RESEARCH ARTICLE

ACTIVATING NEWS POWER: A CASE STUDY ON THE SYRIAN ELECTION NEWS COVERAGE.

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Manuscript Info	*Abstract*
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This paper attempted to critically analyze the Syrian elections news coverage by media during the Syrian war from a critical discourse analysis perspective. It aimed to explore how discourse in general and news discourse in particular produced and reproduced power relations.

Three reports from three channels; CNN, RT and the Syrian Satellite Channel (SSC); were downloaded from the websites of each channel. The channels were chosen based on their political orientations. The downloaded reports, which covered the Syrian election of 2014, were analyzed for their thematic structures and schematic structures.

The analysis showed significant differences in the hierarchal arrangement of themes and schematic categories along with differences in the vocabularies used, which indicates the influence of the ideological background and political interest of each channel. The results also showed that the channels depend on different strategies to influence their audience and enhance their point of view.

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Introduction:-

"Everything we do as Reuters journalists has to be independent, free from bias and executed with the utmost integrity." This is the opening statement in Reuters' Handbook of Journalism (Thomson Rueters Foundation, 2008, p. 1). Reuters and many other news agencies, news channels, newspapers, journalists and broadcasters pride themselves most of all on their claim to give fair treatment and representation of news. Yet, with the its massive influence over the public and its ability of shaping peoples' mind, media has turned into a powerful tool in the hands of elites, political figures, and government officials through which they can promote their own ideas and achieve their goals and interests. This abuse of power has put media under the precise investigations of researchers questioning its impartiality and neutrality and putting those shiny standards that journalism has set for itself under their microscope.

The Arabic audience and recipients started to sense this manipulative role of media with the beginning of the non-stop coverage of the demonstrations in their region, or the so-called "Arab Spring", which started eight years ago in Tunisia and is still going on in Syria. The controversies over the impartiality and credibility of news coverage of those events went high especially with the Syrian crisis. There have always been two sides of the story when reporting from Syria, on Syria and about the Syrian crisis. A single event is reported differently through news channels and each channel has its own causes, consequences, and statistics of that event, which not only slightly differ but sometimes contradict that of another channel. The inconsistency of news coverage about Syria gave rise to an "*Information Battle*". This paper attempts to show how manipulation is enacted in television journalism through analyzing the language of news reports about the Syrian elections.

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Theoretical Framework:-
Power Theory and Media Discourse:-
One of the major areas of investigation in critical discourse analysis is the study of power relations and how they are enacted and reproduced through discourse. This type of social power is defined by Dijk as:
*"A social relation between groups or institutions, involving the **control** by a (more) powerful group or institution (and its members) of the actions and the minds of (the members) a less powerful group. Such power generally presupposes privileged **access** to socially valued resources, such as force, wealth, income, knowledge, or status."*
(van Dijk T. , 1995, p. 10)

As Dijk (2009) argues, power relations are manifested in interaction, and instances of these relations are encountered in all kinds of communicative events as in parent-child, teacher-student, doctor-patient and policeman-prisoner where the home, classroom, clinic, and police station are considered as *Centers of Power*. Society holds many centers of power controlled by elites, and each center is opened to special domain or scope through which the elites can practice their power. To simplify the matter we take the school as an example of a center of power. The teacher is the one possessing the power, the classroom is the domain through which he can practice his power, and the students constitute the controlled group.

Media is considered as a significant center of power within society and is both pervasive and persuasive. It has a wide recipient scope since it is a source of knowledge acquisition for millions of people throughout the world and is an important tool in setting the public agenda. If we look back at Dijk's definition of social power, we can see that it features in two main dimensions: **Control** and **Access.** Explaining these two and relating them to media will give us valuable insight into the nature of media power and how it is activated.

1. **Control** is the act of exercising power in such a way that A controls B. The control exercised by media is characterized of being indirect and symbolic and, thus, targets the minds not the actions of a particular group. However, this indirect control can be transformed into a direct one when it influences the attitudes and opinions of the audience and persuades them to do actions on the basis of what is delivered to them by media. For instance, it is wholly an accepted fact today that thousands of Jihadists arrived to fight in Syria due to the extensive coverage of the Syrian Crisis.
2. **Access** to discourse is the main measurement device of the power of an institution. Media constitutes a perfect example, where the more powerful always gain access to sources of discourse and communicative events. Since it reaches millions, access to media by elites is crucial for continuing their enactment of power. On the other hand, media gains more power through the access to valuable discourse resources of those in power as politicians, leaders and executives. For example, interviewing a president is different from interviewing a member of the public because of the consequentiality of the discourse of the former.

It is the aim of a news report and its authors that the readers form a model of the news event in the report. The structures and contents of such models can be manipulated through the structures and contents of news reports. The analysis will focus on the structure of news reports in order to determine such ways of manipulation. To do that, I will depend on van Dijk's model of discourse comprehension.

Through his model, Dijk decomposes the text into the structures that inters the process of producing it by the writer/speaker and making it comprehensible to the reader/listener. In any kind of discourse, he distinguishes two major structures under which other structures are included. **The Microstructure** which operates at the narrow level of words, sentences and the connection between sentences, and **the Macrostructure** which make explicit the overall topics or themes of a text and at the same time define the overall coherence of a text (van Dijk T. , 1988c).

This paper focuses the analysis on the Macrostructure of the news reports and the reason behind this is Dijk stressing the fact that if we want to analyze discourse for critical purposes of investigating power, dominance or ideology, we should concentrate the investigation on its global or Macro levels. So, what follows is a detailed explanation of the Macrostructure of discourse.

The Macrostructures:-
The Macrostructures or **the Global Structures**, as Dijk refers to them, operate at a higher level than the level of words and sentences. At that global level of discourse, we have two main structures: **the semantic macrostructure** (themes) and **the formal superstructure** (schema). The former organizes the content of the text, while the latter

organizes its form. As Dijk points out "Macrostructures and the cognitive operations in which they are used are crucial in news production processes by reporters and editors and for comprehension, storage, memorizations and later reproduction by media users" (van Dijk T. , 1988c, p. 14).

The semantic macrostructure is the theoretical account of what we usually call the topics or the themes. The notion of theme has multiple approaches within language studies. First, we have the sentential topic which is defined as the left-most constituent of a sentence but that is definitely not what Dijk is referring to. His concept of theme is more relevant to that of Brown and Yule who view themes as equivalent to the intuitive notion of 'topic' or 'what is being talked about' (Brown & Yule, 1986, p. 132). Dijk (1983) argues that for each sentence there is a proposition, while for a set of sentences there is a **Macroproposition,** a theme, which gives us the overall meaning, and the sum of all the macropropositions in a text is its semantic macrostructure. In other words, the semantic macrostructure is a summary of the propositions that constitute the semantic skeleton of the text. Though the reader has an intuitive ability to reorganize the themes, yet there are also some structural signals that are considered to be macro-relevant such as titles, subtitles, headings, summaries initial sentences; and such signals facilitate comprehension (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983, p. 54).

The second main structure is **the formal superstructure** or schema. Many discourse types seem to exhibit a conventional schematic structure, by that we mean an overall formal organization of the whole text. Those formal superstructures may function as a form for the global content of the text. Therefore, they are compared the syntax of a sentence; they are the macrosyntax corresponding to the macrosemantics (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983, p. 237). The following section explains the schema theory in general and goes into the details of news schema.

News Schema:-
Various discourse types have conventional categories that are type-specific, and so, they have their own schematic structure. A story, for example, has a setting, complication and resolution categories. In the same way, readers are capable of recognizing news reports as such because they possess a schema of news reports on their minds. This news schema is defined by Dijk as the "abstract structural properties of discourse, as representations, and as socially shared systems of rules, norms, or strategies for the use of news." (van Dijk T. , 1986, p. 155). The main categories that make up the schema of a news report as presented by Dijk (1986) are illustrated in figure (1).
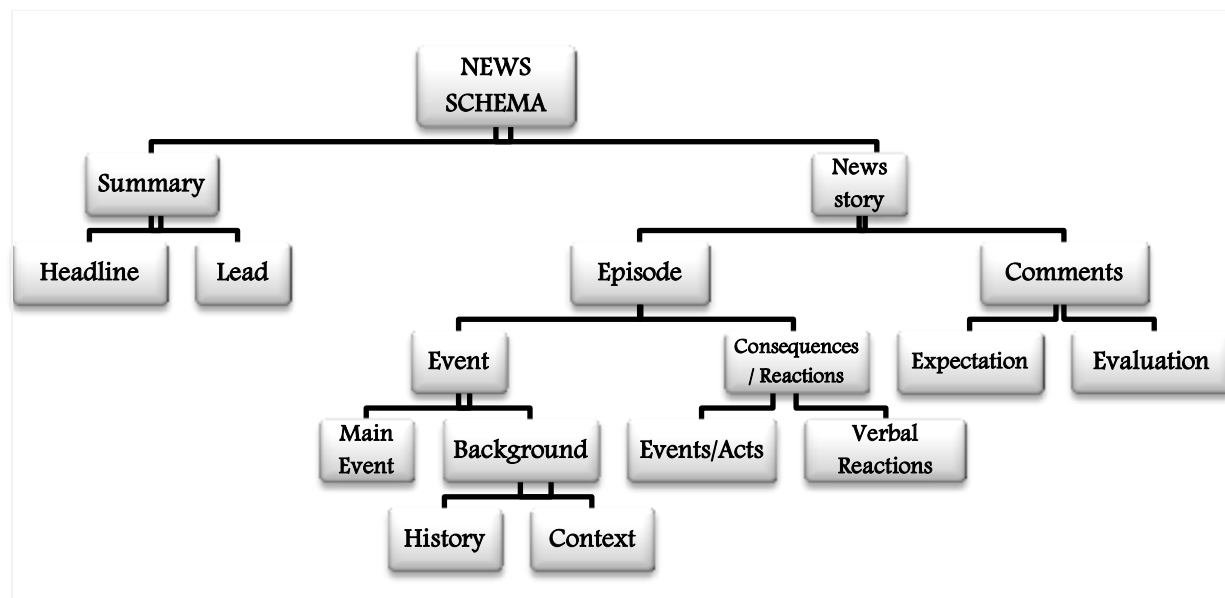
Figure 1:-van Dijk's (1986) News Schema

As clear in the previous figure, the schema of a news report branches primarily into a **Summary** and a **News Story**. **The Summary** is composed of **Headline** and **Lead**; their function is to announce the major topics of the text. The Headline is typographically marked by larger bold letter type, and placed on top of the news report in order to attract

the attention of the reader. Headlines signal the most relevant or important information of the news report. The Lead follows the headline with smaller letter type adding more details to it. As for the News Story, we see that it is composed of an **Episode** and **Comments**. Each **Episode** has **Events** and **Consequences**. The event category consists of **Main Events** and **Background**. The main event is the category that is needed in any news report. It constitutes the most recent event which gives rise to the news report within the limits of one or two days before the publication of the report. Background follows Main events. Van Dijk (1986) distinguishes between past and present backgrounds; hence, the distinction between two subcategories of **History** and **Context**. History is the past context that leads to the actual situation and its events. While the Context, as Dijk says, "covers all the information in the news report about the actual situation in which the main news event takes place" (van Dijk T. , 1986, p. 164). The **Consequences** category, as a subcategory of episode, further consists of **Events** or **Acts** and **Verbal Reactions**. It is concerned with how the news event impacts the actual world. Verbal Reactions, in this regard, covers information on the quoted declaration or statements of the immediate participants who have opinions or comments on the news event the report is covering. Events or Acts help cover any other actual reactions, such as protests, celebrations, or cutting off diplomatic relations. Finally, a news discourse has a **Comment** category consisting of two major subcategories: **Expectation** and **Evaluation** which help the reporter evaluate the news events. This category usually comes after the Main events, Context, and Background categories, towards the end of the news discourse. Evaluation features evaluative opinions about the actual news events while Expectations formulates possible other consequences of the events and situation. (van Dijk T. , 1986)

Methodology:-

The views over the Syrian crisis were divided into two main fronts; the first is anti-government led by the USA administration and their western and regional allies and the other is pro-government led by Russia and its allies. Therefore, the channels CNN, RT, and the Syrian Satellite Channel (SSC) are chosen to capture the diversity of the two extremes. By logging into the official websites of the three channels -CNN: https://www.cnn.com, RT English: https://www.rt.com and the Syrian Satellite Channel: https://www.syriaonline.sy- I searched their news archives and downloaded the reports which addresses the presidential elections in Syria and President Al-Assad's winning of a third term in office on the fourth of June 2014 (see the Appendix).

Since the size of my sample does not permit a refined quantitative analysis, only a qualitative analysis of the data is applied. The reports are analyzed at two levels (1) a discursive level (2) a critical level, without forgetting the comparative nature of the whole study. The discursive analysis is based on Dijk's model of text structuring. The focus is on the Global Structures of the reports, i.e., thematic and schematic structures. Then, the outcome of this discursive analysis will be critically assessed in order to spot any differences in their thematic or schematic hierarchy and to see how the political agendas of the channels affects the structures of their reports.

Analysis of the Syrian elections' news reports:-

The Syrian presidential elections were held on the fourth of June 2014, three years after the beginning of the crisis. These elections were considered illegitimate by many western countries even before they took place. So, it is not surprising at all that President Assad's winning of the elections would generate a sever wave of criticism and conflicting political views worldwide where some western politicians called it a shame while others a democratic act. Therefore, the chosen three reports constitute a perfect case study, which would help comparing how a single event can be presented through news channels with different political interests.

Discursive Analysis:-
Thematic and schematic structures:-

The first step of the discursive analysis is examining the thematic structure of each report. A thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method, which subsumes the overall content of discourse. The main goal of any thematic analysis is to identify the themes in each news discourse and to establish their hierarchical relationships. This helps in highlighting major differences in the news reports in terms of promoting, prioritizing, demoting or undermining certain topics. It shows which topic has the higher position in the hierarchy and in what reports we miss a given topic or a cluster of topics.

After decoding the reports and properly defining the themes, the next step is to apply a schematic analysis. It is essential to point out that understanding the thematic and schematic macrostructures is an interface process in the sense that each complements the other. It is the Macroproposition or topics that fill up the schematic categories of the discourse; the first captures the content while the second reflects the form. The schematic categories in news

discourse such as circumstances, history and verbal reactions assign functions to the Macropropositions which are inferred from a sequence of propositions. So, in this step of the analysis I will choose the topics that best represent each schematic category and fill up the diagram.

What follows is the thematic analysis and the schematic analysis of the three reports CNN, RT and SSC reports, respectively, which will be critically analyzed afterwards.

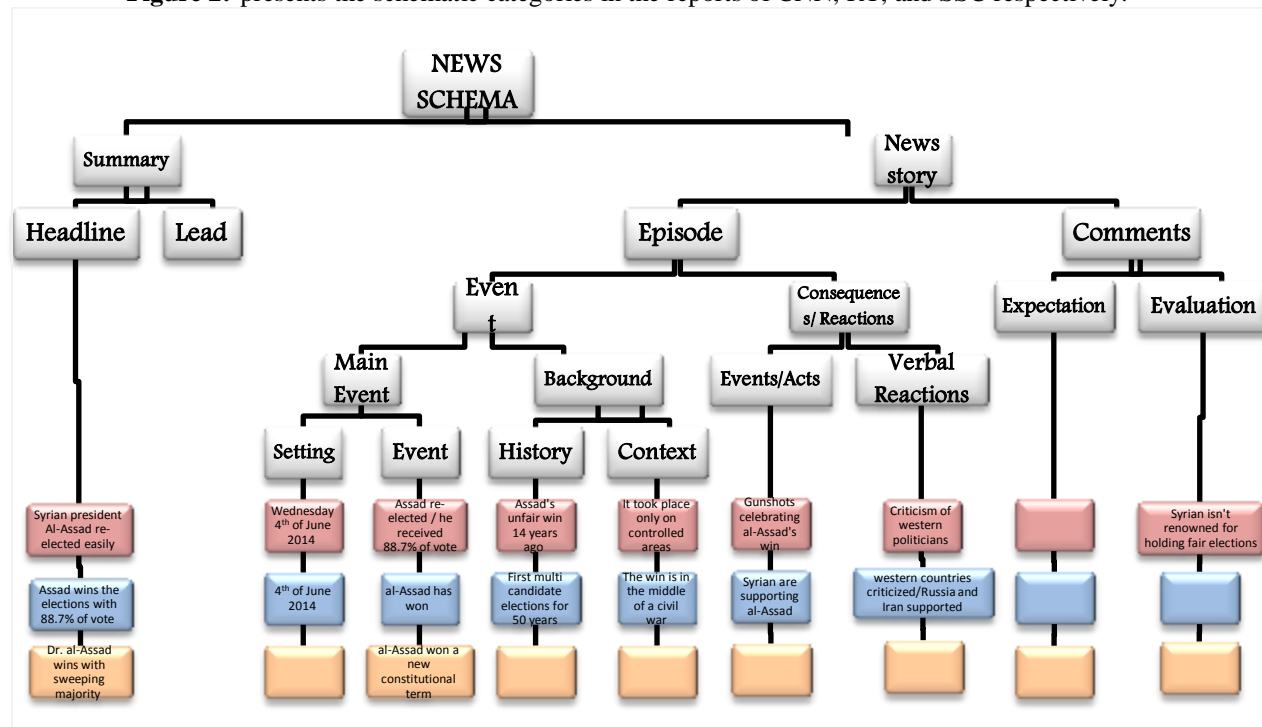**Table 1:-**Thematic Structure of CNN's report

1)   Syrian president Bashar Al-Assad was re-elected
2)   He received 88.7% of the votes
3)   The elections only took place on the areas controlled by the government
4)   Opposition groups and western countries criticized the process
5)   The Syrian government dismissed any criticism
6)   Al-Nouri received 4.8%, Hajjar received 3.4%
7)   The voting comes as the war continues
8)   People were killed in the day of elections
9)   Al-Assad urged people not to fire guns as an expression of joy

10) The criticisms of the elections: a. Ban ki moon
                    b. the Islamic Front
                    c. the British Foreign Office
                    d. US State Department

11) Monitors from the US and Europe were not present but others were

12) a. Al-Assad's unfair win 14 years ago
        b. Al-Assad's unfair win 7 years ago
        c. Hafez Al-Assad's tough rule of Syria for 29 years

Table 2:-Thematic Structure of RT's report

1)   Bashar Al-Assad has won the Syrian elections
2)   The win is in the middle of a civil war
3)   Laham declared Al-Assad's victory

4)   a. 10.2 million people voted
     b. the voters' turnout was 73.42%
     c. no violations reported

5)   Syria's officials say the victory is a vindication of Al-Assad' campaign against rebels
6)   The first multi-candidate elections in 50 years
7)   Rebels obstructed the voting in the north and east of Syria
8)   The conflict killed 160.000
9)   Opposition groups and western countries criticized the elections
10) Syrians are supporting Assad
11) Russia and Iran supported the elections
12) Al-Assad said he will meet the opposition's demands

Table 3:-Thematic Structure of SSC's report

1)   Bashar Al-Assad won a new constitutional term
2)   The majority of 10.319.723 votes and 88.7%
3)   Dr. Hassan Abdullah al-Nouri got 4.3%
4)   Maher Abdul-Hafiz Hajjar got 3.2%

Figure 2:-presents the schematic categories in the reports of CNN, RT, and SSC respectively.

Figure 2:-schematic structure of CNN, RT, and SSC reports

The ideological background and the political agenda of each channel could be easily traced through the thematic and schematic structures of these reports confirming the anti-government/ pro-government classification. The following analysis will critically assess the macrostructures of the three reports in order to spot the differences among the channels, which makes clearer the above mentioned classification.

Critical Analysis:-
When examining the thematic and schematic analysis of the three reports, we notice distinctive variations that are comparable between the channels. Though the three reports share the same main event, however, there are differences in the hierarchal structure of both themes and schematic categories. Each channel chooses different topics and schematic categories to elevate in the hierarchy and others to downplay or even delete.

In the thematic analysis of the CNN report (table 1), almost half of the topics allude negatively to the Syrian elections and their results. Right after introducing the main topic and the announcement of the re-election of Dr. Bashar al-Assad and the percentage of votes he received, came the criticism of the process in three consecutive topics. This is followed by one topic about the humble percentages the other two runners have got and then back again to criticisms. So, the most salient theme in the CNN report is not the elections per say but the negative reactions and criticisms directed against them. Not only does it occupy a higher position in the thematic hierarchy, but it also dominates the rest of the report.

As for RT's thematic structure (table 2), the content and tone are more or less balanced. Though the overall tone is relatively positive, yet it contained the views of both the anti-government and pro-government sides. The report highlights the West's and the opposition groups' disapproval of the process and results and emphasizes, immediately after that, the fact that the Syrian people endorse them. The following quotation from the RT report clarifies this idea:

> "*But while opposition groups inside Syria and most countries in the West have denounced the elections as a sham, many Syrians are supporting President Assad....*"

Constructing and structuring the topic in such a manner downplays the criticisms and leaves enough room for the readers to make their own judgments. Therefore, it is not only about eliminating undesirable topics; however, the

way a topic is structured and presented could totally change the way the audience receive, and perceive, it. The most salient topic for RT is the main event where details of the elections such as the results, the number of voters and the turnout are given prominence in the thematic hierarchy.

It is noticeable also that Both CNN and RT reports have exactly the same topic in their thematic structures in tables (1) and (2) which is "*opposition groups and western countries criticized the process".* However, CNN elevated this topic to be the forth in its hierarchy while RT delayed it to the ninth position. It is in the best interest of CNN to highlight the negative reactions to the Syrian elections. This explains why this topic was given such prominence. However, this is not the case for RT since the Russian leadership is supporting the Syrian elections and its legitimate government, this explains why the prominence was placed on the high voters' turnout, the reactions of Syrian officials and the Syrian people's support for al-Assad.

In the SSC's report (table 3), however, the thematic structure is rather very simple. The only topics are of the results and the percentage the other two runners had. Other topics of past elections or even the current situation in Syria was not mentioned since such topics will never support the Syrian government interests.

Moving to the schematic analysis in (figure 1), the lexical choices of the first schematic category of Headlines and the way they are constructed show the division of anti- and pro-governmental ideological conflict.

CNN: "*Syrian President al-Assad re-elected easily, state media reports*"
RT: "*Bashar Assad wins Syria presidential election with 88.7% of vote*"
SSC: "*Dr. Bashar Hafez al-Assad wins post of president of Syria with sweeping majority of votes at 88.7%*

It is essential first to see how each channel addressed the main actor of the event Dr. Bashar al-Assad. For RT and SSC, he is presented without mentioning his position or title as the current president of Syria and is treated as a normal candidate and only his name was mentioned. As for CNN, the headline starts with "*Syrian president al-Assad*" to display for their audience the image of a former president being re-elected again in pre-arranged elections that will indicate an unfair win and theatrical elections. To enhance this image, CNN uses the verb "*re-elected*" modified by the adverb "*easily*" so the event does not suggest typical elections where one candidate surpasses others and wins, rather it is re-election of a former president. RT and SSC use the verb "*wins*" as an indication that the elections were fair and legitimate.

Both the CNN and RT reports have more of a complete schematic structure than the SSC report. The schematic structure of the SSC report has the minimum limit of schematic categories; Headline and Main Event only. The overall report is just an announcement of the results and the percentages each runner has received. Although the elections happened in the middle of a war and are the first multi-candidate elections in Syria, yet Background and History are eliminated. Most significant is the elimination of Verbal Reactions; neither supportive reactions nor criticisms were mentioned, though the elections stirred a great deal of controversy. This gives the impression that the Syrian channel is not really interested in what outsiders have to say.

Conclusion:-
The stated objective of this research was to examine the role discourse in general, news discourse in particular, plays in the reconstruction of power relations and to highlight the connection between discourse and power. I chose to analyze news discourse because of its consequentiality and effectiveness over the public and because I consider media to be a partner, to say the least, in the war that is being launched against my country. It was intriguing to see how news discourse can be structured in a manipulative way that leads to dominance or abuse of the power that media possess. So the analysis targeted news reports in CNN, RT and SSC about the Syrian elections, not for the purpose of investigating the objectivity of any of the channels, rather for exploring the most affective discursive strategies that helps to mediate their own point of view and hence enforce their ideologies.

The discursive analysis that has been carried out on the macro-level of themes and schemata proved to be an efficient way of investigating news materials. The thematic and schematic analysis of the reports facilitated the mission of spotting the comparable elements and the differences in the reports' structures of each one of the channels under study. After a critical examination of the discursive analysis, It was found that each channel strategically arranges the hierarchy of thematic and schematic structures of their reports in order to influence the perception of their targeted audience. There were significant differences in salient and deleted topics and schematic

categories for each channel. It was also found that specialized news channels; CNN and RT, tend to have complete thematic and schematic structures compared to un-specialized channels such as SSC.

Finally, the recipients of media should not take its messages for granted. Just because it is telling us the truth, this does not mean that it is not deceptive. Telling half-truth can be more manipulative than telling a lie. Readers and viewers of media should always train their minds to critically assess media messages rather than just accept them. They need to develop their own counter power system. Hopefully, this case study would contribute in understanding media discourse more clearly and motivate further critical studies on media discourse-related issues.

Appendix: The news reports of the Syrian Elections

Syrian President al-Assad re-elected easily, state media reports
By **Mohammed Tawfeeq** and **Jethro Mullen**, CNN
June 4, 2014 -- Updated 2309 GMT (0709 HKT)

(CNN) -- Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was re-elected in the country's first presidential vote since its civil war broke out three years ago, state-run television reported Wednesday.

Al-Assad received 88.7% of Tuesday's vote, the state media outlet said, in an election that took place only in areas controlled by the government. Rebels hold significant parts of the north and east of the country.

Opposition groups and many Western countries have said the voting was rigged and that al-Assad's two little-known challengers -- Hassan al-Nouri, a businessman and former government minister, and Maher Hajjar, a lawmaker -- were just window dressing to give the undertaking a veneer of democracy.

But the Syrian government has dismissed any criticism of the process.

Al-Nouri received 4.3% of the vote, and Hajjar received 3.2%, the state-run Syrian Arab News Agency reported, citing Parliament Speaker Mohammad Jihad al-Laham.

The voting comes as war continues to rage in Syria. The United Nations estimates more than 100,000 people have been killed in the Middle Eastern nation since an uprising began in March 2011.

That includes more fighting on Wednesday. The Local Coordination Committees in Syria, a network of opposition activists, reports on its Facebook page that at least 24 people were killed in violence nationwide, including eight in Aleppo province and six in and around Damascus.

In a nod to this ongoing warfare, al-Assad urged people not to fire guns into the air as an "expression of our joy and enthusiasm" -- saying doing so threatens citizens' lives and dishonors Syrian troops on the frontlines.

In a posting on the presidency's Facebook page, cited by SANA, al-Assad told citizens to voice their feelings about the vote "in a way that reflects our high morals and civilization as Syrians."

Yet not everyone believed the election was worth celebrating -- or that it should have been held at all.

The office of U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon had urged the Syrian government not to hold the election, warning it would "damage the political process and hamper the prospects for a political solution" to the civil war.

The Islamic Front, one of the largest armed rebel groups, claimed the al-Assad government was blackmailing people to vote in what it called a fake election.

The British Foreign Office said the vote would "be a grotesque parody of democracy," and the U.S. State Department said the al-Assad government took steps "to make it difficult if not impossible to have a fair and free election in Syria."

The Syrian government said election monitors from the United States, the European Union or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe wouldn't be present, but observers from some other countries would be.

Syria isn't renowned for holding free and fair elections. When al-Assad came to power 14 years ago, he ran unopposed, securing more than 99% of the vote, according to state media.

Seven years later, he won again with a similarly mountainous share of the vote. His father, Hafez al-Assad, ruled Syria with an iron fist for 29 years before he died in 2000.

Bashar Assad wins Syria presidential election with 88.7% of vote
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Edited time: June 04, 2014 21:18

Bashar Assad has won a landslide victory in the Syrian presidential poll with 88.7 percent of the vote. This will secure him a third seven-year term in office amidst a bloody civil war, which stemmed from protests against his rule.

"*I declare the victory of Dr Bashar Hafez Assad as president of the Syrian Arab Republic with an absolute majority of the votes cast in the election,*" parliament speaker Mohammad Laham said in a televised address from his office in the Syrian parliament.

A total of 10.2 million people voted for Assad. The voter turnout stood at 73.42 percent. No violations have been reported, Syria's Higher Judicial Committee for Elections said as quoted by SANA news agency.

Syrian officials said the result was a vindication of Assad's three-year campaign against those fighting to get rid of him.

This was the first multi-candidate presidential election in Syria for almost 50 years. The other two candidates for the top post were Hassan Abdullah Nouri, from the National Initiative for Administration and Change in Syria, and Maher Abd Al-Hafiz Hajjar, formerly from the People's Will Party.

Despite the high turnout figures, residents of some areas in the country's north and east were obstructed from voting by rebel forces.

The conflict in Syria has already killed 160,000 people and created nearly 3 million refugees, as well as displacing more people inside Syria.

But while opposition groups inside Syria and most countries in the West have denounced the election as a sham, many Syrians are supporting President Assad and see him as the only option to return stability to the country.

"*This is our duty, we can't allow people from outside the country to decide for us. Our duty is to vote – or order to protect our country,*" Usam Hammami, a resident in the capital Damascus, told RT's Maria Finoshina.

Russia and Iran both supported the election and Assad himself has said that it is part of his efforts to meet the opposition's demands

سـورية

Dr. Bashar Hafez al-Assad wins post of President of Syria with sweeping majority of votes at 88.7%

Speaker of the People's Assembly, Mohammad Jihad al-Laham announced the results of Presidential elections, pointing out that Dr. Bashar al-Assad won the post of the Republic's Presidency for a new constitutional term, having the majority of participants' votes with 10.319.723 votes and 88.7%

Al-Laham added that presidential candidate, Dr. Hassan Abdullah al-Nouri, got 500,279 votes with a percentage of 4.3% of the valid votes, while presidential candidate Maher Abdul-Hafiz Hajjar got 372,301 with a percentage of 3.2% of the valid votes.

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