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VISUALIZING THE ARAB SPRING: A PHOTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE 2011
PROTESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

by

Casey K. Hilder

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Journalism

Major: Journalism

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ABSTRACT

Hilder, Casey Kendall. MA. The University of Memphis. May 2013. Visualizing the Arab Spring. Major Professor: Joseph Raymond Hayden.

This research presents a content analysis of news photography produced during the Arab Spring, a tumultuous series of revolutions and protest action that swept across the Middle East and North Africa in early 2011. To establish a framework for this research, a review of relevant literature focused on framing and second-level agenda setting and the application of these theories to form 15 coding categories. This study analyzed 430 photos that ran from December 18, 2010, to May 24, 2012, in the pages of *Time* and *Newsweek*. Results showed that the events of the Arab Spring were visually depicted by Western newsmagazines as a movement of peaceful protest with strong elements of nationalism. While some degree of interaction between a given country's rate of Internet access and violent escalation was shown, further study in this area is recommended.

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Visualizing the Arab Spring

Introduction

The events that would come to be known to Western journalists as the “Arab Spring” began in Tunisia on December 18, 2010. On this date, 26-year-old Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi lit himself ablaze in protest of continued harassment and extortion at the hands of government officials. The flames of Bouazizi’s final act of defiance served as the catalyst for a cascade of revolutions across the Middle East and North Africa that would eventually lead to massive political shakeups across the region.

The events of the Arab Spring were broadcast to a world agog as journalists captured the sudden eruptions of violence between protesters and police as crowds of militia clad in ramshackle armor and armed with self-fashioned weapons clashed with local officials against the backdrop of the sprawling cityscapes of Tunisia, the legendary architecture of Egypt, and the active battlefields of Syria. The photographs captured at this time document the downfall of a cadre of deposed rulers including Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, and Muammar Gaddafi of Libya.

This research will focus on the photographic news coverage of several countries involved in protests and revolutionary activity that began with “the burning man of Tunisia” and continued throughout 2011 and gained infamy through events like the “taking of Tahrir Square” in Egypt and the numerous outpourings of activism that came to be known as “Day of Rage” events across the region. This string of protests in the Middle East and North Africa served as the culmination of several decades-long struggles over various political and social issues, chief among them widespread civil and human rights violations. Poor standards of living and accusations of bureaucratic corruption also

fueled the grassroots movement, which was often accompanied by online activism through various social media outlets.

The coverage of these regional uprisings is unusual in that much of the video and photographic coverage was produced by citizens and transmitted through the Internet. The timeline of the Arab Spring provides several examples of how news is dispersed abroad in times of crisis and mass civil unrest, as well as insight into the transition of leadership, regional recovery and the consequences of massive shifts in political power in the region.

This research will focus on photos published in the two most popular newsmagazines of the United States. The selected imagery, culled from the pages of *Time* and *Newsweek*, will focus primarily on Tunisia, where the revolution began; Egypt and Libya, where it brought regime changes; and Syria and Bahrain, where it continues. Additionally, this research will attempt to incorporate photographic news coverage from places that received less exposure such as Yemen, Algeria, Jordan, and other areas that were not as greatly embroiled in protest as the five primary countries of focus.

Literature Review

To establish a framework for this research, this review of relevant literature will focus on framing and second-level agenda setting and the application of these theories to photojournalistic news coverage.

Framing

Framing theory states that the way news media presents an issue affects the public's perceptions and opinions regarding the issue. The concept of framing was first presented by Goffman (1974), who defined frames as "schemata of interpretation," or

collections of stereotypes that individuals subconsciously process to relate to their everyday lives. Goffman's initial interpretation defined frames as a psychological concept related to an individual's belief system that aids in the understanding of complex issues. Gitlin (1980) argued that frames serve as a sort of "packaging" to make the underlying concepts of news stories more relatable and therefore accessible to an audience. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) further elaborated on the concept, applying Goffman's theory directly to the field of journalism by introducing the news frame. The news frame, also known as media frame, is used to represent the unifying element that gives meaning to the events presented by news coverage. In other words, the news frame focuses on the heart of the issue at hand and how it is presented by the media.

Entman (1991) created a distinction between the news frame and audience frame, with the audience frame representing the reader's interpretation of a news frame. The concept of the audience frame refers to a set of beliefs on behalf of the reader that aid in processing and understanding complex issues and harkens back to Goffman's original definition of framing theory. Whereas the unit of analysis for news frames can be measured through various forms of news coverage, audience frames are analyzed by accounting for how an individual processes a news story. This schism in framing is what many hold to be the modern consensus on framing theory as it relates to the field of journalism. In short, frames affect the conveyance and interpretation of a news story. As such, the impact of identical news messages depends entirely on how these messages are presented, or framed. This situation is further complicated when visuals are added into the mix.

Visual Framing

While a great deal of research has been afforded to framing story content and textual analysis, significantly less research attention has been granted to the area of visual framing (Bell, 2001). To understand where visual framing fits in the spectrum of framing research, it is necessary to establish a firm definition of the concept of framing as it relates to photojournalism. Dimitrova and Rodriguez (2011) defined a four-tiered system of visual framing that provides important guidelines analyzing and identifying visual frames. This comprehensive system accounts for the style or composition of the photo, subject behavior in a photo, and the iconic symbolism associated with an image.

The first level refers to the denotative, direct and immediate structure of a photograph that represents what is seen on the page immediately as it is viewed and maintained in the short-term memory. Much of the time, this refers to the immediate topic or issue presented by news coverage without much subtext.

The second level of this model accounts for compositional and stylistic choices made by the photojournalist. These “style variables” relate to the literal framing of images and account for factors such as dominant or submissive angles, how an image is cropped, what is in focus, or how a given image adheres to the basic rule of thirds.

The third level focuses on connotative subject behavior and the underlying meaning attached to each image. This level is more content-focused than the rest and places firm emphasis on the elements of a photo. This level employs Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2001) definition of abstract and figurative symbols in visuals to explore ideas attached to images. Figurative symbols are displayed prominently in photographs, such as

people and places relevant to a news story, whereas abstract symbols refer to objects in a photograph with some sort of latent symbolism attached, such as a cross or a flag.

The fourth level focuses on applying the iconic symbolism presented in level three as it relates to the hearts and minds of the audience at large. This level of visual framing is similar to the concept of Entman's audience frame as it attempts to draw conclusions based on an audience's ability to cognitively process these images and apply their own values. When analyzing the public's interpretation of a news story, it is necessary to account for nationalism, or a public's sense of identification with its country. Because of framing's origins as a "collection of stereotypes," it is unsurprising that international coverage can often be framed in favor of the country where the story originated.

Visual Framing and Nationalism

Studies on U.S. coverage of the Second Gulf War and intervention in the Middle East have defined much of recent visual framing research. These studies, which often use a content analysis methodology, often reveal the implications of foreign visual coverage, especially in regard to the media's tendency to frame events from a nationalistic perspective. For example, a study by Griffin and Lee (1995) presented a content analysis of 1,104 images from the first Gulf War that revealed very little focus on actual combat and little to no presence of opposition soldiers. Instead, many of the published photographs served to showcase high-tech weaponry and catalogue the military might of the United States arsenal. This emphasis on a one-sided display of military might and implied sense of patriotism was deemed by the author to show a nationalistic slant toward the United States.

In his 1991 study of the visual and textual framing of two similar military plane crashes, Entman found that the media's coverage of the U.S. attack on an Iranian plane was framed more favorably than a similar event involving a Soviet attack on a Korean aircraft, despite the similar circumstances of the events. Fahmy (2007) presented a framing-based content analysis of visual coverage involving the toppling of a massive stone monument to Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Her research coined the concept of the victory frame, a triumphant, hopeful image that presents occupying forces as liberators accompanied by crowds of cheering supporters as pro-democracy patriots. Fahmy's research found that this type of frame was more likely to be used by publications based in countries in favor of the war, thereby emphasizing the perceived benevolence of military forces and instilling a sense of national pride. While most of these concepts were presented in pro- or anti-war news coverage, it is not difficult to apply this concept to a revolutionary protest movement like the Arab Spring.

Framing and Agenda Setting

Framing is among the most debated theoretical concepts. Carragee and Roefs (2004) bemoaned a lack of power in recent framing research and cautioned that many had mistaken the concept for second-level agenda setting by undertaking attribute-based studies under the guise of framing research. Framing and agenda-setting research are closely intertwined, as both media-effects theories deal with the manner in which news coverage is dispersed to the public. However, while research of the former deals with presentation and interpretation, agenda-setting research focuses on salience. Entman (1993) defined salience as the means of making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to an audience. Weaver (2007) acknowledged that many more

definitions exist for framing than for agenda setting, which has caused complications when applying the theory. Framing accounts for factors beyond objects and attributes, such as sociological implications and the cognitive schema of the reader (Pan & Kosicki, 1993) that provide insight on an audience's view of news coverage. However, agenda setting contends that the media does not influence how the public thinks, but rather dictates what the public thinks about through story selection.

Agenda Setting Theory and Research

McCombs and Shaw's (1977) seminal work hypothesized that the media set the agenda of public consensus via selection of news coverage (e.g. to space afforded, issues covered, and in the case of visual journalism, size and emphasis of content in photographs). In short, agenda-setting theory states that the importance of an issue in the media reflects the salience of an issue to the general public. For example, McCombs and Shaw (1977) defined "major items" in news magazines as those that occupy more than one column and those that are featured toward the beginning of the magazine. These "major items" proved more salient to audiences, thereby making these items more memorable and influential than less prominently featured news stories.

Further agenda setting research by Zucker (1978) formed a distinction between obtrusive issues that a reader might experience or deal with on a daily basis (e.g. local crime, politics), and unobtrusive issues, which are not directly experienced by an audience but are observed through news coverage (e.g. global politics, foreign affairs, war). Because the public's sole window to unobtrusive issues is through the lens of the media, Zucker argues that the public tends to place greater importance on unobtrusive issues that tend to crop up in the news than it would for intrusive, daily issues. Coverage

of foreign events falls into this category. However, traditional first-level agenda setting places additional focus on the editors' and photographers' decisions behind the publication and placement of these photos, while a separate branch of the theory emphasizes the attributes and characteristics of news coverage.

Second-Level Agenda Setting

This form of attribute-focused research is known as second-level agenda setting. Second-level agenda-setting theory states that journalists don't push particular viewpoints, but rather attributes of issues. Second-level agenda setting focuses on certain attributes of objects beyond the objects themselves, such as the symbolism attached to various aspects of news coverage. This branch of agenda-setting research focuses on the salience of certain attributes of objects (i.e. issues) as they are presented in news coverage. Second-level agenda setting holds a closer tie to the theory of framing than first-level agenda setting due to its emphasis on attributes of objects.

Second-level agenda setting is commonly used in visual content analysis studies as a method of categorizing images, as shown through prior research by Fahmy (2007), Griffin and Lee (1995), and Keith, Schwalbe, and Silcock (2009). A form of second-level agenda setting is employed for the purposes of this research by focusing on individual attributes of the photographic coverage of the Arab Spring, most notably through a distinction between violent and nonviolent protest assemblies.

Prior research suggests that certain attributes of visual coverage have some bearing on how news content is interpreted, especially in stories involving foreign affairs and protest. A second-level agenda setting test by Wanta, Golan, and Lee (2004) found a close relationship between positive or negative foreign coverage of nations and an

individual's perception of those countries. An experiment by Arpan and Tuzunkan (2011) found that that visual coverage of protests often fostered less positive perceptions of the protesters and their causes if violent or deviant action was present in the images. The same research surprisingly found that photographic depictions of deviance had little bearing on the process of story selection by the audience.

Regional Overview

The following selection of regional categories serve as an overview of countries in the Middle East and North Africa engaged in revolutionary action. This overview is not meant to serve as a comprehensive national index, but rather a briefing on the issues facing the region during the time period of the Arab Spring.

Tunisia

The nation of Tunisia sits at the northern end of Africa and served as the origin of the Arab Spring. Citizens flooded the streets on December 18, 2010, to protest President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The events were referred to as "The Jasmine Revolution" by journalists and "Dignity Revolution" by locals in the time before the term "Arab Spring" was coined by Western journalists. Major dates and events include the suicide of Mohamed Bouazizi, the aforementioned "burning man of Tunisia," who is credited for inspiring the protest efforts in the region.

The first signs of revolution in Tunisia consisted of gritty, low-resolution YouTube videos featuring angry mobs against a backdrop resembling a smoky urban mosaic. President Ben Ali ordered a crackdown on political and revolutionary websites as the protest movement began to gain steam, effectively shutting down a large section of the Internet for the Tunisian populace. However, the government initially neglected to

restrict access to popular recreational websites like YouTube and Facebook, which offer a combined audience of more than 1.2 billion worldwide.

This would foreshadow a revolution driven by technology, with most of the information transmitted via social media. Around 36% of the population of Tunisia had access to a viable Internet connection as of 2011. For the sake of comparison, 78.6% of the United States population has access to the Internet¹. This revolution was marked as one of the briefest instances of uprising, as Ben Ali's 23 years in power drew to a close with a forced exile of the former president. This led to the introduction of an interim government on January 15, 2011, that included Slim Amamou, a former blogger and protester who was arrested during the events of the Jasmine Revolution. The conflict in Tunisia drew to a close with a free election in mid-October of 2011. The events of this region served as an inspiration to other Middle Eastern countries, with many mimicking the web-based protest efforts pioneered by the Tunisian people.

Egypt

Few areas in the Middle East felt the backlash of the Arab Spring like Egypt did. Spurred on by inspiration from their Tunisian neighbors to the west, Egyptian citizens took to the streets January 25, 2011, in protest of Hosni Mubarak's reign of nearly 30-years. Suez, Alexandria, Mahalla, Mansoura, Damietta, Port Saed, Luxor, and Cairo all saw massive public protests that were countered with government curfews and policing on a grand scale. Many of the protest events were organized and coordinated via Facebook and other social networking media by the April 6th Youth Movement, a group formed from a 2008 textile mill strike for workers' rights. The coordination efforts were

¹Internet World Stats, "Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics," (2011)
<<http://www.Internetworldstats.com>>

accessible to more than 21 million citizens, with more than a quarter of Egypt's population connected to the Internet.

Like Tunisia, Egypt was subject to widespread Internet blackout by the government to prevent communication among protesters. One of the most publicized events was a large gathering in Cairo's Liberation Square that rose to a crescendo of frustration during the 18-day event known as "The Taking of Tahrir Square." More than 200,000 protestors would flow into the square, chanting "the people want to bring down the regime," a phrase that would echo throughout the Middle East across Syria, Sudan, and Lebanon. Fires raged throughout the iconic plaza, dangerously close to a museum that housed many of the ancient treasures of the Pharaoh Tutankhamun. Government forces employed increasingly desperate tactics, including rows of identical black-clad soldiers in riot gear and haphazardly dispersed tear gas canisters. For many citizens, the revolution at hand drew uncomfortable parallels with an earlier time of subservience to the great pharaohs and workers' strikes in ancient Egypt. While Mubarak was ousted and given a life sentence in jail just two weeks after the revolution began on February 11, the transitional period would take more than a year. The events in Egypt culminated in May of 2012 with the country's second presidential election in history with more than one candidate.

Libya

The Libyan Civil War began February 15, 2011, following widespread protests in Egypt. Much of the visual coverage consisted of stirring images that document the fall of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, ending his 42-year reign as autocrat of Libya. Gaddafi's eccentricities included an all-female troupe of bodyguards and a solid-gold handgun.

Protest movements in Libya were met with much more forceful resistance than other areas in the region, as Gaddafi became known to the world as the ruthless dictator who would eventually turn the country's military against its own people. Libya presents the bloodiest instance of revolution for both the regime and the opposition, with 6,000 people killed during the first two weeks of the revolution alone and the final death toll estimated to be around 10,000.² Libya's civil war lasted seven months, finally coming to a close on October 20, 2011 when the bloody corpse of Gaddafi was pulled through the streets by an a crowd of rebels following the seizure of government headquarters by the National Transitional Council. Internet access in Libya stretches to 5.9% of the population, the lowest of all the countries included in this study.

Bahrain

King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's 12-year reign stretches back to a dynasty of rulers whose lineage began more than 200 years ago. Revolution struck the tiny island nation that lies on the cusp of Saudi Arabia on February 17, 2011, in response to accusations of political corruption and frequent clashes between the Sunni-led government forces and Shia opposition. The Shiite rebellion against a Sunni monarch eventually grew to such to such magnitude that neighboring Saudi Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council forces occupied at the behest of Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. Saudi GCC troops took to the street and immediately began executing protesters, bringing a swift end to the initial wave of protests and occupation that brought more than one-fifth the country's population to the streets. Citizen reports likened the Saudi occupation to Nazi Germany's surreptitious occupation and annexation of Poland

²Libyan Civil War Statistics "Libyan Civil War" (2011)
<<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/libya-civil-war.htm>>

in the opening days of the Second World War. Bahrain possesses one of the highest rates of Internet access in the region, with 57.1% of its population readily able to access the Internet, the closest in this study to the United States and the highest rate of Internet accessibility featured in this study according to Internet World Stats, an organization that tracks Internet usage in more than 233 countries.

Syria

Mass demonstrations in Syria began March 15, 2011, as citizens took to the streets in protest of the half-century rule of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party and President Bashar al-Assad, who was in the fourth year of his second seven-year presidential term. Assad, along with his father Hafez al-Assad, represents a growing dynasty of Syrian statesmen who have gripped the country for the past 40 years. Like Libya, Syria presents one of the most violent scenarios of the Arab Spring, with NATO reporting more than 30,000 deaths in the 14 months since the revolution began. Problems in this country stem from struggles for government reform after decades under the rule of the al-Assads, as well a year and two months of military occupation following the beginning of the regional uprisings in January. The events in Syria are further complicated due to continued meddling in national affairs by Iranian politicians, many of whom aim to implement a more traditional non-secular form of leadership. The area has become something of a perpetual battlefield, with the body count steadily rising at the time of this research. Nearly one-fifth of the small South Asian country's population possesses a stable Internet connection, which is considered relatively low for the region, according to Internet World Stats.

Sudan, Israel, Algeria, Yemen, Palestine, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan

This category includes several other areas in the Middle East and North Africa with less pronounced, or perhaps less publicized, instances of revolution or civil unrest. While each of these countries are significant and face unique challenges, protest coverage for each country listed in this category was severely limited compared to the five primary regional categories.

Significant events in this regional category include rallies in Yemen for political and social reform for child welfare that eventually led to President Ali Abdullah Saleh's resignation after months of protest. The Yemeni governmental transition has since proven to be a slow and difficult process, as the nation borders the dangerous and U.S.-occupied regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to a 2012 report from Al Jazeera English, this has created something of a power vacuum in the country, as much of the reform policy has been contested among the old guard, radical Islamists, and the region's tribal chiefs. During this period of time, women's rights protests took the forefront in Saudi Arabia, as well as activism regarding the nation's aforementioned interference in the ongoing conflict in Bahrain. Other events related to this category include massive government shifts in Jordan and the ongoing conflict over human rights violations in Sudan that led to President Omar al-Bashir's refusal to run for reelection.

Method

Once the underlying countries of focus were identified and photographs were selected, this research will attempted to determine the manner and magnitude of the visual coverage of the events of the Arab Spring through a quantitative content analysis of the two leading U.S. newsmagazines, *Time* and *Newsweek*. Overall inter-coder

agreement for this study was 92%, a level suitable for retesting and replicating these results. Initial disagreements in the practice coding process were corrected through clarification and revision to coding categories.

A recent study by Stepanova (2011) regarding the role of information communication technology in the 2011 uprisings noted that low or minimal social media interaction roughly corresponded with violent escalation. This conclusion was formed through a comprehensive viewing of social media activity in the region and U.N. statistics. This research aims to confirm that Stepanova's findings carry over into the pages of *Time* and *Newsweek* by taking each nation's relative level of Internet access into account during analysis. This study presents a central research question and a trio of hypotheses:

RQ1: How were the events of the Arab Spring portrayed visually by the two leading news magazines of the United States?

H1: The visual presentation of the events of the Arab Spring will be dominated by images of violence.

H2: The visual presentation of the events of the Arab Spring will be dominated by images of nationalism.

H3: Events in the five primary countries of focus with populations that have less access to the Internet, such as Libya, will be depicted through more violent imagery than those with high level of access to information technology, such as Bahrain.

Why Time/Newsweek?

These publications were chosen because their weekly, episodic nature allows for a sort of "highlight reel" of the most prominent news events of the week. In addition, the full-color and image-centric format allows for easy gathering of a variety of frames for

selection and recording. Also, *Time* and *Newsweek* seem to possess a high level of popularity in regard to the US population, with respective circulation rates of 3.5 million and 1.6 million subscribers in 2010³, as well as a degree of prevalence in similar photographic content analyses (Griffin & Lee,1995).

Timeline

The period of time covered by this research begins December 18, 2010, with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi and continues until the dawn of Egypt's first free election on May 24, 2012, offering roughly a year and a half of coverage. This research looks to encompass the photojournalistic coverage of the political strife and turmoil of a wide geographic area over the course of 18 months. This time period includes the transition of leadership in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, as well as the continued struggles in Syria, Bahrain, and elsewhere. By casting an extensive net, this research aims to present the Middle East and North Africa not as several unrelated nations, but as a singular entity, each component of which serves as part of a larger story of a region in a time of great transition.

Image Selection and Units of Analysis

This research examined 173 photographs published in *Newsweek* and 257 photos published in *Time*, a total of 430 photos. These images are limited to photographs published from December 18, 2010, to May 24, 2012, with a focus on Middle Eastern countries engaged in organized anti-government activity and protest. All photos were selected based on the countries of interest and image content. Following initial selection and grouping by date and county, each photograph was examined, coded and sorted accordingly. These photographs were limited to published photos that are cropped to

³ <http://stateofthemediamedia.org/2011/magazines-essay/data-page-4/>

traditional photo dimensions (i.e. square or rectangular). Cutouts, photo illustrations, and other graphics were not included in this research due to the separate purpose of the aforementioned visuals, which are more apt to inform rather than illustrate.

Image Categorization

Individual photographs from the pages of *Time* and *Newsweek* were divided into 11 categories based on the dominant elements in each photo. Two coders – the author and a professional reporter – viewed and categorized 430 images according to the 15 variables presented in Appendix A. The dominant visual element in each photograph was determined by the coders’ own interpretation formed through a review of previous visual coverage of large-scale protest events outside the United States and guided by prior research that includes Dimitrova and Rodriguez’s (2011) four-tiered method of analysis. Categories for this study were inspired by prior research by Griffin and Lee (1995), whose research accounted for arsenal, media involvement, and political leaders on both sides. The coding system accounts for 15 variables, the first four of which will focus on the presentation of the image. Each photograph was assigned an identification number and categorized by date, publication. The remaining 11 variables focus on a selection of attributes for each image, five of which were coded as “yes” or “no,” while the latter five (protest, violence, arsenal, and authority) were coded on varying degrees of correspondence.

Findings

Research Question 1

The initial research question aimed to assess the portrayal of the events of the Arab Spring through an analysis of photography published in *Time* and *Newsweek*. Results

indicate that the timeline of the Arab Spring was presented by two American newsmagazines as a movement of peaceful protest with strong nationalistic undertones. Variety was abundant in this study, with a wide selection of striking imagery related to each category and very few low-frequency categories with results of less than 10%. Table 1 displays an overview of the results of this study grouped by category.

Table 1
Category Frequency

Coded for	% of coverage
Protest	32.1
Nationalism	18.4
Arsenal	16.5
Political Leaders	16.3
Vandalism	14
Daily Life	12.6
Violence	11.4
Popular Opposition	11.4
Authority	8.1
Media	6.6
Old Wealth	2.8

Note. This table displays the frequency of the eleven coding categories.

Hypothesis 1

The initial hypothesis predicted that the events of the Arab Spring would be presented by Western photojournalists as a movement characterized by acts of violence, with an emphasis on bloody conflict and the casualties associated with the revolutions. Results show that the initial hypothesis was incorrect, as most of the photographs selected for this study depicted the Arab Spring as a movement of peaceful protest. While some degree of violence did manifest in 11.4% of the photographs analyzed, most of the protests were depicted in a nonviolent fashion, especially when no form of authority or

weaponry was present in an image. Additional findings show that it was not outright violence, but rather a greater focus on destruction of property and an emphasis on deadly weaponry that defined the darker side of the Arab Spring.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis proved correct in that “dominance,” in this case refers to ranking in the general coding process, with nationalism was the second-most coded category of this study. Symbols of nationalism in this study took many forms, from the throngs of protesters waving each country’s respective flag to the lavender robes worn by many activists to represent the symbolic lotus blossom of ancient Egypt. The element of nationalism manifest in nearly one-fifth of the photographs in this study and was observed at a higher frequency than violence, destruction, or the political heads of the troubled nations.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis regarding Internet access was found to be largely inconclusive due to the relatively low frequency of images from Tunisia and Bahrain compared to the other three primary countries of interest. While ranking among the highest in terms of violent imagery and Internet access, Bahrain also produced among the lowest in terms of images of any of the five primary countries, with a scant 14 published photographs. While relevant to this study as a whole, it is not recommended that these 14 images be used to generalize any one aspect of the Bahraini revolutionary movement. Other than Bahrain and Tunisia, the scale of violence depicted was found to be roughly in accordance with Internet access rates per population, with high-access countries driven by peaceful protest such as Egypt and Tunisia showing the least amount of violence in

photos and low-access countries embroiled in heavy combat such as Syria and Libya showing the most violent imagery. This finding holds a degree of importance because it offers a glimpse of the potential organizing power of social media and the impact it may have had on lessening the escalation of violence in these events. Further research regarding the two outlying countries is recommended, as this hypothesis cannot truly be verified for Bahrain and Tunisia without more photos to analyze to become on par with the other three primary countries of analysis that were in accordance with predictions.

Table 2
Internet Access Rates and Violence

Primary Countries	Total images	% of images coded for violence	% population with Internet access
Bahrain	14	21	57.1
Syria	67	19	19.8
Libya	122	11	5.9
Tunisia	23	9	36.3
Egypt	128	7	24.6

Note. This table displays Internet access rates⁴ and percentage of images coded for violence per country.³

Discussion

Dominant Coverage

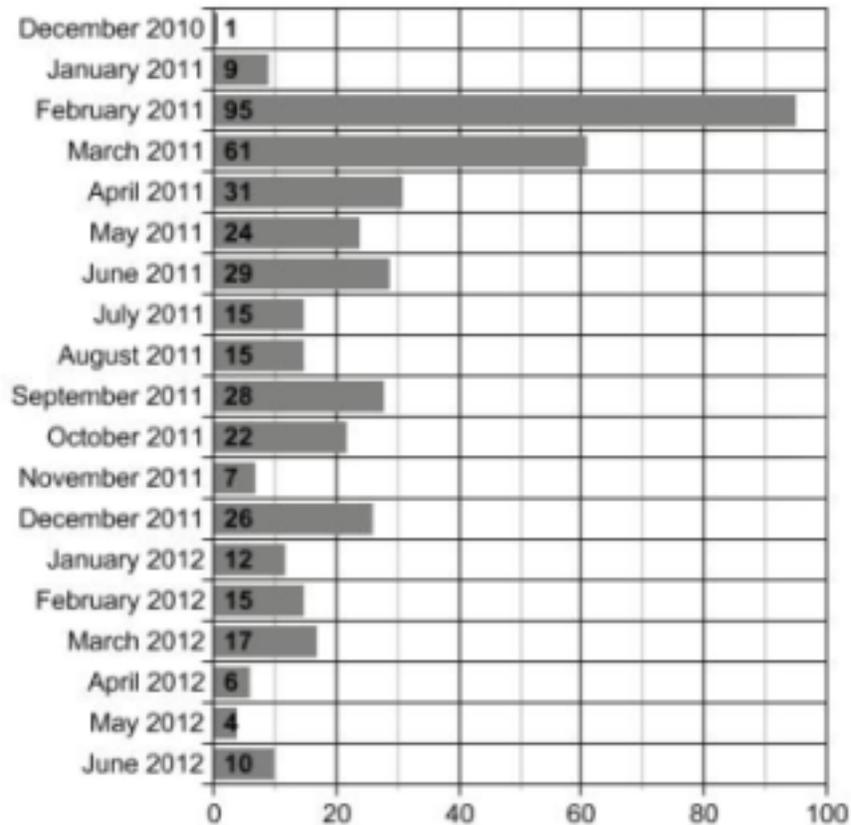
Photo size varied throughout the study, though most of the images occupied less than one-sixth of a page. This was likely a conscious concession made by publishers to conserve space and maximize information in an ever-dwindling news hole. More space was afforded to larger photos of protest action in Egypt, as well as destruction and old wealth in the form of seized palaces in Libya. Photographs of guns, tanks and assorted

⁴ Internet World Stats, "Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics," (2011) <<http://www.Internetworldstats.com>>

arsenal were also heavily featured in larger photos, with 36% of all the two-page spreads featured in this study coded for the presence of some form of weaponry.

As shown in Table 3, most of the data for this study was produced during February of 2011, a month that saw the rise of mass Egyptian protests and the Libyan Civil War. This pair of events drew the eyes of the media to the already-embroiled region that was still reeling from the swift ousting of Ben Ali in Tunisia during the December 2010 uprisings. Images produced during the subsequent months began to track the reformation of governments and the reconstruction of civilian life in the region, with a shift from protest coverage to an emphasis on the political strife caused by previous leaders and a focus on the destruction caused by military clashes with citizens-turned-insurgents.

Table 3
Frequency Timeline



Note. This graph traces of the frequency of revolution-based coverage in the Arab Spring timeline.

Dominant Countries

As shown in Table 4, Egypt, Libya, and Syria dominated revolution-based regional coverage in this study. Together, Egypt and Libya accounted for nearly 60% of the photographic coverage of the Arab Spring within the pages of *Time* and *Newsweek*. While this research focused on the protest movement in the region as a whole, these two seemingly antipodean movements warrant a degree of individual consideration.

Table 4
Images Per Country

Country	Freq.	%
Algeria	2	.5
Bahrain	14	3.3
Egypt	128	29.8
Iran	4	.9
Iraq	3	.7
Israel	6	1.4
Jordan	6	1.4
Lebanon	1	.2
Libya	122	28.4
Morocco	6	1.4
N/A	5	1.2
Palestine	5	1.2
Saudi Arabia	9	2.1
Sudan	11	2.6
Syria	67	15.6
Tunisia	23	5.3
Yemen	18	4.2
Total	430	100

Note. This frequency table displays data based on the individual countries of focus in Arab Spring coverage.

Egypt

Photographs of Egypt presented mostly depictions of peaceful protest, oppositional thought leaders whose views ran counter to the ruling regime, and nationalism in the form of numerous distinctly colored symbols of Egyptian liberation. Protest coverage accounted for 38% of all photos in this study, with one-third of these photos taken in Egypt. Photographs coded for popular opposition in Egypt emphasized prominent activists, artists, and members of the Muslim Brotherhood. These ranks include blogger Mona Eltahawy, an activist who suffered a pair of broken arms during the initial revolutions in Cairo and Rawda Ahmed, an Egyptian lawyer and one of the region's lead advocates of the free flow of information. The element of popular

opposition was present in 22% of all published photos of the Egyptian revolution.

Arsenal and nationalism were both coded in 16% of all photos. However, the former was more emphasized than the latter in photos, with arsenal often manifesting as a small element of larger picture and nationalism often coded as the primary element of a photo.

Libya

Photographic coverage of Libya was heavily saturated with arsenal, destruction, and images of then-leader Muammar Gaddafi. The Libyan war machine was given considerable focus, and alongside it came widespread destruction and vandalism, which accounted for 27% of revolution coverage. Many published photos depict a nation in flames at the hands of tanks seized by rebels. This country revealed a greater focus on arsenal and the tools of war in 28% of published photography. This could possibly be attributed to the nature of Libya's revolution, which proved to be equal parts military coup and protest movement that was further complicated by the country's hotly contested oil reserves, many of which rebels set ablaze in defiance of Gaddafi's reign. One-fifth of all Libya-related photos contained Gaddafi's likeness, including several grisly photos captured in the moments just after his death in October of 2011. Libya is also noteworthy for its relatively low Internet access rate and much lower photographic emphasis on oppositional leaders in comparison with its neighbor to the west.

Other Countries

An analysis of images associated with the birthplace of the revolution in Tunisia yielded just 23 photos, most of which were published in the early days of the revolution. Photographic coverage of the ongoing conflict in Syria revealed an emphasis on protest action, nationalism, and violence that painted a picture similar to the one predicted by H1

and H2. Many photos from Jordan focused on King Abdullah II, the charismatic leader who used his media savvy to avoid many of the protests that had shaken other countries in the region. The remaining countries did not produce enough data to warrant individual consideration in this study and were meant to assist in gauging the actions of the region as a whole.

Dominant Categories

While visual coverage of the revolutions proved to be a diverse offering, photos of protest action proved to be the most prominent element of this study, followed by nationalism, arsenal and political leaders.

Protest Coverage

Of the 430 photos studied, 31.2% were coded as images depicting protest action. Of those 133 protest-related photos, three-quarters depicted peaceful protest. General protest coverage was the most prominent category of this study for the five primary countries with the exception of Libya, where a majority of images contained a noted presence of arsenal or some form of weaponry. Egypt offered the most protest photos through extensive coverage of the protests in the historic Liberation Square and subsequent government retaliation, which accounted for 48 of the overall 430 photos related to protest. Inter-coder agreement for this category was 89%.

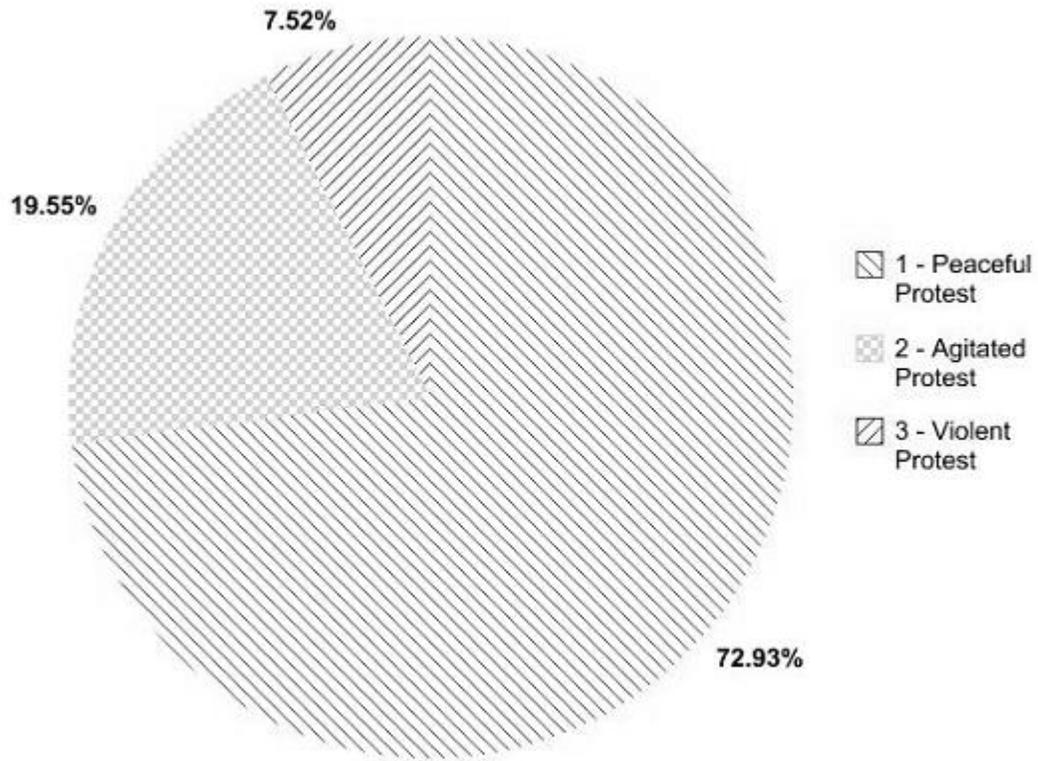


Figure 1

Protest Coverage Analysis

Note. This pie graph traces the degree of intensity of photographic protest coverage in the Arab Spring timeline.

Nationalism

Eighteen percent of the photographic coverage in this study included some form of nationalism, a recurring theme in almost any revolutionary action. Separate from symbols depicting political or military leaders, this category’s purpose was to trace the flag-waving and patriotic pandering that tends to accompany most historic revolutionary acts. Its prominence in this study has been noted, with the percentage of photos coded for nationalism second only to peaceful protest. Fourteen percent of all photos in this study were coded for both nationalism and protest, while less than 2% of photos were coded for both violence and nationalism. Inter-coder agreement for this category was 90%.

Arsenal

Some degree of arsenal was present in 16.5% of all photos included in this study. This element was the present but not the focus of 3.7% of all photos in this study, prominently focused in 6.3% of all photos, and the primary focus of 6.5% of all photos. Arsenal was most prevalent in coverage of Libyan rebel forces and ruling regime alike, with 28% of the selected photos including some form of weaponry. Inter-coder agreement for this category was 90%.

Political Leaders

Photographs depicting political leaders, either in person or in the form of one of the many monolithic banners that decorate the countries of interest, accounted for 16.3% of selected imagery. Particular emphasis in this category was placed on Gaddafi, whose infamous likeness was splashed on covers and profiled extensively through in-depth coverage of the region. During the timeline of the Arab Spring, Gaddafi seemed to embody the troubles associated with the region, from his extravagant palace estate to the wide disparity of wealth between Libya's elite petroleum magnates and the lower class. Inter-coder agreement for this category was 92%.

Vandalism/Destruction

Destruction manifested itself in many ways throughout the Arab Spring, from small-scale vandalism in the form of graffiti and Molotov cocktails to widespread devastation courtesy of advanced military weaponry and calculated guerrilla strikes from former citizens clad in improvised gas masks. Inter-coder agreement for this category was 91%.

Violence

Violent imagery appeared less than expected, with 88.6% of published photos related to revolutionary action in the Middle East decidedly nonviolent in nature. Inter-coder agreement for the category of violence was 93%. Bloodless violence accounted for 2.8% of all coverage, while intense violence manifested in 5% of all photos analyzed. The final subsection, which focused on published images of death, showed substantial emphasis in 3.7% of all selected imagery.

Other Categories

Popular opposition was featured in 11.4% of the photos analyzed and took many forms, including members of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, popular musicians, filmmakers, artists, and poets associated with the revolution. Nearly one-third of Tunisia's selected imagery focused on this element, mainly in the form of supporters of Bouazizi with a offered to the faces of the revolution. Old wealth was featured almost exclusively in Libya, where the disparity in income created by Muammar Gaddafi festered to an angry boil as citizens seized dictator's extravagant palace.

The first subsection of the media category focused on published photos that depicted journalists, several of which gained notoriety as casualties of revolution. The latter subsection of this category focused on citizen media, whose unconventional means of guerrilla reporting gained infamy and came to define the Arab Spring. Both forms of media received equal visual coverage from the publications under analysis, accounting for 14 photos apiece and 6.6% of the total photos of this study.

Conclusion

The results of this research provide a degree of insight regarding the people, places and ideas behind the Arab Spring as viewed through the lens of Western photojournalists. Protest coverage.

An overview of photos from the entire region showed that the events of the Arab Spring were visually depicted by Western newsmagazines as a movement of peaceful protest with strong elements of nationalism.

The most striking difference among countries presented itself in comparison of Libyan and Egyptian coverage. While the latter was presented as a mostly peaceful act of liberation driven by protest action, the former was depicted as a bloody war with widespread destruction from advanced weaponry.

The lack of emphasis on violence in this study may be attributed to several factors, including a true lack of violent activity within the Arab Spring movement, a reluctance of photographers to shoot such perilous events, or perhaps it could be perceived as an expression of Western journalists' views that the movement and underlying causes are more important to the world at large than the associated casualties.

Suggestions for Further Research

The timely nature of this research presents several potential discrepancies that maybe rectified through future research. First, incorporating a modicum of Internet coverage is essential to further understanding of the nature of the Arab Spring. In addition, prior media-based content analysis research drew data from many publications which now distribute through an online-only format, such as U.S. News and World Report. Given the presence of Time online and Newsweek's recent switch to an online-

only format, additional research that accounts for the presence of the Internet could provide a much-needed corollary to this study.

Next, this research covers what is regarded as the fledgling days of the revolutionary movement that continues today. The 523 days of photographic coverage under analysis in this study represent but a sliver of the Arab Spring timeline. Further research that chronicles this ongoing conflict beyond this study's cutoff date of summer of 2012 is recommended, including added emphasis on the aftermath of the bloody coup that ended Gaddafi's reign and other political renovations in the region. While new governments have been established in several nations, plenty of ongoing struggles accompany this new leadership, such as those currently experienced in Egypt under the recently instated rule of Mohamed Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood constituents that has many citizens crying for a revolutionary encore. Therefore, additional research of this region focusing on times of repair and transition is suggested.

Finally, this research was limited in that photos were the sole unit of analysis. Additional research that incorporates text coverage is essential to a better understanding of the Arab Spring and a more firm grasp on the framing and agenda setting-based implications associated with this study.

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Appendix A: Visual Coding Categories

The following categories attempts to demonstrate and support the prior research question and hypotheses regarding the photographic depiction of the events surrounding the Arab Spring.

1. *Publication*

Photographs will be categorized according to publication.

1) *Time*

2) *Newsweek*

2. *Date*

This category displays the week that the photograph was published in mm/dd/yyyy format.

3. *Size*

This variable records the size of published photographs.

This variable records the size of published photographs.

0) 1/6 page or less photograph

1) 1/4 page photograph

2) 1/3 page photograph

3) 1/2 page photograph (i.e. “major items”)

4) Full-page photograph

5) One and a half-page spread

6) Double-page spread

4. *Country of origin*

This category records the country where a photo was taken.

1) Tunisia

2) Egypt

3) Libya

4) Bahrain

5) Syria

6) Israel

7) Palestine (West Bank + Gaza)

8) Saudi Arabia

9) Iran

10) Jordan

11) Algeria

12) Yemen

13) Sudan

14) Unspecified

5. *Symbols of Nationalism*

Images in this category include depictions of the flag and other national emblems of the respective country portrayed.

- 0) No noted presence of nationalism in a given image.
- 1) Some presence of a symbol of nationalism in an image.
- 2) Notable presence of nationalism in an image (i.e. majority of the frame, main focus of photo).

6. Violence

This category includes images that depict the degree of violence and injuries sustained on both sides of the conflict. Special notice will be given to photographs in this category that depict death.

- 0) No noted violence in an image
- 1) Image depicts bloodless violence
- 2) Image containing notable sustained injuries and “bloody violence”
- 3) Image depicts recently deceased individuals.

7. Protest

Images in this category depict defiance through force and chronicle the repeated clashes between protesters and government officials. This variable attempts to form a distinction between photographs involving violent protest that contain elements from the previous variable and depictions of nonviolent protest with no apparent violent action occurring within the frame.

- 0) No noted presence of protest in a given image.
- 1) Peaceful protest.
- 2) Agitated protest.

3) Violent protest.

8. *Symbols of Authority*

This category includes all images related to the current regime in power in a given nation. Images in this category focus on some manner of authoritarian figure such as a local police officer or member of the armed forces.

0) No noted presence of authority in a given image.

1) Minimal presence of authority in an image.

2) Some presence of authority in an image.

3) Notable presence of authority in an image (i.e. majority of the frame, main focus of photo).

9. *Political Leaders*

Images in this category differ from symbols of authority in that these photographs are limited to the depictions of political figures during the ongoing conflict.

0) No noted presence of political leaders in a given image.

1) Some presence of political leaders in an image.

2) Political leaders are the primary focus of the photo (i.e. 50% or more of the frame).

10. *Popular Opposition*

Photographs in this category focus on popular faces and advocates of protesters' rights, many of whom possess celebrity status in their respective culture. This

includes named leaders of protest groups and thought leaders, as well as those sympathetic to the cause.

- 0) No noted presence of popular opposition in a given image.
- 1) Some presence of popular opposition in an image.
- 2) Popular opposition is the primary focus of the photo (i.e. 50% or more of the frame).

11. Arsenal

This category includes images with a focus on the makeshift weaponry improvised by protesters, as well as photographs with a focus on the arsenal of the ruling regime.

- 0) No noted presence of arsenal in a given image.
- 1) Minimal presence of a symbol of arsenal in an image.
- 2) Some presence of a symbol of arsenal in an image.
- 3) Notable presence of arsenal in an image (i.e. majority of the frame, main focus of photo).

12. Daily life

Images in this category reflect the consequences of revolution on the daily routines of Middle Eastern and North African citizenry. This includes depictions of non-secular sanctuaries such as mosques and photographs of prominent or iconic places or structures across the region.

- 0) No noted presence of daily life in a photograph (e.g. event/protest coverage).
- 1) Noted presence of daily life in an image.

13. Old Wealth

Images in this category depict artifacts of a displaced regime and forgotten wealth.

Includes photographs of seized property of former leaders.

0) No noted presence of displaced wealth in a given image.

1) Some presence of displaced wealth in an image.

2) Displaced wealth is the primary focus of the photo (i.e. majority of the frame, main focus of photo).

14. Vandalism/Destruction

Images in this category depict destruction of property. Includes photographs of graffiti and destroyed buildings with a focus on the devastation causes by regional conflicts.

0) No noted presence of vandalism in a given image.

1) Some presence of vandalism in an image.

2) Vandalism is the primary focus of the photo (i.e. majority of the frame, main focus of photo).

15. Media

The media-driven revolutions behind the Arab Spring have afforded many instances where the news gatherer becomes the news. This category takes into account both recognized journalists of Al Jazeera ilk and citizenry acting as journalists by capturing and documenting events to post online.

- 0) No noted presence of journalism professionals.
- 1) Noted presence of journalists or journalism professionals.
- 2) Noted presence of citizen journalism (e.g. documentary through cell phone, or social media usage).