contrast to *BBC*, which depended on the moderate rebels of the FSA for source.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

This final chapter provides the conclusion of the study with some possible recommendations.

5.1. Conclusion

The study was conducted to investigate how *Aljazeera*, *BBC*, and *ETV* frame the conflict in Syria. To this end, three month time period - July, August, and September of 2013- were purposely selected. Guided by the time frame, all news articles that entertain the war in Syria were downloaded from their respective websites. By employing purposive sampling technique, sample data were selected and analyzed qualitatively. Diagnostic frame, responsibility frame, portrayal frame, solution frame, and prognostic frame were finally identified to analyze the study.

Based on the analysis, in the diagnostic frame, all the media organizations selected for this study reported that the Assad government was responsible for initiating the conflict. However, some differences were shown as to why the media organizations held the Assad government responsible for the crisis. While *Aljazeera* stated that the four decades of an authoritarian rule was the main cause, *BBC* emphasized that absence of democracy and freedom, and emergency laws were the main causes for the people to start an Arab like uprising in Syria. In addition, the three media organizations were similar in accusing the Assad government of using excessive forces on civilian protesters.

In the responsibility frame, with the exception of *ETV*, both the global media institutions made the Assad government responsible for carrying out the chemical attack. While *Aljazeera*

deliberately utilized experts to make the government forces responsible, *BBC* institutionally laid blame on the Assad government. *ETV* became neutral and showed compliance with the UN inspectors' report, announced only that the chemical weapon was used. Thus, unlike the other two, *ETV* made no one responsible for the attack.

The global media organizations also showed similarity in portraying the rebels and the Assad and/or forces. While they depicted the Assad forces as killers of civilians, the rebels as saviors/caring of peoples. In addition, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* similarly depicted the rebel forces as victorious. *ETV* also showed similarity in portraying the Assad government as killers of civilian peoples, but it did not entertain news depicting the rebels as victorious and caring. Furthermore, all the three media institutions similarly used the SOHR as source in reporting the casualties, only reportedly killed by the Assad forces. In addition to that, the global media organizations frequently used the SOHR in reporting victories of the rebel forces.

Again, the global media institutions similarly framed that the Assad regime should be ousted by the West's, particularly U.S.'s military strike. But *ETV* stated that the peaceful/ diplomatic solution should be worked out to end the turmoil in Syria.

The only difference between the global media organizations in framing the conflict was observed while portraying the two powerful rebel groups of the FSA, al-Nusra Front and the ISIS, and in the prognostic frame. *Aljazeera* portrayed the two groups in a positive manner- that they are not killers; rather saviors, and that they are not al-Qaeda linked rebel groups. In contrast to *Aljazeera*, *BBC* portrayed the two groups in a negative way- that they are killers, obstacles to the FSA, and that they are al-Qaeda linked groups. Moreover, while speculating the future of Syria in the prognostic frame, *BBC* stated that these Islamists would transform Syria in to an Islamic

state where the Christian minorities and the Shia Alawites would have no place. *Aljazeera*, on the other hand, predicted that the future of the country would be disintegration in to small states.

Generally, while *Aljazeera* and *BBC* became biased towards the rebels, *ETV*, although it sometimes framed the conflict in Syria in a complicated way; for example, in portraying the Assad forces as killers, showed significantly a neutral position. More importantly, both *BBC* and *Aljazeera* selected news sources and experts that were suitable with the media organization's ideology. Hence, both the global media organizations worked to the interest of their owners. *Aljazeera* served to the need of the Emir, who was providing support to the FSA, including al-Nusra and ISIS, in order to remove the Shia leader Bashar al-Assad. Similarly, *BBC* also served as propaganda machine for the west, which has also been providing support to the moderate rebels of the FSA to demolish their common enemy- the Ba'ath party leader Bashar al- Assad.

5.2. Recommendations

With the exception of *ETV*, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* framed the Syrian conflict in line with their owners or political elite's preference. They showed a complete allegiance to their respective countries' political outlook toward the Assad regime. Both wanted the government to be deposed, as it was clearly indicated in the solution frame. Moreover, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* also showed loyalty to their respective governments' support they provide to the FSA groups. Qatar supported all the FSA groups, including al-Nusra and the ISIS, so did *Aljazeera* in depicting the two groups. U.K. and its staunch ally the U.S. support only the moderate groups of the FSA, excluding al-Nusra and the ISIS, so did *BBC* in describing the two groups and the moderates. Therefore, *Aljazeera* and *BBC* were governed by their political elites' interest than the profession.

So, this study recommends that *Aljazeera* and *BBC* should report facts on the ground. As the journalism profession clearly indicates, journalists should report issues in a balanced and fair way; the sources they select should equally entertain the two sides' point of view. In this case, the global media outlets failed to meet this important element of journalism profession. In addition, owners or powerful elites should allow journalists to practice the profession independently. On the part of journalists, regardless of their government's animosity with another country, they should be governed by the principles of the profession in reporting issues/events. On part of *ETV*, the study recommends that sources should be selected carefully. As has been observed in the global media organizations, sources played a crucial role in relaying the media institution's editorial policy (in this study their respective governments' political interest) across to the public. Thus, *ETV* journalists should avoid using sources that put one group in a bad image.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Operational definitions for the type of frames used to analyze the story;

Diagnostic frame: provides background for the causes of the Syrian conflict (who or what causes the conflict).

Attribution of responsibility frame: This particularly discusses the media's blame and attribution of responsibility for the chemical attack (who is blamed for killing innocent people by chemical weapon and who is made responsible, the regime forces or the rebels)

Portrayal frame: discusses the media depictions of the warring groups;

1. Assad and/or forces and rebel forces (how Assad and/or forces and the oppositions are represented in the media), and
2. ISIS and al-Nusra fighters, powerful rebel groups of the FSA (how these powerful rebel groups are depicted by the media)

Solution frame: discusses the possible solutions to the conflict (what solutions are reported by the media to end the war)

Prognostic frame: discusses the consequences of actions or events (what will happen if the Assad regime is overthrown). In short, it discusses the future of Syria.

Appendix B

The Amharic version of ETV extracts used in the text.

የፕሬዝዳንት ባሻገር አልአሳድ መንግስት አድማሱን እየሰፋ በመራመድ ላይ እንደሚገኝ የሚነገርለትን ህዝባዊ ተቃውሞ እንቅስቃሴና ሁከት በወታደራዊ እርምጃ ለመደምሰስ

የሚያደርገው ሙከራ የሟዾች ቁጥር በየዕለቱ መጨመሩ ቢገለፅም ሁከቱ ተጠናክሮ ቀጥሏል። (ኢቴቪ፣ ሐምሌ 18፣ 2013)¹

በሶርያ ባለፈው እሮብ በዋና ከተማ ደማስቆ አቅራቢያ በኬሚካል ጦር መሳርያ በደረሰና እስካሁን ማን እንዳደረሰው ባልታወቀ ጥቃት የበርካታ ሶርያውያን ዜጎች ህይወት አልፏል። የምዕራባውያን የመገናኛ ቡዙኃን በጥቃቱ የሞቱት ቁጥር ከአንድ ሺ በላይ አድርሰውታል። ሶርያ ባለፉት ሁለት አመታት ይህንን ጥቃት ጨምሮ በርካታ ዜጎችን የነጠቁ ግጭቶች ተፈፅመውባታል። (ኢቴቪ፣ ነሐሴ 23፣ 2013)²

የተባበሩት መንግስታት ድርጅት የጦር መሳርያ መርማሪ ቡድን ሶርያ ደማስቆ ገባ። ሃያ አባላትን የያዘው ቡድን ደማስቆ የገባው የአሳድ መንግስትና ተቃዋሚዎች የኬሚካል ጦር መሳርያ ተጠቅሟል በሚል እርስ በርሳቸው በመወነጃጀላቸው ጉዳዩ ለማጣራት በሚል ነው። (ኢቴቪ፣ ነሐሴ 19፣ 2013)³

የተባበሩት መንግስታት ድርጅት የኬሚካል ጦር መሳርያ መርማሪ ባለሙያዎች ቡድን ስራውን አጠናቆ አገሪቱን ለቆ ወጣ። መርማሪ ቡድኑ በደማስቆ አቅራቢያ ተፈፀመ በተባለ የኬሚካል ጦር መሳርያ ጥቅም ላይ ስለመዋሉና አለመዋሉ ሲመረምር ከቆየ በኋላ ጥቅም ላይ መዋሉ መረጋገጫ ሰጥቷል። በሪፖርቱ እንደተጠቀሰው በመቶዎች የሚቆጠሩ ሰዎች በኬሚካል ሳሪን እንደተገደሉ በምርመራ አረጋግጧል። ከኬሚካል ጦር መሳርያ ጋር በተያያዘ በደማስቆ ተፈፅሟል በተባለ ሦስት ጥቃቶችን ጨምሮ ስደስት ጉዳዮችን መርማሪ ቡድኑ ማግኘቱን ሮይተርስ በዘገባው አስፍሯል። (ኢቴቪ፣ መስከረም 19፣ 2013)⁴

የመንግስት ጦር ሂሊኮፕተሮች የተቃውሞው እንቅስቃሴ ማፅከል እንደሆነች የሚነገርላት ሆምስ በተባለች ከተማ በፈፀሙት ጥቃት 19 ሰዎች እንደተገደሉ የሰባዊ ድርጅቶች ተወካዮች መካከል አንዱ ራሚ አብዱራህማን የመንግስት ጦር ሃይሎች ኢድሊብ፣ ራስተን፣ እና ታልቢሳ የተባሉ ከተሞችም በመድፍ መደብደባቸውን አስታውቋል። (ኢቴቪ፣ ሓምሌ 3፣ 2013)⁵

የብሪታንያ ውጭ ጉዳይ ሚኒስትር ዊልያም ሂግ በፓርላማ ባደለጉት ንግግር የአለም አቀፍ ማህበረሰብ በሶርያው ፕረዚደንት በባሻር አልአሳድ መንግስት ላይ ጠንካራ እርምጃ ሊወስድ እንደሚገባ አስገነዘቡ። ይህን ያስታውቁት በመንግስት ደጋፊ ሚሊሻዎች እንደተፈፀመ የተነገረለት ጭፍጨፋ ይፋ ከወጣ በኋላ ነው። ከአራት ወር በፊት ሃውላ በተባለች ከተማ ተፈፀመ በተባለ ጭፍጨፋ ከ 100 በላይ የንፁሃን ሰዎች አስክሬን ከአንድ መቃብር በቁፋሮ መገኘቱን ፊውተርስ ዘግቧል። (ኢቴቪ፣ ነሐሴ 13፣ 2013)⁶

በሶርያ ውስጥ የሚካሄደው ጦርነት ሂደት የመንግስት ጦር ሃይል በቁጥጥር ስር በሚያውሏቸው ተጠርጣሪዎችና ሰለማዊ ሰዎች ላይ የማስቃየት ተግባር የሚፈፅም መሆኑን አንዳንድ ለሰባዊ መብት መጠበቅ የቆሙ ድርጅቶች ማመልከታቸውን ተገልጿል። (ኢቴቪ፣ ሓምሌ 7፣ 2013)⁷

ባለፉት አመታት በዓለም ዙርያ በተከናወኑ ወታሃደራዊ ጣለቃ ገብነቶች ካመጡት መፍትሄ ይልቅ ጉዳቱ በህይወትና በንብረት ያስከተለው ጉዳት ከፍተኛ መሆኑ ነው የተነገረው። (ኢቴቪ፣ ነሐሴ 31፣ 2013)⁸

የኬሚካል ጦር መሳርያ አልተጠቀምኩም ያለው የሶርያ መንግስት የአሜሪካ ውጭ ጉዳይ ሚኒስትር ጆን ኬሪ አሉኝ ያሉትን መረጃ ሀስት በማለት አጣጥለውታል። መረጃ አለኝ በሚል ሰብብ በጎርጎርሳውያን የዘመን ቀመር በ2003 ወደ ኢራቅ የዘመተው አሜሪካ መራሹ ጦር የዛችን ሀገር ከማመሳቀልና ሂወታቸውን ከመንጠቅ ባለፈ ምንም አይነት ለውጥ አላመጣም በማለት በማሳያነት እያነሱ አሁን ላይ ምናልባት በሶርያ ላይ ይካሄዳል ያሉትን ወታሃደራዊ ጣልቃ ገብነት ቡዙዎች እያወገዙት ነው። (ኢቴቪ፣ መስከረም 2፣ 2013)⁹

በኒውዮርክና በዋሽንግተን ከተሞችም ጨምሮ በደቡብ አሜሪካ በተለያዩ የአለም ክፍሎችም በሶርያ ላይ የሚደረገውን ጣልቃ ገብነት የሚቃወሙ ሰልፎች ተካሂዷል። (ኢቴቪ፣ ነሐሴ 31፣ 2013)¹⁰

በሶርያ የተፈፀመው አሳዛኝ ድርጊት ፖለቲካዊ መፍትሄ እንዲያገኝ አንዳችም ጥረት እንደማይባክን የኢትዮጵያ መንግስት ያምናል። (ኢቴቪ፣መስከረም 20፣2013)¹¹

በሩስያ ፌዴሬሽንና በአሜሪካ መካከል የተደረሰውን የሶርያ የኬሚካል ጦር መሳርያ የማስወገድ ስምምነት ሁሉም ተፋላሚ ሃይሎች ትብብራቸውን እንዲያሳዩ ኢትዮጵያ ጥሪዋን ታቀርባለች። (ኢቴቪ፣መስከረም 20፣2013)¹²

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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