

# Media coverage of the Syrian crisis from 2011 to 2013; a comparison between Al-Jazeera and Al-Manar channels

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The Syrian crisis is characterized by the intertwining of factors and variables at the local, regional and global levels. The geopolitical importance of Syria and the positions of the Syrian government on many issues, most notably the Arab-Israeli conflict and the support of the “Resistance” in Palestine and Lebanon, radically divided the Syrian society and the Arab media into supporters and opponents of the Syrian government and created contrasting mental images of the Syrian crisis. Media not only transmit events but contribute to their creation as well. Media contents are formulated according to the desires and tendencies of the sender so that the recipients get mental images of the facts that make them adopt ideas and behaviors consistent with the propagandists’ objectives. For many, the media are the basic source of information and consequently they are the creator of thoughts and attitudes.

This research relies on the semiotic analysis of the content of a purposive sample of news reports from Al-Manar and Al-Jazeera channels from 2011 to 2013. These reports address the internal axis of the Syrian crisis, i.e. what is happening inside Syria and not outside it. The news report requires the journalist to be objective and to present the facts with the utmost credibility. In this context, the study examines the interrelation between the verbal and nonverbal signs used by the journalists to express explicitly or implicitly their attitudes towards the events and to convey the propaganda of the conflicting parties. The signifiers were classified according to the topic they raise. Interaction between the two levels of significations, the denotative and connotative, is taken into consideration.

This study is based mainly on Agenda-setting Theory, News Framing Theory and Gatekeeping Theory, and based on a multidisciplinary approach. The evoked disciplines are: information and communication sciences, media sociology, politics, linguistics, history, propaganda and misleading, military sciences, sociology, and religion.

The results show that Al-Jazeera adopts and defends the ideas and attitudes of the Syrian opposition while Al-Manar is the defender of the Syrian government and president. Both channels exploit the characteristics of non-verbal signs, characteristics of the Arabic language and metaphors derived from Arab customs, specifically the Syrian ones, to emotionally affect the recipients and push them to take steps in line with the wishes of the propagandists.

Keywords: Syrian Crisis, Media Content Analysis, Propaganda and Misleading, Verbal and non-Verbal Signs.

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