

Before and After the 2017 Gulf Crisis: Peace, Propaganda, and Violence Frames in Al-Jazeera’s Coverage of Bahrain’s Uprising

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This study explores how the fluctuations of Qatari-Bahraini ties from 2011 to 2021 have influenced Al-Jazeera’s legitimization of the Bahraini regime. It also measures the extent to which Al-Jazeera Arabic (AJA) and Al-Jazeera English (AJE) included Galtung’s typology of violence (ToV) and peace journalism model (PJM) in their coverage of Bahrain’s 2011 uprising. A total of 424 articles were analyzed from both channels. The results found that the regime’s direct violence dominated the coverage, whereas its structural and cultural violence received less attention, particularly by AJA. In addition, the number of articles framing the regime’s propaganda as facts dropped across both channels following the 2017 Gulf crisis. During the same period, delegitimizing frames of the regime increased in articles from AJA and AJE. The study concludes that the deterioration of Qatari-Bahraini relations after the 2017 crisis made Al-Jazeera’s coverage more critical of the Bahraini regime but not necessarily more peace journalism oriented.

Keywords: peace journalism, typology of violence, 2017 Gulf Crisis, Bahrain Uprising, Al-Jazeera, framing theory, Qatar foreign policy, propaganda

Bahrain is a small archipelago located in the Persian Gulf. It sits between the Middle East’s main rivals, Saudi Arabia and Iran, which were at the forefront of protracted regional proxy wars before restoring their diplomatic ties on March 10, 2023, in a historic deal mediated by China. Bahrain’s absolute monarchy is part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) alongside Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar (see Figure 1).

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Figure 1. Map illustrating the strategic location of Bahrain in relation to the GCC and Iran (Nations Online Project, 2023).

The Arab Gulf states are key allies to the United States and control approximately one-third of global natural gas reserves and two-thirds of the world's proven oil reserves. Unlike other monarchies in the GCC, the majority of Bahrain's population are Shias (65%), whereas the Al Khalifa ruling dynasty belongs to the Sunni minority (Mabon, 2012).

Inspired by the Arab Spring that swept across the Middle East from 2011, the people of Bahrain took to the streets on February 14, 2011, calling for democracy, political reforms, and the end to systematic discrimination against Shias. In response, the Al Khalifa regime used excessive force against protesters (Bassiouni, Rodley, Al-Awadhi, Kirsch & Arsanjani, 2011). Indeed, when compared with its regional neighbors, Bahrain recorded the highest per capita arrests of political activists and the second highest per capita in extrajudicial killings during the post-Arab Spring period (Al-Khawaja, 2014).

In what has been described as a "collective punishment" against Shias, in 2011, the Bahraini authorities demolished 30 Shia mosques and places of worship (Bassiouni et al., 2011, p. 329). They also forced 5,000 Shias into unemployment and looted US\$10 million from the Shia community under the guise of police raids and arrests (Davidson, 2013).

Bahrain's highest authority, King Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa (2011), portrayed the uprising as an unfortunate symptom of sectarian divide. This framing echoed that of former Al Khalifa rulers in response to uprisings in the 1980s and 1990s, which Fuller and Francke (1999) have termed a "survival tactic." This was supported by the state media, which publicized anti-Shia rhetoric and repeatedly reported on "discovering terrorism cells" funded and trained by Iran. However, a classified U.S. cable released by WikiLeaks revealed that the regime's allegations against Iran were baseless (Black, 2011, para. 2).

Regardless, hostility between the GCC and Iran, alongside ongoing conflicts in the region with Iranian involvement, have helped reinforce the Bahraini regime's allegations (Gengler, 2015, p. 9). As

such, the use of "sectarian discourse" as a counterrevolution tool was successful in suppressing the pro-democracy movement in Bahrain (Al-Rasheed, 2011, p. 514) and reshaping Arab public opinion toward it (M. Lynch, 2016).

On March 14, 2011, Saudi Arabia, which considers itself the supervisor of the GCC (Miles, 2010), deployed the Peninsula Shield Forces (PSF) in Bahrain's capital, Manama, and pressured Qatar to join its troops (Kamrava, 2013). Significantly, despite its open support for revolutions occurring elsewhere in the region and its persistent attempts to escape Saudi's shadow, Qatar did not oppose Al-Saud's foreign intervention in Bahrain (Khatib, 2013). Bahrain's protests brought Qatar and Saudi closer because a successful uprising in a neighboring country, dominated by Shias, could result in a potential ally to Iran (Kamrava, 2013).

In a move that was consistent with Qatar's foreign policy, Al-Jazeera became "tongue-tied" when the Saudi-led PSF began cracking down on peaceful protesters in Bahrain (Kamrava, 2013, p. 72). This was in stark contrast (M. Lynch, 2013) to the Qatari-funded network's promotion and legitimization of military actions against the Syrian and Libyan regimes (Abdul-Nabi, 2022; Al-Nahed, 2015). Like Al Khalifa, Al-Jazeera also downplayed the uprising as a mere display of a sectarian tension between the Shia majority and Sunni minority (M. Lynch, 2013).

The relatively stable ties established between Qatar and the GCC countries were quickly dashed, as evidenced by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain withdrawing their ambassadors from Doha on March 5, 2014. They rebuked Qatar for funding parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) that—according to the other council members—aimed to threaten the security of the GCC itself (Ulrichsen, 2019). However, by mid-November 2014, the crisis appeared somewhat resolved thanks to Qatar offering up "meaningful acts" such as shutting down Al-Jazeera Egypt Live, expelling Egyptian MB leaders from Doha, and supporting the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen (Ulrichsen, 2019, p. 33).

During the 2017 Gulf crisis, the diplomatic conflict escalated once again, with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt imposing a five-year blockade on Qatar. On January 5, 2021, the Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman signed the Al-Ula declaration agreement. Despite this progress and several formal invitations sent from Bahrain to Doha, Qatar's relations with Bahrain did not return to normalcy at the time. After more than five years of dispute, Qatar and Bahrain restored their diplomatic ties on April 13, 2023.

This study explores how the shift in Qatari-Bahraini relations from GCC allies in 2011 to rivals in 2017 has influenced Al-Jazeera's legitimization of the Bahraini regime's propaganda.

The study utilizes the typology of violence (ToV) and peace journalism model (PJM; Galtung, 1990, 1998) as analysis criteria to examine Al-Jazeera's framing. It analyzes 424 news stories (NS) during several periods in which Qatari-Bahraini ties fluctuated between de-escalation and escalation. These periods include the following: (1) 2011 uprising, (2) 2014 crisis, (3) 2014–2017 de-escalation period, and (4) 2017 crisis.

J. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), who developed and published extensively on the peace journalism (PJ) approach, defined it as "when editors and reporters make 'choices' about what to report, and how to report it, that create opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent responses to conflict" (p. 5).

PJ is derived from the field of peace and conflict analysis (J. Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). This means that PJ-oriented coverage goes beyond reporting on direct violence (number of victims/deaths/destructions), instead making deliberate efforts to report on the cultural and structural reasons/context/history that have led to a certain conflict (J. Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). More specifically, adopting a PJ approach requires an understanding of the ToV, which includes "direct, structural, and cultural violence" (Galtung, 1990, p. 291). Therefore, this study utilizes the ToV to measure the extent to which the three types of regime violence were included in the channels' coverage.

Qatar's Influence on Al-Jazeera

In 1996, one year after toppling his father, the former Qatari Emir, Hamad Al-Thani, founded Al-Jazeera as part of his sophisticated public diplomacy and state branding strategies (Ulrichsen, 2014).

Although a limited number of media studies examine the extent of Qatar's influence on Al-Jazeera's coverage during the Arab Spring (Abdul-Nabi, 2022; Al-Nahed, 2015), numerous political science scholars have contended that the channel has been serving its owner's agenda (Kamrava, 2013; Khatib, 2013; Ulrichsen, 2014). For example, whereas Al-Jazeera framed the protests in Egypt, Syria, and Libya as "revolutions" (Al-Nahed, 2015; El-Nawawy & El-Masry, 2015), Bahrain's uprising was hardly represented as such in the beginning of the Arab Spring (Abdul-Nabi, 2015). Abdul-Nabi (2017) argues that the change in Qatar's foreign policy from an impartial mediator before the Arab Spring to an aggressive interventionist in the years since has altered the channel's role from a successful public diplomacy tool to blatant propaganda.

Indeed, multiple studies that dissect Al-Jazeera's coverage after the 2017 Gulf crisis illustrate how the channel has acted as a propaganda instrument, supporting Qatar's foreign policy in both its Arabic (Ajaoud & Elmasry, 2020) and English content (Kharbach, 2020). However, others argue that Qatar and Al-Jazeera remain two separate institutions that each reflect their "own internal logic" (Maziad, 2018, p. 1067).

In addition, some studies indicate no major differences between Al-Jazeera Arabic (AJA) and Al-Jazeera English (AJE; Al-Nahed, 2015; Fahmy & Al-Emad, 2011). Kraidy (2008) argues that the channels are similar in their coverage of the Middle East, yet AJA still sounds harsher than AJE. Other studies observe major differences between AJA and AJE content (Al-Najjar, 2009). Barkho (2019) posits that the absence of written editorial guidelines within AJA has encouraged its journalists to use more "expressive and eloquent language" when compared with their counterparts at AJE (p. 94).

Literature Review: Peace Journalism

The father of peace studies, Johan Galtung (2015), states, "To say something about peace journalism, something has to be said about peace. To say something about peace, something has to be said about conflict and its resolution" (p. 321). J. Lynch and Galtung (2010) liken PJ with "health journalism," which focuses on the causes of diseases, preventative measures, and possible cures (p. 3). Conversely, they portray war journalism (WJ) as akin to "sport journalism," where "winning is not everything, it is the only thing" (J. Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. 3).

Galtung (1986, 1998) categorizes PJ and WJ based on four orientations: (1) peace/conflict versus war, (2) truth versus propaganda, (3) people versus elites, and (4) solution versus victory. According to Galtung's (1998) PJM, peace/conflict-oriented reporting focuses on conflict formation and all conflicting parties (not merely two), as well as the goals, causes, and history of conflicts. Truth-oriented coverage exposes propaganda from all sides. People-oriented coverage gives voices to the marginalized, including victims, women, activists, and ordinary people. Finally, solution-oriented coverage reports on peace proposals and the aftermaths of conflicts (Galtung, 1998).

A prevalent misconception among both critics (Hanitzsch, 2007; Loyn, 2007) and proponents (Aslam, 2016; Benn, 2015; Peleg, 2007) of Galtung's PJM is that it is a form of advocacy or attachment. This is despite longstanding clarifications from PJ scholars that the role of peace journalists is not to promote peace but rather to give it an "opportunity," so audiences can "consider and value non-violent responses to conflict" (J. Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 5). If these "responses, once considered, are rejected, there is nothing else journalism can do about it while remaining journalism" (J. Lynch, 2014, p. 64).

Furthermore, J. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) explain that covering peace initiatives does not mean ignoring violence or shying away from asking the difficult questions. Hence, PJ is a shift in the way of reporting, not a complete departure from professional journalism (J. Lynch, 2014).

Critics of the PJM

Galtung's (1998) four orientations have inspired other media scholars to criticize, develop, and expand on his approach. For instance, Kempf (2003) suggests a two-step strategy to combat the domination of WJ: "de-escalation-oriented coverage" and "solution-oriented coverage" (p. 9). In addition, Shinar (2007) extracted five headings from Galtung's PJM and proposed utilizing them as evaluative criteria for PJ studies that employ content analysis methodologies. J. Lynch (2014) describes PJ as "good journalism" and suggests six characteristics to transform it from theory to practice (p. 33).

Although some have welcomed the PJM as a system of "global media ethics" (Tehrani, 2002, p. 58), others have raised questions around its applicability. For instance, Gilboa (2009) criticizes the model's "simplicity," "unrealistic approach" toward media effects, and inability to examine media coverage during different degrees and phases of conflicts (p. 110). Others have also critiqued the dualism of the PJM, arguing that a true diversity of views does not always fit into Galtung's orientations (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2015; Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Hanitzsch, & Nagar, 2016).

Due to the lack of "sub-distinctions" in Galtung's model, Tenenboim-Weinblatt and colleagues (2016) designed an "actor-event framework" that analyzes "news narratives" by examining the representations of the different levels of involvement by actors and the different degrees of events/conflicts (p. 155). Nohrstedt and Ottosen (2015) propose utilizing critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a complementary tool to the model. Furthermore, El-Nawawy and Powers (2008) argue that the PJM disregards the role of "collective identity" for groups in accepting or rejecting nonviolent responses to conflicts.

In criticizing the impracticality of applying Galtung's model in non-Western contexts, Hussain, Shahzad, and Ahmad (2022) propose a "classification framework" for PJ, which they base on analyzing journalists' perceptions and media coverage of six different conflicts in Pakistan (p. 2). The framework determines that the different degrees of conflict and journalists' perceptions of national security threats can help to predict the nature of media coverage (Hussain et al., 2022).

Furthermore, after surveying more than 100 PJ journal articles, Doll and Moy (2022) suggest a "cross-dimensional" PJM, in which "impacting factors" affecting the "practice" and "content" of PJ are provided as a set of "considerations" ranging from macro (institutional) to micro (individual; p. 274).

Other researchers suggest expanding the PJM by adding more orientations to it, such as gender awareness (Jacobson, 2010), racial/ethnic awareness (Benn, 2015), peace photography (Allan, 2011), human rights (Shaw, 2011), and normative values for peace media (Ersoy & Miller, 2020).

Barriers Toward Putting the PJM Into Practice

Opponents and advocates of PJ agree that media, economic, and political structures can hinder putting the model into practice (Hackett, 2006; Hanitzsch, 2007; Shinar, 2007; Tehranian, 2002). These barriers include government propaganda, advertisers, media ownership (Tehranian, 2002), conventional news values, and media routines (Hackett, 2006). Interestingly, at times these routines can also act in favor of the PJM (Hackett, 2011). For instance, the "regime of objectivity" which requires quoting two sides can still offer opportunities to anti-war or alternative voices (Hackett, 2011, p. 36). Furthermore, Hackett (2006) argues that certain media models such as the hierarchy of influences (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013) actually give agency to journalists, meaning that applying the PJM remains feasible. However, journalists might still be restricted by overarching political, institutional, and social-psychological structures (Ersoy, 2016; Kempf, 2003; Şahin & Ross, 2012).

For instance, although journalists from Nepal, who are considerably more diverse than those from Sri Lanka, are more likely to practice PJ, in both instances, journalists are restrained by media ownership, suppression, and a lack of professionalism and training (Selvarajah, 2021). Moreover, when looking at Kenya, it is clear that local and foreign journalists covering the 2017 election violence and the 2019 Dusit attack faced similar barriers and failed to truly understand PJ, meaning that journalist misconceptions of PJ should also be added to its list of restraints (Arregui, Thomas, & Kilby, 2022).

A recent mixed-methods study concluded that journalists who received PJ training have changed their approach (J. Lynch & Tiripelli, 2022). However, since some PJ orientations (such as people) are "most readily applicable" than others, such transformation is "necessarily limited" (J. Lynch & Tiripelli, 2022, p. 224).

Although it might be assumed that the typical restraints on PJ are less effective on social media, recent studies have found that these platforms remain dominated by escalatory discourse, especially in countries torn apart by violence such as Nigeria (Aghadiogwu & Ogbonna, 2015; Auwal & Ersoy, 2022), Israel, and Palestine (LaTarte, 2019). For instance, Nigerian newspapers' heavy reliance on the tweets of the frontrunners in the 2019 presidential election has led to reporting claims as facts and escalating the social divides in the country (Auwal & Ersoy, 2022).

Epistemology of Peace Journalism

Hussain and J. Lynch (2015, 2019) assert that the PJM has primarily been perceived by media scholars based on four approaches. Hanitzsch (2004) considers the PJM as a normative or idealist concept that relies on "naïve realism" to promote that reality can actually be represented in media as it is (p. 483). Conversely, J. Lynch (2007) suggests that "critical realism" (p. 6) forms the model's epistemological foundation, meaning that although the world cannot be fully depicted as it is (truth), it can be assembled as agreed (social truth; Wright, 1996). Other scholars have adopted the critical approach, which argues that PJ can be practiced only if media conventions and structures are entirely reformed (Galtung, 2000; Peleg, 2007; Tehranian, 2002), whereas some, like Lee (2010) and Lee, Maslog, and Kim (2006), have come to understand the model as a "post-positivism approach" in which PJ can be utilized as a criteria for analysis (Hussain & J. Lynch, 2015, p. 7).

Due to the impracticalities arising from adopting "critical realism" and the "critical approach," especially in areas engulfed by conflicts like Pakistan, Hussain and J. Lynch (2015) propose that "critical pragmatism" is a more feasible "philosophical mooring" for PJ (p. 8). Critical pragmatism does not allege that it can reach "absolute knowledge," but it believes that "maximum possible knowledge" (even if fallible) can be gained through reliable means (Hussain & J. Lynch, 2015, p. 8). As such, it can be viewed as a compromising concept between post-positivist and critical approaches to PJM (Hussain & J. Lynch, 2015).

Utilizing Pakistan as a case study, Hussain and J. Lynch (2015) designed a "critical pragmatic model" for PJ, which accounts for the changing roles of peace journalists depending on the conflict context (including its intensity) and the level of restrictions on journalists (including stemming from threats to their safety; p. 9).

Hussain and J. Lynch (2019) later expand this by suggesting the adoption of six strategies that enable a focus on specific aspects to PJ that are dependent on the nature/extent of challenges/conflicts, as well as perceptions of challenges/conflicts held by journalists themselves.

It Is All About Selection

J. Lynch (2007) argues that the main dispute within PJ is not about "truthfulness" or "reporting facts," but rather how and why certain facts are "selected" in the media coverage of an event while other facts are simultaneously excluded (p. 3). This "selectivity," as referred to by J. Lynch and Galtung (2010), is a propaganda technique applied by media organizations (p. 53) to serve the political agenda of a privileged power (Herman & Chomsky, 2010). So too do Herman and Chomsky (2010) argue that if such choices are represented in a convincing way, and backed by "authority figures" without providing alternative interpretations, this can enable the public perception that selective information is in fact "established truth" (p. 122).

A limited number of studies have discussed the implications of excluding certain facts on how conflict is represented (Fahmy & Eakin, 2014; J. Lynch, 2006; J. Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005), so this study aims to fill this gap. It also explores whether the "variation of political environment" between Qatar and Bahrain from 2011 to 2021 led to a "variation" in media representation (selections) as predicted by Wolfsfeld's (2013) politics-media-politics (PMP) framework (p. 15).

Methodology: Framing Theory and Quantitative Content Analysis

Lee and colleagues (2006) state that PJ is theoretically "supported by the framing theory" (p. 501). Entman (1993) defines framing as "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52). He also explains that frames can be determined based on the presence, as well as absence, of "certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Therefore, the inclusion of certain aspects of reality in media coverage is as crucial as the exclusion of them (Entman, 1993).

Youngblood (2016) argues that PJ-oriented coverage "makes choices," selects words, and carefully frames stories in a way that encourages constructive conversation within society (p. 9). Hence, "framing" as well as "word choice" are the main elements of PJ (Youngblood, 2016, p. 9). To conclude, both framing and PJ intersect in their emphasis on what J. Lynch and Galtung (2010) refer to as "selectivity" (p. 53).

Because framing theory depends on "selection" and "salience" (Entman, 1993, p. 52), this study measures the extent to which PJ frames are present/absent in Al-Jazeera's coverage based on which criteria (facts) are selected and the frequency (salience) of criteria mentions. For example, an AJA or AJE NS (unit of analysis) will be framed as peace- or conflict-oriented if it mentions facts (criteria) related to the historic background of the Bahraini regime's allegations against protesters or Iran.

Quantitative content analysis methods are utilized to measure the extent to which the PJM and ToV frames have been applied. Macnamara (2005) explains that quantitative analysis "collects data about media content such as topics or issues, volume of mentions, messages determined by key words in context (KWIC), circulation of the media, and frequency" (p. 4).

The research body related to framing theory focuses on four areas: "frame building, frame usage, framing effects, and how people use frames to process meaning" (Potter, 2019, p. 143). This study concentrates specifically on "frame building" which is, according to Tewksbury and Scheufele (2009), influenced by: (1) news production routines, (2) political actors, and (3) cultural context.

To examine the influence of political actors on Al-Jazeera's framing, four research periods from 2011 to 2021 have been selected (Table 1), covering fluctuations of escalating tension and reconciliation between Qatar and Bahrain. All NS directly related to Bahrain's uprising during the four research periods were selected and analyzed for research questions (RQ) 1 and 3 (Table 1). Only NS related to the regime's

allegations (terrorism and Iran's role) were considered for RQ2 (Table 1). Articles related to other genres, sport, weather, or brief descriptions of videos were excluded.

Table 1. Number of Selected News Stories (NS) From AJA and AJE in the Four Periods.

Selected Period	De-escalation			
	2011 Uprising (March 14, 2011–June 1, 2011)	2014 Crisis (March 5, 2014–November 16, 2014)	Period (November 17, 2014–June 4, 2017)	2017 Gulf Crisis (June 5, 2017–September 28, 2021)
AJA NS, RQ1 and RQ3	80	19	61	161
AJA NS, RQ2 (Terrorism)	14	2	31	36
AJA NS, RQ2 (Iran's agents)	20	0	25	13
AJE NS, RQ1 and RQ3	38	9	26	30
AJE NS, RQ2 (Terrorism)	6	5	10	8
AJE NS, RQ2 (Iran's agents)	14	2	13	10

Research Questions and Frames

RQ1: ToV Frames

In his ToV, Galtung (1990) categorizes violence in three ways: "direct, structural, and cultural" (p. 291). Galtung and Fischer (2013) view violence as "avoidable insults to basic human needs," whereby "direct violence" is the negation of these needs through killing, torturing, arresting, and other forms of repression (p. 38).

Conversely, structural violence is invisible and stems from political, social, or/and economic systems that deprive people from attaining their rights. It can include exploitation, marginalization, segmentation, and fragmentation (Galtung & Fischer, 2013).

Galtung (1990) also coined the concept of "cultural violence," in which an ideology, language, art, and/or science can be used to justify and legitimize structural and direct violence (p. 291). These cultural aspects can take several forms such as nationalism, racism, sexism, imperialism, and prejudice (Galtung & Fischer, 2013).

Youngblood (2016) argues that Galtung's ToV is a "valuable tool" to assess and examine media coverage (p. 54). Therefore, RQ1 is as follows:

RQ1: To what extent did AJA and AJE apply the ToV frames in their coverage of Bahrain's uprising in the periods from 2011 to 2021?

Based on Galtung's (1990) ToV and the context of Bahrain's conflict, Table 2 designs the criteria for the direct, structural, and cultural frames.

Table 2. Criteria of ToV Frames in the Bahraini Conflict.

Direct Violence Frame	Structural Violence Frame	Cultural Violence Frame
Killing/torturing/arresting/exiling protesters. Or physical and verbal abuse.	Discriminating against Shias. Or depriving protesters from employment/government services/medical treatment.	Dichotomy between Self (Sunni) and Others (Shia). Or prejudice that Shias are Iran's fifth column. Or downgrading Shias to "rejectionists," "Safavids," and "that group."

RQ2: Peace/Conflict Frame

Because some studies have analyzed only select aspects of the PJ orientations (J. Lynch, 2006, 2008), RQ2 focuses specifically on the first of these orientations: peace/conflict. According to Galtung's (1998) PJM, applying this orientation requires a deep knowledge of the context of conflict formation. J. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) argue that when media coverage excludes the "context" of (direct) violence, audiences assume that the conflict must be triggered by unreasonable causes such as "ancient hatreds," "religious fanaticism," or "tribal anarchy" (p. 108).

This study examines whether Al-Jazeera reported allegations of terrorism or Iranian interference made by the Al Khalifa regime at face value or whether it included the critical context and reasons behind these claims. RQ2 focuses on two allegations: (1) that protesters are involved in "terrorism attacks" and (2) that protesters are "Iran's agents." Therefore, RQ2 is as follows:

RQ2: To what extent did AJA and AJE apply the peace/conflict frame in their coverage of the allegations of "terrorism" and "Iran's agents" in the periods from 2011 to 2021?

Table 3 details the criteria of the pro-Bahraini regime frame, pro-protesters frame, war frame, and peace/conflict frame.

Table 3. Criteria of Frames for Pro-Bahraini Regime, Pro-protesters, War, and Peace/Conflict in the Channels' Coverage of "Terrorism" and "Iran's Agents" Allegations.

Pro-Bahraini Regime Frame	Pro-protesters Frame	War Frame	Peace/Conflict Frame
Including only the regime's accounts.	Denying the allegations without providing any context.	Including the regime's and protesters' accounts (two sides),	Including alternative accounts, and /or providing

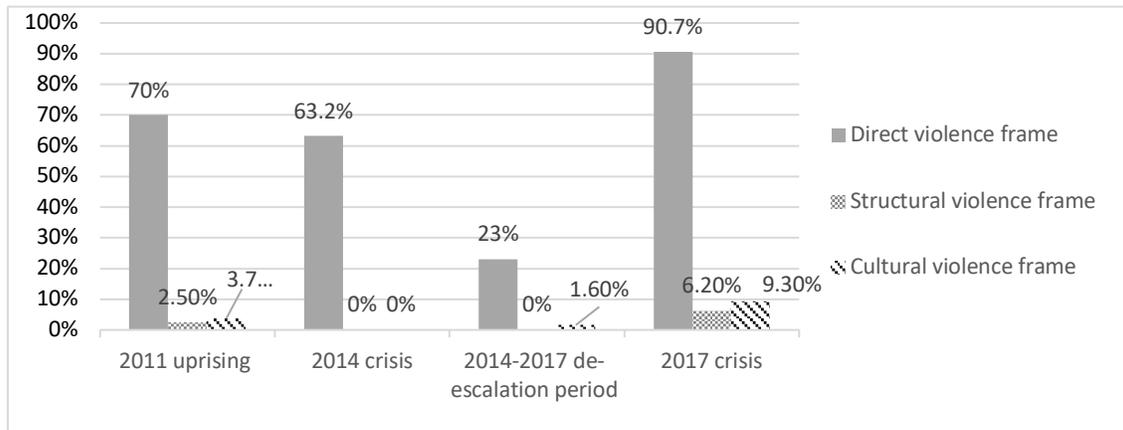


Figure 2. Percentages of ToV frames in AJA.

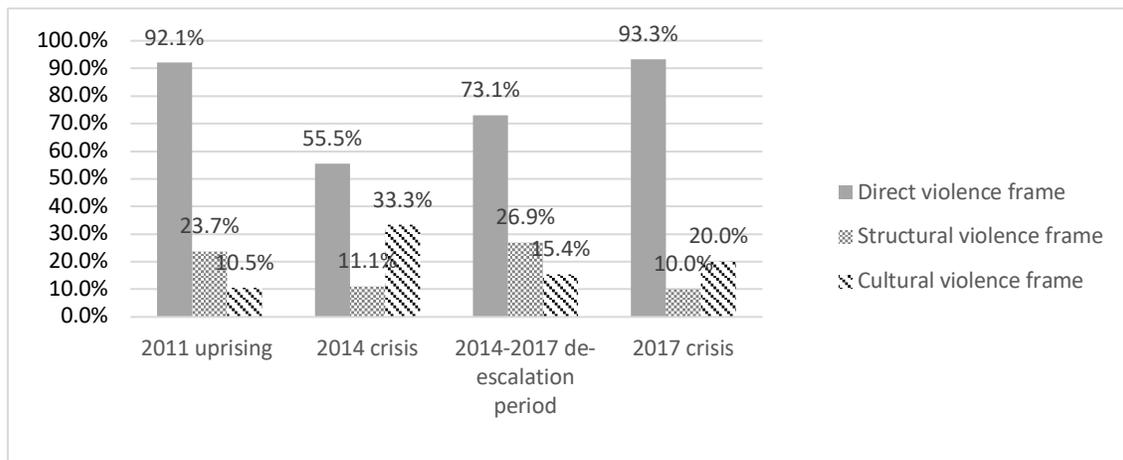


Figure 3. Percentages of ToV frames in AJE.

RQ2: Allegation Coverage: Drop in Pro-Bahraini Regime Frame After 2017 Crisis

RQ2.1: "Terrorism" Allegations

Both channels' coverage of "terrorism" allegations were dominated by the pro-Bahraini regime frame (more than 42%) in all research periods, except for AJE during the 2011 uprising (Figures 4 and 5). However, the frame's overall percentage decreased by nearly a half in each channel during the 2017 Gulf crisis. This was accompanied by an increase in the application of the peace/conflict frame in AJA (50%) and AJE (12.5%) in the same period (Figures 4 and 5).

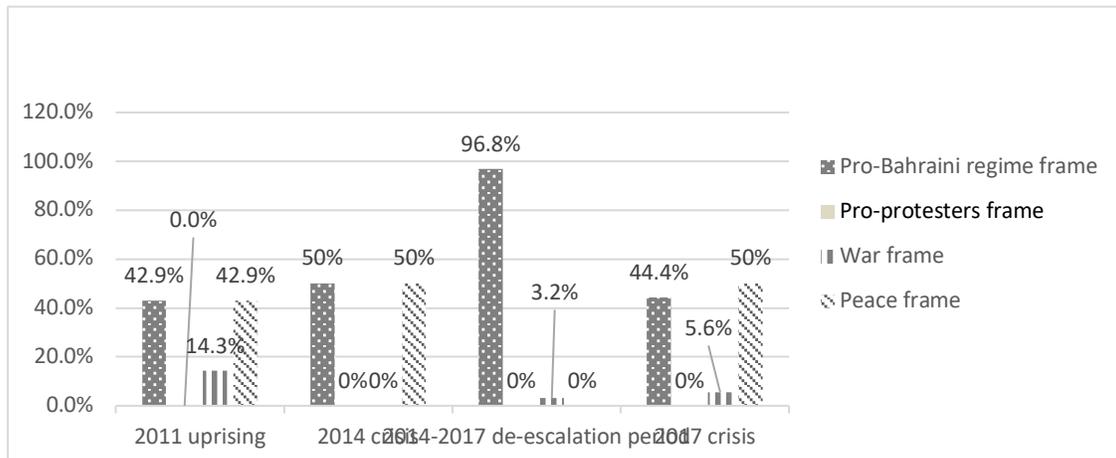


Figure 4. Percentages of terrorism allegations frames in AJA.

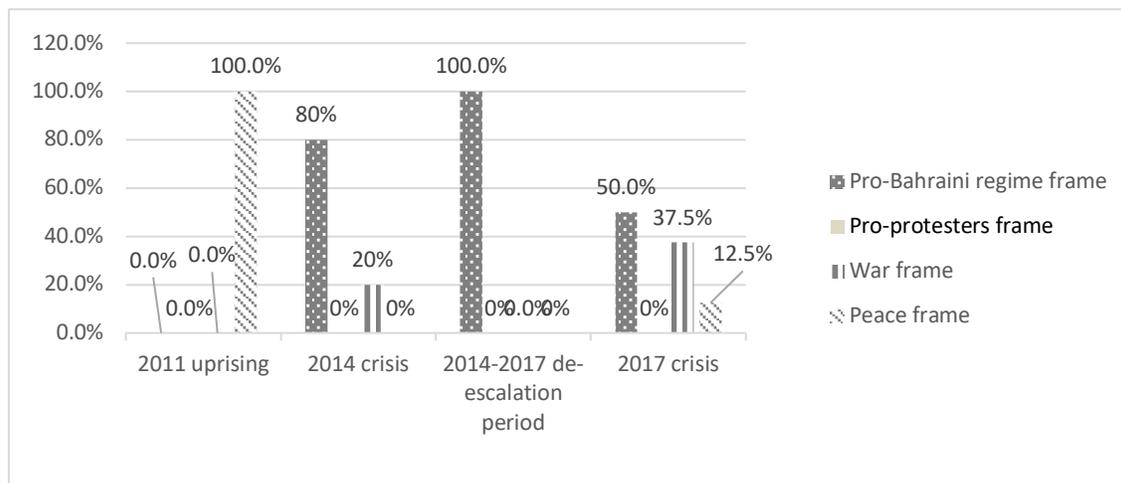


Figure 5. Percentages of terrorism allegations frames in AJE.

RQ2.2: "Iran's Agents" Allegations

The percentages of the pro-regime frame significantly decreased in AJA's and AJE's coverage of "Iran's agents" allegations during the 2017 Gulf crisis (Figures 6 and 7). In the same period, the war frame increased in the NS of both channels. Neither included the peace/conflict frame in their coverage across all research periods (0%), with the one exception of AJE's coverage during the 2011 uprising (42.9%; Figures 6 and 7).

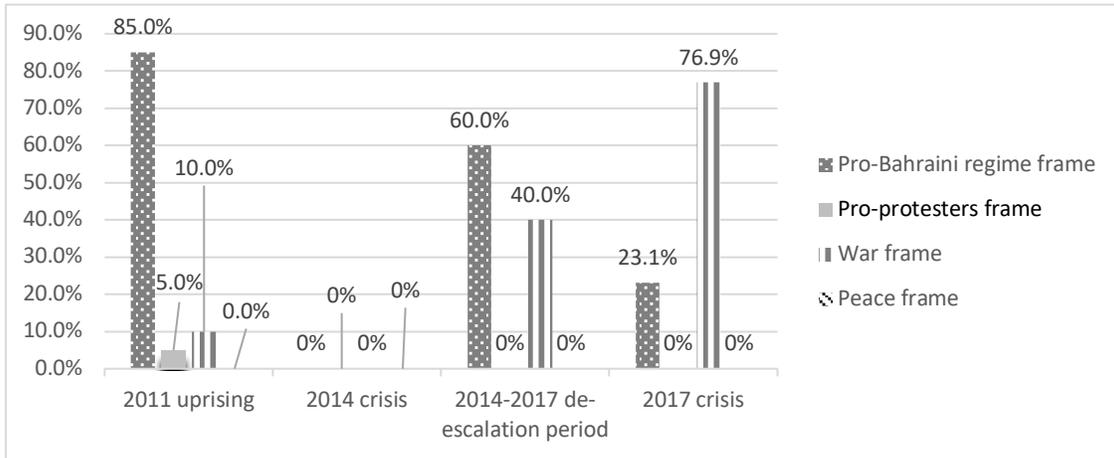


Figure 6. Percentages of "Iran's agents" allegations frames in AJA.

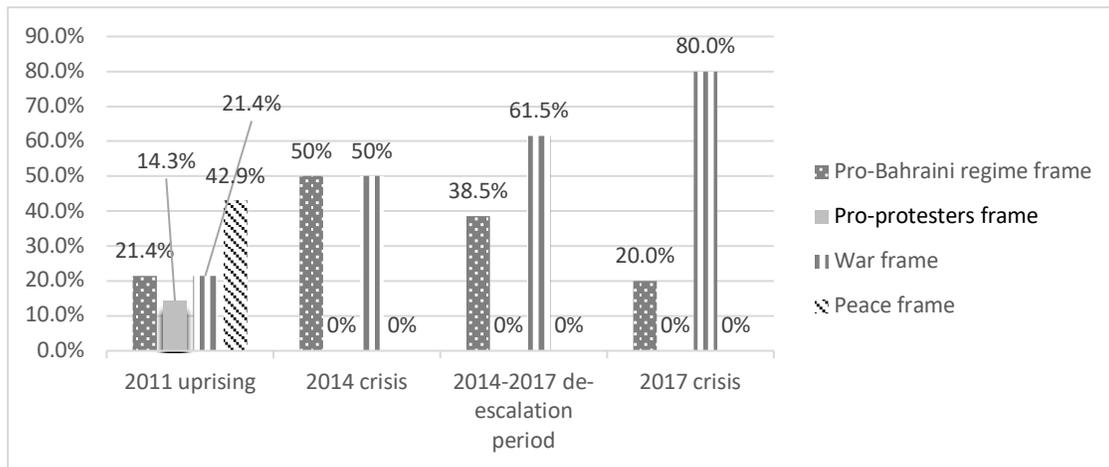


Figure 7. Percentages of "Iran's agents" allegations frames in AJE.

RQ3: Increasing Delegitimization of the Bahraini Regime After the 2017 Crisis

RQ3.1: Delegitimizing Frames of Protesters

Delegitimizing frames of the Bahraini protesters decreased during the 2017 Gulf crisis under both channels. For instance, more than 19% of AJA and AJE NS framed the protesters as "sectarian" in the de-escalation period, whereas only approximately 3% of NS by both channels represented them as such during the 2017 crisis. Likewise, the clashes frame dropped in AJA and AJE during the same period (Figures 8 and 9).

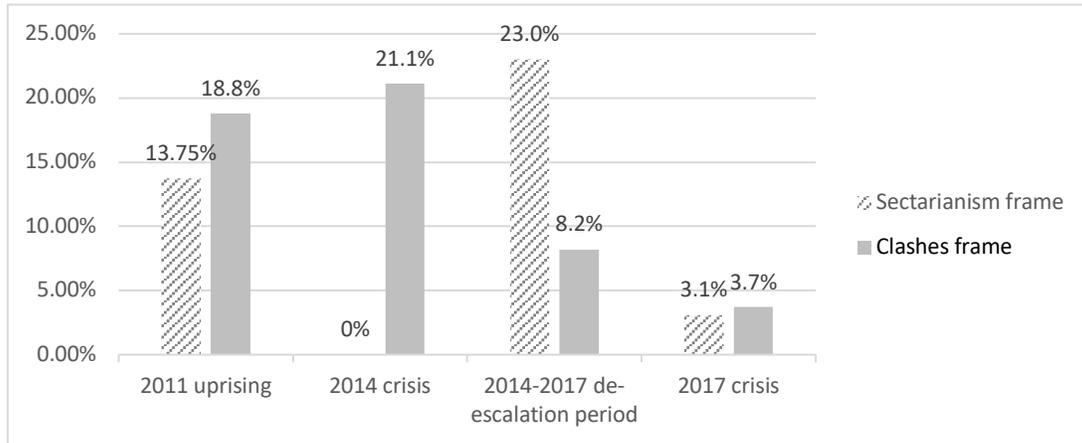


Figure 8. Percentages of delegitimizing frames of the protesters in AJA.

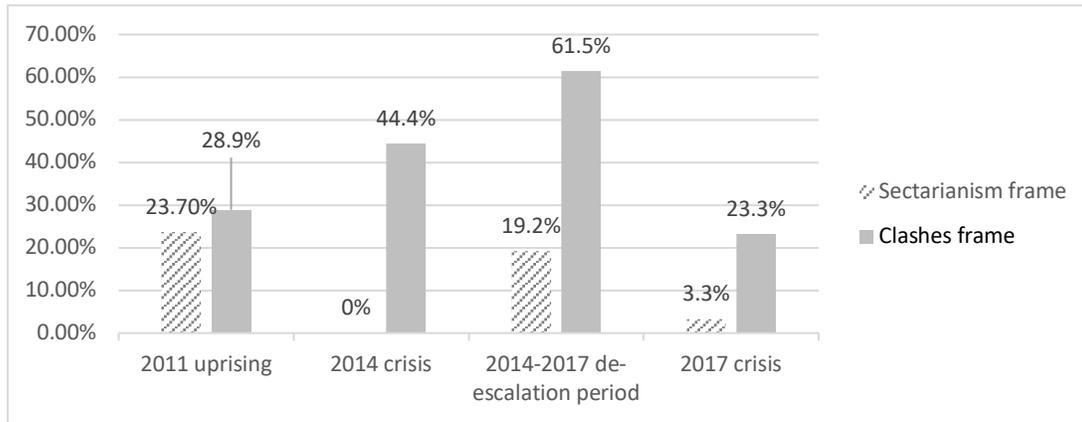


Figure 9. Percentages of delegitimizing frames of the protesters in AJE.

RQ3.2: Delegitimizing Frames of the Bahraini Regime

Both channels increased their application of delegitimizing frames of the Bahraini regime after the 2017 Gulf crisis (Figures 10 and 11). For example, more than one-third of AJA coverage depicted the regime's conduct of "excessive force," "torture," and "human rights violations" as factual practices during the 2017 crisis (Figure 10). In AJE NS, the "excessive force" frame did not seem to be affected by any specific period (Figure 11). However, representing "torture" and the regime's "violations" as facts increased considerably in AJE's coverage, from less than 4% during the de-escalation period to nearly 30% during the 2017 crisis (Figure 11).

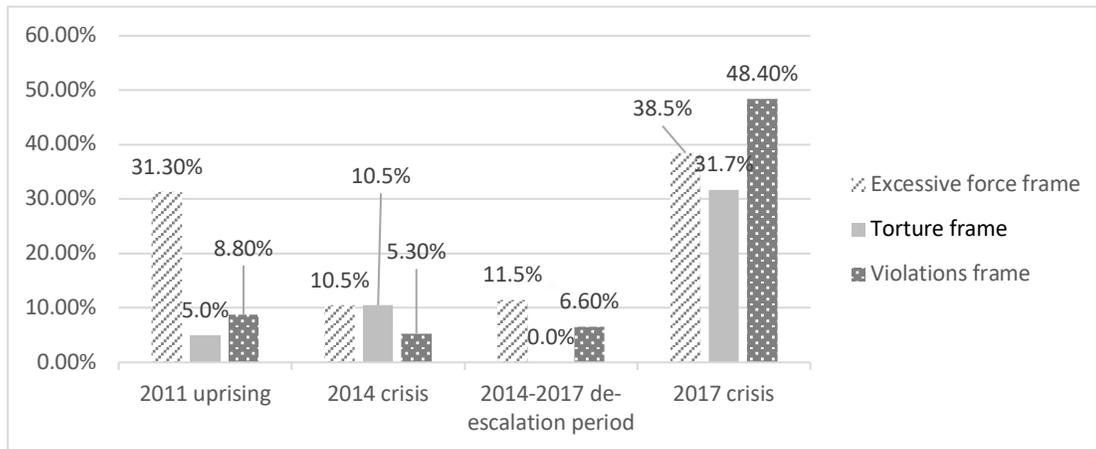


Figure 10. Percentages of delegitimizing frames of the regime in AJA

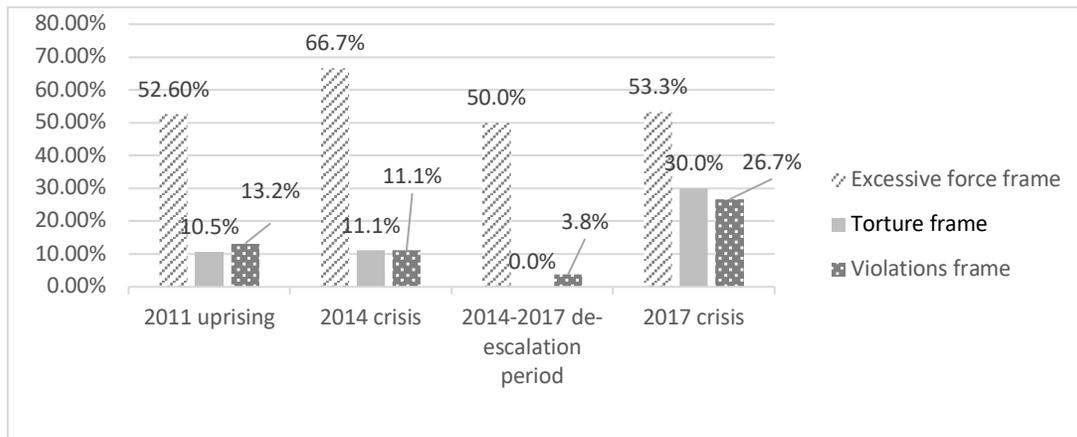


Figure 11. Percentages of delegitimizing frames of the regime in AJE

Discussion and Conclusion

Implications of Excluding Structural and Cultural Violence Frames

Intense focus on the regime’s direct violence by both channels emphasized the notion that the key actor of the conflict is where the violence is (Galtung, 2003). PJ-oriented coverage focuses instead on the consequences arising from visible and non-visible violence. For instance, both direct and structural violence can result in “collective trauma” by depriving people of their needs (Galtung & Fischer, 2013, p. 42). This might drive the deprived (e.g., protesters) to react by using “direct violence,” which subsequently breeds more violence (Galtung & Fischer, 2013, p. 42). Such implications were never mentioned in the channels’ coverage.

Also, excluding the fact that protesters have been discriminated against (structural violence) and that the regime has been treating them as Iran's fifth column (cultural violence) has helped in promoting the regime's sectarian propaganda, especially in the de-escalation period.

Some studies found that the inclusion of the PJ approach in NS is challenging, due to the nature of the genre (Guta, 2019; Lee, 2010). However, AJE's relative application of the structural and cultural violence frames is further evidence that PJ is "feasible" (J. Lynch, 2013, p. 15).

Influence of the "Political Environment" on PJ

The majority of AJA's and AJE's NS during the de-escalation period acted as "mere conduits" (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013, p. 195) to the Ministry of Interior's (MOI) allegations of protesters' involvement in "terrorism." None of the NS published by either channel in that period included alternative accounts. For instance, the coverage could have quoted credible organizations such as Amnesty International (AI, 2017), which repeatedly criticized the regime for charging peaceful protesters with terrorist acts after extracting confessions under torture.

Herman and Chomsky (2010) interpret that official sources (like the MOI) flood media outlets with "facts" that they have created to push "unwanted stories" to the back pages (p. 106). Once these officials observe how their "facts" are being reported, they can design other "facts" that are more likely to continue to be reported (J. Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 374). J. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) call this process a "feedback loop" in which journalists influence the sort of "facts" that are provided for them to cover in the future (p. 371).

Interestingly, AJA and AJE started to include more background and critical accounts that challenged the regime's allegations after the 2017 crisis. Both channels, especially AJA, started broadcasting documentaries that refuted the narratives of "terrorism" and "Iran's agents."

For instance, the documentary film *Playing with Fire* represented the Bahraini regime (rather than the protesters) as being involved in terrorism and intervening in Iran's affairs (Al-Jazeera Arabic, 2019). The film, which was aired by AJA and AJE, showed two leaked testimonies from al Qaeda members who revealed that they were recruited by the Bahraini regime in 2003 to assassinate Shia political figures (Al-Jazeera Arabic, 2019).

The channels' shift from framing the protesters as "terrorists" before the 2017 Gulf crisis to framing the regime as the "terrorist" after the conflict can be attributed to what Wolfsfeld (2013) calls "politics first" (p. 3). Based on this concept, media coverage can be better assessed when considering the political environment surrounding it. This also aligns with the PMP model, which suggests that a "variation" in a particular political environment can lead to a "variation" in media coverage (Wolfsfeld, 2013, p. 2).

The results also show that the peace/conflict frame increased in the coverage of "terrorism" allegations by the channels during the 2017 Gulf crisis. This finding supports previous studies, which concluded that PJ orientations can increase in certain conflict periods, particularly if peace is part of the

political agenda (Kempf, 2003; Lee, 2010). It is also consistent with studies, which found that the political environment in a state can affect the inclusion and exclusion of PJ frames in its media coverage (Fahmy & Eakin, 2014; Lee et al., 2006; J. Lynch, 2008).

Although the results of this study partially agree with the literature cited earlier, they also demonstrate that having the right political environment is not enough to increase the percentage of PJ. For instance, whereas the 2017 crisis allowed more space to the application of the peace/conflict frame in the coverage of "terrorism" allegations, neither channel applied the frame while reporting on the claims of "Iran's agents." Therefore, being free of the political "external constraints" in Tiripelli's (2016) words might not necessarily result in a higher practice of PJ (p. 134).

Tiripelli's case study (2016) found that the journalists covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were not critical toward media routines and the consequences of their reporting style. As such, training journalists must remain an essential factor in enhancing the application of PJ (Blasi, 2004).

Simplification of Violent Crackdowns as "Clashes"

Associating protesters with "sectarianism" and "clashes" recorded significant percentages in both channels in the periods before the 2017 Gulf crisis. AJA and AJE reported on "clashes" between the protesters and security forces as if both sides were equal, without addressing what J. Lynch and Galtung (2010) call the structural imbalance between them.

For instance, AJA framed the Duraz raid in which the National Security Forces (NSF) violently quelled a sit-in protest, killing five protesters and a child (AI, 2017), as a "confrontation" between the police and "outlaws" (Al-Jazeera Arabic, 2017, para. 3). Comparatively, AI (2017) told an entirely different story, stating that when authorities revoked the citizenship of prominent Shia spiritual leader Sheikh Isa Qassim in June 2016, mass demonstrations took place outside his home in the village of Duraz. In response, the NSF blockaded the village for 11 months and used "excessive and arbitrary force," including firing tear gas at the Duraz Intermediate Boys School and Qassim's house (AI, 2017, p. 33). This context was not included in the AJA coverage, which depended only on one source, the MOI. Conveying statements made by the authorities at face value is better left to the "ministries of dis-information," as put by Galtung (2003, p. 178).

In the Duraz raid story, Al-Jazeera Arabic's (2017) use of the lexical choices ("the killing," "the arrest," and "there have been five deaths") is an example of the channel's application of the discourse analysis concept: "nominalization" (para. 1). Machin and Mayr (2012) define "nominalization" as when a text uses nouns (the killing of protesters), instead of verbs (police killed protesters), to cover agency and responsibility, hide the affected, remove sense of time, and create ambiguity (p. 137).

Moreover, excluding protesters' accounts and associating them with "presuppositions" like "outlaws" and "confrontation" can imply that these representations are factual, whereas in reality they "may be contestable and ideological" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 133). These choices are not neutral; editors/reporters select them based on how they wish to represent certain social actors (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 133).

Media Representation of Peaceful Struggle

The concern with misrepresenting protesters as "terrorists" and "Iran's agents" who regularly "clash" with the police is that this distortion can justify "violent responses." J. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) argue that "the way a problem is seen, or diagnosed, conditions what we are prepared to see as an appropriate remedy" (p. 62).

The study observes that the channels' NS rarely framed the protests as "peaceful" during all research periods. Al-Khawaja (2014) argues that neglecting peaceful struggle while giving consistent media coverage to violent acts discourages the use of nonviolent methods of conflict resolution. This might drive protesters or "less advantaged sources" to initiate "events" that—in Shoemaker and Reese's (2013) words—can fit the criteria and bureaucratic routines of news outlets (p. 183). J. Lynch and Galtung (2010) say that covering non-violent struggle can empower protesters' commitment to adopting more peaceful methods, whereas neglecting them can drive protest movements to turn to violence. Galtung (2000) states,

You [protesters] have a voice but they don't have an ear and whatever you say is twisted into unrecognition, and if you experience that over a period of let us say fifty years you may become tired and you may get the feeling that it doesn't matter the slightest, and you may just as well get violent because that seems to be the only language they understand. (p. 162)

PJ-oriented coverage would be aware that journalists are part of the conflicts they cover, and hence the involved parties might possibly manipulate them to deliver their propaganda (J. Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). The lack of such awareness in Al-Jazeera's coverage has thus aided in promoting the Al Khalifa regime's propaganda. Davies (2014) argues that the promotions of regime allegations related to sectarianism and Iran's intervention were among the main reasons behind the failure of the nonviolent struggle in Bahrain.

AJA and AJE: Similarities and Differences

Like AJA, AJE was more critical of the Bahraini regime during the 2017 Gulf crisis than during other conflict periods. However, the increases in AJE's application of the direct violence frame and delegitimizing frames of the Bahraini regime during the 2017 conflict were not as dramatic as in AJA's NS. AJE also recorded significant percentages of the structural and cultural violence frames (which were not affected by a certain period), whereas the same frames were rarely mentioned by AJA. Hence, unlike other studies that found no major differences between AJA and AJE (Al-Nahed, 2015; Fahmy & Al-Emad, 2011; Kraidy, 2008), this article argues that the different degrees of applying the ToV frames by both channels have significantly affected their representation of Bahrain's uprising.

The differences between AJA and AJE can be possibly explained by the five levels/filters of Shoemaker and Reese's (2013) hierarchy of influences model. Although both channels are governed by the same organizational level (ownership), they differ on the individual level (journalists), extra-media level (competitors/audiences), routine level (reporting standards), and ideology level (nationalities of journalists and audiences; Shoemaker & Reese, 2013).

Limitations and Future Studies

Because this study focused only on Al-Jazeera's online NS, additional research projects could examine other genres such as online features, live shows, news reports, bulletins, and documentary films. Furthermore, the differences and similarities between AJA and AJE could be dissected in more depth by utilizing discourse analysis methods instead of depending only on quantitative content analysis.

More research can be conducted to test the effect of the feedback loop (J. Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005) on both the Al Khalifa regime and pro-democracy protesters. It would also be intriguing to explore whether increased reporting on peaceful struggles in Bahrain can enhance the use of nonviolent methods on the ground. Moreover, future research could examine the influence of PJ in de-escalating the sectarian perception of Bahrain's uprising among Arab audiences.

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