

Case Study

News Coverage Trends of the 2016 Saudi-Irani Crisis in Anglo-American Newspapers: A Case Study of Al-Nimr's Execution

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Abstract: The Foreign newspapers play an important and effective role in shaping the international opinion towards lots of issues and events, especially in the transitional stages and the conflict world zones.

The international arena witnessed lots of controversies about the role of the foreign press in covering crisis events in the Arab World in the wake of the Arab Spring revolutions. These controversies revealed lots of problems facing these newspapers in their way of dealing with the Arab world countries, especially in the light of accusations of using crises and picking selected information that support the pro-states and implement their interests. In this context, the study attempts to find out the extent of bias in Anglo-American newspapers in shaping the press coverage of the crisis that happened between Saudi Arabia and Iran because of the execution of Shiite cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. Nimr [was one of 47 people Saudi Arabia executed for terrorism](#).

In addition, it tackles the factors affecting the coverage, whether related to editorial policy in the newspaper or agenda interests in international relations and attitudes of state policies towards the events taking place.

This paper depends on two methods: The Survey Method (Content Analysis) and the Comparative method. The paper will use both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

The paper time frame starts at the beginning of the crisis which was at the 2nd of January 2016 and ends by the 31st of January.

The two newspapers that are included in this paper are The New York Times, and The Guardian Weekly.

Key words: International News\ News Coverage\ Media Bias\ the New York Times\ the Guardian Weekly\ Saudi-Irani Crisis 2016\ Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr

Introduction

To what extent is the Anglo-American news coverage biased? How do you tell that such news piece coverage is bias? How do you detect news bias? Actually, reporting bias happens mainly due to a journalist who under-reported or over-reported a specific event (Baum & Zhukov, 2015) ⁽¹⁾.

On the 2nd of January 2016, Saudi Arabia government executed Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr as he was one of the 47 prisoners they executed due to terrorism. Saudi official statement included that they had been found guilty of organising terrorist attacks on Saudis, foreigners, security personnel and oil installations. The Saudi Press Agency reported, citing the Koran, said: "The recompense of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and do mischief in the land is only that they shall be killed or crucified or their hands and their feet be cut off from opposite sides, or be exiled from the land" (Kerr, 2016) ⁽²⁾, (BBC Arabic) ⁽³⁾.

On the other hand, Iran responded toughly after the execution rejecting and denying the rumours that say that Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr was involved in any terrorist attack or even violence. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader warned Saudi Arabia stating that they will face "divine revenge" for what they did. Not only their president and leaders who were responding against what happened, also the Shiite citizens in Tehran, about 3,000 people demonstrated against the Saudi

royal family and burned the Saudi embassy in Tehran (AFP, 2016) ⁽⁴⁾, (Fars News) ⁽⁵⁾.

In more than two decades, Saudi Arabia's execution of leading Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr has generated a another conflict between the Sunni kingdom in Saudi Arabia and Shiite Empire in Iran destroying the last of the diplomatic relationship between both countries.

The Anglo-American newspapers play pivotal role in shaping the image of any crisis that happens between countries. The examining of media coverage is a fundamental aspect as it suggests the groundwork to study and analyse the impact of media and the effects of it.

Media studies show the presence of bias in many formats. One of the media studies showed six ways of bias in press coverage. First, removing one side of the conflict in the coverage. Second, by picking sources that support a side against the other. Third, by choosing the stories that match the editorial agenda. Fourth, by inserting the news in certain places in their order of importance to the journalist. Fifth, by formulating descriptions and labels to highlight a side positively and ignore the other. Finally, rotating the facts providing one and only explanation to the events, and removing any other interpretation which defames sides over the others (Baker, 2005) ⁽⁶⁾.

Research Problem

The contradictory beliefs about news media bias availability highlight a need to explore more about the presence of bias and the factors that influence it. The research problem tries to find out the extent of bias in the Anglo-American newspapers and its shaping of the press coverage of the crisis that happened between Saudi Arabia and Iran because of the execution of Shiite cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. This paper aims at tackling the factors affecting the coverage, whether related to editorial policy in the newspaper or to the agenda interests in international relations and attitudes of state policies towards the events taking place. These attitudes are expressed through the mechanisms of the international news flow and their impact on these newspapers' coverage for landmarks and breakthrough events such as this crisis.

Research Importance

Several factors show the importance of this study. Some researchers called the conflict and tensions rising between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle East the "Cold war" (Grumet, 2015) ⁽⁷⁾, (Gause III, 2014) ⁽⁸⁾ as Saudi Arabia and Iran now view one another as enemies, and are locked in an escalating competition for influence and dominance of the Middle East. This has an impact on the nature of the political relations and special agendas of each major country in the world and that could affect the press coverage of each of the foreign newspapers. Also, the way the American and British newspapers cover the conflict between these countries which may affect the public opinion of the world towards them. In addition, there is a question that rises in the way the foreign newspapers cover the Middle East news in light of the choices and interests that control the news flow and that leads to focusing on a specific angle in the coverage that helps in shaping certain perceptions about the crisis under study. Finally, the current study analysis in the coverage of newspapers when studying those countries affairs, gives the researcher the opportunity to understand the mechanisms which are used to frame the news in the press coverage of Anglo-American newspapers.

Research Goals

This study aims to identify the bias used –if found - in the newspapers under study in its news coverage of the Saudi-Irani crisis 2016 and how the interests of the countries that issue the newspapers can affect the news coverage, in addition to understanding the role of the news sources that Anglo-American newspapers provide and depend on in shaping the trends of the coverage towards the crisis. And finally, comparing between the newspapers under study's trends in the coverage of the crisis and the factors affecting each of them by identifying and determining the mechanisms used by the bias in the newspapers under study when covering the international events applying that on Saudi-Irani crisis.

Literature Review

The scholars of media have been questioning whether there is

bias or not in the news coverage of newspapers and, if available, the types of such bias. This will be the first dimension in this study's literature review. In this dimension, the researcher is going to present some studies that founded that bias existed in the news coverage and others that did not find any.

From those who proved that bias exist, (Dragojevic et al, 2016) ⁽⁹⁾ tried to find out whether there is linguistic bias in the American newspapers coverage towards the U.S. immigration from Mexico in the four U.S. states that border Mexico (i.e., Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas) or not. Results supported the presence of linguistic bias in the statements. In other words, language used was the type of bias available in the newspaper coverage.

In addition (Baum & Zhukov, 2015) ⁽¹⁰⁾ study aimed at finding out the reporting bias in the international newspapers, whether it is under-reporting or over-reporting the issues it is covering. They argued that news coverage of a conflict relies on two points which are the conflict event itself and its importance, and whether the coverage published in the newspapers can direct the political perspective or not. The study worked on a sample of 113 countries in the period of 18 December 2010 till 23 October 2011. The researchers found that news coverage depends on the type of regime Findings showed that in the non-democratic countries, they under reported the issues "pro-incumbency bias" in their coverage while in the democratic countries, they over reported "pro-challenger bias" in their coverage. It proved that the coverage published in the newspapers can direct the political context. In democratic countries, bias is shown through their institutions such as newsworthiness that highlights conflict, novelty and proximity, etc.... Those countries tend to result in conflict coverage supporting anti-regime forces.

Also, (Navia & Osorio, 2015) ⁽¹¹⁾ study tried to examine the bias included in two main newspapers in Chile. El Mercurio and La Tercera between 1994 and 2010. The researchers tried to examine the factors influencing the coverage in those newspapers such as the political bias. They analysed the headlines to search for bias. Results found that La Tercera newspaper concentrated on all the presidents and that caused ideological bias found when analysing the newspaper. They were standing beside Piñera in a clear way. In El Mercurio a greater bias against Bachelet than the other presidents was found.

Moreover, (Dunham, 2013) ⁽¹²⁾ study evaluated the extent of bias in six international major newspapers plus the Associated Press news agency. Dunham studies how the political bias affects the media content in the major newspapers. This study specifically aims at knowing and identifying the sources of bias. This study focused on what is usually repeated in the media content instead of analysing the coverage of specific events. The study found that the bias in the news comes from the reporters and editors and not from the publishers and readers. The study also showed that all the news in the Washington Post newspaper is connected to the ideological frames of the country that issues the newspaper which is

considered to be rightist.

Also, (Caballero, 2010) ⁽¹³⁾ study explored how the newspapers use bias and to what extent it affects the news coverage of the Palestine-Israel Conflict. Caballero started working from the point where the previous studies concluded that The New York Times used to be biased towards Israel when covering the conflict. The study worked on The New York Times only. They worked on the Operation Cast Lead. Results proved that the newspaper coverage through using sources stayed biased favouring Israel. It increased the distortion. In addition, the bias in coverage was shown through the omission of facts too.

As there are studies who proved there is different types of bias in the news coverage, there are also other studies which proved that bias was not available at all as stated previously like (Budak, Goel & Rao, 2016) ⁽¹⁴⁾ study which aimed to explore the availability of ideological bias in 803,146 news stories published over twelve months in the American newspapers. Results indicated "ranging from The New York Times on the left to Fox News on the right have surprisingly similar, and largely neutral, descriptive reporting of US politics". In other words, the researchers found that no bias was used in the coverage.

Also, (Watson, 2014) ⁽¹⁵⁾ study aimed to dig deeper after he found several studies stating that there is no bias related to journalists' personal beliefs and attitudes. Watson conducted this study applying it on BP oil spill crisis checking Gulf Coast journalists' beliefs and attitudes towards it. He clearly found that there is no positive bias included in the news coverage and clearly journalists' personal attitudes towards the crisis was not reflected in the coverage.

In addition, (Judy, 2010) ⁽¹⁶⁾ study was trying to detect the availability of bias through analysing the news coverage of the 2009 Virginia gubernatorial race by the Richmond Times-Dispatch and The Virginian-Pilot. Judy questioned the availability of political bias or so on from types of bias in the newspaper coverage. Results showed that there is no proof that any bias was included in the coverage even the political one.

The second dimension of the literature review included studies around the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The researcher found studies which explored the historical relationship between both countries (how and when they stopped trusting each other?) in order to understand the newly-addressed conflict between them which is being analysed in this study to know why it became a big struggle to the extent that newspapers was keen to cover each and every single detail about, as well as understanding the content written in the newspapers under study.

The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran witnessed several fluctuations as (Jahner, 2012) ⁽¹⁷⁾ studied their relationship at 1928 when al-Saud dynasty was well-known. At the beginning, they never visited each other until the mid-1960s. The relation between them started at 1958 when King Faysal was overthrown in Iraq. Consequently, Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi and the Saudi Kings Saud especially King Faysal who took the power in 1964, started normal discussions to organize and manage their local rules which

supported the both countries relationship. The oil and gas united both of them in a friendly relationship till the end of the 1970s when the Shah was overthrown in 1979 and this was considered the first clear problem that happened between both countries that led to the breaking of the relations in 1988 by Iran's boycotting Haj in Saudi Arabia. In 1987, the year which included the Mecca incident, Iran believed that Saudi Arabia created the violent clashes that happened between the Iranian pilgrims and the Saudi security forces where 275 Iranians were killed and 303 were injured. From that time, Iran spoke out and said that Saudi Arabia does not deserve to protect the holy places of Islam. Later on, they united once again after the Gulf War facing Iraq which was their mutual enemy. At 1991, their diplomatic relationship was officially back, however, they still did not trusted each other.

Other studies such as (Alghunaim, 2014) ⁽¹⁸⁾ addressed the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran and highlighted that it started due to Iran's rebellion of the Arabian governments, particularly the Gulf ones that include huge number of Shiite citizens who are considered to be minorities when compared to the number of their populations. In addition to Iran's point of view in the way it deals with the West which changed with the beginning of the new rules after the Iranian revolution led by Iran's first Supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini who implemented an "anti-Western and anti-shah strategy". On the contrary, Saudi Arabia was an ally to the United States of America since 1974. Take into consideration that after the Iranian revolution, the Iranian leaders used to "brutally criticize the Islamic legitimacy of Saudi Arabia" and that also increased the tension between both countries.

Downs (2012) ⁽¹⁹⁾ study was from the studies which focused on the Shiites and their actions that caused crisis at some times, actions that adds to the mistrust between both countries. The study denoted that 1979 was the early appearance of Shiite in Qatif town which is located at the Eastern Province in Saudi Arabia. The ruling family in Saudi Arabia has been cautious and suspicious of the Iranian effect among its Shiite minority in that town. This was worsened with the Khobar Towers bombing in 1996. In Qatif's case directly after Khomeini's rise, Shiite demonstrators "held posters of the Ayatollah and denounced the Saudi regime".

Also, (Rizwan, et al, 2014) ⁽²⁰⁾ study mentioned some historic events where in 1996 there was a bombing at Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in which some American army personnel were injured and others died. The United States at that time blamed Iran for the explosion, however, the Saudi régime did not disturb its relations with Iran.

Wehrey, et al (2009) ⁽²¹⁾ studied the relationship between both countries since the fall of Saddam in 2003. It was known that Saudi Arabia supported Saddam Husain spreading out action against Iran infuriating Iran. The researches referred that there is a main clear issue that Iran sees "Riyadh as America's proxy". The overthrow of Saddam caused lots of changes in the politics power in the Gulf area that affected the relationship in a negative way between Saudi Arabia and Iran again. The change of the benefits broke the unity between them. The most

harmful aspect to the relationship was the authorized and permitted Iranian mission for bigger and superior effect and power in the period after Saddam Hussein was thrown from power.

Also, there are various studies that emphasized the relation between Saudi Arabia and Iran as a conflict between Sunni and Shiite such as Grumet (2015) ⁽²²⁾ study who viewed the main conflict between both countries as considering Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Sunni and Iran, the Kingdom of Shiites. "The nature of the Saudi-Iranian rivalry has led many Middle East experts to identify their rivalry as a New Middle East Cold War" and that was questioned in this study. Results found that the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran, however, while instilled with tactical and "geopolitical underpinnings", is mainly affected by "religious and ethnic ideology". The struggle between Sunni in Saudi Arabia and Shiite in Iran is not the consequence of an early division that happened between the Sunnis and the Shiites. Relatively, it is the result and the consequence of periods of "political and religious contestation that existed between empires that has now manifested itself into the politics of these modern-nation states".

As well, there are studies such as (Osiewicz, 2016) ⁽²³⁾ study who showed that the rivalry between both countries affected other countries too on an international level. This study was conducted after the latest crisis between Saudi Arabia and Iran at January 2016 explored the determinants of the rivalry between both countries. The researcher noted that both countries represent two different political systems, taking into consideration that all what happens between them is due to the "religious-ideological antagonism and competition for regional influence". Osiewicz highlighted that Saudis and Iranians have already contested for "political influence in other countries of the region" such as Bahrain, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt" referring to the latest June, 2013 event in Egypt where Saudi Arabia supported Egypt while they were protesting to throw the Muslim Brotherhood from the regime as they were going to unite with Iranians. Adding to this the escalating tensions that affected the relationship between both countries which can be understood in the light of the two proxy wars in Yemen and Syria these days.

Esfandiary and Tabataba (2016) ⁽²⁴⁾ study adds how the war in Yemen affected and was affected by the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. In 2014, the Houthi protestors "took control" in Sanaa, Yemen's capital. At that time, Gulf officials believed and stated that Iran is behind what is happening there as they aim at creating a Shiite Empire. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia did not prefer, accept nor support the war in Yemen because they represent the Sunni Kingdom. The Saudi-led alliance attacks against Yemen were represented as part of an alternative war between the two main rivals (Saudi Arabia and Iran), in which both had identical participation.

Theoretical Framework:

**This paper will depend on two theories which are:
Framing Theory**

Goffman worked on it in 1974 then McCombs and Shaw Weaver pointed out that this theory was generated from the Agenda-setting theory (Scheufele, 1999) ⁽²⁵⁾. It was stated that according to Entman at 1993, "framing involves selection and salience". He believed that through framing, you can understand the reasons why the problems occur, and it helps in making moral judgments and recommending solutions.

Mcquail (2010) ⁽²⁶⁾ explained that it is hard for the journalist who does to use the framing -to be objective all the time, causing what is called the "unintended bias".

This theory narrates the events and puts it in a certain frame to direct the receiver to judge the case according to what they want through the availability of information about that event. These pieces of information are the path that leads the receivers to take provisions as made by the framing theory and the information agenda that is sent.

George Lakoff, professor at UC Berkeley pointed that the "Communication itself comes with a frame". For example, he pointed that the language chosen for the news is considered a type of frame.

Framing can be identified through the sources that are used in the piece and the context in which the piece is created.

News frames help in creating public frames regarding any subject, or event appearing in the media fields. Entman in 1991 pointed that frames are two-fold: the first kind is media dealing frames which are considered aspects distinguishing the media content. And the second kind: is the frame adopted by the public towards the event or the case presented in the media means.

Bias studies try to find out whether news coverage was positive, neutral or negative towards an issue. When someone starts thinking deeply about the news coverage in the context of framing, the old concept of bias seems to be constricted and basic. In other words, it is easy for the readers to find out that the journalist or the newspaper in general is biased towards a candidate or a specific issue, but it is difficult for them to find out that "a news event is being packaged as a certain type of story". Framing can be found in headlines, leads, nut graphs and quotations, etc... (Severin & Tankard, 2010) ⁽²⁷⁾.

International News Flow Theory

Some researchers attributed the importance of the news flow to its impact on the public as they see that the news flow, its composition and shaping are considered two of the important factors in shaping the image of the world in the minds (Rosengram, 1974) ⁽²⁸⁾.

This theory returns to the "International News" book that is published by Galtung. It is a well-known theory which Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge's worked on it. They discussed the theoretical structure of the international monopoly of the media. Galtung worked in one of his studies on the direction of the media flow and he designed the "centre margin" pattern as he believed that the world is divided into dominant countries which represent the centre and countries dominated by those countries that represent the periphery. He concluded that the relationship between those two sides is not a

horizontal interactive and exchange relationship. It is actually a vertical relationship where there is no equality as the centre controls the news flow in the world.

The interest in studying the flow of media began with the committee that was set up by the UNESCO to prepare a report to deal with the unbalanced media in the world. Shayne McBride was the committee chairman in 1977 and it kept working for three years. The committee ended the report in 1980 and it contained a number of facts that are included in "Many Voices One World" book.

The report stated that the concept of the free flow is used for the benefit and the sake of the Western countries as by this way it ensures its cultural hegemony. The report also pointed out to the right of the developing countries to establish independent national media systems away from the various multinational media systems' monopolies.

The report stated that the most-powerful countries have a superior status and this can generate economic, social and political negative effects and that the principle of the free news flow can be used as an ideological and economic tool to control who do not have those methods. Moreover, the free news flow resulted in one flow (from north to south).

The report also noted the need for the work with a new media world-wide system to repair the existing deficiency in the media based on the information that states that communication is an essential element of cultural independence. The gap is widening between the developing countries which publish their message freely between the countries that do not have the possibility of freedom which results in negative consequences. The developed countries must provide help to the countries that want to strengthen their ability in the communication field in order to stop the increase of dependence of developing countries on developed countries, and the need to have a double-way communication. Furthermore, they must respect the independence of all communities and its dignities without compromising their identities, so that the communication can repair the existing deficiency.

Methodology

The study will use both quantitative and qualitative analysis in order to fulfil its goals. The qualitative analysis will be used to analyse the quantitative results and content analysis results. The researcher has used survey methodology in an attempt to describe and explain the bias in the Anglo-American newspapers by using the content analysis tool. This tool will be used to examine the two newspapers. The comparative method was also used to contrast the two journalistic circumstances which are the American and the British as a way of their coverage of Saudi-Irani 2016 crisis.

Time Frame of Study

The paper time frame starts at the beginning of the crisis, the 2nd of January 2016 and ends by the 31st of January.

Study Sample

The two newspapers that are included in this paper are The New York Times, and The Guardian Weekly.

Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions to study the sources, news coverage and bias in the foreign newspapers.-:

- 1- What are the types of bias in the news coverage used in the newspapers' samples?
- 2- What factors influence the news coverage in the newspapers' samples?
- 3- What are the similarities and differences in the newspapers under study's coverage?

Results

After the execution of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, the Shia cleric at the 2nd of January 2016, **The New York Times**' first published piece about the crisis that popped up between Saudi Arabia and Iran was on the 4th of January 2016 with a headline "Tensions rise in Middleast after cleric is executed" ⁽²⁹⁾. This piece started by a description that was not quoted to someone and not even a fact saying "Most of the men were beheaded; some were shot by firing squads. Unlike most Saudi executions, those on Saturday were not public." Here, the first point which was cleared was confirmed that the executions were not terrible as the one they described few words earlier. Later on in the same piece, it was written that "Saudi Arabia has maintained that Sheikh Nimr was actively involved in violence against security forces during Arab Spring protests in the Eastern part of the country, but it has not made public any evidence it may have against him". Here, The New York Times was fair enough to say the point of view of Saudi Arabia towards Sheikh Nimr and at the same time, it stated that no one saw those evidence, which is correct. This piece also included an angle that showed the Saudi embassy which was set on fire in Tehran by Iranian protests. This was a clear point to any reader that Iranians violated the rights of any embassy in their country as they quoted Iranian officials accusing that act from their citizens.

On the 5th of January, the New York Times piece headline was "3 Gulf allies join Saudis in reducing ties with Iran" ⁽³⁰⁾. This piece was a beginning for many coming pieces that talked about the Saudis who have many allies that supported and stood beside where on the contrary stands Iran single fighting alone with no support. Take into consideration the piece was not biased because the journalist also represented the reactions through statements and so on from Iran about what happened. In this piece, Bahrain, Emirates and Sudan joined Saudi Arabia and became their allies "Three Sunni-led countries joined Saudi Arabia on Monday in serving or downgrading diplomatic ties with Iran, worsening a geopolitical conflict with sectarian dimensions in one of the world's most volatile regions".

On the same day, another piece was published too under the headline "The Similarities and differences of Sunni and Shia Islam" ⁽³¹⁾. A clear correct information about the similarities and differences between both Sunni and Shia. Again, no Bias occurred.

On the 6th of January, the piece was titled "U.S. strains to defend its alliance with Saudis"⁽³²⁾ and mainly expressed the inability of Obama administration to convict and judge the

execution of the cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, for "fear of undermining the Saudi leadership".

On the same day, another piece was published too under the headline "Emerging from sanctions, Iran faces new rides" ⁽³³⁾. In this one, beside the new ally which is Kuwait that joined Saudi Arabia, Iran's own internal tensions started popping up too "finding themselves mired in a new crisis". This new crisis was being described by opponents and challengers as a provocateur in the local region and in the international arena too.

In those previous pieces, the reader can conclude that Iran lost and is losing a lot while Saudi Arabia is gaining benefits such as the support of lots of allies. When analyzing this, it is noticed that the newspaper used the Win and Loss Frame.

On the 7th of January, the New York Times piece headline was "Saudi-Iran feud imperils Iraqi's ISIS fight" ⁽³⁴⁾. In this piece, it was shown how the Sunni at Iraq fought and wanted to take the country from Shiite, but the Shiite won and Iraq's flag flew again. All of this happened as a geopolitical consequence of the crisis as Sunnis thought that they are more powerful after what Saudi Arabia did.

Also, another piece was published under the headline "Sunni States wary of clash with Iran" ⁽³⁵⁾ telling and assuring the consequences of the geopolitical conflict between both countries. Returning back to the allies adding Egypt to those beside Saudi Arabia. Also, that many countries extend sympathy, but little else to avoid courting conflict.

On the 8th of January, under the headline "Tehran says Saudis hit Yemen embassy" ⁽³⁶⁾, the piece again showed another geopolitical consequence for the conflict between both countries. This time not in Iraq, but in Yemen where Iran accused Saudi Arabia of an aerial attack on its embassy in Sana, Yemen's capital. However, in this piece, the journalist quoted close eye witnesses (guards at the Iranian embassy) who said "the building had not been hit". Also, another eye witness said that the airstrike hit another house on the other side of the street from where the embassy was located. This house belonged to a son of Ali Abdullah Saleh, Yemen's president. Here, you can find that the newspaper was again providing fair images, the one of accusation that Iran is throwing already and the other is a proof for the opposite of what they said, clearing Saudi's image.

Here, it is noticed that the newspaper used the lie frame where it showed that Iran invented the news of hitting its embassy in Yemen, framing Iran as being a liar and that Saudi Arabia was a victim which is another frame used to clear Saudis image. Also, from analysis, it is proven that the newspaper used the Defense frame by providing the readers all facts to prove that Iran was creating a lie.

On the same day too, under the headline "Saudis welcome tough line against Iran" ⁽³⁷⁾, it was a contrary for the other previous news piece where it expressed Saudi's decision to execute "Yet for many Saudis, the act was simple justice". In the piece, Saudi point of view was highlighted.

On the 9-10th of January, under the headline "Turkey reluctantly drawn into Saudi-Iranian dispute" ⁽³⁸⁾, the journalist

stated that Turkey was the latest ally for Saudi Arabia as the majority in the country are Sunni. At the same time, the journalist explored its relationship with both rivalries Saudi Arabia and Iran. Turkey is trying to rebuild its relationship with Riyadh which was destroyed few years ago during the Arab Spring revolutions as Turkey supported the Muslim Brotherhood while Saudi Arabia did not in Egypt. However, Turkey does not consider Iran a lot as they only import natural gas from.

Gathering all the pieces together and analysing them, it can be understood that The New York Times was able not be biased providing its readers with different views from both countries using enough facts and statements. However, it was clear through narrating all pieces together as one piece, that The New York Times was supporting Saudi Arabia, clearing its image when necessary. Taking also in consideration that one of the pieces talked about The United States supporting the country of the conflict crisis.

The New York Times used actual facts, but they inserted those facts into certain frames. That was the main way of bias the newspaper used. This is what can be called intelligent bias – the bias which is conducted in a systematic professional way.

The Content Analysis Sheet indicated that The New York Times used lots of sources (62 Sources), while The Guardian Weekly rarely used Newspaper sources (5 Sources only). In addition The New York Times newspaper used the biggest number of Foreigners and Arab sources in its news pieces (27.2%) as they explored the allies whom Saudi Arabia won during the crisis against Iran. Journalists in the newspaper did not attribute more information to Saudi sources over the Iranian and vice versa. The New York Times was on track of credibility as it used 84.09% Known and Identified Sources and only 15.9% was Anonymous Sources which does not affect or hurt its credibility in front of its readers. The Content Analysis Sheet proved that The New York Times newspaper used different views with 70%. It included lots of sources which many of them have different views.

Looking on the other newspaper **The Guardian Weekly**, after the execution of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, the prominent Shia cleric on the 2nd of January 2016, its first published piece about the crisis that popped up between Saudi Arabia and Iran was on the 8-14 January issue 2016 with a headline "Saudis widen Muslim divide" ⁽³⁹⁾. This headline showed from the very beginning that the newspaper took a side and judged the crisis between both countries. Words Bias was available at the very beginning of the piece introduction as it described the execution "was an act motivated by politics than judicial considerations" without even relying on someone's quote. In Journalism, journalists are not allowed to state any opinion either direct or indirect in a hard news. It is known that "most newspapers set aside particular sections of the newspaper for columns, illustrations, and letters that express opinion, clearly separating factual reporting from these less objective features" (Walbert, 2008) ⁽⁴⁰⁾. Hard News is what is called factual reporting, so word bias when occurs, means the journalist lead the piece to the side he want. Beside the word bias, another

bias occurred which is the sources that all support one point of view (Iran's side). In this piece, almost all sources supported the negative image towards Saudi Arabia expressing that they did a mistake when they executed the cleric. They also labelled the crisis from the very beginning that it will cause Muslim divide and that execution will reverberate through the Muslim world.

Also, in the same issue, another piece was published under the headline "Rouhani urges calm amid boiling tensions" ⁽⁴¹⁾. The journalist again did the same thing, all sources served what Iran wanted to say and tell the world. They even quoted the family of the cleric where they expressed that they do not want blood at all "No one should have any reactions outside this peaceful framework enough bloodshed".

Here, it is noticed that the newspaper used the human interest frame as they got quotes from the cleric's family saying that they are accepting what happened and they do not prefer "bloodshed" putting them in the victim frame and inserting what Saudi Arabia did in the violent frame. The journalist did not represent Saudi Arabia's point of view in which they could have tried to see their reasons of execution, but the journalist decided to ignore. That was one of the ways used suggesting that there is a sort of desire to distort the reality of the situation between Saudi Arabia and Iran in *The Guardian Weekly*. Representing the piece, at first the journalist wrote how Iran sees the image now "would cost Saudi Arabia dearly", then what happened in October 2015 from rejection of the appeal, then the execution and United States as Saudi's biggest backer, then quotes from Hassan Rouhani, Iranian president, then Ayatollah Ali Khameni, Iran's supreme leader and so on.

On the 15-21 January issue, under the headline of "Rouhani seeks to turn Saudi setback into an advantage" ⁽⁴²⁾. Again the same point all sources in the piece served Iran and its point of view ignoring Saudi Arabia's one and definitely and consequently word bias occurred making sure in the piece that "Saudi Arabia has a long history as a reliable ally while Iran is unpredictable".

On the 22-28 January issue, under the headline of "Tehran's resurgence sparks anxiety in Saudi Arabia" ⁽⁴³⁾. All the piece was expressing the fear of Saudi Arabia from Iran. However, the only one source "Adel -al- Jubeir, the Saudi foreign minister" available in the piece was Saudi. The piece included fears such as "billions of dollars were wiped off Saudi", "their larger fear is that Iran flush the new revenues will be emboldened to intensify its activities across a violent and unstable Middle East" and "last Summer Haj disaster in which hundreds of Iranian pilgrims were killed in a Mecca stampede, brought the relationship to a new low" and so on. The Journalist highlighted the point that the Iranians accuse the Saudi's of creating ISIS too.

Here, it is noticed that the newspaper used the strategy of recalling the facts from the past, despite the lack of its consistency with the current context. In other words, the newspaper used the historical frame too.

On the same issue, a second published piece with a headline "Sanctions lifted but caveats remain" ⁽⁴⁴⁾ stated details about

Iran and its nuclear program which enables it to be a strong and powerful country. In addition, that they believe that now is the suitable time for the Muslim nations to join hands and get rid of the world of violent extremism as Iran is ready. In addition, in the same issue, a third published piece with a headline "Iran releases 10 American sailors" ⁽⁴⁵⁾. Again all pieces are related to Iran and only. No Saudi Arabia point of view in any of its pieces.

Here, it is noticed that the newspaper used the Win and Loss Frame. It framed Iran as winning after the latest conflict and on the other hand Saudi Arabia was framed losing. Noting that this exactly was the opposite of the New York Times newspaper whom inserted Saudi Arabia in the winning frame and Iran in the losing one.

On the 29 January – 4 February issue, under the headline of "Austerity, Saudi style: Fewer SUVs and shrinking subsidies" ⁽⁴⁶⁾ where the piece highlighted the negative sides of the economic crisis on Saudi Arabia, price of petrol which has just gone up by 60%, rents which have risen and worries what will happen when all subsidies end in five years. This time they talked about Saudi Arabia, but expressed which was previously stated which again shows negative points towards the country.

On the same issue, a second published piece with a headline "Pot Plants and lilac doors ... the desert jail where Riyadh shuts away its enemies" ⁽⁴⁷⁾ where again the whole piece depended on one single source only. In this piece especially, the headline did not match the piece.

On the same issue, a third published piece with a headline "Chess forbidden in Islam, rules Saudi Mufti" ⁽⁴⁸⁾ in which a spark was lightened with lots of questions because the main news was that Saudi Mufti banned, why the journalist got another Iraqi Shia religious authority to comment and compare this to Sunni.

Also, on the same issue, a fourth published piece with a headline "Saudi Arabia's age of anxiety" ⁽⁴⁹⁾ where the journalist used sarcasm through quotations such as "The Al-Saud are the best of the worst quipped a middle-aged government employee ...", another one commenting on Saudi Arabia's king "Yes he is smart, but he has too much power and not enough experience and that worries people ..."

Here, it is noticed that the newspaper used absolute provisions without any facts or evidence. Also, a question popping up is whether the journalist can go to any anonymous citizen and just quote her saying he is not experienced!!! Almost all Saudi sources were anonymous and commenting using sarcasm on the family and country. Those sources were also accusing them for creating ISIS without providing the readers any proof. They were saying that the country is at a turning point, which means that they will lose their power very soon. The whole piece was addressing the royal family in Saudi Arabia and judging them by anonymous sources opinions. In addition that the newspaper created a link between Saudi Arabia and ISIS, and that is unrelated information still again without proof.

The Content Analysis Sheet indicated that there is a huge usage for the Unknown nationality of sources in *The Guardian Weekly Newspaper* which included 25.7%. As stated in the

above lines, the sheet confirmed that The Guardian Weekly scored the highest in using the Anonymous Sources in its news pieces which shows that 51.4% of its news pieces including Anonymous Sources which is more than half of the sources used. The results also showed that the Others was used a lot coming after using the governmental sources 28.5%. Mainly most of the Others were experts who were not talking by the governmental tongue nor were eye witness for the crisis that happened between both countries. They were just trying to give their opinion about the crisis. The Guardian Weekly newspaper is ranked first with 80% in presenting the events from one side only which shows that it is biased towards the angle it picks to support.

Beside all this, when analysing the headlines separately in all the news pieces that are published in the newspaper, bias seems to be clear. The headlines included specific judgmental point of views that mirror and reflect clear bias attitude with Iran against Saudi Arabia, putting Iran in the victim frame.

Conclusion & Discussion

This study was questioning how the Anglo-American newspapers covered the Saudi-Irani, 2016 crisis. As stated previously, there are lots of bias types that newspapers can use in their coverage and results found that there were lots of them used but in an indirect way. Although The New York Times was providing all views from all angles about both countries, still it was biased supporting Saudi Arabia. While in the Guardian Weekly newspaper, sources lost the balance and objectivity in the news pieces which were published. It mainly depended on the one-sided view that supports the view they want to convince the reader with to frame the events as they want them to see taking the side of Iran. The sources helped in working out this scenario.

Moreover, this study was questioning the factors influencing the news bias in the newspapers. It was found that the official policy of the country where the newspaper is published may influence the content that is written. For example, The New York Times is affected by the US official policies who is the biggest backer of Saudi Arabia and The Guardian Weekly is affected by the British official policies which is with Iran as (Moqaddam & Sari, 2014) ⁽⁵⁰⁾ noted in their study that "Iran will remain atop of British foreign policy priorities". Also, the study highlighted that at the times of problems between London and Tehran, "the British government agreed to restrict BBC's activities to avoid the deterioration of relations". Results indicated that reporting bias sometimes relies on how newspapers circumnavigate the political setting in which they are based.

Framing occurred in the newspapers and created the bias. Frames are powerful. The framing theory assumed that it occurs all the time, the journalists' play a role in choosing the topic, sources and point of view which will be presented in the piece and that is exactly what the study found in its results. When comparing the assumptions of the framing theory and the study results, you will find that the theory explains lots of these results. Also, it was previously explained in the results

that both newspapers used frames in order to fulfil their goals as the New York Times seemed to support Saudi Arabia and the Guardian Weekly seemed clearly to support Iran.

Also, when comparing the International news flow theory with the results, the flow and structure of international news shape people's minds and draw the picture of the important news from the point of view of the newspaper towards the important countries to them. Events with high news value of the newspaper country of origin will be the main concern to them. An increase of news flow would be observed the greater the relations between the countries and that would be reflected in their newspapers.

In comparison to the literature review, this study found another type of bias which was used indirectly in the coverage. In addition, the historical part which was presented explains why nowadays the crisis exaggerated till that extent. The longstanding cold war between them and the mistrust is escalating more and more with each conflict ruining their diplomatic relations. This explains why the newspapers care about covering their conflicts as these two countries are two great powers in the Middle East and they are striving for dominance and control in the region. Take into consideration that media has always played a critical starring role in encouraging people in any kind of conflict and crisis.

These newspapers use the bias intentionally in covering news related to Saudi Arabia and Iran to establish a stereotypic image of them. Therefore, each one of them used the sides they wanted to present to their readers to convince them. Biased coverage takes many forms, some of which are not immediately obvious.

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