

---

**Martin Elena**

martin.elena@upf.edu  
PhD Candidate. Department of  
Communication. Pompeu Fabra  
University. Spain.

---

**Submitted**

November 27, 2015

**Approved**

April 7, 2016

---

© 2016

**Communication & Society**

ISSN 0214-0039

E ISSN 2386-7876

doi: 10.15581/003.29.3.119-130

www.communication-society.com

---

2016 – Vol. 29(3),

pp. 119-130

---

**How to cite this article:**

Elena, M. (2016). Framing  
international media in the face of  
social movements: CNN and Al-  
Jazeera English in the fall of Morsi:  
*Communication & Society* 29(3), 119-  
130.

## **Framing international media in the face of social movements: CNN and Al-Jazeera English in the fall of Morsi**

**Abstract**

**This research paper aims to analyse and compare the role of two of the major television networks in international news coverage, Al-Jazeera English and CNN, in relation to one of the most important social movements of the last decade known as the Arab Spring. The study specifically focuses on Egypt during the coup of July 2013, when President-elect Mohamed Morsi was overthrown by the army after weeks of protests. Through a qualitative content analysis based on the framing theory, we will look at the position of both channels regarding a coup emerging from popular uprisings and identify the differences between the two channels. The results show frames matching the definition of conflict (crisis and coup), military power and the legitimacy of democracy. As for divergences, it highlights CNN's stance towards the coup as a necessary evil, while Al-Jazeera English takes a more Islamist approach and prefers to emphasize its democratic legitimacy. The transition to democracy in Egypt is not seen as a linear process of uninterrupted progress, but events such as the coup are seen as slight setbacks in the development of the conflict. These setbacks are a result of the dynamics of power in Egypt, where the military remain in charge above and beyond social movements.**

**Keywords**

**Arab spring, Egypt, framing, CNN, Al-Jazeera English, TV news, journalism**

### **1. Introduction**

The phenomenon of democratic revolutions in Arab countries has generated significant academic output in the field of social sciences and politics, in which they are compared to other revolutions and democratic transitions that have affected groups of countries in a short period of time, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall. Hale talks of a regime change cascades in reference to the transnational nature of the processes (Hsale, 2013).

The so-called Arab Spring has predominated in such research focused on social movements. Given the revolutionary nature of the

process and the importance of social media in its development, studies on what happened in Arab countries form part of research that at the time examined the relationships between social movements and their communication strategies, such as the Zapatista movement in 1994 (Castells, 2012), the Battle of Seattle during the protests against the World Trade Organization in 1999 (Rheingold, 2004) and the Iranian Green Movement in 2009 (Burns & Eltham, 2009).

Significant scientific investigation has propagated in the field of communication too, due to its leading role in these revolutions. The Arab democratic revolutions as events comply with the elements that afford them journalistic worth within the trend of news value research, that is, they all qualify as international news stories. Many of the classic parameters of Galtung and Ruge, who define the factors required for an event to be newsworthy as frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, eliteness, personalization and negativity (Galtung & Ruge, 1965), are present in the case of the Arab uprisings.

Since the self-immolation of the street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi in the Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid, the Arab democratic revolutions have spread throughout North Africa. They started in 2010 and continue until now. The government of Ben Alí in Tunisia fell, the government of Gaddafi in Libya also fell, as did the governments of Mubarak and Morsi in Egypt, while Syria is currently in the midst of a civil war. In the rest of the Arab countries, major protests occurred that affected their respective governments to differing degrees (Lotan *et al.*, 2011).

These popular revolts managed to overthrow authoritarian governments who had remained in power for decades and become headline news around the world. Reporters, correspondents and international sections covered these revolutions directly. Different news channels and newspapers, including major players such as CNN and Al-Jazeera, gave priority to Egypt's news round the clock. Programmes were interrupted to broadcast the latest news of the Egyptian protests and many newspapers and other media channels changed sides during this period (AlMaskati, 2012: 343). In light of the newsworthy value of this social movement, this research paper aims to analyse and compare two of the major international news television channels, CNN and Al-Jazeera English, in their news coverage of the Arab uprisings in Egypt.

Television was chosen as the medium for analysis as it is the preferred communication vehicle used by people to find out what is happening and because at the moment it still has the most extensive scope and influence (Eurobarometer, 2008; Ghannam, 2011; Kevin, Pelicanò & Schneeberger, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2012). Thus, we concur with Borrat and Fontcuberta in the role that television plays nowadays:

When a person buys a newspaper he has already heard about the latest events from the radio and the television. The press is no longer needed to provide news stories but serves to explain them or to go into further depth. However, the reader must of course have a desire for this; as MacLuhan explained, television, unlike the press, is a hot medium that can be received with little exertion (Borrat & Fontcuberta, 2006: 35).

The decision to focus on Al-Jazeera English and CNN was taken as they are the two largest channels for international conflict coverage and also top the ratings, as well as having a clear mission to report news stories framed within a global outreach (Kevin *et al.*, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2012; Valassopoulos, 2012).

CNN is the leading North American channel for international coverage (Pew Research Center, 2012). Its prestigious programme CNN World Report, which has been aired since the eighties, is at the forefront in international news reporting. The importance of this channel is reflected in the expression "the CNN effect", used by Freedman to refer to the channel's

ubiquity – it has correspondents all over the world – and for becoming a benchmark for its news reporting of the Gulf War in 1991 (Robinson, 2005).

Al-Jazeera English is a Qatari channel with a global fact-finding mission coupled with a high degree of specialization in news agenda for Arab and Muslim countries. It has extensive satellite coverage that affords it an international presence (Kevin *et al.*, 2013; Miles, 2006; Valassopoulos, 2012). Why Al-Jazeera English and not Al-Jazeera Arabic? Firstly, it might be considered a research limitation for linguistic reasons, and in fact it is, but we found comparative studies between Al-Jazeera Arabic and Al-Jazeera English that reveal that differences between the two versions of the same channel are fairly minor, apart from the language (Fahmy & Al Emad, 2011). In fact, the correspondents Ayman Mohyeldin and Josh Rushing speaking about the relationship between Al-Jazeera English and Al-Jazeera Arabic stated that it is virtually the same channel, where content is shared and they report to the same general manager (Meltzer, 2013). Meanwhile, we also found research that highlighted the differences between the channels. The director of Al-Jazeera English, Al Anstey, argued in 2010 that Al-Jazeera English is not a mere translation of Al-Jazeera Arabic, it is instead a completely independent channel, keen to differentiate itself from its version in Arabic (Loomis, 2009; Zayani, 2008). It is funded by advertising and contributions from the Emir of Qatar. These unrestricted resources have enabled it to be present in every corner of the planet with a network of reporters and foreign correspondents, many of whom come from the BBC.

With regard to the geographical area of the study, Egypt was chosen from among the Arab countries that have undergone major social movements as it is the Arab nation with the strongest international media impact. Apart from the interest that may be generated in the international sections of the media by a popular revolution or change in government, what happens in Egypt affects areas that are sensitive to international geopolitics. It is these international effects that stimulate a high degree of media interest, especially in Arab countries and the United States (Segura, 2002).

The repercussions in the Arab world are the result of Egypt's significant influence in the region. It was the founder of the Arab League in 1945 and has the largest population in the region with over 80 million inhabitants. The revolution that started in the Tahrir Square is not an isolated insurgence; it forms part of the string of popular uprisings in North Africa yet it is fundamentally set apart from other revolutions as the protests twice managed to overthrow the government. The evolution of the situation in Egypt is uncertain. It is an ongoing and complex process involving numerous agents who have felt obliged to modify their initial positions as events unfold (Lotan *et al.*, 2011).

One of the most important international impacts is the economic effect caused by instability in Arab countries. Energy dependence on oil, with the Suez Canal as a supply route to the Mediterranean, is of concern to these governments. Meanwhile, as we mentioned above, these are not isolated revolutions; they have spread across the southern shore of the Mediterranean, generating political instability and resulting in military, commercial and migratory conflicts (Tagma, Kalaycioglu & Akcali, 2013). The last international backlash is the relationship with the United States. In relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Egypt had become, from the time of Al-Sadat in the Seventies, an ally to the United States and guarantor of the safety of Israel, North America's leading ally in the area (Jellissen, 2012; McDermott, 2013; Segura, 2002; Tagma *et al.*, 2013).

For the development and feasibility of our analysis, we established a timeline for our subject of study. We chose the month of the ousting of President Mohamed Morsi, from 1 to 31 July 2013, with the fall of Morsi occurring in the first week of the period examined. Our aim was therefore to analyse the framing by the channels selected in the days before and after the military coup, considered an exceptional event (Grossi, 1981).

The fall of the Morsi government was considered interesting to investigate as it is an extraordinary recent event that had been relatively underexplored and had been preceded by another unexpected change of government, the fall of Mubarak in 2011. There is a great deal of research and analysis of the events of 2011 that serve as an indication of the state of affairs and the evolution of the conflict, but not as a comparison of both events, as these investigations present major differences. Apart from occurring in another period of time, they are not focused on by the channels that we are examining in this study.

We might summarize other differences by contextualizing. The fall of Mubarak came about after two weeks of protest against an authoritarian government, perpetrated in power for 30 years through limited elections and in a state of emergency since the Eighties. Opposition to Mubarak brought together Islamists and secular groups, producing two firmly differentiated bands with opposing interests. Meanwhile, Morsi's government was the first to be voted in through free elections and was deposed by the army a year after it was appointed, after weeks of protests among the president's supporters and opponents. In this sense secular opposition to Morsi and the forces of the old regime clashed with the government elect, but with objectives that were not always aligned. In light of this new situation Fontana states:

Those who heeded only the spectacle in the Tahrir square, publications on Facebook and other demonstrations televised around the world believed that the dozen secular parties competing for power would gain the majority vote, without taking into account the long-term activities of Islamists, who for years had maintained the only health centres to be found in the most deprived areas and who helped poor families to send their children to school (Fontana, 2013: 100).

This is why it is interesting to look at the media's treatment of the opposition. After justifying the aim of the study, we composed the following research questions in order to achieve our research aims:

- RQ1: What are CNN and Al-Jazeera English's reference frames in the Egyptian conflict?
- RQ2: Are there any differences between the news focus by CNN and Al-Jazeera English in the Egyptian conflict?
- RQ3: Do the channels analysed maintain stable reference frames or are there shifts as the conflict evolves?

## **2. State of the art**

Studying TV news about a chosen exceptional event, in line with the Grossi theory, implies recognition of the media as creators of schema or public reference frameworks (Grossi, 1981). These frameworks help us to identify the positioning of the channels analysed. The socially recognized and legitimized frames generated by the media are a fundamental part of the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1968). According to Tuchman, frameworks created by the media, in particular news stories, are constructed through an interpretation of reality from the individual frameworks of the journalist and the collective frameworks of the organisation for which he or she works (Tuchman, 1978). It is a question of adapting the sociological frame concept (Goffman, 1974) to communication research.

This adaptation adheres to the objectives of our research. By examining the framing process undergone by two channels, we understand that each channel generates its own frameworks and that these are created from an individual and collective interpretation of events. In the individual interpretation the journalist's subjectivity is implicit, discarding the objectivist paradigm of positivism when creating news stories. Yet the collective interpretation is also important, where the editorial line of each channel may end up

shaping the focus of how the reality is presented. To frame is 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 (Entman, 1993: 52).

A look at published academic articles on democratic revolutions in Arab countries shows there are concurrent frames. The socio-political research that defines reference frameworks of the protests in Egypt in 2011 (Clarke, 2013), as well as research that defines the frameworks detected in the media (Fornaciari, 2011; Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012) follow the same trend. Further to the definition of frame by Entman we grouped together the dominant frames detected into “problem definition”, “causal interpretation”, “moral evaluation” and “treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993).

Regarding problem definition, the dominant frame in research reviewed is that of “revolution” (Clarke, 2013; Fornaciari, 2011; Hale, 2013; Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012; Seigneurie, 2012; Singerman, 2014). Problem definition as “transnational” is also important. Even though all the studies frame Egypt within the Arab Spring and not as a separate phenomenon, it is important to note that the Al-Jazeera channel is given the responsibility of constructing this definition framework (Cottle, 2011; Hale, 2013; Lim, 2013).

Causal interpretation is less uniform but two dominant causal frames in the preceding articles can be highlighted: “economic conditions” (Clarke, 2013; Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012; Seigneurie, 2012) and “lack of democracy” (Cottle, 2011; Hale, 2013; Seigneurie, 2012; Singerman, 2014). A third causal frame, at times difficult to differentiate from “lack of democracy”, is the frame “human rights”, that is, everyday social conditions such as the situation of women or police repression, rather than political organization and legislation. Moral evaluation reflects an identification with the protests through the frame “legitimacy”, with indicators such as justice, resistance, international recognition, engagement and non-violence to name but a few (Cottle, 2011; Hale, 2013; Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012; Seigneurie, 2012; Singerman, 2014). Lastly, as treatment recommendation, there is the frame “change of regime” (Hale, 2013; Singerman, 2014).

### **3. Methodology**

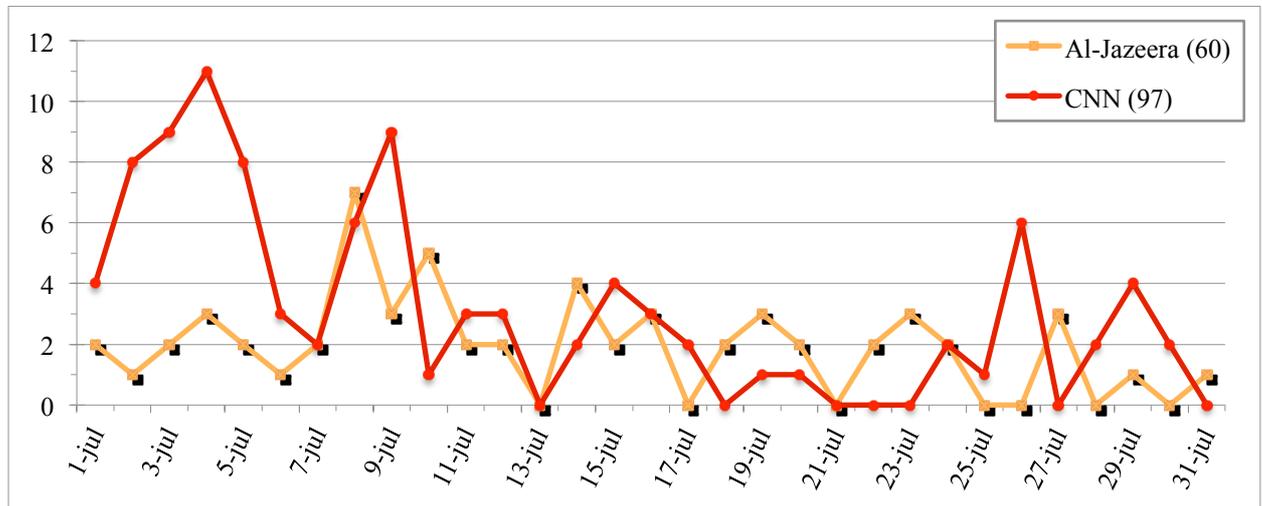
In our research we methodologically used qualitative content analysis to identify the different frames. After studying the selected TV news stories we arranged the content into different predefined categories, bearing in mind frequency, emphasis, selection or exclusion, while also evaluating the context and sender, among other aspects. We adapted to the bottom-up methodological model, according to which, after collecting information, reviewing current documents and analysing the sample, we identified a set of preliminary frames. From the preliminary frames we constructed dominant frames, each with its own characteristic indicators.

The units analysed were selected by collecting video pieces from news stories on the websites of the channels studied and their respective YouTube channels. It is important to note that the news pieces are viewed in isolation, without the introductory presentation by the journalist in the studio, and therefore obtaining samples through the online divisions of the respective channels presupposes a limitation. The procedure consisted of a limited search from 1 to 31 July 2013 using the key word “Egypt”. The search provided us with around 400 hits, of which we eliminated those belonging to special programmes and duplicated results. We thus ended up with edited pieces from news programmes. The decision to discard special reports was taken in line with our objective of identifying the channel’s framework. We were able to identify this framing more clearly in brief news pieces rather than special reports, which contained a greater variety of interpretive frames that usually included participation by the different sectors involved.

**Framing international media in the face of social movements:  
CNN and Al-Jazeera English in the fall of Morsi**

CNN provided us with 97 analysis units and Al-Jazeera English 60 such units. After viewing the reports, a list of key words, recurring concepts and images shown or omitted was drawn up, from which we inferred the corresponding dominant frames.

**Graph 1.** Number of news pieces analysed per day



Source: own elaboration

### 3. Analysis and Results

#### 3.1. Al-Jazeera English

The definition of the problems according to Al-Jazeera English is framed as national division and crisis, with each news story showing images and voices of both parties during an initial period. As the conflict evolved and after the arrest of President Morsi, his followers and the Muslim Brotherhood became more and more prominent in the news stories examined. In all live connections the correspondent gives his or her report with pro-Morsi demonstrations in the background. It is then described as a military coup, with the strong presence of the army and references to president Morsi as a democratically elected president. Also prominent is the increase of violence subsequent to the military coup and the arrests of pro-Morsi members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Internationally Al-Jazeera English frames the conflict within Arab countries, establishing the same divide as within Egypt itself, that of a pro-Morsi faction backed by Tunisia, Qatar, Turkey and Palestine and an anti-Morsi group backing action by the army and supported by Syria, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. The latter three countries are also singled out for their support of the coup and for funding the new emerging government. At no time is any mention made of interference by North America, although there are references to the fact that it continues to make its annual financial contribution to the Egyptian army.

The dominant causal interpretation by Al-Jazeera English is the framing of military power as responsible for the events. This is an underdeveloped focus as the causes of the conflict are not explored in depth. The news stories are more descriptive than interpretive and the *why* factor is largely ignored. Thus, the moral evaluation exercised by emphasising the power of the military forces, its relationship to the previous Mubarak regime, the democratic legitimacy of president Morsi and the definition as a coup coupled with violence and news censorship all offer us an antagonistic view of the army.

As regards political solutions, Al-Jazeera English does not offer clear lines of action. One dominant theme is that the coup has brought confusion and a loss of leadership. The absence of a prime minister and an unknown president, chosen by the army, undermine the coup as a solution to the existing problem. In news pieces that mention negotiation, reconciliation or transition as a solution to the conflict the channel explains that these are proposals by a temporary non-elected government and that the Muslim Brotherhood played no part in them. The dominant frame in the conflict according to Al-Jazeera English is military power, which once again starts to control Egyptian politics in the same way as before the Tahrir Square uprising against Mubarak in 2011<sup>1</sup>.

### 3.2. CNN

CNN defines the problem first as a crisis and then as a coup, although by using the word 'coup' an interesting discussion arises according to which journalists insist on this definition while the opposition, the military and the White House refuse to define it as such. In terms of the international impact of the conflict, CNN only provides the American frame, with reactions from the White House and concern for Egypt as the most prominent Arab ally in the area. Frequent references are made to the multi-million dollar military aid the Egyptian army receives from the United States. According to the agreements signed, in the event of recognizing the ousting of Morsi as a coup CNN considers this aid should be halted. In fact, the news on 27 and 28 July emphasizes that the sending of F-16 fighter planes by the United States to the Egyptian government has ceased, further to the uncertain evolution of the conflict.

CNN's dominant frame of causal interpretation is the isolation of the government<sup>2</sup>. Mohamed Morsi has only governed for his voters; he has ignored the political opposition and has not counted on the support of the police or military, which are still the country's most powerful institutions led by the same elites as in the time of Mubarak. On a second level of causal interpretation, we can observe the economic crisis frame, with clear indicators of the worsening of the economic situation and a shortage of energy supplies such as petrol, water and electricity. Uncertainty is the third causal interpretation frame, with attention drawn to indicators such as an increase in violence, rioting resulting in deaths and injuries and no police presence before the coup.

CNN's moral evaluation is the most complex aspect; even though it defends the democratic legitimacy of Mohamed Morsi's overthrown government and military action is defined adversely as a coup, it seems also to infer that the coup was the only feasible way out of a political stalemate for which the government was responsible due to its inability to dialogue with the opposition and one that only the army had the capacity to disengage. Among recommendations proposed, ideas include the holding of new elections in which all sectors of Egyptian society would be represented, including Islamists, but it was stressed that the Muslim Brotherhood refused to participate in any kind of negotiation with the government after the coup. Unlike the previous elections, in order to resolve the conflict, the winner of future elections must let the opposition take part in government action.

From the news treatment lent to the conflict by CNN we can extract a dominant frame related to the second stage of the revolution. The coup is shown as a negative but necessary event in the transition towards a new democracy in Egypt, after the previous experience of a democratically elected Islamic government that failed as a result of its inexperience. Political Islam's capacity to govern is rebuffed.

---

<sup>1</sup> Al-Jazeera English News 18/07/2013: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoRfYoquzUk>

<sup>2</sup> CNN News 04/07/2013: <http://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2013/07/03/intl-morsy-military-bluff-sabra-intv.cnn>

**Table 1.** Main key words and recurring concepts

CNN	Al-Jazeera English
Army (33%)	Military power (23%)
Coup (33%)	Pro-Morsi demonstrations (21%)
Violence (27%)	Coup (16%)
Economic crisis (19%)	National divide (6%)
Recover democracy (15%)	Democratic legitimacy (5%)
National divide (13%)	Civil war (5%)

Source: Own elaboration

### 3.3. Differences between Al-Jazeera English and CNN

After responding to our first research question (RQ<sub>1</sub>) and identifying the dominant frames of each channel in the conflict, we examined the differences between them in order to look at the second research question (RQ<sub>2</sub>). There are significant differences, but when analysing the event as a whole, both channels frame it as a coup whereby the democratically elected president was removed. Therefore, overall we might refer to a common reference framework.

In the first stage of the conflict analysed, preceding the coup, it is interesting to note that Al-Jazeera English emphasizes the concept of division and constantly shows the two parties in dispute. On CNN there is an over-representation of opposition demonstrations and Morsi's followers have a scant presence, whereby the inference is that the conflict is affecting just one side. Yet after the coup Al-Jazeera English commits more airtime to the pro-Morsi demonstrations while consistently underlining their peaceful nature. In this vein, on 31 July, Al-Jazeera English broadcasts a news story in which it questions whether the anti-Morsi demonstrations prior to the coup were as massive as the media reported.<sup>3</sup> After the coup CNN also included the pro-Morsi demonstrations in its reports, yet still showing demonstrations in favour of the army.

As we have seen in the identification of frames, Al-Jazeera English does not explore the causes in depth, while CNN underlines economic reasons, poor management and lack of democratic experience by the government. Both channels define the government as democratically elected, but CNN, using experts and politicians, includes the fact that democracy does not merely consist of voting, but also includes civil liberties and governmental management. According to CNN, Morsi mismanaged his power; he was democratically elected but did not govern democratically. Thus, while the coup is not legitimized, it is justified.

Another prominent difference is the perception of violence. Al-Jazeera English highlights the amount of violence after the coup. Before the coup there were reports of deaths and injuries, but to a limited degree, while after the coup we are shown violent scenes and blood, with the Islamists as victims of the army. The idea is put forward that the coup has brought instability and violence to the conflict. On CNN an increase in violence is also perceived after the coup, although it is more focused on protests by the Islamists than on military repression. Before the coup, CNN conveyed a sense of instability and insecurity, as neither the police nor the army were on the streets during the protests, having refused to obey the orders of a weak government. When CNN reports on deaths and injuries it always specifies that they are from both sides. An example is the massacre on 8 July in which 50 Islamists and an official were killed. The actual perpetrator of these deaths is left up in the air due to the highly confusing events. It also puts forward the government's version

<sup>3</sup> Al-Jazeera English news 31/07/2013: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5IadhVPvMs>

whereby repression by the police is justified due to the presence of an armed demonstrator.<sup>4</sup> In this specific example Al-Jazeera English illustrates with witnesses on the scene that the 50 dead demonstrators were killed by police bullets<sup>5</sup>. Like CNN, Al-Jazeera English includes the official version of events, while underlining that it is the official television version, in line with the military's interests.

At international level we see how each channel adapts the conflict to different scenarios. Al-Jazeera English focuses on Arab countries and CNN on the United States. It is important to note CNN's over-representation of the influence of the USA on the conflict through a considerable number of news reports. The pan-Arab trend by Al-Jazeera English, as mentioned above, is seen by the army as negative and pro-Islamist. Mubarak used the army to close down Al-Jazeera Arabic during the 2011 revolutions and it then happened again after the coup, revealing the clash between Al-Jazeera and the Egyptian military<sup>6</sup>. The other western channels, led by CNN, are subject to incidents but they continue to broadcast. Henry Hale defines Al-Jazeera's framing as advocating the protests:

Al-Jazeera not only came to span virtually the entire Arab world in its coverage during the 2000s, but also through its editorial policies crafted a specific frame of a single good Arab "street" standing up against corrupt and non-representative regimes, a frame that it then imposed on its coverage of the 2011 Arab uprisings. (Hale, 2013: 340)

Lastly, when comparing differences, the way the news is treated becomes an interesting focal point. CNN's news reports are mainly interpretative and at times border on straight opinion. There are frequent contributions from experts expressing their viewpoint. We are also shown corrections by journalists of statements from leading figures opposed to the channel's interpretation. Al-Jazeera English also presents interpretative reports but unlike CNN they are closer to description than to opinion.

**Table 2.** Dominant frames

FRAMES	RESEARCH January 2011	CNN July 2013	Al-Jazeera English July 2013
PROBLEM DEFINITION	Revolution	Crisis and Coup	National divide, crisis and military coup
CAUSAL INTERPRETATION	Economic conditions and lack of democracy	Morsi isolation	Military power
MORAL EVALUATION	Revolution legitimacy	Necessary coup	Negative coup
TREATMENT RECOMMENDATION	Change of regime	New elections	Uncertain future
DOMINANT FRAME	Democratic revolution	2nd stage revolution	Military power

Source: Own elaboration

### 3.4. *Evolution of the frames*

Regarding the evolution or the stability of the frames of each channel which was looked at in the third research question (RQ3), it can be observed that the channels preserved consistent frames, particularly Al-Jazeera English that maintained a pro-democratic and anti-military framing. CNN presents a gradual diminishing of the frame of the government's democratic legitimacy. Little by little the errors committed by Morsi are emphasized, to the extent of

<sup>4</sup> CNN news 09/07/2013: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LK1iUGMSMLk>

<sup>5</sup> Al-Jazeera English news 09/07/2013: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJimmmdFjcA>

<sup>6</sup> Al-Jazeera English news 05/07/2013: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/07/201374223725841263.html>

relating the Muslim Brotherhood to Al-Qaeda and Jihadist terrorism. Another frame that evolves gingerly on CNN is that of the licitness of the military. The army starts off as a guarantor of order and national stability but after the coup it loses legitimacy following excessive repression and the deaths of pro-Morsi demonstrators.

Yet the most interesting shift is that of the 'coup' frame to define the conflict. In the first week of the month under analysis we see a struggle, a frame contest (Ryan, 1991) in an attempt to establish the dominant frame. CNN defines it as a coup from the start, but the over-representation of the opposition and the army who reject the definition of 'coup', along with the shift in the White House's position - first talking about a coup and then avoiding the word - generates an interesting debate in which CNN journalists remain firm in their concept of a coup. In the end, the word is used so much to define and to negate that it resembles Lakoff's elephant: it is impossible not to think about it (Lakoff, 2007). Al-Jazeera English consistently defines the conflict as a coup, although there are other interpretations that negate the concept when opposition spokespeople are given a voice, highlighting popular support of the military.

#### **4. Discussion and conclusions**

Al-Jazeera English's coverage was initially balanced, giving voice and presence to all the agents in the conflict. After the coup, it took the side of the overthrown legitimate government and afforded greater presence to pro-Morsi discourse. By providing a descriptive approach to the news, the drawback was that it did not enter into a more detailed analysis of the causes and consequences. Meanwhile, continuing with this non-interpretative line, we saw how Al-Jazeera English required fewer minutes to explain the conflict than CNN. The open debate on the Arab channel focused on its pro-Arab or pro-Islamist framing. Although it defines itself as a global news channel, we saw how the international repercussions of the conflict focused on Arab countries. Thus, from the research carried out here we can identify a trend towards democratic Islamism. It is worth highlighting here that the channel has encountered significant censorship problems almost always while under self-proclaimed authoritarian Arab governments.

The American channel offered extensive coverage lasting several hours, examining the conflict's causes and effects in in-depth manner, but, as we indicated in the results section, through an interpretation that was closer to the opposition to president Morsi while maintaining a certain distance from the military. Through the appearance of experts and analysts significant weight was given to opinion as a journalistic genre within the news reports. This journalistic practice might be understood as the desire to explore the story further, but it might also be understood as the desire to convey a certain point of view.

CNN's independence in news reporting with regard to the US government's position is important as they maintain differing positions towards the concept of a coup -denied by the White House and reaffirmed by CNN- as well as its emphasis on the financial relationship between the US government and the Egyptian army. These data are, in many ways, compromised by the fact that both the news channel and the Obama administration attempt to maintain a certain distance from the military coup. In fact the omission of the word coup by the American government is in response to the explicit relationship it holds with its largest Arab ally in the Middle East. The USA is keen not to be identified with a coup and anti-democratic government, yet neither does it wish to stop funding its principal Arab ally. According to the heads of the American army, recognition of the coup as such implies the ceasing of aids by law. CNN does not report this directly but it may be construed that Egyptian military power comes from North American financial contributions (1,500 million dollars a year), so the inference is that the Egyptian army is not acting freely, uninfluenced by the White House.

However, there are more framing similarities than differences by both channels. Both defend democracy as a model and reject the military coup as a manner of seizing power although, according to CNN, religion and politics should be separated, thus denying the capacity of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist politicians to take power. The transition towards democracy in Egypt is not seen as a linear process of uninterrupted progress; instead, events such as the coup are seen as minor setbacks in the global development of the conflict. These setbacks occur due to the power dynamics in Egypt, where the army is still in command very much beyond social movements. In Egypt changes of government only occur under military consent; whoever governed had the army on their side.

## References

- AlMaskati, N.A. (2012). Newspaper coverage of the 2011 protests in Egypt. *International Communication Gazette* 74(4), 342–366.
- Berger, P.L. & Luckmann, T. (1968). *La construcción social de la realidad*. Buenos Aires: Amorrortu.
- Borrat, H. & Fontcuberta, M. (2006). *Periódicos: sistemas complejos, narradores en interacción*. Buenos Aires: La Crujía.
- Burns, A. & Eltham, B. (2009). Twitter free Iran: an evaluation of Twitter's role in public. Diplomacy and Information Operations in Iran's 2009 election crisis. *Record of the Communications Policy & Research Forum*, 298–310.
- Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Clarke, K. (2013). Aish, Huriyya, Karama Insaniyya: Framing and the 2011 Egyptian Uprising. *European Political Science* 12(2), 197–214.
- Cottle, S. (2011). Media and the Arab uprisings of 2011: Research notes. *Journalism* 12(5), 647–659.
- Entman, R.M. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication* 43(4), 51–58.
- European Commission (2008). *Eurobarometer. E-Communications Household Survey*. Brussels: European Commission.
- Fahmy, S.S., & Al Emad, M. (2011). Al-Jazeera vs Al-Jazeera: A comparison of the network's English and Arabic online coverage of the US/Al Qaeda conflict. *International Communication Gazette* 73(3), 216–232.
- Fontana, J. (2013). *El futuro es un país extraño*. Barcelona: Pasado&Presente.
- Fornaciari, F. (2011). Framing the Egyptian Revolution: A content analysis of Al Jazeera English and the BBC. *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* 4(2+3), 223–235.
- Galtung, J. & Ruge, M. (1965). The Structure of Foreign News. The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crises in four Norwegian newspapers. *Journal of Peace Research* 2, 64–91.

- Ghannam, J. (2011). *Social Media in the Arab World : Leading up to the Uprisings of 2011*. Washington: CIMA.
- Grossi, G. (1981). Professionalità e casi eccezionali. *Problemi dell'Informazione* 6(1), 71-86.
- Hale, H.E. (2013). Regime Change Cascades: What We Have Learned from the 1848 Revolutions to the 2011 Arab Uprisings. *Annual Review of Political Science* 16(1), 331-353.
- Hamdy, N., & Gomaa, E.H. (2012). Framing the Egyptian Uprising in Arabic Language Newspapers and Social Media. *Journal of Communication* 62(2), 195-211.
- Jellissen, S.M. (2012). Book Review: Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt. *Comparative Political Studies* 45(4), 535-539.
- Kevin, D., Pelicanò, F. & Schneeberger, A. (2013). *Television News Channels in Europe*. Brussels: European Commission.
- Lakoff, G. (2007). *No pienses en un elefante: lenguaje y debate político*. Madrid: Complutense.
- Lim, M. (2013). Framing Bouazizi: "White lies", hybrid network, and collective/connective action in the 2010-11 Tunisian uprising. *Journalism* 14(7), 921-941.
- Loomis, K.D. (2009). A Comparison of Broadcast World News Web Pages: Al Jazeera English, BBC, CBS, and CNN. *Electronic News* 3(3), 143-160.
- Lotan, G., Graeff, E., Ananny, M., Gaffney, D., Pearce, I. & Boyd, D. (2011). The Arab Spring The Revolutions Were Tweeted: Information Flows during the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions. *International Journal of Communication* 5, 1375-1405.
- McDermott, A. (2013). *Egypt from Nasser to Mubarak*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Meltzer, K. (2013). The US launch of Al Jazeera English in Washington, DC: An analysis of American media coverage. *Journalism*, 14(5), 661-677.
- Miles, H. (2006). *Al Jazeera. How Arab TV News Challenged the World*. London: Abacus.
- Pew Research Center (2012). *In Changing News Landscape, Even Television is Vulnerable*. Washington: Pew Research Center.
- Rheingold, H. (2004). *Multitudes inteligentes. La próxima revolución social (Smart Mobs)*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Robinson, P. (2005). *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Ryan, C. (1991). *Prime Time Activism: Media Strategies for Grassroots Organizing*. Boston: South End Press.
- Segura, A. (2002). *Aproximación al mundo islámico: desde los orígenes hasta nuestros días*. Barcelona: UOC.
- Seigneurie, K. (2012). Discourses of the 2011 Arab Revolutions. *Journal of Arabic Literature* 43(2-3), 484-509.
- Singerman, D. (2014). Youth, Gender, and Dignity in the Egyptian Uprising. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 9(3), 1-27.
- Tagma, H.M., Kalaycioglu, E. & Akcali, E. (2013). "Taming" Arab social movements: Exporting neoliberal governmentality. *Security Dialogue* 44(5-6), 375-392.
- Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making News*. New York: Free Press.
- Valassopoulos, A. (2012). Beyond Al-Jazeera. *New Formations* 76(1), 143-147.
- Zayani, M. (2008). Arab media, corporate communications, and public relations: The case of Al Jazeera. *Asian Journal of Communication* 18(3), 207-222.