

MA International Journalism
School of Journalism, Media & Cultural Studies, Cardiff University

'Not flawed Journalism; it is the accurate coverage of the time'
An Investigation into the Perceptions and the Influences on Foreign News Reporting
Case Study: Egypt's 2013 Uprising

Rationale of the Study

- ▶ Many studies have tackled foreign reporting in Egypt's upheavals (2011-2013) within an existing narrative that can hardly go beyond the discursive framing and media portrayals of media content creating orientalist stereotyping (Karim 2006; Kumar 2010; Poole & Richardson 2006; Powell 2011; Semati 2011). Other studies have examined bribery of news coverage that can exist among different countries (Yang 2012; Guzman 2016). Others have incorporated interviews with journalists to explore the traditional journalism in the new media environment (Beckett 2008; Schudson 1995; Matheson & Allan 2009, Hannerz 2004).
- ▶ Thus, to contribute to the growing concerns of the new media environment and to argue against the premise that says that all foreign news are bad journalism practices, this dissertation focuses primarily on analysing the perceptions of journalists and the influences on their media coverage in a professional media environment during their coverage of Egypt's uprising in 2013.

Rationale of the Study

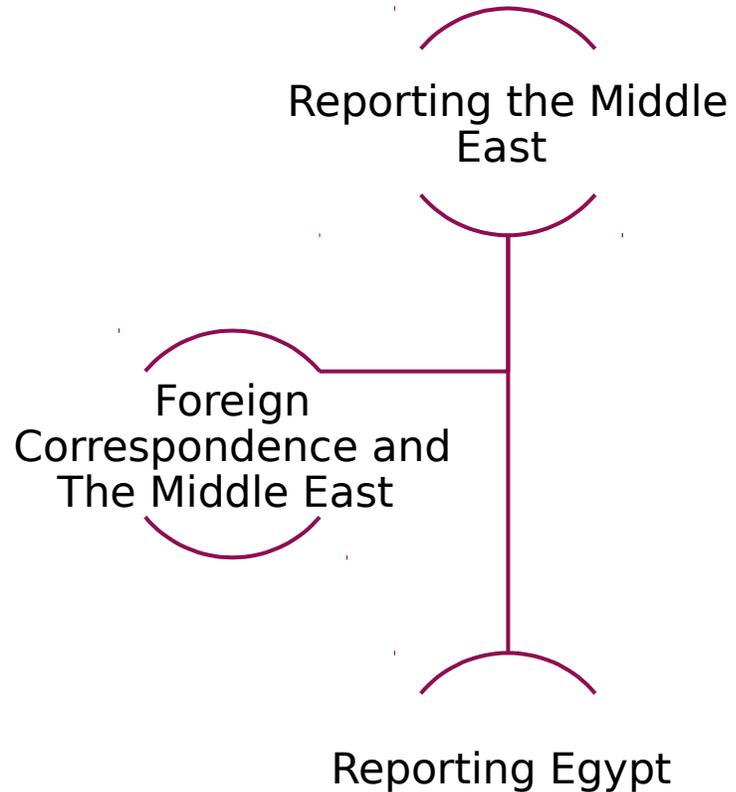
- ▶ **The premise of this study** is to investigate how foreign correspondents perceive their own influences and how far their media coverage reflect those influences. I have chosen Shoemaker and Reese (2014) hierarchical model of influences, which are structured along the lines of: routine, extra-media, ideological, cultural and individual influences.
- ▶ From the interviews conducted with five foreign correspondents, I have created a continuum of reliable data to examine the perceptions of their influences, the challenges they perceive in today's world of journalism and the changing roles of journalists. The interviews will act as the main data to dictate the flow and the order of hierarchy model, which I will re-arrange according to the interviews' analysis and their most relevance to journalist's professional practices.

Objectives

- ▶ The focus of this research is on the influences, which determined the coverage of Egypt's uprising in 2013 by two British newspapers mainly: The Guardian and The Times.
- ▶ By examining journalistic discourse and related media's influences and perceptual studies, the **literature in review** will bring forward two main dimensions.

First, in relation with the foreign correspondence, much concern will be given to the changing role of foreign correspondents reporting in the Middle East. Second, in relation with the journalism influences and perceptions, this will be discussed from theoretical relevance of professional practice that exists nowadays highlighting the techno-economic viewpoint. Therefore, both sections will contribute to the cultural and social dimensions in a mediated discourse in an attempt to put forward the forefront of today's challenges, risks and professional practices that are much relevant to foreign correspondents.

Literature Review



Power, Media Ownership and Journalist's Influences

The Death or the Rise of Foreign Correspondents

From Collaborative Journalism to Participatory Journalism

Research Questions

This research examines new perceptions of foreign correspondents and their effects on media content which sit in the emerging journalistic culture and how new media is challenging traditional norms. Adopting Shoemaker and Reese (2014) hierarchical model of influences, this study will try to answer the following questions:

- ▢ RQ 1: What are the foreign correspondents' perceptions of the organizational roles, epistemological, individual, and ideological foundations of journalism that underlie their work? –
- ▢ RQ 2: What are the influences that affected their news coverage using the same hierarchical model of influences?
- ▢ RQ 3: Throwing on the changing roles of foreign correspondents, how much did participatory journalism play a role in their media coverage?
- ▢ - RQ 4: What are the specifics and the challenges of reporting from the Middle East ?

Methodology

Sampling Data and Measurement in Interviews

In this study, semi- structured interviews were used to map and to understand the respondent's professional life. From such perspective, the potential respondents were chosen according to the newspapers articles derived by NEXIS.

Foreign correspondents and reporters constituted our primary interviewees who accounted for perceptions and internal and external influences. The researcher used telephone interviews, Skype and what's App interviews as the foreign correspondents locations varied from one place to another.

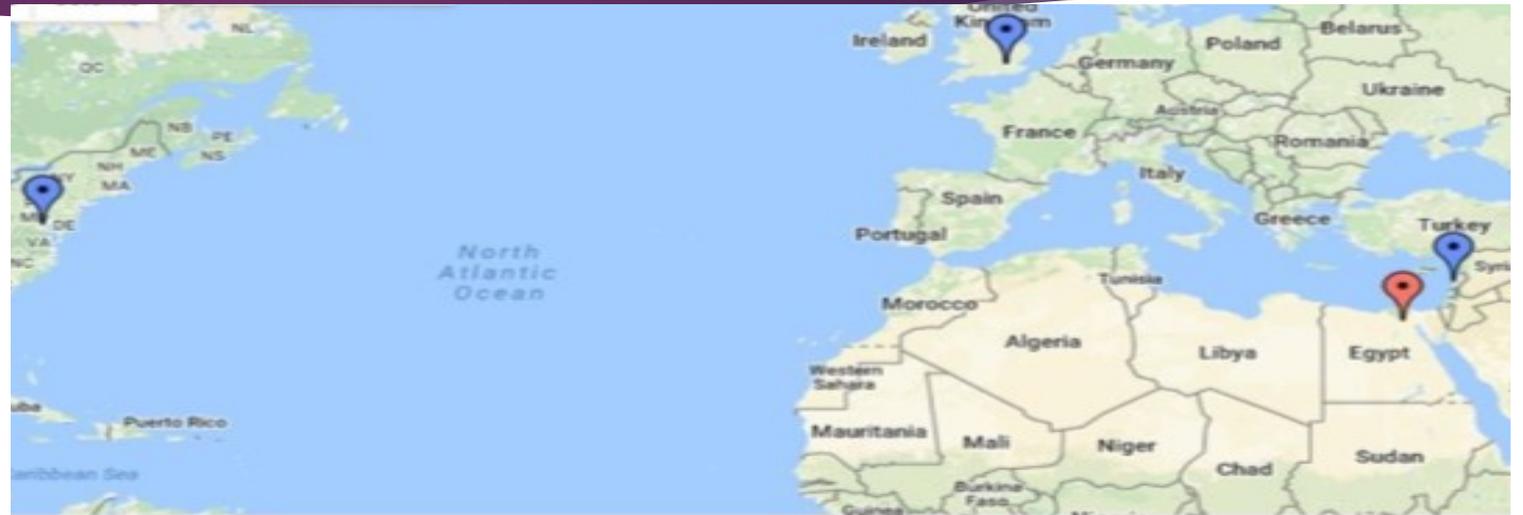
The data analysed in the interviews was based on five interviews conducted with British foreign correspondents located in different parts of the world: the US, the UK, Egypt, and Lebanon

Methodology :Interviews

Who are the journalists interviewed?

As illustrated in the map , the five journalists interviewed were located in different places around the world; however, they all contributed to the coverage of Egypt. Such difference in locations allowed the study to be richer in sources, attributions and allowed the articles analyzed to vary in terms of form and content.

Furthermore, the wide range of age (from 24 to 72 years old) also contributed to the kind of knowledge they shared and the kind of posts they held at the time, which helped the study to have a wide variety of viewpoints.



- **Michael Binyon , 72, Leader Writer at The Times and a former foreign correspondent based in London (Blue Pin)**
- **Haroon Siddique, 39, General News Reporter based in London (Blue Pin)**
- **Martin Chulov,43, Middle East Correspondent (Based in Lebanon, Blue Pin)**
- **Patrick Kingsely, 24, Egypt correspondence for the Guardian (Based in Cairo , Blue Pin)**
- **Dan Roberts, 40, Washington Bureau Chief (Based in Washington , the US , blue Pin)**

Map 3.1: Journalist Professional Identities in terms of posts and locations held at the time of

Data Selection of Newspapers

The selection of the news organizations was stratified according to three criteria.

- ▶ First, the sample was to have a daily print newspaper, as the online versions of the same the newspapers were not included in the data.
- ▶ Second, the sampling was partitioned in accordance with broadsheet quality newspaper, which was categorized as free of political or commercial masters. The Guardian is owned by The Scott Trust, which is the sole shareholder of the Guardian Media Group, and the Times of London is owned by the Murdoch Group, a subsidiary of News UK, and owned by News Corp (Lords 2007).
- ▶ Third, the criteria of selection was based on the circulation of international news as both **The Guardian** and **The Times** top the British daily news of international news coverage (Greenslade, 2014) .
- ▶ Both organizations published **68** articles in one week during their coverage of Egypt's political uprising. Another important concern was the availability of international news concerning the Middle East and Egypt, in particular as a means to reach the best possible approximation of news.

Theoretical Framework

- ▶ The interviews outlined were classified according to the theoretical framework set by Shoemaker & Reese 2014. In Mediating the Message, they established a framework to analyse the effects on media content based on five levels of influences.

Routine : This level refers to the constraints of work practices. Routine was identified by Reese and Shoemaker as the 'norms , rules and procedures ' that are embedded in media work. In this scheme , we shall look at the multitude of limits which were imposed by time , space and technology.

Extra-Media : This level refers to those influences that exist beyond the scope of the traditional media influences , yet , they help in shaping the media content. It refers for to those influences practised by particular interest groups, news wires , public relations , advertisers and news sources which may have an impact on the content produced.

Ideology : The ideological level refers here to the ideological and the cultural approach outlined by Schudson,1989. It refers to those ideological and cultural indices which can be framed along the lines of cultural and ideological constraints.

Individual: This level refers to the journalists' own characteristics , attitudes and behaviors as media creators and how much does it affect the content they create. It refers also to the professional roles in their media professions and how much i t is compatible with their view points or adheres to their professional norms .

Organisation : This level refers to the policies that involve the newspaper's ownership in a larger context that determines the newspaper's policies .

Discussion and Analysis

Sample Data

'Part of the life as a journalist,' Kingsley (Resp.1) said 'is you are obviously in tight with deadlines because may be you are writing three stories a day so there is a huge amount of time pressure but that is what happens when you are a journalist: busy time'. Chulov (Resp.5) described time pressure as being a reality one must work with.

Oh, people would say .Ah. you are paid by the Muslim Brotherhood to write a piece about Rabaa or about the fact that 50 + people died when they got shot dead outside the guards, it is certainly my duty as a journalist to go and report on people dying and to try to get to the bottom of what might have happened.

Kingsley (Resp.1)

I write from the standpoint of a sort of an English speaking liberal white man in a very privileged environment and that all inevitably has an impact on how I see the world .I do my best to counter it but Yeah! That is an ideological stand whether or not we want to admit it.

Roberts (Resp. 4)

Findings

- ▶ The analysis and testimonies from correspondents in the region point to challenges that remain pertinent today. It has incorporated numerous block of variables in the ideological, cultural and professional contexts. In the course of the analysis, several answers have been elicited to help answering the hypothesized research questions. The following findings should be able to explore them more.

▶ **The Routine Level**

- ▶ The study shows that some pressures are timeless no matter how far technological development is advanced. **The deadline pressure** is one of them. Throughout the time, it has not changed. It has not improved. On the contrary, it has become worse .In recent years; it has gradually increased with the multitude amount of user-generated content (UGC), online content and citizen journalism.
- ▶ **Time difference** between countries and continents remains a topic a very few scholars have explored when analysing foreign correspondence perceptions and professional performance. It remains one of those pressures, which may influence foreign correspondents, but is subtle, locked in newsroom unable to be thoroughly explored except when the journalists quite reveal it as a pressure. It has certainly become part of their jobs.

Findings

The Extra -Media level

- ▶ **Newswires** are perceived as unreliable. Nonetheless, journalists rely on them. Although journalists find newswires an untrusted source of information, analysis indicated that journalists relied heavily on press statements as well as they used them throughout the coverage.
- ▶ Evidently, **interest groups** change history. They do not only affect the coverage of foreign news reporting but they also play a great role in the political make up of a country. By holding demonstrations and protests, ‘event- reality’ has become the most powerful speaking tool on the ground as it stirs completely power players grabbing media attention. With social media revolution, event reality in the Middle East has grown into an inevitable source for journalists’ information –gathering

Findings

The Ideological Level

This study endorses the **convergence of cross-national understanding** between the eastern and western contexts. It shows that more than often, the growing of such misconceptions between the 'us and the 'them' is a result of idiosyncratic conscious and a personal evaluation that is not related to a balanced media coverage.

As foreign correspondents act as transferable agents from one culture to another, the findings of this study corroborate that there is no cultural specific measurement of cultural barrier that can be pitched at abstract level. However, there has been a large picture of journalism' diverse cultural manifestations in a cross-cultural context that has been revealed by using a variety of **culture specific items** that belong to the East and the West.

Findings

The individual level

- The research finds that the effect of communicators in terms of background, age, personal beliefs is hard to examine, as the influence is always minor. However, the journalists' professional identities have been revealed through their **adherence to objectivity and reliable reporting**. Results have found that the journalists relied more on staged riots and event-based reality than press releases in their coverage.
- ▶ The analysis of the sources indicates that there is a growing number of interviews with **members of the public** as it topped the chart to account for 70% of both official and non-official sources altogether. The results of the official sources demonstrate that the journalists interviewed the Islamist parties more than the opposition and the liberal ones

Findings

The Organizational level

- The findings indicate the positive impact of the organization, which helps journalists to achieve 'good journalists. The foreign correspondents interviewed took into consideration their **organizations professional and ethical values** have been able to produce as much as 'accurate and a reliable' kind of reporting.
- ▶ The Guardian and The Times made the journalists collaborate when reporting from other countries. Out of the analyzed articles, **four were by-lined articles**, which means that newsrooms which exist in different countries, can still contribute to the same article via the data bank and the group- thinking strategies the newspaper is incorporating among its journalists.

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Thank you