

Conflict in Syria: an analysis of the photographic covering made by the digital portals of the *An-Nahar*, *El País*, *Noticias ONU* and *The New York Times*

LAURA CASTAÑO GIRALDO¹

Article received on February 27, 2019,
approved for publication on April 30, 2019

Abstract

The present investigation addressed the photojournalistic coverage of the chemical attacks on Syria between 7 and 13 April 2018, carried out by the media *An-Nahar*, *The New York Times*, *El País* and *UN News*, through their digital portals. During the process, the founding theories of *Agenda setting* and framing were welcomed as guiding agents in understanding the collected material. This exercise was carried out on the basis of an observation technique that allowed to reach a descriptive research level capable of qualifying the phenomena found, which included, for example, some similarities in the editorial line of the media in terms of actors and ways of viewing the photographs, and differences in terms of their contextual content. This allowed for the annulment of certain prejudices and predictions that existed thanks to the tracing of investigative background on the chosen topic line.

Key words: Photojournalistic coverage; Agenda setting; framing; Photography; Social conflict.

1. Introduction

In April 2018, two tragic events were reported in Syria. The first, was the chemical attack perpetrated by President Bashar al-Asad's regime on 7 April, which targeted the population of the city of Duma and left more than forty dead. The second, as a result of Western rejection of this attack, was the offensive of the United States on 13 April, backed by France and the United Kingdom, through missiles that impacted three centers aimed at the production and storage of chemical weapons.

1 Student of the School of Social Communication and Journalism of the Universidad de Manizales, Colombia.
Email: lauracastanog@gmail.com

The media disseminated information about these events and this gave reason to believe that there have always been discussions that point to the way each one gathers and disposes content to an audience about the events that make up news in a given context. Hence it has become frequent to speak in terms of framing, which privileges “[...] the departure of certain elements of reality to the detriment of others, and would provoke in its readers the apprehension of a distorted and stereotypical reality” (Abreu, 2008, p. 410). This was related, according to the theory of Agenda setting, to the stage of treatment, which consists of “[...] decide which will be the main focus of the story and involves framing the facts using a particular angle, a concrete perspective or a central organizing idea” (Igartua & Humans, 2004, p. 256). Thus, with an approach to this specific research, “[...] photographs can also be used in a biased way, such as when looking for a different effect than providing information in an objective way” (Muñiz, Igartua & Otero, 2006, p. 109).

According to the above, digital media portals such as El País, UN News, The New York Times and the An-Nahar formed a body of study thanks to the possibility of showing variations in terms of journalistic coverage of the critical situation facing Syria. These media offered to the public photographic information on two common facts: chemical attacks and bombings, for which it was important to analyze and determine how the forms as presented by the images and their possible relationship with the origin, theme or editorial line of the images converged or differed. Who published them, because, as Bonilla says: “Contemporary representations of horror unfold around media that circulate in a context that differs from those days when we saw little or nothing of depraved violence” (2018, p. 114).

The pieces were obtained through information sources that correspond to observations and analysis of visual contents that are articulated from the phenomenon of study, which was composed of the digital portals of the media addressed. The selection of these media was limited to the depth of the ideological and editorial differences that became visible between each of them in specific time-space circumstances of the context. In addition, its axis of action in the coverage of the Syrian conflict, which began in 2011 with the outbreak of the first revolts against the regime of Bashar Al-Asad, current president of Syria, allowed to come into direct contact with the functioning of the phenomenon of framing from photojournalism and its ability to bring to light the contrasts of information that is made available to the audience.

The union of what has already been said prompted us to pose the following as the question that was intended to answer with this investigation: How was the journalistic photographic coverage made by the El País digital portals, UN News, The New York Times and the An-Nahar of the conflict in Syria during the chemical attack perpetrated against the population by the regime of Bashar al-Asad on April 7, 2018, in Duma, and the bombing carried out by the United States, the United Kingdom and France on April 13?

2. Theoretical considerations

The realization of an analysis of the photographic coverage made by different means of communication from their respective digital portals, required the assessment of the images from narrative, content, visualization aspects, among others, since there have always been discussions that point to the way each one collects and disposes information before an audience about the events that make up the current news in a specific context.

For that reason and to begin with, it was important to clarify that the theoretical basis of this research was structured and articulated, based on two foundational theories. The first corresponded to the Theory of *Framing* that has been addressed by Robert Entman, Dietram A. Scheufele and Erving Goffman, and the second to the Theory of *Agenda Setting*, which was addressed, in principle, by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw.

According to Entman (1993), framing in a conceptual framework, was understood as “[...] a process in which some aspects of reality are selected, which will give them greater emphasis or importance”. This allowed the salience of certain elements to the detriment of others to provoke “[...] in their readers the apprehension of a deformed and stereotypical reality” (Abreu, 2008, p. 410).

Right here it was pertinent to point out and clarify that the individual concept of framing, within its theory, was different from the concept that was built on what is called framing effect. The latter corresponded to the “[...] change that occurs in opinions and attitudes due to subtle alterations in the definition of a problem” (Igartua & Humanes, 2004a, p. 261).

That is why we should also make the distinction between those who, from the scientific literature, were called as media frames and audience frames. The first ones were welcomed as frames of the media or news frames, and the second as frames of the public (Scheufele, 1999). The nature of this investigation was based on the coverage of the facts and the treatment that the media gives to the information, not based on the perceptions of the audiences, for which the perspectives of analysis were approached from the news frames and not from the framings of the public.

These news frames influenced the recipients, a situation that, according to Scheufele (2000) (cited by Igartua & Humanes, 2004, p. 261), was evident in two processes. The first, which is called frame-setting, suggested that these frames mediate the content of people’s thoughts, that is, they had the ability to regulate the way subjects reflect on the information that is made available. The second (Iyengar & Kinder, 1978), was linked to: “[...] the effect of the news frames on the attributions of responsibility in terms of political and social problems” (cited by Igartua & Humanes, 2004, p. 262).

Each media, and for that matter, each graphic reporter, decided to portray reality from a different perspective. Such situation became evident with the Colombian photographer Jesús Abad Colorado (2018), who, in the days when he was engaged in photographing football games, on weekends, rarely portrayed the ball because, according to him: “Football it is also the people who celebrate or suffer from the rostrum”.

On the other hand, there was the Theory of the Agenda Setting, whose general hypothesis stated that: "The media, when it comes to covering the news, tend to focus on some problems to the detriment of others" (Igartua & Humanes, 2004, p. 244). Según lo anterior: "By describing and clarifying the external reality, they presented the public with a 'list' of everything around which they should have an opinion and discuss, thereby increasing the public outreach of the most emphasized issues" (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; McCombs, 1996; McCombs & Gilbert, 1986; McCombs & Reynolds, 2002, (cited by Igartua & Humanes, 2004, p. 245).

From the Theory of the Agenda Setting, it was necessary to analyze how the news production process was and what were the stages in which it was divided. The first was called selection and it consisted of determining which topics were shown and which were omitted. This action was perpetrated by gatekeepers, which "[...] are the individuals or groups that have the power of decision to pass or block certain information in the organization of a medium of communication" (Wolf, 1991, cited by Igartua & Humanes, 2004, p. 246). Then was hierarchy stage, in which the events received treatment with an information accorded to them more or less importance compared to other facts and "[...] the audience was implicitly informed about the relevance of the information" (Igartua & Humanes, 2004, p. 246). The last stage corresponded to treatment, which consisted of "[...] decide which will be the main focus of the story, and involves framing the facts using a particular angle, a particular perspective or a central organizing idea" (Igartua & Humanes, 2004, p. 256).

It was possible to think that both theories -*Framing* and *Agenda Setting*- were complementary but independent. Thus, Zhou & Moy (2007) claimed that:

While the researchers of the Agenda Setting compared the relevance of certain topics in the media with the relevance perceived by the public, the Framing researchers compared the news frames on an issue with the frames that the public uses to interpret the matter (cited by Abreu, 2015, p. 427).

3. Methodology

The present exploration analyzed the photographic journalistic coverage made by digital portals such as *El País*, *UN News*, *The New York Times* and *An-Nahar* of the conflict in Syria during the chemical attack perpetrated against the population by the Bashar al-Assad regime. April 7, 2018, in Duma, and the bombing carried out by the United States, the United Kingdom and France on April 13 of the same year.

The purpose of the research was to understand how meaning is constructed in the face of socio-political conflict, through the images circulating in social contexts, bearing in mind that, since there is more than one reality, there can be multiple and equally legitimate interpretations (Merrigan & Huston, 2014, p. 36). For this, a methodology was proposed whose interpretative interest allowed to arrive at the elaboration of affirmations able to unveil significant structures

whose explanation is based on concepts and principles from disciplines such as semiology and comunicology. This made possible the realization of a rich description of the phenomena that are found as a result of the analysis of the collected material.

The phenomenon of study of the present investigation was constituted by the mentioned digital portals. Their selection was limited to the depth of the ideological and editorial differences that become visible between each of them in specific time-space circumstances of the context. In addition, its axis of action in the coverage of the Syrian conflict, which began in 2011 with the outbreak of the first revolts against the regime of Bashar Al-Assad, current president of Syria, allowed to understand the operation of framing from photojournalism.

The *An-Nahar*, which in English means *The day* is a Lebanese newspaper that has been in circulation since 1933. The digital portal of this medium presented a simple interface that, in spite of being directed mainly to the population of Lebanon and from other Arabic-speaking countries, it sought to involve foreign readers thanks to the possibility of viewing the content from the English version of the portal. Although this newspaper covered three news axes: international, regional and local, its interest was in the production of content related to the Middle East and Africa from a leftist and anti-Syrian perspective.

El País is the most widely disseminated newspaper in Spain and its date of birth dates back to 1976. Its website, according to the GMS (General Media Study), led the list of newspapers in Spanish that are on the Internet and converted it into one of the most consulted newspapers in the world. In 2008, this newspaper began its process of moving to the right and “[...] these changes in its editorial line have caused *El País* to abandon its referential role of progress to be now known as the newspaper close to the political right and the financial power” (Vallejo, 2016, p. 9).

UN News is the news portal of the United Nations Organization. It showed a media convergence involving radio, press, television and internet for the preparation of content related to human rights, humanitarian aid, vulnerable communities, sustainable development, peace, groups of migrants and refugees, among others.

The New York Times is a New York newspaper that is distributed in American and other countries of the world since, apart from its web portal, it has a print run that exceeds one million copies per day. Its founding year was 1851 and, since then, it has been consolidating as a prestigious newspaper with a democratic character.

However, the whole approach to information was achieved from a qualitative perspective, since this, as Berganza & Ruiz point out: “it provides richer and deeper information about social phenomena” (2005, p. 31). The elements studied had common contextual characteristics that differed when they were transformed into particularities of journalistic coverage and photography, and could not be dealt with substantially with figures. There we had to take into account that social reality has meanings that are articulated in language and inter-subjectively linked (Berganza & Ruiz, 2005, p. 31). In that case, the important thing was not the counting of the selected images, but the interpretations, characterizations and representations that originated from them.

The investigative level was of a descriptive nature since the investigation gave account of the specificities of the object of study that, for the specific case, was the photographic journalistic coverage. Annexed to this, all the approximations to the material were made from a transversal position, since the data collected belong to a unit of compact time, and a methodological process of a deductive nature was used.

The corpus was constituted by representative pieces, not random, of the events that delimit the material of the investigation. In terms of this tracking, the pieces were the photographs published by the four previously mentioned media as part of the coverage that each of the chemical attack and the bombing that Syria suffered in April of this year did. The medium that prolonged its journalistic exercise to the minimum unit of time, was the determinant of how many days, weeks or months were taken into account to collect the images in order to guarantee a comparison in equal conditions.

Taking into account the above, the investigative technique used in the present study was based on observation, which already had a preliminary phase of recognition of the research problem by means of periodic visits to the selected digital portals and subsequently, it was transformed into a direct methodical observation because this way, it would be possible to build a register table with categories and indicators that, later, gave rise to the interpretation in the light of exercises of contrast and distinction of the found data.

4. Interpretation of results

After obtaining all the work material and its corresponding organization in the results matrix, it was possible to carry out an exercise in relating the information obtained in light of the theoretical and state-of-the-art support that was part of the research. The findings are organized into three categories of analysis: actors, content and visualization.

4.1. Category Actors.

This first category of analysis assumes the Actors as the human beings that appear in a photograph. This was divided into four subcategories: Quantity, Performance, Gender, Role and Life Stage.

4.1.1. Subcategory Quantity. Corresponded to the number of individuals involved in the image. In the *An-Nahar*, 6 photographs of 16 counted with the participation of more than 10 people and the remaining 10, with less than 10. *The New York Times* had 5 images, among 22, with more than 10 actors and 17 with less than 10. Of the total of 17 photos of *El País*, 3 showed more than 10 individuals and 14 less than 10. Finally, *UN News* published 3 images with more than 10 auditors and another 3 with a number less than that.

The hegemony of the appearance of less than 10 actors per photograph in each of the media gave rise to the interpretation that they sought more the particularity, something that would bring readers closer to what is and what the violent situation of the which Syria was a victim (Image 1).



Syrian government supporters chant slogans against U.S. President Trump during demonstrations following a wave of U.S., British and French military strikes to punish President Bashar Assad for suspected chemical attack against civilians, in Damascus, Syria, Saturday, April 14, 2018. (AP Photo/Hassan Ammar)

Image 1. Quantity

Source: *An-Nahar*. April 14, 2018

4.1.2. *Subcategory Performance*. As far as these subcategories were concerned, principal and secondary actors were observed. The first ones were those that appeared focused and occupied a relevant position in the image. The seconds were those that were out of focus and tended to be indistinguishable.

The *An-Nahar* provided 16 photos in which 58 Main and 19 Secondary actors were found. The *New York Times* showed 73 Main and 23 Secondary actors in its 22 photographs. *El País* had 17 images that hosted 44 Main and 27 Secondary actors. *UN News* made 18 Main and 7 Secondary actors visible in their 6 photos (see in image 2 a representative case).



Image 2. Performances / Main actors

Source: *The New York Times*. April 8, 2018

The significant impact of Main actors reflected the commitment of the medium to provide graphic content that would give emphasis to each one of its auditors depending on the action they performed and the contextual framework in which they were immersed.

4.1.3. Subcategory Gender. It refers to the distinction between Masculine -men-, Feminine -women- or Unidentified -one to whom it is not possible to determine attributes of man or woman- the results were the following:

In the 16 photographs of the *An-Nahar*, 58 actors were found under the Masculine, 9 Feminine and 10 Not Identified indicator. In *The New York Times*, on the other hand, the predominance, taking into account the 22 photographs, had the Unidentified indicator with 44 individuals, a figure that was followed by 42 people in Male and 10 in Female. *El País* in its 17 images showed 45 individuals classified as Male, 12 as Female and 14 as Unidentified. In the 6 photos of the *UN News*, 8 people were detected in the Male gender, 8 Unidentified and 9 Female.

The clear majority of the Masculine indicator suggested that the four media analyzed were not equal in gender matters. The wide difference between the coverage of the situation of men and women pushed reality more to one side than to the other and could deliver to readers a version that indicated that those who were most involved and affected by the various factors of the conflict were the men (see image 3 as representative).



Image 3. Gender / Male
Source: *El País*. April 15, 2018

4.1.4. Subcategory role. Each individual that appeared in the images had a Role, which referred to the position he fulfilled within them. Five indicators were part of this subcategory: Victims, understood as any individual that reflected or was part of a vulnerable situation, Belligerent, that is, every individual that showed violent attitudes or gestures, authority/offi-

cial entity, understood as one that carried an identifier of some official, Protestant organism, visualized as any individual expressing any political position, either in favor or against, and Unidentified, which corresponded to that individual who did not meet the characteristics of the previous indicators.

In the 16 photographs of *An-Nahar* the Authorities predominated with 24 individuals, followed by 26 Unidentified and 17 Protestants. In *The New York Times*, the largest number fell on the Unidentified with a total of 36 individuals, close to 35 Victims and distant from the 16 Authorities. In *El País* there was a boom of 39 Not Identified, 16 Authorities and 13 Victims. Finally, in the *UN News* photographs, the number of victims was shot up to 18 and was followed by 4 Authorities and 3 Unidentified (Image 4).



Image 4. Role / Victims

Source: *UN News*. April 11, 2018

The exercise of unraveling who are those in the press gave an unexpected result. The most popular roles are Protestants, Authorities, Victims and Unidentified. These constituted a phenomenon that opposed a prejudice that considered that those who received the most prominence in the coverings were the Belligerents, a matter that did not happen in these four media.

4.1.5. Subcategory Life stage. Finally there was the Stage of Life subcategory. This included four indicators: Child, Youth, Adult and Unidentified, which were determined according to the researcher's own perception.

The *An-Nahar* recorded in his photographs 55 Adults, 18 Unidentified and 3 Children. *The New York Times* showed 43 Unidentified, 33 Adults and 12 Children. *El País* showed 38 Adults, 14 Children and 13 Unidentified. *UN News* presented 11 Adults, 8 Children and 6 Unidentified (see picture 5 as meaningful).



Image 5. Life stage / Children

Source: El País. April 15, 2018

4.2. Category Content

The second category that was addressed in the present analysis was Content. This covered the information related to the characteristics of space and performance that are evident in the photographs. Two specific subcategories were part of it: Activities and Place. The first one referred to the tasks or actions performed by the actors of the images in the context of the research. The second corresponded to the places in which these actions were executed.

4.2.1. Subcategory Activities. It counted on 10 indicators, whose predominance varied in each one of the portals that constituted the body of the investigation. In the case of *An-Nahar*, the Inspection exercise prevailed. It was defined as the action that suggested or demonstrated the investigation or exploration of places and scenes. Out of a total of 16 photographs, 5 showed this type of work.

Contrary to this, the displacements -activity that involved transporting belongings and/or groups of people from one side to another insinuating dispossession-, Funeral Acts -funerals, burials, cremations, commemorations, religious and symbolic rites, etc.- and Struggling -fighting which involved physical and violent actions- were in a lower position, since there was no photograph, among 16, that demonstrated this type of circumstances.

Annex to the above, there were two indicators that occupied an intermediate position in terms of quantitative relevance, since each one received 3 photographs classified in their name. On the one hand, there were Protests, which were related to the presence of an individual or a conglomerate of people who carried communicative elements in sight as a sign of support or rejection of a problem or character. On the other, the Daily Acts were found as situations of daily life such as shopping, sales, games, family spaces, among others.

The images that recorded Medical Activity/Relief, that is, the provision of health, prevention and rescue services, were more frequent in *The New York Times*. The figure corresponding to this indicator was 6 photographs out of 22 and was opposed to the result of Clashes and Humanitarian Activity -acts that involved donations, hostels, entertainment for affected people, etc., which revealed that none appeared in the selected images of this media.

For their part, Funeral Acts, Daily Acts, Inspection and Military Activity -workings in which members of the military/uniformed forces performed- took place in 3 photographs each.

In the *El País portal*, the significant figure corresponded to the Daily Acts with 8 photographs of 17 marked with this indicator, while those of Clashes, Protests, Displacements, Humanitarian Aid and Debris Removal -work of clearing of movable material remains that were the result of violent activities- they fell to the point where there were no images within their classification. In between these two extremes, Inspection and Military Activity, indicators were received based upon 3 photographs.

In *UN News*, Daily Acts predominated in 4 images of 6 and were followed by Inspection and Displacement, which counted, individually, with 1 photograph. The other indicators -Medical Activity / Relief, Clashes, Protests, Funeral Acts, Debris Removal, Humanitarian Aid and Military Activity- did not correspond to any of the representations.

In the case of Activities, the interpretation of results clung to the contrasts that were glimpsed from the comparison of the 4 media analyzed. The predominance of the *An-Nahar* Inspection exercise demonstrated its leftist and anti-Syrian perspective, which had a close link with the control and surveillance of the violent acts that take place in that country. The prevailing number of photographs of Medical Activity/Relief in *The New York Times* reflected the origin of this means of communication. The United States is a leader in providing medical services and its humanitarian character is evident in the missions that are sent to countries that are in conflict in the Middle East. In addition, it has offices of *Doctors Without Borders*, one of the most important international organizations in the world.

El País and *UN News*, with its supremacy in terms of Daily Acts, put on the table the focus on the inhabitants and their capacity for resilience in the midst of chaos. *UN News* made visible the link that has, as an organization, with Human Rights and *El País* its manifesto in favor of the right, a political position that could conflict with the government of Syria.

The decision to present content instead of another is linked to the communicative intention of the medium. "The press, like the rest of the media, would privilege with its framing the salience of certain elements of reality to the detriment of others, and provoke in its readers the apprehension of a deformed and stereotypical reality" (Abreu, 2008, p. 410). Thus, each portal proposed a photographic coverage that was consistent with its context and its pretensions and, as a result, revealed a reality with particular emphasis that it gave to each of its readers.

4.2.2. Subcategory Places. For this analysis, 3 indicators were defined: External, which were those open and open spaces, Interiors, that is, closed and Unidentified enclosures, which could not be determined due to the closeness of the plan.

In the photographs of all the analyzed media, the Foreign places predominated. In *An-Nahar*, the figure was 11 out of 16 and the remaining 5 corresponded to Interiors. In *The New York Times*, 13 images of 19 showed Exteriors and 9 Interiors. In *UN News*, 5 photos on 6 were in Exteriors and the remaining in Interiors.

El País was the only portal that had photographs classified under the Not Identified indicator with a figure of 2 between 17. In Exteriors it had 14 images and in Interiors only 1 (see images 10, 11, 12 and 13 as representative).

The interpretation of the Places category, lent itself to finding similar behaviors of the phenomenon. The coincidence of the 4 media in the predominance of the representation of external spaces gave grounds to infer that there is interest in the massive, chaotic and vast, and in giving importance to the real dimension of the conflict in Syria.

4.3. Category Visualization

The third category that formed the body of analysis was the Visualization, which hosted the information examined and organized according to the criteria that takes into account the



Image 6. Activities / Inspection
Source: *An-Nahar*. April 18, 2018



Image 7. Activity: Medical / Relief
Source: *The New York Times*. April 8, 2018



Image 8. Activity / Everyday acts
Source: *El País*. April 15, 2018



Image 9. Activity / Everyday acts
Source: *UN News*. April 11, 2018

means to arrange it before the public or consumer. This included four subcategories: Damage, Publication, Planes and Angulations.

4.3.1. Subcategory Damage. Subcategory that referred to the physical affections suffered by individuals due to the conflict and the war in Syria. It had four indicators: *Not Severe, Severe, Very severe and None.*

In the *An-Nahar photographs*, the most repeated record was that of None, that is, the absence of physical implications in the bodies of the actors in the photographs. Of 16 images, 14 had this characteristic versus 2 that showed a No Severe damage, which made evident traces of dirt, superficial injuries or bruises. Here, the Severe and Severe indicators were deserted (see image 14).

The *New York Times*, meanwhile, presented a new behavior with 5 photographs of 22 that were classified under the Very Severe indicator, which showed mutilated limbs and lifeless bodies. 11 images refrained from exposing damage and gave predominance to the indicator None, while another 6 showed conditions classified as Non-Severe (image 15).



Image 10. Places / Exteriors
Source: An-Nahar. April 16, 2018



Image 11. Places / Exteriors
Source: The New York Times. April 14, 2018



Image 12. Places / Exteriors
Source: El País. April 15, 2018

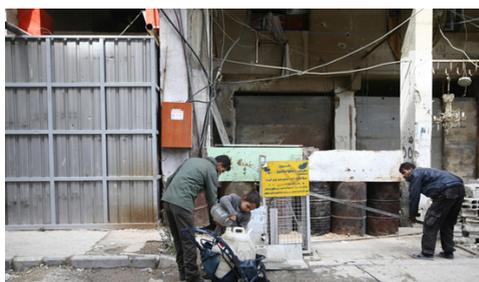


Image 13. Places / Exteriors
Source: UN News. April 10, 2018

The behavior of *El País* was similar to that of *The New York Times*. Among 17 photographs, 13 corresponded to the indicator None, 3 to No Severe and 1 to Very Severe.

Unlike the three previous portals, *UN News* avoided publishing images with any type of damage, for which their total material, that is, 6 images were labeled under the indicator None (Image 17).

From the above it was possible to affirm that the four media were inclined to abstain from the presentation of images that showed damage from the literal and physical conception of it. However, the appearance of photographs showing very severe damage in *The New York Times* broke with the homogeneity that was perceived and could give some air of morbidity and even sensationalism to the environment, since photographs were made available to the readers that recorded dead and mutilated parts of individuals.

4.3.2. Subcategory Publication. It had to do with the way the visual material was arranged on the web portal. The sum of the number of photographs published by each medium resulted in 61, a figure that corresponded, in the same way, to the number of images classified within the Uncensored indicator, which involved a distorted content with the help of effects and digital tools. No photo, for this case, was censored.



Image 14. Visualization. Damage / None
Source: *An-Nahar*. April 13, 2018



Image 15. Visualization. Damage / None
Source: *The New York Times*. April 14, 2018



Image 16. Visualization. Damage / None
Source: *El País*. April 17, 2018



Image 17. Visualization: Damage/None
Source: *UN News*. April 16, 2018

The fact that the phenomenon of censorship was not presented in the images of the four media could be analyzed in two ways: the first is that there is full of journalistic freedom that does not inhibit the person responsible for the note from adding the visual information they want without any limitation, and the second is that the media does not consider the ethical implications that can be caused by the faces of children, for example (images 18, 19, 20, and 2 as significant).

4.3.3. Subcategory Plans. I classified the photographs according to the framing rules that exist. The *An-Nahar* put in first place the General planimetry, that is, the one that completely showed the individual on his stage. 10 photographs of 16 were pigeonholed in that indicator, while 3 were arranged in American, a type of plane that goes from the top of the knees to the head, followed by 2 photos of the Medium plane, which includes the area above the waist to the head (image 22).

From then on, the planimetric pattern was repeated in the other media. Of the total of 22 photographs of *The New York Times*, 18 were General, 1 American, and 3 Medium. In the case of *El País* there were 13 General, 1 American and 3 Medium and, finally, 3 General, 2 American and 1 Medium in *UN News* (images 23, 24 and 25).



Image 18. Publication / Uncensored

Source: An-Nahar. April 9, 2018



Image 19. Publication / Uncensored

Source: The New York Times. April 8, 2018



Image 20. Publication / Uncensored

Source: El País. April 17, 2018



Image 21. Publication / Uncensored

Source: UN News. April 13, 2018

4.3.4. Subcategory Angulations. There were considered, in the same way, images based on the rules of photography, but we did so taking into account the position of the photographer in front of the individual, space or object. *An-Nahar* published 11 pictures without Angulation among 16, that is, those taken at the same level as the point of interest, 3 in high-angle, which implies a shot from top to bottom and 2 in low-angle which is from bottom to top (image 26).

As in the case of planes, there was a similar behavior among the media, since there were only photographs classified under the 3 indicators mentioned previously.

In *The New York Times*, there were 15 images, between 22, without angulation, 6 in high-angle and 1 in low-angle. Of 17, *El País* published 15 without angulation, 1 high-angle and 1 low angle. Finally, *UN News* showed 4 images of 6 without angulation, 1 high-angle and 1 in low-angle (images 27, 28 and 29).

With support in the relationship between the photographic technique and its connotative implications, it was interpreted that the predominance in the use of the General plane, which was common in the four media, reflected an interest in delivering a descriptive visual resource with as much contextual information as possible. To this it should be added that the majority use of photographs without Angulation showed an affinity for the presentation of



Image 22. Plans / General

Source: *An-Nahar*. April 16, 2018



Image 23. Plans / General

Source: *The New York Times*. April 12, 2018



Image 24. Plans / General

Source: *El País*. April 17, 2008



Image 25. Plans / General

Source: *UN News*. April 10, 2018

reality without major deformations, that is, without positions of superiority or inferiority with respect to the objects and individuals captured.

5. Conclusions

As a result of the research, three conclusions were drawn up that answered the three questions posed that served as a guide during the entire process:

Conclusion 1: The predominant types of actors in the photographs of the four media were similar. In all of them there was a significant level of participation of the main *Actors*, which provides the content consumer with greater clarity about who are the most important action figures within the context proposed by the image.

The hegemony of the masculine gender in all the portals revealed the conditions of inequality that are presented in informative terms. This type of circumstance affects the weight of the actions and makes men stand out as individuals who suffer, lead and suffer the facts of the conflict in Syria.



Image 26. Angulations / Without angulation
 Source: *An-Nahar*. April 17, 2018



Image 27. Angulations / Without angulation
 Source: *The New York Times*. April 8, 2018



Image 28. Angulations / Without angulation
 Source: *El País*. April 15, 2018



Image 29. Angulations / Without angulation
 Source: *UN News*. April 12, 2018

Contrary to a previous thought to the investigation, the belligerents were not the protagonists of the images, but the victims, authorities, protestants and unidentified people on the photos. This line allowed to establish then that there is an abandonment of the classic pretensions of showing those who perpetrate the war and the intention appeared to make visible other faces of it.

In addition to the above, three recurrent life stages were identified in the images of the four portals: Children as the most vulnerable population; adults as those resilient of the conflict and Not identified as beings that go around subjected to the hardships of the environment.

Conclusion 2: The type of *Content* that appeared frequently in the photographs published by the four portals chosen was different among the majority. In the case of *An-Nahar*, the predominance of Inspection Activities became evident. A condition that was different from the *New York Times*, since in this medium were the photographs that recorded Medical Activity/Relief, was the largest number. *El País*, put on its portal, in a significant amount, photos that corresponded to Daily Acts and *News UN* behaved in the same way in that regard.

Unlike the plurality of results of Activities, there was the similarity in terms of Places, since most of the photographs collected from the media analyzed recorded Exteriors.

Thus, it was concluded that, contrary to prejudices prior to the realization of the investigation, the photographic content that predominated in the four portals did not correspond to the record of the full exercise of violence, but to other facets that emerge from it and that link the everyday life, the provision of medical services and the investigation of what happened in the external places where the events took place.

Conclusion 3: The criteria of *Visualization* in the photographs of the four media followed similar patterns of behavior. For example, the largest number of images did not show any of the types of damage specified by the indicators. In figures, the *An-Nahar* presented 14 photographs as well; *The New York Times*, 11; *El País*, 13 and *UN News*, 6.

However, there were two aspects that laid a different path in the coverage decisions. The *New York Times* was the only media that published images in which Very Severe damage was visible, reason that suggests readers who are in front of a newspaper that do not ignore the morbid and, in certain circumstances, forget of the affections to the sensitivity that said images can cause. *UN News* was the only portal that abstained, completely, from publishing images with any type of damage, which highlighted its close link with Human Rights and ethical principles.

In terms of Publication, unlike what was initially expected, there were no photographs that resorted to censorship to protect identities or avoid causing disturbing perceptions. The ratio was 1:0, which revealed that the media in that sense is crude and do not pay attention to the consequences of spreading images with such complex contents without any type of filter. Even so, these actions also reflected, among the lines, the respect for press freedom practiced by the portals in question.

The parameters of composition in the images were governed, in their majority, by General planes and registers Without Angulation. The first condition highlighted the claim of the

medium to be descriptive and complete at the time of delivering information. The second demonstrated the commitment not to alter the positions of authority of the real world when making the photographic record.

From the generality of the answers to the initial questions, it was possible to establish that, effectively, the four media analyzed have different editorial parameters that make them differ in certain aspects of journalistic coverage. However, it was greater the notoriety of similar behaviors among them in terms of decisions on the visual dissemination of news events.

To obtain results that highlight more opposites, it would be necessary to expand the research body to include a greater number of media from different geographical areas.

References

- Abreu, A. A. (2015). Framing o teoría del encuadre en comunicación. Orígenes, desarrollo y panorama actual en España. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, (70) 1, 423 – 450. Doi: 10.4185/RLCS-2015-1053.
- Abreu, A. A. (2008). La inmigración, en la fotografía de prensa de Canarias. *Revista Latina De Comunicación Social*, (63), 409-417.
- Berganza, M. R. & Ruiz, J. A. (2005). *Investigar en comunicación: Guía práctica de métodos y técnicas de investigación social en Comunicación*. Madrid: S.A. McGraw-Hill / Interamericana de España.
- Bonilla-Vélez, J. I. (2018). Imágenes que vienen del pasado. Las fotografías de los llamados campos de concentración de la guerra en Colombia. *Comunicación Y Sociedad* (0188-252), 31, 146-172.
- Colorado, J. A. (2018). *El retrato de un testigo de la guerra*. Disponible en: <https://colombia2020.elespectador.com/>
- Igartua, J. J. & Humanes, M. L. (2004). Imágenes de Latinoamérica en la prensa española. Una aproximación empírica desde la Teoría del Encuadre. *Comunicación Y Sociedad*, 17 (1), 47-76.
- Igartua, J. J. & Humanes, M. L. (2004a). La función de establecer la agenda (agenda setting). En J. Fernández & M. Cebrián (Eds). *Teoría e investigación en comunicación social* (243-260). Madrid: Síntesis S.A.
- Merrigan, G. & Huston, C. L. (2014). *Communication Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Muñiz, C., Igartua, J. J. & Otero, J. A. (2006). Imágenes de la inmigración a través de la fotografía de prensa. Un análisis de contenido. *Comunicación Y Sociedad*, 19 (1), 103-128.
- Scheufele, D. A. (1999): Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing Revisited: Another Look at Cognitive Effects of Political Communication. *Mass Communication & Society*, 3 (2&3): 297-316.
- Vallejo, V. M. (2016). *La deriva ideológica de El País: del socialismo a ciudadanos* (Tesis de pregrado). Barcelona: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.