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### British Newspaper Coverage of the 2011 Libyan Uprising

The Arab Spring, which started at the end of 2010, was subject of much media scrutiny. After protests in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Yemen and other Arabic countries had taken place, the Libyan people started protesting to the 42-year rule of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi likewise. Gaddafi's tough response to the Libyan uprising expressed itself in an unseen level of extreme violence against the protesters. The international community felt compelled to act. The British newspaper press devoted a considerable amount of attention to the uprising and reactions to it from outside. This thesis gives an insight into the differences and resemblances in British newspaper coverage on the Libyan revolution of 2011, and the means by which the newspapers express their opinion.

The articles analysed are selected from a specific timeframe. The start of this timeframe is 18 February 2011, on which day the first protesters were killed by Gaddafi's troops. The last articles are selected from 4 April 2011. This is two weeks after resolution 1973 had been approved by the United Nations Security Council. After this date, the newspapers lost most of their interest on the subject. The decline in front-page articles spent on Libya, especially in the quality press, was substantial. This is mainly due to the fact that the situation two weeks after the 1973 resolution remained relatively unchanged, with NATO bombing targets in Libya daily and the situation on the ground becoming repetitive. In the two weeks following the Security Council mandate, the international community's response to the

mandate and the realization of it was open for much debate. Questions were raised as to who should take control of the mission: NATO or the United States. Many countries, such as France, England and the Netherlands were eager to participate. Others, such as Germany, Russia and China, were very clear in abstaining from participation. Also, it was unclear if Gaddafi was a legitimate target for the allied mission, or if that was left for the Libyan people to decide.

The newspapers are selected on basis of their format, political view and circulation. Two red-tops with opposing political views and two quality newspapers are included in the analysis. The red-top *The Sun* is the newspaper with the highest circulation figures, one of the most outspoken views and most sensational news coverage. Between 1974 and 1997, *The Sun* always firmly supported the Conservative party. During Tony Blair's years as prime minister, between 1997 and 2007, *The Sun* changed colour and supported Labour. Since 2005, it has supported the Conservative party. The *Daily Mirror*, also a red-top newspaper, has significantly lower circulation figures, but places itself on the opposite of the political spectrum. The newspaper has always been a firm supporter of the Labour party ("Main National Newspaper's Support").

The other two newspapers are selected from the quality press. *The Guardian*, a respected newspaper which predominantly places itself on the left side of the political spectrum, and *The Independent*, with its history of actually being independent in terms of political view, are chosen. The quality newspapers do not nearly reach the circulation figures of the popular newspapers.

The research investigates multiple facets of the coverage. This thesis limits itself to front-page and leading articles. The front-page articles will give an insight into what the newspapers think constitutes an important story. The leading articles will provide an

understanding of what the newspapers' political view of the subject is. First, the number of articles written about the Libyan uprising in the chosen timeframe will be looked into. Secondly, their content, choice of words and headlines will provide extra information on how the news is brought to the reader. Thirdly, the opinion expressed in the leading articles will be compared to the front-page coverage, after which the objectivity of the hard news can be analysed. Fourthly, the way the newspapers frame their news on the whole will be scrutinized. The findings will be compared to and based on a theoretical framework.

In order to assess the differences between popular and quality newspapers, the terms by which they are described must be clear. The terms tabloid and broadsheet officially refer to the physical format of newspapers, but, more recently, also to their content (Zelizer and Allan, 13). Traditionally, popular newspapers used the tabloid format and quality newspapers the broadsheet format. The distinctions between these formats and their content have blurred over time. Conboy uses the terms "popular" and "elite" respectively to distinguish between newspapers aimed at the masses and serious newspapers (10). The main difference between them is signified by these categories: popular and quality newspapers. This thesis will use the terms red-tops, popular newspapers and tabloids to refer to *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*. *The Guardian* and *The Independent* will be referred to as elite, quality or broadsheet newspapers.

#### Content: Sensation and Genuine Interest

The popular tabloid press try to appeal to a larger audience by offering them short sensational news, and the quality broadsheet press try to appeal to a different audience by delivering them more serious and informative news (Zelizer and Allan, 13). The oppositions between tabloid and quality newspapers, however, run deeper than their choice of news and the value and prominence they attach to it. Zelizer and Allan, for example, state that tabloids also differ from broadsheets in "presentational style, tone, content selection and presumed

audience” (151). The popular press has far larger circulation and readership figures than the broadsheet press (“NRS” 1). While this does not imply that the views expressed by these newspapers necessarily reflect their readers’ views, the popular press write and edit their articles as if they do. In order to appeal to their readers, the press adjust the language of their news coverage to them (Conboy 14). The newspapers “have their own definition of what constitutes an important story” (McNair 41).

The tabloids, for example, are more reluctant to include political or international news in their articles than the quality press (Conboy 48). They tend to focus on national news, narratives of personal stories, human-interest stories, sports and celebrity news (30). When international or political news or opinions are featured in the tabloids, the language is often sensational, overtly exaggerated, or even hostile toward politicians. For example, the tabloid press characteristically focus on the individual instead of giving a more in-depth analysis of the broader political spectrum, as the quality press may do (157). Conboy adds, however, that the elite press also tend to represent politics “as merely a clash of personalities” (31). Equally, the coverage of international news in the tabloid press will often lack the historical background and analysis of the relevant global politics of the quality press. The tabloid’s coverage often simplifies the subject and divides the world into binary divisions of right and wrong (160). Furthermore, the popular press will often feature more photographs or pictures and will contain less text than their counterparts in the quality press. On the whole, “there is more political news, more economic analysis and more overseas news in the elite press ... and more celebrity news, sport and scandal in the popular varieties of print” (30).

There are significant variations in the scale of front-page coverage of the Libyan uprising. *The Guardian* and *The Independent* feature respectively 23 and 21 articles on Libya in the given timeframe on their front-pages, compared to ten and six in *The Sun* and the *Daily*

*Mirror*. Most front-page articles were printed in both the tabloid and the broadsheet press the first days after the start of the revolution and the days following resolution 1973. The average number of words spent on these articles further accentuates the differences between tabloid and broadsheet press. *The Guardian* and *The Independent's* were an average of respectively 900 and 1340 words compared to 58 and 70 in *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*. The content also differs greatly. *The Sun* focuses mostly on repetitive accounts of bloodbaths and casualty numbers. Its front-page coverage is limited to news of Gaddafi's atrocities, a short one-sentence summary of the international response or news concerning British nationals in Libya. For example, "Scot's Libya Terror" focused solely on a Scottish father trapped in Libya, another on a trapped Irish father in Libya, a third on an SAS squad that was captured, a fourth on a *The Sun* squad that was attacked and a fifth on the Lockerbie attack. *The Sun* is eager to include Gaddafi's threats.

The *Daily Mirror* is more sensational in its front-page coverage. Its articles focus on short descriptions of bombardments, battle scenes and the use of "women and children as human shields" ("Inhuman"). Half of these articles were dedicated to the role of the SAS, RAF or Royal Navy, while abstaining from giving updates of the situation in the country. Unlike *The Sun*, the *Daily Mirror* spends no front-page article on any international response to the situation, such as the decision to enforce a no-fly zone. Furthermore, not a single foreign politician or allied country's name makes the tabloids' front-pages.

*The Independent's* front-page articles elaborate on in-depth analyses and summaries of the situation in Libya, the international response, diplomatic relations and the history of the country. For example, one 2000-word front-page article features a complete summary of eight countries' responses to the no-fly zone plan, their motivations and its impacts. Sensationalism is often absent; casualty numbers are hidden halfway down the articles and many articles

focus solely on politics. *The Guardian*'s front-page coverage on the subject is quite similar to *The Independent*'s. It includes analyses and summaries of the situation, international responses and the country's history. However, its articles are slightly more sensationalized. One article, for example, gives an elaborate and dramatized account of a battle scene and quotes of Libyan rebels ("War Rains Down").

The quality newspapers' front-page articles pay little attention to the role of the British military or government. Additionally, they give an account of the reasons and the legal framework for intervention. They explain the Russian, Chinese and German refusal to approve a no-fly zone, including a historical and political background for their reasons. *The Independent*, for example, explains that "the Chinese government condemned what it called 'armed action against a sovereign country' and ... 'the West will not give up their jurisdiction over justice and injustice'" ("The Disunited Nations"). *The Guardian* gives an account of the "discord within Nato", giving various European countries' views: "Britain and the US had hoped that Nato would take command ... But Germany ... and Turkey ... share French concerns about alienating Arab partners" ("Discord at the Heart of Nato").

The red-top front-page coverage on the Libyan revolution focuses strongly on Gaddafi and his misdeeds, as well as on Cameron and his policies. Apart from the four articles concerning British nationals, all *The Sun*'s headlines contain Gaddafi's name. All first lines of these articles refer to Gaddafi and what he has done to Libyans. On 18 March, *The Sun*'s first line of their front-page article states that "[the] world lost patience with murderous Colonel Gaddafi last night" ("War On Gaddafi"). This exemplifies Conboy's argument that the tabloid press tend to divide the world into binary division of right and wrong. The *Daily Mirror* also focuses predominantly on Gaddafi, but also includes Cameron's decisions.

The elite press differs greatly from the red-tops in this respect. Their articles include quotes, reactions and motives from nearly all political leaders concerned with the Libyan uprising. This difference in focus is clearly exemplified on 18 March, when the no-fly zone resolution had been approved of by the United Nations Security Council. *The Sun*'s front-page article announces that "RAF top guns could see action as early as today", while giving no account of the roles of other countries ("War on Gaddafi"). The *Daily Mirror* neither mentions other countries that joined the "allied air blitz", and only focuses on the "RAF Typhoons [that] went into action for the first time" ("Inhuman"). *The Guardian*'s headline on the same day, on the other hand, states that "Britain, France and US line up for air strikes". *The Independent*'s headline announces that "The UN strikes back".

In their leading articles, the tabloid and quality press additionally differ in terms of content. The leading articles differ from the hard news on the front-page or in other sections of the newspaper. Hard news is defined as "a type of news associated with importance, significance, immediacy and relevance which reflects the news that the public 'needs to know'" (Zelizer and Allan, 53). Leading articles express the opinion of the newspaper on politics, are meant to represent or shape the opinion of the reader and show what the newspaper finds the most important news of the day (Conboy 82). In line with Conboy's argument that the tabloid press, when covering politics, focus on the individual, the tabloid newspapers' leading articles on the Libyan crisis concentrate only on British politicians. *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* both base their arguments on domestic issues of the past and present. In its leading articles in *The Sun Says* section, *The Sun*'s political colour is clearly illustrated. Labour and Gordon Brown are criticized for aiding Gaddafi and his sons in the past. According to *The Sun*, Gaddafi was excused of his role in the Lockerbie attacks and the death of Yvonne Fletcher, because "Labour wanted to keep Gaddafi sweet" for his oil ("Evil

Unmasked”). Therefore, *The Sun* says that Labour “stroke[d] this mad dog”, that “smiling Mr Brown sat alongside the monster”, and asks its readers “[h]ow did he [Gaddafi] become the Left’s darling?” (“Evil Unmasked”, “Final Disgrace” and “Uni’s Shame”). Adding humour, *The Sun*’s third leading article becomes even more insulting: “Gordon Brown was a big admirer of courage. He rarely displayed it himself, but he saw it in many others. Among them was Colonel Muammar Gaddafi” (“Final Disgrace”).

In line with Conboy’s argument that the tabloid newspapers are reluctant to include international news, *The Sun*’s leading articles base their arguments on *causes célèbres* in British history: the Lockerbie incident, the attack on Yvonne Fletcher, the arming of the IRA and the schooling of Gaddafi’s son Saif in London. The sole exceptions to domestic references are “the Soviet tyrant Joseph Stalin”, in an evaluation of Gaddafi’s ceasefire proposal, “Nelson Mandela”, with the accusation that Labour treated him as such, and Saddam Hussein, with the alignment of threats the two dictators posed. *The Sun* further accentuates its political colour by praising David Cameron for his deeds in proposing a no-fly zone. It goes as far as saying that “[i]f the world had listened to David Cameron and *The Sun*, the head of Libyan tyrant Muammar Gaddafi could have been on a spike by now” (“Show Him We’re Serious”). In the rest of its leading articles, *The Sun* praises the British army and urges the British government to be urgent on the Libyan question. Furthermore, it is very clear that no British troops should be sent to Libya. This is “[b]ecause everyone knows that when there are boots on the ground the fighting will soon escalate” and Britain should not “get involved with another all-out military conflict in a Muslim country” (“Yes To ‘No-Fly’”). This will remind the reader of the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions.

*The Daily Mirror* condemns nearly every action taken by Prime Minister Cameron in particular and the government in general. Cameron’s budget cuts, the capture of an SAS unit,

the proposal of a no-fly zone, the government's slow response in handling the situation and Cameron's arms trade relations with Libya are all reasons for the *Daily Mirror* to criticize the Prime Minister. Cameron's defence cuts were a "monumental folly", his "incompetent coalition" put British lives at risk, and the government's slow response "is a disturbing failure of leadership by David Cameron" ("Defence Cuts", "PM's Out" and "Risky Lack").

Cameron's trip to the Middle East in which he tried to sell arms is criticized in several *Daily Mirror* leading articles. Like *The Sun*, the *Daily Mirror* focuses on the British government and its leadership, but the *Daily Mirror*'s leading articles are less limited to domestic policies and history. The *Daily Mirror*, for example, makes no references to the IRA or Lockerbie.

Furthermore, it stresses the importance of a firm backing of the Arab League in dealing with the Libyan crisis, because "[w]e cannot risk another anti-Western backlash" ("Draw a Line").

The quality newspaper leading articles are far more analytical, comparative and show much less opinion than their tabloid counterparts. The main difference between leading articles in the quality and tabloid newspapers in terms of content is their argumentation and their subjects. While the tabloid press focuses on the British government's policy and base their arguments on domestic premises and domestic history, the quality press focus on the British, UN, NATO, foreign government's policies and world history and comparative analysis.

*The Independent*, with its history of criticism on the Iraq invasion, is very reluctant to give an outspoken opinion on the Libyan crisis in its leading articles. Although it stresses that speed is of the essence, it is sceptical about the government's ability to handle such a crisis and urges for caution. For example, it states that intervention is "not something to be undertaken lightly" and that any action should be based on international law and be "mounted with the widest possible support" ("We've Made Enough Mistakes" and "Any Intervention").

“Double Standards” compares the Libyan situation to Ivory Coast, and urges Western governments to lose their double standards. “The Obama Doctrine” focuses solely on Obama’s policies and analyses the United States’ point of view in the Libyan crisis. Like the tabloid press, *The Independent* is critical of the British government over its defence cuts and of Labour, because of its history with aiding Gaddafi. Furthermore, like the *Daily Mirror*, *The Independent* criticises Cameron for acting as “arms sales promoter” (“In Defence”). By criticising both sides of the political spectrum, *The Independent* publically proclaims and validates its own independence.

*The Guardian* is more sceptical about intervention, but refrains from giving outspoken opinion. Its first leading article on the subject, for example, gives no opinion at all; it is merely a summary of Libya’s past and present. In its analysis of the 1973 resolution, *The Guardian*’s leading article remains sceptical without judgement: “As British Tornados, French Dassaults and Canadian F-18s prepare to patrol the skies over Tripoli, it will be business as usual – an intervention which looks much like all the others. Let us hope it has a different outcome” (“Libya: The Perils”). It gives examples of past interventions and of possible outcomes should the international community intervene in Libya. Like *The Independent*, it builds its arguments on history and an analysis of the ongoing situation. *The Guardian* is sceptical about the British Government and Cameron’s decisions without venting real criticism.

#### Choice of Words: Exaggeration and Formality

The sensational and over-the-top choice of words of the tabloid press is often in stark contrast to the assumed neutral language of the quality press (Conboy 14). The tabloid press may use “slang, alliteration and puns” to appeal to their readers and this further accentuates their informal and emotive language (Wahl-Jorgensen 74). When covering international news,

especially when the British army is involved in times of war or intervention, the patriotism and nationalism of the tabloid press surfaces (Conboy 50). They tend to refer to the British soldiers as “our boys”, “Brits”, or “paras” (101, 173). This is in line with the tabloids’ trademark of constructing “imagined communities” (11). As the title of Conboy’s book suggests, tabloids “[construct] a community through language”. Danuta Reah explains that “there may be no clear profile of a ‘Sun’ reader or a ‘Guardian’ reader, but the papers themselves often write as though such a person exists and that there is ... a homogeneous group of people with shared beliefs and values” (36).

By utilising linguistic and rhetorical methods, they divide the world into “insiders and outsiders, our readers and their readers, ‘Us’ and ‘Them’” (Conboy 12). These imagined communities enable the tabloid press to express their opinion and views as if they were speaking for all of their readers. Their influence on their readers may be substantial, but the same may be true for the readers’ influence on the newspaper. This is well illustrated by the 1997 political turn of *The Sun* in backing Labour for the first time since 1974 (McNair 51). The “us versus them” rhetoric is also used when covering politics. The government and its institutions, for example, may simply be termed “the system” and may be used to accentuate the alleged “public anger” at this system of the tabloids’ community (Conboy 44, 64).

The choice of words in the newspapers’ front-page coverage marks a distinction between the biased coverage of the tabloid press and the neutral coverage of the quality press. In the tabloid press, Gaddafi is described as “evil”, “mad dog”, “tyrant”, “hated Colonel Gaddafi”, “mad dog dictator”, “sick Gaddafi”, “murderous Colonel Gaddafi”, “crazed Libyan tyrant”, and “barbaric tyrant Colonel Gaddafi”. His loyalists are “thugs” (“Inhuman”). The quality press abstains from adding adjectives to his name and refer to him as “Colonel Gaddafi”, “Muammar Gaddafi”, “Gaddafi” or “the Libyan leader”.

*The Sun* tends to dramatize its front-page coverage in terms of choice of words. It adds emphasis and opinion to events with the use of adjectives. For example, the SAS mission “went badly wrong,” “[the] US finally acted” and Gaddafi offered a “sick bounty”. The *Daily Mirror* is not different in this respect. The terms “brutal regime”, “ferocious aerial bombardment” and “Libyan fiasco” dramatize and sensationalize the news coverage, but give no opinion. *The Independent* does the same by adding adjectives such as “ferocious campaign”, “chilling ultimatum” and “horrific scenes”. *The Guardian*, in one of its articles, even goes a step further in sensationalizing its news. For example, it describes a battle scene as follows: “What was not immediately incinerated was mangled, thrown in the sky and dumped in bits on the earth. Machine guns twisted into grotesque shapes, broken engine parts and flattened shells lay among the wreckage” (“War Rains down”). Apart from a few adjectives adding emphasis or accentuation, the front-page articles of the quality press remain formal and are not excessive in terms of choice of words.

The patriotism and nationalism Conboy assigns to the tabloid press are barely present in their front-page articles. Apart from their content selection showing their focus on British nationals or British policy, there is no nationalism expressed in terms of choice of words. The only exception is the phrase “40 of our nationals” in *The Sun* (“Fears for JJ”). This is very different in their leading articles. Because no ground troops were ever deployed in Libya, and the number of British casualties in the Libyan crisis was nil, the tabloid press had no incentive to refer to British soldiers or their bravery, as is tradition according to Conboy. Still, two leading articles in *The Sun* mark an exception. The sole purpose of the first leading article is to praise the British military: “Let’s all salute our brilliant military heroes”, “hats-off for the RAF Hercules Pilot” and “[o]ur gallant heroes” (“PM’s saviours”). The second states that “we [should] not ask them [British soldiers] the impossible” (“Thin Front Line”). Like the first

article, it admires the role of the British soldiers flying above Libya and says that “[n]o forces are showing more courage in the Libyan conflict than Britain’s”. Again, references to the military are “our heroic forces” and “our troops”. The *Daily Mirror* makes no references to the bravery of the British military in their leading articles.

The ‘us’ and ‘them’ rhetoric, as well as the imagined community ideas explained by Reah and Conboy, both feature in the choice of words of the tabloid press’ leading articles. *The Sun*, in its first leading article on the subject, blames Labour for Gaddafi becoming a legitimate statesman. After summing up Labour’s part in this, it states that “[f]or the convenience of oil deals *we* (emphasis added) were supposed to put it behind us” (“Evil Unmasked”). Additionally, America is described as “our No1 ally”. Even more illustrative is *The Sun*’s sentence “[b]ut *they* (emphasis added) didn’t”, after saying that the world should have listened to Cameron and *The Sun* (“Show Him We’re Serious”). In the same article, *The Sun* gives a summary of what should be done in Libya. Reah and Conboy’s theory about an imagined community is perfectly exemplified: “[w]e don’t want it [occupation of Libya]”, “there is plenty we can – and will - do”, “we can and must turn off Gaddafi’s life-support”, “we must not hang around” and “we mean business and want him – dead or alive”.

The *Daily Mirror* does not use this rhetoric in the same way as *The Sun* does. However, in many of its leading articles, the *Daily Mirror* refers to Britain as “we” and describes the government as “our government”. For example, “Risky Lack of Urgency” states that “our own leaders have been like frightened rabbits”, because of their slow response in rescuing “Britons”. One of its headlines states that “We Must Not Invade”. *The Independent* also says “Our Forces” in one of its leading article headlines, but abstains from using the tabloid methods any further. In this article, *The Independent* states that “[w]e are sceptical about whether British forces should be deployed in Libya” (“In Defence”). This “we” is

characteristic of editorial leaders and refers to the newspaper and the article's writers, rather than a community of the newspaper and its readers, as the tabloid press use the word. The only exception in its leading articles is a headline saying that "We've Made Enough Mistakes Already". In this article, the "we" refers to the international community. *The Guardian* uses none of this rhetoric in any of its leading articles, nor does it refer to "we" or does it add "our" to references of British forces or the government.

The choice of words in leading articles in the tabloid and quality press differs additionally in terms of formality. While *The Independent* and *The Guardian* refrain from using emotionally charged language, *The Sun's* and the *Daily Mirror's* leading articles are rife with exaggeration and sensationalized use of words. As in their front-page articles, *The Sun* refers to Gaddafi as "the mass killer of Lockerbie" and "mad-dog tyrant". Gaddafi's "evil grasp" and his "vicious and sadistic methods", "terrified citizens" and Labour's "colossal misjudgement", "brainless adulation" and "giant folly" and Gaddafi "bloodily bombs men, women and children into submission" are examples of emotionally charged language in *The Sun's* leading articles. This is in stark contrast to the choice of words *The Independent* applies when discussing Labour's history with Gaddafi in the past: "The embarrassment of what has become known as the Libyan School of Economics has exposed the miscalibration of the Blair government's policy of engagement with the dictatorship" ("In Defence").

Apart from the *Daily Mirror's* widely different references to Gaddafi, such as the "tyrant of Tripoli", one of its leading articles refers to Libya as "that hellhole". Also, Cameron's no-fly zone proposal was "humiliatingly slapped down" and his "disjointed government is incapable" and "incompetent". *The Guardian*, when expressing doubts about the successes of a no-fly zone, refers back to history in a near poetical rhetorical question: "[w]here Jeffersonian shells fired from US tanks invading Iraq, planting the seeds of

democracy in the craters they left?” (“Libya: the perils”). In its criticism on Cameron for his no-fly zone proposal and its possible implications, *The Guardian*’s choice of words is different from the direct insults of the tabloid press, but it is nonetheless clear: “Mr Cameron may say until he is blue in the face that it will be up to the Libyans to choose their leader once this is all over, but history in this part of the world is against him” (“Moving Targets”).

#### Headlines: Screaming and Humble

Headlines are very suitable for hyperboles and sensational phrasing, because they are perfect for drawing the readers’ attention (Conboy 161, Zelizer and Allan, 140). *The Sun*, for example, proudly states that it “always has the BEST headlines” (27). While the quality press may sometimes try to implicitly charm readers with their knowledge of literature and history, the tabloid press may do this by flattering them with their knowledge of reality television shows (Conboy 14, 109).

The front-page headlines of the tabloid press are in contrast with those of the quality press. First off, they are much shorter. The average red-top headline on Libya articles consists of eight words, compared to 14 in the quality press. Secondly, they are more sensational, less descriptive, and, because of their font size, draw more attention. *The Sun* uses titles such as “War on Gaddafi”, “Mad Dog 0 Top Guns 1”, as if it is a sports game, “Devil Dog” and “Camel for Mr Gaddafi”. The *Daily Mirror*’s headlines are just as sensational and uninformative as *The Sun*’s. It uses phrases such as “Mad Dog Goes Walkies”, “Road To Hell” and “Inhuman”. *The Independent* and *The Guardian* tend to summarize the content of their articles in their captions. “Britain, France and US line up for strikes against Gaddafi”, “Is Gaddafi a target? Cameron and military split over war aims”, “The disunited nations” and “Discord at the heart of Nato over who commands no-fly campaign in Libya” are a few examples of headers that are not sensational or hyperbolic, but are merely informative.

However, some quality headlines are as sensational as those in the tabloid press. For example, *The Independent* and *The Guardian* use multiple quotes from Gaddafi: “I am not going to leave. Damn those who try to stir unrest. If we need to use force, we will use it. Go out in the streets, arrest them. Their crimes are punishable by execution”, “[t]o the last man” and “I’ll die a martyr”. Other examples include “[t]he bodies lay strewn, dismembered and burned” and “Cruel. Vainglorious. Steeped in blood”.

The difference in titles of the leading articles between popular and quality press are comparable to those of their front-page articles. *The Independent* headlines are one-sentence summaries of their main argument. “Any intervention must be based on international law” and “[w]e’ve made enough mistakes already. Caution is now key” are examples. *The Guardian* is different in this respect. Its headlines give no opinion, but rather sketch the contents of the article. “Libya: The perils of intervention” and “Libya: The urge to help” are examples. The *Daily Mirror*’s are the most outspoken and express the most criticism and opinion. Some are critical of Cameron, for example “Not Cam in a crisis”, “Cam’s failure” and “Defence cuts are crazy at a time like this”. Others are aimed at the situation in Libya, such as “Cut of the Mad Dog” and “Get tough on Gaddafi”. *The Sun*’s headlines of its leading articles are the least informative of the four newspapers. Some, such as “Uni’s shame” and “Yes to ‘no-fly’” express opinion. Others are only used to draw attention and give no information. Examples include “Barmy beast”, “Mad to the end” and “Evil unmasked”.

#### Objectivity and Subjectivity

Leading articles are “central to a newspaper’s identity” (Wahl-Jorgensen 70). As they express the general view of the newspaper, leading articles lack a public author. Therefore, they are the “last bastion of anonymity in newspapers” (Conboy 9). However, as Wahl-Jorgensen argues, the “expression of judgements and opinions” are not only found in these

opinion pages, but are seen throughout the newspaper, also in the hard news articles (70). She argues that *The Sun*'s front-pages are sometimes drenched in subjectivity (74). Conboy agrees that while leading articles are meant to be influential and convincing, they are so in line with "the overall political and cultural position of the newspaper that there is little actual persuading is going on" (82). Conboy recognizes that the blurred division of objective news and opinion in the tabloid press is in contrast with the quality press, that often has a more "defined split" between these two formats (32). In fact, according to Wahl-Jorgensen, "[t]abloid newspapers defy any easy distinctions between opinion and information-oriented journalism" (74).

Little opinion is embedded in *The Sun*'s short front-page articles concerning Libya. However, in correspondence to their leading article on the same day urging the government for swift action in evacuating British nationals from Libyan soil, two front-page articles focus on trapped Scottish and Irish fathers. Furthermore, on 18 March, the day after the no-fly zone approval, *The Sun*'s leading article compliments Cameron on convincing Obama for installing a no-fly zone. Their front-page article on the same day states that "[t]he US *finally* (emphasis added) acted over Colonel Gaddafi's slaughter of civilians yesterday and demanded immediate air strikes" ("US Call"). While the front-page articles are predominantly neutral, a link between *The Sun*'s opinion and their news page coverage is apparent.

The *Daily Mirror* shows more opinion in its front-page articles. On 7 March, it blames Cameron in its leading article for the failed SAS mission. On the same day, its front-page article features two quotes from British soldiers criticising the government for this failed action and mentions that "[m]ilitary insiders said he [Cameron] rushed the squad into the mission with no proper planning or back-up" ("SAS in Libyan Fiasco"). The *Daily Mirror* features unattributed quotes in four of their six front-page articles on Libya. Sources are

referred to as “a rebel”, “[a] witness”, and a “terrified Tripoli resident”. The tendency to feature unattributed quotes does not add to the *Daily Mirror*’s trustworthiness. On the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, governments and NATO debated over whether Gaddafi was a legitimate target. In the *Daily Mirror*’s leading article of March 22<sup>nd</sup>, the newspaper states that those in charge should not be in doubt over what Gaddafi’s fate was to be. In their front-page article of 21 March, they give a quote and a statement by Defence Secretary of Liam Fox, saying that “RAF pilots were ready to take out Gaddafi” (“Road To Hell”). Additionally, the *Daily Mirror*’s history of being critical of American foreign policy, especially in times of the Bush administration, is repeated in its front-page article of March 23<sup>rd</sup>. According to this article, American pilots shot at Libyan civilians that tried to help other American pilots. The presence of this news on the front-page, and the article’s headline “[w]ith friends like these...” is another example of opinion vented on the *Daily Mirror*’s front-page.

Little opinion is expressed in *The Independent*’s front-page articles. However, its coverage is sometimes in line with its leading articles. For example, its leading articles on 15 and 26 March express criticism on NATO, UN and the no-fly zone. It stresses that it should be deployed with the widest possible support and is very sceptical about NATO’s role as no-fly zone enforcer, because of its doubtful command structure. Its front-page article on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, titled “[t]he disunited nations”, gives prominence to Russian, Chinese and German doubts and criticism on the no-fly zone. Furthermore, in this article, *The Independent* states that difficulties in the NATO command structure “are a reflection of the haste with which operations got underway” and “the UN vote was rushed through with unusual speed” (“The Disunited Nations”). *The Independent*’s front-page coverage more often corresponds to its leading articles. Its leading article on April second, for example, urges the West to lose double standards and to not only pay attention to Libya but also Ivory Coast. The front-page article

on the same day is dedicated to Gbagbo's atrocities in Ivory Coast. The article itself, however, does not express opinion and no reference to Libya is made.

*The Guardian's* front-page articles are objective and vent no opinion. However, like *The Independent*, its coverage is sometimes in tune with its leading articles. For example, in its leading article of 19 March, *The Guardian* is very critical of intervention and occupation. Its front-page article of two days later ends with a kicker: "'we don't want what happened in Iraq with international intervention,' she [Salwa el-Deghali of the National Transitional Council] said. 'Foreign troops on the ground, no. Just the air strikes'" ("War Rains Down"). In other leading articles critical of intervention, *The Guardian* keeps referring back to past interventions, such as Iraq, and its unwanted consequences. Its front-page article of March 22 reminds the reader again: "[s]enior cabinet ministers admitted 'the emotional optics' of cruise missiles raining down ... had unwelcome echoes of Iraq" ("Is Gaddafi a Target?"). On the whole, *The Guardian* remains unbiased in its front-page coverage and gives an objective account of the situation that is unfolding in Libya.

#### Location of Opinion

What makes it even more difficult to distinguish objectivity from subjectivity in the tabloid press is that they often lack a separate opinion section. The quality press bundle their opinion articles in separate sections (Wahl-Jorgensen 75). Quality and tabloid press also differ in the layout of their leading article sections. The quality articles tend to focus more on extended text and in-depth analysis of the news than on sensational visuals and striking headlines as their tabloid counterparts do (73). "[F]or tabloids in particular, it may be more useful to view leading articles ... as embodying a distinctive mode of address rather than as a privileged site within the newspaper for the expression of opinion" (76).

*The Independent's* leading articles on the Libyan revolution always feature between pages 34 and 40 on Saturdays and Sundays, and are featured on page two of *The Independent Extra* on week days. They are without exception printed in the comment section of the newspaper. *The Guardian's* leading articles are typically featured between pages 32 and 40. Like *The Independent*, its leading articles are also only printed in the comment section. Like the quality newspapers, the *Daily Mirror* only prints leading articles in their comment section, and these articles are on either page eight or ten without exception. Likewise, *The Sun* printed all its *The Sun Says* articles on pages 6 or 8 without exception. The quality press print their articles further down their newspapers than the tabloid press do. Exceptions, such as famous *The Sun Says* articles printed on their front-pages, are not present in leading articles concerning Libya.

### Framing

Newspapers may as well covertly express opinion in hard news; not by content, but by their coverage of the content and how they frame their news. For example, the choice of informants, perspectives, sources and vocabulary can all covertly alter the news, and through this adjustment express opinion (87). A reader's opinion on a certain subject can partly be formed by how this subject is framed in the press. This is because "[f]rames focus attention, privileging certain areas of emphasis over and above alternative possibilities" (Zelizer and Allan 48). By framing news in a certain way, the press can influence the way in which readers perceive the news. For example, "[f]raming terrorism as the global equivalent of a hijacking brackets off criticism of state actors as they reassert their authority in dealing with threats of security" (Reese and Lewis 781).

The newspapers have very different ways in which they frame the news. After analysing the attention to the subject, the focus on what part of the subject and the general

view of the subject, the newspapers' ideology and general view become apparent. Although there is a different overall frame for every newspaper in which the news on Libya is covered, frames can also differ per article. The straight news account, in which the inverted pyramid structure is used to answer the basic *who, where, when, what* and *why* questions, is barely employed by any of the newspapers. While the tabloid press depict Gaddafi as an evil and mentally ill tyrant in nearly all of their articles, some of these articles still use the straight news account. *The Sun* uses this frame in "300 Die in Libya Uprising", "Gaddafi Flees as 400 Die" and "War on Gaddafi". The first two articles were featured at the very start of the uprising, the second after the 1973 resolution. "Scot's Libya Terror" and "Fears for JJ" frame the news from the perspective of a trapped British national, and "US Call to Blitz Gaddafi" uses the conflict frame. The *Daily Mirror* employs a wrongdoing frame in four of their five front-page articles, two of which frame Gaddafi as an evil madman. "SAS in Libyan Fiasco" and "With Friends Like these" frame respectively the British government and The United States as wrongdoers.

*The Independent* employs conflict and policy frames in their front-page articles. "In Libya, a Despot's Defiance" and "Gaddafi Regime" use the conflict frame to explore the situation on both the rebel and the Gaddafi loyalists' side. Their other articles frame the news from a policy perspective, describing the Libyan situation as an international policy conflict between major world players. *The Guardian* also uses the international policy frame in most of its front-page articles. "Death is Everywhere", its first article on Libya, uses the straight news account and "War Rains Down on Libya" frames the news from the on-the-ground situation perspective.

In the leading articles, the frames are different. *The Sun Says* often choose a wrongdoing frame and assign blame to Gordon Brown, Labour and Gaddafi. Other articles

employ a praise frame, in which they explain what the good decisions were, and who deserves praise. In most of their leading articles, *The Sun* applies a British perspective to the situation. The *Daily Mirror*'s leading articles are similar in this respect. More than often does it use a wrongdoing frame or a comparative frame, in which the Libyan situation is compared to similar crises in the past. *The Guardian* and *The Independent* make use of the comparative frame in nearly all of their leading articles. A historical or situational comparative analysis is followed by advice or a judgement.

Combining the analyses of the number of the articles written on the Libyan uprising per newspaper, their content, emphasis, priorities and values gives an accurate description of how the newspapers frame their news. *The Sun* describes the situation as a conflict between the world and a single madman. Furthermore, it depicts Libya as a British issue, in which a clash between domestic policies and between British politicians takes place. By bringing the news this way, *The Sun* is able to use Libya as an excuse to promote its own political views that are barely concerned with the actual Libyan question. The *Daily Mirror* utilises the same frames and techniques as *The Sun* to express their political view on the British government by using Libya as an excuse. *The Guardian* and *The Independent* cover their news in such a way that the Libyan situation is seen as a conflict of international policies. Their leading articles raise more question than that they give answers, especially *The Guardian*'s. This framing transforms the uprising from being a domestic Libyan situation into an international crisis of laws, relations, history and diplomacy.

### Conclusions

The tabloid press and quality press differ in nearly every aspect. The results found in front-page and leading articles on the Libyan revolution of 2011 overall corresponded to critic's theories. The tabloid press was more reluctant to include news on the subject than the

quality press. When they did, their coverage was limited to sensational coverage of bloodbaths and casualty numbers, news concerning British nationals in Libya, Labour's or the Conservative party's role in the situation and condemnation of Gaddafi. Their leading articles displayed their political colours very clearly. While *The Sun* repeatedly accused Labour of aiding Gaddafi, the *Daily Mirror* blamed Cameron for its policies on the Libyan crisis. The red-tops' leading articles concentrated their criticism predominantly on individuals. *The Sun*, in line with the traditional nationalism and patriotism of the tabloid press, praised the British soldiers in their leading articles. The unreserved opinion expressed by both newspapers in their leading articles was clearly accentuated by their headlines. Their choice of words further sensationalised the coverage, in their front-page articles as well as in their leading articles. The assessment that *The Sun*'s front-page articles were "drenched in subjectivity" did not hold true for the coverage on the Libyan uprising. Especially the *Daily Mirror*'s front-pages expressed outspoken opinion. *The Sun* also did this, but to a lesser extent. Furthermore, their leading articles were printed on fixed locations in the newspapers without ever reaching the front-page. However, both newspapers' front-page coverage subjects were in line with their leading articles.

The quality newspapers were eager to pay an enormous amount of attention to the Libyan revolution. Unlike the tabloid press, the quality press did not limit its coverage to sensational news or domestic politics. Analyses and summaries in general, and the international response from different perspectives in particular deserved much scrutiny in their front-page coverage. Especially *The Guardian*'s leading articles expressed little opinion compared to its tabloid counterparts. *The Independent*, to a lesser extent, was likewise reluctant to give an outspoken opinion in their leading articles. Both were very sceptical on whether intervention in Libya was justified and desirable. In contrast to the tabloid press' sole

criticism on either Labour or the Conservatives, the quality press tended to address their leading article comment to the international community and global and Western institutions, such as the UN and the NATO. Apart from a few exceptions, their choice of words was formal in both their front-page and leading articles. Most of their headlines summarized the contents of their articles, but some were sensational and attention-grabbing by using Gaddafi's quotes. *The Guardian's* headlines of their leading articles expressed nearly no opinion, but *The Independent's* did. While the quality front-page articles were principally objective, they did provide a framework for their leading articles to comment on.

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