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News Production & News Coverage of the Normalization Between Arab States & Israel in Arab Media

By

Jana Itani

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Multimedia Journalism

School Of Arts & Sciences
April 2023

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Thesis Title: News Production & News Coverage of the Normalization Between Arab States & Israel in Arab Media

Program: Multimedia Journalism

Department: Communication, Arts & Languages

School: School of Arts and Sciences

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Masters of Arts in the major of Multimedia Journalism

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News Production & News Coverage of the Normalization Between Arab States & Israel in Arab Media

Jana Itani

ABSTRACT

The latest announcement of normalizing relations between UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, Morocco and Israel is a complete, explicit normalization of diplomatic, economic, and touristic relations. During this defining moment, the thesis aims to study both the news production and coverage of the normalization across state owned and private media websites from the four normalizing Arab countries: *Alittihad* and *Gulf Today* (in UAE)*, BNA* and *Akhbar Al Khaleej* (in Bahrain)*, Suna* and *Al Sudani News* (in Sudan)*, Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* and *Morocco World News* (in Morocco), as well as pan Arab media websites: *Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya*, and *Al Mayadeen*. The quantitative content analysis of 166 articles compares the generic frames, word choices, sources, and pro-normalization or anti-normalization tones. The content analysis results reveal a focus on certain main, commonly used frames, the political affairs frame and the human interest frame, and a rare, avoidable employment of two others, the law and order frame and the injustice and defiance frame. These results also map the top words used to refer to the normalization agreement. The majority of the analyzed articles were supportive of the normalization and lacked sourcing diversity. To complement these results, the thesis interviews journalists and media workers from three Arab media previously selected for the content analysis sample. Using grounded theory, the qualitative interviews analysis detected four patterns of Arab media production practices named: the independence of journalists' stances, the rigidity of writing guidelines, the flexibility of sourcing decisions, and the firmness of post-normalization editorial stances. These patterns inspired a set of recommendations for journalists to resist against the latest normalization inside Arab media newsrooms. Finally, the thesis reaches the conclusion that public, private, and pan Arab media still fall under the same umbrella of ownership limits and restrictions. Therefore, this thesis builds on the body of knowledge on the topic of Arab media news production, policies, and influences. It also advances the research on framing theory by examining frames and directions used in different Arab media coverage of the normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel.

Keywords*:* Abraham Accords, Normalization, Framing, Arab Media, Political Economy, News Coverage, Quantitative Content Analysis, Qualitative Interviews, Grounded Theory.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAK…… Akhbar Al Khaleej

AFP……. Agence France-Press

AP……. Associated Press

ASN……. Al Sudani News

BNA…… Bahrain News Agency

Le Matin……. Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb

MWN…… Morocco World News

UAE…… United Arab Emirates

U.S…… United States of America

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The wave of normalizing relations between Arab states and Israel in 2020 is the first explicit normalization move since Wadi Araba treaty in 1994, breaking a long-standing impasse with Israel (Fulton & Yillenek, 2021). Imposed by the Arab states' signing of the Abraham Accords, the latest normalization accepts a complete arrangement of diplomatic, economic, and touristic relations between not only the governments but also the people of the normalizing Arab states and Israel. On August 13, 2020, the United Arab Emirates agreed to establish normal diplomatic relations with Israel (Al Jazeera, 2020). On September 15, 2020, UAE, Bahrain and Israel formally signed the Abraham Accords, in a signing ceremony at the White House in Washington (Judd & Naar, 2020). Then, on October 23, 2020, Sudan signed the same accords and normalized its relationship with Israel (Al Jazeera, 2020). Latest, on December 22, 2020, Morocco signed the accords and resumed its diplomatic relations with Israel (Kasraoui, 2020).

1.1 Reactions Towards The Normalization

Such accords brought attention of Arab and international media (Salama, 2021) and global public opinion (Allam, 2020) to the subject of Israeli occupation and the Arab stance towards the Palestinian cause (Erekat, 2020). On one side, media outlets in UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, Morocco as well as Egypt, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Oman, among the most repressive regimes (Amin, 2002), praised the accords (Allam, 2020; Fulton & Yellinek, 2020). They viewed the normalization of Arab relations with the state of Israel as a historical achievement and a shift towards resolution in the Middle East (Allam,

2020). On the other side, opposing opinions from the Arab media landscape rejected the accords and considered them as a betrayal to the Palestinian cause (Allam, 2020). Additionally, representative citizens phone surveys in Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia revealed low levels of appreciation and support among for the normalization of relations between their Arab states with the state of Israel (Robbins, 2020). Correspondingly, the 2019-2020 data of polls and surveys from the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies and the Arab Opinion Index showed that the public opinion rejected any recognition or normalization of relations with Israel (Arab Public Opinion on the Palestinian Cause, 2021). Moreover, many prominent Arab public figures, such as politicians, journalists, and social society activists opposed the governmental policies. Their voices were expressed in the different types of the media, like the online "Charter of Palestine" petition, and "No2Normalization" campaign on Facebook and Instagram.

1.2 Aim of The Thesis

The controversy of opinions towards the normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel warrants a careful examination of the attitudes of different media. Media are the primary information sources for the public in such regional events (Ross, 2003). Media cover these news events from different perspectives and influence the public's reception and interpretation (Alkalliny, 2017). With this perspective, this thesis aims to study the coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel across different Arab media. The thesis compares the framing between state owned and private media websites from the four normalizing countries: *Alittihad,* state owned Emirati news website, *Gulf Today,* private Emirati news website, *BNA,* official Bahraini news agency, *Akhbar Al Khaleej,* private Bahraini news website, *Suna,* Sudanese news agency,

Al Sudani News, private Sudanese news website, *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb*, state owned Moroccan news website, and *Morocco World News*, private Moroccan news website as well as pan Arab media websites: *Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya*, and *Al Mayadeen*. Using quantitative content analysis, the thesis explores the specific frames and sources used by these Arab media as well as the frequency of these frames. The content analysis also examines the tone of the Arab media coverage if it was pro-normalization or anti-normalization. To understand the content analysis results, the thesis analyzes the factors that influence the frames used in the media texts. Thus, the thesis explains Arab media institutions production practices that shape the coverage of the normalization. Interviews with journalists and media workers at pan Arab media institutions tackle the different factors that influence their practices and their role in promoting the normalization or condemning it. The interviews data is analyzed based on grounded theory (Nelson, 2020) to provide further insights about the institutional production practices, their acquiescence or resistance to normalization.

According to previous literature on the topic of mass communication in the Arab region, the media policy in general and news coverage in particular, are the result of governmental and political control (Amin, 2002; Hamadi, 1991; Khiabany, 2016; Nossek & Rinnawi, 2003). The thesis aims to map contrast between state owned, private, and pan Arab media coverage according to the normalization stances and used frames. The thesis also investigates Arab media practices during news production phase. Therefore, this thesis builds on the body of knowledge on the topic of Arab media news production, policies, and influences.

The media coverage framing the normalization with Israel or so called peace accords is extensively studied from the Western media perspective (Ben-Naftali et al., 2005; Liebes & First, 2003; Liebes & Kampf, 2007; Sheafer & Dvir-Gvirsman, 2010;

Wolfsfeld, 1997) rather than the Arab media perspective (Elmasry et al., 2013). Although few studies focused on pan Arab media coverage of events about Palestine, these studies included small sample sizes and failed to define specific frames for the Palestinian issue (Elmasry et al., 2013). Thus, this thesis also advances the research on framing theory by examining frames and directions (Elmasry et al., 2013) used in different Arab media coverage of the normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Normalization Definition

By definition, the normalization of relations between two states in general suggests that communication and collaborations between these states is henceforth accepted and considered normal (Nelson, 2016). In the context of the Israeli occupation over Palestine, the normalization of international relations with the occupying state proposes that not only communication and collaborations are normal, but also oppression is accepted and not resisted (Palestinian BDS National Committee, 2022). Such normalization defies the Palestinian struggle for liberation and erodes forms of solidarity with their cause, given that the normalization does not aim for resistance against the occupying state of Israel who in its turn does not recognize the UN declared rights of the Palestinians (Palestinian BDS National Committee, 2022). Therefore, the normalization between four Arab states and the colonial state of Israel imposes the beginning of a new regional partnership (Fulton & Yellinek, 2020) shifting the regional landscape, powers, and threats (Isik, 2020). This shift has implications on both the official and popular levels (Zweiri, 2021). On the official level, the normalizing states tolerate political, economic, military, educational, and technological collaborations (Fulton & Yellinek, 2020). On the popular level, normalization welcomes touristic (Zweiri, 2021) and sportive relationships (Fulton & Yellinek, 2020). Full popular normalization also implies trust of the other people's narratives and cultural dialogues (Nelson, 2016; U.S. Department of States, 2020). – abstain from considering Israel as an enemy state and consider occupation as normal -

2.2. Camp David Accords

Arab states refused any form of normalization with Israel and considered it as a colonizing enemy state since its establishment on Palestinian lands in 1948 (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2020). The first official framework for peace in the Middle East between an Arab state and Israel is the Camp David Accords in 1979 (Allam, 2020; Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2020). The Arab Republic of Egypt signed the Camp David Accords as a peace treaty after conducting four wars against Israel (Camp David Accords, 1978). The accords resulted in respecting Egypt's territorial integrity in Sinai Peninsula (Carter, 2020), recognizing Israel as a state, and ending all economic boycotts (Camp David Accords, 1978). However, by signing the accords, Arab states considered that Egypt deviated from the 1967 Arab consensus (Carter, 2020), suspended its membership from the League of Arab States, and called for boycott (Allam, 2020). Arab media coverage of the Camp David Accords was in line with the Arab states' reaction, critiquing and opposing the normalization move without a definite solution to the Palestinian issue (Allam, 2020; Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2020).

2.3. Oslo Accords

Another Arab normalization move with the Israeli state was the set of Oslo Accords between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the government of Israel (Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, 1993). On one side, the Oslo Accords resulted in the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and Jericho, and in the establishment of the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority as a representative of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza (Haberman, 1993; Oslo I Accords, 1993). The Palestinian Authority was entrusted to ensure internal security

and to organize diplomatic political elections during the five years interim period (Oslo I Accords, 1993). On the other side, according to the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Liberation Organization accepted the coexistence with the Israeli state and renounced authorized forms of armed violence (U.S. Department of State, 2017). Media studies about the coverage of the Oslo Accords examined the effects of framing the accords on the public opinion towards the peace process (Sheafer & Dvir-Gvirsman, 2010; Wolfsfeld, 2004). These studies suggested that the media coverage was pessimistic towards the peace accords (Wolfsfeld, 2004) and viewed it as an occupation framework rather than a peace or liberation agreement (Fischbash, 2017).

2.4. Wadi Araba Accords

As a result of the Oslo Accords, Jordan normalized its relations with Israel, signing a peace treaty in Wadi Araba in 1994 (Riedel, 2020). Jordan became the second Arab state to recognize Israel as a neighbor state over the occupied Palestinian lands since 1948 and 1967 (Zweiri, 2021). The League of Arab States expressed its condemnation of Jordan's normalization move, however, without suspending Jordan's membership, nor calling for a boycott (Allam, 2020). Therefore, the Arab media coverage of the Wadi Arab Accords was relatively still opposing the normalization, but, less aggressively towards Jordan than the coverage was towards Egypt (Allam, 2020).

2.5. Abraham Accords

The 2020 Abraham Accords were foundationally different than previous normalization moves in 1979, 1993 and 1994 (Isik, 2020). Three of the signatory states, UAE, Bahrain, and Sudan were not in a direct state of war or military clashes with Israel like the case of Egypt or Jordan (Isik, 2020). The Moroccan state's relationship with Israel

was not hostile either (bin Taher, 2020). Instead, this relationship dates back to 1986 marked by Israeli officials visits to Morocco, the opening of the Israeli liaison office in Rabat in 1994, and the trade exchange volume that reached its summit in 1999 (bin Taher, 2020). The Moroccan closure of their previously held relations with Israel happened in the year 2000 after the Israeli oppression of the second Palestinian Intifada (bin Taher, 2020). Later connections between Moroccan and Israeli governmental figures took place, however the signing of the Abraham Accords on December 10, 2020 was the event that Morocco considered as their official re-establishment of stalled relations (bin Taher, 2020).

The four signatory Arab states' reasons for normalization were national interests and regional power relations (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2020; Fulton & Yellinek, 2020; Isik, 2020) rather than improving the Palestinian's rights (Erekat, 2020; Zweiri, 2021). The Abraham Accords are a "Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization" (Krasna, 2021) that aimed for long-term peace, interfaith, and coexistence between Arabs and Israeli colonizers (U.S. Department of States). As follows, the League of Arab States was criticized for not condemning the Abraham Accords and refusing to discuss the topic of normalization (Al Jazeera, 2020). Thus, the Arab media coverage of the Abraham Accords was discrepant between supportive of the accords, opposing it, and conservative, not expressing any stance towards the accords (Allam, 2020).

2.6. Arab Media

Arab media coverage of news events reflects the governmental stances and policies (Mellor, 2011). Till this day, Arab governments impose censorship (Amin, 2002; Hamadi, 1991; Khiabany, 2016; Nossek & Rinnawi, 2003) over both the state owned and national

private media institutions (Mellor, 2011). Private Arab media are not necessarily independent institutions broadcasting their independent views; they could be owned by politicians within the same government (Mellor, 2011). Despite the common ownership patterns and control practices between media institutions in the Arab region, each Arab country has its unique culture, identity, and values that influence its public and private media (Abdel Rahman, 2002; Mellor, 2011).

The UAE and Bahrain are among the Arab Gulf states characterized with high literacy rates, advanced internet services, and a majority of state owned media (Mellor, 2011). However, the Emirati and Bahraini media limit the freedom of speech (Arab Press Network, 2014; Dajani, 2011; Singh, 2000) and impose self-censorship in their media laws (Mellor, 2011). This thesis will examine Emirati and Bahraini media, particularly one state owned and one private media website in each country. *Alittihad* is an Emirati governmental news website owned by Abu Dhabi Media Group publishing in Arabic language (Middle East Photograph Preservation Initiative, 2019). *Gulf Today* is a private Emirati news website owned by Dar Al Khaleej for Press, publishing in English language (Arab Press Network, 2011). BNA is the official Bahraini news agency website publishing in Arabic and English language (Bahrain News Agency). *Akhbar Al Khaleej* is a private Bahraini news website affiliated with the Bahraini government and the ruling family, publishing in Arabic language (Arab Press Network, 2014).

Sudan is among the developing Arab countries suffering from expensive internet services (Mellor, 2011) and the government's domination over the media sector (Rinnawi, 2011). The Sudanese media to be examined are *Suna* or Sudan's official news agency publishing in Arabic, English and French languages (Arab Press Network, 2011; Suna), and *Al Sudani News*, private news website publishing in Arabic language (Al Sudani News).

Morocco is a North African Arab country highly influenced by the French culture and language (Dajjani, 2007). Moroccan media laws impose self-censorship and restrain any opposition of the official policy or the monarchy (Dajjani, 2011). The Moroccan state owned media to be examined is *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb*, the official news website of the monarchy publishing in French language (Arab Press Network, 2011). The private media website to be examined is *Morocco World News*, a private newspaper publishing in English language (Morocco World News).

Pan Arab media are regional media institutions that enjoy a relatively greater freedom of speech and cater to wider audiences (Ayish, 2011). *Al Jazeera* is a Qatari state funded pan Arab media institution broadcasting from multiple international bureaus and hosting an Arabic language website and an international English language news website (Ayish, 2011). *Al Jazeera* claims support for the Arab public opinion (Ayish, 2011) while conservatively criticizing Arab governments (Seib, 2017). *Al Arabiya* is *Al Jazeera*'s competitor in the region (Ajaoud & Elmasry, 2020). *Al Arabiya* is a Saudi pan Arab media operating from the UAE (Elmasry et al., 2013), hosting a news website, and supporting Saudi government policies (Ajaoud & Elmasry, 2020). *Al Mayadeen* is another pan Arab media network opposing *Al Jazeera*'s coverage (Forester, 2021). *Al Mayadeen*, not so explicit about its funding, operates from Lebanon and more explicitly supports the Iranian and Syrian governments (Forester, 2021). Therefore, each of these three media would hold an individual stance from the Palestinian cause and the Arab states' normalization with Israel (Alsaba, 2023; Forester, 2021). Grouping the three as a pan Arab media category in the thesis from an ownership perspective follows similar Arab media research design (such as Ajaoud & Elmasry, 2020; Alsaba, 2023; Elmasry et al., 2013) to particularly highlight their distinct stances.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Media coverage of the normalization, whether supportive, conservative, or opposing, is the main source of informing the public and reminding them about an affecting change (Wolfsfeld et al., 2008). This thesis is based on framing as a first theoretical framework; examining the frames used to cover the normalization, their frequency, word choices, news sources, and the dominant tones if pro-normalization, neutral, or anti-normalization (Elmasry et al., 2013).

3.1 Framing Theory

3.1.1 Framing Definition

Framing does not have a unique definition (Entman, 1993; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). One of the many theoretical definitions is the constructionist definition of frames (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Reese, 2010) that this thesis follows. The constructionist approach to framing suggests that the reality of an event is constructed in the media with frames being the basic construction blocks (Reese, 2010). Thus, the repetitive occurrence of culturally accepted frames holding a symbolic meaning (can Gorp, 2007) affects the depiction of a certain event's reality in the media coverage (Reese, 2001; van Gorp, 2007).

Media frames are also organized units that can represent selected information and angles about events while excluding other information and angles (Gitlin, 1980). The choice of frames used depends on both the journalists and media institutions (Pan & Kosicki; 1993). Moreover, a constructionist approach to study frames examines different framing devices (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; van Gorp; 2007) such as metaphors, exemplars,

visuals (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), or rhetorical structures (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Rhetorical structures are manifested as stylistic choices of words, definitions, or narratives (Benoit & Condit, 1991) inside the media coverage (Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

Media studies on the topic of Palestine were more oriented towards comparing the sets of frames used between different media institutions and away from examining the rhetorical choices of these institutions (such as Ayish, 2002; Elmasry et al., 2013; Forester, 2021; Salama, 2021; Wolfsfeld et al., 2008). The rhetorical structures not only indicate the use of a certain frame, but also impact the construction of the news coverage (Pan & Kosicki, 1993) from one particular stance (Andsager, 2000).

3.1.2 Generic Frames

In framing literature, frames were conceptualized based on their level of abstraction into generic frames and issue-specific frames (Matthes, 2009). Issue-specific frames, such as their name implies, are specified to a particular news event, extensively describing, offering details (Kozman, 2017), and rich context about this event (Borah, 2011). Generic frames are more abstract, not limited to the coverage of a certain news event, rather can be used to compare between different news events (Ardevol-Abereu, 2015; Kozman, 2017). Studies about media framing of Palestine related events and normalization accords examined sets of generic frames (Arvas, 2015; Dobernig et al., 2010; Wolfsfeld, 1997) such as the human interest frame (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), the political affairs frames (Nisbet & Huge, 2007), the law and order frame and injustice and defiance frame (Wolfsfeld, 1997). The human interest frame focuses on human, social and emotional angles of events (Neuman et al., 1992). In opposition to the human interest frame, the political affairs frame focuses on governmental figures statesmanship (Brantner et al., 2011). The law and order frame focuses on power and authority (Wolfsfeld, 1997);

while, the injustice and defiance frame focuses on social justice and human rights (Arvas, 2015; Wolfsfeld, 1997).

3.1.3 Tones

The tone of news coverage is a framing device frequently studied (Aday et al., 2005; Dimitrova & Stomback, 2005; Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007; Elmasry et al., 2013; Melki, 2014). The tone is defined as the stance or direction of the media coverage towards the news event. Therefore, the tone could be assessed as dominantly supportive, neutral, or critical of an event (Aday et al., 2005; Elmasry et al., 2013).

3.1.4 Sources

The choice of news sources is another framing device that influences the media coverage (Entman, 1993). Diverse news sources choices are made by journalists to construct the media content according to their perspective while keeping their credibility (Cozma & Kozman, 2017). Official news sources are mostly used or quoted in the coverage of political events (Bennet, 1990) because they are perceived as legitimate sources providing accurate information about their institutions (Kozman, 2017). Non official sources are usually relied on or quoted in the coverage of crisis (Fontenot & Wigley, 2009; Salwen, 1995) without extensive information or interpretations (Steele, 1995). The choice of sources to be examined could also be Arab sources, Israeli sources, or international sources which influence the narrative and stance of the media coverage (Elmasry et al., 2013).

The thesis aims to study the Arab media coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel. Specifically, the thesis compares the generic frames, the choice of words, and the sources used across different Arab media. The overall

tone of the media coverage is also analyzed. Therefore, the following research questions compare the coverage of the normalization of relations between four Arab states and Israel across public, private owned, and pan Arab media:

RQ1: What frames did public, private owned, and pan Arab media use in their coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel?

RQ2: What were the words used to refer to the normalization in the public, private, and pan Arab media coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel?

RQ3: What were the dominant tones of public, private, and pan Arab media coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel?

RQ4: What were the news sources used in the public, private, and pan Arab media coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel?

3.2. Political Economy of Communication Theory

3.2.1 Political Economy Definition

This thesis uses the political economy of communication theory as a second theoretical framework (Murdock & Golding, 1974) to explain how Arab media ownership paradigms influenced the coverage of the latest normalization. Political economy of communication theory views media institutions as industrial and commercial institutions (Dwyer, 2015) that produce media with the intention of maximizing their profit (Dwyer, 2015; Garnham, 1979). Therefore, the theory formulates that the political and economic interests in media ownership influence the media production practices (Dwyer, 2015). The theory also suggests methods for the opposition and resistance to practices imposed by the media ownership (Wasko, 2014).

Media studies rarely applied the political economy framework to discuss the links between media ownership and production practices (Wasko, 2014). In the case of Arab media, studies that examined the concepts of ownership and practices, did so from a descriptive approach drawing explicit links (such as Mellor et al., 2011; Khiabany, 2016) rather than applying a political economy approach (Miller & Kraidy, 2016). When the majority of Arab media studies focused on the gatekeeping practices of the media (Mellor, 2008), only few studies examined practices of sourcing (Elmasry et al., 2013), self-censoring (Mellor, 2008), and covering peace accords (Sheafer & Dvir-Gvirsman, 2010; Wolfsfeld, 2004).

3.2.2 Arab Media Ownership & Practices

Most media institutions in the Arab states are under government influence (Elmasry et al., 2013; Khiabany, 2016; Mellor, 2011; Zayani, 2005). Public and private Arab media institutions are either owned by government agencies, politicians, political parties, or investors affiliated with state actors (Khiabany, 2016; Mellor, 2011; Zayani, 2005). Pan Arab media are largely concentrated (Khiabany, 2016; Sakr, 2011) in the oil rich Gulf region (Khiabany, 2016; Mellor, 2011), owned by investors closely connected with the governments (Skovgaard-Petersen, 2015).

This governmental influence paradigm inevitably structures Arab news media production (Pintak, 2007). Arab media institutions are accused of being the media of the governments in power rather than the media of the people (Pintak, 2007). Arab governments influence the media practices and content through the implementation of media laws, press codes, license requirements, and intimidating penalties (Elmasry, 2011; Elmasry et al., 2013; Mellor, 2005; Dajjani, 2011; Rugh, 2004; Sakr, 2001). Similarly, editorial practices of pan Arab media accept the legal and political censorship imposed by

the governments (Skovgaard-Petersen, 2015). Consequently, the Arab media institutional practices and media products adjust to the governmental policies even in times of shifts in the political environment (Elmasry, 2011; Mellor, 2005; Rugh, 2004; Sakr, 2001; Wolfsfeld, 2004; Wolfsfeld, 2008), such as normalization.

Normalization between two states affects the quantity and quality of media production (Wolfsfeld, 2008). In this context, the media's main focus seeks to sustain peace, rebuild relationships between the populations of the normalizing states (Lederach, 1997), and influence the public opinion to support the normalization (Bar-SimanTov, 2004). After normalization, media practices include shifts in journalistic norms (Wolfsfeld, 2004), news values, news sources, word choice, and news slots to cover stories of peace and diplomacy instead of hostility (Wolfsfeld, 2008).

3.3. Grounded Theory

To understand the news media production practices that shaped the coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel, the thesis interviews journalists working in three media institutions, using data analysis methods informed by grounded theory. Grounded theory is a systematic research design as well as a qualitative methodology to collect, group, and analyze data (Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2008). Following this method, data is generated from data sets to develop themes and concepts, therefore from the ground up (Lai & To, 2015).

Analyzing data using grounded theory mainly involves three steps: pattern detection, pattern refinement, and pattern validation (Nelson, 2020). First, pattern detection reduces complicated data sets into simpler ones through grouping similar data (Nelson, 2020). Second, pattern refinement interprets the detected pattern to generate

concepts and answer research questions (Nelson, 2020). Third, pattern validation tests the research validity and reliability of the detected patterns (Nelson, 2020).

Grounded theory is widely used in qualitative media studies (Sommer, 2021). However, most Arab media studies surveying and interviewing journalists (such as Abdel Nabi, 1987; Al Rasheed, 1998; Bekhait, 1998; Boyd & Kushner, 1979; Kirat, 1987; Tash, 1984) are quantitative rather than qualitative (Mellor, 2008). These Arab media studies either did not rely on systematic methods of gathering and analyzing journalistic surveys and interviews, or examined journalistic practices in specific pan Arab media institutions (Mellor, 2008; Zayani & Sahrawi, 2007). Therefore, these studies could not be replicated, nor their findings could be generalized to institutional practices in all Arab media institutions or for various news events. The present thesis aims to fill this gap through its qualitative analysis of interviews investigating the following research question:

RQ5: How did Arab media news production practices influence the coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel?

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODS

4.1 Content Analysis

To study the coverage of the normalization in Arab media, this thesis conducted a quantitative content analysis of news articles (n = 166) that covered the topic of normalization. Quantitative content analysis is widely adopted in the study of communication messages (Baxter & Babbie, 2004; Merrigan & Huston, 2004; Weber, 1990), thus, it was adopted as a proper main methodology for examining this thesis' research questions. The content analysis compares this normalization coverage between state owned, private, and pan Arab media news websites in terms of the frames used, the words choice, the souring, and the anti-normalization or pro-normalization tone.

4.1.1 Content Analysis Sample

The state owned and private media news websites were selected from the four normalizing states: UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. These news websites and the number of articles purposively selected from each platform are: *Alittihad* (n = 22), state owned Emirati news website, *Gulf Today* (n = 8), private Emirati news website, *BNA* (n = 15), official Bahraini news website, *Akhbar Al Khaleej* (n = 11), private Bahraini news website, *Suna* (n = 3), official Sudanese news agency website, *Al Sudani News* (n = 7), private Sudanese news website, *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* (n = 6), state owned Moroccan news website, and *Morocco World News* (n = 32), private Moroccan news website (Table 1). The three pan Arab media news websites selected were: *Al Jazeera* (n = 11), *Al Arabiya* (n = 19) and *Al Mayadeen* (n = 32) (Table 1). The articles were written in

Arabic, English, or French language, were analyzed in their original language without translation.

Table 1 - State owned, private, and pan Arab media selected for the content analysis sample (Total n=166)

Website	Country	Type	Language(s)	n
Alittihad	UAE	State owned	Arabic	22
Gulf Today	UAE	Private	English	8
BNA	Bahrain	State owned	Arabic, English	15
AAK	Bahrain	Private	Arabic	11
Suna	Sudan	State owned	Arabic, English, French	3
ASN	Sudan	Private	Arabic	7
Le Matin	Morocco	State owned	French	6
MWN	Morocco	Private	English	32
Al Jazeera	Qatar	Pan Arab	Arabic, English	11
Al Arabiya	UAE	Pan Arab	Arabic, English, French, Urdu	19
Al Mayadeen	Lebanon	Pan Arab	Arabic, English, Spanish	32

The articles were systematically searched for inside each of the news websites using relevant keywords during the sampling period. The keywords used were: "Normalization" OR "Abraham Accords" OR "Peace accords" OR "Peace treaty" in English language, "تطبيع" OR "اتفاق أبراهام " OR "اتفاقية أبراهام" OR "اتفاقيات أبراهام" OR " اتفاق سلام" OR "اتفاقية سلام" in Arabic language, "Normalisation" OR "Accords d'Abraham" OR "Accords de Paix" OR "Traité de paix" in French language. All resulting articles from the search per website were selected (*n*) for coding, with the exception of search results that

featured op-eds or included video news reports with the relevant keywords in captions or alt tags. These results were omitted from the final articles sample.

The sampling period for news articles starts from the normalization announcement date of each Arab state and ends on December 10, 2021, one year after the last signing of the Abraham Accords. Thus, the sampling period for news articles about the Emirati and Bahraini normalization starts from August 13, 2020, the sampling period of news articles about the Sudanese normalization starts from October 23, 2020, and the sampling period of news articles about the Moroccan normalization starts from December 10, 2020.

Two Lebanese American University graduate students assisted the thesis as coders, so the total number of coders was three. As a preliminary step, the coders were extensively trained on the codebook. Then, at the completion of the training, the intercoder reliability was tested for a random 20 percent selection of the news articles sample (n = 34) and the percentage of agreement scored 0.82 > 0.8 for all variables combined. The percentage of agreement was also calculated for each variable. The agreement scores for five variables, law and order frame, injustice and defiance frame, article's choice of words, article's tone, and article's sources, were above 0.8, thus considered acceptable. Two variables, human interest frame and political affairs frame, produced an agreement of 0.7292 and 0.7813, lower than 0.8. However, these two variables were not discarded from the analysis because an agreement level above 0.7 is acceptable (Poindexter & McCombs, 2000). Framing, sourcing, and tone measurements were done at the article level.

For this first 20 percent selection of the sample (n = 34), the results of the triple coding of each variable were averaged and later used to generate the quantitative tests. The rest of the sample (n = 132) was equally divided among the three coders, yielding a random selection of 44 articles assigned for every coder. Therefore, the whole news

articles sample (*n*=166) was coded for later analysis as follows: 20 percent (*n*=34) was triple coded and averaged while 80 percent (*n*=132) was single coded.

4.1.2. Content Analysis Codebook

The codebook consists of 12 variables: 7 independent variables (Table 2) and 7 dependent variables (Table 3) to compare the coverage of the normalization between state owned, private, and pan Arab media news websites (Appendix A). The independent variables are the coder ID, article ID, and date. The dependent variables are the frames used in the article (RQ1), the words referring to the normalization in the article (RQ2), the dominant tone of the article (RQ3), and the sources used in the article (RQ4).

Table 2 - Codebook's 7 Independent Variables

Independent Variable	Variable Name
V1	Coder ID
V3	Article ID
V4	Article Date
V5	Article Source
V6	Article Source Ownership
V7	Article Source Country

Table 3 - Codebook's 7 Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	Variable Name
V8	Human Interest Frame
V9	Political Affairs Frame

V10	Law & Order Frame
V11	Injustice & Defiance Frame
V12	Choice Of Words
V13	Dominant Tone
V14	Sources Used

4.1.3. Frames Coding

The generic frames used were examined through a list of questions, two questions for each variable. The answers were coded on a nominal scale with the answer yes = 1 and no = 0. The two answers were then averaged to indicate the presence (average > 0) or absence (average = 0) of the frame in the coded unit of analysis. For the human interest frame, articles are coded for bringing emotional dimensions of the normalization and its effects on the people. The questions asked were (1) Does the article include words, quotes, or visuals that show how Palestinian, Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan regular citizens with no title, or Israeli settlers will be affected by the normalization like effects on tourism, education, or purchasing power? and (2) Does the article include words, quotes that activate emotions, such as happiness, anger, pride, nationhood, resistance, consolidation, etc. when covering the normalization?

For the political affairs frames, articles are coded for including governmental officials and effects of the normalization on the governments. The following questions were asked (1) Does the article include sourcing, quotes, or visuals of governmental officials including Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, Israeli, or U.S. officials? as well as (2) Does the article include words, quotes, or visuals that show how Palestinian,

Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, or Israeli governments will be affected by the normalization such as effects on a governmental level or diplomatic presence?

For the law and order frame, articles are coded for including governmental policies, laws, and accords statements based of these two questions (1) Does the article include words, quotes, or visuals that explain Palestinian, Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, Israeli or U.S. governmental policies (decisions) after the normalization agreement? (2) Does the article include quotes from the Abraham Accords declaration?

As for the injustice and defiance frames, articles are coded for including human rights and public opinion. The questions asked were (1) Does the article include words, quotes, or visuals declaring human rights and justice claims? and (2) Does the article include words, quotes, visuals, or data about Palestinian, Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, Israeli, or U.S. public opinion towards the normalization?

4.1.4. Choice of Words Coding

The choice of words used to refer to the normalization was coded as well. The codebook mainly examined the presence or absence of keywords that would ordinarily refer to the latest normalization news event, such as “Abraham Accords”, “normalization”, “agreement”, and “peace deal”. The answers to the questions about the word choice in the codebook were coded on a nominal scale with the answer yes = 1 and no = 0. The codebook looked further into the wording to induct and code any other words referring to the normalization.

4.1.5. Tones Coding

The codebook also examined the dominant tone of each news article. The assessment of the tone was based on the overall direction of the coverage if supporting, opposing, or neutral towards the normalization as well as the impression that an average news consumer would form (Elmasry et al., 2013) towards the normalization after exposure to the news article content. The tone was then measured on an ordinal three-point scale with 1 = article supporting the normalization when evidence is found for only supportive content, 0 = article neutral towards the normalization when evidence is found for both supportive and opposing content or neither supportive nor opposing content, and -1 = article opposing the normalization when evidence is found for only opposing content.

4.1.6. Sources Coding

Sources who were quoted or to whom information was attributed in the news article were classified into 6 categories, official sources such as governmental figures, politicians, ministers, deputies, consultants, ambassadors, or military figures; experts such as journalists or political scientists; citizens including Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, Palestinian citizens, or Israeli settlers; activists; media including social media platforms, data, and reports; and wire services such as AP, Reuters, or AFP. Each source was coded on a nominal scale with the answers 1 = source used and 0 = source not used. Finally, the total number of classified sources used in the news articles was counted.

The variables were quantitatively analyzed using SPSS software. All tests presented results using both frequencies and valid percentages to fairly compare the different numbers of articles selected per news website (*n*). These tests included frequency tables counting the presence or use of each variable by each media, combined frequency tables counting the presence or use of each variable by three types of media ownership,

combined frequency tables counting the presence or use of each variable by countries, to answer the first three research questions.

4.2. Interviews

To understand the results of the normalization coverage analyzed in the context of Arab media institutional practices, and to answer the fifth research question, the thesis interviews journalists and media workers from three Arab media previously selected for the content analysis sample. Interviewing journalists is a common methodology in Arab media research for a broad range of news events and institutional practices (such as Abdel Nabi, 1987; Al Rasheed, 1998; Bekhait, 1998; Boyd & Kushner, 1979; Kirat, 1987; Tash, 1984).

4.2.1. Interviews Sample

The interview sample size is three media workers at three distinct Arab media institutions selected for the content analysis sample. The media workers could be news production managers, editors, reporters, or journalists at their institution who were in their positions prior to August 13, 2020, the first normalization announcement date, and who had extensively covered the normalization.

4.2.2. Interviews Invitations

Interview invitations were sent by email after IRB approval. The email invitation included the IRB introductory informed consent for interviews, mentioning the thesis topic to the participants, informing them about the purpose of gathering their answers, that there

are no direct benefits, and that no known risks, harms or discomforts are associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life (Appendix C).

4.2.3. Interviews Questionnaire

The interviews questionnaire included 12 open-ended questions (Appendix B) originally written in English language and translated to Arabic language for Arab interviewees' convenience. The questions were crafted with the aim to reveal the factors behind the choice of words and sources used in the coverage of the normalization. The questionnaire also explored the Arab media institutional decisions and the way policies were set, altered, and applied to produce news articles tackling the topic of normalization.

4.2.4. Interviews Data collection

Two interviews were conducted online and recorded using Zoom Meetings, one in English language, and one in formal Arabic. These two interviews' durations ranged between 30 to 45 minutes. Interviews data was only audio recorded and stored using anonymous file names such as Interview 1- July 24, 2022. Interviewee's name, media institution, and any identifiable information were removed from the transcripts to de-identify data. Then, the audio recorded answers were transcribed and translated into English for the analysis stage. The third interview was not conducted in real-time, instead, after signing the consent form, the English version questionnaire was sent by email to the interviewee. They emailed back their written answers on an anonymously named document within a specified date range. The same document content was used for the analysis.

Table 4 - Assigned code for the interviews sample (Total n=3)

Assigned Code
Interviewee 1, Zoom, July 23, 2022
Interviewee 2, Zoom, August 20, 2022
Interviewee 3, Email, September 8, 2022

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

5.1. Content Analysis Results

5.1.1. Frames Results

RQ1 explored the framing of the normalization news in state owned, private, and pan Arab media to spot their similar or distinct uses of frames. The four frames tracked were the human interest frame (V8), political affairs frame (V9), law and order frame (V10), and injustice and defiance frame (V11).

Table 5 - Frames used by each of the 11 media (V5)

	Human Interest		Political Affairs		Law & Order		Injustice & Defiance	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Alittihad	12	54.50	19	86.36	12	54.50	1	4.54
Gulf Today	5	62.50	8	100.00	3	37.50	0	0.00
BNA	6	40.00	13	86.66	6	40.00	4	26.66
AAK	4	36.36	11	100.00	9	81.81	2	18.18
Suna	1	33.33	3	100.00	0	0.00	1	33.33
ASN	3	42.85	6	85.71	3	42.85	3	42.85
Le Matin	6	100.00	5	83.33	5	83.33	2	33.33
MWN	21	65.62	32	100.00	23	71.87	5	15.62
Al Jazeera	6	54.54	11	100.00	9	81.81	6	54.54
Al Arabiya	9	47.36	19	100.00	8	42.10	4	21.05
Al Mayadeen	19	59.37	27	84.37	11	34.37	16	50.00

Mapping the human interest frame, descriptive statistics showed different frequencies between each state owned media coverage and each national private media coverage (Table 5). For instance, more than half (54.50%) of *Alittihad* news articles used the human interest frame, while only 33.33% of *Suna* articles employed it. Larger discrepancies are found between national private media. For example, all of the articles (100%) sampled from *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* compared to only 36.36% of *Akhbar Al Khaleej* articles used the human interest frame. Contrastingly, the presence of the human interest frame is relatively more consistent across the three pan Arab media used in 54.54% of *Al Jazeera*'s sample, 47.36% of *Al Arabiya*'s sample, and 59.37% of *Al Mayadeen*'s sample.

The political affairs frame was highly present in the majority of the articles by state owned, national private, and pan Arab media (Table 5). *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* presented the least political affairs frame frequency (83.33%), followed by *Al Mayadeen* (84.37%), *Al Sudani News* (85.71%), *Alittihad* (86.66%), and *BNA* (86.66%). The six other media, *Gulf Today*, *Akhbar Al Khaleej*, *Suna*, *Morocco World News*, *Al Jazeera*, and *Al Arabiya*, used the political frame in their entire (100%) articles sample.

Law and order frame results were vastly varied between different Arab media (Table 5). The highest frame frequencies were present in the articles of *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* (83.33%), followed by *Akhbar Al Khaleej* (81.81%) and *Al Jazeera* (81.81%) equally, then *Morocco World News* (71.87%) and *Alittihad* (54.50%). For the rest of the sample, the law and order frame was present in less than half of each media's articles including *Al Sudani News* (42.85%), *Al Arabiya* (42.10%), *BNA* (40.00%), *Gulf Today* (37.50%), and *Al Mayadeen* (34.37%). The law and order frame was totally absent (0.00%) from *Suna* articles.

The injustice and defiance frame was the least prominent frame across all articles from all media (Table 5). The highest frequencies were 54.54% of *Al Jazeera*'s articles and 50.00% of *Al Mayadeen*'s articles. The lower frequencies were present in *Al Sudani News* (42.85%), *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* (33.33%), *Suna* (33.33%), *BNA* (26.66%), *Al Arabiya* (21.05%), *Akhbar Al Khalee*j (18.18%), *Morocco World News* (15.62%), and *Alittihad* (4.54%). The injustice and defiance frame was totally absent (0.00%) from *Gulf Today*'s articles.

Table 6 - Frames used by 4 state owned, 4 national private, and 3 pan Arab media (V6)

	Human Interest		Political Affairs		Law & Order		Injustice & Defiance	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
State Owned	25	54.34	40	93.47	23	50.00	8	17.39
Private	33	56.89	57	98.27	38	65.51	10	17.24
Pan Arab	34	54.83	57	91.93	28	45.16	26	41.93

When articles were grouped into three types, state owned media articles, national private media articles, and pan Arab media articles, strong framing trends were spotted (Table 6). The percentages marking the presence of the human interest frame were remarkably close between the three types of media. Slightly exceeding half of the sample, the human interest frame was present 54.34% of the state owned media articles, 56.89% of the national private media articles, and 54.83% of the pan Arab media articles.

A similar presence trend was spotted for the political affairs frame across the three types of media as follows (Table 6). 91.93% of the pan Arab media articles, 93.47% of the state owned media articles, and 98.27% of the national private media articles all used the political affairs frame. Therefore, the political affairs frame was present in the majority of the sample articles.

The results for the law and order frame were less consistent among the three media types, yet still varied around a specific range (Table 6). Exactly half (50.00%) of state owned media article used the law and order frame, while, on the extreme ends of the range, the law and order frame was present in 45.16% of the pan Arab media articles and 65.51% of the national private media.

The injustice and defiance frame was the least prominent in the sample articles by all media types (Table 6). This frame was mostly present (41.93%) in the pan Arab media articles compared to lower presence percentages in state owned media articles and national private media articles that closely scored 17.39% and 17.24% respectively.

Table 7 - Frames used in state owned and national private media in each of the 4 countries (V7)

	Human Interest		Political Affairs		Law & Order		Injustice & Defiance	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
UAE	17	56.66	27	90.00	15	50.00	1	3.33
Bahrain	10	38.46	24	92.30	15	57.69	6	23.07
Sudan	4	40.00	9	90.00	3	30.00	4	40.00
Morocco	27	71.05	37	97.36	28	73.68	7	18.42

Framing trends remained consistent when looking at each country's media sample (Table 7). The human interest frame was used in the majority (71.05%) of the articles by Moroccan media, slightly more than half (56.66%) of the articles by Emirati media, 40.00% of the articles by Sudanese media, and closely 38.46% of the articles by Bahraini media.

The political affairs frame was noticeably the most used in sample articles by all four countries media (Table 7) with tightly close presence percentages such as 90.00% of

both Emirati and Sudanese media articles compared to 92.30% of Bahraini media articles, and mostly 97.36% of Moroccan media articles.

The law and order frame was as well used in the majority (73.68%) of Moroccan media articles compared to lower dispersed presence percentages in other countries' articles sample (Table 7). The frame was used in 57.69% of the articles by Bahraini media, exactly 50.00% of articles by Emirati media, and least, in 30.00% of articles by Sudanese media.

The injustice and defiance frame was rarely used in each county's media sample (Table 7). Sudanese media employed the injustice and defiance frame the most frequently in 40.00% of their articles sample, followed by Bahraini media in 23.07% of their articles, Moroccan articles in 18.42% of their articles, and last Emirati media in only 3.33% of their articles.

5.1.2. Choice of Words Results

To support the framing of the normalization coverage analysis and to answer the second research question, the thesis looked into the choice of words used by different media to refer to this normalization event (V12). The keywords counted were those that would ordinarily refer to the latest normalization news event, such as *Abraham Accords*, *normalization*, *agreement*, and *peace deal*.

Table 8 - Choice of words by each one of the 11 media (V5)

	Abraham Accords		Agreement		Normalization		Peace Deal	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Alittihad	0	0.00	6	27.27	8	36.36	16	72.72
Gulf Today	1	12.50	6	75.00	5	62.50	3	37.50
BNA	0	0.00	5	33.33	1	6.66	8	53.33

AAK	0	0.00	6	54.54	7	63.63	1	9.09
Suna	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	33.33	0	0.00
ASN	0	0.00	2	28.57	7	100.00	3	42.85
Le Matin	0	0.00	1	16.66	2	33.33	0	0.00
MWN	10	31.25	18	56.25	25	78.12	13	40.62
Al Jazeera	3	27.27	9	81.81	10	90.90	4	36.36
Al Arabiya	5	26.31	11	57.89	15	78.94	9	47.36
Al Mayadeen	3	9.37	16	50.00	31	96.87	10	31.25

The official normalization declaration name, the *Abraham Accords* (U.S. Department of State, 2020), was the least word used to refer to the normalization event in the sample of articles by different Arab media (Table 8). The word *Abraham Accords* was not present in any of the articles by *Alittihad* (0.00%), *BNA* (0.00%), *Akhbar al Khaleej* (0.00%), *Suna* (0.00%), *Al Sudani News*, nor *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* (0.00%). It was used in one article (12.50%) by *Gulf Today*, in 9.37% of the articles by *Al Mayadeen*, 26.31% of the articles by *Al Arabiya*, 27.27% of the articles by *Al Jazeera*, and mostly in 31.25% of the articles by *Morocco World News*.

The use of the word *agreement* to refer to the normalization event highly differed between all media of all ownership types (Table 8). The word *agreement* was used the most in 81.81% of *Al Jazeera'*s articles, followed by 75.00% of *Gulf Today'*s articles, 57.89% of *Al Arabiya*'s articles, 56.25% of *Morocco World News*' articles, and 50.00% of *Al Mayadeen'*s articles. Lower rates were present in 33.33% of *BNA'*s articles, 28.57% of *Al Sudani News'* articles, and 16.66% of *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* articles, but none (0.00%) of *Suna'*s articles.

The word *normalization* was generally the most frequently used in the whole sample with particular frequencies differences between different media (Table 8). For instance, all of *Al Sudani News articles* (100.00%), 96.87% of *Al Mayadeen'*s articles, and 90.90% of *Al Jazeera'*s articles used the word *normalization* compared to fewer occurrences in 78.94% of *Al Arabiya'*s articles, 78.12% of *Morocco World News'* articles, 63.63% of *Akhbar Al Khaleej'*s articles, 62.50% of *Gulf Today'*s articles, 36.36% of *Alittihad'*s articles, commonly 33.33% of *Le Matin du Sahara et di Maghreb* and *Suna'*s articles, and only 6.66% of *BNA'*s articles.

No obvious similarities could be spotted in the sample regarding the use of the word *peace deal* either (Table 8). The highest presence percentage was in 72.72% of *Alittihad'*s articles. It was followed by 53.33% of *BNA'*s articles, 47.36% of *Al Arabiya'*s articles, 42.85% of *Al Sudani News'*s articles, 40.62% of *Morocco World News* articles, 37.50% of *Gulf Today'*s articles, 36.36% of *Al Jazeera*'s articles, and 31.25% of *Al Mayadeen'*s articles. The wording *peace deal* was not used in any of *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* (0.00%) nor *Suna'*s (0.00%) articles.

Table 9 - Choice of words by 4 state owned, 4 national private, and 3 pan Arab media (V6)

	Abraham Accords		Agreement		Normalization		Peace Deal	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
State Owned	0	0.00	12	26.08	15	32.60	24	52.17
Private	11	18.96	32	55.17	44	75.86	20	34.48
Pan Arab	11	17.74	34	54.83	56	90.32	23	37.09

Grouping the articles by media ownership revealed common wording use between both national private media and pan Arab media compared to state owned media (Table 9).

State owned media articles never employed the word *Abraham Accords* (0.00%) in any of the sample articles covering the normalization. Likewise, the word wasn't used in the majority of national private media and pan Arab media, rather it was present in only 18.89% of national private media articles and closely 17.74% of pan Arab media articles.

The word *agreement* was used in almost half (26.08%) of the state owned media articles compared to more than a half of both the national private media articles (54.84%) and pan Arab media articles (55.17%) (Table 9).

Equivalently, the word *normalization* was used in only 32.60% of the state owned media articles compared to the majority of both national private media articles (75.86%) and pan Arab media articles (90.32%) (Table 9).

The word *peace deal* was used in close percentages of the private media articles sample (34.48%) and pan Arab media articles sample (37.09%) compared to more prominent use in over half (52.17%) of the state owned media articles sample (Table 9).

Table 10 - Choice of words by state owned and national private media in each of the 4 countries (V7)

	Abraham Accords		Agreement		Normalization		Peace Deal	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
UAE	1	3.33	12	40.00	13	43.33	19	63.33
Bahrain	0	0.00	11	42.30	8	30.76	9	34.61
Sudan	0	0.00	2	20.00	10	100.00	3	30.00
Morocco	10	26.31	19	50.00	27	71.05	13	34.21

Comparing the wording use in the articles by the country of the media manifested consistent patterns (Table 10). The word *Abraham Accords* was only used in 26.31% of

the articles by Moroccan media and 3.33% of the articles by Emirati media. It never occurred in neither the Bahraini (0.00%) nor Sudanese (0.00%) media articles sample.

The use of the word *agreement* to refer to the normalization was relatively more consistent between the four normalizing countries (Table 10). The word was used in 50.00% of the Moroccan media articles, 42.30% of the Bahraini media articles, and 40.00% of the Emirati media articles, compared to only 20.00% of the Sudanese media articles.

The word *normalization*, the most recurrent, was used in all (100.00%) of the sample articles by Sudanese media, in the majority (71.05%) of the sample articles by Moroccan media, in 43.33% of the sample articles by Emirati media, and in only 30.76% of the sample articles by Bahraini media (Table 10).

The Emirati media sample was contingently the most prominent to use the word peace deal (63.33%) in the articles compared to closely 34.61% of the articles in the Bahraini media sample, 34.21% of the articles in the Moroccan media sample, and 30.00% of the articles in the Sudanese media sample (Table 10).

Table 11 - Other words used in the sample by each of the 11 media (V5)

	n
US-Brokered Deal	10
Reconciliation	4
Joint Declaration	2
Declaration Supportive of Peace	2
Rapprochement Deal	1
Resuming Relationships	1
Reestablishment of Relations	1

The coding of the word choice also counted other words that referred to the normalization throughout the whole sample. These words occurred the least compared to the generic normalization keywords encountered. For instance, the word *US-brokered deal* was counted 10 times in the articles sample, *reconciliation* four times, *joint declaration* twice, *the declaration supportive of peace* or "إعلان تأييد السلام" twice, *rapprochement deal* once, *resuming relationships* once, and *reestablishment of relations* twice in the Moroccan media sample in particular.

5.1.3. Tones Results

RQ3 assessed the dominant tone of the articles by public, private, and pan Arab media covering the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel. The tone of the coverage was coded either supporting, opposing, or neutral towards the normalization based on the overall direction of each article (V13).

Table 12 - Dominant tone of the articles by each one of the 11 media (V5)

	Supporting		Neutral		Opposing	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Alittihad	16	72.72	6	27.28	0	0.00
Gulf Today	7	87.50	1	12.50	0	0.00
BNA	10	66.66	5	33.34	0	0.00
AAK	7	63.63	4	36.37	0	0.00
Suna	1	33.33	1	33.33	1	33.33
ASN	3	42.86	2	28.57	2	28.57
Le Matin	6	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
MWN	18	56.25	13	40.63	1	3.12

Al Jazeera	0	0.00	8	72.72	3	27.28
Al Arabiya	16	84.21	3	15.79	0	0.00
Al Mayadeen	2	6.25	15	46.88	15	46.88

Descriptive statistics about the tone of the articles revealed clear coverage directions distinct to each media (Table 12). The highest supporting articles percentages were in *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* (100.00%), *Gulf Today* (87.50%), *Al Arabiya* (84.21%), *Alittihad* (72.72%), *BNA* (66.66%), *Akhbar Al Khaleej* (63.63%), and *Morocco World News*' (56.25%) samples. The least supporting articles found were in *Al Sudani News* (42.86%), *Suna* (33.33%), *Al Mayadeen'*s (6.25%) samples while none (0.00%) of *Al Jazeera'*s sample articles was supporting the normalization (Table 12).

The percentage of neutral articles also differed in each media sample (Table 12). The most neutral articles percentage was coded for the majority (72.72%) of *Al Jazeera'*s sample. This neutral articles' percentage was relatively close in less than half of *Al Mayadeen'*s sample (46.88%), *Morocco World News'* sample (40.63%), *Akhbar Al Khaleej'*s sample (36.37%), *BNA'*s sample (33.34%), and *Suna'*s sample (33.33%). In return, the lowest neutral tone articles percentage was coded for *Al Sudani News'* sample (28.57%), *Alittihad'*s sample (27.28%), *Al Arabiya'*s sample (15.79%), and *Gulf Today'*s sample (12.50%). *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb'*s sample, as stated, never featured neutral articles (0.00%) (Table 12).

Articles opposing the normalization were, in general, the least among the whole sample (Table 12). The most opposing articles percentage was coded for *Al Mayadeen'*s sample (46.88%), followed by *Suna'*s sample (33.33%), *Al Sudani News*' sample (28.57%), *Al Jazeera'*s sample (27.28%), then *Morocco World News*' sample (3.12%). Contrastingly, none of the articles by *Alittihad* (0.00%), *Gulf Today* (0.00%), *BNA*

(0.00%), *Akhbar Al Khaleej* (0.00%), *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* (0.00%), nor *Al Arabiya* (0.00%) was opposing the normalization (Table 12).

Table 13 - Tone of the articles by 4 state owned, 4 national private, and 3 pan Arab media (V6)

	Supporting		Neutral		Opposing	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
State Owned	33	71.73	12	25.00	1	2.17
Private	35	60.34	20	34.48	3	5.17
Pan Arab	18	29.03	26	41.93	18	29.03

Grouping sample articles by media ownership unveils clear distinctions between their overall tones (Table 13). State owned media articles were the most supportive (71.73%) of the normalization compared to 60.34% of articles by national private media and only 29.03% of articles by pan Arab media.

In contrast, the state owned media sample featured the least percentage (25.00%) of neutral articles compared to 34.48% of articles by national private media and, mostly, 41.93% of articles by pan Arab media (Table 13).

Opposing articles were also the most prominent (29.03%) in the pan Arab media sample compared to a low 5.17% proportion of the national private media sample featuring opposing articles and only a 2.17% proportion of the state owned media sample featuring opposing articles (Table 13).

Table 14 - Tone of the articles by state owned and private media in each of the 4 countries (V7)

	Supporting	Neutral	Opposing

	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
UAE	23	76.66	7	23.33	0	0.00
Bahrain	17	65.38	9	34.61	0	0.00
Sudan	4	40.00	3	30.00	3	30.00
Morocco	24	63.15	13	34.21	1	2.63

The results also compared the overall direction of the articles between each of the four normalizing Arab countries revealing almost consistent trends between UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco's media samples (Table 14). The majority of the articles in the Emirati (76.66%), Bahrain (65.38%), and Moroccan (63.15%) samples compared to less than half (40.00%) of the articles in the Sudanese sample were supporting the normalization (Table 14).

The percentage of neutral articles was relatively closer between the four countries' samples as follows, 34.61% of the Bahraini articles, 34.21% of the Moroccan articles, 30.00% of the Sudanese articles, and least 23.33% of the Emirati articles were neutral towards the normalization (Table 14).

Consequently, a minority of the articles in all four samples was opposing the normalization (Table 14). Only 30.00% of the Sudanese sample and 2.63%, or one article from the Moroccan sample were opposing the normalization while none of the articles by Emirati media (0.00%) nor Bahraini media (0.00%) featured evidence for opposing content (Table 14).

5.1.4. Sources Results

RQ4 looked for the sources used or quoted by state owned, private, and pan Arab media during their coverage of the normalization. These sources were classified into 6

categories, official sources such as governmental figures, politicians, ministers, deputies, consultants, ambassadors, or military figures; experts such as journalists or political scientists; citizens including Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, Palestinian citizens, or Israeli settlers; activists; media including social media platforms, data, and reports; and associated presses or wire services (V14).

Table 15 - Sources used in the articles by each one of the 11 media (V5)

	Official		Expert		Citizen		Activists		Media		AP	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Alittihad	18	81.81	1	4.54	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	18.18	4	18.18
Gulf Today	7	87.50	1	12.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	37.50	3	37.50
BNA	12	80.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	6.66	2	13.33
AAK	11	100.00	1	9.09	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	27.27	3	27.27
Suna	2	66.66	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	33.33
ASN	6	87.71	2	28.57	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	42.85	0	0.00
Le Matin	5	83.33	0	0.00	1	16.67	0	0.00	1	16.67	0	0.00
MWN	30	93.75	7	28.87	1	3.12	0	0.00	12	37.50	3	9.37
Al Jazeera	11	100.00	6	54.54	2	18.18	0	0.00	5	45.45	5	45.45
Al Arabiya	18	94.73	1	5.26	0	0.00	0	0.00	7	36.84	3	15.78
Al Mayadeen	27	84.37	4	12.50	11	34.37	8	25.00	27	84.37	7	21.87

Comparing the sources quoted or to whom information was attributed in each of the 11 selected media demonstrated a solid rely on some sources more than others (Table 15). Official sources were used in the majority of the articles by all Arab media as follows, a total of 100.00% of *Akhbar Al Khaleej* and *Al Jazeera'*s articles, 94.73% of *Al Arabiya'*s

articles, 93.75% of *Morocco World News'* articles, 87.71% of *Al Sudani News'* articles, 87.50% of *Gulf today'*s articles, 84.37% of *Al Mayadeen*'s articles, 83.33% of *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb'*s articles, 81.81% of *Alittihad'*s articles, 80.00% of *BNA'*s articles, and the least, 66.66% of *Suna'*s articles (Table 15).

Contrariwise, relying on expert sources was not congruent between different media (Table 15). On one side, state owned media such as *BNA*, *Suna*, and *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* never (0.00%) attributed information to nor quoted experts. On the other side were media that used expert sources in only a minority of their sample such as *Alittihad* (4.54%), *Al Arabiya* (5.26%), *Akhbar Al Khaleej* (9.09%), *Gulf Today* (12.50%), *Al Mayadeen* (12.50%), *Al Sudani News* (28.57%), and *Morocco World News* (28.87%) (Table 15).

Citizen sources were absent from all of the sample articles by *Alittihad* (0.00%), *Gulf Today* (0.00%), *BNA* (0.00%), *Akhbar Al Khaleej* (0.00%), *Suna* (0.00%), *Al Sudani News* (0.00%), and *Al Arabiya* (0.00%) (Table 15). They were only referred to or quoted in 3.12% of *Morocco World News'* articles, 16.67% of *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb'*s articles, 18.18% of *Al Arabiya'*s articles, and mostly in 34.37% of *Al Mayadeen'*s articles (Table 15).

Similarly, activists were almost absent from the whole sample articles by *Alittihad* (0.00%), *Gulf Today* (0.00%), *BNA* (0.00%), *Akhbar Al Khaleej* (0.00%), *Suna* (0.00%), *Al Sudani News* (0.00%), *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* (0.00%), *Morocco World News* (0.00%), *Al Jazeera* (0.00%), and *Al Arabiya* (0.00%) (Table 12). Activist sources were only used in 8 articles or 25.00% of the sample articles by *Al Mayadeen* (Table 15).

Media sources were more prominent in the sample articles (Table 12). They were used the most in 84.37% of *Al Mayadeen'*s sample, compared to 45.45% of *Al Arabiya'*s sample, 42.85% of *Al Sudani News'* sample, 37.50% of both *Gulf Today* and *Morocco*

World News' samples, 36.84% of *Al Arabiya'*s sample, 27.27% of *Akhbar Al Khaleej'*s sample, 18.18% of *Alittihad'*s sample, 16.67% of *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb'*s sample, and 6.66% of *BNA'*s sample (Table 15). However, none of the sample articles by *Suna* (0.00%) relied on media sources (Table 15).

The use of sources attributed to the associated presses or wire services was similar to that of media sources in the sample (Table 15). They were used the most in 45.45% of *Al Arabiya'*s sample, 37.50% of *Gulf Today'*s sample, 33.33% of *Suna'*s sample, 27.27% of *Akhbar Al Khaleej'*s sample, 21.87% of *Al Mayadeen'*s sample, 18.18% of *Alittihad'*s sample, 15.78% of *Al Arabiya'*s sample, 13.33% of *BNA'*s sample, and 9.37% of *Morocco World News'* sample (Table 12). None of the sample articles by *Al Sudani News* (0.00%) nor *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb* (0.00%) used associated presses or wire services as sources (Table 15).

Table 16 - Sources used by 4 state owned, 4 national private, and 3 pan Arab media (V6)

	Official		Expert		Citizen		Activists		Media		AP	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
State Owned	37	80.43	1	2.17	1	2.17	0	0.00	6	13.04	7	15.21
Private	54	93.10	13	22.41	1	1.72	0	0.00	3	5.17	9	15.51
Pan Arab	56	90.32	11	17.74	13	20.96	8	12.90	21	33.87	15	24.19

When comparing the sources based on media ownership, it was found that the most used were official sources in state owned media articles (80.43%), national private media articles (93.10%), and pan Arab media articles (90.32%) (Table 16). In contrast, other sources examined were present in a minority of the sample articles (Table 16).

Expert sources were used in 2.17% of state owned media articles compared to 22.41% of national private media articles and 17.74% of pan Arab media articles (Table 16). Also 2.17% of state owned media articles and 1.72% of national private media articles compared to 20.96% of pan Arab media articles relied on citizen sources (Table 16). 12.90% of pan Arab media articles relied on activists as sources while none of articles by state owned (0.00%) nor national private media (0.00%) did (Table 16). Media sources were mostly attributed or quoted in pan Arab media articles (33.87%), then in state owned media articles (13.04%), and in only 5.17% of national private media articles (Table 16). Wire services or associated pressed were used as a source in 15.21% of both state owned and national private media samples and in 24.19% of the pan Arab media sample (Table 16).

Table 17 - Sources used by national state owned and private media in each of the 4 countries (V7)

	Official		Expert		Citizen		Activists		Media		AP	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
UAE	25	83.33	2	6.66	0	0.00	0	0.00	7	23.33	7	23.33
Bahrain	23	88.46	1	3.84	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	15.38	5	19.23
Sudan	8	80.00	2	20.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	30.00	1	10.00
Morocco	35	97.36	7	18.42	2	5.26	0	0.00	13	43.33	3	7.89

Relying on each of the six sources followed the same pattern when comparing it based on the country of national state owned and private media (table 14). Official sources remained the most used in 80.00% of the Sudanese media sample, 83.33% of the Emirati media sample, 88.46% of the Bahraini media sample, and 97.36% of the Moroccan media sample (Table 17).

Experts were relied on in 20.00% of the Sudanese media sample, followed by 18.42% of the Moroccan media sample, 6.66% of the Emirati media sample, and 3.84% of the Bahraini media sample (Table 17). Citizens as sources were only relied on or quoted in 5.26% of the Moroccan media sample while none of the sample articles by the Emirati (0.00%), Bahraini (0.00%), nor Sudanese (0.00%) media samples referred to citizens (Table 17). Comparably, none the sample articles by Emirati (0.00%), Bahraini (0.00%), Sudanese (0.00%), nor Moroccan (0.00%) samples used activists as sources to quote or attribute information to (Table 17). Media sources were used the most in 43.33% of the Moroccan media sample, followed by 30.00% of the Sudanese media sample, 23.33% of the Emirati media sample, and 15.38% of the Bahraini media sample (Table 17). Wire services or associated presses were also used in 23.33% of the Emirati media sample, followed by 19.23% of the Bahraini media sample, 10.00% of the Sudanese media sample, and 7.89% of the Moroccan media sample (Table 17).

5.2. Interviews Results

RQ5 explored the Arab media production practices during the coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel. Three media workers at three distinct media institutions were interviewed relying on open ended questions (Appendix B). The media workers were a journalist, an editor, and a reporter who all had been in their positions prior to August 13, 2020, the first normalization announcement date, and who had extensively covered the normalization. They were also from different genders and nationalities to ensure a certain degree of diversity in the sample.

The responses provided by the journalists were qualitatively analyzed through the three steps of grounded theory to detect, refine, and validate patterns of Arab media editorial policies. Four patterns were identified to be commonly present across the three

interviews. These are the independence of journalists' stances, the rigidity of writing guidelines, the flexibility of sourcing decisions, and the firmness of post-normalization editorial stances.

Table 18 - Examples from the 3 steps of grounded theory as applied to the interview data

Independent Journalists' Stances	
Detection	"personally", "I cannot convey everyone's stances in the newsroom", "I'm representative of the network's policies, but I say what I do", "I have my own opinions", "talking about the network and about the channel I'm not representative of that", "I prefer to"
Refinement	Independent stances
Validation	Detection in 8 answers throughout 3 interviews: 2 answers in interview 1, 4 answers in interview 2, and 2 answers in interview 3

5.2.1. Independent Journalists' Stances

The interviews as a second methodology were primarily conducted to examine concrete practices in Arab media institutions while covering the normalization. However, the interviews, first and foremost, revealed another layer to these institutional practices which was the strong, active perception of the journalists' independent stances towards the normalization. Their support or opposition to the normalization of Arab states with Israel did not necessarily match the stance of the Arab media institutions they worked at. Even in cases when the journalists' stances might have been aligned with those of their institution,

all three interviewees were outspoken about their independent stance that may or may not relate to their institution.

Incidentally, the interviews questionnaire did not specifically ask about personal opinions towards the normalization (Appendix B). The interviewees also did not have to express a personal opinion to answer any of the questions, even descriptive ones. This resulting pattern arose based on the repetitive disclaimers made by journalists, at different parts of their interviews, reinsuring that what they are about to answer might not represent the same stances or recommended practices adopted by the media institution. These disclaimers varied in intensity as well. For example, on the less intense side of the spectrum, when one interviewee was asked about their media institution's current stance and policy towards normalization, they expressed: "I cannot convey everyone's stances in the newsroom. People are working independently and everyone holds a stance and we are open to different opinions and views, and I think this is what journalism is about." (Interviewee 3, 2022).

On the more intense side, one interviewee almost refused to proceed with the interview himself right after the introduction explained that the questions related to their practices on an institutional level: "But I'm representative of the network's policies, but I say what I do and you certainly understand that. I have my own positions, but talking about the network and about the channel I'm not representative of that. I can help you with finding the contacts you need in the PR department." (Interviewee 2, 2022).

The interviewer followed up by reexplaining that the questionnaire aimed to understand the daily news production practices, resources, and occurrences during the coverage of the normalization. As such, the interviewee could openly answer what they do instead of representing the media institution's general policies. Therefore, after proceeding with the three interviews examining detailed journalists' practices in terms of wording,

sourcing, and news writing, the independent stance of media workers was manifested as a valid pattern during the coverage of the normalization.

5.2.2. Rigid Writing Guidelines

Diving in depth into these normalization coverage practices, interviewees were open about sharing rigid pre-writing guidelines and post-writing editing procedures. In terms of pre-writing guidelines, the three media workers explained that the rhetorical structures and wording choices regarding the normalization news were compiled in an internal writing guide. Based on their answers, this document was explicitly handed out for the journalists and editors to abide by since assigned to their positions in the Arab media newsrooms. By comparison, based on the literature, an internal newsroom document that determines the choice of words and guides the writing style regarding a variety of news topics is the media organization's stylebook (Bell & Keer, 2021). The term "stylebook" was indeed mentioned by one interviewee:

> There's a stylebook in every institution, I believe, including ours certainly. Every journalist can return to it and check the words used and the words approved. There are terminologies adopted by press institutions, and this is something known to everyone. Therefore, the media terminology that is explicitly recognized is in line with the channel's editorial line. (Interviewee 2, 2022).

Slightly in contrast, another interviewee mentioned the "booklet" (Interviewee 1, 2022) as a written document version representing the media institution's policies and culture, stating "A booklet for our policy, and definitely it states that we don't call these treaties for example." (Interviewee 1, 2022). This "booklet" (Interviewee 1, 2022) was more extensive than a list of allowed or prohibited words that would refer to the

normalization event, accords name, Palestinian territories, and Israeli regime according to the institution's editorial stance in the first place.

Yet, in both cases, the interviewees did not mention any change in their institution's guide after the normalization. Additionally, the word choice examples provided in the interviews, particularly answering the first, third, and fifth questions (Appendix B), were detected to be opposing the normalization. The accords signing event and the whole normalization news were not unquestionably referred to by opposing terms, but for deliberate reasons, clearly known and adopted by the media workers.

For example, the official normalization accords name, the *Abraham Accords* (U.S. Department of State, 2020) was not adopted by one media institution according to their interviewee:

> We don't refer to them as the Abraham accords. And if we wanted to refer to them as Abraham Accords, we say that so called Abraham Accords between quotations. And also, as you mentioned, we say these treaties, we even call them for me in my articles, I call them shameful treaties, shameful normalization process with Israeli occupation and so on. And that is because we believe that these normalization treaties with the Israeli occupation can be considered a betrayal to the Palestinian people. (Interviewee 1, 2022).

The second interviewee also discussed the reason for never using the word "peace treaty" to refer to the normalization. They explained that their media institution "[…] fully agrees with the Arabs public opinion. So, we never talked, will never talk about peace treaties with the Israeli occupation. I mean you have to call things by their names." (Interviewee 2, 2022).

The same reasoning was present during the third interview's answers when providing an example of word choices specifically referring to the normalization of

relations between Morocco and Israel. This interviewee stated, “We described the Abraham Accords between Morocco and Israel as the re-establishment of relations since both countries were having diplomatic ties until 2000 when Rabat announced to sever relations following the outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada.” (Interviewee 3, 2022).

In terms of post-writing decisions, the interviewees further expressed that in some cases, editorial interventions took place after writing news stories covering the normalization to “approve or disapprove or request changes” (Interviewee 3, 2022) regarding the final choice of words. Therefore, the second solid pattern detected was the rigidity of news writing guidelines during the coverage of the latest normalization. This rigidity was marked by unedited stylebooks and institutional policies booklets post-normalization, deliberate wording choice, and post-writing editorial revisions.

5.2.3. Flexible Sourcing Decisions

The three interviews proceeded to explore the detailed sourcing practices as an integral part of the normalization news coverage. When asked “what directed your choice of sources to rely on or quote to cover the normalization?” (Appendix B), interviewee 1 answered that his choice is primarily influenced by his news article’s angle. He observed, “Well, frankly speaking for me, my case when I write my articles, I usually have in mind who [are] the sources I want to interview” (2022). In that case, the editorial influence came in secondary place, as referring or assisting in the sourcing practices rather than imposing them. Interviewee 1 (2022) explained, “So, in the rare cases, if I needed any help in having interviews with some sources, I would go and ask my coordinator, for example, to refer me to sources”.

A similar degree of personalized sourcing choices was again revealed in the second and third interviews without mentioning any editorial intervention. When asked the same

question about their choice of sources, interviewee 2 (2022) answered “It’s part of my work’s nature. I was never obliged to interview a certain source” (Interviewee 2, 2022). Reflecting on their main motive to adopt a certain news source, interviewee 3 (2022) stated “My angles directed the choice of sources. In the […] newsroom, you are free to use sources as long as they are accurate and credible” (Interviewee 3, 2022).

Based on their answers, journalists were themselves responsible for choosing the sources for the normalization coverage while, in the case of one institution, editors, coordinators, or managers would only refer or suggest their selection of sources. Therefore, a greater margin of flexibility is perceived regarding sourcing practices compared to writing guidelines.

Another aspect of this flexible sourcing practice was the criteria of choosing the sources. Criteria varied to a certain extent between the different media institutions, yet the three interviewees agreed on credibility and accuracy, along with originality and actuality as the main standards for choosing the normalization news sources. For instance, interviewee 1 (2022) said “I would always try to contact the original sources”. Similarly, interviewee 3 answered “We in the […] newsroom aim for the actual and original sources. Credibility and accuracy are the top priority” (2022). Along the same direction, interviewee 2 (2022) extensively described that credible sources could be classified into three types:

> The first type is the personal news source, like the president or prime minister or any official whether his video or written announcement or post on his certified social media. The second type is all national or international media reporting about news source. Moving on to the open sources on social media for example, we investigate their credibility from at least three sides or three witnesses before adopting any.

An additional, yet notable standards had to be considered by one media institution regarding the safety and security of Palestinian sources, whether officials, experts, activists, or citizens, residing in occupied 1948 territories, West Bank, and Gaza. Interviewee 1 (2022) explained “So, I usually go for the Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza if it's available, instead of the occupied territories. We're trying to minimize damage”.

The journalists’ prominent care towards the Palestinian sources met with their reservation with respect to relying on Israeli sources. The reserved practices were manifested by solely using official Israeli statements by the government or state officials that would be available on all open source media. Indeed, interviewee 2 (2022) elaborated that they quote “[…] from open sources. But I have never spoken with any Israeli official or any Israel person, and I never will if God wills”. Likewise, Interviewee 3 (2022) clarified:

> So, checking their [Israeli sources] Twitter and Facebook to verify news was also among our methods. We check media of course as well, but we verify the sources from which the news was reported as well. We quote media in case a specific personal stance is also indicated.

A final aspect to the sourcing practices that two interviewees critically shared was the scarcity of direct news sources from the normalizing Arab countries’ officials or official media. The journalists’ sourcing choices were limited to American statements, Israeli statements, and international associated presses. This limitation was considered a challenge facing both interviewees as media workers entitled to search for the originality of news sources and analyze the normalization related information. Interviewee 2 (2022) shared:

> The worse thing was that the normalizing country was scarce with its media sources as if they were ashamed to announce what they did. So, we didn't find any source from a normalizing country openly talking about what will benefit the Arab world from these normalizing operations with the occupation. […] The first to announce the normalization were foreign newspapers while Arab newspapers were the last to know about this.

Closely, interviewee 3 observed "Israeli executives (officials) are really outspoken about the agreements signed unlike the [four] countries that agreed to reestablish relations with their country."

5.2.4. Firm Post-Normalization Editorial Stances

Finally, to answer the questions about the media institutions' editorial policies (Appendix B), none of the interviewees reported perceived changes of their institutions' editorial stances and policies after the normalization of Arab countries with Israel, in particular, regarding the Palestinian cause. For example, interviewee 1 (2022) declared:

> Actually, I haven't noticed any change towards Palestine, maybe in other cases but not the Palestinian cause. […] still holds on to its same stance, same news analysis, same guests, and same editorial line regarding the Palestinian cause.

Another example from the same interview went along the same lines as well, when interviewee 1 (2022) explained:

> We still put Israel between quotations with the belief that Israel is an occupying entity that we don't believe in. We don't believe that it's a state or a country with international recognition. So yes, there's a consistency in putting Israel between quotations with our articles.

Even with these interviews questions investigating general editorial changes (Appendix B), two media workers recalled examples of their institutions exposing Israeli aggressions and covering Palestinian related news events that took place after the normalization. For instance, interviewee 2 (2022) said that after the normalization, their media institution "[…] still covered all events that happened in Palestine like the commemoration of Nakba. […] describes the occupation's massacres and this is what we saw during the last war on Gaza".

Unchanged post-normalization editorial stances were spotted again when asking the same questions to interviewee 3 (2022) who described:

> No, I don't see a change in our editorial stance. We report on the news with regards to the reestablishment of relations but we also report on any reported violation or attacks the Israeli defense department launched against Palestinians. And this is what happened recently. […] has been updating its audiences regarding Israel's attacks on Gaza, which claimed over 40 deaths and hundreds of injuries.

Therefore, the last pattern detected, refined, and validated in the interviews results was firm post-normalization Arab media editorial stances and policies. Throughout three interviews, no proof for normalization in the Arab media institutions was ever encountered, instead, constant anti-normalization news reporting practices were shared, during almost two years after the signing of the first normalization agreement between an Arab state and Israel.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

This thesis aims to study the news production and news coverage of the latest normalization between four Arab states, UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco, with the state of Israel. The thesis sample includes national state owned and private Arab media within these four countries as well as three pan Arab media. The reciprocity of quantitative content analysis of media news reports with the qualitative analysis of media workers' interviews contributes to the academic and general understanding of the normalization topic widely covered by Arab media since August 2020. Specifically, the first methodology of the thesis analyzed the framing, words choices, sourcing, and dominant tones in 166 news articles by seven Arab media. The quantitative analysis further compared the results between these seven media based on the comparative factors of media ownership and country of the news source. To complement the news content study, the interviews analysis as a second thesis methodology explored the production practices while covering the normalization news by three media workers at three distinct Arab media institutions. The interviews looked for the newsroom overall stances, traditions, guidelines, limitations, responsibilities, and motives for the choice of words and sources resulting in the coverage of normalization.

6.1. What frames did public, private owned, and pan Arab media use in their coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel?

The content analysis of Arab media news articles revealed the frequencies of frames used during the coverage of the normalization. The four frames coded were employed in distinctive frequencies between the 11 Arab media samples (Table 5). The frames' frequencies distinctions yet faded after examining grouped results based on media ownership (Table 6) and country of the selected media (Table 7). Highly similar frequencies of frames were found throughout state owned media sample articles, *Alittihad, BNA, Akhbar Al Khaleej, Suna, Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb*, national private media articles, *Gulf Today, Akhbar Al Khaleej, Al Sudani News*, and pan Arab media articles, *Al Jazeera*, *Al Arabiya*, *Al Mayadeen*, news articles.

Detailed framing results showed that the Arab media coverage of the normalization extensively employed the political affairs frame in news articles (Table 6 and Table 7). Relying on the political affairs frame in the majority of these sampled news articles indicates an increased focus on officials as news sources and narrower news angles towards governmental figures (Brantner et al., 2011) at least within the first year of media coverage after the first normalization announcement. As a main political news event in the region (Forester, 2021), the coverage of the normalization normally emphasized on the role of Arab, American, and Israeli governmental officials who contributed to the normalization agreements (such as Allahoum et al., 2020; Najjar, 2020). The news discourse, within the Arab media sample, also discussed the possible factors that led to the normalization, the governmental opinions around it, and its consequential effects on states and public levels (such as Al Malik, 2020; Judd & Naar, 2020). Therefore, the political affairs frame was commonly employed in the largest portion of the state owned, national private, and pan Arab media news articles that reported the normalization in Arab countries.

The second most used frame during the Arab media's coverage of the normalization was the human interest frame (Table 5). Centered around human and social angles of a news event (Neuman et al., 1992), the human interest frame, in one aspect, was present in sample articles that specifically tackled the effects of the normalization on the people of UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, Morocco, and Palestine as well as Israeli settlers, but not on their governments. Such articles inclusively focused, for example, on the flights, tourism, sports, private trade, and annexation consequences of the full normalization of ties on the governmental and public levels (such as Allouche, 2020; Le Matin, 2021). The other aspect of the human interest frame was bringing public emotions to the normalization coverage. In this case, media articles reported public reactions such as pride and joy or anger and refute that followed both the official normalization announcements and the related expressive anti-normalization public movements (such as Al Jazeera, 2020; Al Mayadeen, 2020). The interplay of the two aspects placed the human interest frame as an essential one for the normalization coverage stirring the thesis to examine not just its employment or not, but also how it was employed. While the human interest frame could have been omitted to avoid the portrayal of human angles or individual level consequences in Bahraini or Sudanese media for example (Table 7), the same frame was inescapably employed in media articles to portray the public's reactions to the normalization and its related governmental policies.

In terms of employing the law and order frame, the results widely varied between news articles by different media samples (Table 5). The law and order frame focuses on power, authority, and governmental decisions and policies (Wolfsfeld, 1997) to add legitimacy to and generate support from the coverage (Fridkin, 2017; Wolfsfeld, 1997). Based on the literature, the thesis relied on these main indicators for the law and order framing of the normalization news coverage by Arab media. Notably, the thesis codebook

also looked for articles including quotes of the original Abraham Accords declaration as another indicator for the law and order frame (Appendix A). However, only one out of the 166 sample articles included direct quotes, decisions, or policies from the Abraham Accords declaration, making it an exception among the sample. Thus, on one side, when using the law and order frame, the bulk of the Arab media news coverage during the first year after the normalization accords signing focused on particular governmental policies and implementations that followed the normalization. On the other side, backing up the normalization coverage by quoting from the agreement to employ the law and order frame has been largely avoided.

Compared to the law and order frame, the injustice and defiance frame was as well the most avoided in the coverage of the normalization by Arab media (Table 5). The injustice and defiance frame addresses human rights and social justice (Arvas, 2015; Wolfsfeld, 1997), an aspect of the normalization consequences that was not so commonly found in the Arab media news coverage within 17 months after the normalization agreements. The injustice and defiance frame was primarily coded present in news articles for shedding the light on the basic human rights of Palestinians, Emiratis, Bahrainis, Sudaneses, Moroccans, and Israeli settlers, such as their right to express their opinion about the normalization.

Therefore, the descriptive findings of the question what generic frames did public, private owned, and pan Arab media use in their coverage of the latest normalization revealed a focus on certain main, commonly used frames, the political affairs frame and the human interest frame, and a rare, avoidable employment of two others, the law and order frame and the injustice and defiance frame.

6.2. What were the words used to refer to the normalization in the public, private, and pan Arab media coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel?

As framing devices and rhetorical structures (Pan & Kosicki, 1993), the choice of words to refer to and describe the normalization news between Arab states and Israel was examined as well. Referring to the content analysis results (Table 8), the word *normalization* was the most frequently encountered in the Arab media coverage, followed by the word *agreement*, then *peace deal*. Other word choices counted within the sample included *US-brokered deal*, *reconciliation*, *joint declaration*, *the declaration supportive of peace*, *rapprochement deal*, *resuming relationships*, and *reestablishment of relations* in the Moroccan media sample in particular (Table 11). The *Abraham Accords*, the official normalization declaration name (U.S. Department of State, 2020), was remarkably absent from the majority of the thesis sample (Table 8). While using the words *normalization*, *agreement,* and *peace deal* could be the more descriptive of the normalized relations in the coverage of the news event and its consequences, avoiding the official name of the signed normalization deal between four Arab states and Israel could also signal a media practice to not ratify this deal (Interviewee 1, 2022), even by state owned media (Table 9). For the same reason, as revealed in one interview, the word *peace deal* was also avoided by one media institution (Interviewee 2) but not the whole news coverage sample (Table 8). In both ways, these results suggest a deviation of the normalization news discourse towards a descriptive rhetoric rather than a technical one. Since, based on framing literature, issue-specific frames are the ones that extensively describe, offer details (Kozman, 2017), and rich context about a particular regional news event (Borah, 2011), these findings about

word choices would be of particular interest for later studying issue specific frames related to the normalization news coverage by Arab media.

Also, in light of Arab media research, this study's words choices findings did not fully agree with previous studies comparing the discrepancies between pan Arab media, *Al Jazeera*, *Al Arabiya*, and *Al Mayadeen* (such as Alsaba, 2022; Elmasry et al., 2013; Forester, 2021). *Al Jazeera*, funded by the Qatari government, was opposed to the normalization (Allam, 2020) and found to use opposing words choices in the coverage of Palestinian related news events (Elmasry et al., 2013). *Al Arabiya*, owned by the Saudi government, was found on the contrary more neutral in its words' selection (Elmasry et al., 2013). *Al Maydeen*, privately owned pan Arab media, was also known for opposing the normalization and supporting the Palestinian cause (Forester, 2021). The three pan Arab media in focus relied on proportionally similar words choices during the normalization coverage (Table 8) despite their different ownership and stances. For instance, the majority of each of the pan Arab media samples, 90.90% of *Al Jazeera'*s sample, 78.94% of *Al Arabiya*'s sample, and 96.87% of *Al Mayadeen*'s sample, chose the word *normalization* compared to the minority of each of the pan Arab media samples, 27.27% of *Al Jazeera'*s sample, 26.31% of *Al Arabiya*'s sample, and 9.37% of *Al Mayadeen*'s sample, chose to mention the word *Abraham Accords* (Table 8). Such quantitative results did not present enough evidence to argue for specific words selection as significant indicators for Arab media stances towards the normalization.

6.3. What were the dominant tones of public, private, and pan Arab media coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel?

Arab media stances towards the normalization were also examined based on the dominant tone of the coverage. A dominant supporting tone was coded when evidence was found for only supportive normalization content, a dominantly neutral tone was coded when evidence was found for both supportive and opposing content or neither supportive nor opposing content, and dominant opposing tone was coded when evidence was found for only opposing content (Appendix A). As such, the content analysis results indicated the dominance of supporting coverage tones despite the detection of neutral coverage and a minority of opposing coverage (Table 12).

Comparing the tones results by media ownership, the state owned Arab media sample, by *Alittihad, BNA, Akhbar Al Khaleej, Suna,* and *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb*, was the most supportive of the normalization, followed by the majority of the private Arab media sample, including *Gulf Today, Akhbar Al Khaleej,* and *Al Sudani News* (Table 13). Pan Arab media were instead more neutral towards the normalization, and the pan Arab media sample was equally divided between opposing and supporting tones (Table 13). In particular, *Al Jazeera*'s coverage was mostly neutral (72.72%) and sometimes opposed to the normalization (27.28%), but never supporting it (0.00%) (Table 12). In contrast, *Al Arabiya*'s coverage was mostly supportive of the normalization, sometimes neutral, but never opposing it (Table 13). *Al Mayadeen* was prominently the most opposing Arab media in the whole thesis sample (46.88%) along with its share of neutral coverage (46.88%) and a minority of supporting articles (6.25%) (Table 13).

The pan Arab media tones results are in agreement with normalization media studies that considered *Al Jazeera*, as a Qatari funded media, more conservative in its normalization coverage compared to the Saudi owned *Al Arabiya* (Alsaba, 2023), while *Al Mayadeen* held its opposing stance towards normalization (Forester 2021). Furthermore, the dominantly supporting normalization coverage that the thesis found conforms with the existing literature on the topic of Arab media institutions and their unquestioned alignment with their correspondent governments' policies (such as Elmasry et al., 2013; Khiabany, 2016; Mellor, 2011; Zayani, 2005). Therefore, despite the controversy of public opinions towards the Arab states' normalization of relations with Israel (Arab Public Opinion on the Palestinian Cause, 2021; Robbins, 2020) the majority of the Arab media coverage was supportive of the declared normalization while neutral and opposing coverage exceptionally stood out from the crowd.

6.4. What were the news sources used in the public, private, and pan Arab media coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel?

Another framing device examined through Arab media content analysis was the sources quoted or relied on inside news articles. Official sources such as Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, Palestinian, Israeli, and U.S. political and military figures were the most used and quoted by Arab media (Table 15). This sourcing practice was as well evidently common between the 11 media studied in the thesis sample whether state owned, national private, and pan Arab media (Table 15 and Table 16). Inspired by sourcing research (such as Cozma & Kozman, 2017; Elmasry et al., 2013; Entman, 1993) the thesis also coded the reliance on experts, citizens, activists, media, and wire services or

associated presses, each as a distinct source used inside the normalization coverage (Appendix A). The results found that the second most used sources were media and associated presses, then experts, followed by citizens, and finally activists who were relied on by only one anti-normalization pan Arab media, *Al Mayadeen* (Table 15). Noticeably, the count of all of these sources combined did not reach the high number of official sources present in the normalization coverage sample (Table 15). While official declarations, statements, opinions, and releases were essential for credibly reporting (Cozma & Kozman, 2017; Elmasry, 2013) such a regional political news event, the quantitative results indicated a lack of sourcing diversity. Previous literature has warned against this lack of source diversity for not only its effect on the media news frames, narrative, and stance (Elmasry et al., 2013), but also on the public's perception of the overall news coverage (Cozma, 2014). Therefore, the excessive attribution of normalization news information to official sources, as found in the thesis, could explain both the inevitability of the political affairs framing of the normalization coverage (Table 6) and the dominance of supportive, pro-normalization stance (Table 12); leaving the perception and influence of this coverage among audiences a question for future normalization research. The lack of sourcing diversity detected in the coverage also challenges the flexible sourcing practices shared in the interviews (Interviewee 1; Interviewee 2; Interviewee 3). Calling the credibility, availability, actuality, and news angles as the main criteria for relying on a certain source (Interviewee 1; Interviewee 2; Interviewee 3) does not explain the absence of, for example, activist and citizen voices from the coverage of the normalization (Table 15) that directly affects them.

6.5 How did Arab media news production practices influence the coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel?

The fifth and final investigation led throughout the thesis interviews examined the news production practices that shaped the coverage of the normalization by pan Arab media. Interviews analysis detected the four patterns introduced in Chapter 5: the independence of journalists' stance towards the normalization from that of their institutions, the rigidity of writing guidelines and the flexibility of sourcing decisions during the normalization news coverage, as well as the unaltered post-normalization editorial stances.

Such news production practices patterns highlight two levels of influence to discuss. On one level, the institutional influence on the normalization news coverage would be represented by the explicitly declared Arab media institution's stance, whether supporting or opposing the Arab states' decisions, and dictated inside guides such as the above mentioned stylebooks and booklets. Based on the interviews results, it could be argued that this influence remained limited during the first year after the normalization since no changes were reported for Arab media institutions' stances towards the Palestinian cause, Israeli occupation, nor normalization of relations with the occupying state of Israel.

On the second level, the editorial influence on the normalization news articles would be manifested by a range of journalistic practices from the choice of news angles, access to information sources, selection of words, and writing style, to the editorial gatekeeping, edits, and recommendations before publishing. Based on the interviews, once again, the unaltered media editorial policies, unchanged writing guides, and flexible

sourcing practices present limited evidence to measure the practical editorial influence inside Arab media articles covering the normalization news in terms of supporting the normalization or resisting it. Therefore, although little evidence was found for post-normalization changes in stances or policies, the interaction between the two levels of Arab media institutional influences and editorial influences answers the question: how did Arab media news production practices influence the coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel?

Building on these findings as well as previous research on journalists' resistance in the newsrooms (such as Sakr, 2005), this thesis suggests a set of recommendations for journalists to resist against the latest normalization between Arab states and Israel inside Arab media institutions. First, the reliance on pre-normalization media laws and institutional policies in certain Arab states still constitutes a legal basis that journalists can take advantage of. For instance, while laws in certain Arab countries still criminalize forms of media interactions with Israeli governmental figures or settlers like the case of the 1955 Lebanese Boycott law (Republic of Lebanon Ministry of Economy & Trade, n.d.), journalists could legitimately advance the anti-normalization narrative throughout their news content production. This suggestion does not optimistically surpass the governmental censorship unlawfully imposed by Arab states, those that did and did not normalize, rather it aims to emphasize the existing legal loopholes as an available weapon for anti-normalization resistance.

Second, the detected flexibility of sourcing practices designates that the selection of the normalization related news source is to a certain extent an individual decision determined by journalists. This offers the opportunity for journalists to not only diversify the news sources relied on and quoted, but also to legitimately represent resisting, anti-normalization voices as essential sources while covering normalization news.

The third and last suggestion is inspired by the deliberate choice of words and titles revealed through the interviews conducted and analyzed. The suggestion calls for journalists working in Arab media institutions to draft and publish an index or glossary of terms pertaining to the normalization, Palestinian cause, and Israeli occupation. While tips and resources are available for covering similar news events (such as The Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association, 2021), an inclusive lexicon based on the journalists' own contributions and experiences resisting against normalization in Arab media newsrooms would provide a unique, participatory, and continuously evolving repository for anti-normalization vocabulary to adopt by Arab media.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, throughout its six chapters and two methodologies, the thesis studies the news production and coverage of the latest normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel across 11 different Arab media. In this context, using quantitative content analysis, the thesis compares the frames, words choices, tones, and news sources present inside the normalization news coverage between state owned, national private, and pan Arab media websites. Thus, although following a descriptive analysis, the thesis valuably adds to the body of knowledge on the various topics of news sourcing, media rhetoric, coverage tones, and framing theory. Furthermore, the thesis cannot be confined into a framing or news products study. Its contributions expand beyond news content findings by rooting media and journalism theories in modern, post-normalization Arab media production landscape. As such, comparatively studying the employment of each of the four generic frames, words choices, tones, and sources examined based on the ownership and country of the Arab media selected has presented more similarities than contrasts between the different media. Therefore, the thesis reaches the reasoning that public, private, and pan Arab media still fall under the same umbrella of ownership limits and restrictions.

The qualitative analysis of interviews complements the same conclusion revealing two levels, institutional and editorial, influence on the normalization news content. Generating identical news coverage of the normalization agreement dictated by media owners, whether government-affiliated individuals or governments themselves, expose the political and economic interests of news institutions. Based on the political economy of

communication theoretical framework as well as the interviews findings, the thesis argues that these political and economic interests defy and resist individual journalists' stances to ultimately shape both the media production and product regarding normalization related news within the first year after signing the normalization agreements between four Arab states and Israel.

Additional contributions of this work fill multiple gaps in Arab media studies by first, tailoring the systematic grounded theory approach to qualitatively explore media production practices in the context of Arab media institutions. The qualitative analysis was, secondly, used to formulate a set of recommendations for journalists to resist against the latest normalization inside Arab media newsrooms. These anti-normalization recommendations do not only suggest temporary journalistic practices. Their value expands to constitute a basis for building a resistance culture through Arab media from the development of journalism curricula for courses, such as media ethics, all the way to informing resisting newsroom guides and policies. The whole thesis also promotes the academic teaching and researching the coverage of the normalization of relations with Israel from an Arab media perspective using solely non-normalized vocabulary.

Finally, the thesis is limited to its analysis of textual news articles from 11 Arab media websites and three interviews. The study of two media institutions in each of the four normalizing Arab countries does not constitute a representative enough sample to generalize the results to other Arab media institutions. Video news reports, social media content, or newscasts would not only offer much more content to analyze, but also additional guidelines and policies to explore how they might come into play while visually covering the normalization. Three interviews for qualitative news production practices analysis was the most convenient sample size for the thesis but not the optimal one. Although all patterns were validated following the grounded theory approach,

supplementary interviews shall be conducted until reaching redundancy to generalize the results. Imposed by the current researched design, one additional limitation of the thesis is not being able to compare each interview's results directly with its correspondent media coverage results due IRB reasons and security reasons. Future research on the normalization topic could consider this mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative - production and product - to study the change in Arab media laws and policies, their influence on production practices, and the resulting Arab media news coverage. Lastly, as a controversial turning point in the history of Arab states relationship with Israel, the normalization news coverage would consequently affect the Arab media coverage of related news topics as well as the audiences' perception of these topics, such as the Palestinian cause or Israeli occupation. Therefore, studying the effects of the normalization coverage would form another branch of research that awaits exploration.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CONTENT ANALYSIS CODEBOOK

Coder Information

[V1] Coder ID

[V2] Coder Name (Last name, First name)

Article Information

[V3] Article ID

[V4] What is the date of the article (dd-mm-yyyy)

1. August 15, 2020
2. September 30, 2021
3. September 13, 2020
4. December 23, 2020
5. September 12, 2020
6. October 22, 2020
7. December 11, 2020
8. September 14, 2020
9. October 24, 2020
10. October 30, 2020
11. December 24, 2020
12. September 22, 2020
13. September 25, 2020

14. July 25, 2021

15. December 25, 2020

16. September 15, 2020

17. October 23, 2020

18. August 12, 2021

19. November 18, 2020

20. December 18, 2020

21. October 25, 2020

22. November 27, 2020

23. October 19, 2021

24. December 10, 2020

25. October 28, 2020

26. December 21, 2020

27. December 13, 2020

28. October 25, 2020

29. October 19, 2020

30. September 21, 2020

31. September 11, 2020

32. December 4, 2020

33. October 26, 2020

34. December 29, 2020

35. February 17, 2021

36. October 31, 2020

37. October 20, 2020

38. August 26, 2020

39. August 18, 2020

40. August 13, 2020

41. July 26, 2021

42. August 19, 2020

43. December 12, 2020

44. January 27, 2020

45. August 9, 2020

46. October 15, 2020

47. October 21, 2020

48. October 18, 2020

49. December 1, 2020

50. July 15, 2021

51. December 29, 2020

52. December 17, 2020

53. August 17, 2020

54. December 15, 2020

55. December 16, 2020

56. August 14, 2020

57. September 2, 2020

58. October 5, 2020

59. March 18, 2021

60. June 16, 2021

61. June 27, 2021

62. July 1, 2021

63. July 4, 2021

64. July 20, 2021
65. September 24, 2020
66. August 11, 2021
67. May 7, 2021
68. January 1, 2021
69. September 18, 2020
70. November 26, 2020

[V5] What is the source of the article?

1. Alittihad
2. Gulf Today
3. BNA (Bahrain News Agency)
4. Akhbar Al Khaleej
5. Suna
6. Al Sudani New
7. Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb
8. Morocco World News
9. Al-Jazeera
10. Al Arabiya
11. Al Mayadeen

[V6] What is the ownership type of the article's source?

1. National state owned media
2. National private media
3. Pan Arab media

[V7] What is the country of the article's source?

1. UAE
2. Bahrain
3. Sudan
4. Morocco

[V8] Human interest frame: this frame focuses on human, social and emotional angles of events.

[V8a] Does the article include words, quotes, or visuals that show how Palestinian, Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan regular citizens with no title, or Israeli settlers will be affected by the normalization? (Like effects on tourism, education, purchasing power).

0. No
1. Yes

[V8b] Does the article include words, quotes that activate emotions, such as happiness, anger, pride, resistance, consolidation… when covering the normalization?

0. No
1. Yes

[V9] Political affairs frame: this frame focuses on governmental figures and statesmanship.

[V9a]: Does the article include sourcing, quotes, or visuals of governmental officials (Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, Israeli, or U.S. officials)?

0. No

1. Yes

[V9b] Does the article include words, quotes, or visuals that show how Palestinian, Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, or Israeli governments will be affected by the normalization (policies, economy, effects on a governmental level, diplomatic presence)?

0. No

1. Yes

[V10] Law and order frame: this frame focuses on power and authority.

[V10a] Does the article include words, quotes, or visuals that explain Palestinian, Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, Israeli or U.S. governmental policies (decisions) after the normalization agreement?

0. No

1. Yes

[V10b] Does the article include quotes from the Abraham Accords declaration?

0. No

1. Yes

[V11] Injustice and defiance frame: this frame focuses on social justice and human rights.

[V11a] Does the article include words, quotes, or visuals declaring human rights and justice claims? (Palestinian cause, freedom of speech, new human rights after normalization)

0. No

1. Yes

[V11b] Does the article include words, quotes, visuals, or data about Palestinian, Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, Israeli, or U.S. public opinion towards the normalization?

0. No

1. Yes

[V12] Choice of Words

[V12a] Did the article use the word Abraham Accords to refer to the normalization event?

0. No

1. Yes

[V12b] Did the article use the word Agreement to refer to the normalization event?

0. No

1. Yes

[V12c] Did the article use the word Normalization to refer to the normalization event?

0. No

1. Yes

[V12d] Did the article use the word Peace Deal to refer to the normalization event?

0. No

1. Yes

[V12e] Did the article use other words to refer to the normalization event?

Write it in the codebook cell.

[V13] What is the dominant tone of the article?

1. Supporting the normalization when evidence is found for only supporting words

0. Neutral when evidence is found for both supporting and opposing words, neither supporting nor opposing words, ambiguous stance words

-1. Opposing the normalization when evidence is found for only opposing words

[V14] Was each of the following sources used or quoted in the article?

[V14a] Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, Palestinian, Israeli, or U.S. official sources (Governmental figures, politicians, ministers, deputies, consultants, ambassadors, military figures…)

0. No

1. Yes

[V14b] Experts (Journalists, political scientists with expertise in peace processes or the Palestinian situation)

0. No

1. Yes

[V14c] Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, Moroccan, Palestinian citizens, or Israeli settlers

0. No

1. Yes

[V14d] Activists

0. No

1. Yes

[V14e] Media, including social media, data and media reports

0. No

1. Yes

[V14f] Wire Services

0. No

1. Yes

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What specific words did you use to describe the Abraham Accords? Such as peace treaty, peace accords, reconciliation, normalization...

   Were there any words that you were prohibited from using?
2. Who decided the choice of words used to describe the Abraham Accords in the coverage of the normalization?
3. What words did you use to refer to the Israeli government in the coverage of the normalization? Were there any words that you were prohibited from using?
4. Who decided the choice of words used to refer to the Israeli government in the coverage of the normalization?
5. What words did you use to cover the causes and the results of the normalization? Such as diplomacy, interests, investments, annexation, Palestinian cause...

   Were you prohibited from using any specific words?
6. What were the sources that you relied on or quoted to cover the normalization? Such as officials, experts, citizens, activists, media and associated presses (wire services)...
7. What directed your choice of sources to rely on or quote to cover the normalization?
8. How do you describe your media institution's current stance and policy towards normalization?
9. Have you noticed changes in your media institution's editorial stance and policy after the normalization with Israel? if yes, how?
10. Describe any incident that you faced while covering the normalization.

APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL OF RESEARCH

LAU
الجامعة اللبنانية الأميركية
Lebanese American University
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

لجنة الأخلاقيات

NOTICE OF IRB APPROVAL

To: Ms. Jana Itani
Dr. Gretchen King
Assistant Professor
School of Arts & Sciences

APPROVAL ISSUED: 1 April 2022
EXPIRATION DATE: 1 April 2023
REVIEW TYPE: EXPEDITED - INITIAL

Date: April 1, 2022
RE: ***IRB #:*** *LAU.SAS.GK6.1/Apr/2022*
Protocol Title: *Arab Media Coverage of the Abraham Accords*

The above referenced research project has been approved by the Lebanese American University, Institutional Review Board (LAU IRB). This approval is limited to the activities described in the Approved Research Protocol and all submitted documents listed on page 2 of this letter. **Enclosed with this letter are the stamped approved documents that must be used.**

APPROVAL CONDITIONS FOR ALL LAU APPROVED HUMAN RESEARCH PROTOCOLS

LAU RESEARCH POLICIES & PROCEDURES: *All individuals engaged in the research project must adhere to the approved protocol and all applicable LAU IRB Research Policies & Procedures. PARTICIPANTS must NOT be involved in any research related activity prior to IRB approval date or after the expiration date.*

PROTOCOL EXPIRATION: *The LAU IRB approval expiry date is listed above. The IRB Office will send an email at least 45 days prior to protocol approval expiry - Request for Continuing Review - in order to avoid any temporary hold on the initial protocol approval. It is your responsibility to apply for continuing review and receive continuing approval for the duration of the research project. Failure to send Request for Continuation before the expiry date will result in suspension of the approval of this research project on the expiration date.*

MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS: *All protocol modifications must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation.*

NOTIFICATION OF PROJECT COMPLETION: *A notification of research project closure and a summary of findings must be sent to the IRB office upon completion. Study files must be retained for a period of 3 years from the date of notification of project completion.*

IN THE EVENT OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ABOVE CONDITIONS, THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR SHOULD MEET WITH THE IRB ADMINISTRATORS IN ORDER TO RESOLVE SUCH CONDITIONS. IRB APPROVAL CANNOT BE GRANTED UNTIL NON-COMPLIANT ISSUES HAVE BEEN RESOLVED.

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact the IRB office by email at irb@lau.edu.lb

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The IRB operates in compliance with the national regulations pertaining to research under the Lebanese Minister of Public Health's Decision No.141 dated 27/1/2016 under LAU IRB Authorization reference 2016/3708, the international guidelines for Good Clinical Practice, the US Office of Human Research Protection (45CFR46) and the Food and Drug Administration (21CFR56). LAU IRB U.S. Identifier as an international institution: FWA00014723 and IRB Registration # IRB00006954 LAUIRB#1

Dr. Joseph Stephan
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED:

IRB Initial Protocol Application	Received 25 March 2022
Research Protocol	Received 25 March 2022
Informed Consent for interviews	Received 25 March 2022
Interview Questions	Received 25 March 2022
IRB Comments sent: 31 March 2022	**PI response dated:** 1 April 2022
CITI Training – Gretchen King	Cert.# 30400643 Dated (1 February 2019)
CITI Training – Jana Itani	Cert.# 45679022 Dated (17 October 2021)