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International news media coverage of the "Arab Spring": actors, technology and political impacts

Julian Dube
Clark Atlanta University

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ABSTRACT

POLITICAL SCIENCE

DUBE, JULIAN  
B.A. CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY, 2009  
B.A. CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY, 2010

INTERNATIONAL NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE “ARAB SPRING”:  
ACTORS, TECHNOLOGY AND POLITICAL IMPACTS

Committee Chair: Hashim Gibrill, Ph. D.

Thesis dated May 2013

This study examines the strengths and influence of International News Media Coverage in Politics as manifested in the “Arab Spring.” Key variables that shape global news coverage are examined with Western media institutions in particular being the focal point. The analytical agenda or purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between international news media and politics by evaluating news media coverage of protests, demonstrations and uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria, in an effort to determine how the Western media has shaped political views on those countries and other parts of the world using its technology, political principles and advantages. A case study analysis approach was used to explore the systemic factors that influence international
news coverage and how these factors determine the volume and content of news that flows from various parts of the world. The researcher found that news coverage does not change the policy, but it does create the environment in which the policy is made and that the media remains crucial in focusing international attention on the Arab Spring, but they do not determine the policy, the key decisions, nor their implementations. The conclusion drawn from the findings suggests that although global news media is increasingly becoming a source of rapid real time information, it is used by politics to convey its ideological messages and propaganda.
INTERNATIONAL NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE "ARAB SPRING":
ACTORS, TECHNOLOGY AND POLITICAL IMPACTS

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

BY
JULIAN DUBE

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY, 2013
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAT – Agency Alliance Treaty
AA – Association Agreement
ABC – American Broadcasting Company
AFP – Agence France-Press
AP – Associated Press
BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN – Cable News Network
CIA – Central Intelligence Agency
CTD – Center for Telecommunication Development (at the ITU)
CCTV – China Central Television
CBS – Columbia Broadcast Services
ESPN – Entertainment and Sports Programming Network
EU – European Union
FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigations
FCC – Federal Communications Commission
FOC – Fiber-Optic Cables
FMF – Foreign Military Finance
FNC – Fox News Channel
GATT – General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs
GSO – Geo-Stationary Orbit

GMTV – Good Morning Television

GNP – Gross National Product.

IMF – International Monetary Fund

INTELSAT – International Telecommunications Satellite Organization

IOJ – International Organization of Journalists


ITAR – Information Telegraph Agency of Russia (ITAR-TASS became the new name for the recognized old news agency, TASS).

ITU – International Telecommunication Union

ITV – Independent Television (U.K.)

MENA – Middle East and North African Countries

MNC – Multinational Corporation

NBC – National Broadcasting Company

NPR – National Public Broadcaster

NWICO – New World Information and Communication Order

NTA – Nigerian Television Authority

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

PLO – Palestine Liberation Organization

RT – Russia Today

SABC – South African Broadcasting Corporation
TASS — Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (Telegrafnoye Agentstvo Sovetskovo Soyuzu)

TNC — Transnational Corporation

UNESCO — United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

UK — United Kingdom

UN — United Nations

UPI — United Press International

VOA — Voice of America
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The topic: International News Media Coverage of the "Arab Spring": Actors, Technology and Political Impacts, examines key variables that shape global news coverage. The Arab Spring is a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests occurring in the Arab world and began in December 2010. These revolts were caused by dissatisfaction with the rule of local governments that had established absolute monarchies and violated human rights. Most of these countries were also experiencing economic decline, unemployment, extreme poverty, and a number of demographic structural factors, such as a large percentage of educated but dissatisfied youth within the population. In the context of this thesis, the international news media is dominated by Western media institutions; hence the "focal point" of study will be on the Western media in particular. The analytical agenda or purpose of this research is to evaluate media coverage of protests, demonstrations and uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria (collectively known as the Arab Spring) in an effort to determine how the Western media has shaped political views on those countries and other parts of the world using its technology, political principles and advantages.¹ This thesis does not go beyond the scope of coverage to include Saudi Arabia and Bahrain although these two countries are also a

¹ Western media are news agencies and media discussed agencies are: Agence France-Presse (France), Associated Press (U.S.), Thomson-Reuters (U.K.), Information Telegraph Agency of Russia (Russia). News organizations will be CNN (U.S); BBC (U.K); France24 International (France)
significant part of the Arab Spring. In the subsequent chapters Saudi Arabia and Bahrain
is used to substantiate statistical facts on the discussion. The revolts in Tunisia, Egypt,
Libya and Syria are four different unique situations playing within the framework of the
Western countries’ foreign policy and strategic interests.

This thesis discusses and explores the systemic factors that influence international
news coverage and how these factors determine the volume and content of news that flow
from various parts of the world. Global news media coverage in the context of this thesis
is the communication of selected information on current events taking place on the global
spectrum and presented by television broadcasters to a third-party or mass audience. This
covers news in politics, economics, cultural, social relations and sports of world states to
establish an interconnection of a global village. While there are other establishments of
the media, such as newspapers and radio, this thesis precisely focuses on Cable and
Satellite television news coverage.

The subject is of significance to scholars of political science, mass media
communications and economics because it analyzes the inter-connected relationship of
international media, communication technologies, and international politics in assessing
the social and political impacts of global media systems. Using the Arab Spring as a case
study, the core focus of this research is to make an analysis of the factors that influence
and manipulate global news flow. Different actor types on the global news media
platform are examined to reveal patterns of news sourcing used by the international
media strategists who emerged as key brokers of information during the Arab Spring.
Actors in the context of this thesis are: journalists, the global media institutions, Western
countries (namely United States, Britain and France) with an active role in the political landscape of events in the Arab Spring. Russia and China are occasionally mentioned due to the influence and their power to veto decisions on revolts in Libya and Syria at the United Nations Security Council. Both Russia and China hold permanent seats at the Security Council. A discussion on global news coverage and international diplomacy cannot be complete without “key ball-players”, media practitioners and their sources, the countries with enhanced media technology, and the global media institutions themselves. News sourcing is a critical element in the practice of media journalism as it develops from whom journalists get their information and how they process it. Navigating through media and scholarship on international politics, the thesis attempts to explain that international news media coverage is inherently strategic for influencing the political structure of world politics and the dissemination of political ideologies.

The interest in this topic emerges from the author’s transition from journalism to political science. It became imperative and a befitting tribute to examine the relationship between communication and politics. It is therefore important to study misconceptions and hopefully establish a better framework for understanding the dynamics between mass media and political developments. This subject on international news coverage and its political impacts further identifies closely with professional experiences of the writer as a broadcast media specialist and student of politics. The author’s knowledge on the subject involves first hand exposure to the world of international politics, diplomacy and

---

2 Journalists are sometimes referred to as reporters. They gather, write and distribute news and other information. They sometimes research, conduct interviews and report on information to be presented in sources.
business that has encouraged the making of a scholarly contribution to the challenges and
crises of the pursuit of political and economic development.

Furthermore this thesis provides another forum to test theories of neo-realism and
neo-Marxism. It achieves this by focusing on the role of politics, individuals in
government institutions and corporations that control global news media outlets and
Television in particular. The subject international media and political impacts addresses
the forces at work that determine the limits and extent in global news coverage based on
either idiosyncratic or other social, economic and political requirements which arouse
powerful Western nations to vie for the control or influence of these elements in countries
experiencing anarchy such as (the discussed) Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria. This
approach is recommendable because only through the proper understanding of global
media and its relationship with politics can the effects of international news coverage be
best evaluated and improved. It is through defining these theories that the research is able
to explain how media sustain politics and its activities and vice-versa. The thesis further
helps in understanding the dynamics of international relations and provides information
on how various aspects of human endeavor, such as in media and its international news
coverage can exacerbate or ameliorate international disputes. This work further
encourages other research on the specific aspects of the ever-developing global media
technology and its interaction with politics as manifested in news coverage of the Arab
Spring.

Furthermore the thesis explains why to millions of people around the world, the
definition of what is news is determined by global television networks; Cable News
Network (CNN) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) based in the United States and United Kingdom and controlled by Americans and British respectively. The discussion extends to Al-Jazeera of Qatar an emerging new voice in the 21st century, competing for audiences throughout the world by offering news shaped by varied interests and perspectives from which sometimes vary those of the Western media. While the argument could be that Al-Jazeera is not a Western media institution, it should be kept in mind that the influence of the Western political doctrines has been carried to this global institution through its employing an increased number of journalists and production executives from CNN, NBC, BBC and France24 International. This will be discussed in detail in later chapters.3

The development of communication technologies has helped improve international news coverage and transmission, while also increasing the complexity of international politics. Developed media technology allows a lone broadcast journalist/reporter to take a single professional video camera out to shoot a story, to an entire television crew taking a production or satellite truck on a location to do a live television news report for a remote broadcast newscast. In politics, countries now take advantage of sophisticated technologies used to transmit news, to criticize each other’s domestic, foreign policies, economies and political principles. The “trade” in international news by transnational media institutions has improved the structure and proximity of all countries of the world to one another. Trading news in the context of this

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3 The author’s conclusion is based on “floor-crossing” statistics of increased number of media practitioners he has worked with at CNN moving to Al-Jazeera. A short list of names of news anchors and correspondents from the BBC, CNN and ABC who have moved to Al-Jazeera is tabulated in the appendix page.
thesis refers to the exchange of video footage or media resource-sharing agreements by media multinational institutions. An example of trade in international news is the mutually beneficial arrangements between two major global broadcasters, CNN and Al-Jazeera. The procedure is that CNN will provide Al-Jazeera with footage from events that the latter’s media practitioners do not have access to, in exchange for video packages exclusively afforded to the Arab media.

International news coverage play an important role in today’s world in that it impacts upon the general public, policy makers, interest group leaders and public policy in decisions they make on daily basis. In most instances people tend to react or respond to news or news headlines as required by the media institutions. When planes flew into New York’s Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, most of Western news media headlines read: “America under Attack”. The aim of these global media was to compel the population to believe that there was an enemy or terrorists bent on killing all Americans. Henceforth the U.S. was vindicated to repel these attacks. During Israel and Hamas conflict, Maen Areikat, Chief Representative of the general delegation of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the United States, told CNN’s Erin Burnett that the “media-spin” on the conflict delayed truce between the two warring parties. Areikat stated:

---


5 The news trade example between CNN and Al-Jazeera is when the latter would exclusively obtain video packages from the Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and exchange that footage for video recordings provided exclusively for Western media institutions for no charge.
When the media continues to say; rockets continue to rain on Israel, it makes negotiating peace difficult.\(^6\)

The influence of Western media in the 21\(^{st}\) century has extended to the Arab Spring where it continues to play a strategic role in stimulating the political events and processes that approve their countries' political doctrines and economic interests. There is no dispute that ownership and control of international news coverage is often one-sided. The big questions revolve around what should be made of this situation. It has been fashionable in some circles to glorify these inequalities by arguing that global news media is the arena in which values, such as universal human rights and democracy, are disseminated from the places that cherish them to backward politically underdeveloped regions. On the other hand, global news media has been viewed as a multi-layered structure, where the worldview of elite races, cultures and nations are imposed on others, and where questions related to the global power structure are not even allowed hearing because all issues are framed by the powerful.

In the past, Western media journalistic ethics questioned the use of information provided by the public and unknown or incredible media sources in global political news.\(^7\) However the influence and power of politics has altered these media guidelines. In global news coverage of the Arab Spring, Western media institutions accepted and used information and footage from private citizens of the Arab Spring countries despite the


West and Hollywood’s negative portrayal of the Arabs, Muslims and their religious principles. The change-in-beliefs and embracing of the information contributed by these private citizens was for the reason that these protests, demonstrations and uprisings were expectedly to benefit the Western countries’ economic and strategic interests. These assumptions are based on firsthand observations of the writer while working as Assignment Editor for CNN International Desk during coverage of the Arab Spring.

During the first weeks of upheavals, private citizens in Tunisia and Egypt notably provided images and sound of events to news agencies such as Agence-France-Presse, Reuters, Associated Press, and media institutions of BBC, CNN, France24 International and Al-Jazeera News through Facebook, Twitter and the blog calling-on the Western countries to intervene. Since then, the approach to the news coverage of these events by institutions from the United States, Britain, France and Qatar respectively is evidently based on national interests’ viewpoint that promotes political ideologies and economic progression.

Research Theories: Neo-Realism and Neo-Marxism

Two primary theories applied to this research scholarship are Kenneth Waltz’s neo-realist and Daniel Chandler’s neo-Marxist media theories. The elitism theory is used as secondary to clarify and describe class and power structures on who controls what,

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9 Media institutions discussed will be abbreviated as: Al-Jazeera (Aljazeera), American Broadcast Corporation (ABC), Associated Press (AP), British Broadcast Corporation (BBC), Cable News Network (CNN), China Central Television (CCTV), Fox News Channel (FNC), France 24 international News (France24), Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Russia Today (RT) and South African Broadcast Corporation (SABC). Information Telegraph Agency of Russia (ITAR).
how and why. Neo-realism’s philosophical idea asserts that: “international institutions are used by states to pursue their own interests and that the States are the tools of the elite class. Without a basis either of hegemonic dominance or common interests, international institutions cannot long survive.”

Neo-Marxist theory focuses on states and its elite promoting corporate interests and the free-market globalization. It also puts emphasis on international class adjustments and allegiances; (1) that international politics using international news coverage is essentially a struggle for power in a rebellious setting in which nation-states inevitably rely on their own capabilities to ensure their survival by promoting corporate interests and hegemony; (2) that states exist in a condition of legal sovereignty in which nevertheless there are gradations of capabilities, with greater and lesser states as actors; (3) that states are rational actors characterized by a decision-making process leading to choices based on maximizing the national interest at the expense of others, and (4) that power is the most important concept in explaining, as well as predicting state behavior.

Chandler’s premise of neo-Marxism elucidates that international media are, in a “means of production” which in capitalist society are in the ownership of the ruling class. According to the classical Marxist position, the mass media simply disseminate the ideas and world views of the ruling class, and deny or defuse alternative ideas. This is very much in accord with Marx's argument that:

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Capitalist society is one of class domination; the media are seen as part of an ideological arena in which various class views are fought out, although within the context of the dominance of certain classes; ultimate control is increasingly concentrated in monopoly capital; media professionals, while enjoying the illusion of autonomy, are socialized into and internalize the norms of the dominant culture; the media taken as a whole, relay interpretive frameworks consonant with the interests of the dominant classes, and media audiences, while sometimes negotiating and contesting these frameworks, lack ready access to alternative meaning systems that would enable them to reject the definitions offered by the media in favor of consistently oppositional definitions. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.  

The definition of States being tools of the elite is based on the premise that the U.S. constitution, according to Joseph D. Kearney and Thomas W. Merrill in their book: 

“The Origins of the American Public Trust Doctrine: What Really Happened in Illinois Central”, was designed to protect the interests of the most powerful and the wealthy.

Kearney and Merrill asserts that:

The constitution of the U.S. is a document of, by and for the rich for control of the laws by which a government operates.  

In the progression of this thesis, the discussion attempts to reveal that International media institutions and its news agencies tends to take a subjective stance in the coverage of the events once its journalists or practitioners become embedded with a section or group in conflict. These media authenticate everything said by any of the factions that accommodate them to such that in the end they compromise their media or


journalistic ethics for the interests of their home countries. Further elaboration on this will be discussed in the later chapters.

When global news media institutions such as BBC, CNN and Al-Jazeera label top government officials as credible sources to comment on international diplomacy, it empowers these individuals at best to control and decide on the political doctrine or paths that their respective governments should follow. It also sanctions these elites to influence the content on news production. The relevance of neo-realism and neo-Marxist theories to global news coverage and specifically of the Arab Spring, at best interprets and analyzes how the elite of the Western countries indirectly influence or influenced the political system, structures and decision-making processes based on their national interest. On one hand Neo-realism talks of international institutions (in this case, the institutions are the news media houses) being used by States. In this illustration States discussed are governments of Arab Spring countries and Western governments who during the upheavals used their respective media institutions to broadcast news favorable to their strategic and economic interests.¹⁴ On the other hand Neo-Marxism influences the philosophy of corporate and national interests. Its approach to the development of economics is connected with dependency and external exploitation rather than the normal “internal” exploitation. Its assertion of the Arab Spring news coverage by Western media institutions is that the developed West’s reliance on economic and strategic resources of

¹⁴ Brief explanation is that CNN, BBC and France24 International’s news were angled favorable to the upheavals of the peoples of the Arab Spring countries’ advances against their governments. On the other side the media of the countries facing these revolts were critical of these demonstrations and protests. Russia TV broadcasts criticized these rebellious events because they are an institution funded by the Russia government that has strategic and economic interests in the Arab Spring countries.
the Middle East and North African countries such as oil, natural gas and the Nile river transportation system, systematic exploitation results in (these economically developed Western countries) their support of popular revolts against their own governments.\textsuperscript{15} The upheavals normally end with these governments replaced by regimes or systems that are pro-Western influenced to give the latter advantages in the manipulation of economic and strategic resources along with establishing hegemony. The further explanation of these theories further allow the thesis to explain the impacts of politics and the influence of media technology brought by the corporate institutions to the global community.

Key-Players and Actors in International News

Key notable players who contribute sound and footage to news media institutions are the international news agencies of the likes of AP, AFP and Reuters. These are cooperatively owned by contributing newspapers, radio and television stations in their respectively home countries. In some instances U.S. media will subscribe to British owned Reuters, the French media subscribe to AP and British media to AFP through media communications contracts of news trade, also known as the Agency Alliance Treaty of 1869.\textsuperscript{16} The role of these news gatherers and its “sources” to the Arab Spring will be discussed in detail in the later section of this research.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} These upheavals are caused by corruption within government institutions, high employment, food inflation and poor living conditions and a lack political and freedom of speech.

\textsuperscript{16} Media communications contracts also known as Agency Alliance Treaty of 1869 are agreements that exist among the three news agencies, Agence-France-Presse, Associated Press and Reuters whereby the three delegated each other regions of the world for exclusive coverage and service. They agreed for each to sell footage to any licensed media institutions without a claim on each other. *Cherry, World Communication*, 116.
In contrast are the Doha-based Al-Jazeera and Saudi Arabia owned Al-Arabiya; satellite television channels. Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya’s welfare beside national interests involves religious, social and cultural interests to the revolts, and how Arab viewers think about these issues. While both Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya subscribe to media ethics similar to any media institution including the Western media, they also understand the importance of religion and how it affected these upheavals. Being headquartered in the Middle-East (the hub of Islamic religion), there is a perception that these media outlets are better-placed to dominate the markets and help to craft public perceptions and influence the debate on the Arab Spring news coverage. It should be stressed that for all the named media institutions to package and produce news they need to source and process the information.

Sources and sourcing of news is an important element in the navigation of this research study and to those who aspire further research on the subject in future. The use of the Arab Spring as a case study helps in the understanding of how global news coverage is evolving in an era of networked digital media, a space that, by its nature, allows for new research possibilities in tracking the influence of sources and States.

In transmitting global news or analyzing, there is a need to consider the destination of the news to its target audience and how that audience will respond to the news. Authors Alfred Hermida, Seth Lewis and Rodrigo Zamith, in their paper titled:

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17 AP is a cooperatively owned by its contributing newspapers, radio and television stations in the United States, which both contribute stories to the AP and use material written by its staff journalists. Many newspapers and broadcasters outside the United States are AP subscribers, paying a fee to use AP material without being contributing members of the cooperative. Agence-France-Presse is of the same in France and Reuters in Britain.
"Sources during the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions", presented at the International Symposium, affirms that Western media of the likes of CNN, BBC, France24 International and the news agencies: AP, AFP and Reuters trusted Western sources commenting on the Arab Spring in their news production because these sources knew how to protected Western principles.\(^{18}\) These sources are the elite, defined as credible to provide information that determined the theme of news produced and the political process in other countries. These elites hold institutional powers in government departments, legislations and business institutions. These governments’ constitutions are drafted to such that they protect the elite and their wealth.\(^{19}\) Credible sources are trusted people with a reputation for accurate and truthful information they provide to the media. However there is need to evaluate who gives credit or trust to these sources, and to which of the doctrines these sources are aligned to. Anonymous sources can also be credible with information that they provide but don’t want their identity revealed.

In 20\(^{th}\) and 21\(^{st}\) century politics, international news coverage has become an essential component in the interaction of three highly important institutions: States, corporate markets and societies, and how their relationship to one another affects the behavior of different actors. In the past scholars of international politics put less emphasis in ideas and information with students of media and communications and vice-versa. Politics and media work in tandem so the two now have to closely interact for their own

\(^{18}\) Alfred Hermida, Seth Lewis C., and Rodrigo Zamith, “Sourcing the Arab Spring: A Case Study of Andy Carvin’s Sources During the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions” (paper presented at the International Symposium on Online Journalism in Austin, Texas, April 2012).

\(^{19}\) Alfred Hermida, Seth Lewis C., and Rodrigo Zamith, “Sourcing the Arab Spring: A Case Study of Andy Carvin’s Sources During the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions” (paper presented at the International Symposium on Online Journalism in Austin, Texas, April 2012).
mutual benefit. The media receives financial benefits from selling news to the population, such as “talking points” from political figures, while politicians benefit from using the media as a vehicle to disseminate their messages or propaganda. In all instance, this relation attracts financial revenues for both.

In modern economies and societies, the availability of information is central to better decision making by citizens and consumers as well as international partners. However it should be highlighted that the source of information should be trustworthy. In political markets, citizens require information, facts, principles and background on candidates or individuals seeking election to offices for them to make intelligent voting choices. In economic and financial markets, whether local or international, consumers and investors require information to select products and securities. The availability of information from a reliable source is a crucial determinant of the efficiency of political and economic markets.20

Events that take place around the world such as international judicial systems; war and peace; trade and bilateral relations are communicated through international news gathering systems at unprecedented speed. Using sophisticated and highly developed technology, the latter subsequently connect countries of the world coherently to convey positive and sometimes negative influences to the electorate. The media gathers and transmits news globally, using technologies such as communication, business and military satellite systems. It is accepted or undisputable in nearly all variants of social and

political theory that global news media and communication systems are cornerstones of modern societies. In political terms, they serve to enhance democracy, or to deny it, or some combination of the two. International news media reported, analyzed and suggested events of the Arab Spring. In some instances their coverage stimulates anarchy. News media coverage and communication systems in the political world have also emerged as central areas for profit-making in modern capitalist societies. The profit-making argument is supported by the proven statement that international news media institutions have become a better marketing vehicle for international businesses. Multinational corporations sell their products through advertising in global media institutions.21

The increase of technology in transnational electronic media institutions has helped eliminate time and distance as obstacles to communication.22 Most of the media outlets discussed in this research are conglomerates that have benefited many parts of society, including business, education and international relationships. Media conglomerates in this context are media institutions or media groups that own a large number of companies in various mass media such as television, radio and internet. These media conglomerates strive for policies that facilitate their control of news markets across the globe. The most notable media conglomerate companies that feature prominently are: Time Warner and News Corporation, although this thesis does not discuss much of News Corporation.

21 Multinational Corporation (MNC) is a corporation enterprise that manages production or delivers services in more than one country. It can also be referred to as a Transnational Corporation. They play a role in globalization.

22 Technology in transnational electronic media discussed are Fiber-Optic lines, strands as thin as a human hair that carry digital cable television and telephone systems information over long distances implanted under the ocean.
The Information Technology possessed by these international media conglomerates is demolishing territorial boundaries and bringing nations together in a single global community. No-one would have expected that CNN and BBC would one-day be in competition with Arab-owned satellite news gatherer in the mold of Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya or social media of the caliber of Facebook and Twitter. Change has become the order of the day. Trade, banking and telecommunications are being deregulated. Through the use of media technologies and its competitive actors, transport is getting faster, flexible and available. Re-engineered business systems are taking advantage of quick response and just-in-time strategies: and cargoes, containers, and goods are being tracked around the globe by a variety of automatic identification devices. Electronic data interchange and electronic commerce are replacing the slower, more tedious paper trail. Countries now compete in global markets regardless of time zones, national boundaries, and distance, as products and processes are redesigned to adjust to the new business environment. People can advertise, sale and buy items on line using specialized communication social engines such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

The increasing pressures from the global market are forcing everyone to adopt new trade practices and standards. Customs, treasuries, and lawmakers have to reinvent themselves to adapt to the concept of electronic commerce. Nations are adjusting to new methods of finance and tax gatherings, opening up their telecommunications systems to private interests, and learning to take full advantage of harmonized procedures, standards, and practices for trade documentation.
Another significant issue pertaining to this topic is that it provides an improved basis for articulating the political economy of transnational television news media coverage and its potential for improving relations among nations. In this context, the transnational media discussed include activities by electronic media or television organizations that broadcast beyond the boundaries of their resident countries. The politics of transnational news coverage means the decision-making process that determines the degree of freedom of the press tolerated by individual governments and how that could affect broadcasting modes and attitudes towards other nations. The most noticeable transnational media organizations and news agencies that feature prominently and make the discussion of this thesis are: CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera, RT, SABC, NTA, AP, AFP, Reuters and News Corporation.23

The subject of international news coverage confirms that not all countries can be covered everyday by news media, and that the picture of the world in the news of every country’s media is inevitably distorted in the sense that people, countries and the events are often represented unevenly. The subject of international news coverage further reveals politics as an important element in the manifestation of business, social and cultural news. Most of the literature identified and studied so far corroborates that international news coverage and its political impacts, have been, and continue to be an influence to man’s contribution to societal development. Even a layperson can notice that some incidents from a given country can appear so large that they occupy most of the

23 These international news institutions are owned by elite individuals, corporate officers, major shareholders and governments. AP is the abbreviation for Associated Press, and News Corporation is the company that owns Fox News Channel, Fox SportSouth, SkyNews and many other Cable TV Channels.
available international news slots while incidents of the same magnitude in another
country will barely receive any coverage.

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

As a scholar of Political Science and Mass Media Communications the author is
intrigued and determined, through this research to reveal the structural foundations that
shape international news coverage in media and international politics through a case
study of the Arab Spring. In the process the research answers questions that encapsulate
the statement of the problem to the topic: International News Media Coverage of the
“Arab Spring”: Actors, Technology and Political Impacts. The central research question
that this thesis seeks to examine is the relationship between International News Coverage
and International Diplomacy. In an attempt to answer this central research subject, there
are a series of questions that need to be dealt with in the process, such as: Why are some
countries more likely than others to be covered and given more space or broadcast time
on these giant Western media institutions? What caused Africa and other world media in
the run-up and during the Arab Spring to rely on footage and sound-bites from western
media institutions? What systemic forces or determinants govern international news
coverage? These questions were pursued as manifested in the global news coverage of
the Arab Spring.

The extent to which capitalist, political, or social motivation determines the
present manner of international news coverage will be helpful to better our understanding
of prescriptions or solutions to associated problems. Given the complex and interwoven
nature of these problems, one cannot help but look beyond these questions into more
specific aspects of the problems such as: Who are those responsible for the production, transmission, and reception of (both electronic and print) international news coverage that produce political impacts? At what point is this manner of global news coverage likely to enhance cooperation or aggravate conflicts among nations? The news coverage of the Arab Spring by Western media exposes some of the claims linked with enhancing cooperation or aggravating conflicts by using people from those countries.

In the effort to answer all these questions, the core focus of the research examines the multistep processes of politics in global news coverage and the distribution by a chain of "gatekeepers" who apply a set of traditional news values that reflect a collective judgment of what is news worthy and what is not. In this context gatekeepers are news directors who monitor and decide what goes to air (in the context of television news) and print news that will be suitable for public consumption.

The study of this subject is shaped by the research hypothesis which suggests that gatekeepers tend to select information that reflects unexpectedness, proximity, political conflicts, trade and political activities that influence the progression of economies of the world and policies of the "host" countries. The news in general over-represents events that occur close to our homes or incidents that are disruptive and feature well-known or powerful people.

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24 Host countries in this context are countries that "house" international news media institutions covering news in other countries. Guest countries are countries that are covered in the news media of other countries.
This research presents a model that enables us to determine the most functional means of articulating global communication and, particularly international news coverage in relation to international politics: its influence, impacts, technologies and the actors involved. It is inevitable that this study challenges other existing explanations on the subject, either in part or in every respect as it reveals the role of international news coverage to the international communities. Global news coverage is the major source of information about, and explanations of, social and political processes. It plays a key role in determining the forms of consciousness and the modes of expression and action which are made available to people. Consequently, any adequate analysis of the distribution of power and of the process of legitimization must necessarily include an analysis of the international news mass media.25

Based on the interdisciplinary nature of this scholastic study, a number of hypotheses compete for prominence. The central hypothesis and one inspiring among them, is that which assumes that international media and its news coverage is a dominant factor such that its activities tend to influence and shape perceptions, and political decisions of other countries favorable to their home countries’ doctrines.

The secondary hypothesis suggests that international news coverage or its communication activities reporting conflicts could worsen hostile relations between nations as a result of the slightest arousal of any perceived threat to national security. The third hypothesis is that as the number of people in a country or an area increase there is a chance or likelihood of a rise in the volume of news from that area. The abundance of

resources and strategic allocation of a country or state will also contribute to the volume and interests to a country or countries by international news media institutions from the west.

These hypotheses are a result of systemic factors that are likely to influence international news coverage. These factors comprise of: trade, territorial size, cultural and political ties, physical distance, communication resources and sources. All are classified under the umbrella of systemic factors. The systemic factors in this study are defined as the distinctive traits of individual nations, as well as the magnitude of interaction and relatedness between any two nations in the context of the global system. Because of the increased production and invention of sophisticated technology, the factor of distance cannot count at this juncture. Technology has enabled countries to connect with ease. Interactions between nations are trade between two countries sharing the same political ideology, language or exchange in cultural and social relations. These systemic factors tend to influence the volume and content of news that flow from various parts of the world and determine the menu of international news available to gatekeepers. The operationalized systemic factors of international news flow include categories: national traits and population. The common definition of “national traits” in this framework is the behavior of a particular country towards the policies or ideologies of another.\(^{26}\) Improved media technologies mean an improved number of “news source” and “sources of news”. News source is a person, publication, or other record or document that gives timely information. Examples of sources include official records, publications or broadcasts,

\(^{26}\) Population in this discussion will state that: As the number of inhabitants in a country or an area increases there is a likelihood of an increase in news coming from that area.
officials in government or business, organization or corporations, witnesses of crime, accidents or other events, and people involved with or affected by events or issues.

Freedom of the press is another key element that determines the volume of news coverage capacity. In areas where there is news censorship, the likelihood is that there will be less news gathered and disseminated to the population. Logistical factors of news gathering and distribution such as the Satellite and Fiber-Optic Cable Systems add to the essential and technologically developed news transportation forms between countries. Navigating through this thesis, there is be a need to understand that the world we see, read and hear about in the news is a product of both news standards and the global system of news coverage and distribution. This means that there are set-standards for how news should be covered. What angle of the story the news coverage will approach. Who are the key players involved and who benefits from how the news is presented.

Based on protests, demonstrations and military conflicts in the Arab Spring, this thesis discusses the relations between global news media institutions and politics, and whether the link between politicians and how international news are covered can complicate relations between nations. There have been instances where political events, tensions and conflicts can be aggravated by statements uttered and channeled through the media platforms by politicians, interests groups and world leaders. This takes shape when international news practitioners continuously direct probing questions to politicians and

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27 The degree of press freedom is the latitude given to the media to investigate, criticize, transmit and publicize news on government institutions and its personnel without condemnation or threats.
political organizations that later turn to incite conflict. A case-in-point was the CNN’s “Piers Morgan Tonight show” where the news anchor probed Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak on prospects of attacking Iran.\footnote{Steve Krakauer, “Ehud Barak: Obama is friendly to Israel, especially in security-related issues,” Piers Morgan Tonight (CNN, 2011) \url{http://piersmorgan.blogs.cnn.com/2011/09/20/ehud-barak-obama-is-friendly-to-israel-especially-in-security-related-issues/}, accessed 12 February 2012.} Obviously this statement presumes an existing climate of conflict between nations which the present mode of communication seems to have been exacerbated. Incidentally, the realist viewpoint in international relations agrees with this perspective. It maintains that states as major actors in international relations are in perpetual antagonism, with each of them are motivated by national self-interest. This supposedly means that conflicts could worsen in the hostile relations between nations as a result of the slightest arousal of any perceived threat to national security for states. Countries that used to be sworn enemies due to conflicting political ideologies: Russia and the United States have eased the animosity to a working relationship that encompasses trade, social contact, media communications and the search for peace. While all these elements have improved the status quo of diplomacy and how countries relate, tensions still exist as each and every country vies for their national interests.

Furthermore this research study re-examines some of the existing theory and practice in global communication in general and international news coverage in particular. There seem to be in existence certain conditions which tend to support the fact that the prevailing global communication processes promote conflict rather than foster harmony. This assumption has its basis on human belief that through the promotion of
harmony rather than exacerbating conflicts, many countries would be less prone to confrontation or hostilities.

To attribute the entire global conflicts to the nature of global news coverage would be very misleading because not all news covered by the international media from the West stimulates conflicts. Some of these universal news media contributes positively in economic, social and cultural cooperation. In some instances it becomes a case of how the intended targets receive and interpret the message disseminated. While in other instances journalists gets carried away with events and fail to explore both sides of the story properly, especially when embedded to a group with the same political ideology as their home country.\(^29\) They tend act as messengers for politicians and politics.

International news coverage and international diplomacy are encapsulated in the study of international relations. The latter being a branch of political science that studies and analyzes the international system. International system is the principal scheme of relationships that extends beyond the boundaries of neighboring states. Therefore the study of: “International News Media Coverage and Political Impacts”, enables scholars of International Relations to relate to War and Peace studies, Conflict Resolutions, International Law, International Economics, International Organizations and Diplomatic Relations. All these sub-fields are key elements of global politics that play a role in negotiating peace between the warring factions and international economic relations.\(^30\) In


\(^{30}\) Warring factions in this context is the protesters and demonstrators who revolted against their governments resulting in the two factions engaging in military conflicts.
essence the enlisted subfields, in one-way or the other have become key elements in the process of negotiating peace in the Arab Spring. Academic experts in each of these fields of study have been called upon to mediate political, economic, cultural and social stand-offs.31

In almost all countries of the Arab Spring the situation has invited or needed the intervention of the United Nations, an international organization whose stated aims are facilitating cooperation in International law, International security, economic development, social progress, human rights, and achievement of world peace.32 It should be realized that all these sub-fields mentioned above support and service the growth of international news coverage’s progression as manifested in the Arab Spring.

In addition, the subject on helps to establish suggestions that transnational information flow is a reflection and a constituent of the larger global system which in turn is latently structured by the world’s politics, economic and culture.33 The larger Western nations, which have the resources to maintain their own systems of news coverage, tend to distribute surplus resources strategically, meaning they will channel


resources and aid to media institutions and governments that drive their agendas or having the same political ideologies.\textsuperscript{34}

Actors in the context of this topic are countries whose media has extensively covered the Arab Spring. The challenges in the discussion on these actors will be to examine how Western media institutions' images and graphics presented the socio-political structure of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria.\textsuperscript{35} What is of interest to these media institutions and the countries they originate from? Theoretically any media institution privileged to cover events in any other country besides its own has a high probability that it will focus or put more emphasis on its home-country's national interest. The discussion cannot yield results without evaluating the status and credentials of sources of news in the social and political class. Also in the list of actors are countries of the Arab Spring (guest countries) covered by these Western media.\textsuperscript{36} Although its own media has also covered these events (the Arab Spring), their viewpoints have had little to influence most of the world countries about the unraveling events.

The thesis suggests that superior media technology of predominantly Western countries could be using the advantage of communications satellites and Fiber-Optic

\textsuperscript{34} A case in point is United States' Voice of America (VOA) Radio and Television broadcasts distributed by satellite and cable to countries such as Cuba (Radio Marti) to sabotage and force regime change in favor of a capitalist system of governance. In 1980 U.S. congress approved $1.3 Billion to VOA broadcasts against countries such as Zimbabwe, Cuba, Iran, North Korea and others opposed to the U.S. principles of government.

\textsuperscript{35} The media institutions that the research discusses include Four big news agencies that supply images and sound to mainstream media namely: AFP, Reuters, AP and Information Telegraph Agency of Russia (ITAR) and international media: Aljazeera, BBC, CNN, France News24 International, NTA, RTV, and SABC.

\textsuperscript{36} Guest countries are the countries that are covered in the news media of other countries.
Cables to transmit news events from their standpoint. Even though communication and news coverage is expected to be a two-way thing, this study demonstrates that the value of international news coverage of events in the Arab Spring to a country such as the United States, and media technologically rich countries, does not necessarily involve others doing more than receiving news and viewpoints. The millions around the world who invested and watches news from satellite reception dishes are, unsuspectingly buying into a process that gives the media-technologically developed countries the ability to exercise political power over them by influencing their ideologies.

Through the case study of the Arab Spring, the research reveals that global news coverage course is essentially strategic and beneficial to the world’s powerful countries. Western countries, Russia and China present an impression that their meddling with political activities in the Arab Spring, aided by sophisticated media technologies help maintains a world order. However the research study reveals that in reality they do so to pursue ideas that influence their political, economic and cultural interests in these countries.

Developed countries control communication satellites and optic fiber cables wired to run on the sea-bed transmitting news on economies, defense systems, transport and politics. These media technological elements facilitate the transmission of images and

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37 The World’s powerful countries in this context will be: France, Russia, U.K and U.S. The media from these countries have dominated coverage of the Arab Spring while their governments have remains key players in negotiating the political process.

38 Communications Satellites are satellites stationed in space for the purpose of telecommunications. In the context of this research, these satellites are used for broadcasting television programs. Their operations are that they are artificial satellites that receive signals from earth station and then re-transmit the signal to other stations. The satellite circles the globe over the equator, in a movement
sound through television and radio news. The news they produce are covered from their own perspective and disseminated to influence the world countries of their political doctrine. Most of Africa and other semi-developed countries’ media do not have the sophisticated communication satellites to cover news on a global spectrum. They tend to become affiliates or subscribers, and flight news gathered by Western media from a Western viewpoint. It should be realized that global news transmission also reflects the earlier imperialist system in which news agencies follow national flags, armies and traders. On one side Western countries jostle in support of revolts against governments and leaders in the Arab Spring whose political principles normally challenges western political, economic and cultural ideologies. On the other Russia and China have supported of the Libya and Syrian governments for reasons of national interests. Qatar based Arabic news satellite TV channel, Al-Jazeera has become internationally popular in the coverage of the Arab Spring. To the viewer, being an Arabic news channel, they are seen as being more cultural connected to the politics, religion, economy and the population. This connection gives them an advantage to navigate the course and causes of these events. Although some will argue that Al-Jazeera’s coverage of the Arab Spring has been objective and better compared to the West, Russia and Chinese media, this study

that is synchronized, and they also offer continuous operation in the area of visibility. These types of satellite are said to have a geostationary orbit.

39 National flags, armies and traders in this context means: coverage of news in the Arab Spring is influenced by the activities and size of their militaries and economies.

reveals specifics of national interests identical to the Western media to the Arab Spring upheavals.

The discussion debates that international media when conducting news coverage; its reporters are typically assigned to foreign locales with pleasant amenities or to those regions with traditional and current links to their home country. Consequently, news is expected to follow reporters’ postings. Limited technological resources in third world countries restrict them access to equipment that could enable their media institutions to capture and disseminate international news from an independent political analysis. This reality gives the leverage in global political decisions to western powers. These details contribute to confirm that through international news coverage Western countries have gained political power to influence political decisions within governments and international world bodies. To justify this causal claim the research provides supporting facts and data in the following chapters.

Political Scientists must not overlook that, in the 21st century, a valid global reality has been the tendency for most societies to measure their progress and development by the levels of growth of their technology.

This thesis enables the exploration of the nature of global news flow by investigating the influence of nine systemic factors (namely: communication resources, level of economic development, degree of press freedom, presence of international news agency, language, cultural ties, physical distance, territorial size and strength of trade

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41 Western powers in this context are countries of Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the U.S. They strive to influence their political, economic and cultural ideologies to other countries.
partners) on the volume of foreign news originating from the Arab Spring protests in Tunisia and Egypt, and subsequently presented in the media of eight individual countries. In this study, each of the four "guest" countries is treated as the unit of analysis. Guest countries are countries that are covered in the news media of other countries. In the context of this study the Arab Spring becomes "guest" countries in international news media of the West. The dependent variable is the total number of news stories from or about the guest countries in the media of the eight "host" countries. The importance about the "total numbers" is that they explain and reveal the level of press freedom afforded in a particular country. Nations that practice democracy, the probability is that there is no leverage to the number of stories covered per area.

Democratic states allow transparency and free-flow of news coverage by both international and local media. The media is allowed to dissect and analyze political, economic, social and cultural events without limitations or censorship. Studies in the past have revealed that countries with an abundance of communication resources and a high level of economic development have the capacity to dominate international news coverage. Furthermore the number of international news stories covered for the world by media from the rich Western countries is also determined by the level of relations between these core nations and its semi-peripheral countries. In world systems theory

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42 Host countries are countries that have international news media institutions covering news selected for study in the sample. e.g. U.S. (CNN), U.K. (BBC), Russia (RT), France (France24 International News), Qatar (Al-Jazeera), South Africa (SABC), Nigeria (NTA), China (CCTV).


44 The semi-peripheral countries are the industrializing, mostly capitalist countries which are positioned between the developing and the rich developed and powerful countries.
these semi-peripheral countries are the industrializing, mostly capitalist countries which are positioned between the periphery and core countries. They have organizational characteristics of both core countries and periphery countries and are often geographically located between developed and underdeveloped regions. These developing regions play a major role in mediating economic, political and social activities that link developed and underdeveloped areas.

The stronger the ties with technologically developed western countries, the more likely a nation will receive more coverage. This allows the population of the host country to keep abreast with events and activities in guest countries. In some instances news coverage in countries with no ties to the host country still do take place to interpret or convey a message on the guest country. An illustrative example is the case of Iran which presently has strained relations with the United States, Britain and France; however it still receives more international news coverage than these countries’ ally Israel. Most of the news coverage on Iran portrays this country in a negative light and critical of its political, economic, social and religious principles.


46 Developed regions are referred as core regions while the underdeveloped are referred as peripheral regions.

On one end news coverage from the same media institutions will reflect sympathy and justification of any Israeli assault on Palestinian settlements in Gaza. This case-scenario reflects how political relations between countries can affect news presentation by the international news institutions across the globe.

**Elites Influence in Global News Coverage**

International news media institutions are controlled by bureaucrats or the elites who are sometimes used as “news sources” or analysts.⁴⁸ These elites determine foreign and domestic policies of states through their influence on politicians and the political systems.⁴⁹ These “select-few” tend to be individuals in government, international organizations and corporate officers who own major shares in media companies that enable them to financially sponsor politicians or decisions in exchange to securing their interests or power. Some will argue that this claim does not apply to all media as there are some international institutions such as the BBC which is an autonomous public broadcaster, funded through television licenses. It should be stressed that these permits are paid for, annually by the British population. However, we should keep in mind that these license fees are set by individuals who are appointed by the British Government which in itself is made-up of politicians. The license fee is approved by the parliamentarians who themselves qualify as politicians.

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⁴⁸ Sources in news coverage or journalism are persons, publication, corporation and business or other record or document that gives timely information.

⁴⁹ Elites in the context of this research topic are wealthy bureaucrats who own shares or the media so as to control and influence the political agenda.
Walter Lippmann, an American intellectual, writer and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner brought forth that media and news coverage are therefore tools that must be used by the elite to rule the public without physical coercion. Lippmann’s opinion was that the general public is not qualified to reason and to decide on important issues. It is therefore important for the elite to decide “for its own good” and then sell those decisions to the masses.\(^5^0\) Numerous studies have shown that journalists privilege elite sources that hold positions of power in society.\(^5^1\)

Steve Jacobson asserts that:

Political and economic power in the United States is concentrated in the hands of a “ruling elite” that controls most of U.S.-based multinational corporations, major communication media, the most influential foundations, major private universities and most public utilities. Founded in 1921, the Council of Foreign Relations is the key link between the large corporations and the federal government. It has been called a “school for statesmen” and comes close to being an organ of what C. Wright Mills has called the Power Elite – a group of men, similar in interest and outlook shaping events from invulnerable positions behind the scenes. The creation of the United Nations was a Council project, as well as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.\(^5^2\)

One of the three notable individuals amongst the many who qualify as examples of the elite that control and own media outlets is Australian-born Rupert Murdoch, the billionaire and owner of News Corporations. Murdoch’s media empire has manipulated


not just the news of Federal Communications Commission but also the political landscape of the U.S. and the U.K. for decades.\textsuperscript{53} He has done so by pressuring the FCC and Congress to alter the laws of the land and regulatory standards in order to give his media conglomerate advantage in competition against other institutions such as Time Warner and Columbia Broadcast Services (CBS) Corporation.\textsuperscript{54} FCC a U.S. government agency charged with the task of regulating all forms of interstate and international communication. This agency was created via the Communications Act of 1934, originally for the purpose of regulating radio licensing. Over the years as technology developed, various other forms of communication fell under the agency’s jurisdiction, including television and telecommunication mediums.\textsuperscript{55}

Then there is American businessman, politician, current Mayor of New York, majority shareholder and owner of Bloomberg L.P, financial news and information services company, Michael Bloomberg. The latter a Democrat who switched to a Republican before seeking elective office (now an independent), is alleged to have used his media institutions and wealth to influence the New York political landscape and population to amend the constitution allowing him to serve a third term in the mayoral office. Bloomberg LP with its huge donations in the 2012 fiscal year ($220 million to the

\textsuperscript{53} Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is an independent United States government agency established by the Communications Act of 1934 charged with regulating interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable.


World Health Organization and $20 million to different New York City organizations) is a major player in the economic landscape of the U.S. and to international organizations.\textsuperscript{56} In Italy, former Prime Minister and media mogul, Silvio Berlusconi controls three over-the-air state media networks. This has enabled him in the past to threaten other media publications with lawsuits for publishing new stories on his (Berlusconi) scandals involving prostitutes.\textsuperscript{57}

There are instances whereby elites become major shareholders or corporate officers in global media institutions such as CNN, a Time Warner-owned company, and General Electric’s NBC news, Al-Jazeera, Walt Disney’s ABC/ESPN and CBS.\textsuperscript{58} Through these media institutions, the wealthy shareholders are able to influence public opinion and government policies by simply donating to politicians’ election campaign. Circumstantial evidence of this is the lists of donations to George W. Bush’s 2000 election campaign by top four American media corporations namely: NBC, ABC, CNN and Fox News. The former (NBC) through its conglomerate General Electric donated $1.1 million. ABC’s owners Disney pledged $640 000. CNN, who some claim has a liberal bias donated $1.6 million through its sister company Time Warner during the


\textsuperscript{58} Al-Jazeera is an independent broadcaster owned by the state of Qatar through the Qatar Media Corporation and headquartered in Doha. Wealthy Saudi Arabian and Qatari investors hold shares in this media institution.
same year. The biggest donor to Bush’s course was Murdoch-owned News Corporation (owners of Fox News) who pledged $2.6 million.59

Another example in the discussion to prove that the elite in various societies acquire and control international news coverage mainly to satisfy their political, economic or social interest globally is the case of Saudi Arabian billionaire and major shareholding owner of conservative Fox News. Prince al-Walid bin Talal stated that he once used his influence to change Fox’s headlines. During the riots in Muslim neighborhood in France, Fox News was using the term “Muslim Riots” to describe rioting by Muslim youth. Prince bin Talal claims to have called the cable television station and had them change the title of the story to “Youth Riots”.60 In the global coverage of the Arab Spring, influential people in the American

The discussion on international news coverage and political impacts also realizes that media attitudes are largely the ideological expression of local and international elites who determine foreign policy using media and politics as its means of influence. Most of these multinational corporations that own international media are vertically integrated, and control everything from initial production to final distribution of news.61


61 Time Warner is a clear example of a multinational corporation, which is an enterprise that operates in several countries but managed from one home country. Generally, any company or group that
MAJOR CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The major concept and theoretical underpinnings to endorse this subject is that international news coverage, among many genres of the news menu, qualifies to be among the most studied and discussed subjects. Its operations have enabled countries around the world to connect, share interests and trade resources. The interest to this research and the use of the Arab Spring as a case study derives from its distinct method of the making of news, the economic factors that are associated with the production and the potential impact on the world. As already mentioned, some of the major concepts that the research topic deals with, are the political economy, international security and how these elements contributed to global news coverage on the Arab Spring. Political economy in the context of this thesis discussion examines how politics of upheaval affected the economies of the actors in the Arab Spring and who stood to benefit the most.\footnote{The Western countries of U.S, England, and France, who had media covering the Arab Spring also played a catalyst role in stimulating the events by supplying military arsenal to opposition forces rebelling against governments of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria. This involvement would benefit the West’s economies and entrench their political influence.}

The discussion focuses on what technologies have improved global news production and identifies the actors that have become prominent in the production process. The Arab Spring case study helps the research identify how Western governments, through media from their countries define and shape images of these guest countries to satisfy their interests. Most of the countries affected by the Arab Spring have a common element in that they are strategic allies of the West, Russia and China. The oil derives a quarter of its revenue from operations outside of its home country is considered a multinational corporation.
and gas resources, their proximity to the Suez Canal, which serves both as an international oil route and as critical route for warships transiting between the Mediterranean Sea and either the Indian Ocean of the Persian Gulf, creates a framework for co-operation in politics, trade, security links, social and cultural relations favorable to the existence and survival of these developed countries' ideological interests.

Demonstrations and uprisings in Tunisia received global news coverage because it was the "nucleus of the Arab Spring". This North African country has been a key and strategic ally of France and a member of the Association Agreement (AA). Its membership to the AA and proximity to the Mediterranean Sea opens the gateway for the European Union to North Africa for trade and security links. Military cooperation between the U.S. and Egypt is probably the strongest aspect of their strategic partnership. Because of the access it gives the U.S. to the region since its peace deal with Israel in 1979 and 2003. Egypt has received about $19 billion in military and $71.6 billion in bilateral foreign aid from the U.S. Libya and Syrian government have had cordial relations with Russia and China. These relations emanates from oil and gas contracts, which are tied to the sale of military hardware to these Arab Spring countries.

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63 "Nucleus of the Arab Spring" loosely translates to mean: Tunisia is where the wave of protest, demonstration and strikes started. It is pronounced as the center of the where these revolutions started before spreading to other countries.

64 A European Union Association Agreement (for short, Association Agreement or AA) is a treaty between the European Union (EU) and a non-EU country that creates a framework for co-operation between them. Areas frequently covered by such agreements include the development of politics, economic, social, culture and security links. Tunisia is a member at the recommendation of its ally France.

Therefore the case study of the Arab Spring gives in detail what influences the news coverage of events in certain parts of the world measured in comparison with other regions that lack resources. Navigating through this research has enabled us to discuss the efficiency provided by technologies used to gather and process news. There are Fiber Optical Cables that run under the seas and oceans to transmit news and information in comparison to satellite communication systems that transmit information through the skies, of which both have played a key role in revolutionizing the communication systems of news coverage. For all these sophisticated global media technologies to function cohesively, international diplomacy become an important factor as there are cooperative agreements that shape governments’ working relationships.

Globalization has improved the standards of international news coverage which in turn has helped international politics communicate economic developments, conflict resolutions and peace. In the past there was apparently little direct connection between mass communications and computing. But now communication technologies have converged, making it essential for computer scientists, communication and politicians to work side-by-side. In the developed countries, television services is being delivered over telephone lines; computers have progressed from being mere tools of computation to being multimedia instruments that are capable to supplying sounds, pictures and words. As mentioned above, the case study of the Arab Spring becomes a convenient platform to highlight how these technological developments have helped the Western media gather news sophisticatedly to favor interests of their home countries. It should be kept in mind that it has been the Arab Spring that the advanced media technology was used by social
media to transmit news internationally. The peoples of the Arab Spring gathered sound and footage of events using mobile phones, and then transmitted to Western media institutions. These packaged news data would then be transferred through computers in newsrooms, and processed before being aired to the global world. Given the above, the study reveals that Western media technology such as Twitter, the Blog and Facebook played a dominant role in igniting the Arab Spring movements and at the same time giving Western powers leverage to influence events and the news disseminated globally.

Furthermore these measurable concepts dealing with international news reporting engage all ages of society with academics, ordinary persons and the elite class becoming an important element of the equation. The population participates in the transmission of news by uploading video footage to You-tube, pass information through the blog and twitter on its way to mainstream media. These technologies have cohesively infused coordination of global news between mainstream media and these social media. In the past, documenting human rights abuses and broadcasting such documentation was rarely done by one individual. The improved global news technology put in place by the Western world allow the public access to broadcast anything news through conglomerate media companies’ technologies.

The “agenda of news producers” refers to beliefs, principles, thoughts or ideas that the news media tries to make or drive to its audience. It is important to be able to identify the different ideological discourses that may be present in even an apparently simple photograph or video footage. The process to detect and determine media agenda may take the form of editorial reviewed bias where only one set of views are allowed and
others discarded out of hand no matter how valid they are. This happens when the media has bias based on who owns them and what interests those individuals have. In the case example; Israel is a strong ally of the U.S.A. The probability herewith is that international news aired by networks from the U.S.A will place Israel on a positive light due to their identifiable principles and systems of governments.

A discussion on international news media coverage and political impacts cannot be complete without examining the direct and indirect effects global news coverage is having on the formulation and implementation of foreign policies. There has to be an investigation on the results of these effects for politicians, appointed officials and media professionals. Therefore the research used to accomplish these purposes is qualitative and is based on testimonies and writings of policymakers, journalists, communication professionals, media researchers, political scientist, and a case study of the Arab Spring which qualifies as a very relevant event to the Western media in the last decade. The approach is interdisciplinary and is based on joint application of concepts and theories from the fields of both communication and international relations.

In summary, this chapter has defined international news coverage and the structures that manage and regulate global news. It has identified the international actors involved in the production of news and defined the influence exerted by these global media institutions on international diplomacy and vice-versa. A series of actors are evident in the thesis equation: the Western media institutions, the private citizens of the countries engulfed in the Arab Spring upheaval that disseminated information to these mainstream Western media, and the economically powerful Western countries housing
international media institutions have been mentioned. The latter have been depicted as having enormous national interests to the Middle East. The strength of the media in the global business markets and international diplomacy has been explained. The technology transmitting the news has been clarified. These technologies have created alternative “news-engines” in the global news coverage of the Arab Spring such as Twitter, Blogs and Facebook. The same technologies became sources of news to mainstream media institutions. The chapter has revealed that while this technology improves the standards of global news coverage, it increases the complexity of international diplomacy. The elite have been identified as influential individuals in government administration, corporate business owners and shareholders and politicians who play a key role in shaping international diplomacy and the direction of global news.

Chapter Two covers the theoretical framework. This section highlights the method of research and the “tools” used for the research. These so-called “tools”, are the philosophical ideas that best interprets, explains and maps situations in simple terms that link to the research study. In this section the proposition relates neo-realism and neo-Marxism to global news coverage and how Western countries use the media to promote capitalism. The latter becomes the recipe in the promotion of corporate interests and the establishment of hegemony among countries engulfed in Arab Spring. These theories further explain that these rebellions in these North African and Middle Eastern countries are the assumption that all international issues are reducible to issues of economic gains for the West, rather than political power for these rebellious groups or movements.
Chapter Three focuses on reviewing literature on global media, international diplomacy and the Arab Spring. In this section the thesis analyzes, evaluates and summarizes scholarly material on media and politics, international news coverage, its effects on the Arab Spring and the resulting political impacts. The weaknesses in past research regarding media and global news coverage are revealed and suggestions on how to improve future research on the subject are discussed, and if any are available, they are recommended. Key concepts such as: international media, international diplomacy, elite class, hegemony, capitalism, and multinational corporations and corporate interests are defined so as to support the interpretation of international news coverage and its political impacts as viewed from a case study of the Arab Spring.

Chapter Four provides a detailed discussion of media and its news agencies, global news coverage and political impacts from a perspective of the Arab Spring. A brief history of news agencies and their meaning is highlighted. In this section it is worth setting out two inherent difficulties facing global media and its practitioners in reporting complex situations or circumstances, since these both have implications for the nature and use of evidence such as that provided here. Firstly, news seeks to be comprehensive, providing audiences with information about all that is important or salient to them, yet given limitations of time or space and political principles these international media institutions are necessarily highly selective. Such selection involves professional judgments and political interests that cannot be judged or even inferred here. Secondly, the global media institutions that are discussed of course try to make the information it provides meaningful and comprehensible. In this section the thesis discusses the structure
of international media and coverage of news, the international politics of news, and the structure of global news, the big four media institutions, the four wire agencies and the media links with governments. This necessarily involves the deployment of implicit or sometimes explicit contexts, allusions, or associations which might be regarded by some as controversial or influential in framing audience understanding of events reported. Yet without any such context, however limited or inherent, meaningful communication is all but impossible.

The closing chapter summarizes the political impacts and reveals the accomplishments of this thesis. It further concludes by exposing the technical hitches encountered during the process of writing and researching. It gives suggestions for future discussion on the subject of global news coverage and the studies of the Arab Spring.
CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHOD OF RESEARCH

The theoretical framework for this thesis is articulated within the multidisciplinary field of communication and power of political analysis, an area of study in media and social sciences respectively, which systematically examines the structures and functions of images and sound in their social, political, and cultural contexts.\(^1\) Applied to the study of global news coverage and political impacts, this approach claims that in order to understand the role of the news media on a global spectrum, and their messages, one needs to pay detailed attention to the structures and strategies of such discourse and to the ways these relate to institutional arrangements, on the one hand, and to the audience, on the other hand.\(^2\) For instance, topics or reference patterns in global news reports may reflect the approach of various news actors or sources to news media, whereas the content and form of coverage may subtly influence the interpretation and hence the persuasive effects of news media coverage among the audiences. Conversely, if we want to examine what exactly goes on if it is assumed that the media manipulate their audiences, we need to know under what precise conditions, including structural properties of news coverage, this might be the case.


The major thrust of this thesis is to identify specific and general aspects that determine the nature of relations that exists between media and politics. This thesis therefore identifies and analyzes the writings and findings of other scholars in the field to support key arguments. None-other-than; dissertations, theses, journals and books written by other authors of the past and present on global news coverage and on events of Arab Spring, will be suitable for such venture. The global news coverage of Arab Spring is used as the case study in identifying specifics existing between International news media and politics. Supporting the initiative, are defined theories of neo-realism and neo-Marxism. These theories are applied in the method of research that uses qualitative approach and content analysis.

Ralph Miliband’s standpoint on neo-Marxism in his book: “The State in Capitalist Society”, has always seemed correspondingly reasonable. He avoids reducing institutions and political regimes to their class basis alone; yet has insisted that state elites do in the end serve to uphold the capitalist system, in which investment in and ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange of wealth is made and maintained chiefly by individuals or corporations, which in the case of the Arab Spring, the Western powers intervention stood to benefit their corporate institutions by means of contracts to re-build the infrastructure that subsequently benefits Western economies. Miliband points out that:

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3 Definitions of these theories are summarized in the introduction chapter.

4 In the context of this thesis qualitative method of research is the aim to get a better understanding through truthful reporting, and quotations of actual conversations. It aims to understand and interpret how the participants derive meaning from their surroundings, and how their meaning influences their behavior. This approach could be, for example, quantification of facts.
The state apparatuses are not simply vehicles for capitalist interests, but that doesn't mean that they are not also that. State power, is definitely not the same thing as the power of a specific class, but the state does not have interests separate from class-based social forces.\(^5\)

A profound research calls for a balanced and objective analysis of literatures and systemic factors that determine the role of Western media institutions in international diplomacy and the resulting political impacts. This is an essential and a viable procedure that helps support key arguments in detailed discussion of international news coverage and literatures reviewed. The study research demands the examination to the key variables that make these media institutions put more emphasis on certain countries or events ahead of the other. The "tone or language" of conversations stimulate the need to examine the magnitude of influence, domination and ability to sway the judgments of societies against or in favor of political, economic and cultural principles of these "guest" countries. In the context of this thesis, guest countries are countries of the Arab Spring that had news events covered by Western media institutions such as CNN, BBC, France 24 International and Arab satellite media Al-Jazeera. The inclusion of Al-Jazeera is this research is because of its relevance to global news and the Arab Spring in particular. Its headquarters and ownership is in Qatar, a country that has become a key player in Arab Spring events.

To make a suitable content analysis of news coverage the following factors are tested; the authenticity of news sources, the sourcing of news, the "language or tone" which the news is presented globally and whether there is a national interest of the home-countries of these media institutions discussed. Such an assessment permits judgments on

whether global news has an impact to influence political principles. The thrust of the study identifies the specific formats that create the imbalances in global news coverage that provides some prospects for future research on this topic. The Arab Spring is used as a general measure of the factors that determine international news coverage.

Literature analysis helps to accurately describe the coverage itself and subsequently to answer some parts of the research questions. The production of news, the consumption and comprehension of it by audiences are excluded from research. Content can only act as circumstantial and suggestive evidence about the cause or consequences of news content. To move beyond this requires the use of an additional set of research methods and more time that would enable the investigation of global media practice and how political actors seek to manage the news. However this research does not move beyond this stage. It concentrates on the literature analysis tied with neo-realist and neo-Marxist theories on Western international media coverage of news and political impacts as manifested in the Arab Spring. The ultimate aim is to examine the causal relations between global media and political impacts in which members of the elite class and media tools of technology are involved.

The analysis and evaluation of these media is enabled by the author’s experiences working for CNN’s International News desk and interaction with views and opinions from International news wire agencies, Al-Jazeera, BBC, SABC, CCTV and RT. The author’s ability to apply political theories to literatures on news coverage helps in the tabulation of dependent and independent variables. Having served as a broadcast and
print media specialist, and political science scholar, the writer’s personal observation has also been vital in the research.

Framing of events and media coverage of the Arab Spring with theories of neorealism and neo-Marxism becomes uncomplicated to ease to a suitable conclusion on the relationship between global media and politics. What qualifies these theories is that the revolts that engulfed Tunisia and Egypt were documented by global media of western origins as being of an anarchic environment without any central power coordinating and regulating affairs of these states. It is therefore appropriate to employ Kenneth Waltz’s neo-realism principle as it justly claims in an expanded explanation states that:

The current international system is an anarchic environment without any central power coordinating and regulating affairs among states. It is not a human nature but rather a systemic nature of the whole world that defines international politics. Each state is in a pursuit of personal gain and its actions on an international arena depend on its individual interests. In order to achieve its personal gains states may create alliances, but even within such alliances each state is only interested in achieving its own objectives. Anarchy of the international system is an order in itself. Concerned with its security and development each state is in constant competition with other states. Power is central in understanding the relations among states. Pursuit for power makes states to build up their arsenal, boost up economies and develop science and society. In a neo-realist world, the stronger the state, the less vulnerable it is on the international arena. Military and economic might are the major criteria for security and development, and achievement of these criteria is done by all possible means. War, in neo-realism, is inevitable. However, in a nuclear century, wars among the nuclear powers are unlikely to occur easily, since the states possessing nuclear weapons realize the consequences of such a war, and therefore, use nuclear arsenal as a means of deterrence and balance of powers.⁶

In the context of events of the Arab Spring, neo-realism becomes a theory of balance, and the anarchy of international system, is an order rather than a condition of

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chaos. Waltz’s central assumption interprets to mean that among states, the state of nature is a state of war; however Waltz thinks that chaos, destruction and death are closely associated with government that is the case with anarchy. Thus he argues that the criterion of use of force or the constant fear of its use is not sufficient to explain the domestic or international divide. This has more to do with the different modes of organizations in the use of force employed by the government within its territorial limits and states outside in the context of anarchy.  

Balance of power is the only means to preserve peace, but with media dominated by politics and political authorities who own or are shareholders of these institutions the world’s international political system is bound to be dominated by the west jostling for strategic interest in countries of the Middle East and North Africa with an abundance of natural resources. However these western powers can only be fractured from internally when the elites and the western media institutions they own jostle for control of their governments.

Application of neo-realist theory to humanitarian action such as in the Arab Spring take this thesis’s theoretical framework to a following set of conclusions: (1) humanitarian and military assistance conducted by Western countries is often driven by self-interest. These interventions rely on military force to protect civilian population and are more focused on long-term development, post-conflict rehabilitation and reconciliation on strategic resource-interests. Nevertheless, individual states of the West and their global media remain selective in their choice of conflicts and cautious to

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This basically is to say that for the people of the Arab Spring to achieve democracy or peace, it is their prerogative to have Western ideology entrenched in their systems of governments.

intervene, only interested is that benefits them strategically and economically. (2) Aid agencies, rather than individual states, are expectedly more prone to conduct impartial and neutral humanitarian assistance. NGOs and international aid organizations can fall victims to individualistic behavior of powerful states and they too are often selective in their choice of crises in order to secure the donor and public interest and support. Unwittingly or not, aid agencies are easy to deviate from their path of impartial, neutral and independent aid delivery while being entangled in a web of international politics, which inevitably surround humanitarian action, and (3) neo-realist principles can hardly be found in natural disaster aid assistance. In contrast to man-made crises, natural disasters are unlikely to serve political interests of states and unlike conflicts cannot be used as tools in international politics.\(^9\)

The lessons that modern aid providers can learn from the theory of neo-realism is, first of all, its primary emphasis on self-interested and rational nature of politics and its major players: states, international organizations and corporations. Understanding the world of neo-realism can be an asset in successfully following principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence in humanitarian world.

The second crucial theory in this thesis research is Immanuel Wallenstein's neo-Marxism whose basic tenet is that the world is divided not into politically determined nations but into economically determined classes.\(^10\) In examining the relationship between global media coverage of news and politics as manifested by the Arab Spring,


this theory becomes important in justifying the hypothesis that; politics does not supersede economics, but rather economics trumps politics. The various neo-Marxist theories of international relations agree that the international state system was constructed by capitalists and therefore serves the interests of wealthy countries of the West and corporations, which seek to protect and expand their wealth. Mapped on the global news coverage of the Arab Spring and political impacts, this theory interprets to mean that the upheaval or revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria was more to do with the rich Western powers gaining economically rather than the people of these Middle East and North African countries gaining political freedom or democracy so as to say.\textsuperscript{11} The international political structure was created capitalists and there serves the interests of the elite who influences and use the states for their own benefits.

Therefore the application these two theories to international news coverage of the Arab Spring and the analysis of various literatures reviewed and its arguments will assist to a viable conclusion. In addition, and in order to present the nature and potential capacity of the Western media in the international political arena, this thesis delves into the political economy of news media in the MENA countries. This is conducted in the discussion and case study chapter of “Global News Media Coverage of the Arab Spring: Actors, Technology and Political Impacts”, and through a proper evaluation of its economic, political and socio-cultural impact on these societies.

In the political sphere, as stated earlier, it would be necessary to explain how economic, political and social factors propel the Western media as a decision-making potential and a viable agent of the capitalist system. The sheer volume of economic

\textsuperscript{11} Middle East and North African countries will be abbreviated to read MENA in this thesis.
importance of global media and its ability, as perceived to control and persuade the
populations makes it both a lucrative as well as sensitive to both developed and
developing countries. Whereas in the developed countries it is used to both socialize and
monitor the opinions of the people regarding government policies, for dictatorial regime
and propaganda dissemination.
CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global news coverage and news in general are critical fundamentals in the practice of politics of international relations. The principal relationship between the two is that for the better part, media is, and continues being used by politics as a vehicle in the broadcast of propaganda to the population, and connecting business economics to relevant regions. However it is equally important to stress that in a research reading of global news coverage that studies the Arab Spring, the media institutions such as CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera and France24 International, and their sources and agencies sits at the heart of making decisions on who is included or excluded as an actor in international diplomacy.¹ This is done by means of disseminating news information that profiles leaders or countries in either good or bad way depending on how favorable these prospective actors are to Western political ideology, and how much of strategic and national interests the home countries of these media will benefit.

In the context of this thesis, sources of news and knowledgeable commentators discussed are the elite defined as authoritative people who hold certain credentials in society, such as in government, police services, and business departments, or representing

¹International diplomacy is in itself the art or practice of conducting international relations, as in negotiating alliances, treaties, and agreements.
significant segments of society such as political parties or pressure groups. These sources do more than represent events and issues, as they also shape public perception and the understanding of how states should be governed. It is these elites who provide their views or opinions and beliefs to media agents like CNN, BBC, France 24 International and Al-Jazeera for broadcast, as was the case with the Arab Spring. Their opinions generally fall in line with their country's national interest, which in this instance are the Western political principles that favor capitalism and promote corporate interests. Al-Jazeera although not based in the West and of being of Arab cultural grounding, its owners, (the government of Qatar) have extensive bilateral relations with U.S., Britain and France to such that its coverage has become acceptable to Western principles. In some quarters, it's still classified as being an Arabic Channel. It's built of a majority of journalists from CNN, BBC and France24 International to qualify more of a Western media institution. Capitalism, by definition is an economic system in which investment and ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange of wealth is made and maintained chiefly by private individuals or corporations.

Some of these sources are labeled as experts on global political issues such that their point-of-view influences international bodies and government institutions in decision-making. A precise example of elites who gets comment on domestic and foreign policies are: (1) the highest political leaders including the president and a handful of key cabinet members and close advisers; (2) major corporate owners and directors; and (3) high-ranking military officers. In the U.S. the media of CNN and Fox News Channel invites Warren Buffet, Donald Trump and Jack Welch respectively for expert comments
on domestic and sometimes foreign policies. In most instances their comments is in line with their interests or policies favorable to capitalism, which is U.S. principles. However, not all become knowledgeable on political matters but it is their influence on politicians, their contributions to political parties and presence on the political landscape in the media that makes them significant.

The important points in the literature reviewed for this is the interpretation or explanation of: (1) the status quo of international diplomacy in relation to international news media and the actors involved; (2) the status and influence of the elite class in media and global news coverage; and (3) the impact exerted by the news media technology to global politics as manifested through a study of international news coverage of the Arab Spring. This helps in understanding how Western countries and their sophisticated technology use international media to ingrain their influence on other countries and of the MENA in particular and subsequently enhance its economies. The selected literature examines some determinants that should be considered important in the study of international news coverage by Western media institutions.

Reviewing the literature written on global media coverage and political impacts in the Arab Spring in particular, this thesis agrees that a critical approach in media studies must go beyond the news media paradigms to uncover hidden political agendas. Findings in several different researches on global media, political impacts and the news coverage of Arab Spring suggest that the concept of media influence, performed through global news coverage, is of itself adequate to explain the value of news coverage in sustaining political power and media relations in society. Whether the international media are
influential or not, news content, in many accounts, is becoming increasingly political. They define who gets what, when and how in almost all of its operations, which is also the definition of politics in essence. Media and its audiences are becoming more fractured and dispersed with the arrival of new media technologies. These new media of technologies (Twitter, blogs and Facebook) even though effective, have not altered the influence of the West in spreading its political ideologies and interests. Many are manufactured or invented by Western scientist working for the betterment of Western elites.

Upholding the concept that politics uses media, strengthens the notion that those who own the media must have power to influence the world’s progression. Politics is about power; therefore the global flow of news is political. These statements reflect that international media and news coverage determines the international structure of political power. Author of: “Who Stole the News”, Mort Rosenblum argues that the analysis of the relationship between political power and news begins with the consideration of the concept of news itself, and on whose definition of news do we base our own definition? Rosenblum proposes that the definition of news, or news values, and what global media see fit to report, has been found to be a key variable in understanding the politics and global news flows. He goes further to say that government officials and common citizens from small states often accuse the main disseminators of international news such as the international wire services, and the global TV networks of CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera and

France 24 International of concentrating on “negative” news about their countries. Rosenblum states that:

It sometimes seems that there is a malicious attempt to Stereotype these countries and this attitude might be propelled by various factors, including racism, political ideology, and ethnocentrism leading to a desire of strategic and national interests. In this way, international news is viewed as a weapon of those with power in the international system, a tool to maintain the status quo, at least in regard to the inferior status of some peoples and nation-state.\(^3\)

Focusing on negative news strengthens the Western influence over the world. Investors, who would have advanced businesses in these parts of the world to enhance economic structures, are reluctant and fearful to future. The competition against the West in technology enhancement, economic structures and human systems is non-existent. These situations make the so-called “Third World” and other semi-developed countries more reliant on the West in almost everything essential including the dissemination of global news technologies. Global dissemination of news is a fundamental apparatus for the West to dominate global communications of scientific, economic, political, cultural and religious markets.

An alternative way of viewing the problem is not to focus on the dominant definition of news. Such an approach pollutes the notion of strategic and national interests of states being the dominating principle of what becomes news for global media institutions who operates as tools for Western countries in their search to establish hegemony in the Middle East and North African states. Rosenblum fittingly identifies the problem with the power of Western news values as being the conflict of cultural and religious beliefs of MENA against Western ideology rather than with particular

discriminations towards certain countries or groups of people. Based on Neo-realism's philosophical idea that international institutions are used by states to pursue their own interests, this thesis can conclude that: the decision to intervene militarily in the Libyan revolt by Western countries, operating under the banner of NATO, was the result of diplomatic and bureaucratic operations, with news coverage coming in response to those decisions.

According to a study commissioned by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), news in most media systems seems to be defined as the exceptional event, making protests, demonstrations and uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria newsworthy whenever they occur. However it is not so much that the developing world is singled out for such “negative” attention, but that the developing countries tend to be reported only in this manner. These countries are neither the source of, nor are they particularly interested in, presenting “softer” news items. Third World media systems concentrate heavily on ‘hard’ news, and the tendency is that the smaller the amount of general news coverage, the more it concentrates on a few topic areas and reflects the specific events of the time. News tends to stereotype all regions in some way or another.\(^4\)

Former United Nations Secretary-General and Egyptian envoy, Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his novel: “Unvanquished: A U.S. – U.N. Saga” asserts that:

The structure of international politics is such that, the control and support of media institutions by governments of authoritative states affects the political landscapes of lesser states. The journalists, the institutions for which they work, and the

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information they report, play significant roles in shaping the agenda of international relations for governments, organizations and common citizens. Political authorities of various ideological complexions all devise positions on news media and journalists very clearly in their rule and use their laws and monopolies on the legitimate use of violence to control the press.\(^5\)

Boutros-Ghali’s statement in relation to the Arab Spring can interpret to mean that authoritative governments of US, Britain, France and Qatar supported media of CNN, BBC, France24 International and Al-Jazeera respectively, in their coverage of upheavals in those countries, as their reports played significant roles in shaping the agenda of their governments and corporate institutions. This statement is supported by Noam Chomsky and Herman Edward who suggests that the western media reporting matches the western media in its ‘patriotism’. Chomsky and Edward states that:

That said, you have to remember the western media still follows the old imperial code of reporting countries in terms of their usefulness to western interests, or expendability. That is especially true of the American media, as the U.S. is the world’s most rapacious imperial power. The view from Washington is the “view from the bridge”; they believe they dominate the planet and in many respects they do.\(^6\)

The blame cannot all be heaped on the Western media coverage of events in Arab Spring as the peoples of those countries evidently, through social media technologies supplied information, relevant and factual or not, to media institutions of the West. The only blame of the Western media, of course, has been its diversion from its journalistic and media ethics of evaluating sources information’s credibility.

Critics of Western political principles, Chris Atton and Emma Wickenden argue that the West’s desire to expand its influence through capitalist political principles,


increased appetite for resources and dominance in global news coverage, promotes anarchy in developing societies. This led to the population of developing countries giving negative assessment of their governments and leaders, culminating in political instability that invited powerful states to intervene the process in exchange of strategic and benefits in natural resources.⁷ Atton and Wickenden’s testimony justifies the volatile upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and other countries not debated in this thesis, where peoples of these countries had become disillusioned by their governments’ failures to provide “democracy”, a discourse preferred, practiced and accredited to Western countries. These failures catapulted social and political unrests, precipitated by the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi of Tunisia, forcing Middle East and North African Arab countries to a state of anarchy.⁸

The leadership of Tunisia and Egypt (then, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak respectively), prior to these revolts enjoyed the support of Western powers who cared less on how Ben Ali and Mubarak governed their respective countries. The West’s interests in these two states has been based on Tunisia and Egypt maintaining a strategic partnership favorable to Western control and interests of the region rather than domestic governance of its peoples. Even the media of the West displayed a less active attitude in coverage of revolts at first, yielding to social media to take the lead in documenting events. Once the Western governments realized that their


⁸ Self-immolation refers to setting oneself on fire, often as a form of protest or for the purpose of martyrdom or suicide. In this instance self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December, 2010 in Tunisia led to the ousting of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and ignited revolutionary events that will be later known as the Arab Spring.
strategic national interests were in jeopardy and started taking an active role, it was then that its media increased its coverage. This scenario is best explained by the theory of neo-realism and neo-Marxism (defined in preceding chapter) that contends that states act in accordance with their conception of national interest rather than protecting peoples' interests and international institutions are used by states to pursue their interests and that powerful states exploits others for their capitalistic interests respectively.⁹

Had the events in the Arab Spring not affected or threatened Western interests, the probability is that there would have been less enthusiasm or interest in global news coverage from the Western media. However, this argument can be debated based on financial needs of these media sources relative to the relationship and loyalty they have to existing governments in the countries hosting them. The new media technology such as the Twitter, blogs and Facebook, which are enabled by the optic fiber cables running through the sea-bed have facilitated the real-time coverage of conflicts by developed Western media institutions.

Even external actors in the cauldron of criticism of Western media coverage of the Arab Spring, Sunday Eboyé, Frank Enor and Jide Chime in one of their Journal publications on “NATO and the Libyan Crisis”, blame Western governments for maintaining autocratic rulers in Tunisia and Egypt and catalytically attempting a regime change in Libya and Syria.

They affirm that:

US policy in those regions has been based on maintaining dictatorial regimes headed by puppets of the US in a bid to achieve their objectives in the region irrespective of the domestic policies of such regimes. Now that those regimes are under flames, the US and the West have attributed the protest movements in the Maghreb and Middle East to the lack of “economic opportunities”, “tight fist” and or “sit-tight” policy of their governments.10

Elite Class and Technology in Global News Coverage

Numerous studies have shown how governments or state officials dominate as sources in global news coverage.11 Terrance Albrecht and Bradford Hall affirm that the elite class are at the top of a hierarchy of credibility, and as a result, are primary definers who shape the news agenda and interpretative approach used by the global media.12 Events of the Arab Spring changed this premise, as common citizens of the Middle East and North African countries engulfed with revolts became the main sources of information to global media and its coverage. Technology enhanced Twitter, blogs and Facebook, often referred to as social media also offer broad opportunities for individuals to participate in the observation, filtering, distribution and interpretation of news. In the Arab Spring, these technologies allowed newsrooms to provide live coverage without any reporters on the ground, by simply newsgathering user-generated content available


Jazeera as curators who filters, selects and contextualizes copious amounts of real-time information on the fly.

Alfred Hermida, in his writing on “Social Media and its Shaping of Journalism”, makes an analysis that the negotiation between journalism and social media as structuring and /or shaping technology is a key point for understanding its role in influencing established norms, practices and routines. He further clarifies that social media allow for new relations that potentially disrupt hierarchical structures (that the state is the tool of the elite and politics uses the media) and erode the traditional distinction between the producer and consumer of news.\textsuperscript{13} Such a statement cannot be disputed, but qualified by the circumstances of the Arab Spring media coverage. Services like Twitter facilitates the instant, digital dissemination and reception of short fragments of data from sources both inside and outside the framework of established global media institutions of CNN, BBC, France24 International and Al-Jazeera.

John Thompson in his book: “The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the media”, stresses that the aggressive coverage of the Arab Spring by social media should not obscure and undermine the fact that it is Western governments through their rich economies that they were able to sponsor the operations of these media technologies of Twitter, blogs and Facebook to subsequently transmit images and sound captured in the Arab Spring events for re-evaluation and retransmission by Western mainstream news media globally.\textsuperscript{14} This qualifies an observation that information or news filtered by


disillusioned peoples of the Arab Spring against the West’s involvement in these revolts did not receive any global coverage. Even the media institutions of South Africa (SABC) and Nigeria’s NTA could not transmit such; because such technology (of Fiber Optic Cables under the seabed and Satellites transmitters) and resources to gather and transmit news from these distances are controlled and dominated by the Western countries of the US, Britain, France and emerging and surrogate Al-Jazeera.\textsuperscript{15}

Eytan Gilboa has provided a more complex view of the effects of global news coverage and the Arab Spring in particular which conflicts with the primary hypothesis of this thesis. He states that Colin Powell who has accumulated a substantial record both in war and diplomacy has observed that:

Live television coverage doesn’t change the policy, but it does create the environment in which the policy is made. The media remains crucial in focusing international attention on the Arab Spring, but they do not determine the policy, the key decisions, or their implementation.\textsuperscript{16}

While the author’s initial hypothesis advocated or suggested that international media’s overriding strengths influences, shape perceptions, and political decisions of other countries that are favorable to their home countries’ doctrines, Gilboa’s viewpoint suggested by a Powell interview supersedes the latter. The validation of Gilboa is based on the theory of neo-realism that assumes that: “international institutions are used by states to pursue their interests and that the States are the tools of the elite class. Powell’s

\textsuperscript{15} To phrase Al-Jazeera as a Surrogate media institution of the West is the authors’ point-of-view that although registered as an Arab TV News Station, besides its cultural and religious grounding in Qatar, its workforce is hugely from the Western media institutions and school-of-thought. Its global coverage is becoming identical to the CNN, BBC although less comparable to France 24 international.

statement is directional in that it policies that are prepared and passed by congress cannot
be altered by the media nor the people. Those who make-up congress are the elite,
authoritative people who hold certain credentials in their society and subsequently elected
to policy-making organization. Jonathan Mermin, in his journal presentation: “Debating
War and Peace: Coverage of NATO Intervention in the Post-Libya Era”, supports
Gilboa’s interview with Powell to justify the neo-realist philosophy. He asserts that:

NATO’s decision to intervene militarily in the Libyan revolt was the result of
diplomatic and bureaucratic operations, with news coverage coming in response to
those decisions. The Case of France, Britain, United Stated plus Qatar and Saudi
Arabia intervention in Libya, in sum, is not at heart evidence of the power of
television to move governments; it is evidence of the power of governments to
move television. 17

Howard Frederick believes the contrary. He writes in “Global Communication
and International Relations”, which apart from the limited number of those who benefit
and control global media and its news coverage; another, more ominous, development is
taking place. A handful of immense corporations dominate the world’s global media.
These corporations are owned by powerful individuals who have vast influence to
international organizations and Western government officials. He elaborates that:

If the present trends continue, by the turn of the century, five to ten corporate giants
will control international media. These lords of the global village exert a
homogenizing influence over ideas, culture and commerce. 18

Beyond the concentration of media in a few corporations, hence individuals, there
exists an overall disparity between and within nations. Within nations wide disparities

17 Jonathan Mermin, “Debating War and Peace: Media Coverage of U.S. Intervention in the Post-
Libya Era”, The Handbook of Global Online Journalism 1, no. 2 (2012).

18 Howard Frederick, Global Communication and International Relations (Belmont, California:
exist between the rich and the poor, urban and rural, men and women. Although the people that make up "the first world" represent only a quarter of the world's population, they control half its income. The poorest, fifth of the world's population earn only two percent of the world's Gross national Products (GNP). Fredericks remarks that this gap is twice as large as it was thirty years ago. He states further that:

The world of information is also divided into the haves and the have-not, or info-rich and the info-poor. The nation with a huge proportion of info-poor people starts at a great disadvantage in terms of development. This unequal bargaining position will affect all relations whether labeled aid, trade, investment, transfer of technology, technical assistance, or any other.\textsuperscript{19}

Ralph Miliband writing in: "The State in Advanced Capitalist Societies", authenticates theories of neo-Marxism and neo-realism as being very much in existence in the operational relationship between Western international media and international politics, when supporting the point of view that political power is concentrated in a few hands. He asserts that:

Identifiable groups in societies control the realm of politics. I can only say that power is concentrated in the hands of the few and that the state is an instrument wielded by the ruling class against both the interest of labor and popular democratic agitation. The state apparatuses are not simply vehicles of capitalist interests, but that doesn't mean that they are not also that. State power is definitely not the same thing as the power of a specific class, but the state does not have interests separate from class-based social forces.\textsuperscript{20}

Miliband refers to the concept of hegemony, defined as the apparatuses of the state managing to set the agenda and pre-shape the views of the population through, for example, control of the educational system and media. This indoctrination process ensures what is in fact, class rule, will appear to be rule in the interest of all. He goes

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. 64.

further to elaborate that hegemonic processes are central to class struggle as the bourgeoisie seek to "banish all sense of radical alternatives from the mind of the subordinated classes."\textsuperscript{21} Miliband in defending neo-Marxism theory he classify western media and their global news coverage as being important machines available to capitalists for indoctrination (hegemonic manipulation) of the underclass, which in this thesis context are disillusioned peoples of the Arab Spring. He states that:

The media acts in capitalist interests. Information is distilled by a set of rules that act to screen the news and other material disseminated by the media. These are: (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant global media firms, (2) advertising as the primary income source of the 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, and (4) stricture as means of disciplining the media.\textsuperscript{22}

Abner Cohen elaborates the process of domination of the global media first by western societies, followed by regional domination of regional powers and ultimately by the domination of men within rational boundaries, by elite groups of industrialists or politicians or military cadre. He affirms that:

By deductive reasoning it becomes clearer at this point to appreciate that the process of global domination starts with local ambitions of individuals within state boundaries, which could then expand to the regions and ultimately to the world at large. An appreciation of these facts set off a more balanced and objective outlook for evaluating the process of international media because it exposes the true nature of those who determine how it is used. Out quite simply, the affairs of men, through this explanation, are seen to be conducted within, first, the current state structure, where men in positions of authority determine what decisions are made concerning local issues and those with international implications. We cannot rule out the


tendency of the majority in most societies to acquiescence to the decisions of the elite group in their society.\textsuperscript{23}

This literature review reveals and eases out conclusions that international media and their news coverage are used by politics to convey its messages and propaganda. Western countries of U.S., Britain, France and developing Asian country of Qatar are domiciles to these dominant international media and its global news coverage.\textsuperscript{24} The author agrees with Gilboa's suggestion that media do not have the capacity to change the policies of governments; however they do create the environment in which the policy is made. But the literature review further clarified that beyond governments are the influential elites who determine policies for states and these policies conveniently benefit these elite who are authoritative people holding certain credentials in society, such as in government, police services, and business departments, or representing significant segments of society such as political parties or pressure groups and owning business institutions.

Considering the perspectives of international media and their news coverage this thesis can only acknowledge the impact of global media on policymaking, and the premise that media remains crucial in focusing international attention on major issues that are bound to affect the status quo of the Western influence and political principles in the Arab Spring and to the contrary they do determine the policy, the key decisions, or their implementation. This assumption is based on the theory of neo-realism that dictates that


\textsuperscript{24} Media referred to in this context are CNN, BBC, France24 International and Arab Satellite Television, Al-Jazeera.
the elite use the states as tools, because their contributions and influence to policymaking authorities justifiably goes to favor these media which they are share-holders or owners.
CHAPTER 4

GLOBAL MEDIA AND THE COVERAGE OF THE ARAB SPRING

On circumstantial evidence from theories of neo-realism, neo-Marxist, and literature reviewed for this thesis, it becomes evident that international news media institutions are established not so much to create an informed international citizenry but to advance and influence political doctrines of Western countries across the globe. The relationship between news media and politics can at best be defined as media being used as a vehicle to disseminate political agenda and its influence. There exists a “marriage” of convenience that benefits either of the two.

Observation of news coverage of the revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria by Western media institutions and Al-Jazeera differs due to the fact that the each of these countries posed different strategic interests to the Western powers. Unlike Libya and Syria, Tunisia and Egypt have bilateral and strategic partnership with the U.S, U.K. and France, the three dominant actors from the West. Such has influenced the media from these countries to devote their maximum resources to the coverage which they view as effective in informing the population and calling the political authorities to action. Egypt is the most important actor to the West because; it gives the Western countries priority
to the Persian Gulf energy resources, particularly the European Union countries. The second most important aspect on Egypt is that it permits the West a right to use the Suez Canal, which serves both as an important international oil route and as a critical route for U.S. warships transiting between the Mediterranean and either the Indian Ocean or the Persian Gulf. As a result, the U.S. has been giving Egypt an annual Foreign Military Finance aid of $1.3 billion which also comes as a prize for making and maintaining peace with Israel, a key ally of the West. For these reasons, even with the Egyptian government cutting media communication lines, Western media, acting for the benefit and interests of their states, broke journalistic ethics to receive and utilize images and sound from the disillusioned peoples of Egypt through social media for what is referred as “continuing crisis coverage”. These are firsthand observations of the writer, working as Assignment Editor for the CNN International news media institution. These observations are supported by increased tabulated number of news media stories issued on the Arab Spring daily by U.S. based news media institutions: CNN and AP news agency.

The Thesis provides a table of data tabulated Table 1 (below) to illustrate the number of countries served with news by the agencies and global news media, the bureaus in operation, the number of countries covered by correspondents, the number of words issued on Arab Spring daily, the amount of words disseminated throughout the

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1 The European Union (EU) is an economic and political union of 27 member states which are located primarily in Europe.

world daily and the number of full-time correspondents in foreign countries. This table is very useful in providing an idea of the relative size and reach of the “Big Four” news agencies and the four renowned news institutions such as Al-Jazeera, BBC, CNN and France24 International. The caveat is that some categories of statistics are in a state of constant change, with the daily numbers of words, correspondents and countries covered fluctuating due to systemic factors such as media censorship, security and conflicts, an abundance of communication resources, language, culture and the level of economic development.

U.S. headquartering AP who serves 120 countries with news has been producing 32 000 words for news stories on Arab Spring daily. CNN took the lead ahead of Al-Jazeera, BBC and France24 International by generating and broadcasting 10 000 words for news stories on the Arab Spring daily to 212 countries. Such demonstrates the level of interest the U.S. has had in these upheaval, which equates to a desire to influence political, economic and social principles and subsequently control of strategic resources in MENA countries.

France-headquartered AFP generated 50 000 words on the Arab Spring daily to 173 countries. Its news media institution, France24 International was able to disseminate the least number of 4 000 words on these events due to its small size and sphere of influence globally as it serves 89 countries. France 24 International is growing as an emerging media powerhouse.
Table 1. Dissemination of News by International Media between 2011-2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Agency</th>
<th>Number of Countries served with News</th>
<th>Number of News Bureaus around the world</th>
<th>Number of Countries covered by Reporters/Journalists</th>
<th>Number of words issued on A.S. daily 2011-12</th>
<th>Number of words issued daily</th>
<th>Number of Reporters/Journalists in foreign countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>32 000</td>
<td>21 million</td>
<td>713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFP</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>50 000</td>
<td>18 million</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITAR</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20 000</td>
<td>8 million</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REUTERS</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>16 000</td>
<td>890 000</td>
<td>1092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Jazeera</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8 000</td>
<td>14.2 million</td>
<td>840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>6 500</td>
<td>16.5 million</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>10 000</td>
<td>22.8 million</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANCE24</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>4 000</td>
<td>3.8 million</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Because the figures involved are often large and in a state of almost constant change, the wire and news services have provided approximations of rounded figures on media news coverage and the Arab Spring for the period.


5 Data on Agence France-Presse is extracted from AFP, From Havas to AFP: 150 Years of News Reporting, Paris: AFP, 2011; Personal Correspondence with Agnes Caradec, Vice-President, External Relations, AFP, 7 April 2011. In Table (1a) Note that A.S. is abbreviation for “Arab Spring.”

6 Data on ITAR-TASS is from TASS (Main Secretariat) Director-General of Media Communication Systems, Sergei V. Mikhailov, appointed on 17 September 2012.

7 Data on Reuters is extracted from Reuters Holdings PLC: Annual Report 2012, and figures updated Reuters Director Bryan Campen after request from this writer on 15 November 2012.

8 Data facts obtained on request from Al-Jazeera Communications Director, Wadah Khanfar before his resignation on 17 September 2011.

9 Data accessed from the BBC Press Office and other details of stats on request by this writer to BBC Director of Communications, Paul Mylrea. 23 November 2012.

10 Data received on request from CNN International Director of Coverage Cynde Strand 12 October 2012.

11 Data received from and France24 News Corporate Communications Executive Virginie Duval on 14 August 2011.
BBC generated 6,500 words per day disseminated throughout 189 countries. Al-Jazeera who serves 108 countries had its influence increased with 8,000 words per day, mostly throughout the Arab world and some parts of Africa. Amongst the lot, Al-Jazeera covered these events in two dimensions: (1) their news product menu had to suit the requirements of the Islamic religious values more than economic and ethnicity. (2) Its pool of Reporters, Journalists and executives is comprised of recruits from major Western news media institutions like ABC, BBC, CNN (as substantiated in Appendix A) therefore the scope of their news evaluation has accommodated Western oriented perspective. The religious values in Al-Jazeera’s news broadcasts equates to political and economic systemic factors in the end, because the desire to gain influence in the countries engulfed by revolts has to do with the desire to control trade, resources and its redistribution. The overall coverage and the most noteworthy development as corroborated by statistics in Table 1 shows the favorable portrayal of MENA populations and those portrayals altered the general understanding of the traditional demonization of Arabs. This is because the revolts fought against the West’s foes in Muammar Gaddafi and Syria’s Bashar Al-Assad. For these reasons the volume of news on Arab Spring coverage increased.

The factor of distance is no-longer a key determinant of the volume of news produced on certain States as such has been canceled-out by emerging sophisticated media technology that enables the transmission of trade news, studies of economic and observation of military installations from far-away distances. In the case of Libya and Syria, the factor of ethnicity and religion has been the key in stimulating the global coverage of events in the later. Qatar (who own media of Al-Jazeera) and Saudi Arabian
governments pledged military artillery and money in support of rebels against Muammar Gaddafi and Bashar Al-Assad because these two leaders did not belong to their favored Sunni ethnic group. In further explaining the West’s news coverage of the Arab Spring, Steve Salaita writes that:

Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran each claim to be the world’s true center of Islam. Both nations are struggling to expand their influence in a region upended by popular revolts that are shifting governments and long-standing alliances. Assad’s government serves as Tehran’s key pipeline for transferring money and arms to Hezbollah, the Shiite militia in Lebanon. King Abdullah sees Assad’s potential ouster as a way of choke off that flow and diminishes the influence of an increasingly belligerent Iran. Syria is Iran’s entry into the Arab world. Take down Assad and you inflict a strategic blow on Iran.\(^\text{12}\)

The factors that determined the number of news stories covered by AFP and France24 International is the fact that Tunisia is a former French protectorate and the two countries still maintain close political and economic relations. France’s interests in the Libyan revolts, emanates from the 1974 contracts, whereby Libya affirmed “a guaranteed oil supply for technical assistance and financial cooperation.” The French and British’s economies had been boosted by the sale of weapons to Libya before unilateral sanctions halted the trading partnership in 2011.\(^\text{13}\) Such relations stimulated the French, British and U.S. media to have the momentum in their news coverage of events, and as contribution to national interests of their governments. The proximity of Tunisia, Libya and Egypt to France enabled AFP to take the lead in the generation and dissemination of stories on


events in these countries. It should be remembered that with the Western media entrenched in new media technology that involves running Fiber Optic Cables under the seabed of the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean and Red Sea. Therefore these systemic factors are proof that they influence international news coverage and determine the volume and content of news that flows from various parts of the world.

The distinctive patterns that point in the direction of favor to the Western principles is that first of all, these media represents events in the Arab World from the point of view of Western states interests (which is to say, the point of view of Western corporate interests). If no specific benefit to the Western states interests is apparent in the possible outcomes of a given uprising, Western media institutions simply invent an advantageous potential results and report from that standpoint. The clear example is the recent reports from Al-Jazeera and France24 International, citing that Syria’s Bashar Al-Assad was readying to use chemical weapons against the rebels. These reports stirred U.S and its Western allies to threaten the Assad regime with force.

While it would appear obvious to anybody who follows patterns of Western news media that these media highlight events and regions that prove instrumental to the practice of Western imperialism, it is important to assess the discourses that rationalize such inconsistent coverage. In the case of the Arab revolutions, those discourses reveal the extent to which Western news media institutions convey the interests of Western governments. They do so not only by uncritically repeating official government statements, but also by presenting limited information based on the proclivities of the economic elite, a tacit form of politics passing itself off as objectivity.
CNN, for instance, has devoted intense coverage to unrest in Syria, an enemy of the U.S. Comparing the coverage of unrest in the Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, two countries that are strong American allies, during the same period, it is clear that although the two countries brutalized protests, there were virtually ignored beyond their diplomatic roles in the Arab World. Repression in Bahrain was comparable in brutality to that of Syria, yet Syrian violence against civilians received disproportionate coverage.

The same is true for Saudi Arabia. A search of CNN online archive news between September and December 2011 returned 85 articles on “Saudi Arabia unrest,” many of them relaying Saudi officials’ responses to events in Syria, Egypt and Libya. A search of the same period with the terms “Syria unrest” turned up 203 results, nearly all of them implicating President Bashar Al-Assad’s repression.

Other major news media institutions such as BBC and France 24 International covered the Arab revolts with disparities nearly identical to those of CNN. Based on statistical facts gathered and evaluated by the writer while working as Assignment editor of CNN International, the observations show that BBC and France24 through their affiliates heavily supported the uprising against Muammar Gaddafi in Libya to such an extent that they insisted on sound-bites of a NATO intervention. The Western media continued with those calls for intervention in Syria.¹⁴ Yet these same news media institutions have failed their own ethical and editorial consistencies by not criticizing Saudi Arabia brutality against civilians and foreign intervention. The West has long supported the same Arab dictators they are now forced to disclaim, a pattern in strict

keeping with the public sentiments of the American, French and British governments. The media from these countries is therefore caught in the web, and is used to the benefits of politics and the elite.

This scenario qualifies the neo-realist theory that international institutions are used by states. It also upholds Powell’s philosophy that media coverage does not change the policies of the states but it is the states that benefits from the conducive environment created by the news media coverage for states to implement these policies. Veteran journalist and BBC World anchor Nik Gowing agrees that international news media coverage may have drawn attention to crises and may have evoked emotional public reactions, but based on his interviews with policymakers in several countries, he concludes that they resisted pressure to act solely in response to media reports. He noted that recently, the United States and Western governments have refrained from intervention in the Libya and Syria revolts despite substantial news coverage of atrocities. To prove politics’ strengths against the media and their news coverage, Gowing used the reversal of U.S. policy towards the 1996 catastrophe in Burundi to demonstrate the opposite example: willingness to intervene despite the absence of international news coverage.15

Tunisia received moderate coverage because it was the nucleus of the Arab Spring. The media of CNN, BBC, France24 and Al-Jazeera, all intensified their artillery and even branded sources from within those countries as credible in their attempts to

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evoke Western powers’ military intervention. France24 International took a leading role in the count for coverage on events in Libya for two reasons: (1) so that its home country and neighboring Italy could negotiate contracts in the rebuilding process of post-Libya and boast their economies and (2) to negotiate improved oil import agreement or concessions. Qatar as a key actor to the events in Libya, Al-Jazeera finds itself entrenched in the news coverage of Arab Spring events as a call for duty in their competition to establish themselves as a leading international news media institution, and for the interests of their owners who also wield power in the government and policy decision in the Qatari political process. Al-Jazeera’s Western view of coverage of the revolts in MENA countries has received praises from former U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton because it both emphasized on Arab and Islamic perspectives while at the same time satisfying the western principles comprehensible to a western audience. 16

Social upheavals have almost never produced democracies. Instead, they usually lead to lengthy, violent power struggles that only cease when a totalitarian government assumes power. As Waltz rightly observed in “Theory of International Politics”, that:

Struggles to achieve and maintain power, to establish order, and contrive a kind of justice within states, may be bloodier than wars among them.17

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International News Media and its Characteristics

During the last 20 years, the expansion of international news media institutions such as CNN, BBC, France24 International and Al-Jazeera, and particularly their ability to influence politics, has attracted politicians, government officials, media practitioners and scholars of political science. This interest is a result from an analysis by academics in the studies of both media communications and political science, that global news media institutions of the West have become the most important power brokers in world politics. “Mediademocracy”, “mediapolitik”, and “teledemocracy” are a few trendy expressions invented to describe this new media dominated political system. These terms simply attempt to make mainstream media more accountable to the public they serve and to create more democratic alternatives of disseminating news across the globe as was the case with the coverage of the Arab Spring. 18

The characteristics that best describe global news media coverage are that they are: a 24-hour broadcaster that is transmitted in real-time, its news is headline-oriented, and its news is broadcast for consumption for, and around the world. Two particular formats are more significant to global news media coverage; the breaking news and the continuing crisis coverage. The breaking news are important to relevant events that comes unexpectedly to news, while the crisis coverage are characterized by a special logo defining the major events such as the Arab Spring symbolized as: “Middle East Crisis”. These formats create pressure on three actors who play different roles in decisive

decisions and policymaking in that media institutions press on its practitioners to produce fresh footage on events, reporters push political leaders and Heads of governments to respond fast to unfolding events and leaders press-on experts and diplomats to produce instant policy analysis and recommendations. This sequence catapults global news coverage to key status in international diplomacy.

The Structure of International News

International news media coverage and its flow rest with those whose voices and viewpoints that are heard the most. These are economically rich Western countries, and whose influence is entrenched in global media powerhouse likes: CNN, BBC, France24 International and Qatar-headquartered Al-Jazeera. Although not a Western global media outlet, Russia Today also falls in this category while on a low keynote influence. This thesis demonstrates Teun Van Dijk’s premise, through an illustrative news flow diagram, Figure 1. It explains that more news stream from the richer countries of the North to the South, and greatly exceeding the quantity going in the other direction.\(^{19}\) This arrangement signifies the direction of flow of influence in politics, economics and culture, while using the media as the vehicle or vein. This directional flow of news and its coverage therefore quantify the perception or theory of influence and power by the West on countries of Middle East, Africa, the Caribbean and Asia. The thesis best explains the above in its case study of the global news coverage of the Arab Spring within MENA countries.

\(^{19}\) Teun A. van Dijk, Power and the News Media (Amsterdam, Netherlands: University of Amsterdam, 1992).
Directional Flow of International News

The directional flow of news (as indicated by arrows) between regions varies quantitatively and qualitatively. The quality of news from the Southern Hemisphere to Northern Hemisphere is lower than the reverse flow. Based on illustrative (figure 1), the observation reveals that with the South encompassing Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean states, the news they disseminate to the States of North America and Europe is in small volumes due to several factors such as: (1) the unavailability of sophisticated media technology to produce news efficiently to match standards of those of highly developed media like CNN, BBC, France24 International and Al-Jazeera, who have a capacity and finances to subscribe to powerful news agencies so as to enable them to produce and disseminate news in real-time to countries in Africa, Asia, Caribbean and Middle East: states. Some of these events would have taken place in the Southern Hemisphere. (2) The negative level of press freedom that news media of the South have
in reporting about events happening in their own backyard such as the Arab Spring and not face harassment, censorship or even murder, contributes to the volume of news that the Southern Hemisphere generates and transmit to the states of North America and Europe. Many media workers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria devoted much time and space to the readily available news from North America and European media institutions because they feared reprisals from their governments, while on the other hand the Western media practitioners always enjoy protection from their home governments and the host government in all their foreign global news coverage. Based on the observation of the writer in his experiences and participation in some of these international assignments for CNN International, the security provided to Western media is for the reason that at the most, their coverage is associated with national interests that subsequently favors their home governments more than news values. These developments justify the neo-Marxist philosophy raised in earlier chapter, that international media for the better part exists to promote corporate interests that a media-informed citizenry. In contrast, there are high quantitative and qualitative flows of news between the richer countries of North America and Europe. However this increased flow of news between the rich Western countries illustrates that there is also an increased influence between them. This is best explained by the existence of increased communication in trade, security and bilateral relations that exist between the U.S. and member countries of the European Union. Another element that increases the traffic of news between states of North America and states of Europe is the fact that they share the same capitalist ideological principles.
The observations of the writer from the standpoint of Western media coverage practitioner is that although the global stressed the number of casualties inflicted by the revolts, its emphasis was more at expressing the blame on the governments or leaders of MENA countries engulfed with revolts, and drive the Western countries to act or decide the fate of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria. All this is done by ignoring the fact that these are sovereign states elected through the ballot as per the constitution of their countries.

The “big three” international news agencies AFP, Reuters and AP, and global networks of CNN, BBC, France24 International and Al-Jazeera, have the vast majority of their foreign news bureaus concentrated in the major capitals of the Western world, especially London, New York, Paris, Washington, Brussels, Tokyo and Hong Kong. Based on theories and literature review in earlier chapters, it can only be true to assume that these news outlets act as watchdogs of the Western states who also generate millions of words, pictures and sounds to their head offices where they are packaged for global news casts.

The quality of news flow is determined by how news is covered, and if there are few international news bureaus in a region then it is less likely that information will be relayed in more ways than written reports from sources called on the phones. Based on the illustrative Figure 1 of the thesis, the South-South flow of news is peculiar not only because of its very different quantitative and qualitative character, but also because it has a higher tendency not to flow directly. Because all the major international news organizations with technological capacity to transmit or flight news are based in the North, therefore news events of the Arab Spring to Africa, for example, would flow via
London or New York. Again this arrangement justifies the neo-Marxist theory of imperialism that states that:

The imperialism theory explains the domination of underdeveloped areas by industrialized countries as the consequence of different economic and technological levels and unequal power potential resulting from a different economic growth. The consequence of the development of industrial capitalistic societies is a pressure for expansion which may lead to military or political acquisition (colonies) or to maintaining economic dependence (developing countries).

The media who define what news is, not only see news as the exceptional event, but also what is important. So this thesis's description of global news is also a view of the perceived important sources of news and the major points of exchange for such information. Their influence to politics and the impact of politics to international media coverage is an important factor in evaluating the environment for news flow. Those who defend the character of global news coverage argue that international news organizations rightly pay more attention to the major capitals because that is where the important news is produced. The assumption beneath this explanation is that the production of news is a reflection of the various configurations of international power. The international ramifications of decisions made in these capitals, especially in the areas of economic and military relations, are seen as justifications for the structure of global news. The logical extension to this line of thought is that the historical development of world political, technological, economic and military relations must be analyzed before appreciating the character of global news.

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International News Media and their Agencies

Before the arrival of global news networks, of the likes of CNN, BBC, France24 International and Al-Jazeera, the “Big Four” news agencies were the dominant sources of international news. For this thesis and its evaluation of the coverage of the Arab Spring, the story why they were created, their historical relations with their home governments, and how they evolved does a lot to explain the relationship between global news media and politics.

News agencies are organizations which employ a number of correspondent in diverse geographic areas to report news to a central location where, for a fee, it is then disseminated, by electronic or technological means, to a variety of media institutions, diplomatic missions, business houses and other clients. Many news agencies are national in scope, concentrating their activities to the service of clients in their home states, even though they might employ correspondents in other countries. Four news agencies tower above all others in terms of size and influence. Three of these, the AFP, Reuters and AP are based in the West while Information Telegraph Agency of Russia (ITAR) is headquartered in Moscow.21

Most literature published in the West tends to focus their discussion and writings on international news media coverage on what they refer as the “Big Three”, (AFP, Reuters and AP) instead of a “Big Four” that includes Information ITAR. Western agencies are not only the main source of international news for the media in the

developing nations, but their reports are the chief means by which their power centers are informed of developments in the Third World. These four are special among news agencies for a number of reasons: (1) they not only compile news from across the globe, but they also have clients in a number of other countries, in addition to their home states. (2) They are very experienced in the task of collecting and disseminating news, most of them being in existence in one form or another since the 1800s. Because they are so established they enjoy high credibility and so they are able to attract as clients the largest and most influential media in all countries of the world that have media systems of some kind. In the case of many newspapers or diplomatic offices, the international news agencies, prior to the existence of CNN, BBC, France24 International and Al-Jazeera, were the only sources of information on international events or developments. As such, it can be argued that as much as they are not counted in the listing of global news media institution listing, they are most certainly the main conveyors of international news to all news media that cannot afford to maintain correspondents in remote parts of the globe.\(^{22}\)

Based on Table 1 the notion of a “Big Three” that excludes Russian news agency ITAR-TASS (Telegrafnoe Agentsvo Sovetskovo Soyuza) due to its direct control by the state and as an instrument of the then Soviet Union’s domestic and foreign policy would be discrimination and biased.\(^{23}\) Although not a news agency but a disseminator of news, the highly regarded Al-Jazeera is owned and partially controlled by the Qatari


\(^{23}\) Telegrafnoe Agentsvo Sovetskovo Soyuza translates to mean: Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union. The writer studied Russian language; hence he is able to translate the meaning to English.
government yet it's still included in the “Big Four” list of mainstream global media institutions comprising of BBC, CNN and France24 International. In his book: “Al- Jazeera: The Inside Story of the Arab News Channel that is Challenging the West”, Hugh Miles is quoted saying that Qatar was using the Arabic news channel as a bargaining chip in foreign policy negotiations by adapting its coverage to suit other foreign leaders and offering to cease critical transmissions in exchange for major concessions. These so-called concessions are in favor more for the West's strategic interest than of political gains for the state of Qatar. He asserts that:

Al-Jazeera's ability to influence public opinion throughout the region is a substantial source of leverage for Qatar, one which it is unlikely to relinquish. Moreover, the network can also be used as a chip to improve relations. For example, Al-Jazeera’s more favorable coverage of Saudi Arabia’s royal family has facilitated Qatari-Saudi reconciliation over the past year. This is a clear example of the regional news channel being exploited for political ends.\textsuperscript{24}

Leon Barkho elaborates further that the Doha embassy claimed Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani told the US senator John Kerry that he had proposed a bargain with the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, which involved stopping broadcasts in Egypt in exchange for a change in Cairo's position on Israel-Palestinian negotiations”.

HBJ had told Mubarak “we would stop Al-Jazeera for a year” if he agreed in that span of time to deliver a lasting settlement for the Palestinians.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} Hugh Miles, \textit{Al-Jazeera: The Inside Story of the Arab News Channel that is Challenging the West} (New York: Groove Press, 2005).

Based on these literature review and theories framing the relationship of media and politics, there is no doubt that beneath the surface politics and its policymakers uses the media more than the media uses politics.

The size of the so-called Big Three translates to why they are the most powerful actors in the global flow of news and "agenda-setters" because: (1) they determine on a daily basis what is considered to be "news" because what they decide to relay accounts for a lot of what is printed and broadcast by their media clients, (2) The amount of time and space the agencies devote to particular stories serves to rate material on a scale of importance and "recommend" some stories to media editors, while downplaying others, (3) The priority the wire services give to some events influences how editors deploy their own staff to cover these events in more detail, (4) The standards of the International news agencies and the technological and professional help they give to other news agencies and media are agenda-setting in their very nature because they set codes of journalistic and international news-gathering conduct for organizations for less experience and stature to follow and at most their news productions suits Western political ideology.²⁶

The strength and influence of Western news media and their coverage of the Arab Spring is clarified by volume of stories produced on the events and comments made by policymakers. These stories are calculated as number of words issued daily on Arab Spring and served to the global village. The thesis observed that the more numbers media and agencies from countries, determined more influence and interests to events in each of

these countries of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria. The news agencies like AP and AFP maintained the lead in the coverage of the Arab Spring. As watchdogs of the U.S and France interests respectively, they had to sustain an uninterrupted coverage that would supply the media of CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera and France24 International.

An interesting element to note in the big numbers served by CNN, the global news institution based in the U.S. Its number of countries served as of 2012 shows 212 compared to BBC who had 189, France 89 and Al-Jazeera 108. These numbers explains and justify the United States’ sphere of influence transmitted through international news media institution like CNN to other countries. Not only do CNN transmit news coverage through its bureaus, but other media become its affiliates and transmit their production to subsequently increase its influence and the influence of its home country. Based on the theory of neo-realism that international institutions are used by states for their own benefit, therefore, this might translate to mean that U.S. influence in politics, economy, culture and social aspect is engrossed in many countries of the world. Therefore it cannot be denied that West entrenches or transmits its influence and ideologies through the media. Such a statement is qualified by tabulating a tally of the number of countries served by all news media agencies from the West such as AP of the U.S, French-based AFP, Reuters (Canada), CNN, BBC (U.K) and France24 International.

It is also clear that the official statistics on output of words given by agencies do not lend themselves to good comparisons because some agencies and media institutions do not count each piece of editorial matters once, but matter can be counted more than once due to relays to several different regions and translations to different language
services. This table further explains and gives a suggestion that, based on the number of correspondents, countries served with news and the number of words from the Western news media institutions and agencies, it can be surmised that news coverage of the Arab Spring events was dominated by the Western media who assumed interests of their home countries. CNN which is headquartered in the U.S. had the most number of stories issued on the Arab Spring. This can partly be attributed to the influence and strategic interests of its home country in MENA countries.

Media from the Third-World countries such as South Africa’s, SABC and Nigeria’s NTA were able to the coverage of the Arab Spring through a (Triangular Process), whereby CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera sold them edited snippets. Such practices and arrangements confirms why the Russians influence on world countries is less and comparable to the West. ITAR-TASS coverage of the Arab Spring differed from the Western media. It was objective and though favorable to their interest, the number of countries affiliated to them was less in comparison to those of the West.

Compared to the Western media and its agencies, Russia’s ITAR-TASS and Al-Jazeera seem less international in reach, serving and covering relatively few countries, a feature that is to some extent the result of their governments not having any old colonial ties, vast political, economic, social and cultural influence. For Al-Jazeera, had it not been for the Qatari government’s huge investment in technology, increasing influence in the MENA political events and diversification on the character of its news, they
wouldn’t be in their present level of being an emerging international news media powerhouse.\textsuperscript{27}

**History of Western News Agencies**

The three world’s leading news agencies; AFP, Reuters and AP were started in the 1800s, and of these AFP is the oldest. It celebrates its 177 anniversary this year (2012), and claims to have been the world’s first international news agency. AFP’s origins date to 1835 when Charles-Louis Havas, a French entrepreneur, bought the Correspondence Garnier, a company that translated foreign newspaper and started converting it into a news agency.\textsuperscript{28}

Havas encountered competition when rival international news agencies, in the form of Reuters in London and Wolff in Berlin, were set up. His competitors were the Germans Paul Julius Reuter and Bernhard Wolff, both of whom were once employed and later trained by Havas. These three agencies; Havas, Wolff and Reuters, would remain the premier news agencies of the world into the twentieth century. But Reuter and Havas outlasted the Wolff agency, which disappeared with the rise of Nazism in Germany and the coming of the Second World War.\textsuperscript{29} Reuter moved to London and continued his business in stock-price information, but this time sending it from London to Paris via the

\textsuperscript{27} "Diversification of Al-Jazeera" is when Al-Jazeera broke from their tradition and culture of being an Arabic news media institution and went on a recruitment drive of Western media practitioners from CNN, BBC, ABC and France24 International to attract a diverse audience around the globe.

\textsuperscript{28} Anthony Smith, Geopolitics, *From Havas to AFP: 150 Years of News Reporting* (Paris, 1985) 75.

Dover-Calais submarine cable link. He gradually expanded to general news and increased
his clientele to other parts of the continent. Its status was enhanced when in 1865 it
became the first in Europe to carry news of the assassination of President Abraham
Lincoln.\textsuperscript{30}

The Associated Press was set up as a cooperative among six New York
newspapers. AP differed from its European counterparts in that it restricted the
dissemination of news to members in the U.S. and never gathered foreign news and had
no members from other countries. However the desire for influence of U.S. political and
economic ideology resulted in AP have a change-of-mind. This could have been the
desire for political and economic influence by the U.S to countries overseas. Havas and
Reuters had established an international news cartel between themselves by signing the
Agency Alliance Treaty in 1869 under which they delegated to each other regions of the
world for exclusive coverage and service. Reuter got the entire British Empire and the
Far East while Havas gained the rights to the French and Portuguese empires, Italy and
Spain.\textsuperscript{31}

Russia’s ITAR-TASS was on similar structure whereby the U.S. media
institutions are under the watchful eyes of the Federal Communication Commission,
headed by an appointee of the US president. ITAR-TASS was controlled by the Council
of Ministers of the USSR. Its Director was appointed by the Presidium of the Central

\textsuperscript{30} Anthony Smith, Geopolitics, \textit{From Havas to AFP: 150 Years of News Reporting} (Paris, 1985)
86.

Committee, and all its international contacts and agreements had to be approved by the foreign affairs ministry.\textsuperscript{32}

**Media Institutions and Agencies Links with Governments**

When governments of Third World countries made calls at the UN in the 1970s for reforms of the structure of international news, the influential Western media dismissed these initiatives as raising the ugly image of government control over news. But the history of the international news wire services reveals that these news organizations have never been completely free of relationships of some sort with their various home governments, for ensuring telecommunications links or for needed financial support. The agencies have patterned their international reporting very closely to the shape of power of their governments.\textsuperscript{33}

Oliver Boyd-Barrett writes in “The International News Agencies”, that Charles-Louis Havas had personal connections with French government officials, and this more than likely played a part in the government’s decision in 1838 to employ his agency to relay ministerial news to state agencies. He asserts that:

In the interwar years the Foreign Ministry subsidized Havas in The wake of its losing markets due to competition from TASS, short-wave radio revolutionizing the international transmission of news in the 1930s, and the end of the cartel. After the outbreak of the Second World War it turned into the French Information Office. The agency was revived as Agence France-Presse after the war by former London correspondents and journalists of the Resistance. However, the turning-point was in

\textsuperscript{32} Personal Ludmila Alexandrova, “News Agencies Agree on TASS Information Pool” (text). Moscow, TASS in English, 16 December 2010.

1957 when French law granted it editorial independence and financial autonomy. Nevertheless, to this day AFP has not been able to shrug off allegations that it is linked to French government interests, both domestic and foreign. The French government is still the major subscriber to the service.\textsuperscript{34}

Based on Boyd-Barrett's statement, there is evidence that the relationship between media and politics has existed back to history. The pattern has always been: politics giving financial support to media institutions set-up by the wealthy elites, while it reciprocates the gesture by setting favorable environment for these governments or states and politics to implement their policies.

Based on circumstantial evidence and theories tested in this thesis, the case of international news media coverage reveals the power of politics in international relations. It can further be deduced that politics is most powerful when combined with the power of communication possessed by certain kinds of media in specific regions. These media are the elite press, global television networks of the likes of CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera and France 24 International News; and the international wire services of AFP, AP and Reuters, all based in the international power centers of North America and Europe.

What this thesis has shown is how the structure of international news media coverage mirrors the structure of international political and economic relations. In the case of western media such as: CNN, BBC, France24 International and Arab satellite media station, Al-Jazeera the configuration of global political and economic power has shaped the ways in which they cover the world. However the strategic role of news in international relations is more complex than a simple North/South divide, with rich countries using the structure of international news to control smaller, poor ones. To

\textsuperscript{34} Oliver Boyd-Barrett, \textit{The International News Agencies} (London: Constable, 1980) 39.
understand the strategic value of news there must be an understanding of what are news values and the structures that co-opt those at the bottom of the global news hierarchy into defining the news in specific ways. Therefore how news is defined is an important explanatory variable for analyzing the quantitative and qualitative character of international news.

There is no dispute over the fact that the quantitative and qualitative character of international news is imbalanced. The real arguments have been over what should be done in the form of regime-creation or other actions by governments and media interest to change this scenario. Any global regime for news must cover the ideologically charged subjects of propaganda, government censorship, protection of journalist and reform of the international imbalance in the coverage of news their transmission.

According to William Preston Jr., Edward S. Herman and Herbert I. Schiller, there have been various international laws and expressions of consensus by governments and non-government organizations on these issues at various times. But states have been unwilling to surrender national sovereignty in an area as strategic as news. They state that:

Solving the problem of creating a more balanced flow of global news is also not as simple as providing more training and technologies for media workers in deprived areas. These processes replicate the hierarchies causing, and reflected by, the global news structure.\textsuperscript{35}

The relationship demonstrated between international news media institutions and politics in the coverage of the Arab Spring demonstrates that no regimes of international

news will last if they are created without clear understanding of the relationship between news and the other features of the international system valued by states and non-state actors. In particular, there is the direct relationship between news and political culture, including ideology, and the relationship between news and international power because of the very fact that news is a strategic entity in international relations.
CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This thesis has revealed through researching the relationship between international news media coverage and politics that: Global news media is increasingly becoming a source of rapid real-time information for policymakers; has accelerated the pace of diplomatic communication; and focused world attention on crises in places such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria. The fast speed of international new coverage applies pressure on policymakers and foreign policy experts to respond even faster to such world events, while also allowing them to send significant messages that, in turn, have affected the outcomes of these events.

The thesis further reveals that 24-hour all news channels and their fast broadcasting pace are also creating new challenging working conditions for media industries and its reporters. Thus, the effects of global news coverage on policymaking are much more complex and subtle than what was then the coverage of news on Middle East before the developed technology was able to boast the social media, which has been a key factor in the supply of images and sound, to the West’s news media institutions and agencies.

The popularity of the Arab Spring and the attention it has received in all circles, including the policymaking and the media communities, and its consequences for both
politics and research, deserve a separate comprehensive study that will clarify at what level systemic determinants of global news media coverage compels media institutions to cover news objectively without coercion from states and their political interests being the kingmakers. It is here sufficient to suggest that the influence of global news media represents an interesting case study of politics' impact on international news coverage as stated in neo-realist theory that international institutions are used by States to pursue their own interests and that States are the tools of the elite class. Despite evidence to the contrary, many leaders such as Colin Powell who has accumulated a substantial record both in war and diplomacy has stated that media of television news does not change the policies set-up by States, but creates the environment in which these policies are made. Therefore the above justifies the premise that the media remains crucial in focusing international attention on the Arab Spring, but they do not determine the policies and key decisions, or their implementation. Such a premise helps to understand why international news coverage has been perceived as having a power to determine foreign policy, primarily in severe crisis situations, and why policymakers or politicians feel they need to neutralize the media before they implement significant foreign policy decisions.¹

Challenges and Dilemmas created by Global News Coverage

The research has demonstrated that the global news coverage affects the nuts and bolts of policymaking, and creates challenges and dilemmas for all the actors in the policy process. Political leaders face the following challenges and dilemmas: (1) how to

avoid an immediate policy response to an unfolding event without being exposed as a weak leader who is confused and doesn't know how to handle a situation. (2) When responding, how to refrain from making a commitment to policy that might have to be reversed or changed. (3) How to include different appeals to domestic and foreign audiences in a single message. (4) How to flow with video clip pace without creating too high expectations for too rapid results; and finally (5) how to maintain policy that is at odds with prevailing media tone, without alienating journalists and its audiences. The U.S government has already encountered the first challenge mentioned. After the killing of U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens in Libya, politicians from the Republican Party criticized the U.S. President, Barack Obama for delayed response to events, and comments or statements from the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N, Susan Rice that the attack was a spontaneous reaction to a movie on Prophet Mohammed. On the second point of challenges and dilemmas, The West is struggling to recognize the rebel-groups fighting to oust President Bashar Al Assad although they have pledged military arsenal, they are still apprehensive of the end-game. Supposedly the rebels emerge victors, not all the fighting forces will embrace Western ideology and influences due to a conflict in religious beliefs, and thus adding to the dilemmas for the West in the Arab Spring events. These factors confirm that systemic factors such as religion and culture affect the events of the Arab Spring and subsequently their news coverage. They played crucial on the factors of who stood to benefit economically, and what trade barriers could come into place after the revolts. This partially answers part of the question that the research set to

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examine regarding whether certain systemic factors influence and determine global news coverage.

The professional foreign affairs bureaucracy faces these dilemmas: (1) How to write and provide solid and well-founded information, evaluation, and recommendation for policy and still submit reports in time to be considered by leaders; and (2) how to effectively compete with video images that may be at odds with preferred policy.

The international media and their coverage of news faces challenges such as (1) how to accurately report from any location and provide sufficient context and analysis under tremendous time pressure and limited knowledge on the events and processes covered. (2) How to report fairly on an international conflict when you believe one side is clearly the aggressor and the other is a victim; and (3) if reporters feel the need to take a side, how can they resist manipulations by the leaders of the party they support. Editors face these dilemmas: (1) How to avoid pressuring reporters sent overseas to file reports before they are ready, and still satisfy the everlasting hunger for real-time fresh and timely pictures. (2) How to select visuals from a large menu, including some from unknown sources, while still maintaining high professional standards; and (3) how to balance between one-sided coverage of news from media journalists who believe they can’t be neutral in severe cases of violence, with requirements of objectivity and fairness. There are no easy solutions to all these dilemmas, but this thesis acknowledges that they exist and have significant effects.

The central research question that this thesis set off to examine was the relationship between international news coverage and international diplomacy. The
primary hypothesis that international news media and its coverage is a dominant factor such that its activities tend to influence and shape perceptions and political decisions directly related to the central research question. However as the study research progressed the author’s “educated guess” was proved to the contrary by Etyan Gilboa’s interview with General Powell revealed that media only sets-up a conducive environment for Politics to implement its policies without the influence of the media. Another hypothesis that “gatekeepers” or news directors, who monitor and decide what goes to air, have more input into what becomes news for public consumption through selecting information that reflects proximity, political conflicts, trade and activities that influence progression of economies and policies of the host countries, revealed that gatekeepers depended on systemic factors and influence of their home governments’ national interests rather than the traditional news ethics of information reflecting unexpectedness.

Therefore the conclusion to the thesis is that there are no simple explanations of the uneven structure of the relationship between news media and politics, and therefore there are no easy solutions to the problem of stereotyping media and politics, and media and values. The case study of the Arab Spring reveals that foreign policy postures towards issues in international news media coverage are colored by a complex of factors such as that: (1) capitalist society is one of class domination; the media are seen as part of an ideological arena in which various class views are fought out, although within the context of the dominance of certain classes; (2) ultimate control is increasingly concentrated in monopoly capital; (3) media professionals, while enjoying the illusion of autonomy, are socialized into and internalize the norms of the dominant culture; (4) the
media taken as a whole, relay interpretive agendas that are in agreement with the interests of the dominant classes; and (5) the class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.

All these conclusive facts substantiate the relevance of neo-realism and neo-Marxist theories applied to the Arab Spring, which at best interprets and analyzes how the elite of the Western countries indirectly influence or influenced the political system, structures and decision-making processes of these countries based on their national interest. Systemic factors such as the economic interests, political ideology, trade and ethnicity are found to play a key role in determining the volume of news media coverage in the Arab Spring. The Western media, as stated by Powell in his interview, that the media is only used to set-up conducive conditions for politicians to implement on selected states. This is further confirmed by Waltz's neo-Marxist classical position that news media simply disseminate the ideas and world views of the ruling class, and deny or defuse alternative ideas. If there was no economic resource such as oil and natural gas energy, the strategic Suez Canal which serves as a critical trade route and for U.S warships transiting between the Mediterranean and either the Indian Ocean, the other factors would not have encouraged a high volume of global news coverage. Therefore the findings confirm that there are certain factors that influence the media coverage and these factors have to fall in line with national interests and political principles of home countries of these Western news media institutions.
Factors such as distance and language no-longer hold the key in determining the volume of news coverage due to enhanced media technology that enables global coverage at unprecedented speed. In the case of the Arab Spring news media coverage, religion and ethnicity played a key role in influencing the events and not the coverage. In Egypt the Muslim brotherhood became important actors in the revolt. Initially the Western media’s coverage was critical of them because of their religious principles that went against the West. In Syrian the Saudi Arabia and Qatar favored a Sunni leadership against Shiite or Alawite president. With Saudi Arabia and Qatar being allies of the U.S, the Western media of CNN, BBC, France24 International and Al-Jazeera covered events in two folds: in line with national interests of their home countries, and religions and ethnic interests of the West’s allies, in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The main thing to be taken from this thesis and learning process is that news media coverage of the Arab Spring and in general is propelled by various factors; including political ideology and ethnocentrism leading to a desire of strategic and national interest. Based on these suggests the author can only conclusively agree with theories of neo-realism and neo-Marxist that international news is a weapon of those with power in the international system, a tool to maintain the status quo, at least in regard to the inferior status of some peoples and nation-states. This statement is qualified by suggestive data on the volume of news coverage of the Arab Spring, the directional flow of global news media and Mort Rosenblum submission on Western news media coverage that the structure of international politics is such that, the control and support of media institutions by governments of authoritative states affects the political landscapes of lesser states. The journalists, the institutions for which they work, and the information
they report, play significant roles in shaping the agenda of international relations for governments, organizations and common citizens. Political authorities of various ideological complexions all devise positions on news media and journalists very clearly in their rule and use their laws and monopolies on the legitimate use of violence to control the press.

The research findings further validate Jonathan Mermin’s argument that news media institutions have no power to move governments, but it is the government that has power to move the media. The thesis has also proved that even though news media institutions and their coverage do not influence policies, they however set the conducive environment for politicians to implement them. The media therefore remains an important actor or tool of politics, and precisely not only as observers. This places a heavier responsibility on journalists to report more accurately on event they see and hear.
APPENDIX
Appendix A

Some of the Presenters and Correspondents who have joined Al-Jazeera from Western News Media Institutions (years of experience in bracket):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>PREVIOUS EMPLOYERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tony Harris</td>
<td>News Anchor/Presenter</td>
<td>CNN/International (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Hanna</td>
<td>Senior Correspondent</td>
<td>CNN/International (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Burman</td>
<td>Managing-Director</td>
<td>BBC World News (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrian Finighan</td>
<td>News Anchor/Presenter</td>
<td>BBC World News (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Frost</td>
<td>HardTalk Show Presenter</td>
<td>BBC World News (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Spicer</td>
<td>News Anchor/Presenter</td>
<td>NPR (U.S.A) (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folly Bah Thibault</td>
<td>News Anchor/Correspondent</td>
<td>France24 Intl.¹ (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoda Abdel Hamid</td>
<td>Senior Correspondent</td>
<td>ABC (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnaby Philips</td>
<td>Chief Correspondent</td>
<td>BBC (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica Pedrosa</td>
<td>News Anchor/Presenter</td>
<td>CNN International (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riz Khan</td>
<td>News Anchor/Correspondent</td>
<td>CNN International (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh Rushing</td>
<td>FaultLines Show Host</td>
<td>U.S. Marine Corps (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Fisher</td>
<td>Senior Correspondent</td>
<td>ITV (U.K.) (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucia Newman</td>
<td>Senior Correspondent</td>
<td>BBC World News (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristen Salooney</td>
<td>Senior Correspondent</td>
<td>NBC (U.S.A) (15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ France24 Intl. is the abbreviation for France24 International Television.
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