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Arrested Media: Transforming the Depiction
of Contemporary Mediatized Conflict

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Abstract

This dissertation explains how the realignment of power between media, state, and society is transforming the media's depiction of war in contemporary mediatized conflict. Focusing on how media framing, advancements in technology, and iconization of images in different media environments alters how war is viewed by a public. Utilizing media ecology theory a comparative case study was conducted on two conflicts, which included analysis of the Kosovo War in the broadcast media ecology (1990s-2000s) and War in Syria from the arrested media ecology (2010s-present). Critical discourse analysis and semiotic analysis was conducted on articles and images from *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mail* to decipher if variation exists in a depiction of war from the broadcast media ecology to the arrested media ecology.

The findings showed that despite the saturation of amateur content depicting war, the mainstream recycles images derived from wire services to report conflict. Furthermore, as technological advancements remain a destabilizing force between the media-state relationship, the mainstream continues to exhibit the rearresting of agenda setting capabilities that were previously disrupted by the emergence of unintended content. Exemplifying greater adaptation and reflexivity by media, which has yet to be demonstrated by the sovereign in the arrested media ecology.

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1. Introduction

The desire for an enhanced understanding of conflict within the international system has challenged scholars and policy-makers alike as new technologies and an increasing number of actors involved in war alters power relations among the state, society, and media. Furthermore, the recent rise in intrastate conflict exhibits the changing nature of contemporary warfare (Levy & Thompson, 2010: 13), encouraging greater knowledge vis-à-vis what ignites conflict, what perpetuates conflict, and what resolves conflict. Contemporary wars are largely characterized by asymmetrical warfare, leading to the increase in guerrilla warfare, terrorist tactics, the targeting of citizens (Levy & Thompson, 2010: 13), and what Kassimeris calls the ‘barbarization of warfare’ (Kassimeris, 2006). War arguably has always been barbaric; although what makes contemporary war unique is the embedded role that media and technology play in how wars are conducted, mediated and viewed by a public.

War in this study is defined as “sustained, coordinated violence between political organizations” (Thompson & Levy, 2010: 5), while conflict is an engagement between two or more groups utilizing coercion and mutually hostile actions to control their opponent (Brecher & Harvey, 1998: 7). Both war and conflict are defined because while conflicts can arise without being classified as war, wars inherently are always classified as conflict. All conflicts cited within the dissertation have escalated to the point of being classified as war, and the two terms will be used interchangeably.

To fully understand contemporary conflict it is crucial to acknowledge the relationship between the media and war, and the media’s increasingly embedded role within conflict itself. This is known as the mediatization of conflict, which emphasizes how the media is “often implicated within conflicts while disseminating ideas and images about them” (Cottle, 2006: 8). Furthermore, mediatization refers to the ‘long-lasting process, whereby social and cultural institutions and modes of

interactions are changed as a consequence of the growth of the media's influence" (Hjarvard, 2008: 114). Contemporary conflicts illuminate how traditional and new media are intertwined within conflict and how a public understands war. The shifting role of the media in conflict is also altering how wars are fought. Now winning the physical war on the battlefield is just as important as winning the virtual war online, by "fill[ing] in fields of perception" via mainstream and new media governments are able to garner public support for conflict (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 6).

To analyze how the media is altering what is seen in conflict, this paper will utilize media ecology theory to critically examine the media's influence on social change and impact the media has in the construction, perpetuation, and transformation in reality of war (Lum, 2009: 3). Media ecology theory is defined in the thesis as the study of the environment in which the symbiotic relationship between the individual, society, and communication technology are influenced and impacted by media (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2015: 1324). Utilizing media ecology theory will further help to examine the relationship between media, war, and society as technology is further embedded in global affairs (Strate, 1999:1), and incorporated in constructing a public interpretation of contemporary mediatized conflict (Lum, 2006: 28).

1.2 Research Aims, Objectives and Value

The main aim of this research is to enhance understanding of how media ecologies shape a dominant version of what war looks like in contemporary mediatized conflict. This thesis will specifically utilize the broadcast media ecology (BME) and arrested media ecology (AME) to explore the mainstream's relationship to conflict and how conflict is depicted in mainstream media through a comparative case study.

The BME occurred from 1990 into the 2000s and coincided with the rise of the 24/7 news cycle and Internet boom. BME is characterized by the mainstream's gatekeeping and agenda setting abilities, which allowed the media control in the dissemination of unidirectional content

reflecting the political elite agenda (Cottle, 2006; Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010). Furthermore, conflicts occurring within this ecology were highly regulated by government and military elites. Therefore, access to wars was limited and the emergence of unintended content nearly unheard of, which impacted what a public viewed during war.

Moreover, while the AME represents a realignment of media-state power and includes conflicts occurring from approximately 2010 into present day. The reassertion of the mainstream is a result from the media's loss of control in the new media ecology (NME), which challenged the elite discourse through the emergence of amateur content via web 2.0. The development of web 2.0 and increasingly multi-directional flow of content starkly contrasts the unidirectional flow of information in the BME. Increasing hyperconnectivity amongst society in the AME only further emphasizes the importance of understanding the mediatization of conflict within contemporary wars and its evolution since the BME.

The ways conflict is portrayed in the BME and AME will help to expose the interconnected relationship of media and war in varying media environments, and the impact media has in shaping what war look like. Increasing advancements and accessibility of portable technology has fueled the dissemination of eyewitness and amateur images of conflict, allowing anyone to become a citizen journalist and share content from war. Despite a saturation of images within the media environment, only a few select images rise to the status of what is to be considered iconic and symbolic of a conflict.

Iconic images in the thesis are images that conceptualize an event, and when viewed, act as a reference and embodiment of a particular event. Images become iconized through continual circulation in mainstream and new media (Griffin, 2010: 18), and furthermore, these images tend to reflect western values and lifestyles (Tulloch & Blood, 2012: 5). Iconic images represent important areas of analysis within media ecology

scholarship due to the fact that when an image is iconicized it assists in a conflicts construction of meaning.

To fully enquire about the relationship between media and conflict in altering a depiction of what war look like, an interdisciplinary approach will be used. Employing an interdisciplinary approach allows for a more in-depth analysis of war through a hybrid of media studies theory, international relations theory, and sociological theory. Linking these various disciplines is necessary to develop a more holistic epistemology of contemporary conflict, reconceptualizing the understanding of mediatized conflict in an age characterized by the emergence of new media, globalization, and connectivity. Analyzing the media-state relationship and impact of different media ecologies is imperative to the study of war because it is through the media that conflicts are made comprehensible and visible to a cosmopolitan public (Cottle, 2006: 185).

The main objectives of the dissertation are to:

1. Identify how different media ecologies shape contemporary depictions of what conflict look like.
2. Evaluate whether patterns exist in iconic images of suffering that emerge throughout different media ecologies in times of conflict.
3. Analyze the ways in which new media technologies shape the depiction and understanding of conflict.

1.3 Outline of Thesis

Chapter one will introduce the main research aims, objectives, and value that the study will bring to the understanding of war and conflict. In addition, the chapter will foreshadow the following sections of the thesis.

Chapter two will seek to familiarize the reader with main scholars in the media and war discourse. Additionally, main theorists used in the dissertation will be introduced, as will their contributions to the study of conflict.

Chapter three outlines the methodology used to complete the study, which identifies the case studies selected to conduct a qualitative comparative analysis that employed both critical discourse analysis and semiotic analysis.

Chapter four will seek to identify if variation exists between BME and the AME regarding what war look like in the Kosovo War (1998-1999) and Syrian War (2015-Present). Comparison will utilize critical discourse analysis to decipher the effects of the media's framing in conflict, as well as, how the saturation of images in the BME and AME alters what is seen during conflict.

Chapter five will explore trends present in the iconization of images that emerge during conflict in the BME and AME. This chapter will utilize semiotic analysis to analyze the iconization of Agim Shala from the Kosovo War and Alan Kurdi from the Syrian War. Additionally, the inherent politicization of iconic images will be explored.

Chapter six will then analyze the impact of new media technologies in shaping a contemporary depiction and understanding of war. Specifically focusing on the changing nature of newswriting and its impact in the depiction of conflict from the BME and AME.

Chapter seven will pinpoint main findings from the work and the implications they entail, as well as, recommendations for future research in media and war scholarship.

2. Literature Review

The following chapter of the dissertation engages with scholars from media and war studies and critically analyzes prominent research pertaining to the thesis topic. This section will include exposing gaps within the field that have fueled my research on the dissertation topic, and the contributions this research will have for media and war scholarship. The literature review is organized into three sections covering main themes prominent within the paper, which include media ecology theory as an interdisciplinary approach to understanding a changing depiction of conflict, images of suffering and their implications for contemporary mediatized conflict, and lastly, the impact of media templates and framing. Each section will exemplify the importance of the theory in this study and in the broader field, as well as, how this work seeks to advance research in mediatized conflict.

2.1 Media Ecology Theory

Using media ecology theory to study media and war allows for a more holistic approach in understanding the environment conflict occurs in and how it influences societies understanding of war. Neil Postman was the first media ecology scholar to introduce the concept of media as an environment (Postman, 1970: 161). Much like the way scientist analyze phenomena in ecologies; Postman believed that the media could be conceptualized similarly. As technology advances within the media environment it alters and disrupts the sociopolitical structure within the ecology (Alexander, 2006: 366-367; Cottle, 2006: 2; Hoskins, 2016: 2; Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010), which influences what spectators see during war because of transforming interrelationships between the sovereign, media, and civil society.

Furthermore, media ecology theory seeks to uncover the way “communication affects human perception, understanding, feeling, and value” (Postman, 1970: 161). Changes in communication mechanisms altering communications flows, illuminates the transition from a single

sensorial-symbolic environment to multimedia sensorial-symbolic environment (Lum, 2006: 30). The increasing number of mediums that content from conflict can be disseminated on is complicating the co-existing interrelated media dynamic, revealing how the media atmosphere is transforming. This transformation illuminates the need for media and war scholars to acknowledge and explore its effect on a contemporary depiction of what war look like in Western society.

2.1.1 Media Ecology in the Study of War

Scholars Simon Cottle, Andrew Hoskins, and Ben O’Loughlin, are central to research using media ecology theory to study media and war. Their research in mediatized conflict is increasing understanding of the relationship between media, military, and society by reconceptualizing how mainstream is embedded in war.

Pivotal to media and war scholarship is research by Hoskins and O’Loughlin in the three different phases of mediatization, which was introduced in their book *War and Media: The Emergence of Diffused War* and further expanded upon in their more recent publication *Arrested War: The Third Phase of Mediatization* (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2010, 2015). Their research includes identifying phases or epoch’s conflict occurs in, which helps demonstrate how particular mediums can influence the construction of “behaviors, political and social institutions and epistemological biases” (Alexander, 2006: 366). Furthermore, the three phases of mediatization coincide with the three media ecologies identified within the publication, the broadcast media ecology (BME), new media ecology (NME), and lastly, the arrested media ecology (AME). The three media ecologies proposed by Hoskins and O’Loughlin have been incorporated within this thesis as they offer a comprehensive theory to understand the media environment conflicts occur in.

To decipher what characteristics differentiate media ecologies from each other, research by Simon Cottle identifies six features that distinguish media ecologies in his research on mediatized disasters. While

his research focuses on mediatized disasters, his findings are generalizable for mediatized conflicts as well. Cottle's analysis concludes that it is "scale, speed, saturation, social relations enfranchisement, surveillance, and seeing" that alter the "extensity and intensity of media and communication" (Cottle, 2014: 5-6). The scale, speed, and saturation of images from the BME to AME will be analyzed within the thesis, which will help establish a better understanding of what a public sees during conflict, as well as, how images are iconicized.

Additionally, research by Cottle proposes that media is embedded within conflict through the dissemination of visual and textual content from war (Cottle, 2006: 8). Cottle's research exposed the fluctuating power dynamics between varying ecologies in conflicts (Cottle, 2006: 22), which will be further explored in chapter six when analyzing the impact of new media technology in contemporary conflict and the realigning capabilities of the mainstream. Furthermore, his research focuses on how user generated content can sometimes fuel mainstream coverage of an event. Although, he did not explore the impact social media has in its agenda setting capabilities, which will be addressed in chapter five regarding the iconization of the Alan Kurdi image. The thesis seeks to go beyond understanding how web 2.0 increases awareness of an event as was prominent in Cottle's research, but rather to explore how social media can contest power relations between the public, media, and government.

While media ecology theory provides a comprehensive understanding of the media's role in conflict and relation to war, it suffers from establishing a stable theory in media and war studies. The consistently changing dynamics within the scholarship have not remained constant long enough for a set paradigm to emerge. Additionally, media ecology theory tends to view ecologies within strict theoretical opposition. For instance, while new media challenges traditional media it is not in direct opposition to traditional media and both can thrive symbiotically within media ecologies. While limitations exist, media ecology theory still

offers a strong conceptual model for analyzing the symbiotic relationship between media and conflict in a manner incapable without the complete approach media ecology theory offers.

Scholars of media and war have emphasized the changing landscape that web 2.0 presents in how wars are fought, although have yet to examine how this impacts the mainstreams depiction of conflict during a given media ecology. This transforming landscape can be attributed to the “re-ordering of time and space by media”, which results in a transformation of what is visible (Cottle, 2006: 6-7). The shifting role of web 2.0 has unsettled the civil-sovereign relationship and the sovereign’s hierarchical power in the media environment, exposing research gaps regarding the recent reassertion of the media in the AME.

2.2 Images of Suffering

The saturation of images in the media environment is increasing attention to the impact of images, due to a photographs ability to move a public. Specifically, this research will engage with the most relevant scholars to the thesis, which are Azoulay (2008), Chouliaraki (2008), Sontag (1977, 2003), Taylor (1998), Tulloch & Blood (2012), and Zelizer (2010).

The publication of images during conflict is imperative to shaping public opinion and perception of war. The Vietnam War represents the first instance where the publication of images of horror drastically altered public perception of war, exemplifying the extent the media visual is able to harness support and opposition for war (Griffin, 2010: 35). The exponential growth of images from conflict, due to advancements in mobile technology and Internet interconnectivity, reflects a visual obsessed society emerging into the 21st century.

The increased visibility of conflict within the present media ecology is a result of the saturation of images within the media space connecting spectators to groups previously unseen. The dissemination of images via mainstream media or new media has the ability to increase

humanitarian aid (Robinson, 2002: 124), increase awareness of an event (Cottle, 2006: 185), increase public support of government policy or intervention (Zelizer, 2010: 20), and in some cases securitize and enforce the notion of the 'other' (Buzan et al., 1998: 124). Therefore, to understand the changing media atmosphere wars occur in, it is imperative to explore the image because of the diffused and saturated media environment.

The emergence of images during conflict has specifically prompted research concerning the role of the spectator. Both John Taylor (1998) and Lilie Chouliaraki (2006) are prominent scholars who explore the moral obligation and responsibility of the mainstream in their publication of images of horror and the spectator's role in viewing.

Taylor's contribution of the 'hierarchy of death' within the media exposes the "value of news based on nationality of victims" (Taylor, 1998: 90), which raises the question whether continuous globalization is altering and increasing the depiction of distant bodies in the mainstream depiction of conflict? Chouliaraki's analysis of the spectator's role goes beyond exposing the hierarchy of death within the reporting of suffering, to expose a paradox between advancements in technology and the international publication of images of suffering from conflict. This paradox shows the contention between mainstream reporting of conflict and placing the sufferers body on display for the viewing of distant spectators (Chouliaraki, 2006: 37). Although the media's usage of images of distant sufferers will remain a journalistic practice, because viewing images of events allows the spectator to 'witness' as if they were there themselves (Chouliaraki, 2006: 209). The 'realism' that images provide in a conflict help legitimize the actuality of the event and expose what is happening in war.

2.2.1 Iconic Images

The iconization of images occurs from the repetitive publishing and sharing of an image that incites either a connection or response from

spectators. Research from Tulloch and Blood explores the making of icons and credits their construction to the mainstream, because of its perception by audiences as a legitimate source reinforcing western ideologies and beliefs (Tulloch & Blood, 2012: 3). While their research provides a thoughtful analysis regarding the construction of icons and reveals neo-liberal connotations attached in the iconization process, they overlook the depth in which web 2.0 impacts the making of an icon. Furthermore, the construction of meaning tends to be perceived as more credible when derived from a position of power, as the traditional mainstream possesses, although their research disregards the possibility of an expansion in what is conceptualized as mainstream (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2015: 1335). This gap exposes an area of research analyzing the ways in which social media alters the iconization process, which will be further explored in chapter five.

2.2.2 Media Framing

The impactful nature of images lies not only in what the photograph depicts, but also how the image is framed within the medium (Azoulay, 2008: 152; Zelizer, 2010: 13). Or simply that it's the "context that determines the content" (Strate, 2008: 132). Therefore, the framing used to accompany an image is paramount in constructing a narrative of conflict, and in effect, how a public understands conflict. Scholarship of media templates emphasizes the ability of templates to provide media consumers with a neatly packaged, comfortable, and in many cases simple representation of a story (Chouliaraki, 2006: 43; Kitzinger, 2000). Moreover, the framing used by mainstream media has the capability to reconstruct the meaning of an image as meaning derives from the accompanying textual support and position of the image within an article (Zelizer, 2010: 53).

Research by Jenny Kitzinger focuses on the role of media templates in understanding how the media utilizes its power to construct reality of a news event (Kitzinger, 2000: 81). Furthermore, scholars

researching media templates and framing have shown the ability of images, through their mediation, to evoke either a connection or disconnect with the sufferer through distance and proximity framing (Chouliaraki, 2008: 49).

Oftentimes the framing used during conflict distances the spectator to instill and reinforce the notion of the other. The securitization of the other is made possible through framing techniques employed by media and political elites, which results in the construction of a threat to identity and societal security of a group (Buzan et al., 1998: 120). Analysis of societal security and construction of the other during times of conflict exposes the ways in which the media utilizes framing techniques to either distance or connect spectators to an event.

Furthermore, specifically when employing proximate or distance framing, the types of images used in conflict have the potential to incite reactions or indifference among spectators. Barbie Zelizer proposes three types of ‘about to die’ images that are used in mainstream media: ‘images of presumed death’, ‘images of possible death’, and ‘images of certain death’ (Zelizer, 2010: 68). Her research illuminates how different types of ‘about to die’ images are used by media to depict events and connect or distance spectators.

Images of certain death are often the types of images iconicized during conflicts due to their shocking nature and fall into three categories of identification, which are “anonymity, posthumous personhood, and notoriety from recognizable personhood” (Zelizer, 2010: 175). Zelizer highlights how anonymity can be used to symbolize a broader meaning to an event due to the absence of identifying the viewer’s name (Zelizer, 2010: 186). Although, Zelizer disregards that retaining anonymity is not the only means capable of establishing a symbol of an event, as identifying the subject in a photograph still results in the creation of a symbol that arguably establishes greater connection to spectators through their identification. Furthermore, the luxury of anonymity is virtually

unheard of in the AME and to some extent the BME, which raises the question of whether those photographed in conflicts have the right to remain anonymous?

Addressing questions of anonymity is work by Ariella Azoulay in her publication *The Civil Contract of Photography*. Azoulay proposes that anyone participating in the action of photography, including taking, watching and showing is consenting to the civil contract of photography (Azoulay, 2008: 24). In the civil contract of photography the subject in the photograph is perceived to have renounced their right not to be photographed (Azoulay, 2008: 99), as there is a duty to capture the suffering exposing social and political injustice.

While the media's framing attempts to make images exposing social and political injustice more comprehensible, there is no guarantee that the interpretation of the spectator will be one that was intended by the journalist (O'Loughlin, 2011: 71). Media templates and framing are useful techniques for presenting news of catastrophes in an easily understandable and familiar manner, although also possess the potential to evoke unintentional compassion fatigue among spectators.

Compassion fatigue is relevant to the analysis of images of suffering because the perception of compassion fatigue by editors and journalists can result in whether an image is printed or if an event is covered (Moeller, 1999). The theory, which was originally introduced by Susan Sontag in *On Photography*, states that images have the ability to anaesthetize (Sontag, 1977: 20). Later retracting her declaration of the images ability to anaesthetize in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, claiming that people do not become numb from an overabundance of images resulting in callous indifference, but rather because they are afraid (Sontag 2003: 100). Sontag's shift in mindset removes the blame of compassion fatigue from the media and instead places the responsibility on the spectators themselves for their inability to empathize.

The theory of compassion fatigue deserves recognition because if audiences are truly becoming ‘fatigued’ by the saturation of conflict reporting, then this will alter how media depicts conflict. Moeller’s work regarding compassion fatigue highlights the potential for images of suffering to not shock spectators as they previously did (Moeller, 1999). This exposes an area of research within the AME, which points to potential compassion fatigue among viewer’s as the saturation of graphic images are easily accessible and available simultaneously on multiple mediums hinting to an increasing threshold to shock an audience.

Critical analysis of scholarship in media and war shows areas of uncertainty and gaps where further enquiry is needed. This work aspires to engage with these gaps, which includes considering how media framing impacts what is seen during conflict in a given media ecology. Whether differing media ecologies impact the iconization of images that emerge during conflict? And lastly, how technological advancements are changing the power dynamics between the media and public, and if the increased reporting of distant suffering signifies a change in media’s itself? To address these questions a comparative analysis will be conducted utilizing UK media articles from the Kosovo War in the BME and the Syrian War in the AME. The specific methodological avenue chosen for analysis will be further explained and justified in the following chapter.

3. Methodology

A combination of the changing nature of war with advancements in technology have presented new obstacles and opportunities for media in its reporting of conflict, which highlighted the importance of understanding the mediatization of conflict in constructing contemporary depictions of war. To gain further knowledge how media ecologies shaped what war look like this chapter explains the dissertations research design, research methods, research agenda, and lastly, the research summary.

First, the research design explains why a qualitative comparative case study was chosen and what cases were selected for analysis. Second, the research method will justify what approaches were employed in the comparative case study and what documents and images were chosen for analysis. The research method will include an explanation of how samples selected for the comparative case study helped discover how differing media ecologies shaped a contemporary depiction of war, if themes existed in the iconization of images in varying media ecologies, and lastly, the scope new media technology had in influencing the depiction and understanding of conflict in the broadcast media ecology (BME) and arrested media ecology (AME). Third, the research agenda explains how data was collected and analyzed, and addresses any potential limitations of the study. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a research summary of the theories utilized, methods chosen for analysis.

3.1 Research Design

To gain a comprehensive understanding of how media ecologies shaped what war look like in contemporary mediatized conflict the thesis conducted research from a qualitative approach. A qualitative research approach was chosen to analyze how media ecologies shaped a dominant depiction of war because of the ontological characteristics of the research design. The interpretivist nature of qualitative research aided in the “understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of the world by its participants” (Bryman, 2016: 375), which

helped to expose the changing depiction of war in the BME and AME. In the endeavor to enhance understanding of the relationship between government, society, and media a qualitative approach exposed the symbiotic relationships these actors have in constructing what is seen during war in the BME and AME.

Furthermore, a comparative case study was employed to decipher if differentiation exists between media ecologies and the mainstream's impact on how western mediatized conflict was depicted. This design was selected for the thesis because it revealed social phenomena and exposed differentiation between ecologies, which would not have been applicable with a single case analysis. Comparison of the BME to the AME also encouraged better comprehension of the impact advancing technology had in the iconization of images of suffering and contemporary depiction of conflict.

Samples chosen for the case study derived from news agencies in the United Kingdom (UK), which represented the mainstream Western viewpoint for this study. The UK was selected for analysis because it housed some of the largest media conglomerates in Europe (Le, 2015), as well as, reflected a dominant Western perspective due to the UK's influential stance in world politics and permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council. Additionally, when referring to a public, audience, or western depiction of conflict the thesis is only focused on the UK public and perception of war. This was because analysis only considered UK media, and therefore the audience in reference will not extend beyond the UK.

Additionally, consideration was given to expand the study to include a more encompassing depiction of 'Western' by incorporating other Western countries. Although, because of varying standards in taste and decency a comparison would become complex and due to space limitations the thesis focused solely on UK media. Increased complexities in taste and decency derived from the requirement for media to abide not

only to country specific written laws, but also, to what they perceived a public to consider socially acceptable to publish (Taylor, 2010: 135). What might be acceptable to one public could be considered graphic in another; therefore, focusing solely on UK media allowed for deeper analysis and more reliable results.

The two cases chosen for comparison are the Kosovo War from the BME and the Syrian War from the AME. The conflicts in Kosovo and Syria were chosen for comparative analysis because of similarities present in these conflicts. Both cases represented intrastate conflicts that threatened the peace, stability, and security of surrounding countries gathering international involvement and attention due to high refugee flows (NATO, 1999; UNHCR, 2016a) and suspected (Syria) and known (Kosovo) war crimes.

3.1.1 The Broadcast Media Ecology (BME)

The BME in this study was characterized by the prominence in the mainstreams agenda setting capabilities and role as the main gatekeeper (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010, 2015). The mainstreams ability to remain in control of what content was released to a public reinforced its ability to shape a societies cognizance of a conflict. Furthermore, the emergence of the BME coincided with the rise of the 24/7 news cycle and real-time reporting, which increased awareness of distant conflicts and presented western society with a new way to watch a conflict unfold. This study conceptualized conflicts occurring from the 1990s to 2000s as being classified within the BME.

Additionally, news coverage during the BME tended to reflect the political and military elite agenda, which is classified as the manufactured consent paradigm (Cottle, 2006). The ability of government elites to control the agenda and conflict that occurred within the BME resulted in a highly sanitized depiction of war, which was due to reliance on government sources for information regarding the conflict.

3.1.2 The New Media Ecology (NME)

The new media ecology (NME) was characterized by the disruption of the highly sanitized and controlled media landscape that was symbolic of the BME. The NME referred to the media ecology that bridged the BME to the AME. The NME highly contested the political and military elites in conflicts from the 2000s to 2010s. While this specific ecology will not be analyzed within this study it is important for understanding how the AME evolved.

The NME was classified by “connection, complexity, and emergent change” (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2010: 11). This is due to the ‘civilian surge’ (Gowing, 2009: 1) and emergence of unintended content from war that contrasts the political elite discourse and challenged the manufactured consent paradigm that was prominent in the BME. Emergence of amateur content increased in the NME as social media gained popularity and advancements in portable communication technology made capturing and sharing images more accessibility to citizens.

3.1.3 The Arrested Media Ecology (AME)

The most recent media ecology is the AME, which referred to conflicts occurring from 2010 into present day. The AME represented the reassertion of the mainstream in reporting international conflict (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2015). The realignment of power between the media, state, and society is amplified in the AME as the media emerged as a main actor in the construction of what is seen in conflict and reasserted its agenda setting role. AME is distinct from the NME because while amateur content still emerged, the mainstream has adjusted to incorporate user generated content rather than resisting or ignoring the emergence of unintended material. While the shock from the NME still lingers in governments as they strive to adjust to the AME (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2015), the mainstream has adjusted and rearrested its control within the contemporary media environment.

3.2 Research Methods

To conduct a comparative case study researching variation in the depiction of war in the BME and AME multimodal analysis was used, which incorporated a combination of images and text to conduct critical discourse analysis (CDA) and semiotic analysis. Online articles selected from both media ecologies and conflicts were compared using identical methods of analysis to unveil similarities and differences between what war look like in the BME and AME, which will be further expanded upon in the following paragraphs.

Research focused on online media to conduct a comparative study between the BME and AME. Online articles were collected from *The Guardian*, and *The Daily Mail* for analysis. The decision to select only online articles was made due to the ease of availability of content from *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* in the coverage of both conflicts.

Analysis consisted of a mixture of online publications from *The Guardian*, and *Daily Mail*. To strive for a representational sample of the UK media landscape, a range of UK media from different political affiliations, as well as, different target audiences was selected. Combinations of a broadsheet and tabloid paper were chosen because of differentiation in reporting styles and content published. Broadsheets traditionally published stories containing hard news that covered breaking events, while tabloids published stories that featured soft news covering more human interest orientated stories (Reinemann et al., 2011: 224-225).

The Guardian and *Daily Mail* provided a well-rounded depiction of the UK media, which incorporated varying political affiliations. The incorporation of a paper known for backing Conservatives (*Daily Mail*) and a paper known to support Labour (*The Guardian*) was selected to provide a less politically biased analysis through the incorporation of the two opposing political groups. The political leanings of a paper can affect what is published in the paper, as well as, the framing and language utilized in the article. Using both *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* provided a

mixture of contrasting viewpoints, which helped to result in a more representative analysis.

3.2.1 *First Objective*

To decipher potential variation in how the BME and AME shaped contemporary depictions of mediatized conflict the research utilized critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explore this phenomenon. CDA was the most suitable method for analysis because of its ability to provide insight how language is utilized to accompany and provide meaning to images depicting war in various ecologies. CDA exposed how linguistic and visual representations of war were indicators of the power the media has in “mediating the world to the world” (Chouliaraki, 2006: 84), which highlighted its strength in analyzing how different media ecologies shaped what war look like in contemporary mediatized conflict.

CDA was conducted on reports from *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* in both the BME and AME. In conducting CDA examination began with the type of framing in the post, which utilized space/time analysis on reports from the conflicts in Kosovo and Syria. Framing refers to the “properties of a narrative that encourage those perceiving and thinking about events to develop particular understanding of them” (Entman, 1991: 7). Space/time analysis explored whether the framing of an article was characterized as being either distance or proximate. To determine whether an article employed distance or proximate framing the newspapers text was analyzed to see if language and imagery reinforced the notion of the ‘other’ or incited empathetic tones.

Images classified under distant framing tended to depict military infrastructure, equipment or large groups of people that were captured from a distance (Chouliaraki, 2006: 89). Alternatively, to interpret if the article utilized proximate framing, images embedded within a post would be of closer range, usually with the subject gazing at the camera (Chouliaraki, 2006: 89), and lastly, of young children, women, or elderly (Höijer, 2004: 517).

Furthermore, this section utilized CDA to examine the types of images embedded in an article, which looked at what is depicted in the image, as well as, whether images used were from wire services (Reuters, AP, or AFP) or amateur content. This was conducted to explore the changing roles of the media and wire agencies, and what impact this has in the types of image printed during conflict.

3.2.2. Second Objective

To evaluate themes that emerged during the iconization of images of suffering in the BME and AME semiotic analysis was selected because of the emphasis on the images denotative and connotative meaning. Analysis of images required looking at the inherent denotative meaning in conjuncture with the underlying connotative meaning, which exposed how the mediatization of an image can alter its meaning in different ecologies. The denotative meaning of an image “reflects what is there”, whereas, the connotative meaning “provides more than what is physically caught by the camera” and “draws from broad symbolic systems in lending meaning to what is depicted’ (Zelizer, 2010: 3). The attached denotative and connotative meanings from the image helped to expose commonalities and differentiations in the iconization of images in the BME and AME.

Conducting semiotic analysis consisted of searching for themes among iconic images that emerged during the conflicts in Kosovo (BME) and Syria (AME). This included examining what was physically in the image and what the sociopolitical implication the iconization of the image had in construction of the photographs meaning. The iconic images selected for semiotic analysis were those of Agim Shala (Kosovo) Alan Kurdi (Syria). Carol Guzy from *The Washington Post* captured the image of Agim on the 3rd March 1999, which was used for analysis in the BME. Furthermore, two images of Alan Kurdi photographed on the 2nd September 2015 by Nilüfer Demir, from the Dogan New Agency in Turkey, were selected for analysis in the AME. These images were chosen for comparison not only because of their status as icons, but also, due to

the similar nature of the two photographs. Both images depicted refugees fleeing from intrastate warfare in the BME and AME, as well as, featured young children as the main object in the frame. Additionally, semiotic analysis explored how the images of both Agim and Alan were framed within articles by using space/time analysis that was explained in the previous subsection 3.2.1.

3.2.3. Third Objective

This section also utilized CDA on articles from the conflicts in Kosovo and Syria to decipher how mainstream content and depiction of war was altered due to technological advancements from the BME to AME. Analysis considered the extent that technology and the emergence of user generated content has evolved newswriting, and what impact this had on a depiction of conflict in a given ecology. This included how technological advancements have altered the length of articles, the number of images in an article, the multidirectional flow of information, and lastly, the reconceptualization of taste and decency from the BME to AME. Finally, this section also included analysis regarding how mainstream media in the AME is realigning itself as the prominent agenda setter.

3.3 Research Agenda

The upcoming section explains how data was collected for the thesis. This included the methods used to select samples and cases for analysis. Furthermore, the following section addresses the limitations placed on the thesis to provide deeper analysis in the potential variation in what war look like between the BME and AME.

3.3.1 Data Collection

Data collection from both the BME and AME consisted of articles from *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail's* online digital archives and website. Additionally, articles and books regarding information relevant to the thesis were collected from the University of Glasgow Library and search engine.

To conduct the comparative analysis of the BME and AME, three separate events of similar nature were chosen from the Kosovo and Syrian conflicts. Events selected for analysis from the Kosovo War in the BME were the Račak massacre (15th January, 1999), the day the iconic photo of Agim Shala was taken (3rd March, 1999), and lastly, the day NATO airstrikes began in Kosovo (24th March, 1999). Events that occurred during the War in Syria from the AME included the day the iconic image of Alan Kurdi was photographed (2nd September, 2015), the day the UK voted to extend airstrikes into Syria (2nd December, 2015), and lastly, the Palmyra massacre (2nd April, 2016). These events were selected because they were significant incidents in the conflict and are representative of turning points in the Kosovo and Syrian wars. Additionally, analysis only included materials from *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail*, and was conducted by gathering articles that occurred the day prior to, the day of, and the day after the six previously mentioned events. Limiting the scope of articles for analysis into a comprehensible number by only including the day prior, day of, and day after and event, helped establish concrete and replicable searching methods.

3.3.2 Limitations

Limitations in the thesis included focusing solely on two conflicts, one from the BME and one from the AME. This was because conflicts occurring in particular media ecologies exhibit similar characteristics as other conflicts since they operate within the same media environment. Therefore, focusing solely on one conflict per ecology resulted in a more complete and descriptive analysis while still being generalizable and representative of conflicts within the same media ecology.

An additional limitation was the decision to only analyze newspaper articles from *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*. This limitation was instituted because *The Daily Mail* represented a traditionally conservative political affiliation, as well as, was a tabloid style newspaper. Alternatively, *The Guardian* was selected due to its historically supportive

stance of Labour policies, while also representing a UK broadsheet. Utilizing a culmination of both a UK broadsheet and tabloid style paper in conjunction with two opposing political affiliated papers resulted in a representative analysis better reflecting the UK media sphere.

A final limitation of the thesis is derived from the linear nature of media ecology theory. Since time in media ecology theory is conceptualized in epochs it has the potential to disregard continuities from the BME to AME, limiting a scholar's ability to see cyclical trends. Due to the linear nature of media ecology theory it is often that scholars become focused on the characteristics a single ecology and neglect to see the fuller picture. This limitation is addressed because a conflict can occur in multiple ecologies and is not restrained to having characteristics of a single ecology. Understanding that media ecologies are not mutually exclusive, and that there is potential for characteristics from past ecologies to emerge in present ecologies helped look for cyclical trends and continuities between ecologies.

3.4 Research Summary

To gain a better understanding how the depiction of contemporary mediatized conflict has transformed, CDA and semiotic analysis were conducted on newspaper articles and images from the BME to AME. Analysis was conducted on articles from *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* to see what factors impact a changing depiction of conflict within varying ecologies. This included analysis of framing techniques, images used within articles, the changing iconization process and politicization of iconic images, and lastly, how shifts in newswriting alter a depiction of war in the BME to AME. The following three chapters of the thesis will present the findings from analysis, which utilized the methodological approaches previously explained.

4. A Changing Depiction of War

Utilizing media ecology theory, this chapter will reveal how the ebb and flow between the media, state, and public influences what is seen during conflict in the broadcast media ecology (BME) and arrested media ecology (AME). The first section analyzes what type of framing is employed in articles from conflict in Kosovo and Syria. Next, this chapter addresses the framing repetitively used during a given ecology and its impact on the mediatization of conflict and what a public sees in the mainstream. Finally, this section looks at the saturation of images within different media ecologies and the impact it has on the depiction of war in the BME and AME.

4.1 Media Framing

The usage of various media templates and framing by the mainstream has tremendous effect on the formation of the other and is influential in constructing how society perceives a conflict and foreign public (Chouliaraki, 2006: 73; Cottle, 2006: 183). The following section presents the analysis of framing techniques used by *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* in shaping what the public sees during conflict in the BME (Kosovo) and AME (Syria). Additionally, this section exemplifies how the mediatization of conflict impacts a depiction of war through the connection or distancing of spectators.

The contextual framing of images helps to construct meaning behind the photograph and has the ability to distance the spectator or connect the spectator with the subject in the frame (Chouliaraki, 2006: 49). This is because an image only portrays what is within the frame and provides no background information regarding what happened prior or after the photograph was taken, exemplifying the importance surrounding the context and framing of images (Azoulay, 2008: 152, Zelizer, 2010: 13).

Analysis began by looking at the framing used within the BME, which reinforced previously held beliefs surrounding the media's

tendency to align with the elite agenda resulting in a sanitized depiction of war.

The media's alignment with the elite political consensus was exemplified in mainstream publication of articles in response to NATO's decision to conduct airstrikes in Kosovo during the BME. Articles analyzed followed the consensus of political elites, which depicted the Milosevic regime as evil and the West as good by saving the suffering Kosovar Albanians. For instance, *The Guardian's* article was titled 'The Sad Need for Force: Kosovo must be Saved', which helped justify the intervention because the Kosovar and Serbian people would be 'saved', as airstrikes were expected to result in Milosevic's leave from power (The Guardian, 1999). This mirrored the political consensus of the UK government, which emphasized no other alternative to force and that it was necessary for halting the humanitarian crisis (Wheeler, 2000: 153). This article did not incorporate images, but instead relied on descriptive and empathetic textual support to connect the spectator to the distant sufferer.

What has shifted from the BME to AME is the ability of mainstream to reassert its power to set the agenda of an event before governments have the capability to pre-emptively mediate a crisis. Governments in the BME were more able to proactively mediate a crisis prior to its occurrence due to the slower dissemination of content and greater control over journalist's access into conflict zones. Alternatively, in the AME states are learning of events simultaneously as the public is (Gowing, 2009: 10), which is altering what is seen in conflict by forcing the sovereign to become reactive rather than proactive in the management of crises. This was exemplified in analysis of articles from the AME regarding the Syrian refugee crisis, which reinforced how the mainstream was able shape the discourse of the crisis.

The iconization of Alan Kurdi, which will be further explored in chapter five, occurred at a time when UK government officials were

resisting accepting more refugees (Wintour, 2015), inciting societal security risks as a key factor. Societal security risks stem from the securitization of immigrants by political elites, which claim that the incorporation of immigrants within a society alters and threatens the culture and identity of a state (Buzan et al., 1998: 119). Following the publication of Alan in mainstream media the entire discourse surrounding the refugee crisis shifted. The publication of Alan's image humanized the event inciting a mediatized public crisis, which exhibited the media's capability in altering the perception of refugees.

The publication of Alan's image was able to humanize the refugee crisis by establishing a face to symbolize the crisis. Rather than utilizing distance framing and citing only the number of refugees displaced, the incorporation of the image and empathetic language connected spectators because they were able to physically see those affected by the crisis. Citing merely a number distances spectators because it does not provoke the same emotional response needed for a reaction to occur from a public. Whether that reaction is to do nothing or something is beyond the scope of this analysis, but what can be understood is that numbers sterilize spectators. A number presented to an audience is just another number in the bombardment of information presented daily to the spectator, although an image provides substance and a connection that a number cannot.

Furthermore, the accompany captions and language used throughout articles by *The Daily Mail* employed empathetic tones connecting the spectator to Alan. This can be seen through their reference to Alan as a 'toddler', and the 'heartbreaking' moment the Turkish officer was "tenderly closing his eyes for the final time" (Roberts & Altin, 2015). *The Guardian* used similar language in reporting Alan's story, which accounts the "full horror of human tragedy unfolding on the shores of Europe" (Smith, 2015a), and furthermore, incorporating a quote from Justin Forsyth, CEO of Save the Children, who spoke of a "little boy who lost his life fleeing Syria" (Forsyth, in Smith, 2015a). The publication of

Alan's image incorporated with empathetic language and accentuation of his tragic death are examples of proximate framing used to connect the spectator to the crisis. Since death is our last act on Earth it is perceived that it should be meaningful. As Jay Ruby states, "to die in war for no apparent reason and without drama is unthinkable for it implies that the deceased's life was wasted" (Ruby, in Zelizer, 2010: 179). Feelings of Alan's wasted life due to his untimely death and circumstances that caused his death incited empathic reactions from UK mainstream as seen through the usage of proximate framing.

Ultimately, proximate framing of the crisis through the publication of Alan's image combined with the inability of governments to pre-mediate the discourse surrounding an event allowed mainstream media to contest political elite consensus to a level not capable in the BME. The publication of Alan's image resulted in the circulation of a petition requesting the UK government's acceptance of more refugees, which led to an emergency debate six days following the release of the image (UK Government and Parliament, 2015). The mainstream's ability to rearrange the agenda surrounding the refugee crisis humanized the event, and all the while desecuritized refugees lessening the distinction between 'us' (UK citizens) and 'them' (Syrian Refugees).

Although Alan's image incited reaction among spectators and calls for changes in governmental policy, the reach of images in actually altering public policy is limited. Similar to critiques of the CNN effect, which challenges the ability of mainstream coverage to be a direct effect in policy change. Oftentimes governments react and say something will be done in response to public outcry, although seldom do they follow through (Gowing, 1997).

While the image did not change policy it was still able to establish an impact, highlighting the ability of the mainstream's publication to shift a society's perception of an event. This societal shift is not only exemplified in the call for a petition, but also in the change by social

media users when referring to Syrians as migrants before Alan's photo was published, to then referring to them as refugees after the images release (Visual Social Media Lab, 2015). This is significant because of the meanings attached to the word migrant and refugee. A migrant is, by definition, a person who chooses to leave their country to improve their life, while on the contrary a refugee is someone who is forced to leave his or her country to flee conflict (UNHCR, 2016b). Shifting from using the term migrant to refugee implies transformation in how a public perceives refugees. The term migrant distances a spectator because it implies a choice, whereas the term refugee connects the spectator through the fact it signifies a forced life or death situation traditionally inciting empathy amongst a public.

Furthermore, the framing employed in the AME supports the emergence of a cosmopolitan citizen as news shifts to cover and report on distant events. The change in what constitutes as newsworthy exposes a potential reconstruction of imagined communities through globalization and interconnection between societies. Additionally, the sharing and spreading of culture between societies, and increase in migration amongst countries is establishing a metamorphosis and shift from a static identity to a more fluid conception of identity. The rise in a hybrid culture (Bhabha, 1998: 938), exemplifies the evolution that globalization and technology has in the depiction of contemporary mediatized conflict. Furthermore, globalization has increased a proximate framing of foreign bodies, as was seen in the depiction of Alan, shifting toward homogenizing societies (Dragon, 2007: 206) and lessening the distinction between 'us' and 'them' as seen in the refugee crises from the AME.

4.2 The Saturation of Images

The overabundance and accessibility of images is paramount in the AME and is an obvious transformation from the BME. This increased availability of images and access to amateur content has the ability to alter the mainstreams depiction of conflict and, in effect, how a public

understands conflict. The following sections will analyze the saturation of images in articles from conflicts in Kosovo and Syria, and summarize how varying media environments alter what is seen during conflict.

The shift in the media market, characterized by unpredictability and the emergence of amateur content, has resulted in greater accessibility to images of conflict. The saturation of amateur content in the AME depicting first-hand and eye witness accounts originally portrayed what I believed to be a shift towards a more varied depiction of conflict, which embedded more user generate content.

Despite the saturation of images in the AME the mainstream has drifted minimally from using stock images provided by wire services. As anticipated the number of images embedded in articles printed during the AME by *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* rose dramatically, although images published were recycled between articles and mostly derived from wire services like AP, Reuters, and AFP.

The continuous reliance on content from wire services can be attributed to the desire to provide both accuracy and immediacy in articles. The shifting relationship between mainstream media and wire agencies is rooted in a reconfiguration of their roles, which originate from the continuous flow of news in the contemporary media environment. Placing pressure on mainstream media to be both immediate and accurate. In order to fulfill both immediacy and accuracy mainstream media relies on images from wire services, whose role has evolved to include checking the accuracy and authenticity of images (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2015: 1329). Placing the fact-checking role on wire agencies provides mainstream media with a scapegoat if content purchased is inaccurate or manipulated.

Furthermore, a main reason media recycles images throughout conflict is because in order to provide immediacy these images are already on hand, and in order to provide accuracy these image have already been verified by news agencies. One exception to the previous statement was the mainstream's use of images from the Kurdi families Twitter (Elgot,

2015) and Facebook accounts (Morgan, 2015). Utilizing social media as a source for information provided the mainstream with the context necessary to humanize Alan, which helped connect the spectator to Alan through proximate framing. While there is a heavy saturation of images within the AME, the mainstream still predominantly favors using images from wire services when depicting conflict.

The increased rate at which news is disseminated within the AME has impact what is seen during a conflict, although has contrary to what was originally hypothesized, not resulted in the usage of more images to depict an event. Rather images tend to be recycled and derive from wire agencies, whose role in the AME is to verify content for mainstream media. Although the range of images used by the media is not greater to depict a war, the framing employed exhibits the media's ability to set the agenda and alter the discourse as seen in the Syrian refugee crisis. Analysis from the BME to AME in the changing depiction of war supports the rearresting of the mainstream media as a relevant actor in shaping the discourse surrounding a conflict via framing employed.

5. Iconic Images of Suffering

This chapter will present the analysis regarding the iconization of images of Agim Shala from the Kosovo War in the broadcast media ecology (BME), and Alan Kurdi from the War in Syria in the arrested media ecology (AME). The first section discusses the iconization of Agim and Alan, and includes analysis of the denotative and connotative meanings attached to the images from their mediatization. Furthermore, this chapter engages with the inherently politicized nature of iconic images and their exploitation as tools of warfare. Finally, this chapter engages with the limitations present in the iconization of images of suffering.

5.1 The Making of an Icon

The differentiation in the iconization process between Agim and Alan reflects the extent that technology is altering the speed and scope that an image becomes an icon. As previously mentioned, iconic images reflect a western lifestyle and resonate with neo-liberal beliefs, whose repetitive circulation via mainstream solidifies the photographs iconization. Moreover, the repetitive circulation of an image in the mainstream is what establishes the legitimacy required to heighten the image to the status of an icon (Griffin, 2010: 18; Tulloch & Blood, 2012: 3).

Other factors contributing to the development of icons, beyond the mainstream reprinting of the image, are whether the icon connects to and mirrors values held by the spectator. For instance, evoking compassion among witnesses tends to occur more consistently if the photograph depicts children, women or the elderly (Höijer, 2004: 517), all of which are considered vulnerable people and the ‘ideal victim’ (Christie, 1996; Moeller, 1999: 107). Images of these ‘ideal victims’ often reach iconic status as they are shocking and command the viewing of the spectator.

5.1.1 Agim Shala

The image of Agim Shala denotatively depicts a young refugee being passed from his parents over a barbed wire fence to his grandparents in hopes of escaping the unrest in Kosovo. While the image of Agim was

widely shared and recognized as an iconic image symbolizing the Kosovo refugee crisis, the recognition of this photograph as an icon occurred much later than that of the photograph of Alan. This can be attributed to the fact that Agim was iconized during the BME when the dissemination of news was slower and because the UK media tended to report on stories that immediately affected the UK domestic public.

For instance, during analysis *The Daily Mail* refrained from publishing articles regarding the Kosovo refugee crisis and instead focused on the impact that the institution of the Euro would have on the UK economy (*The Daily Mail*, 1999). Shifting the focus from the refugee crisis and to matters directly affecting the UK public exemplifies the editor's perception that *Daily Mail* readers were not as interested in distant conflicts.



Figure 1. Agim Shala, 3 March 1999. Photo: Carol Guzy/ The Washington Post

Furthermore, while Agim's image was captured in March 1999, it was not recognized as a Pulitzer Prize winning image until 2000 where it became largely recognized as an icon. Unlike in the AME where an image can be shared instantaneously after being captured, the image of Agim took a noticeably longer timeframe to be published in the mainstream. This delay in iconization can be attributed to less advanced technology in the BME, which resulted in less mediums to disseminate the image increasing the time it took to reach a public.

5.1.2 Alan Kurdi

Within hours of being photographed Alan's image was shared on social media through Twitter and Facebook and was globally trending under the hashtag #kiyayaVuranInsanlik, meaning humanity washed ashore (Fahey, 2015). After rising to celebrity via social media, Alan's image was later iconicized and arrested by mainstream media. It should be noted that 'going viral' via social media has some, but minimal impact in the construction of icons. This is because virality on social media alone fails to provide the same amount of legitimacy attached to being published in the mainstream media, although circulations via both mainstream and social media has the capability to quicken the iconization process. While Alan's image was heavily shared on social media, it was the mainstream that provided the background and context needed to explain the image. This included explaining how Alan ended up there, what he and his family were trying to escape (Morgan, 2015; Smith, 2015a), and interviews with surviving family (Smith, 2015b) and the officer who found Alan (Roberts & Altin, 2015). In effect, reasserting control of Alan's story through the media's ability to provide the framing and context needed to make Alan into an icon and symbol of the refugee crisis.

There were two images iconicized of Alan that were published in the mainstream. The first image depicts Alan, deceased, lying vulnerably facedown on the beach, while a Turkish officer stands nearby observing. Due to the unsettling and disturbing nature of the image, online viewers of this photograph were given warnings stating the image was graphic (Smith, 2015a), while other media chose to pixelated his body from display (Roberts & Altin, 2015).



Figure 2. Alan Kurdi Lying on Turkish Beach, 2 September 2015. Photo: Nilüfer Demir/ Dogan New Agency

The second image of Alan that was iconicized depicted the same Turkish officer carrying Alan's limp body from the waters edge. This image was more widely used not only because of its less graphic nature, but also because the Turkish officer carrying Alan mirrored that of a modern day portrayal of Michelangelo's iconic art work the Pieta. The connection to the Pieta not only westernizes the image, but also links the image depicting a Muslim boy to the dominant Western Christian iconography. This is significant because of generalizations by Western media that links the term Muslim to terrorism and extremism, in effect demonizing the Muslim community (Ameli et al., 2007: 26-27).

Therefore, the iconization of Alan's image linking it to Christian iconography downplays the creation of the other. Highlighting Alan's religious affiliation would have established distancing framing reinforcing the other, because "there is a perceived link between Islam or Muslims and terrorism in the minds of many people because of ongoing media coverage" (Ansari, 2002). Furthermore, the iconization of the image established a likeness between the western spectator and the distant sufferer by evoking feelings of protector, as well as, empathy for the sufferer because of the Pieta as a known symbol of pain and suffering (Taylor, 1998: 91).



Figure 3. Alan Kurdi in Arms of Turkish Police Officer, 2 September 2015. Photo: Nilüfer Demir/ Dogan New Agency

Lessening the proximities between the spectator and the distant sufferer through not only the iconization of images that portray likeness to previously iconized western art, but additionally paring the image with empathetic textual captions. Utilizing proximate framing and connecting the spectator to Alan's image the mainstream was able to establish a symbol and face to the refugee crisis. Additionally, the iconization of Alan Kurdi occurred simultaneously the same day that his image was captured on the beach, exemplifying the speed at which an image can become iconicized altering what was traditionally perceived as a long process (Hariman & Lucaites, 2007: 173).

Agim Shala and Alan Kurdi are two instances depicting the consequences of war that were iconicized by media during the BME and AME. Symbolizing the perpetual catastrophe refugees face both in the Kosovo and Syrian conflicts. Furthermore, the iconization of images during conflict in both the BME and AME reinforced the continuation of neo-liberal and imperialistic depictions of the West saving the 'other', which will be explored in the following section about the inherent politicization of iconic images.

5.2 Politicization of Iconic Images

A main theme emerging from analysis is the inherently politicized nature of iconic images in both the BME and AME, which impacts what images are made into icons by the mainstream. Agim and Alan's images are both exploited as a tool of warfare by governments, nongovernmental humanitarian agencies and newspapers to encourage humanitarian action, gain attention to an event, and to push for policy change or support for a policy decision. Both images analyzed were politicized in the iconization process reflecting a history of Western imperialism over developing regions, and connotatively reinforcing the West 'saving' the other.

The politicization of Agim's image lies in the fact that it was iconicized at a time when NATO needed to justify their humanitarian intervention in Kosovo. NATO was heavily criticized for conducting an unlawful humanitarian intervention due to the lack of explicit Security Council approval (IICK, 2000: 4), although the emergence and iconization of Agim's image provided support for NATO's intervention. Furthermore, because Agim was classified as an 'image of possible death' (Zelizer, 2010: 68-69) this provided the potential for Agim to escape the crisis. His survival could then be used as an example of the success of NATO airstrikes in saving lives, which wouldn't have been capable if an image of certain death, like Alan's, were published. Moreover, the framing employed throughout the iconization of the image used the template of the West (NATO) saving the other (The Guardian, 1999), further reinforcing neo-liberal ideology and providing justification for the humanitarian intervention.

Additionally, since the media-state relationship within the BME was characterized by the manufactured consent paradigm, as was exemplified through in the previous chapter, media mirrored the political elite consensus regarding the Kosovo War. Mainstream publications about NATO airstrikes employed framing that would incite the Wilsonian impulse of the West to save the distant sufferer, which was reflected in policy during the conflict. The articles released by mainstream media

heightened support for NATO airstrikes, which can be seen from *the Guardian*'s article, which said that Kosovar Albanians "felt more safe" with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe monitoring in Kosovo (Bird, 1999). Furthermore, this was exemplified in an article by *The Guardian*, which incorporated "Kosovo Must be Saved" in the title (The Guardian, 1999). This was imperative to the NATO campaign because through Agim's iconization NATO was able to exploit the image as a justification that refugees were being saved as a result of their intervention.

While the airstrikes did bring an end to the conflict and saved lives, they were not the most humanitarian means possible. After the intervention was conducted information emerged that there was actually an increase in ethnic cleansing directly following NATO's airstrikes rather than a decrease (Butler, 2000: 279). This content took longer to emerge because of less access to conflict zones, and because of the fact more time was needed for information to travel and checked for accuracy. Therefore, content that would have emerged instantaneously or shortly after occurring in the AME was controlled by mainstream and political elites through their gatekeeping abilities in the BME.

The politicization of Alan's image was, unlike Agim's, not used to justify the use of airstrikes but rather to highlight the inaction by governments in addressing the refugee crisis. His image emerged at a time when high flows of refugees were entering Europe. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, while the image incited a public outcry there was minimal action from the UK government in response to the release of Alan's image. Unfortunately, while iconic images become symbolic of events and can incite a reaction amongst the public, they refrain from remaining prominent in the mainstream.

The heightened attention to the refugee crisis in both ecologies was increased after these images were iconicized, although shortly after the publication, the image dwindles from the mainstream and goes unseen.

That is until the next image to be iconicized utilizes the previous iconic images as a frame of reference and media template. This is exemplified in the emergence of the image of Omran Daqneesh, who was pulled from the rubble following airstrikes in Syria. Mainstream quickly compared his image to Alan's, which was depicted in *The Guardian's* post saying, "horror generated by the image of Omran Echoes the anguished global response to the pictures of Alan Kurdi" (Hunt, 2016).



Figure 4. Syrian Boy Pulled from Rubble, 18 August 2016. Photo: Aleppo Media Centre

The continuous iconization and politicization of images from war highlights the paradoxical situation state-less refugees, or 'flawed citizens' (Azoulay, 2008: 36), face in the AME of being 'visible yet invisible' (Azoulay, 2008: 36). While these images are regarded as icons there is little impact in actually changing their situation as refugees in perpetual catastrophes. The saturation of the images and multimodal depiction of Alan and Omran image in the AME reached a greater audience in a shorter amount of time, although did not equate to ending the crisis. Raising the question of whether being heightened to 'iconic' status represents anything beyond debate amongst scholars and a public regarding its importance? Moreover, what must an image depict for it to evade societies

continuous amnesia when presented with images of suffering and go beyond merely being labeled 'iconic'?

These questions illuminate the potential of scholars and media in placing unrealistic expectations and confidence in the ability of an image to change policy. While not being able to directly result in policy change, the publication of iconic images still remains a credible means to increase awareness (Cottle, 2006: 185) and donations (Robinson, 2002: 124) for refugees. Therefore, the iconization of images still reside as an important means for exposing the political and social injustices refugees face as a consequence of war.

6. Rearresting the Media Environment

Advancements in information and communication technology are altering how people consume news, access news, and view distant conflicts occurring throughout the world. Global access to new media is encouraging the democratization of the media sphere, which has been amplified from the broadcast media ecology (BME) into the arrested media ecology (AME). Data provided from The World Bank shows the exponential increase in Internet access worldwide, from 3.16 people per 100 using the Internet in 1998 to 40.7 people per 100 in 2014 using the Internet (The World Bank, 2016). Previous socioeconomic barriers, like the expensive cost of new mobile technology in the 1990s, that withheld citizens from accessing mobile technology and the Internet in the BME has declined in the AME. Therefore, mobile phones capable of capturing what is occurring in conflict is transforming the relationship between the mainstream, society, and government in the AME.

The rise in alternative agendas, contrary to the elite consensus, combined with an increase in the accessibility of technology and web access (The World Bank, 2016) is altering the civil relations between the sovereign and public. The previously mentioned phenomena are exemplified through the evolution of newswriting. This chapter begins by analyzing the physical changes in newswriting from the BME to AME, which focuses on the differences in the length of articles and number of images embedded within posts. Then the chapter will progress to discuss the shift from a unidirectional flow of information to a multidirectional flow of content, and what that signifies for a contemporary depiction of mediatized conflict. Finally, this chapter ends with an analysis of the potential reconfiguration of perceived taste and decency among a public by the mainstream.

6.1 Evolution of Newswriting

A key differentiation that emerged from analysis of the BME to AME is the transformation of newswriting about conflict, which altered

how the mainstream depicts war. As previously mentioned, the new media ecology (NME) was the transitioning ecology between the BME and the AME, which was characterized by the disruption of the elite's hegemonic control of the market due to the emergence of amateur content by citizens (Cottle, 2006; Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010, 2015). This indicated not only realignment within the balance of power between media, government, and society, but also represented a shift in the depiction of conflict in the AME.

Articles published in the BME by *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* utilized far less images and more descriptive texts than articles deriving from the AME. Alternatively, articles published in the AME of key events used far more images combined with less text. For instance, a publication from *The Daily Mail* about the UK's decision to extend airstrikes into Syria used 58 images within the post (Chorley et al., 2015). While an article reporting on NATO airstrikes, by *The Guardian*, used no images within the article, but instead had used descriptive text (Bird et al., 1999).

This shift in article length can be attributed to the popularity of social networking sites, like Twitter, which limit a post to 140 characters or less. Audiences have in effect become accustomed to condensed posts, which are reflected in the length of articles from the AME. Additionally, the saturation of images in the AME can be credited to the rise in 'infotainment' style news. Infotainment news is a result of audience's preference toward 'lighter' and more entertainment style news, which is blurring the distinction between broadsheet and tabloid media. This contemporary style of newswriting prizes exciting and visual dimensions within articles, which is leading to an increase in images within publications to give 'proof' and legitimacy an event occurred (Zelizer, 2010: 38).

Furthermore, the rise of infotainment style news increases the risk of condensing and potential over-simplifying news in the AME, which can increase the perception of compassion fatigue among viewers more so

than in the BME. The increased perception of compassion fatigue by the mainstream is rooted in the accessibility of news on various platforms, and being in a state of constant connection. This results in the quick movement from one crisis to the next in the AME. For instance, while Alan's image incited a reaction among the UK public it was only temporary. Within the next few weeks the story had dropped off the mainstream radar and coverage had moved onto the next crisis.

Additionally, the more platforms available to access news at any moment regarding war can increase audience's consciousness of what appears to be more conflict. There is no drastic change in the amount of conflict from the AME to BME, although the depth at which conflicts are mediatized has risen. The increased quantity of images used to depict conflict in conjunction with the diffusion of technology among society gives the perception of a more dangerous and war filled world.

Furthermore, while the perception of more war is conveyed in the mainstream, there also appears to be a shift towards a multidirectional flow of information regarding conflict. This is resulting from the declining significance of the manufactured consent paradigm that utilized a unidirectional flow of information to inform audiences of conflict. A unidirectional flow of information represents one-way communication, which results in the media telling information to an audience. The transition to a multidirectional flow of content, from both the bottom-up and top-down, between the mainstream and an audience was a result of the adjustment the media had to make to rearrest control and compete in the contemporary media market.

The increasingly multidirectional flow of information is exemplified through the analysis of articles comparing airstrikes from the Kosovo and Syrian conflicts. In reports from Kosovo, published by *The Guardian*, the author merely told what was occurring, which depicts the unidirectional or one-way flow of communication between the mainstream and audience. Whereas, articles published by *The Guardian* reporting the

airstrikes in Syria called for the public to become actively engaged in the comments, posting their thoughts on the airstrikes (Fishwick, 2015). Due to an increase in interactivity between the mainstream and public there is now more personalization with an audience regarding what is depicted in conflict. Editors and journalists are actively engaging to better understand the views of their audience, which less present in the BME. This shift toward a more conversational writing style, which incorporates user generated content, shows the evolution of newswriting and depiction of conflict in the AME due to transformations in the relationship between the media and public since the BME.

The mainstreams incorporation of amateur content and encouragement for readers to partake in contributing materials and comments exhibits the rearranging of the media sphere. While handheld technology had originally created instability in the mainstream, the adaptation to incorporate authentic and amateur content helps to increase trust and legitimacy of the mainstream. This is because witnesses provide ‘on the scene coverage’ in places where traditional media may not be able to access due to limited resources or restrictions by governments (Cottle, 2006: 84; Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2010: 43). These firsthand accounts help legitimize the event and give the mainstream authenticity since amateur content is sometimes regarded as less biased than images ‘produced’ by the media (O’Loughlin, 2011: 79).

Furthermore, as the mainstream media reasserts its control of the market and adapts, incorporating web 2.0 as an ally rather than adversary, there appears to be a reconceptualization of taste and decency. The “marketization of warfare” (Brown, 2003: 63), drawing from Hollywood style production, is shifting the threshold of what is considered ‘good taste’, because it is rooted in entertaining the spectator and can fictionalize an event. While still abiding within publishing laws the dissemination of graphic content appears more prevalent as online access, like Alan’s rise to posthumous celebrity via social media, are already recognizable before

being printed by mainstream. Historically an image similar to Alan's was considered risky to publish in the media, as editors tend to shy away from printing deceased children on their front cover, and prefer to remain on the cautious side when depicting horrific events (Taylor, 2010: 130).

Although, in Alan's case the moral obligation by editors and journalists at both *The Guardian* (Fahey, 2015) and *Daily Mail* (Morgan, 2015) expressed the need for people to see the unsettling to understand the gravity of the crisis. Furthermore, *The Guardian's* deputy editor Paul Johnsons was quoted saying, "we didn't rush to publish, we verified the photographs and waited for a full story before publication", exemplifying the need for "strong public interest justification" to use Alan's image (Fahey, 2015). This reflexivity expressed in the mainstream was present in both ecologies, although what separate the BME from AME are the speed, scope, and intensity at which the image can evoke reaction from spectators.

Additionally, increased exposure to more graphic content in Hollywood and on television indicates the potential to evoke disinterest among audiences, heightening the threshold necessary to shock and awe spectators. For example, an article by *The Daily Mail* incorporated bloody images of ISIS operatives laying face up with their shirts covering their heads after being killed during an assault on Kurdish forces (Robinson, 2015).



Figure 5. Bodies of Dozen ISIS Fighters Killed During an Assault, 2 December 2015. Photo: Sean Swan/ ITV

While sanitizing the heads of ISIS operatives by pixelating their faces, their bloody wounds and noticeable bullet holes are visible in the image. Images of more graphic nature tend to be permissible to a public when the mainstream is reinforcing the construction of the other among western society and depicting foreign bodies. This is because the representation of ISIS within mainstream media depicts them as barbaric, which contrasts the “British system of value, care, and order” (Taylor, 1998:129). Therefore, the decision to publish this image is derived from not only its political use to establish moral and support for the War in Syria, but also can be attributed to an amplified exposure and accessibility of graphic images in the AME motioning towards a societal shift of what is necessary to shock spectators.

Not only is technology influencing how news is being written, but also the speed and scope at which wars are depicted to a public. The decreasing length and increase in images within articles reflects a change in society that requires photographic evidence to understand a conflict. Without documentary images the realism of an event is questioned. Furthermore, the saturation of images in the media environment is increasing societies accessibility to view graphic depictions of conflict

online. While sanitization still exists in the mainstream, the limits of taste and decency are being tested because of the perception that it takes more to shock an audience due to the increased exposure of graphic depictions of war in Hollywood. Ultimately, technological advancements are likely to remain a destabilizing force in the balance of power between governments, society, and the mainstream, which will continuously alter how the media depicts contemporary mediatized conflict to a public.

7. Conclusion

The relationship between media, state, and society is continuously evolving with the transition into new media environments. The progression from the broadcast media ecology (BME) to the arrested media ecology (AME) has exposed a changing depiction of contemporary mediatized conflict through analysis of the Kosovo War and War in Syria.

Analysis exemplified the rearresting of the media sphere by mainstream media in depicting conflict, which is asserting the media as a main actor in warfare itself. This is because the media is able to influence the discourse regarding an event, and in effect, how a public understands the event.

The ability of the mainstream to influence the discourse surrounding a conflict lies in its reassertion of agenda setting capabilities. The agenda setting control from the media in the BME, which was destabilized in the new media ecology (NME), is reemerging in the AME. The slower transition by the sovereign in adapting to the hyperconnectivity and emergence of amateur content in the NME has allowed the mainstream media increased agenda setting capabilities. As a public and sovereign are made aware of an event simultaneously there is little time allotted for the premediation of the event by governmental elites. Allowing the mainstream to shape how a public sees and understands a conflict through visual content and the framing employed.

The depiction of conflict in the AME by mainstream media is changing to include more visual content in articles. While there is more to see of war, the images are derived from a limited range of sources. Most photographs embedded within posts tend to be derived from wire services, because in order for the mainstream to attain both immediacy and accuracy in a competitive media market the recycling of already authenticated images becomes commonplace. Therefore, despite a saturation of images the hyperconnectivity of the AME results in the same images of war being reused. Although, at times the reuse of images by

mainstream media is not out of convenience, but rather is exemplifying the construction of an icon.

Analysis of iconic images from both the BME and AME exposed a theme within the mainstream media in iconicizing images that reinforce Western imperialism and neo-liberal belief. The ‘saving’ of the other by Western governments is a common theme not only in the framing utilized by mainstream media and images iconicized, but also in Western policy. Although the speed, scope and depth an image is made into an icon in the AME exceeds that of the BME, the types of images iconicized follow a relatively similar pattern. The iconization of Agim Shala and Alan Kurdi in different ecologies both connotatively represented the extension of western imperialism in developing regions. The inherently politicized nature of iconic images will continuously shape the discourse and understanding of conflict, as these photographs become symbols of war and what a public sees regarding a conflict.

In shaping the discourse and understanding of conflict the media has transformed the style of newswriting when reporting conflicts in the BME to AME. The increasing exposure to graphic Hollywood depictions of war and rise in infotainment style newswriting in the AME has resulted in what appears to be a reconfiguration among society regarding what is considered to be of good taste in the graphic depiction of foreign bodies. The increasingly multidirectional flow of information is resulting in a more conversational and personalized depiction of war. Rather than telling a public what is happen, the mainstream is actively engaging with the viewpoints of their readers.

Moreover, while this work focused on a Western perspective and how various media ecologies shape what war look like, it would be interesting to expand this research to include alternative perspectives. Extending the scope of the study to incorporate more countries, beyond the West, would help to expose if similar media practices are utilized globally. Additionally, studies using alternative perspectives to the West

would encourage media ecology scholars to decipher whether media ecology theory extends beyond Western media. Can the BME, NME, and AME be used to characterize media environments beyond Western Countries, or does there need to be specialized ecologies for media beyond the West?

The mainstream media has effectively reasserted itself with the AME, although as the sovereign progresses and adapt to the changing media environment there is potential for alternative media ecologies to develop. The prospective reassertion of the sovereign in the near future remains likely as the state slowly incorporates technology and adjusts to the instability created during the new media ecology. Progression in technology and the adaptation by the sovereign in the AME presents future obstacles in the rearranging of the media market by the mainstream, which suggests an imminent redistribution of power between media, government, and society.

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