



## Covering Gaddafi's Libya during the 2011 Revolution: Orientalism is Still Alive

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**Abstract:** *This paper deals with the Western media's coverage of the war in Libya between 2011 and 2016 to examine the ideological implications of headlines in editorials from four prominent newspapers in the United States and Britain. The paper utilizes content analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and frame analysis to make sense of the editorials' headlines reporting the upheaval in Libya. The analysis reveals that headlines are not arbitrary elements but convey specific ideological notions. The selected papers consistently present the West as a savior, a protector, and a bulwark against Gaddafi's tyranny in Libya through their headlines. Despite various sources of conflict, including Western involvement, the Western media tends to downplay or omit Western countries' meddling when reporting the outcomes of the war. This pattern reflects an over-reporting of the positive aspects of Western countries and the negative aspects of others, reinforcing an orientalist "Us versus Them" narrative. Moreover, the study highlights the marginalization and perceived passivity of the Libyan people, who are depicted as dependent on Western intervention and assistance. Notably, The Guardian stands out by attributing responsibility for the chaos in Libya to the West and its meddling and accordingly provides a coverage that does not, partially, resonate with the other papers' version of the story.*

**Keywords:** *The Libyan war, Orientalism, Editorials, Headlines*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the first flame of the Arab revolutions ignited in Tunisia more than a decade ago, the Western media has dedicated substantial attention and resources to the coverage of these historic events. Countless articles, reports, and analysis pieces have been published, signifying the immense interest and significance attached to these uprisings throughout the global media landscape. Such interest can be explained by the fact that American media outlets, for example, closely monitor and report on events that may directly or indirectly affect the country's foreign policy (Salaita, 2012). Besides, the same media's coverage often exhibits disparities based on whether the region being reported on is considered an ally or an adversary (2012).

The initial coverage of these conflicts that swept the MENA region reflects a sort of Western purposive misunderstanding and misinterpreting of the revolutions and their ends (Shihade, 2012). In this regard, Shihade (2012) and Salaita (2012), in their analysis of the Northern media coverage of the uprisings in the Middle East, argue that many Western scholars, academics and media outlets assume that Arabs took to the street and revolted against their authoritarian regimes due to their exposure to Western values of Modernity. Relatedly, El-Mahdi (2011) and Salaita (2012), maintain that a large body of Western coverage of the 2011 revolutions stresses on the idea that Arabs are arising from their slumber due to their exposure to Western modernity and especially to all that the West wrote about nonviolent revolution.

As a case in point, the Libyan war, which began in 2011, marked a significant turning point in the history of the country under the rule of Muammar Gaddafi. Amidst widespread unrest and demands for political change, a coalition of rebel forces, backed by international support, rose against Gaddafi's regime. The conflict escalated rapidly, resulting in a protracted and violent civil war that lasted for months.

It is within this context that the present study examines the ideological implications of newspaper editorials, focusing on the headlines of four prominent newspapers in the United States and Britain: the New York Times (*NYT*) and the Washington Post (*WP*), the Guardian (*G*) and the Telegraph (*T*). By analyzing the headlines quantitatively (content analysis) and through the lens of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and frame analysis, this paper seeks to uncover the underlying ideological notions conveyed by the selected newspapers in their coverage of the Libyan war.

Choosing editorials, rather than op-eds or news articles, as a unit of analysis in this paper is due to their heavy ideological connotations. An Editorial is defined as "a corporate voice or position of a media organization on any given issue of public interest" which is also known as the leader (Azeez, n.d.) or a leading article in a newspaper. The editorial or leader is very influential as it leads its readers to take decisions on the issues being discussed, and/or kick against an idea or policy (Duyile, as cited in Azeez, n.d.). According to Galindo, editorials primarily aim to express the viewpoints of their editorial boards regarding a particular issue, establish their stance within the context of the issue's potential policy implications, and provide policy suggestions. By fulfilling this role, editorials not only inform readers about the different aspects of the issue but also educate and potentially influence readers' perspectives in favor of their own viewpoint (2004). Relatedly, Van Dijk (1991) maintains that the purpose of editorials extends beyond simply reaching the general readership; they also aim to influence social policy by appealing to the social and political elite. Van Dijk further suggests that editorials not only convey opinions to the public but also engage in activities such as criticizing, defending, or providing advice to those in positions of authority. Therefore, given their ideological importance, editorials are found pertinent to the context of this paper.

The paper seeks to answer two main research questions: first, how do the headlines in the selected newspapers frame the Libyan conflict, particularly in terms of Western intervention and the portrayal of the Libyan people, and to what extent do these frames align with Orientalist modes of thought?, and second, what ideological implications are conveyed through the headlines in the selected newspapers regarding the Libyan war, and how do these implications shape Western perceptions, policies, and actions towards Libya?, while the paper hypothesizes that the headlines in the selected editorials will exhibit a pattern of framing the Libyan conflict through Orientalist modes of thought and accordingly reinforce Western intervention as necessary for stability.

## 2. REVIEWING THE LIBYAN REVOLUTION AND WESTERN MEDIA

The wave of uprisings that swept the MENA region starting from 2011 did not exclude Libya and its well-known leader; Colonel Muammar Gadhafi. The latter became the de facto Libya's head of state after a bloodless coup in September 1969 and maintained absolute power and authority as the head of a military dictatorship (Alshareif, 2016). In 2011, many conflicts swept Libya as a result of the inspiration Libyans get from the revolution in Egypt and the ousting of Hosni Mubarak (the then Egyptian president). This subsequently led to full-scale protests that eventually developed into a civil war. The rights that were called for in Tahrir square in Egypt or in Tunisia were echoed in Benghazi, Libya. Libyans called for change, freedom of speech, democracy and for the emancipation from Gadhafi's 42 years of dictatorship and autocracy. These demands that were voiced in peaceful demonstrations were met with military force. In response to the police and military reaction to the protests and civilians, the United Nations and Security Council adopted two Resolutions: 1970 and 1973 that imposed economic sanctions, arms embargo, and authorized to take all necessary means to protect civil population (Stavridis, 2014).

In Libya, unlike in Egypt where Mubarak was put on trial or in Tunisia where Ben Ali fled the country, Gaddafi was captured and killed at the hands of the revolutionaries in October, 2011 (Filiu; Vira and Cordesman as cited in Alshareif, 2016). Another difference that distinguishes the Libyan uprising is that the conflict between Gadhafi supporters and those who strived for regime change, such as Libyan civilians, militias, NATO forces or the Western countries that intervened between Gadhafi and his people, lasted for eight months before Gaddafi's death and years afterwards.

Many commentators divide the Libyan uprising, or the Libyan civil war, into three phases. Firstly, the first civil war started as a simple Libyan version of the so-called Arab spring, is characterized by the Western intervention (or NATO) and ended with the capturing and killing of Gaddafi. Secondly, the country witnessed post-revolution violence that was caused by a defected regime military members, or post-revolutionary brigades, militias, and various other armed groups that refused to hand over

their arms when the war ended in October 2011 and chose, instead, to get involved in clashes and revenge killings (Chivvis & Martini, 2014). Some of these armed groups were reported to belong to Al Qaeda<sup>1</sup>, especially after they attacked the US consulate in Benghazi and killed four people including the US ambassador. Thirdly, the second civil war, starting from 2014, is an ongoing conflict between many fractions aiming at controlling the Libyan territory (Cruickshank, 2014). Consequently, the political scene in Libya witnesses disputed elections and is dominated by two governments; one in the capital Tripoli and the other is a UN-backed administration in eastern Torbruk (BBC, 2016).

In the Libyan war context, international media assigned much space for the coverage and evaluation of the Western intervention in the country. They are not consistent in their coverage of whether or not the intervention was successful. Yet, a clear cut evaluation of the intervention came from eminent political figures, such as the then American president Barak Obama who openly declared that the Western intervention in Libya was a big failure given the fact that the West withdrew its forces immediately after Gadhafi was killed. The West left the country unsecured, awash in arms and militias, and dominated by dozens of armed groups who refuse to hand over their weapons and seek stability and security but to fight and kill to take over Libya's territory and resources. Put differently, Obama declares that not preparing for a post-Gadhafi Libya was probably the "worst mistake" of his presidency (BBC, 2016).

### 3. THEORY

Edward Said's seminal work, "Orientalism," published in 1978, critically examines the Western construction and representation of the East, particularly the Middle East and North Africa. Said argues that Western scholarship, literature, and art have traditionally depicted the Orient as a homogeneous, exotic, and inferior "other" (Said, 1978). He contends that this Orientalist discourse serves as a mechanism of power and domination, enabling Western colonialism, imperialism, and cultural hegemony over the East.

Said's analysis explores how Orientalism emerged as a system of knowledge production and control, shaping Western perceptions, policies, and actions towards the East. He highlights the Eurocentric biases, stereotypes, and essentializations embedded within Orientalist discourse, emphasizing the role of academia, literature, and media in perpetuating these representations (Said, 1978).

Edward Said's *Orientalism* has been a significant contribution to the understanding of Western representations of the East and the power dynamics inherent in such portrayals. While his theory provides a valuable framework for examining the broader context of Western discourses on the Middle East, this paper will depart from Said's theory of Orientalism to specifically analyze how the four selected newspapers reported the war in Libya. By applying Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and frame analysis, the study aims to uncover the ideological notions conveyed through the headlines of these newspapers and explore whether the selected media texts frame the Libyans within categories influenced by Orientalist modes of thought. This departure from Said's theory allows for a focused examination of the specific media representations of the Libyan conflict and their ideological implications.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. Quantitative Properties of Headlines

The paper examines the Libyan war coverage through a corpus of 102 headlines taken from *The G* (n=32), *The T* (n=26), *The WP* (n=26), and *The NYT* (n=18). The quantitative properties of the headlines are summarized in the most frequent topics or themes appeared in them. Table 4.1 shows that the headlines written by the American papers; *The NYT* and *The WP* (n=44) regarding the war in Libya are dominated by topics such as the American policy and action in Libya (n=12), the Libyan revolution (n=9), criticizing the US policy in Libya (n=7), Gadhafi (n=5), and praising the US role in Libya (n=4). Issues such as elections and the presentation of the US as a victim occur in headlines once each. The remaining three headlines are ambiguous and unclear, and therefore cannot be placed in one of the aforementioned themes.

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<sup>1</sup>A radical Sunni Muslim organization dedicated to the elimination of a Western presence in Arab countries and militantly opposed to Western foreign policy: founded by Osama bin Laden in 1988. (Dictionary.com)

*The NYT* and *The WP* refer to the American policy and action over what is happening in Libya in more than 27% of the printed headlines. The issue was defined with notions related to confusion register (“at odds over Libya” (*WP*-25 May 2011), “the wrong approach to Libya’s turmoil” (*WP*-17 Feb 2015), “a dangerous mission in Libya requires a firm approach” (*WP*-16 June 2015)). However, some other headlines define the American policy in the headlines in relation to serving the US interests, helping the Libyans, and preserving success in Libya. It is important to note here that the US is defined as an agent of positive actions. The next most frequent issue in the headlines is the Libyan revolution which occurs in more than 18% of the headlines. It is defined through a register of violence manifested in words and phrases such as “murder”, “security crisis”, “resurgent violence”, and “stalemate”. The next most salient issue in headlines is a criticism directed to the American policy in Libya and mainly to the then US president Barak Obama. The US mission is defined as “stalled”, “slow”, and “comes up empty”, while Obama is reported in headlines as a person who “hasn’t overstepped on Libya” (*WP*-21 March 2011), “muddled Libya policy” (*WP*-22 March 2011), and “botched in Libya.” However, the same media applauded the role the US is argued to have in the context of Libya crisis. The US is presented in more than 11% of the headlines as an agent of positive action: the US “helped cause of freedom in Libya” (*WP*-22 May 2011), “pulled Libya back from the brink of civil war” (*WP*-25 May 2014), “saved lives in Libya revolution” (*WP*-27 April 2011), and that “Libyan democracy needs U.S. assistance” (*WP*-28 July 2013).

The next most frequent subject or word in the selected headlines is “Gaddafi”. It occurs in 11% of the headlines. The US print media are outspoken and overly blunt with their negative headlines when defining Gaddafi. Phrases such as “Libya’s butcher” (*NYT*-22 Feb 2011), “stopping Gaddafi” (*NYT*-24 Feb 2011), “bombing Mr. Gaddafi” (*WP*-3 May 2011), “Gaddafi’s end” (*NYT*-20 Oct 2011), and “post-Gaddafi Libya” (*WP*-20 Oct 2011) reflect the negative tone the selected media use to define its attitude vis-à-vis Gaddafi. One single headline among the 44 selected ones presents the US as a victim that is tortured.

**Table4.1.** Frequency of topics in headlines, *The American Newspapers (NYT and WP)*

Newspaper	Topics	Frequency	%
<i>The New York times</i> and <i>The Washington Post</i>	The American policy/action in Libya	12	27.27
	Libya/ Libya revolution/war	8	18.18
	Criticizing the American policy in Libya	7	15.90
	Gaddafi	5	11.36
	Praising the American role in Libya	5	11.36
	Elections in Libya	1	2.27
	The U.S; the victim	1	2.27
	Others	3	6.81

**Table4.2.** Frequency of topics in headlines, *The British Newspapers (G and T)*

Newspaper	Topics	Frequency	%
<i>The Guardian</i> and <i>The Telegraph</i>	Libya/ Libya revolution/war	20	34.48
	The West’s role	9	15.51
	The UK role	7	12.06
	Gaddafi	5	8.62
	Criticizing the West	4	6.89
	The UK foreign policy	2	3.44
	The Arabs have a duty to help	1	1.72
	ISIS	1	1.72
	Praising the West’s intervention	1	1.72
	Comparing Libya to Tunisia	1	1.72
	The Arab spring is likely to happen again	1	1.72
	Other	5	8.62

The selected British print media provide a longer coverage of the uprising and war in Libya compared to its American counterpart. Accordingly, more themes and topics appear on the headlines written by *The Guardian* (n=32) and *The Telegraph* (n=26). Table 4.2 shows that the most frequent themes that occur in the 58 headlines are the following: a) Libya, Libya revolution or war appear in 20 headlines; b) the West’s role is tackled in 9 headlines; c) the UK role in 7 headlines; d) Gaddafi is referred to in

5 headlines; e) 4 headlines show a criticism directed to the West; and f) the UK foreign policy is raised in two headlines. Issues such as the Arabs have a duty to help Libya, the ISIS<sup>2</sup>, praising the West's intervention, juxtaposing Libya and Tunisia, and prophesying another Arab spring have been raised once each in the selected headlines. The remaining five headlines are ambiguous and unclear, and therefore cannot be placed among the themes stated in the table.

When the US print media dedicate important space in the headlines to raise issues related to its foreign policy vis-à-vis what is going on in Libya, the British media, in more than 34% of the headlines, report about Libya, the war, and outcomes. The British headlines (n=58) show the word "Libya" accompanied by terms or phrases such as "Limited options" (G-26 Feb 2011), "shifting sands" (G-21 March 2011), "rebels in retreat" (G-11 April 2011), "divided" (G-29 July 2011), "a risky phase in Libya" (T-27 May 2011), "in search of a new leader" (G-20 Oct 2011), "the weak hand of the law" (G-18 Sep 2013), "a country on the brink" (G-18 March 2014), "no honest broker" (T-30 May 2011), "a warning" (T-20 Oct 2011), and "the lessons of Libya" (T-17 Feb 2015). The issue was defined with notions related to instability and chaos register. Libya in those headlines is a divided, unsecure, risky, leaderless, and a lawless country that provide lessons for others to benefit from.

The West's role in the Libyan uprising is reported in more than 15% of the headlines. The West hereby is presented in headlines as an active agent of positive action; who is there "to help" (G-24 Feb 2011), not "to let Gaddafi destroy his people" (G-13 March 2011), and who is "standing by new Libya" (T-15 Sep 2011). Yet, some other headlines raise the Western role issue in headlines accompanied by notions of fear of negative outcomes. This is shown in phrases such as "the perils of intervention" (G-19 March 2011), and "mission creak" (G-20 April 2011).

The UK role is tackled in 7 headlines (12%). The UK role or involvement in the intervention in Libya is presented unfavorably in the British headlines. The UK intervention is defined with notions related to disavowal and suspicion register. The UK role occurs in headlines with words and phrases such as "fumbling" (G-7 March 2011), "beware mission creep" (T-18 April 2011), "a price too high" (T-20 June 2011), and "we are edging towards partition of Libya" (T-27 July 2011).

About five headlines include the name Gaddafi(8%). The British media portray Gaddafi negatively, yet in a mitigated way compared to the aggressive manner through which the then Libyan president is presented in *The NYT* and *The WP*'s headlines. *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* print the word Gaddafi in headlines along with words or phrases such as: "destructive path" (G-22 Feb 2011), "try" (bring to court) (T-23 Aug 2011), "Libya cannot move on" (T-29 Aug 2011) and "post-Gaddafi Libya" (T-22 Aug 2011). Hereby, *The G* and *The T* define Libya with Gaddafi as a destroyed country, calling for bringing Gaddafi to court, and longing for a post-Gaddafi new Libya.

The West, namely the UK mission in Libya, is criticized in four headlines (6.8%) by the selected British press. NATO and David Cameron (the then British prime minister) occur in headlines with terms such as: "failure" (G-24 April 2015), "a mess" (G-14 Sep 2016), "exposed" (T-31 Aug 2011), and "mistakes" (T-13 Sep 2016). On the other hand, *The T* evaluates the UK foreign policy in two headlines (3.44%), calling for "redressing the balance" with the US in one headline (T-25 May 2011), and for debating a new mission to Libya in the other (T-19 April 2016).

All that mentioned above is a quantitative analysis of the headlines (n=102). An in-depth discursive analysis of the themes raised in tables 4.1 and 4.2 are provided ahead in the paper to investigate the ideological functions for which the headlines are written when reporting about the Libyan uprising and war starting from 2011. The ideological functions of editorials this study is tracing are seen to reflect the Orientalist discourse that divides the world into different entities.

#### 4.2. Qualitative Properties of Headlines

Identifying Orientalist modes of thought is the main focus of this paper and it completely answers the research questions. In the context of CDA, the concepts of presupposition, transitivity, modality, omission, de-emphasis and mystification can be analyzed to uncover underlying power relations, ideological biases, and discursive strategies. The editorials' content is quantitatively and qualitatively

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<sup>2</sup>ISIS: Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (or Islamic State in Iraq and Syria): a radical Sunni Muslim organization whose aim is to restore an Islamic state, or caliphate, in the region encompassing Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian territories, and southeastern Turkey.(Dictionary.com)

analysed while having in mind Edward Said's understanding of Orientalism. The analysis is organised in specific categories that show whether or not the Libyan subject has been othered and framed in a myriad of ways that go hand in hand with the Orientalist line of reasoning. The Libyan subject is portrayed in different contexts; as a rebel, a fighter, a member of a militia, a leader, and a refugee. All the issues raised below are meant to yield a clear cut finding whether or not the Libyan or Libya at large has been Othered, Orientalized and essentially represented. Methodologically speaking, Fairclough's, and partially Van Dijk's, contribution into the critical discourse analysis is appropriately adopted to answer the aforementioned inquiries.

Headlines shape the reader's understanding of the whole text. The headline summarizes the whole media text and orients the reader directly to the most important information intended to be communicated by the writer (Fairclough, 1995b; Van Dijk, 1991). Given their significance, analyzing headlines is simultaneously an analysis of the underlying ideologies of headline editors and the newspaper at large.

### 4.3. Libya and the West in Headlines: What to Underreport and What to Over-report

The headline is a multi-functional item in the media text; it defines, summarizes, evaluates a certain event and simultaneously unfolds its ideological implications (Van Dijk, 1991). The main linguistic strategy used by editors when writing the headlines is presupposition. Through presupposition, the writers of the headlines, enumerated in table 4.3 below, presuppose negative attributes for the Other; Gaddafi or Libya in this context, and positive ones for Us; the Western countries involved in the intervention in Libya. The headlines project Libya as a place where people are suppressed, killed and destroyed. Headline 1 suggests that Gaddafi is the prosecutor of such deeds. On the other hand, the West is highlighted with positive attributions: "stopping Gaddafi", Making the revolution a success, "saving lives", renovating Libya and saving it from a civil war.

**Table 4.3.** *Presupposition in headlines*

No.	Example	Presupposition
1)	"Stopping Qaddafi" ( <i>NYT</i> , 24 February, 2011)	Gaddafi is creating problems/ doing mischief
2)	"Making Revolution Work" ( <i>NYT</i> , 26 October 2012)	The revolution is not functioning well/Western role is needed
3)	"Saving lives in Libya" ( <i>WP</i> , 27 April, 2011)	People are being killed in Libya
4)	"Preparing for a new Libya" ( <i>WP</i> , 13 July, 2011)	Renovating Libya/Changing Libya to the positive
5)	"U.S. action helped cause of freedom in Libya" ( <i>WP</i> , 22 May 2011)	People are being suppressed in Libya and the US is the liberator.
6)	"Pulling Libya back from the brink of civil war" ( <i>WP</i> , 25 May, 2014)	saving Libya from damage/a civil war
7)	"Libya: The urge to help" ( <i>G</i> , 24 February, 2011)	A responsibility to help.

The same results are yielded when analyzing the above mentioned headlines in terms of transitivity patterns; that is to say, who are the actors in each headline and what they are represented to be doing and what actions are being done to them. Table 4.3 shows that the actor is always the West in the 7 headlines. Here, the West's actions are presented with notions related to peace or freedom register: saving, helping, and protecting.

Thus, the West's agency is manifest in the above mentioned headlines by over-reporting its ability to put an end to Gaddafi's actions, to make the revolution a success, presupposing that the Libyans cannot make it successful independently, and to pull Libya back from a civil war. The West is, once again, projected as a savior, a protector who is standing between the ruthless Gaddafi and his people.

Conversely, important corpus of headlines mirrors the media's underreporting and omission of relevant information. Given the absence of relevant information in the headlines, Libya is under-represented while the West's involvement and responsibility of the chaos in Libya is excluded. It goes without saying that the bombing of many areas in Libya does not have one executer. The war was characterized by attacks coming from three main directions; Gaddafi forces, anti-Gaddafi rebels, and more importantly NATO forces, that targeted military installations and civilian infrastructure in Libya. The headlines written below are worth stating before any further elaborations:

- 8) "The Libya stalemate." (*WP*, 16 April, 2011)
- 9) "Murder in Benghazi." (*NYT*, 12 September, 2012)
- 10) "Libya's Resurgent Violence." (*NYT*, 20 November, 2013)
- 11) "Libya's Security Crisis." (*NYT*, 10 October, 2013)
- 12) "Libya: the weak hand of the law." (*G*, 18 September, 2013)
- 13) "Libya: a country on the brink." (*G*, 18 March, 2014)
- 14) "Libya: yet another messy frontier in the war on Isis". (*G*, 23 February, 2016)
- 15) "Libya: a nation's tragedy, a continent's problem" (*G*, 18 May, 2016)

Note that Libya, in almost all the excerpts stated above, is reported and represented as a death zone wherein there is only "murder", "violence", "security crisis", "tragedy" and "problems". The aim here is not to provide a counter-argument that makes of Libya a peaceful place in times of war. The purpose is rather to uncover the media's strategies of omission and mystification reflected in the headlines. In the excerpts above, the selected media mystifies agency and thus enables the doer or the cause of the murder, chaos, stalemate, and the security crises in Libya to shirk from responsibility and remains vague. The headlines' editors failed to answer questions such as: who is responsible for the stalemate in Libya? Who leads Libya to live a specter of a civil war? Who is the murderer in Benghazi? Is it Gaddafi, the rebels or the Western countries involved in the intervention or the three parties all together?

The remaining image in the reader's mind will be something like this: the West; the savior, the protector, is trying to save lives and protect the civilians from the brutality and violence taking place in Libya in which the West is only playing a humanitarian role. Relatedly, in an opinion article titled "Libya is a disaster we helped create. The west must take responsibility", Owen Jones (2014), argues that the pottery store rule: "you break it, you own it" does not just apply to pottery tools but to Western nations as well when they are involved in military interventions. In Jones formulation, "while many of these military interventions have left nations shattered, western governments have resembled the customer who walks away whistling, hoping no one has noticed the mess left behind" (2014). More importantly, Jones maintains that, here, the Western media is complicit in allowing the West to leave the scene (2014). Put differently, the Western media over-report how good is the West by highlighting its intervention in Libya as a humanitarian mission to save lives while the Western countries involved in the intervention are made absent from the scene when reporting about murder and violence.

Here, the notion of propaganda is worth discussing for it is the most effective media move through which the West is presented as a savior with a "responsibility to protect", and Gaddafi as a dangerous enemy "Other". The Western media resort to propaganda as a tool to win people's support by manufacturing their consent, as Herman and Chomsky argue (2002). Propaganda is "the mechanism by which governments persuade the public of the evil of the enemy and the justness of its own cause" (Steuter & Wills, 2008, p.18). As aforementioned, the selected media overreported Gaddafi's ruthlessness for the sake of legitimizing the West's military intervention in Libya, which is, via the work of propaganda, made a humanitarian intervention. As propaganda "is not concerned with disseminating information, but with rallying emotion" (p.18), the whole world perceives the bombarding of Libya by Western missiles a strategy to protect, save and stop the bloodshed in Libya.

Significantly, one single headline written by *The Guardian* does not conceal the responsible agency. *The G* writes:

- 16) "Libya: a mess not just of David Cameron's making" (*G*, 14 September, 2016)

Here, David Cameron, the then British Prime Minister, is held responsible for the messy situation in Libya, though the same headline shows that Cameron is not to blame alone. What is relevant in this context is the fact that the West is given the negative role of turning Libya into a messy place.

#### 4.4. The White Man's Burden

For the sake of legitimizing a meddling, an intervention, or an action of reform, the targeted subject has to be depicted as lacking the capacities to reform or make its reality better. This idea is well

elaborated by postcolonial theorists such as Bhabha. Bhabha (1983) argues that by denying the Other the capacities of self-government, independence and Western modes of civility, the official version and mission of Western power is invited and made a necessity, a responsibility and a burden. In Bhabha's words: "what is visible is the necessity of such rule which is justified by those moralistic and normative ideologies of amelioration recognized as the Civilizing Mission or the White Man's Burden" (1983, p.83).

What preceded is manifest in the headlines that interiorizes Libya and legitimizes the West's meddling:

- 1) "Libya crumbles as the United States looks the other way." (*WP*, 7 August, 2014)
- 2) "Libyan democracy needs U.S. assistance." (*WP*, 28 July, 2013)
- 3) "Libya: The West can't let Gaddafi destroy his people." (*G*, 13 March, 2011)
- 4) "Libya: The urge to help" (*G*, 24 February, 2011)

Libya in headline 1 above is prone to damage and disintegration if the U.S seems indifferent about the situation in Libya. It is water and oxygen without which Libya is dead. Headline 2 portrays the U.S assistance as highly needed to build a democracy in Libya. Similarly, in headline 3 and 4, protecting the Libyan civilians from the ruthless Gaddafi was not a choice, but rather a responsibility and a burden. On the face of it, Bhabha's "ideologies of amelioration" are just packaged new in the selected papers' coverage of the conflict in Libya to make the Western boots a necessity and a must on the Libyan soil.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Clear from the analysis above is the fact that the headline is not an arbitrary part of the editorial. It instead has an ideological notion to convey. The four selected papers, through their headlines, present the West as a savior, a protector, and as a bulwark against Gaddafi's tyranny in Libya. Although the Libyan sky witnessed fires coming from different sources, including the West, the Western media enables the Western countries to leave the scene when reporting about the war outcomes; a shattered, unsecured and lawless Libya. This is therefore a reflection of over-reporting how good are Us and how bad are Them. The analysis also renders visible the fact that the Libyan has been inferiorized and rendered passive and thus in need of the Western meddling and assistance. Uniquely, *The Guardian*, in a single headline, portrayed the West (by the name of David Cameron) as sharing responsibility of the mess created in Libya. By and large, clear in the analysis is the fact that Orientalism is still prevalent in the portrayal of the "East" and the "West" within the media discourse under scrutiny. It reinforces power imbalances, perpetuates stereotypes, and justifies Western intervention and dominance.

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