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BBC Arabic TV Service and the Lebanese Audience(s): Can They Engage with Each Other?

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**BBC Arabic TV Service and the Lebanese Audience(s):
Can They Engage with Each Other?**

Ola Makki

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
by the University of Westminster for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

October, 2019

Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Acknowledgement

My deepest appreciation and gratitude to all those who supported me throughout this arduous journey. This would be my lovely big family, my friends and all those who gave an advice, a push to keep going, and a pat on the shoulder.

Abstract

Foreign Arabic speaking channels exist for a reason: to influence. The birth of these channels has been in reaction to political developments which press the nations they are attached to, to speak to foreign audiences. They form one of the most reliable tools for a country's practice of soft power. BBC Arabic service is no exception. The urge to speak to Arab audiences was related to the high rivalry that the service faced from other pan-Arab channels.

Within this context, this study investigates the relationship between BBC Arabic TV and the Lebanese audiences by exploring how BBC Arabic service and the audiences see, perceive and understand each other. The research studies the Arabic service from a political and economic perspective to understand how its milieu impact and influence its relationship with the British establishment as well as the audiences. In addition, critical discourse analysis is used to explore the discursive language BBCATV uses in speaking to audiences by analyzing four BBCATV produced documentaries.

This research also studies the Lebanese audiences to understand if what BBCATV offers resonate with their needs, how they see BBCATV, what they expect of it and how they think it sees them. The fieldwork of this study takes place in Lebanon and among the young and educated whom the channel aims to address. The data was obtained through doing focus groups where participants watched and discussed the four documentaries.

The results show that BBCA is governed by its milieu and that it still speaks to the audiences as if it is isolated and in need of BBCA to educate and inform them. The findings from the Lebanese audience's data showed that they have a lack of trust of BBCATV because of its identity as a British organization; they expect media to engage in their societies' causes therefore they feel detached from BBCATV. The findings also showed that the Lebanese audiences are diverse and have different needs, different expectations of BBCATV and different interpretations to how BBCATV sees them.

To conclude, the study shows that Arab audience is in fact audience(s) which is seen, understood and addressed by BBCATV as one lump and which stems from an imperialist perception of the Arab world as one which needs change and modernization according to the western model whether in values or politics.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 International Broadcasters

In an interval of less than ten years the Arab world have seen eight international broadcasters launching in Arabic. This period stretches from 2004 the Iraq invasion up through the Arab Spring at a time when the Arab media market have already expanded since the 1990s with the satellite revolution. The Arab world has come a long way from having only state media that reflect the views of the government to having transborder media that can broadcast with less control from governments.

This is not to say that government do not attempt to clamp down on these channels' freedom of expression¹, but Arab media have expanded in multiple forms offering audiences different genre of output². MBC, the Saudi channel that launched in London in 1991 offered programmes modelled on the Western programming style and format (PBS; 2007). The most crucial aspect of this broadening of Arab media market was the launch of Aljazeera and Al-Arabiya, two pan-Arab news channels that offered audiences content so they no longer needed to rely on western media for news of their own region (see CNN coverage of the first Gulf war or the coverage of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, Henderson; 2000).

The channel took the lead in discussing Arab issues mainly the Israeli Palestinian conflict, opening debates on political issues, causing concern for governments that feared losing control of the public (Henderson; 2000). The idea of an Arab public sphere was gaining pace (Lynch; 2006).

Therefore, as a member of the Arab audience, I had to ask the question why is there this influx of foreign channels? What drives these foreign channels to enter the Arab market? does the Arab world need them? Why the interest in talking to the Arab audiences now? Who is benefiting from them? Can they compete? and what do they

¹ In February 2015, the Al-Arab channel, owned by Waleed Bin Talal, went off air less than 24 hours after launching, for hosting a Bahraini opposition figure. A similar incident happened in December 2015, when Arabsat stopped al-Manar TV, which was affiliated with the Lebanese Shia party Hezbollah, from broadcasting, due to a rift in views regarding the conflict in Yemen and Syria (Monitoring, 2015).

² <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/arab-countries/>

want to say? How far does foreign strategies play on the decision of foreign governments to launch Arabic speaking broadcasters?

International broadcasters are regarded as a key element in a country's diplomacy, which is the facilitation of communication between a state and other states or foreign public (Goodpaster; 1996). The effectiveness and speed of how information is disseminated through media across the globe have transformed diplomatic activity across the globe (Seib; 2012).

Within that respect, Price defines international broadcasting as "the elegant term for a complex combination of state-sponsored news, information, and entertainment directed at a population outside the sponsoring state's boundaries. It is the use of electronic media by one society to shape the opinion of the people and leaders in another" (Price; 2003: 53).

The role of international broadcasters in promoting a country's good image and policies to foreign audiences has been realised since the early 20th century mainly during the two world wars with the advent of the radio. Radio's reachability to audiences across the border made it the medium of choice for governments in disseminating propaganda either to win over foreign audiences, to address the enemy or to boost morales at home.

International media first and foremost are government-funded ventures with a political mission (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg; 2009) that operate to promote national character, values and culture (Zöllner: 2006, Boyd-Barret; 1980).

BBC Arabic service is no exception. During the inter-war years, the Arab world, being under British and French rule, were subjected to German and Italian propaganda through their trans-border radio transmissions to the Arab world. Italy and Germany broadcasted anti-British propaganda to the heart of British colonies. Britain embarked on having its own Arabic service and it launched Arabic radio service, the first foreign speaking service to launch within the BBC. The aim was for the radio service to cast a favourable image of Britain to the Arab world to protect its interests and to make its views known (Taylor; 2007).

Fast forward to the new millennium the 9/11 attacks happened and was followed by the US-led invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. All eyes were on the Arab world and it became important to engage with audiences for the battle of hearts and minds. New

approaches were introduced to speak to foreign audiences which include understanding, listening and engaging with them (Leonard; 2002). This led to a proliferation of international broadcasters in the Arab World all focused on promoting their image their values and their ideas. International channels launched one after the other all rushing to project themselves to the people of this region.

The US-funded Alhurra that launched in 2004 wanted “to promote a more positive U.S. image to Arabs” (McCarthy; 2004). As Russia made a comeback on the international political arena with the aim to expand its influences, Russia Today launched in Arabic in 2007, Deutsche Welle the German funded channel which was launched in 2005 expanded its programming to 12 hours daily in 2008 to increase Germany’s media presence in the region and to spread Germany’s values of human rights, freedom and democratic development according to then Deutsche Welle Director General Erik Bettermann (Press Release; 2008). France 24 Arabic launched in 2010 with a “French perspective” in mind. What is common among all these channels is the goal which is their countries’, vision their countries’ interests and their countries’ values³. BBC Arabic TV joined the bandwagon in 2008. The Arab world turned into a mediated rivalry arena as it became the battleground of international powers via satellite.

The surge in the launch of foreign channels is related to political upheavals. In other words, international broadcasters have emerged mainly at times of crises or world changing events that affect the interests of the country of the broadcaster. The decision to speak to foreign audiences therefore is circumstantial, which makes the birth of international broadcasters ‘reactional’. It is only at times of crises that communication and interaction with foreign audiences becomes crucial and ‘relationship-building’ takes precedence. These are “reactive and not the product of forward-looking foreign services caring about relationships with foreign audiences” (Melissen; 2005:9).

It could be argued straight away that BBC Arabic service is different. Its legacy in the Arab world showed that the service succeeded in creating a relationship with its audiences. However, several factors contributed to that success. The absence of competition from other services (Vaughan: 2008) the high illiteracy rate which rendered radio the medium of choice, the weak competition from national and international broadcasters and also the good relations that Britain enjoyed with Arab countries gave a sense of relief to listeners (Ayish; 1991). But the changes in the Arab

³ https://static.france24.com/infographies/presse/presskit_en.pdf

world, not only in terms of the number of channels the Arab viewer have access to and therefore choices, or the competition that BBC is facing, but also in terms of how audiences now interact with channels, handle information and react to it in the new internet age poses the question of how BBC sees the audiences now, what it can deliver and how.

1.2 Research Problem and Questions

The legacy of international media in the Arab world has created an atmosphere of suspicion. Audiences reeling from the post-colonial era, view them as a fresh return to spread propaganda. BBC Arabic TV was not immune as there were warnings that historical experience of the Arab world with the British colonial rule and the political atmosphere will make them see the return of the BBC as a propaganda tool (Burrell; 2004:1).

On the eve of launching the Arabic TV service in March 2008, Nigel Chapman, then head of the World Service was confident of the success of the channel. "They'll [Arab audience] trust it as they've done in the past and they'll use it extensively", he said (BBC online; 2008). Chapman was not the only one to ascertain this statement. The former head of the BBC Arabic Service, Hossam El-Sokkari confirmed that there is a need and BBC have experience and legacy in the Middle East (Pintak; 2007).

As a person from that region, the first thing that came to my mind was that BBC was relying on its legacy to win the audience. Within that context does the BBC see the audience of the 21st century the same as that of 1938? Why is it so sure that audiences still need, trust and are interested in the BBC?

I also asked myself: How far does the BBC know the Arab audience, when the population of Arabic speakers exceeds 400 million, stretching from North Africa, to the Middle East. They are religiously, ethnically and culturally diverse, yet they were all downsized to one single label: The Arab audience.

I grew up in the Lebanon, the most diverse and pluralistic country in the Arab world. Lebanon's confessional system formed multiple communities with different cultural backgrounds and identities. So where does a population like that of Lebanon fit into the BBC's picture of the 'Arab audience'? Is there a unified image of the Arab world? These questions motivated me to research the relationship between BBC Arabic TV and the Lebanese audience.

This research will look into the circumstances of BBC Arabic TV birth, its responsibilities as a British organisation and functionality through studying its political economy. This research also explores Lebanese audiences' perception, needs and expectations from BBC through discussion of BBC material. The study will explore if BBCATV knows its audiences and their needs. The study aims to understand that through answering the following research questions:

- 1- What is the BBC's perception of its audiences?
- 2- Does the BBC know its audiences?
- 3- How does the BBC talk to its audiences?
- 4- How do audiences see the BBC?
- 5- How do audiences think the BBC sees them?

1.3 BBC Arabic TV and the Lebanese Audiences: An Unexplored Relationship

BBC Arabic TV service had been in the market for ten years, but the specificities of the relationship with Lebanese audiences is still not researched. Some of the articles published in journals focus on the BBC content and coverage. Hill and Alshaer have examined the programme Talking Point, and how its topics relate to the FCO public diplomacy objectives (Hill and Alshaer; 2010: 152). Gillespie have also studied Talking Point. El-Issawi and Baumann (2010) focus in their article on the ever-existing dilemma for BBCA to maintain impartiality and also promote British diplomatic goals in the wake of the launch of BBCATV. The Internews Center for Innovation and Learning at the Annenberg School of Communication, Pennsylvania University (Harkin et al; 2012) published research on BBC Arabic and Aljazeera Arabic's coverage of the Syria crisis, with a focus on analysing the content. BBC research is related to audiences' rates of reachability and viewership⁴ whose "data and insights are vital for performance monitoring, informing the creation of new content and services, and helping shape the BBC's strategy" (National Audit Office; 2017).

Studies of the radio service that includes audiences are almost non-existent. A review of the literature about the Arabic radio service, like Peter Partner's book, Arab Voices (1988), shows a focus on the BBC in terms of its positioning in Britain's foreign policy, the content or the prospects of its establishment, but they neglect the study of

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/051211arabic.html>

the audience. Ayish's (1991) article *Foreign Voices as People's Choice* touches on the listeners rate and their perception of the BBC as an organisation but does not do an in-depth study of the audience. BBC have conducted one opinion research⁵ as Arabic TV was launched in 2009 to gather viewers' perception. However, little is known or explored about the TV service and its relationship to its perception of the audience and the audiences' perception of the BBC.

In light of these points, this study embarks on a multidimensional approach to attempt to understand the relationship between the two: exploring the Arabic TV service politically, economically and sociologically, studying its discourse, how it sees the audience and, at the same time, where the audience situates the BBC, how they interpret BBC's discourse, and the BBC's positionality in the Arab media market. Several studies of media organisations and their discourses have been criticised for neglecting audiences' opinions and relying only on macro level studies of the organisation. This study is imperative because it puts both the BBC Arabic TV and the audience at equal footing in the attempt to understand this relationship. In addition to studying the BBC's political economy, the research studies Lebanese audiences' perception of the BBC, their interpretation of BBC discourse, and also the Lebanese mediascape cultural scape and political scape that shape their understanding of the BBC.

Studies of BBCA have focused on the relationship with the FCO, this study is important because it focuses on the national character of BBCA and the impact on the relationship with the audiences. Media are normally inherent of the socio-political structure of their country of origin and they operate within the norms and values of their own country rather than the country they address. By studying BBC Arabic TV 'British character' this research attempts to show that international broadcasters cannot function outside their milieu due to cultural political and social differences.

This study is also important because it looks into the characteristics of international broadcasters and how this play into the relationship with the audiences. The characteristics inherent in international broadcasters allow them to control the flow of information. News, documentaries, interviews and one-to-one talk shows are formats in which any broadcaster can have total command of and can fulfil the desired objectives (Cull; 2009). But within a changing media environment where communication powers

⁵ http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/review_report_research/ara2008_09/arabic_tv_research.pdf

are now in the hands of audiences, this research will look into the viability of international broadcasters within the new technologies and whether international broadcasters can allow the empowerment of the audiences without losing out on control of their output. Another significant point of this study is that it gives an insight into the application of certain research methods in the Middle East. The focus group methods applied in this research highlights the difficulties faced during fieldwork.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to open the debate on whether there is a need and benefit for audiences from these international broadcasters. I aim to study one international broadcaster, BBCATV, by looking into its existence, role and functionality and how this play on its ability to engage, interact and understand audiences. International broadcasters are featured as now as one of the main assets of public diplomacy, a form of diplomacy that focuses on engaging directly with foreign audiences. It is a shift from the traditional form of diplomacy between state officials to one whereby a government speaks to foreign audiences instead of their peers through their different tools, one of which is foreign-speaking international broadcasters.

However, the legacy of international media speaking to foreign audiences have created an atmosphere of suspicion and audiences view them as propaganda, a term which is associated with 'mind manipulation' and 'management of perceptions' through lying, misleading, and brainwashing (Jowett & O'Donnell; 2015, Taylor; 2003, Welch; 2003, Pratkanis & Aronson; 1991). The debate about whether international broadcasters acts as propaganda machines or public diplomacy necessitates an explanation of the differences and similarities between the two concepts.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Propaganda became so widespread that it was called "the century of propaganda" (Wilke; 1998: 1). Countries relied heavily on media locally and abroad to boost the morale on the home front and mobilise the masses to stand behind their leaders and their choices (Kershaw; 1983); arouse feelings of loyalty to the nation (Welch; 2002: 60); and tarnish the image of the enemy (Lasswell; 1971). However, changes in international politics and world order necessitated new ways for countries to influence audiences.

Public diplomacy was introduced in the 1965 by Edmund Gullion dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University who wanted a more

sophisticated and appealing term that propaganda. However, in his definition he clearly made the link between the two:

What is important today is the interaction of groups, peoples, and cultures beyond national borders, influencing the way groups and peoples in other countries think about foreign affairs, react to our policies, and affect the policies of their respective governments... I would have liked to call it 'propaganda.' It seemed like the nearest thing in the pure interpretation of the word to what we were doing. But 'propaganda' has always a pejorative connotation in this country. To describe the whole range of communications, information, and propaganda, we hit upon 'public diplomacy' (quoted in: Brown; 2008)

But is changing the term to public diplomacy means a change in the goals and objectives? Defendants of public diplomacy distinguish it from propaganda through two main features: interactional feature between the initiator and the audience and the mutual benefits.

'Interaction' features in Gullion's definition of public diplomacy which means that it is a "two-way street" mode of communication (Melissen; 2009: 18). Public diplomacy spectrum of activity "ranges from primarily 'listening' to predominantly 'telling'" (Fisher; 2009: 252). Propaganda spectrum of activity is telling and making receivers believe and do things they wouldn't do if they "thought about it calmly, dispassionately" (Institute for Propaganda Analysis; 1995: 217).

The other feature of the two is the objectives. Propaganda is "the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist" (Jowett and O'Donnell; 2015:7). Public diplomacy is "the way in which both government and private individuals and groups influence directly or indirectly those public attitudes and opinions which bear directly on another government's foreign policy decisions" (Delaney; 1968: 3).

Propaganda and public diplomacy both involve influencing the way of thinking, achieving objectives but they are differentiated by public diplomacy focuses on mutual beneficiary something which propaganda lacks. The functionality of public diplomacy

and propaganda is interchangeable. Nelson and Izadi (2009) ⁶ argue that public diplomacy can become propaganda when it relies on selective truth to fulfil its objective. Scholars also question the 'listening' feature saying that listening is one thing and "giving equal weight" to what people say is another (Berridge; 2015). In their study of UK's approach to Muslim communities in UK and abroad, Curtis and Jaine (2012) argued that there is a possibility that the 'audience' views are listened to just for the purpose of understanding how to manage it in the best interest of the government. The shift from propaganda to public diplomacy is a shift in the way of communication rather than the goals and objectives. This use of more subtle form of influence like public diplomacy is just "propaganda rebranded" Berridge (2015).

This study aims to question foreign media's public diplomacy activity of engaging with audiences and to show that mutual beneficiary is achievable only when the initiators interests are met. Foreign media are inherent of the socio-political structure of their country of origin and operate within the norms and values of their own country. These features of international broadcasters create cross-cultural misunderstanding, problems of engagement with audiences, misconception of the audiences and failure to initiate mutual beneficiary.

1.5 Realities and Realisations during Fieldwork

At the beginning of my research, a university lecturer advised me to change one element of the research: the audience. She referred to the challenge of studying audiences and recommended that I study the BBC and the staff instead. As a beginner in this research, I didn't really know what to expect. However, as I made the preparations for the focus groups, gathered data from the participants, I realised what she meant by that. How can we quantify the feelings of people? Their moods, their anger, their thoughts and ideologies? How do we know if what they say is what they really think?

Focus groups are rarely held in the Middle East. The literature about focus groups gives good guidance in terms of how to gather focus groups, handle participants, what to avoid, and what to expect. However, during the process of planning for these interviews and then conducting them, it became clear to me that focus group research has its own dynamics in each and every country. The personal encounters that I faced

⁶ Nelson and Izadi argue that propaganda is not necessarily deceptive but also it is not necessarily truthful. A propagandist can choose to lie, which is black propaganda, disguise the source of the message, grey propaganda, or give a selected version of the truth, white propaganda. What is important in a propaganda act is the efficiency of the act rather than the truthfulness.

during the process of gathering participants will contribute to the information that is available for subsequent researchers who are planning to do fieldwork in similar environments. The challenges grew bigger because the researched audience is the Lebanese audience or audiences, which are divided along confessional lines. Sects form and shape the social, cultural and political life in Lebanon.

To obtain a representational sample of participants, group members therefore needed to be representative of the major sects that make up the fabric of Lebanese society: Sunni, Shia, Christians and Druze. Being Lebanese, and having my own clear religious identity, meant that I should be very transparent and convincing when I explained to participants, or to the point of contact facilitating these participants, why the sects matter in this research? The other challenge is that I had to ask myself whether my religious identity affected in any way the answers of the participants, or would they just see me as I identify myself; as a researcher. If the focus group method has taught me anything, it is that a moderator can be as nervous as the participants.

When I entered a large classroom of only Christian college students, explaining to them what I was doing and asking for volunteers for the focus group discussion, it was hard not to notice the shock and the looks on their faces: we have a veiled girl in the classroom! I was quite anxious, and my fear was that nobody would agree to take part.

The critical discourse analysis was a different kind of challenge. The analysis of a discursive event is based on the researcher's own understanding of these discursive events. Basically, a researcher is presenting to the readers an analysis that mostly resembles his/her own background, culture, ideologies, own ideas and experiences. This drew my attention to the limitations of this method, in terms of the level of subjectivity that a researcher can insert into the analysis. Just by knowing the producers, and his/her thoughts, a researcher could extract meanings from the text during the analysis of the discursive event. To render this approach more scientific, I attempted to insert a section under each analysis that talks about the discursive practice, through which I explain the process of production.

The participant observation method was used to understand BBC Arabic TV and its functionality. As a BBC staff it was an advantage in observing and easily reaching and speaking to colleagues, editors and managers. When I started the research, I always said to myself: What could be easier than researching an organisation which is my workplace? I have access to information, to emails, and I can approach people easily. I

could witness incidents, hear comments and record what was happening. I can go in and out whenever I like, observe what I like, speak to whoever I want. However, the reason I have this privileged access is the same reason that accounts for why I cannot publish everything I get my hands on: being a member of staff.

Having access to data does not always mean the ability to publish data. My own positioning at the BBC means I will be held for libel if I publish anything that is described as harming the image of the BBC. Upon the advice of a BBC lawyer, the controversial parts had to be examined by a BBC manager to make sure that no names are mentioned inappropriately, and to weigh whether the incidents mentioned could harm the BBC's image.

The other, almost equal, problem was interviewing staff to talk about the BBC and the management, its positioning, and its operations. Many of the BBC staff to whom I talked were very cautious in revealing everything they knew about the management, certain eras, managers, and so on, because they are in a similar situation to me. It was also clear with some of the interviewees that they knew more than they said. Some others would say things off the record. However, there are good aspects of being a researcher and an employee. One is that, as an employee, I have had longer access, which makes it easier to understand how things work.

Some of the incidents that I mentioned, particularly about the BBC and Arab conflicts, and how they relate to staff, are information that could not be obtained through participant observation but, rather, by acquaintance and trust (see Chapter 4), but it is important to highlight that throughout the course of this research, and as I attempted to study an organisation as big as the BBC, the more I know, the more questions I have. Are documents, participant observations, interviews' discourse analysis, enough? Is there anything else to it? How are things actually managed behind closed doors?

1.6 Outline of the Chapters

The research is divided into eight chapters. After Chapter One, the introduction, Chapter Two presents the 'theoretical framework' of this thesis. I use four models to attempt to answer the questions of this research: audience reception theory, propaganda, cultural imperialism and globalisation.

Chapter Three is the methodology chapter. I used four methods to gather data. The first method is the focus group. I conducted group interviews in the Lebanon. The participants discussed BBCATV in terms of how they assess the coverage of the documentaries, how they think it talks to them, what message they think it conveys to them, and whether they relate to it.

The second method is critical discourse analysis. I apply this method on four documentaries from the series *Ma La Yuqal* (The Unsaid), the first documentary series produced by BBC Arabic TV.

The third method is interviews. I interviewed producers and managers who were involved in the process of launching and producing the documentaries. Interviewing BBC managers and producers is useful in understanding how BBCATV staff see the audience, and whether they know what the audiences want. The fourth method is participant observation. I used this method to focus on the workings of BBC Arabic TV vis-à-vis the decision making inside the Arabic service and the positioning of the service within the wider BBC.

Chapter Four is the political economy of BBCA which studies its relationship with the FCO, its positionality as an Arab service bound by British establishment rules and its position in the Arab media market.

Chapter Five is audience's reception. In this chapter I look into BBCA audience research to understand whether BBC reaches out to all Arab audiences, the complexities of Arab audiences and then a micro perspective of the factors which forms and moulds Lebanese audiences' characteristics, who are part of the Arab audience that BBC addresses.

Chapter Six is called Focus Groups: Themes and Findings. This chapter discusses the main finding from the focus group discussions. It includes themes derived from the participants comments after the documentaries.

Chapter Seven is called Critical Discourse Analysis. I carried out a critical discourse analysis of four BBCATV documentaries. This chapter looks into the BBCATV discourse to understand the discourse of the BBC

Chapter Eight is the conclusion which provides a general discussion of the results obtained, the limitations, and recommendations for other researchers in the field of media studies.

Chapter two

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This study situates itself within four models, Audience reception theory, propaganda, cultural imperialism and globalization. For this research, which focuses on the relationship between audience and the BBCATV, it is integral to start with the audience reception theory, which focuses on audiences decoding of messages in a televisual communicative process as well as understanding media as text. This theory is the tool for understanding the audiences' perception of BBCA.

The second theoretical framework is the propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky. Though the model was applied for US media, it provides "analytic framework for understanding the performance of the news media" (Sparks; 2007:69). I use this model to argue that the problems inherent in international broadcasters associate them with propaganda activity. This model provides the tools to study the political economy of the BBCATV through applying the filters used in the model.

The cultural imperialism approach is used to understand the form of relationship between BBCATV and the Lebanese audiences. It is very much a contested model, but I aim to find out if imperialism is a cultural practice. This approach provides tools to understanding how the audience sees the BBC and how the BBC sees the audience. I also introduce criticism to this model for its deterministic approach by studying the media rather than audience which rendered the paradigm dead.

The fourth model is globalisation. Through this paradigm I seek to understand BBC's positioning in the Arab World and among the Arab and Lebanese audiences. The importance of this paradigm is its dichotomous nature and the role attributed to media: pro-globalists think globalisation broadens the sense of connection, anti-globalists believe that globalisation is used to reinforce global economic and cultural domination (Lull; 2000: 225&231).

The dichotomy of globalisation is quite well reflected in the Arab world: first, globalisation is the causal factor for the spread of satellite television in the Arab world. Second, local and pan-Arab channels matched the foreign media in the quality of production, rendering it hard for foreign media to find a place in the Arab world. Third, the domination of the 'national' character of these foreign channels hampered them

from 'globalising' themselves. Fourth, anti-globalists see globalisation as an invasion of cultures that engulfs the nation-state authority and national identity. This helped solidify cultural border and identity recognition. Moreover, research shows that receivers tend to watch channels that reflect their own opinions and views of the world particularly at times of conflict. This complicates the striving of the foreign media for a place in this highly polarised media environment.

2.2 Audience and Medium

Audience reception theory, which derived from Stuart Hall's encoding decoding model, is the most suitable theory for this research, which aims to understand how audiences interpret the message of BBCATV. The importance of this theory is that it gives prominence to the audience as a group of people who interpret meanings based on their cultural experiences. This is not the only aspect of the theory, which makes it applicable.

The theory also understands text as a discourse, that is, it sees text as meanings and not just words, which is important in the analysis of the BBCATV documentaries, it also looks at the whole communicative process which forms a 'message', the production and the circulation of the message. These two important factors are also essential to the research where four BBCATV documentaries will be analysed as text and as a communicative process. But before getting into the theory of audience reception, it is important to follow up how audiences studies have changed and developed to get to Stuart Hall's encoding decoding model, what this model is about and the criticism it was subjected to and how the theoretical application of this theory works for this research.

The changes in the medium have played a role in the studies of audience. Audience, as a word, means "The assembled spectators or listeners at a public event such as a play, film, concert, or meeting" (Oxford Dictionary)⁷. This definition refers to audiences as only those people who are collectively engaged in a watching or listening activity within a specified temporal spatial environment. The references embodied in the word audience have changed with the change of the medium

⁷ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/audience>

(McQuail; 1997:2). A gathering of people in theatre, race arena, musical work or club fights were referred to as live audience because they gathered in a specified time and space to watch a play and interact with others as well as with performers.

The 20th century heralded the age of radio and television, which transformed audience to mass audience. As the time-space dimension loosened, the audience could not know each other and they can be manipulated (McQuail; 1997:3, Lull: 2000:113). The fast development of the television medium to a global medium where a locally produced film can become a global product watched by millions regardless of time place cultural backgrounds turned audiences into consumers who are sold as commodity to markets (McQuail; 1997:9). Audiences therefore were seen as either masses whose understanding of themselves or the world, are moulded by the media (Lippmann; 2004), or consumers due to the technological hype that forced media organisation to lend much weight to the power of advertisers.

The fast development of mass media increased the interest in exploring audiences from both media industries and academics. Media industries' explored audiences for profit reasons. They used quantitative research methods to enable them to measure the viewing figures for their programmes and qualitative data of the viewers to report to the advertisers the viewers interests (Rayner; 2008).

Academics influenced by the rise of success of the radio medium in wartime propaganda during the beginning of the 20th century provided a framework for the study of audiences from the effects prism (Casey et al; 2002). Media effects research focused on the psychological aspect of audiences, looking into their behaviour and attitudes to understand the effects of media. Media research thus led to the codification of audiences as either masses who can be acted upon or commodity that can be sold to advertisers.

2.2.1 Audience as Passive: Media Effects

Media effect is an area of social scientific research that measures the behavioural aspect of viewers via-vis media content. It developed in the United States to measure the influence of violent and sexual activity images on audiences (McCarthy; 2002). The methodological approach used to measure the influence relied on the direct observation

of the audience's reaction and attraction to the new technologies: radio, film, and cinema (McQuail; 1977). In the 1920s, Harold Lasswell's studied the direct influence of the media on the audiences' perception during the WWI propaganda rush (Lasswell; 1971).

In the early 1930s, a privately funded project conducted by the Payne Fund studies in the United States studied the association between children's and juveniles' behavior and violent images through conducting in-depth interviews as well as psychological tests (Guanteltt; 2005). This linear relationship between the sender and receiver, whereby the receiver is a passive entity influenced by the media images without any resistance, was known as the hypodermic needle model. Media messages are as needles "injected into the minds of the masses where they were stored in the form of changes in attitudes and behaviour" (Balnaves, Donald, & Shoesmith; 2009: 58).

Media effect model has been critiqued with the rise of new scientific research methods. Social scientist Paul Lazarsfeld use of empirical methods in the 1940s, introduced results that questioned media effects. In his study of the influence of the US presidential campaign on residents in Erie County, Ohio Lazarsfeld found that the media do not affect the audience directly, but through a third party- defined as opinion leaders- who take in the message, interpret it, analyse it and then pass it on to the masses (Lazarsfeld et al; 1968: vi).

Rather than having an all-powerful effect of the media, there is a 'minimal effect' because of personal influence: exposure to media, the media themselves, the content of the media, the attitudes and dispositions of the audience, and, most importantly, interpersonal relations (Katz & Lazarsfeld; 2006).

This has led to a criticism to media effects studies for the processes pursued to measure the effects. First, it ignores the audiences' power and treats them as passive receivers; second, it studies media effects through a simple experiment of looking into the audience before the event and after that; third it dismisses any context in which media messages are formed. Lazarsfeld approach gave prominence to studying the background of audience and their groups' affiliations, but it was criticised for being inconclusive in the sense that it kept the application of media effect approach as the launchpin for understanding the relationship between media and audiences (McCarthy; 2002).

In the 1960s, new trends in media studies emerged and began to see audiences as active and responsive player. Uses and gratification model developed in the late 1950s until 1970s by British researcher Jay Blumler and US researcher Elihu Katz. The model focused on knowing what audiences do with the media and not what media do to people. People might watch the same news or same film but what they get from it differs depending on each and everyone needs from the show, values that determine the needs for example watching a film could be for entertainment for someone but for someone else it could be an information of film production and screenplay. Someone could watch the news to understand what is going on in the world, someone else might just be trying to improve language skills through listening.

In this sense the audience member shifts from being a passive receiver of the message to an active one who selects what is preferred from the media, and how to use those media (Rubin; 1994). The relation between the media and the audience is governed by a set of “social and psychological factors that mediate people’s communication behaviour. Predisposition, interaction, and environment mould expectations about the media” (Rubin; 1994: 420).

Uses and gratification model takes credit for shifting the focus from the sender to the receiver, but it was criticised for being too simplistic and limited. First, it depicts the media as working for the benefit of the audiences by giving them what they want (Elliot; 1999) and it ignores the powers of media in creating needs (Casey et al; 2002). The need to travel as an example might be urged by a travel show that brings to the audiences the most iconic places in the world to visit, where to eat, stay and what to do and the prices that all influence the audience’s decisions.

Second, the model’s methodological and theoretical limitations because it avoids studies of media and audience in context and relies on empirical research method that quantifies audiences (Seiter; 1999). Uses and gratification model takes credit for shifting the focus from the sender to the receiver but equally kept the effect perspective in place (Bybee; 1987). Approaches to media studies changed with Stuart Hall’s introduction of British Cultural Studies into mass communication studies (Lockett; 2002) through his encoding and decoding model.

Hall’s model laid the framework for media studies to move from the confinements of mass communication research to the broader scope of cultural studies that explores media from a social context by, incorporating semiotics and theories of ideology and

representation (Casey et al; 2002) and also ethnographic method of research (Nightingale; 2003). With his model, the relation between media and audience is no longer measured through the behaviour of the audiences, but through understanding texts as a cultural practice and an understanding of the audiences within a cultural process (Seiter; 1999, Nightingale; 2003).

2.2.2 Audience as active: Hall's Encoding Decoding Model

The encoding decoding model of media production and reception was developed in the 1970s by sociologists Stuart Hall and applied first by David Morley at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University. This model was influenced by two trends: first, the ethnographic research that gave more weight to audiences because it relied heavily on qualitative methodologies (Seiter; 1999, Lacey: 2002). Audiences' research relied on methods like participant observation, focus groups and questionnaire, which acknowledged audiences' powers in reading, accepting or rejecting the media text.

Second, the incorporation of theories of semiotics and ideology in media studies (Casey et al; 2002, and Seiter; 1999). This model mixes between the uses and gratification theory which sees audiences as active, the use of semiotic concepts influenced by post-structuralist philosopher Roland Barthes and the Frankfurt school emphasis on the hegemonic ideologies being encoded into media (Kropp; 2015)

Hall's model is based on what he calls the 'preferred meaning' which is the dominant meaning that the encoder encoded in a text. It is dominant because the encoder is usually the dominant side of society who uses media to encode messages. But whether the decoder will actually accept the preferred meaning is not guaranteed as Hall argues. The way audience decodes the intended meaning in the text is divided into three types of readings. Hall (1999) identifies three reading positions for the receivers' decoding of a message:

The dominant reading position; it is when the receiver decodes the message and adopts it fully.

The negotiated position: it is a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements in the sense that a decoder accepts some elements in the intended meaning but rejects others.

The oppositional reading of the message: it is when the intended meaning is rejected. The receiver understands the intended meaning, rejects it and constructs another meaning that is not intended by the encoder. In the three different readings, audiences' reading of media text is related to their social and cultural context as well as personal experience. This means that texts do not hold a definite meaning but rather they are interpreted differently according to audiences' social, cultural and personal experiences.

This intended meaning might then be decoded either in the same way as intended or in a completely different way. For example, BBC's choice of Arabic documentaries that focuses on taboo issues stem from: a) an ideological notion that it is in the public interest to discuss all issues; b) from a professional notion in the BBC that it delivers good journalism to audience; c) and from a technical notion that the team had access and interviewees that will make up a very good documentary.

Most importantly, Hall's model applies to televisual communication. Hall views this communication as a circuit rather than a linear process between sender, message, receiver as presented by mass communication studies (Hall; 1973)

The communicative process as he explains is a set of connective practices- production, circulation, consumption/ distribution reproduction which are linked but also have their 'distinctive moments' that distinguishes each one of them either by their form, existence or mode of application. This distinctiveness reflects on how the product of that connected process 'appears' at each moment of production/circulation and "distinguishes discursive production from other types of production and our society and in modern media systems' (Hall; 1973).

Hall argues that for the discursive product to be complete in a communicative process, the production practice produces a message or what he calls 'sign-vehicles'. These sign-vehicles are organised through operation of codes which are then issued within the rules of 'language'. Hall emphasises that "it is in this discursive form that the circulation of the 'product' takes place as well as its distribution to different audiences" (Hall; 1973). This requires the use of 'means' ie the media apparatuses instruments for the circulation of the product be it a video-type or film.

As the production process is complete, the discourse must be transformed into social practice, ie give meaning to it to be complete and effective. This meaning which is the outcome of a set of signifying practices (encoding) that are articulated throughout

the production process is determined by a second set of signifying practices (decoding). Hall argues that the moments of encoding/decoding are 'determinate moments.' In other words, once the product is encoded, the discursive form of the message dominates the production/ reproduction process. 'The 'message form' is the necessary 'form of appearance' of the event in its passage from source to receiver" (Hall; 2012: 164).

Hall's communicative exchange in a television medium starts with the broadcasters, which are structured and equipped with the technical and institutional infrastructure to produce a programme. Once production starts then circuit begins because as Hall explains production process is not isolated, but first, it is shaped by the knowledge of the institutional structure and ideologies, the technical skills and assumption of the audiences, second, this knowledge is drawn by the socio-cultural and political system that allows the broadcasters to define topics for treatment, events, and audiences in their production process.

This renders audiences as both the receiver and the source of the message during the production process creating a circuit whereby audiences' feedback is incorporated in the production process itself. However, this circuit does not make the production and the reception of the message identical, rather related because production and reception are 'differentiated moments' within the whole communicative process.

The passage of this product necessitates sending an encoded message through the use of language. The use of language to create meaningful discourse initiates a differentiated moment within the communicative process. But for the encoded message to have an influence, persuade, or entertain, the message must be 'understood as a meaningful discourse and meaningfully decoded'. While the production process have 'differentiated moments' in the communicative process that works for the passage of the product, encoding and decoding ie the use and understanding of the discursive language are 'determinate moments' because they relatively autonomous' in determining the meaning in the text within this communicative process (Hall; 1973: 3).

In a determinate moment, the structure employs a code and yields a 'message': at another determinate moment, the 'message', via its decodings, issues into a structure, we are now fully aware that this re-entry into the structures of audience reception and 'use' cannot be understood in simple behavioural terms.

This circuit does not mean that the encoded meaning structure and the decoded meaning structure are the same. This depends on positioning of the encoder and decoder during the communicative exchange, which affects the degree of 'understanding' and 'misunderstanding'. This as Hall argues transforms our understanding of television content and audience reception (Hall; 1973: 5). Hall laid out the importance of the 'passage of discourse' ie meanings embodied in a text following a process of encoding that are social, cultural and ideological signifiers.

2.2.3 Audience studies: Finding an inroad between Mass Communication and Cultural studies

Hall's model invites us to move beyond the text as simple words and audiences as simple psychological human beings and to analyse both entities within the framework of cultural processes. He puts much attention to the role of the encoder and the decoder, with little attention to 'textual determinism' (Hall; 1973).

Encoding process: In the process of encoding, it takes place through ideological professional and technical processes as Hall explains Hall; 2012).

Institutional structures of broadcasting, with their practices and networks of production their organized relations and technical infrastructures are required to produce a programme (Hall; 2012: 165).

This circuit might affect the encoding of the message and issue different meanings as different signifiers are interfering. However, Hall's model was criticised for talking about one preferred reading while there are three reading positions (Wren-Lewis; 1983). Others also questioned how to establish a preferred reading. 'Where is it and how do we know if we've found it? Can we be sure we didn't put it there ourselves while we were looking? And can it be found by examining any sort of text?' (Moore; 1993: 28).

Hall's model was also criticised for looking into television as a medium rather than "televisual media [as] part of the range of signifying practices that produce and reproduce meaning" (Wren-Lewis; 1983: 183). TV is seen therefore as a signifier which articulate meanings and interpretations to the signified within the circuit. Once TV is

seen as a signifying practice, Wren-Lewis (1983) argues that other discourses could be found outside the encoding practices.

Decoding process: David Morley's study which followed on Hall's model was the first and largest study to apply the model. Morley recruited groups of people to watch Nationwide programme, a BBC evening news programme, based on their class: upper class, middle class and trades union. After the group watched and discussed the programme, Morley attempted to determine the relation between message decoding and their class.

His findings were that different groups decoded messages in different ways. But he also concluded that decoding cannot be linked with the class only and that there should be other variables to determine the decoding of the message. Morley was the first to criticise this correlation in his book the 'Nationwide' Audience: Structure and Decoding', emphasising that though groups have common social positions, "their decodings are inflected in different directions by the influence of the discourses and institutions in which they are situated (Morley; 1980:137).

Wren-Lewis who also criticised Morley's work for dismissing other social factors that play a role in decoding like the effect of a group discussion. Wren-Lewis argues that interviewing decoders separately could establish a more constructive explanation of the differences and similarities in reading. One other variable that might change the decoding of the message is that decoders realisation that they are part of a project which would lead them to offer a more critical reading than they would normally do (Wren-Lewis; 1983).

Drawing on the rereading of Morley's study which emphasised on the link between the decoding and social position (Kim; 2004), this study gives attention to Lebanese audience as multiple audiences because of their sectarian identity to apply this model, which relates between audiences' background and their decoding process.

This study will therefore pick up from where Morley had left and incorporate other influences in the process of decoding, whether it is the environment, moderator, or the media itself. This study also realises Wren-Lewis's argument of the need to pay attention to other discourses, like text meaning and context.

Media as Object: Hall's model breaks from mass communication theories - which emerged when broadcast media, radio and television, were dominating people's lives around the world. But with the changes in media and its usage, Hall's model was invited

to reformulate itself and find common ground with mass communication theories (Livingstone; 2003).

The transition from a media centric research to an audience research shifted the understanding of media text from the meaning in itself to the meaning of the text as reached by the contextualised reader (Allen; 1992). Media use therefore became contextualised and texts analysis gained meaning from the reader rather than the semiotic meanings in the text. Livingstone however argues that media use as an object cannot be ignored in the studies of audiences' reception of the text. "Both interpreters of the media as text- and users of the media as object, and the activities associated with these symbolic and material uses of media are mutually defining" (Livingstone; 2003).

Livingstone's argument stems from two dimensions: historical dimension and audience as users in the new media environment. Historically, audience reception and use of media were integrated. The emotions of anger laughter sadness or joy were gauged instantly just by being present in a specific arena. They would express their opinions right away through a comment, a small discussion a swearing or an applause.

In that single setting it was not only possible to understand the reception of a single defined audiences, but these venues usually gathered different classes, genders and age groups in one setting and therefore studying audiences reception and defining the forms of reception was available (Kropp; 2015).

Measuring the audiences' reception after the advent of television in the 20th century reverted to a focus on the media text more than context as TV was a new medium. With the changing media environment whereby each individual in a household have their own media devices it is becoming challenging to audience researchers because of the social context within which these new media are being used.

In the past families used to gather around one TV set which was usually in the living area. But with the internet, mobile phones, and tablets, individuals use their own devices to watch, or listen in park a café in the bedroom and even in the car or even on the plane to be active users of the media like sending emails, commenting on Facebook, searching the web. This engagement requires as Livingstone suggests understanding reception from an "analysis of use" (Livingstone; 2003:354) rather than how they deal with a text.

Interestingly, both in looking back in looking forward, it is already proving easier to investigate the context within which people use media-as-objects than it is to

identify the interpretive “work” with which audiences engaged with media-as-texts (Livingstone; 2003:356)

The model was also criticised for relying on qualitative rather than quantitative method which places limits on how far results and findings ‘can be generalised (Kropp; 2015). Despite these criticisms, the model has proved valid for the study of audiences and how messages are decoded and the content of media and how messages are encoded (Gillespie; 1995, Morley; 1980, Katz & Liebes; 1990)

2.3 Propaganda Model

The propaganda model that was formulated in 1988 by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky’s is concerned with the political economy of the mass media and its functionality. The model is a framework for analysing and understanding the work, performance and functionality of the US mainstream media (Herman and Chomsky; 1988). It suggests that the dominant elite in the US media, marginalize dissident voices, manufacture consent and engage in propaganda campaigns that preserve the interest of the political and economic establishment. This is done through five filters, which determine what is newsworthy and what is not (Herman and Chomsky; 1988).

- 1- Size, ownership and profit orientation of the mass media; Media outlets are either small and private that depend heavily on big wires for news, or they are owned by a few numbers of big companies, referred to as top tier. “It is this top tier, along with the government and news services, that defines the news agenda and supplies much of national and international news to the lower tiers of the media, and thus for the general public” (Herman & Chomsky; 1998: 4 & 5).
- 2- Advertising: license to do business; Media opt to appease advertising companies to avoid strangulation. This means that papers that attract ads could sell copies at an affordable price unlike papers that relied on raising the price of copies to afford production. Eventually, media companies that are ad-free and depend on sales will be marginalised. “With advertising, the free market does not yield a neutral system in which final buyer choices decides. The advertisers’ choices influence media prosperity and survival (Herman & Chomsky; 1998: 14).
- 3- Sourcing mass-media news; Media cannot afford to be everywhere, so they base themselves where they believe significant news occur, like the White House, etc.

Governmental bodies, in return, facilitate the journalists' work. They provide them with copies of speeches and forthcoming reports, write press releases in usable language in an attempt to spare them looking for other source or writing or reproducing the news. It is due to these services and dependency that media organisations become coerced to run certain stories or mute criticism to maintain a close relationship (Herman & Chomsky; 1998: 22).

- 4- Flak and the enforcers: Flak is a means of disciplining media. It refers to the negative responses to a media statement or programme. Flak can cost the media to lose advertisers. Flak used by the powerful can be direct or indirect. Direct flak comes in the form of letters, phone calls, lawsuits, petitions threat, punitive action etc. The indirect flak is when the powerful complain to their constituencies about the media actions, generate institutional advertising that does the same, and fund think tanks operations designed to attack the media (Herman and Chomsky; 1982: 26).
- 5- Anticommunism as a control mechanism: the evil image of Communism and their threat against western values was used to mobilise people against communism and the heavy political costs they would face if communists acquired political gains. Herman and Chomsky argue that this ideology can be used to keep the opposition, who are accused of not being anti-communist enough, on the defensive and under constant pressure to prove that they are not. "The anti-communism control mechanism reaches through the system to exercise a profound influence on the mass media" (Herman & Chomsky; 1998:30).

2.3.1 Criticism of the Propaganda Model

Propaganda model has been criticized for lacking comprehensiveness, thus having no theoretical grounds and for being holding a highly deterministic of the role of the media as simply for reproduction of dominance (Schlesinger; 1992), for being static (Hallin; 1994, Golding and Murdoch; 2005), and for presenting media as a conspiratorial tool. Other scholars however defended the model offering some refinements rather than scrapping it altogether (Sparks; 2007, Klaehn; 2009).

Theorising Effects: In his argument Schlesinger (1992) points out that Herman and Chomsky's model in which media organizations allow governments and parties to pass on their messages across the public assumes influence and effects. But he argues

that the PM doesn't address audience research and slightly touches on effects which can only be carved out from the meanings in the five filters. Schlesinger notes that determining the media functionalism without studying the audience entails no theoretical grounds for the model. Herman (2000) defended the model saying it is mainly about media behaviour and performance and how power and money work in a capitalist society to influence media output. Klaehn (2003) argued that not studying effects does not make it "incomplete nor does it imply that the model presumes deliberate intent" (Klaehn; 2003:362).

Highly Deterministic: Schlesinger (1992) notes that Herman and Chomsky's model is deterministic, non-pluralistic, and renders media function and output predictive within this structural system of ownership and control. He argues that it is a flawed approach to media functionalism noting that Herman and Chomsky acknowledged that in some of the cases they studied, the system was "not all-powerful" (Herman and Chomsky; 1998:306), and that governments and elite domination of the media have failed to overturn the public opinion in the government's favour. Herman (2000) defended the deterministic approach saying that any model involves deterministic elements, and that the model "is serviceable unless a better model is provided" (Herman; 2000:108). He explains that the model offers a broad framework of analysis that might need modification depending on factor of time, place and the case itself.

Dissident Voices: Herman and Chomsky's were criticized for sidelining the power of dissident voices. Their model shows that elites always have leverage on what to publish, and that opposing views are reflected only when they reflect their interests. Sparks also noted that the model ignored a wider argumentative approach of the media in capitalist democracies which would see differences between opposition voices and elite reflected and not just a reflection of the elite views or the differences among the elite.

The model also implies that there are no constraints on media when there are elite disagreements. In his study of the Vietnam war coverage, Hallin said that the division inside the political inner circle during the war lifted the constraints on the media allowing it to voice different opinions (Hallin; 1986). While Hallin as well as Herman and Chomsky argue that it is only a tactical difference and not a strategic one, Hallin (1994) criticises the model for giving a monolithic view of the mainstream media,

bounding its function to only reproducing dominant views to the outer world, without acknowledging the existence of other functions.

One example Hallin gives is Herman and Chomsky (1998) argument that the filters are built in the system in such a way that news people who operate with integrity are convinced that they are being objective and are applying news values. Hallin (1994) argues that this suggests that the model is “unidimensional” as it excludes other functions that the media perform.

Journalists professionalism: The model is criticized for portraying journalists as unprofessional who align themselves with the elite (Hackett (1991). Sparks criticizes the model for labelling journalists as all being middle-class whose objectives are compatible with the media or their seniors, and that they understand that promotions and benefits are conditioned by acceptance of policies. He also dismisses the idea that relying on official sources entails an adoption of the version of that source. He believes that media rely a lot on official sources due to time and space limits, but that does not mean they would comply with the sources’ perspective or discard other sources.

Defendants of the propaganda model say that it does not take for granted that journalist serve the elite interest but that the constraints in the system allows for the natural filtering of news (Klaehn; 2009). Boyd-Barrett (2004) however, criticised Herman and Chomsky for purposely avoiding touching on the “buying out” of journalists or the media by government. Boyd-Barrett, who lists cases with evidence of government penetration of media, argued that Chomsky, a rejectionist of the conspiracy theory preferred to focus on institutional activity.

Conspiracy theory: The model was seen as implying that all media are conspiratorial tools that work for the interests of the elite. Herman however explains that propaganda model looks for “structural factors as the only possible root of systematic behaviour and performance patterns” (Herman; 1996:44). Herman and Chomsky argue that the “conspiratorial “behaviour is easily explained by natural market processes (e.g. use of common sources, laziness and copying others in the mainstream, common and built-in biases, fear of departure from a party line, etc.) (Mullen; 2009)

Lack of Comparability and Generalisation: The model is focused on the US media system. Schlesinger (1992) and Sparks (2007) agree that model should be able to generalise and be applicable to other capitalist democracies by applying the same

propaganda techniques. Though media in capitalist society share similar conceptions but the model as they argue fail to extend and draw comparisons with other media. Sparks (2007) specifically talks about the importance of this model to encompass the European media system where public broadcasters thrive and are bound by a constitutional basis of serving public interest. Sparks comments are that for the model to work as a theory its explanatory tools should be able to explain media in societies other than the US.

Economic Dynamic: Murdoch and Golding believe that Herman and Chomsky were right in their description of the media as driven by economic powers that ensure the information reached to the public resonates with their interests, but they take a wider approach saying that the model disregards 'contradictions in the system'. They argue that elites cannot always do what they wish because they are part of a structure that sometimes facilitate and at times limit what they can get (Murdoch & Golding; 2005: 63).

This is what they call the critical political economy, which explains the leverage of media not only in terms of economic dynamics as setting the limits and powers of media but also in relation to other dynamics like the processes of production and consumption. Golding and Murdoch argue that technological advancement weakened the abuse of media content, and liberated consumers from the media clout. Herman however argued "although new technologies have great potential for democratic communication, there is little reason to expect the internet to serve democratic ends if it is left to the market" (Herman; 2000: 109).

2.3.2 The Propaganda Model and the BBC: A New Perspective

This research will be the first to apply the model on BBCATV. Though some of the filters are associated with a specific era and/ or specific type of media, I argue that these filters with some refinements (Sparks; 2007, Klaehn; 2009) can be applicable to international broadcasters. Funding and governance is one main filters that impact on the BBC performance as several examples have shown (see Lewis; 2014, Lewis; 2004). I apply Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model, which studies the performance of the media in capitalist societies mainly to focus on the first two points. I draw on the literature around this model, the criticism and the refinements proposed by the scholars and I attempt to mould it to fit with the study of international broadcaster and

its relationship with the state and how this relationship overshadows the BBCWS and its language services.

The propaganda model is particularly concerned with the elements of power embedded in the political and economic elite and how they utilize this power on the mainstream media to serve their interests in a democratic society. Therefore, the model as a whole is applicable to the study of the political economy of the BBC and understand how media work within this power relationship with the British government and how the impact of this on its behaviour.

Klaehn, Sparks, Boyd-Barrett and Herman all indicated that the model is still in operation but in need of refinement. Herman (2000) who wrote an article a decade after the model was formulated argued for its continuity after drawing examples from contemporary media reporting. Sparks has labelled the model as one of the “best available attempts to provide a robust analytic framework for understanding the performance of the news media” (Sparks; 2007: 69), stressing that refinements should be introduced to encompass the European type of media, mainly public broadcasters, which are obliged to allow for the viewpoint of opposing sides to be heard (Sparks; 2007).

Boyd-Barrett (2010) added one other filter “buying-out” which is the exercise of direct control of the media for the purpose of manipulation of public opinion. Klaehn (2009) broadened the fifth filter to refer to “the dominant ideology”. He argued that this filter can be utilized in social scientific research and provide a framework for studying and understanding discourses in media like race, ethnicity, dominance etc.

This research will take into account the criticism and refinements laid out by scholars (Sparks; 2007, Klaehn; 2009, Boyd-Barrett; 2004). I will be presenting some additional refinements that is required for the application of this model on international broadcasters. The filters that will be used in this research are:

1. Funds, ownership and control: The funds from the foreign office up until 2014, the broadcasting agreement, and the licence fee funds exert the same pressures as the advertisers do. This filter looks into how the BBCA birth, continuity and funds define its relationship with the FCO and British interests.
2. Identity filter: Having a British identity and sharing the same values and guidelines as the BBC, I will look into how and if the Arabic speaking channel

reflects Arab audiences, how it approaches stories in the Middle East and whether they are in accordance with the British foreign policy. This filter can be seen within the scope of the ideological element (Klaehn; 2009).

3. Diaspora filter: This filter looks into the powerful role of diaspora staff at BBC as soft power assets for Britain (Gillespie and Webb; 2013). I will look into how journalists used BBC platform for activism in line with British foreign policy.
4. Flak: This filter applies to the work of BBCATV in countries like Egypt. The outcome of this flak is manifested not only in lawsuits, instigation against the media but also a punishment to the function of the bureau. Staff then water down their reporting and coverages to avoid drastic.

2.4 Cultural Imperialism

The section will look into cultural imperialism paradigm. Though this paradigm is said to be outdated, I use it to understand whether international media has an imperialist approach. This paradigm will be applied in this study of BBC Arabic to understand if the service's birth amidst an empire is failing to reformulate itself within the new form of Britain and the audiences changes and is approaching the audience in the context of "we know what they want" as Edward Said put it (Said; 2003: 32).

First, I will start by defining culture and imperialism. In his book *Keywords*, political theorist Raymond Williams talks about two concepts for imperialism, one which goes back to the late 19th century which relates imperialism to colonial rule (politics) and the other concept is that of the early 20th century which relates imperialism to the development of capitalism (economy) (Williams; 1988). Edward Said defines Imperialism as "the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; colonialism, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory" (Said; 1994: 8). In that sense, imperialism is an ideology or a practice. Even though colonialism ended, attempts for domination have taken different forms and the means to it, as Said explains, is the cultural sphere.

Culture as well is subject to different definitions. Said's (1994) own interpretation of culture is that which means art that is independent of the economic, social, and political authority and its only aim is pleasure. The other concept of culture

is by which art reflects the best of 'our' society, 'our' nation. Culture here becomes the source of identity. Williams who was much preoccupied with the word culture and its different usage states that there are three definitions of culture, yet he adopts the social in which culture expresses certain meanings and values not only in art but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. It is a description of a particular way of life (Williams; 1961). The debate is not about the interpretations of culture and that of imperialism rather it is when these two terms come together that the whole meaning is contested.

2.4.1 Cultural Imperialism and Media

Cultural imperialism paradigm began to circulate in the late 1960s. It refers to the "spread of cultural values, ideas and practices which reflect and reproduce the 'superiority' of the dominant culture" (Casey et al; 2002: 51). Cultural imperialism grew as a critical view of the media and development paradigm that emerged after World War II and marks the end of Europe's colonialism of developing countries. Theorists of the media and development paradigm believed that the key element towards modernity is the shifting from a traditional society to a capitalist society by using mass media as a tool for this transition.

Mass media was seen as the road from the traditional to modernisation. "... A shift from village to city, from farm to factory, from traditional clothes to casual outfits, could be achieved through communication; the fastest and far reaching tool that could alter the values of traditionalists" (Lerner; 1958: 45&46). In more specific terms, the mass media in particular was seen as a mentor "... Where teachers, trainers, monitors are scarce, the media can carry a proportionally greater share of the instruction... once the basic skills have been learned, the media can provide further opportunities to learn" (Schramm; 1964: 144).

However, one of the problems attributed to this paradigm was that those who envisioned the move from a traditional society to a modern one are the ones who "identified the problem and decided upon the appropriate course of change" (Sparks; 2007a: 35). They transferred modernisation for what it is in western societies, like social advancement, equality, and freedom, and sidelined the notion of modernisation for what it should be in accordance with the society's desire and needs (Rogers; 1967).

From this perspective, the media and development paradigm deals with modernization and western civilization as one (Lewis; 1990).

Within this context, media and development paradigm is shaped by a colonialist approach whereby the peripheries are kept attached to the colonial country, importing its news programmes, exposing to their culture while being denied the means to promote their products (Schiller; 1976). The dependency relation that connects the developing world to the developed world is understood as cultural imperialism (Golding; 1977). Herbert Schiller, the father of imperialism paradigm focused on the role of multinational corporations (MNC) corporates to Americanise others' traditions and culture by disseminating consumerism culture. This he calls, cultural imperialism.

The sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced and sometimes even bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating centre of the system (Schiller; 1976: 9).

Cultural imperialism was thought of as being the "by-product of ... political and economic imperialism..." (Hamm & Smandych; 2005: 24) and mass media as one of the tools. This was mainly popular among Marxists in the 20th century who focused on the study of the political and economic powers of transnational corporations and the impact of this power on culture and ideology. They argue that the ruling elite which is in control of the economic and political powers uses mass media, to spread their ideology to other cultures (Casey et al; 2002). The images that are produced in western mass media are used to disseminate norms that call on all others to drop their traditions and join them.

Once caught by the media, this image won't let you go. It shapes your outlook, your understanding of yourself and your people, your perceptions and your moral standards, and all through foreign eyes. This is real-life brainwashing. Whatever you grew up with, whatever your culture might have been, it will count less and less and eventually disappear completely..." (Hamm & Smandych; 2005: 27).

From where cultural imperialism theorists stand, mass media practices serve the capitalist system and allow weaker countries to be “absorbed culturally into the modern world system” (Schiller; 1979: 22). From this perspective, this paradigm is important to use in this study because it involves a British organisation that reeled from a colonial era in the Arab region, and because BBCA is the powerful side in this relationship: it is the sender, disseminator, initiator, and it chose to talk to Arab audiences and address them.

This study also realises the complexities of the interpretation of cultural imperialism. Drawing on Tomlinson’s argument that the paradigm “must be assembled out of its discourse” (Tomlinson; 1991: 3), and that meanings to cultural imperialism should be derived from the discursive contexts, I find it important to study BBCA discourse to detect any imperialist discourse and understand from the discursive practice how BBCA sees the audience and what it thinks of the audiences.

This study also takes into account Tomlinson’s argument that imperialist discursive practice is all ‘accidents of fortunes’ that placed them in this position and because of that texts can be read differently, either as simple academic or informative texts or a dominant and imperialist text (Tomlinson; 1991: 28), and that cultural imperialism conjures different meaning in different worlds and times. Therefore, studying the discourse of the powerful, is complimented by a study of how the ‘rest’- the non-western- (Hall; 1992) reads and encodes the messages to assemble a discourse.

2.4.2 Criticism to cultural imperialism: Dilemma of Definition and Practice

Cultural imperialism is seen as problematic and outdated, because of the way scholars assembled the discourse by studying the media only rather than the audience which is supposedly affected by it, and second because scholars who talked about the existence of cultural imperialism paradigm linked modernity to the capitalist version of society and of tying countries of the third world in a process of cultural homogenization. This put the paradigm under criticism.

First, the paradigm was criticized for associating modernity with cultural imperialism. Critique of the cultural imperialism paradigm view modernity as encompassing capitalism, as social and economic emancipation, and a shift from a traditional past to modern present. Tomlinson argues that modernity might decay

traditional views, but not necessarily replace them with Western cultural views (Tomlinson; 1991:162).

Second, cultural imperialism paradigm was criticized for dismissing any cultural impact inherited from the colonial era rather focusing on cultural imperialism.

Imperialism did not maintain its rule merely through suppression, but through the export and institutionalization of European ways of life, organizational structures, values and interpersonal relations, language and cultural products that often remained and continued to have impact even once the imperialists themselves had gone home. In short, imperialism was in itself a multi-faceted cultural process which laid the ground for the ready acceptance and adoption of mediated cultural products which came much later (Sreberny-Mohammadi; 1997: 51).

Third, Understanding the west through the discourse of power was one of the criticisms for postcolonial theorists. The argument was that theorists, like Edward Said, only focused on the construction of the other in the eyes of the West, but disregarded the achievements of the West in the colonial countries, that local elites shared the same ideological base which contributed to the empowering of the coloniser, that European culture is influenced by culture from other parts of the world, and that romanticism, which championed the traditions against the West's modernity, is concerned with protecting the local elite (Johnson; 2003).

Fourth, Benedict Anderson's book *Imagined Communities* refers to national identities as imagined communities. He argues that modernity made it possible for people to imagine events and places because of the technological and economic advancement. This imagination which is achieved through the mass communication like newspaper and novels means that imagining of the event is happening with spatial differences. This means that cultural imperialism which refers to one culture taking over the other is problematic because national identities are not culturally based (Anderson; 2006). Therefore, the import of material could not be seen as imposition of cultural experiences rather as part of their imagined community (Tomlinson; 1991).

Fifth, the paradigm was critiqued for its functionalist approach by focusing on who owns the media to understand its impact on societies, which implies that the receiving end are too weak to resist or choose. Scholars relied on studying media rather

than the public themselves. Media's influence on audiences and viewers was measured based on studying the economic and political features of the media. Fejes (1981) argued that this approach looks at the transnational media without addressing the cultural impact, assuming that it occurs. Studies focuses on the work and practice of the transnational media but where is the study of the supposedly affected culture? His criticism was that studies of imperialism was only based on empirical research and without it being based on theoretical framework.

The study by Liebes and Katz is cited to refute the media imperialism approach. After studying the audience reception of 'imperialist texts', like Dallas, they concluded that the popularity of the show was due to its good melodramatic narrative structure (Tomlinson: 1991:46), but if Dallas, or any other product studied, was found to be non-imperialistic, can we say that all imported material bears no imperialist culture? Can we say that all audiences will process the message in the same way?

The argument that media imperialism cannot be detected by just studying the practice of transnational media is merited, but one cannot ignore the significance of studying of the political economy of media to understand the culture of media, the environment it is functioning within, how this affects what it says and who to say it to. Though media imperialism is rendered as an outdated paradigm within media studies, however as Boyd-Barrett (1977) argues the paradigm's merit is that it looks into the power relations between the developed and the developing world to gather the imperialist discourse.

2.5 Globalization

This section about media globalization is important for this research to understand the relationship between BBCATV and the audience in one specific aspect: can international media localize and better engage with the audience and how audiences react to international media.

Ever since globalization entered the political debate in the 1990s, influenced by mass media, scholars have been divided over what it means and what it does. Tomlinson (2007) offers a defining feature of globalization that amounts to a general understanding among scholars.

Globalization is a multidimensional process, taking place simultaneously within the spheres of the economy, of politics, of technological developments –

particularly media and communications technologies – of environmental change and of culture. One simple way of defining globalization, without giving precedence or causal primacy to any one of these dimensions, is to say that it is a complex, accelerating, integrating process of global connectivity (Tomlinson; 2007: 352).

Globalisation is one concept that holds two meanings. Conceptualizing globalization in terms of its causal determinations and implications acquired the term different interpretations which are best summarized by Held.

Processes of globalisation do not necessarily lead to growing global integration... for globalisation can generate forces of both fragmentation and unification...In addition, globalisation can engender awareness of political difference as well as an awareness of common identity (Held; 1992: 38).

Communication technology such as satellite television, internet and now social media have created what Giddens refer to as a 'sense of living in one world' (Giddens; 1990: 77). With this technology and accessibility to broadcast without restrictions to some extent, globalization came to refer to "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (Robertson; 1992: 8). It is interconnected and interdependent in terms of culture, politics, technology, economy, manufacturing etc.

The world is so interconnected and interdependent that boundaries between domestic matters and global affairs become "increasingly fluid" (Held et al; 1999: 15) and "local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens; 1990: 64). This comes to mean that globalisation is not about the global taking over the local but about bringing the local into the global known as glocalization, hybridization or de/reterritorialization like localizing McDonald's menu in India where beef is forbidden (Robertson and White; 2007), or rap music which is sung in local language of each country (Lull; 2000).

But globalisation also comes to mean the opposite. It is "the present stage of economic imperialism" (Vilas; 2002: 70); a manifestation of the west dominance (Robinson; 2004: 10), and a threat to nations and local cultures because of its homogeneity nature (Hall; 1991, Castells; 1997). Globalization therefore benefits one

end over the other. Since much of the globalised content comes from the developed countries, globalization is seen as homogenizing cultures, allowing the imposition of the cultures of dominant societies over other societies, and therefore becoming a modern form of cultural imperialism.

Drawing on these dichotomies, I argue that global media cannot present itself as glocal; rather its main feature remains its 'national' identity, also that globalisation created resistance and exclusion among communities once they sense that their identity and culture is threatened.

2.5.1 The Glocalization of International Media

The role of media in the interconnectedness has been advocated by globalists. With satellite, they argued, information can flow from one place to the other freely. Barker (1999; 51) points out that 'technologies of cable, satellite, digital technology and international computer networks enable media organisations to operate on a global scale ... allowing media products to be distributed across the world.' Because of globalization, communication now is based on contra-flow system between both hemispheres, where "more nations of the south are producing and exporting media materials including film from India and Egypt, television programming from Mexico and Brazil" was enforced (Sreberny-Mohammadi; 1996: 182); because of globalisation, Arab satellite stations can broadcast outside the control of the state (Rinnawi; 2011, Zweiri and Murphy; 2011: xiii).

Therefore, global media "refers primarily to the extent of coverage, with the popularity of satellite television and computer networks serving as evidence of the globalization of communication" (Wang and Servaes; 2000: 3). Pro-globalists advocate the idea that news is now homogenized because of the globalization of communication. Globalisation is seen as localising the world in terms of media content, whereby global news is downsized to fit the locale of the area of the producing side and local news are treated as of global importance and meaning by these media (Wang and Servaes; 2000).

This was criticized by many scholars, who argued that the unidirectional flow of information downplays this understanding (Boyd-Barrett; 1977), as well as the nature news. In their study of Europe's news agencies, Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen's pointed out how news provided to the outer world helped in the process of "constructing national identity, imperialism and the control of colonies and for financial trading"

(Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen; 1998: 2). News and content provided would then reflect and preserve the interests and values of the countries they are originating from and that provide them with revenues (Lull; 2000: 54, Herman and McChesney; 1997: 12). The world is thus moving in a closed circle of information, since media outlets and journalists are dependent on a few major news agencies to supply their news as Hafez argues.

Media content is distorted whenever international reporting more strongly reflects the national interest and cultural stereotypes of the reporting country than the news reality of the country being reported about” (Hafez; 2007: 25).

Therefore, the increase in the number of channels does not entail a diverse content so long as the original source remains the same (Paterson; 1997). This source is mainly associated with richer countries, has more reachability, and is bound by a national character. Stanton (2007: 3) notes that for CNN the war between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006 was seen from the perspective of the ordeal of the Americans who were caught in Lebanon.

Within that perspective, media, though global, are still bound by political ideologies that tie them to the country, or the total values and concepts of the country of their revenues or origin. In news, channels tend to follow the same political discourse by the state. “Stations such as CNN, ABC (Of the USA) and RAI (of Italy) seemed to have great difficulty using words like ‘illegal’, ‘occupation’, or ‘settlement’ in relation to Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip” (Sakr; 2001: 191).

Homogenization however was dismissed by many scholars (Robertson; 1992, Lull; 2000, Featherstone; 1990) offering instead a less rigid interpretation of the implications of globalization. Robertson adopts the universalism-particularism theme, which means the selection and application of ideas, notions or concepts from other cultures and universalising them or particularising them (Robertson; 1992: 102). Lull (2000) argues that exposure to certain cultural values does not necessarily enforce uniformity or homogeneity; rather it creates a hybrid form of interaction. In news, Gurevitch et al (1991), also argued against the existence of homogenisation.

... the convergence of different news services on the ‘same’ set of stories should not necessarily be viewed as leading to a ‘homogenization’ of news around the

world. Indeed, if the 'same' events are told in divergent ways, geared to the social and political frameworks and sensibilities of diverse domestic audiences, the 'threat' of homogenization might have little basis (Gurevitch et al; 1991:207)

Therefore, can an international organisation be local and global at the same time? 'Global media' are said to refer to the extent of coverage that was made possible by the technologies of the satellite television, computers and internet (Wang and Servaes; 2000, Barker; 1999), but is crossing the border enough? Is there a global content? Arab viewers related to Aljazeera because of common cultural background, and its ability to unite Arabs behind a single issue, while they perceive US media as biased against Arabs (El-Nawawy and Iskandar; 2003).

BBC Arabic service follows the same guidelines as the BBC. How easy it is to converge the global (same editorial values as the rest of the BBC, that are British) with the local (cultural and religious sensitivities). Dirlik uses the term 'Global Localism' by which "the corporation domesticates itself in various localities without forgetting its global aims and organisations" (Dirlik; 1996:34). This would mean that an organization like the BBC with a clear-cut identity would find it hard to address and reflect the whole Arab world and that to a large extent most of its content which might appeal to an fraction of the Arab audience is mainly formulated by its values and agenda as a foreign established organization that is regarded as an important tool of soft power practice. BBCATV, though it broadcasts in Arabic and its addresses the Arab audiences it is still bound by the guidelines of the BBC which stems from the very British values.

2.5.2 Global Media and Resistance, Audiences, and Resistance

Much of the writings that focus on globalization refer to the dangers it poses on culture and identity. This is mainly seen as caused by the mass media and the rapid flow of images and information that develops a global culture. Globalisation is seen as being so entrenched that it cannot be resisted, not even through the traditional forms like nation-states⁸ (Servaes & Lie; 2002: 3). Some predicted that transnational corporations are becoming so powerful that the nation-state is perishing (Sklair; 2002). The nation-

⁸ It is widely agreed that it is difficult to conceptualise, define, or analyse a nation (Anderson; 2006:3, Connor; 1994:36, Gellner; 1983:5). Connor (1994: 37) explains that the difficulty pertains to the fact that the 'essence of a nation is intangible.' Evans and Newnham (1998: 343) refer to a nation as "a social collectivity, the members of which share some or all of the following: a sense of common identity, a history, a language, ethnic or racial origins, religion, a common economic life, a geographical location and a political base."

state power thus is undermined by “the globalisation of core economic activities, by the globalisation of media and electronic communication” (Castells; 1997: 304). The nation-state is no longer the reference, rather it is the world as a ‘single place’ (Robertson; 1992).

Though it is acknowledged by pro-globalization scholars that globalization has become an integral part of life that one cannot be disconnected from, it is also argued that not everything related to globalization is bad (Lull; 2000). The audience’s exposure to certain cultural values via global media does not necessarily enforce uniformity or homogeneity; rather it creates a hybrid form of interaction (Lull; 2000). Even identity has become hybrid. “...People not only have multiple identities, but ... they have more of a melange, a mixture of identities, often referred to as the spread of hybridity” (Spencer and Wollman; 2002: 162). Within this context, there is no single cultural form that is inflicted upon others but a mixture of cultural forms (Featherstone; 1990). Globalization, as such, can never transform the world into one people or one world because the cultural values or commercial concepts disseminated- and despite their influence- interact with local conditions to produce diverse and dynamic consequences” (Lull; 2000: 233).

It cannot though be ignored that globalizing is not equal among countries. Identity melange does not spread across all societies, rather it affects only the poorer societies which receive the products of the dominant country without being able to compete and promote their own cultural products. Similarly, the localised menu of McDonalds would still spread the social and economic practice of fast food culture one that is American (Ritzer; 1983). Globalization thus could lead to exclusivism and gives rise to nationalism as Giddens argues.

The development of globalized social relations probably serves to diminish some aspects of nationalist feeling linked to nation-states (or some states) but may be causally involved in the intensifying of more localized nationalist sentiments... at the same time as social relations become laterally stretched and as part of the same process, we see the strengthening of pressure for local autonomy and regional cultural identity (Giddens; 1990: 65).

The idea of “Western cultural invasion” via globalisation is an ongoing issue in the developing countries including the Middle East. Globalisation has much to do with

the sense that “traditions language and social codes are under threat of elimination by Western values” (Kraidy; 2002: 14). Nationalist sentiments arise when an entity is violated by other nations, or by local domination of one group over the other (Gellner; 1983). Globalisation therefore faces local movements of resistance and “nationalist resurgence” (Castells; 1997: 30). People are using the communication technology to localize.

Old national identities and behavior patterns are proving surprisingly durable. People are moving into self-segregating communities with people like themselves and building invisible and sometimes visible barriers to keep strangers out (Brooks; 2005:1).

What people do is go back to a place, a root, an era in history through which they identify themselves and form these counter identities in the face of global forces that is beyond their control or capabilities. In the struggle for identity “the return to the local is often the response” (Hall; 1991: 33). Resistance therefore is not new. Lerner pointed out that the term modernisation was used rather than westernization because “for Middle Easterners more than ever want the modern package but reject the label ‘made in USA’ (or, for that matter, ‘made in USSR,) (Lerner; 1958: 45). The significance of resistance in the globalization era is that communities are using these technologies of connectivity to create their own secluded world.

People are taking advantage of freedom and technology to create new groups and cultural zones. Old national identities and behaviour patterns are proving surprisingly durable. People are moving into self-segregating communities with people like themselves and building invisible and sometimes visible barriers to keep strangers out (Brooks; 2005:1).

The sweeping effect of the new pan-Arab media which reflected Arab issues and causes resisted and countered the images or content coming from across the border. The 2001 second Palestinian intifada coverage, in which images of the Israeli police shooting at Palestinian stone throwers were broadcasted, inflamed the Arab world, as opposed to the 1987 intifada where no significant coverage was present (Sakr; 2001: 192).

2.6 Summary

The Arab world is one of the first regions to experience the presence of foreign media as well as the highest number of foreign services so far. Many publications have studied and researched BBCA in particular in terms of its history (Partner; 1988, Vaughan; 2008) its relationship with the FCO through certain historical events (Shaw; 1995) , And its evolution from a propaganda tool to a public diplomacy asset. Recent studies have tackled audiences especially with the new age of media and technology (Abdel-Sattar, Al-Lami Gillespie, Sayed & Wissam; 2012)

However, this study is important because it attempts to explore BBCA as well as the Lebanese audiences even-handedly. The four theoretical frameworks used in this study are important to understand BBCA as an organisation politically and economically; as a discourse to understand the text and ideology enacted in language; and to explore audiences as social and cultural entities. The next chapter will look into the methods used to collect data.

Chapter Three:

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This research attempts to explore the relationship between BBC Arabic TV and the Lebanese audiences. This chapter gives an explanation of the methods used to collect data and why, how data was collected, the difficulties faced during the process and the limitations of these methods. To examine this relationship which involves two entities, I applied different methods across four chapters. I aimed to study BBCA, first as an organisation by gathering data available in the public domain, interviews with BBC staff and participant observation within BBCA. The macro-level study is important to discern BBCA's relationship with its funder, its milieu and how this impact on its relationship with the audiences; second, as a discourse by studying four BBCATV produced documentaries. I used critical discourse analysis method to understand power relations between BBCA and the audiences, how they are "exercised and negotiated in discourse" (Fairclough and Wodak; 1997: 272). This method allows to understand how BBCA sees the audience through analysis of the meanings in the text and ideology discourse...

To understand what the Lebanese audiences want from BBCATV, how they process content and how they see BBCA, I first attempted to rely on interviews and data from the public domain to explain on the complexities of the Arab audiences, their preferences and changes within a changing media environment and the difficulties this poses on BBCA. For a micro study of the Lebanese audiences to understand how they see BBCA, whether the content resonates with their needs and how they think BBCA sees them, I applied the focus groups method. I gathered participants from Lebanon to discuss their views of BBCATV coverage of four documentaries from the series *Ma La Yuqal*, meaning The Unsaid, which tackles taboo stories in the Arab world. The importance of this method is that it allows the researcher 'to explore group norms and dynamics around issues and topics...' (May; 2001:125). The method can be used in media research if the researcher attempts to look for 'ideas or feelings that people have about something; is trying to understand differences in perspectives between groups or

categories of people; [or] uncover factors that influence opinions, behaviour, or motivation' (Krueger and Casey; 2000: 24).

The third method used is elite interviewing, which refers to figures who are decision makers, or whose contributions "render the data a researcher obtain(s) much more reliable and credible" (Beamer; 2002: 87). Interviewing elites help in "interpreting documents... personalities involved in the relevant decisions and help explain the outcome of events and provide information not yet available for public release" (Richards; 1996: 200). Through interviewing BBC producers and managers related to the programme *Ma La Yuqal* I aim to get an insight of how and why BBCATV produced and wanted to produce such a programme. The fourth method is participant observation. Being a BBC staff, I used this method to get more information on BBCA from within to understand how this would affect and reflect on BBCA production and its relationship with audiences.

3.2 Focus Groups

Audience research allows us to examine what people get out of the media, what people like (and don't like) and why (Stokes; 2003:131). Several methods could be pursued in researching audiences like surveys and interviews, however, what is significant about this method is that it allows "group interaction and attentiveness by participants" (Barbour; 2007:2) and helps in "understanding audience attitudes and behaviour" (Wimmer & Dominick; 2006: 128). This method is quite appropriate to apply on Hall's audience reception theory, as it is mindful of the audiences' backgrounds during the design of the groups and allows for the understanding of how participants decode messages as why they decode it in a certain way which come up during the course of discussions. What is significant about this method is that decoding appears to be not only influenced by the background and the medium but also by the environment, ie other participants and the researcher.

Moreover, through this method I can examine the ideology of resistance, and also understand how much discursive ideology lies in the text. The discussions the participants undertake, generated by a topic proposed by the researcher, "are the essential data in focus groups" (Morgan; 1998:1). Based on this, focus groups "must consist of representative members of the larger population" (Stewart, et al; 2007:45), and the researcher's role is to form groups that best serve the research. Barbour (2007)

and Krueger (1994) explain that group members should have at least one, or certain, characteristics in common, since the researcher's scope of analysis is the group. When forming a group, it is necessary to take into consideration certain factors that are related to age, race, sex, accent (May: 2001:128) religion, education and occupation (Stewart, et al; 2007:19-24).

Individuals constituting these groups, and the level of interaction, discussion and even conflict, affect the data obtained from the session. In the case of Lebanon, the design of groups relies on Lebanon's historical and current political situation. Accordingly, focus groups were formed firstly by the age category, as the BBC is mostly interested in addressing the young and educated, secondly, by the sect of participants, given that Lebanese society is structured according to a confessional design, and thirdly, by the methods of designing and forming a focus group.

Scholars agree that there are points of weakness and points of strength in conducting focus groups. Its advantages are that:

- a) It allows the researcher to gather a large amount of information from large groups of people in a short period of time, and at low cost (Berg; 2009).
- b) it is more natural than one to one interview, and this helps participants to reveal themselves to others who have certain things in common (Wilkinson; 1998). However, this unnatural setting could be a disadvantage, since the discussion is brought up deliberately, which could leave room for inaccuracy. The researcher also has less control over the data generated, as participants might be affected by each other's opinion, thus it remains unclear whether the data obtained mirrors each participant's behaviour (Morgan; 1996:140).

3.3 Design of Focus Groups

The majority of Lebanon's population is young, according to the United Nations Development Programme⁹. The number of young people is expected to continue to increase and is projected to reach 714,200 in the year 2016, that is, around 17.3% of the population¹⁰. The working-age group (15-64) has increased from 55.7 % in 1980 to

⁹ Arab States: Empowered lives Resilient Nations, 2005. United Nations Development Programme. [available from] <http://arabstates.undp.org/subpage.php?spid=12> p. 1

¹⁰ The Demography of Youth, 1996. United Nations Development Programme. [online] available from <http://www.undp.org.lb/programme/governance/advocacy/nhdr/nhdr98/chptr4.pdf> p. 47

65.3% in 2005 and was projected to reach a peak of 70.1% in 2015¹¹. Realising the importance of the youth in the media market, a former BBC Arabic and Persian Manager Behrouz Afagh said, in an email to his staff, that the focus is to target “the new internet generation”:

Younger, mainly urban, better educated than their parents, more affluent than average, better connected, more mobile, and more exposed to a global world, they have a broader outlook and aspire to universal values. They are increasingly asserting their influence on their societies, and are the most important force for modernity and change (Afagh, October, 2011).

The participants chosen to take part were therefore aged between 19-40, both male and female, and they were either professionals or college students. Groups were selected based on sect, to ensure a genuine representation of Lebanese society. As long as the Lebanese society is divided along confessional lines “citizens identify themselves more with their sect than with their country as a whole” (El Khoury, & Panizza; 2005: 137). The participants were Shia, Sunni, Druze and Christian, the four major components of the country.

Scholars differ on whether focus groups should be homogenous or heterogeneous. Flick (2009) believes that heterogeneity increases the dynamic of the discussion; while Stewart et al (2007) believes that individual differences influence group cohesiveness and affect group conformity. Krueger (1994: 77) points out that a homogenous group can still enrich a discussion, because homogeneity embodies “sufficient variation among participants to allow for contrasting opinion”. Morgan (1988) also believes that participants in a homogeneous group will feel comfortable in expressing their views.

I chose for this research to include both homogenous groups, based on same-sect participants, and heterogeneous groups made up of different sects. I found that, in a homogenous group, a participant might refrain from expressing a view that might be ‘unexpectedly’ different from that of the rest of the members. I had homogenous groups in which ideas were quite similar, so a participant with a different idea might feel isolated if s/he expresses a different view. For example, in the Shia group that watched

¹¹ Lebanon Demographic Profile, 2007. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. [online] available from <http://www.escwa.un.org/popin/members/lebanon.pdf> p. 3

the documentary *Je Suis Gay*, could there have been one opinion that was with homosexuality but refrained from saying it because it goes against the norm? Similarly, in heterogeneous group, if a participant in the mixed Christian Sunni group, that watched the same documentary, could there have been a different opinion that was not voiced?

The demography of Lebanon is a reflection of the confessionalism plaguing the country. So some colleges, mainly the ones outside the capital Beirut, were already comprised of students from the same sect, as in Mount Lebanon, where participants were all Druze. But in Beirut, it is typical to find mixed sects in universities. The composition of the homogenous groups was: three Shia, three Christian, three Druze and two Sunni. The heterogeneous groups were one Shia-Sunni group, one Sunni-Christian group, and a group made up of the four sects.

It is mostly agreed that a typical size for a group is between 8 to 12 participants. An average number is preferred, so that the researcher can guarantee that the group is not too small, and the researcher ends up with no useful data, or too large, where some of the participants get no chance to express their views (May; 2001). In this research, I had groups of four and groups as big as nine. In total, there were 14 groups, three heterogeneous and 11 homogenous. Each group watched one of the four documentaries chosen from *Ma La Yuqal* series. The interviews were conducted in April 2011 within an interval of 20 days.

3.4 Challenges in Lebanon

3.4.1 Lebanon and Focus Groups Research

The focus group is one form of qualitative methodological tools used in research that began during World War II, when Robert Merton explored morale in the US military for the War Department (Krueger and Casey; 2000). Much of the literature about these methods focuses on democratic countries, yet there is dearth in literature that focuses on research method tools in the Middle East. The political climate might hamper researchers from conducting their research or obtaining interviews with key individuals (Clark; 2006). While looking for research conducted in the Lebanon, I came across a study by the Beirut-based Institute for Development entitled 'Research and Applied Care of the Use of Alcohol by University Students in Lebanon'.

The study highlights that such studies in Lebanon and the Arab world are almost non-existent. However, throughout the research there is nothing about how the research was conducted, what difficulties or obstacles the researchers faced, and so on. This leaves the reader puzzled: did the process go smoothly or did the researchers actually dismiss mentioning any problems. While doing my search, I found a study about common views on political issues in Lebanon among Christians and Muslims. The researchers, Azar and Mullet, actually stated some of the encounters in the fieldwork:

The study was conducted just after the withdrawal of the Israeli army from South Lebanon. It was not easy to persuade people to participate in the study. Before agreeing to answer, participants needed to be reassured that the experimenter was not a member of the police or of the secret services (Azar and Mullet; 2002:739).

The lack of literature is not the only problem facing researchers. Research studies that are conducted often remain unpublished. Boujaoude and Abde-Al-Khalick (2004) conducted a study about science education research in Lebanon from 1992-2002. They concluded that 62 empirical researches had been conducted and the majority of them, about 80%, were MA theses. Only six of these research works were published in journals and the others weren't.

Likewise, another professional researcher, Jihad Fakhredine, argues that research related to audience in the Middle East is vast, yet it is not for public use, because it is done to cater for the needs of advertising agencies or specific media. In his presentation at the London Middle East Institute, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Fakhredine (2007) highlighted that, unlike Europe where audience research is done under the auspices of joint industry bodies made up mostly of media suppliers, in the Arab world, such initiative is taken by advertising agencies and not by TV channels.

Media suppliers in the Arab world rarely see themselves as an industry with common interest but as competing interest. Newspapers or TV Stations will buy audience research only if it shows them as leading media (Fakhredine; 2007).

Lebanon shares these same loopholes in the lack of research as other Arab countries, which would make the process of researching harder and more challenging,

but there are some other challenges that are specifically attributed to the Lebanon: the political context, the areas where the researcher is conducting work, the people interviewed, the topic of discussion and, more basically, who the researcher is.

3.4.2 Snowballing and Gatekeepers

My initial attempt to do fieldwork in Lebanon began with recruiting participants in the focus groups. It is one of the crucial stages of planning focus groups. As Morgan (1998a: 67) puts it “poor recruitment is the Achilles’ heel of focus groups.” To ensure that I will get the desired participants, I used the snowballing method. The term is defined as “a technique for finding research subjects. One subject gives the researcher the name of another subject who in turn provides the name of a third and so on” (Vogt; 1999:300). This is known as snowballing.

I also used the formal method of reaching participants by contacting those who are authorised to give access to their sites, their employees, or their students. They are the gatekeepers. Starting with snowballing is said to build trust between participants and the researcher. In their research about “views of Muslims and Christians in Lebanon of political issues”, Azar and Mullet explain that the participants were known to the researcher and this helped the researcher find other participants.

Because everyday relationships are so awkward in Lebanon due to the recent conflicts, it was thought that direct contact and mutual reassurance were the only way to persuade (Azar & Mullet; 2002: 739).

In her research to explore how fieldwork is accomplished in the Middle East, Clark (2006) asked the 55 respondents who took part in her study how they locate their interviewees. The majority (89%) said that they relied on snowballing. As trust is the major element in getting to interview people on some sensitive topics, participants should know who you are, who you work for, and what you do, but, in other cases, a researcher needs to rely on common acquaintances who can help build the trust between the researcher and the participants, especially if the aim of the research is to get to hidden potential participants, or to ‘hard to locate’ members of society. It could be the young, male and unemployed, criminals, prostitutes, drug users and people with unusual or stigmatised conditions (Atkinson and Flint; 2001).

For this research, the hard-to reach population is not those non-elite figures. Rather, those who are hard to reach are rendered so by the demographic map of Lebanon, where the researcher can never be assumed to be a mere researcher until proven to be so. For example, to reach students in Bekfia, an area in North Lebanon that is said to be the stronghold of Kataib or the Phalange party, a Christian party, there must be a point of contact between the targeted interviewees and the researcher to ensure that the request is attended to.

To get to Bekfia, I approached an academic who is an acquaintance of mine. He is the director of CNAM University, the Bekaa campus, a dominant Shia area in East Lebanon. This university has campuses in Bekfia, a Maronite dominated area, in Baaklyn, a Druze area, and Western Bekaa, a Sunni area, three areas that fitted into my research aims. Contacting him would be my visa to get access to other campuses. Yet this is not a guaranteed ticket.

In my case, I might not get the facilities and help needed because of categorisation based on the looks that indicate what sect you are and what political views you hold. The same technique was used with other university directors, the newly established University AUCE (American University of Culture and Education), and LIU (Lebanese International University). By contacting an acquaintance who runs the campus of the AUCE in the South of Lebanon, he was able to grant me fast approval and access to the 'Christian' branch in the Sin El-fil area of Beirut.

Another technique besides snowballing is to go through formal channels when approaching some organisations, universities or bodies. I approached the AUB (American University of Beirut) through former and current AUB teachers, who had better insight of the bodies inside the university that are entitled to decide on granting me access to the university, as well as of the regulations for such a request. Yet the request did not go through easily. Gatekeepers are one aspect of the recruitment obstacles. "They are people with the formal or informal authority to control access to a site." (Newman: 2011: 429).

This means that a gatekeeper might just deny the researcher access, or might allow it, but with interference. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999: 10) say that the "gatekeeper may screen potential participants." So the line manager might exclude participants who are known to be critics, or a teacher might choose the best students to

take part in it. An attempt to bypass a point of contact and go directly to the administration could work, yet it might have disadvantages as well.

In my meeting with the general manager of a Lebanese TV station known for being secular, the person in charge was positive and had no reservations or restrictions on my aim to have participants from the TV station taking part in my research project. Yet the meeting, which was quite short in time, was a pulling of strings between two subjects: The BBC and the project. So while I was trying to put the conversation back on track, that is, the research, the “gatekeeper” was more interested in talking about the BBC, since I was working there. The BBC has a charming sound for the ears of the media people. Once they know you are BBC staff, they are more interested in that side of you than in the academic research side.

Clark (2006) explains that researchers who took part in her survey stated that interviewees expected or requested favours or services. This is not to say that any of those whom I met had this aim, but often people whom the researcher gets to speak to are not able to detach you from what you do, or where you come from.

Planning the trip, the groups, the interviews, and the setting is one thing, and actually going there and doing the final touches is another. Needless to say, most of those I contacted before my trip were willing to help. In fact, their willingness drew relief and anxiety at the same time: relief because they are ready to help, but anxiety because what I wanted was not as easy as they thought.

For them, to gather a group of people was easy, but for me, knowing how the process goes, I was not that calm. Eventually, I came to realise that most of the contacts prefer to finalise things when the researcher is personally there. Then, and only then, they feel that what you are doing is serious and not a waste of time, and only then do they contact people who will help to establish the group.

The trip was not just to conduct interviews rather, it was also to look for participants and to gather them. So most of the interviews; the time and date of meetings, the participants, were arranged while I was in Lebanon, but because focus group attendance is voluntary, an insufficient number may attend a given planned session (Berg; 2009).

Gathering the group through acquaintances is not always as easy as it sounds. First, they don't all know each other, so the researcher has to find a venue, but this might not be comfortable for all the participants. The effects of the last-minute

cancellations are that it leaves the researcher with the minimum number, and sometimes with less than that, which makes the session undoable. I had twice arranged with a group and chosen a venue that suited them all, but they just didn't show up.

3.4.3 Focus Groups in Practice

All the interviews, I must say, were conducted through a point of contact, or snowballing, in order to save time and to guarantee that I would get approval. It was the only option, given the complexity of what I'm doing: gathering a group of people for between an hour and a half and two hours in a room that must be equipped with a projector or a TV set. To look for the best sample that is able to include all sects, it is mainly universities, private universities and the public one, which is The Lebanese University.

One of the advantages of choosing people from the same environment is that the venue of the meeting will be easier. The meeting can be arranged in the campus of the university or in a café where the groups usually meet. Meeting them where they are, and not obliging them to show up at another place, may guarantee their participation. Having points of contact does not ensure that the process of research and interviewing is free of challenges.

Just as the point of contact, gatekeepers or academics, could facilitate the work by granting the researcher access or referring him/her to someone else, gatekeepers can also add to the challenges. For those who do not know about focus groups interviews, they think of it in the same way as arranging an interview with one person. The disadvantages of explaining the whole process could mean that the gatekeeper will back down, especially if the plan was to get more than one group from the same place.

The initial 'yes' from a gatekeeper is the most important thing, but nothing could be finalised when the researcher was abroad, as in my case. Things began to unfold when I went to Lebanon. For example, the director of one of the university campuses, apparently knowing that arranging things beforehand may not be credible, put me in contact with gatekeepers at other campuses after explaining briefly to them who I am and what my project is about. Some gatekeepers prefer to leave the detailed arrangements until the day of the interview with the participants. So, for example, they get to know on that day how many people should be in the group, how long the

discussion will last, what is required from them as facilitators, the type of room needed, and, most important, to find volunteers who will take part.

For appointments at universities outside Beirut, I tried to arrange more than one group interview. On one hand, it is easier for the university to have everything set and done in one day, and it is better for the researcher in terms of time management. In some cases, the group of participants was gathered while I was at the venue. In one of my interviews at LIU University in South Lebanon, the gatekeeper called for some students and explained to them what was required. One of the problems of the 'instant gathering of people' is that they might be unavailable for more than one hour. This leaves the moderator bound by the time of the group, in terms of choosing the shortest film and leaving enough time for discussion.

As for the second group at the same university, I actually went into a classroom explaining what I wanted from them in the presence of the gatekeeper. Some volunteered; others were picked by the gatekeeper herself. Her presence actually made the research more credible to them, and so, after finishing with the first group, the second group were ready, waiting for their turn. The other problems that might erupt in such a case is that the gatekeeper normally is unaware that there are some facilities required, like a projector, which means that rooms should be booked beforehand to ensure that such equipment is available.

One of the problems that a researcher might face as well is those gatekeepers who say that yes, they will help, but who actually mean 'no!'. Their tactic is that they keep postponing the interview until the researcher gives up. I contacted the director of the Tourism College at Lebanese University through a teacher there, seeking mixed students. He agreed but gave tentative dates and kept postponing them until the day of my departure from Lebanon.

A similar encounter happened with another lecturer at Al-Jinan University, in the southern city of Sidon, where I was seeking Sunni participants. We set the time and date, but he never got back to me to confirm. Ironically, when I called both of them to get the confirmation, they said they were in the middle of a class and would call back, but they never did. I texted them, they never replied either.

The sect issue is quite sensitive in Lebanon. Many gatekeepers and participants feel uncomfortable, so they refrain from being involved in such a project. As I looked for a Sunni group, I approached one of the lecturers at the Media College of the Lebanese

University to speak to her Sunni students, but, during this time, tension ran high at the university over a political issue that involved parties affiliated with Sunnis and Shias, prompting the lecturer to back down to avoid any flare up.

The sectarian tension kept me on my guard throughout the process of interviews. I encountered what I call 'self-instated gatekeepers,' a person who attempts to sabotage the interview. One of the ways to avoid tension is to keep calm and be well organised so that the session is not thwarted. During my day at the Lebanese University in Fanar, a Christian dominated area, I had access to the university through a professor there.

The two groups for that day were already formed, and as we were going to the hall for screening a 'self-instated gatekeeper' tried to hamper it, by first refusing to give us the keys to the hall, although it was already booked, and then by refusing to connect my hard drive to the university's computer, saying that it might have a virus. Luckily, I had the material on DVDs, so there was no chance to come up with another pretext.

During the session, he opened the door more than once, trying to listen and see what was going on. At the end of the first group discussion, he tried to hamper the second session as well. At the end, one of the participants said to me that this 'self-instated gatekeeper' has certain political affiliations, and my looks infuriated him. For him, I was an intruder.

3.4.4 The Participants

It is argued that a major problem with snowballing is that it is not representative. "If the researcher relied solely on participant-initiated referrals, only participants who share some social network would be reached-others "like me" (Penrod, et al; 2003: 102). This draws the question of bias in sampling, and a total neglect of others outside that circle of friends. Friends taking part in the session may 'pair up' so that if one speaks, the other agrees.

Alternatively, they may form a 'conspiracy of silence', so that if one does not want to join in, the other will also hang back" (Morgan; 1998b: 67-68). Friendship among participants in the same group could draw similar answers. One participant in the mixed group that watched the 'Converters' documentary, tended to agree with what others were saying and, in the end, had the same views as the rest, but to say that the

element of 'one saying, another agreeing' applies only to circles of friends is not accurate.

It is not only friends who tend to agree with what others say. In most of the groups that I have interviewed, there is always one who agrees with what anyone says, because he/she basically has nothing to say, or is not interested. Another element is when one of the participants is very outspoken and critical so that he draws the attention of others to some points, so they become convinced with what he/she is saying. For example, one participant in the Sunni group from the North that watched the documentary *Je Suis Gay* expressed views that some in the group started copying them.

A researcher will encounter participants who do not know each other, but who happen to agree on too many issues, as was the case of one of the mixed groups that watched the documentary *Africa... the Upcoming Battle*. In this case, some just feel that there is no need to say things in their own words. Rather, they just confirm what the other participant has said. In the case of the Christian group that watched the documentary *Jews of Lebanon... Loyalty to Whom?* it was composed of friends or acquaintances, and they happened to disagree on so many issues that every time they got into a discussion among themselves I needed to get them back to the main issue of discussion, and that is the BBC coverage and the audience's relation to it. Researchers come across some common problems in two opposite groups: the circle of friends group and the all stranger group.

In one Sunni group that watched the documentary about gays, they were very outspoken. The second group that watched the same documentary was mixed, with two Sunnis and five Christians. After listening to the views of the only-Sunni group, and then listening to the views of the two Sunnis, a researcher would ask: are the two Sunnis actually expressing themselves as they want, or not? What if the two Sunnis were in a homogenous group? What if one of the outspoken Sunnis were in the mixed group? How would the participant then express the views? A researcher would never know if these are their real views or not.

So just as friendship may draw similar views, either because participants are unwilling to express their views openly in front of acquaintances, or to avoid tension with friends, the totally stranger group could draw similar results. However, other participants may feel intimidated when discussing certain topics, so they prefer to leave the room. As a group of Druze participants gathered to watch the documentary about

the Jews of Lebanon, one of the participants refused to stay because “It is dangerous to speak about Jews”.

Though I explained that the discussion was not about Jews but, rather, about the BBC’s coverage, still the participant felt intimidated because of the sensitivity of the topic. Some other participants reacted differently to topics they don’t like. Some participants are unwilling to comment, or to go into any discussion, because they do not like the topic altogether, though the discussion is about the BBC’s coverage and not about the topic itself. They have to be pushed to give their views of the coverage. Like Bahaa from the Druze Group, and Zeinab from the Shia group, who watched the documentary about gays, but because they don’t agree with homosexuality, they decided to downplay the whole process of discussion.

During discussion, some other personalities emerge. Some participants did not take the project seriously. They would walk out of the screening just when they felt like it, and might never return. This mainly happened with a Druze Group. Participants were just told by the secretary, who presumably had no authority, to go into a classroom and watch a documentary. This did not make them feel obliged to do so, or committed. Half way through the documentary, participants started leaving one after the other. At the end, one was left, so I had to stop the screening altogether. On the contrary, there are dominant participants who get so excited about the discussion and turn it into a one to one. The mixed Sunni and Shia group that watched the documentary about Jews saw enthusiastic participants who almost dominated the discussion.

3.4.5 The Moderator

A moderator is sometimes brought in for the sole purpose of facilitating the focus group discussions (Morgan; 1998b). For this academic research, the researcher is the moderator. There are challenges that the moderator faces. He/she might unintentionally turn biased during the discussion. As such, the moderator has the task of dealing with these loopholes beforehand through

(a) understanding the source of these biases that can affect the validity of the data obtained,

(b) understanding the steps that might be taken to cope with these biases (Stewart, et al: 2007:85). Character is also one of the elements that worries a researcher in Lebanon,

because the character of the moderator affects the data gathered from the focus group (Barbour: 2007: 49).

In a country like Lebanon, the character of the researcher or moderator plays a pivotal role in focus groups. It starts with a very simple thing, which is the looks: do the looks express what your political views are, what sect you follow, does your clothing refer to anything? Does your name reveal your sect? All this could make some participants feel very cautious in expressing their views, and others very comfortable.

In my case, as a moderator, the name had no connotations, but the dress code said it all. This concerns the moderator: how will the looks affect the process of the interview? There is a possibility that participants might feel uncomfortable because of the moderator's apparent religious beliefs, ethnicity, or political views. Lebanon's history of mistrust and the recent political tension raise fears for the moderator. Just as the participants need to trust the moderator, the moderator in Lebanon feels that he/she should be in control. It is all about the first few minutes and the right preparations, mainly in areas where there is political or sectarian tension.

To meet Christian groups in Lebanon this means a moderator has to go to a Christian dominated area. For them, a veiled female asking people to take part in a discussion and to be filmed is a bit spooky, especially if they were not introduced to the project beforehand and told that a researcher wanted volunteers. A proper introduction could lift that barrier of fear.

Imagine that there is a classroom filled with students taking a class, and then a 'researcher' knocks on the door, it would certainly raise eyebrows. Of all the groups, only two of the Christian groups that were arranged beforehand appeared to have no preconceptions, mainly because there is a point of contact in common, and the second reason is that the lecturer might have told them what to expect. Christians in two other groups (Sin el-Fil and North of Lebanon) were not as comfortable as the other two Christian groups. Some asked about the purpose of filming, others wanted to know why the groups were chosen based on sects. I was extra cautious with them, telling them they can give different names if they wish. Cracking a joke in such an atmosphere is not bad at all in order to loosen the tension. By the end of the session, the group from the North started chatting with me about their studies. Despite managing to pull through the discussion, it can never be known for sure if all of the participants were comfortable,

or whether there were actually some who were shy of expressing themselves openly in front of the moderator.

The Christian group that watched the documentary *Buried Secrets* actually avoided using the word 'Muslims' when they were referring to the characters in the documentary, rather, they used the words 'their culture, their environment'.

The moderator's task is to ensure that "the group discussion goes smoothly" (Stewart et al; 2007: 38). The moderator has to know how to steer the discussion. Krueger (1994) states that the moderator should carefully get the discussion back on track if, and when, some participants introduce new topics. It is one of the main challenges that, as a moderator, I faced in the focus groups. Participants sometimes find it hard to keep a fine line between what their views are concerning the coverage, and what their beliefs are when it comes to the content.

The Christian group that discussed the topic 'Jews of Lebanon,' the difference in views generated a discussion about the issue of Israel and the rights of Palestinians and Jews. Steering the discussion back to the main point happened several times. The moderator's task is to prevent "single participants or partial groups dominating the interview and thus the whole group with their contributions" (Flick; 2009: 195). The Christian participant from the group that watched the documentary 'Converters' was the most outspoken, given that he was keen to analyse what the BBC was showing. The advantages of this is that it could incite others to express their opinions, or it could discourage them, because they might feel their opinion is not as strong and worthy as the others.

Flick (2009: 201) points out that while the group interview is a powerful method to use in order to understand behaviours and attitude, the dynamics of each group, which is determined by the participants, makes it hard for the researcher to predict common encounters for all of the groups in the study. Several elements could affect the dynamic of the group. It is not only about some participants being engaged more than others, but also about the location, the time, the documentary's topic and the moderator. For example, those interviews that saw the presence of a gatekeeper, or that were personally set by the gatekeeper, ran smoothly. Not all of the contacts that the researcher makes end up as a success. Some things never worked, others could not be fitted into the schedule, and some replied with an acceptance, but only after I returned to London.

One of the main concerns of the mixed groups is that some in the group might feel isolated because they are different, or because the material discussed does not allow them to express themselves comfortably in front of others. This also can happen in the same group. To what extent can a researcher guarantee that all the views voiced by participants are a genuine reflection of what they believed in? Isn't there a slightest chance that one or two participants saw things differently, but because the majority didn't see it the same way, they just went with the flow? As we sit to watch a programme, a documentary on TV, we sit in an environment that is comfortable to us. We might be in the living room, in the bedroom, the kitchen, or even in the garden, watching and yet doing a lot of other stuff. Still, we can assess what we have just watched in a friends' group. It is a natural environment, a natural setting and there are natural people around us. This does not apply to focus groups.

The fact that participants are told to sit and watch a documentary or a programme, means that they know that they have to be fully focused, to analyse, and to come up with meanings, which they might not do if they were in a natural setting with their natural friends. Focus groups make them think and analyse and be attentive, because they know that they are going into a group discussion about what they have just seen, but how would they see it and analyse it if they were just watching it normally? Would some ideas pass by without noticing?

3.4.6 Interviewing Style

The style of questions used in the focus groups for this research were open-ended questions to "... allow the respondents to determine the direction of the response" (Krueger and Casey; 2000: 57). Additionally, questions in focus group interviews were non-direct. Merton and Kendall (1946:545) argue that non-direct questions do not steer the respondents to a specific answer unlike direct questions that "force subjects to focus their attention on items and issues to which they might not have responded on their own initiative" (Merton & Kendall; 1946: 546).

There are different types of non-direct questioning: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured questions (Merton & Kendall; 1946: 546 & 547), which can be used in the same interview: beginning, middle and end. I used the three in the focus groups, beginning with the unstructured questions, to give the respondent the option of giving any type of answer because the question is general. For example: what do you think of

the BBC coverage of these stories? Then, in the course of the questions, I used the semi-structured style, which seeks a more structured answer, and finalised the interviews with structured questions that require a specific answer. For example: would you watch that documentary? As for the structure of the interview, I started with a set of fixed questions for all the groups (standardised style) and then redesigned the questions according to each group (semi-standardised).

Morgan states that the advantage of standardisation is “the high level of comparability that it produces across groups” (Morgan; 1996:143). The disadvantage is that the researcher is not allowed to change anything, regardless of each group’s dynamics. Semi-standardised interviews give the option for reordering questions, adding questions, and changing the wording of questions.

3.5 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis “studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by the text and talk in the social and political context” (Van Dijk; 2001: 352). CDA shows interest in the relationship between language and power. This research applies critical discourse analysis method to uncover practice of power dominance and ideology through the use of language in four documentaries produced by BBCATV.

The study of discourse has become a cross-discipline that is used in different areas of humanities and social sciences, as text is no longer studied as words and language, but as part of social and cultural discourse (Van Dijk; 2011a). Therefore, as I’m studying the audiences and how they see the BBKA, I find it a requirement that CDA method is applied in this research to understand the encoding process of content, the enactment of power through this encoding and how this is resisted or negotiated when decoding the content.

CDA is a field of study that appeared in the early 1990s and was led by the contributions of three CDA practitioners, Norman Fairclough (1989) who focused on language as a social practice, Teun Van Dijk (2011) who formulated the socio-cognitive discourse analysis which relates discourse, cognition and society, Ruth Wodak who developed a ‘discourse-historical method’ through which all background information would be included in the analysis and interpretation of the written or spoken text (Wodak & Meyer; 2009).

Critical Discourse analysis is not a theory but an approach that found its origin both in the critical linguistics and social theory. It is the offspring of both Western Marxism that focused on cultural dimensions of societies, (Fairclough and Wodak; 1997) and the critical linguistic approach developed by Roger Fowler who finds a strong connection between linguistic structure and social structure (Fowler et al; 1979).

Fairclough's (1989) review of different approaches to the study of language, like linguistics, sociolinguistics etc., led him to conclude that these approaches do not present critical perspective and therefore they have their limitations. For example, sociolinguistics speaks only of the influence of social structure on the use of language, separating between language and society, while critical linguists consider language as an integral part of the social process.

CDA however is a developed and more broadened form of the critical linguists. It is not aimed at analysing language for itself, rather it aims at analysing language to show "ways in which language is involved in social relations of power and domination, and in ideology" (Fairclough; 2001:229).

This research specifically engages with Norman Fairclough's approach who developed the 'critical study of language' to the study of language as a discourse. Fairclough defines discourse- the language use in speech and writing- as a form of 'social practice' (Fairclough; 2001: 258), and discourse analysis as 'analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice' (Fairclough; 1995: 7). His approach connects between text ie meanings in the text, the discursive practice and the social and cultural context. Language then is used within a discursive practice to reproduce contest or change social relations.

Fairclough and Van Dijk agree that CDA is not limited to text only. CDA pays attention to other semiotic dimensions (pictures, film, sound, music, gestures etc.) of communicative events (Van Dijk: 1995:18, Fairclough et al; 2011).

3.5.1 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

To understand how text is used in power relations, Fairclough formulated a three-dimension model that deals with analysing text or talk to uncover practices of power. The significance of Fairclough's three-dimensional framework is that it a communicative event - whether it is a text or a conversation- has three dimensions

which are inter-related.

- 1- Text, it's a text whether it is speech, script or visual images.
- 2- The discursive practice that is the process by which a text is produced distributed and consumed.
- 3- The social practice which is the condition and causes for the text and the discursive practice

These three inter-related discourses require three-dimensional methods for analysis (Fairclough; 1989:26).

- 1- Analysis of (spoken or written) texts; this stage is called 'Description'. Fairclough divides this analysis into sections. Vocabulary that deals with the use of words, grammar which focuses on the transitivity (active vs. passive in the text), the action involved and how where when why the process occurred and last one is text structure which is the theme of the whole design of a communicative event.
- 2- Analysis of discourse practice (process of text production, distribution and consumption); this stage is called 'Interpretation'. Understanding a discursive event requires an understanding of "who uses language, how, why, and when" (Van Dijk; 1997:2).
- 3- Analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice; this stage is called 'Explanation'. Texts cannot be dealt with, or understood, without understanding the historical and political context. At this stage, it is important to look into elements of power, ideology, and political discourses to understand the relation with the discursive practice that is the production and consumption of the text.

3.5.2 BBCATV Production and Ideology

This research engages in studying BBCA discourse through an analysis of documentaries. This genre of communication is one-way communication, in which the broadcaster can decide how to prioritise information, what elements to focus on, what elements to neglect, who to interview, how to steer the interview are all decisions made and executed within the control of the broadcasters (Cull; 2009).

Given that BBCA as an international broadcaster works within an 'informational framework' where communication is "primarily a linear process of transferring information, often with the goal of persuasion or control" (Zaharna; 2009: 90), the use

of CDA method is most suitable to study the power relations in BBCA discourse and to uncover ideologies that aim to textualise the world in a particular way and lead the interpreter to textualise it in that particular way. Fairclough call this 'ideological common sense' through which ideologies are brought to discourse as common sense and not visibly as ideologies because by clearly identifying common sense as ideologies they would lose the power relations ie they won't function ideologically (Fairclough; 1989).

In *Language and Power* Fairclough (1989) distinguishes between the obvious powers of the discourse in face-to-face interactions like interviews where there is exchange of power, interaction and adaptation of the language through feedback, and the hidden powers of the discourse in mass media which creates an 'unequal encounter' (Fairclough; 1989: 36) in the exercise of power and therefore the construction of an ideological discourse. They are hidden because the nature of the power relations enacted are often not clear because the producers and interpreters or audiences are distant in time and place and cannot interact. The producers then can exercise power over the audience/ interpreter, because they have the production rights and have the power to exclude or include information as they want and even to determine the ideal subject which is the viewer that they have in mind. Since producers do not know the viewers' intertextual experiences, that is background, culture beliefs, and experiences, they construct an ideal viewer /reader with particular intertextual experiences, but they are actually the producer's own experiences.

Fairclough points out that since discourses and text are part of a historical series, the interpretation of intertextual context ie explanation, "is a matter of deciding which series a text belongs to and therefore what can be taken as common ground for participants or, presupposed" (Fairclough; 1989:127). Therefore, participant's reading of the text, or presupposition, as Fairclough's argue, is an aspect of the producer's interpretation of the intertextual context and to which historical series it is fitted. Presupposition in that respect can be "sincere or manipulative" and also an "ideological function when what they assume has the character of 'common sense in the service of power'.

"Producers in mass communication thus have a rather effective means of manipulating audiences through attributing to their experiences things which they want them to get to accept. Because the proposition concerned are not made explicit, it is

sometimes difficult for people to identify them and, if they wish to, reject them” (Fairclough; 1989: 128)

Based on that, and since this research is concerned with imperialist discourse, this method is best fitted to study and explore how BBCATV uses language in shaping social relations and the way dominance and ideology are enacted and reproduced in text and talk within its discourse. For this purpose, I chose four BBC-produced documentaries from the series *Ma La Yuqal*. The documentaries were produced between 2010 and early 2011, the first Arabic TV produced documentaries since the launch. The series was chosen because its main theme was tackling taboo stories in the Middle East.

The analysis follows Fairclough’s three-dimensional method of analysis. In this research I start by the second level, interpretation as the process does not have to be applied in a specific order (Fairclough; 1989). I started with the interpretation to introduce the reader to the documentary, the producers and the production process. Starting with the interpretation will make the analysis more coherent. Then I move to description. In the description I conducted micro-level analysis. I looked into the linguistic use of words, discourse, and verbal interaction. CDA is not limited to analysing text and talk but it also involves semiotic material like music, visuals, pictures, body language etc., that are considered as discourses (Fairclough; 2001). I also did macro-level analysis of the rhetoric of dominance and ideology extracted from the discursive event. This is the explanation stage where the constituent parts of the analysis are connected to an aspect in the world.

The analysis took place following the focus group interviews and discussion of findings. Conducting CDA following the focus group discussions was enriching to the analysis of the power relations and a hindsight specifically in the explanation part.

3.5.3 Limitations of CDA

Fairclough’s approach combines social science with language. Though the methodological approach to conduct discourse analysis has been the focus of his books, Fairclough developed his approach to make it more theoretically appropriate (Fairclough; 1992). However, his approach was criticized for lacking any theoretical foundation as it overemphasized the textual analysis at the expense of analysing the social in conjunction with the textual analysis (Luke; 2002). Henderson however argues

that CDA has taken theoretical position into consideration by “bringing together social and linguistic analyses of discourse thus integrating analysis at the macro level of social structure with analysis at the micro level of social action”.

CDA’s advantage also is its transdisciplinary rather than just interdisciplinary nature (p. 230 a multidisciplinary intro). CDA can be conducted in and combined with any approach and subdiscipline in the humanities and the social science since it is “a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research movement, subsuming a variety of approaches, each with different theoretical models, research methods and agenda. What unites them is a shared interest in the semiotic dimension of power, injustice, abuse, and political -economic or cultural change in society” (Van Dijk; 2011).

Van Dijk (1995) stresses that since CDA is problem-oriented, any theoretical and methodological approach is appropriate as long as it is able to effectively study relevant social problems like sexism, racism, colonialism and other forms of social inequality.

One of the main critiques about CDA is that it deals mainly with how social practices shape the discourse and accordingly assumes how the recipient or the audience absorbed or consumed that information. Though there is a framework followed when using CDA but this discipline - in understanding whether discourse is ideologically oriented or not- relies basically on the perspective of the analyst who is also affected by his/her own social practices. Widdowson (1998), one of the critics of the CDA approach, describes the analysis put forward by an analyst as “the record of whatever partial interpretation suits your own agenda. And since the analysis is itself a text, this too has an ideological bent...” (Widdowson; 1998: 148).

The personal background experiences, cultural beliefs, etc., are what drives us to see things in a way that is different from others. There are meanings in the text that can be easily detected, but there are other meanings that are derived from the researcher’s own personality and experiences, which are also related to the socio-political environment. I noticed, for example, that the documentary *Buried Secrets* inserted a lot of images of veiled women when the producer is referring to the controversy over sex before marriage, but this was unnoticed, for example, by a friend of mine as we were discussing the documentary.

In that sense, “it is not enough to analyse texts; one also needs to consider how texts are interpreted and received and what social effects they have (Fairclough and Wodak; 1997). Van Dijk (2011) notes that ideological discourse should be carefully

dealt with, as not every discourse is ideologically loaded. Similarly, Fairclough (1989: 94) argues that “the meaning of a single word depends very much on the relationship of that word to others.”

Greg Philo, one of the founders of the Glasgow Media Group, believed that Fairclough’s text-based only method of analysis is incomplete. He argues that the text-based studies “are limited in the conclusions which can be drawn, since their approach does not include the study of key production factors in journalism or the analysis of audience understanding” (Philo; 2007: 175). Fairclough (2001) acknowledges that CDA can never be objective as it offers ‘guidelines not a blueprint’ which means its use is always related to interests and personal perspective.

This study is observant of the role of the audience in interpreting the text which compliments the work of the discourse analysis. The use of CDA and focus groups is necessary to give the research an in-depth analysis to the audiences’ relationship with BBCA and also explains the communicative event’s discursive practice and social and political context which defines how audiences relate to BBCA.

3.6 Elite Interviews

An elite interview refers to an interview with a figure that is part of the powerful circle. Elite interviewing is a type of qualitative research that is tasked to give the researcher information about the role of certain decision makers on the subject matter (Harvey; 2011: 431). Yet there is not much literature about interviewing elites or people in power. The reason is that social science researchers are not used to “researching up,” so the challenges they face are “quite different to those encountered in studying down” (Desmond; 2004: 262). The challenges are:

- a) elites are hard to penetrate
- b) researchers fear that by interviewing them they would further empower the powerful (Hertz and Imber; 1995).
- c) the element of power between the researcher and the researched differs if it is a ‘research up’ or a ‘research down’ (Desmond; 2004:262)
- d) in focus group interviews the researcher sets the questions and the problems for participants, but in elite interviews the researcher wants the interviewee to tell him of the situation, the problem (Dexter; 2006).

3.6.1 Interviewing Colleagues

One of the main focuses of the elite interviewing method is how to locate interviewees, and therefore to reach them (Lilleker; 2003). As a BBC staffer myself, it was easy to approach the interviewees, as they knew me and I knew them. Still, the interviewee needs to know what the research is about, how important their contribution is, the questions (Richard; 1996, Lilleker; 2003), how long will the interview take, how the data is going to be used, will the information be attributed to a name or be anonymous? (Harvey; 2011).

The questions were of the open-ended type, which allows respondents to explain what they think (Aberbach & Rockman; 2002). It is important to note here that interviewing an acquaintance is like a Pandora's box. Sometimes it plays in favour of the research, since the interviewee sees the interviewer as a colleague, rather than as a researcher, and thus they might give you some off the record information, but at other times, and because they fail to see 'their colleague' as a researcher, questions that are challenging are prone to annoy them.

For my research, I interviewed eight people. Three of them were the producers of the documentaries previously mentioned, two managers who were behind the launch of *Ma La Yuqal*, and three others who witnessed the transformation of the Arabic service.

All the interviews were audio recorded. Two of the interviews were conducted over the phone, because the interviewees lived abroad. The duration of the interviews was between half an hour to one hour each. The other interviews were done face to face and inside the BBC. They were all conducted in Arabic, except for one in English.

3.6.2 Elite Interviewing for this Research

The data obtained from the interviews are quite important, in the sense that they are triangulated with the data obtained from the CDA and the focus groups. For example, analysing the production process, and how this mediates between the discourse and the social practices, was revisited after conducting the BBC staff interviews. The interviews alone are not sufficient, as more and more questions may appear through the process of writing the thesis. It is usually hard to follow up on an interview, but it is always easier to rely on secondary sources, like documents, memoirs,

previous interviews, which are all important data to compare with that of the interviewees (Davies; 2001).

The interviews with the producers and managers of *Ma La Yuqal* series were conducted following the analysis of the documentaries through applying CDA. The interviews were conducted in 2015 after finishing with the initial analysis of the documentaries in terms of text.

The information obtained from the interviews shed light on the relationship between the BBC's management and the audience, and on whether an imperialist discourse governs the BBC's rhetoric. From the interviews, I can draw out what makes BBC think that, as a channel, it offers the audience what they want; how does the BBC see its Arab audience: stuck in traditions and needing to be changed, needing modernisation, or just seeking information?

3.7 Participant Observation

Participant observation is one of the ethnographic fieldwork techniques that involves observing and interviewing. Most observational research is based on partial immersion which means that researchers go to the research location, sit for hours, then go home, while total immersion is when the researcher spends several years in a specific location to observe it (Delamont; 2007). One of the important points of research observation is that data are collected on situations "as they occur rather than on artificial situations (as in experimental research) or constructs of artificial situations that are provided by the researcher (as in survey research) (Burgess; 1991).

In Chapter Four, I embark on studying the BBC, politically and economically, and consequently to understand the implications for the Arabic service. I use documents, and other research for the purpose. Through the participant observation method, I got the chance to be inside the BBC, to attend some meetings and to understand how decisions are made, what elements mould the decisions, how the staff work, and to engage in conversations that are relevant to my research. Being a BBC staff member facilitated things for me, since access to locations and people were within easy reach. Before embarking on fieldwork through participant observation, the researcher takes a course of action to facilitate the data collection.

3.7.1 Types of Participant Observers

The researcher should decide which observation role s/he is undertaking. There are four types of participant observation, the two most common are: active participant, in which the participants seek “to do what other people are doing, not merely to gain acceptance, but to more fully learn the cultural rules of behaviour” (Spradley; 1980: 60). The problem with this technique is that researchers “might play their role so effectively that they will ‘go native’ and no longer gather data or record the observations that are made” (Burgess; 1991: 81). Participant as observer “where the researcher participates as well as observes by developing relationships with informants” (Burgess; 1991: 81).

However, one of the problems of this technique is that the data collection process might be hampered if it is taking place in an area of conflict (Burgess: 1991). The other less used techniques are: observer as participant, which involves minimum contact with informants. The problem of this technique is that the less contact, the more inaccurate and biased the analysis. There is also the complete observer, in which the researcher makes no contact whatsoever with the informant and gathers information through eavesdropping (Burgess: 1991).

Researching a situation and the activities of people in an environment in which I already work, means that I get to combine different roles. I can describe myself as being a complete participant when I’m working, yet I’m recording encounters and events. The problem with this technique is that one cannot be both all the time, which means miss some of the observations that are important for the research may be missed, but the good point is that the lengthy presence at a location gives a wider insight into people’s activities and reactions and captures the atmosphere that builds up the analysis. I describe myself as a ‘participant as observer’ when I attend editorial meetings in which editors and journalists gather for a briefing on the top stories and the day’s headlines.

3.7.2 Access, Data Collection, Recording

Obtaining access to the situation needed for collecting ethnographic data is the first important step. Delamont (2007) states that researchers should record the whole process of negotiations for access. As a BBC staff researching the BBC, I, or any other staff member, can attend editorial meetings. No one would question who you are or what you are doing here. Then the first major step in the process is the ethnographic

questions. Spradley (1980) says that to obtain good results from observation, and from recordings a researcher should put questions.

In observing an editorial meeting, I asked the following questions: who attended? Who chaired the meeting? What are they discussing? How is the atmosphere? How are they sitting? Did the meeting look informal and snappy? The second step is making descriptive observations of what went in there and recording these observations, whether in notes, photographs, etc. (Spradley; 1980). These observations are complemented by interviews, which can be formal or informal.

3.7.3 Interviewing Styles

As part of my participant observation method, I conducted interviews with informants since they “are participant observers without knowing it” (Spradley; 1980). I mostly relied on unstructured interviews with veteran BBC staff who reflected on past events inside the BBC. The idea is to get interviewees to open up, let them express themselves with minimum control over their responses (Bernard; 2011). Because the working environment is also the observed situation, I tended to rely as well on informal interviewing that occurs “whenever you ask someone a question during the course of participant observation” (Spradley; 1980: 123). The interviews with Bassam Andari, Nour Zorgui and Adel Soliman were conducted in 2016. These were conducted at a later stage as I found it important to understand the sociology of BBCA newsroom before.

3.8 Summary

This study uses for different research methods to explore how BBCATV and audiences see, think and expect from each other. The research engages in focus group analysis to understand audiences and CDA analysis to discern BBCATV discourse. The use of these two methods first part was concerned with the audiences, through doing focus group discussions, in order to obtain information of the audiences’ perception of BBCATV. The second was CDA to understand BBCATV as a discourse. The use of these two methods together are important for this research as they feed into each other. The study of how BBCATV sees its audience is explored through not only interviews but also an analysis of the discourse it uses which explains the power relations between the BBC and the audience. The discussion of the focus groups which relies on Hall’s decoding encoding complements the CDA analysis- which is mainly concerned with the text and

meanings in the text- with an analysis of the audiences. The other two methods used, elite interviewing and participant observer, were necessary as they were fed across the chapters.

The use of these four methods is important for this research as they feed into each other. A critical discourse analysis of BBCATV encoded messages through the study of text and the power enacted through the text allows us to understand how BBCA sees and speaks to audiences through the language and the interviews conducted. The discussion of the focus groups which relies on Hall's decoding encoding complements the CDA analysis. The next chapter political economy of BBCA relies on documents in the public domain, archive material in addition to participant observation information gathered within the course of my work as a BBC staff member.

Chapter Four:

The Political Economy of BBC Arabic TV

4.1 Introduction

This research attempts to understand the BBC's relationship with the Lebanese audiences through answering the questions: does the BBCA know its audience; does it know what it needs and does what it offers resonate with the audiences' needs. To answer these questions, this chapter looks into the political economy of BBCA by exploring the dynamics of the relationship between the service and foreign office (FCO) its funder up to April 2014 and if and how this influences BBCATV relationship with the audiences. I aim to explore if the BBC is able to relate to the Arab audiences while realizing its role as a public diplomacy asset. This chapter is informed by the propaganda model and the globalisation paradigm, the first one will be informative on the 'filters' that govern the BBC's functionality and the second one will be informative on whether an international broadcaster is able to globalise.

This chapter will start by a section on the history of the formation of the Arabic services to understand why and how it was formed. Through tracing this line of history, I explore the imperatives for this expansion or retraction through looking into the birth of BBC Arabic and the political changes that necessitated speaking to Arab audiences and how this play on the interaction with the audience vis-à-vis its obligations towards Britain.

The second section will look into the BBCA's ownership and control. I will discern the dynamics of the relationship between BBC Arabic service and the FCO to weigh in the level of contestation and collaboration. I explore the elements of power of the FCO: being the funder, deciding on the continuity and closure of foreign services, and how this impact on the BBC Arabic service behaviour. This will be done through analysing major historical encounters between the two.

This chapter also looks into how the national character of the BBC affects how the Arabic service covers sensitive issues like the Arab Israeli conflict. The chapter also looks into the sociology of BBC Arabic TV from within. I aim to do this through studying the role of diasporic staff in soft power strategy and how they moved from being the

link between the Arab world and Britain to project a good image to using the BBC as a platform to project their own ideas (Syria case). The last section will look into the Arab media market and if this poses any challenges for BBCA, a British channel.

The information of this chapter are gathered from interviews with BBC staff, former BBC radio editor and current panning and newsgathering editor Bassam Andari, former radio presenter and current TV presenter Nour Zurgi and BBC radio editor Adel Soliman as well as interviews with two BBC journalists Wissam El-Sayegh and Nada Abdelsamad whose input was part of an interview about the production of their documentaries.

The findings of this chapter will be triangulated with data from chapter 5 on the audience and the BBC, an analysis of BBCA discursive practice and how audiences discern that discursive practice.

4.2 BBC Arabic Service: The Reactional Birth

BBC Arabic service was born out of necessity. It was the first foreign speaking language service to operate under the BBC Empire service which began broadcasting in 1932 in English to British nationals abroad. In 1938, Britain established its own Arabic speaking radio service to counter that of Italy and to promote a good image of itself (Taylor; 1999).

As media in the Arab world was almost non-existent and the only ones operational were state-run, BBC Arabic offered audiences informative news and entertainment programmes. It maintained its continuity by gaining the credibility of the Arab audiences and by succeeding in promoting Britain favourably not only through its programmes but also through understanding and reflecting the Arab world cultures.

Programmes reflected the traits and norms of the Arab culture and was attentive to cultural sensitivities and needs of the Arab listeners (Ayish; 1991), which made listeners identify with the service (Partner; 1988, Wood; 1992). News and talk shows which took up most of the airing time has been reduced for light programmes, music and varieties. The service appreciated great Arab artists and broadcasted educational programmes about Arabic literature.

Significantly, interaction programmes were given much attention, like 'Questions and Answers', in which the caller asks political questions which indicates a high level of trust in the services' credibility and impartiality. The service also introduced a good

image of British to the Arab audience through airing programmes that reflected British values and identity (Vaughan; 2008, Partner; 1988).

Communication with foreign audiences and in this case the Arab audiences remained at full swing as long as the foreign policy dictated. As the Cold war began Britain embarked on a propaganda war against the Soviets and launched a Russian service in 1946 (Nelson; 1997: 13).

The Arabic service was as equally important in that war of words protecting the British interests in the Middle East which was coming under the influence of the Soviets. The history of BBC Arabic service shows how it was used to defend Britain's actions during the Suez Canal crisis in 1952 (Boyd; 2003, Mansell; 1982), to fending off communist ideology during the cold war (London calling) and to protecting its interests during the first gulf war (Aly and Baumann; 2013).

As the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990s, there was a focus on speaking to post-Soviet countries to help spread democratic rule (Price; 2003). Speaking to Arab audiences was not a necessity anymore. BBC World service saw the closure of a number of services addressing western Europe compared to a surge in the launching of eastern European services (Macfarlane; 2014).

The newly launched eastern European service were necessary to spread British values. Adel Soliman, the head of the BBC Arabic radio since 2010 who witnessed that period described the Arabic service in the 1990s as an isolated service "reporting from the stone stage" (Soliman; 2016).

As BBC was focused on Europe, the 1990s saw a change in the Arab media market with the advent of satellite television. At the time, the Gulf War broke out, and the Arab audience turned to CNN for information from the battlefield (Kraidy and Khalil; 2007). The absence of such a strong Arab medium boosted the idea of having a 'replica' of CNN, bringing to existence the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC), a Saudi funded TV channel that was based in London (Sakr; 2001). Then ART was launched, also a Saudi project, offering a bouquet of religious, social, children, and news channels.

The BBC, which already has an established presence in the Middle East and feeling the competition for the Arab audience launched a TV channel in 1994 in arrangement with the Saudi-owned satellite network, Orbit, becoming the first foreign channel to launch an Arabic TV service. Yet, two years later, the channel suffered abrupt

closure after broadcasting a documentary about human rights in Saudi Arabia (Sakr; 2001). At the back of the closure of BBC Arabic TV, Aljazeera channel, the Qatari funded and based pan-Arab channel that went on air in 1996 changing the Arab mediascape drastically.

Aljazeera channel dominated the Arab media market with its coverage of the war on Afghanistan and Iraq undermining the western countries actions in the Middle East. For the first time, a voice coming from the east was not only reporting the war but also reporting it in way that challenged the West. "If anyone lived in the Middle East and watched a network like the Al Jazeera day after day after day, even if he was an American, he would start waking up and asking what's wrong", former US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld said (The Irish Times; 2005). BBC on the other hand was relying on the radio service for competition as well as the online service. The Arabic service functions and influence remained limited in comparison to the changes in the Arab world: not only pan-Arab channels proliferated, but local channels began to broadcast outside their borders.

Britain was not far from the repercussion of the political developments in the Arab world. For that purpose, a recommendation by the foreign policy recommended that international broadcasters should engage and listen to the public to win them over. This was reflected in the editorial and managerial changes inside the Arabic service (Andari; 2016, Zorgui; 2016, Soliman; 2016). Nur Zorgui, a radio presenter from 1994 till 2015 (2016) said that, at the time, the BBC realised that there were lots of changes happening in the region, like the invasion of Iraq and the thriving Arab media market. "There was this conviction that if we were to compete, Arabic Service manager¹² should have extensive knowledge of the region, of its events, and of its complications. I think this was a big decision for the BBC to make" (Zorgui; 2016).

The changes saw the radio service producing its own news and delivering its own packages using its own correspondents (Soliman: 2016). But by then TV medium have become much more popular in the Arab world. As radio medium was losing momentum in the Arab world in favour of television, the FO as well as BBCWS agreed that there should be an Arabic TV, because television was the "medium of choice", as

¹² This brought an end to the services of director Gammon McLellan (1992-2004), who was succeeded by Hossam El-Sokkari, an Egyptian British national who was the Head of Online at the time..

Nigel Chapman, the former head of the world service, put it (Further Issues for BBC Charter Review 2nd Report; 2006: 22). He argued during the Charter review session that “it was no longer going to be viable for us to just broadcast on radio and provide new media services” (ibid; 2006).

The circumstantial and reactional existence of foreign media which much relates to foreign policies plays heavily on these channels ability to understand the needs of the audiences they address without having the interest of the national government in mind (see Chalaby’s study; 2005). The reactional birth of BBC Arabic TV necessitated by political and strategic interests makes it more opt to work within British foreign policy and affects its engagement with the audiences. The next section will look into how this play into the relationship with the British establishment.

4.3 BBC Arabic Service and FCO: Ownership and Control

Ever since the Arabic service and the following foreign language services were established there has been an understanding of their role: to influence. There is also an understanding between the BBC World Service and the foreign office that the World Service is editorially independent from any foreign office interference.

None of the history books or articles about the BBC Arabic service question or debate that the service was launched to make the British point of view known to the world. These same books also chronicle through various historical incidents how the Arabic service and indeed other services within BBCWS have been subjected to pressures from the establishment and the foreign office to change and alter some of its coverages mainly during crises times that were deemed unfavourable towards British point of view and how the Arabic service resisted that interference.

This section will give a background of how and why the BBC Arabic service was formed, and the relationship with the FCO which has provided grant-in-aid for the world service up till April 2014. The dynamics of this relationship was not only governed by the BBC’s reliability on the FCO for funding (BBC Trust; 2016) but also the FCO influence on the continuity or closure of these services, and how this played on the BBC independence.

This background will pave the way to debate whether the BBC Arabic service has changed from performing propaganda that is mainly concerned with the initiator of the message to public diplomacy which is mainly concerned with engagement. The

gentleman's agreement in 1938 which set the relationship between the BBCWs and the FCO to the operating agreement in 2007 emphasizes the role of the BBCWS and its requirements to deliver towards Britain even if the presentation and the articulation differed.

4.3.1 BBC Arabic Service: A propaganda Tool or an independent Broadcaster

BBC Arabic radio service was first and foremost related to British foreign policies. The wide and successful anti-British propaganda broadcasts from Germany and Italy to the heart of British colonies in the Middle East (Boyd; 2003:444) and Britain's fledgling political and economic status required it to speak to others and project Britain to the world (Taylor; 2007). The idea to have a BBC Arabic service thrived in 1936 but it took two years for this service to make it to air as the idea of having a foreign language radio was regarded by some politicians as propaganda tool that is used by totalitarian states (Mansell; 1982).

Though it is 'natural' to think of the Arabic service as a propaganda tool given the circumstances of the launch, the Arabic service was also reputed for its credible news. Many historical accounts show that the BBC put editorial requirements first.

The first Arabic news bulletin was promising for the BBC Arabic service as it told the news in a factual manner. Arabic Radio Service reported that a Palestinian man was executed by the order of a British military court evoking anger in Palestine and the Middle East over the death but also inside the political corridors of Britain. For the BBC, this was broadcasting of 'straight news', but for Rex Leeper, the head of the Foreign Office's news department straight news "must not be interpreted as including news which can do us harm with the people we are addressing. That seems to be sheer nonsense" (quoted in Taylor; 2007: 206).

The differences in editorial policies became a recurrent encounter between the BBC and the FCO, its paymaster. WWII, the first major crisis in the life of the Arabic radio, put the service under pressure from the FCO, to adopt "extreme measures of anti-German (or anti-Axis) propaganda" (El-Issawi and Baumann; 2010: 140), and for the Arabic service news editor to attend the Foreign Office Middle East Department, which BBC did not heed (Mansell; 1982). The service faced mounting and fuelling criticism from the ministry of information for allegedly quoting enemy sources and undermining British interests, that it faced being put under the direct control of the state (Jaber;

2010).

The Arabic service, as historical accounts show, stood up for its editorial independence which was under risk of government influence. The BBC Arabic Radio Service battle to maintain a reputation as an independent organisation, was evidenced during the Suez Crisis in 1956, when Israel, Britain and France attacked Egypt for nationalising the Suez Canal, a move that Britain saw as a threat to its interests in the Middle East. BBCA's coverage of the crisis was deemed unsatisfactory because it did not broadcast any favourable British news relating to the invasion.

The Ministry of Defence described BBC Arabic service as more opt "to quote the Egyptian rather than the British point of view" (Vaughan; 2010: 507). The FCO embarked on a plan to cut down funds by one million pound as a "means of administering a shock to the BBC and inducing them to reconcile their independence with the need for greater care in consulting their services in the national interest" (Quoted in Partner; 1988: 104).

This international crisis is always taken as a reference point to prove BBC's standing up for its values as an independent news broadcaster and successfully resisting the pressures of the government as former director general Charles Curran stated (Shaw; 1995). However, the course of events show that the World Service never denied the role it plays to reflect Britain abroad, but it differed with the FO on the mechanism. A BBC memorandum shows that the Arabic service programmes presented the British point of view in a favourable way while focusing on president Gamal Abdel Nasser's futile economic plans and the difficulties he would face in running the canal. The service even broadcasted some anti-Nasser jokes in a programme called: Political asides" (quoted in Partner; 1988: 102).

Though BBCWS rejected compliance with FCO's informal guidance, but still it did not renounce its role as a British asset. BBCWS maintained a relationship with the FCO whereby its decisions and practices made would take into consideration the FCO's position and interests (Gillespie, Webb & Baumann; 2008). The difference was in tactics in how the BBC would reflect Britain's interests rather than a disagreement on the principle of defending Britain. will trace the relationship between the BBC and the FCO through first measuring BBCA editorial independence and the FCO interference, by looking into major events that put the radio service to test.

The BBC's editorial line paid off in favour of the government as the BBC gained the trust and backing of the Arab audience (Jaber and Baumann; 2011, Ayish; 1991). But it also paid off for the BBC world service which saw an increase in its funding under the White Paper of 1957 (Jaber and Baumann; 2011). The relationship between the FCO and BBC shifted from a propagandistic direction to "mutual understanding of the role of the BBC as a 'public diplomat'" (Sreberny, Gillespie and Baumann; 2010). Accordingly, the FCO shifted its tactics of control from censorship to punishment and reward (Sreberny, Gillespie and Baumann; 2010).

The service insisted on maintaining impartiality when broadcasting news but to engage in 'indirect propaganda' in debate programmes and chat shows (El-Issawi & Baumann; 2010). It believed that broadcasting credible news reflects positively on the image of Britain. Hence, the Arabic service embarked on engaging with audience, by changing Arabic service programming to be "in harmony with the Arab urge towards the strengthening of their common nationhood", while also not forgetting the BBC's British identity, wrote director of near eastern services Sigmar Hillelston (Mansell; 1982: 204). The Arabic service regarded that presenting news of interest to the Arab audience would "create a favourable impression of Britain" (Taylor; 2007: 208).

The 1967 Arab-Israeli war expanded BBC's popularity because of its extended broadcasting hours, credibility in reporting news as opposed to the Voice of the Arab radio station, and most importantly engagement with the audience through joining efforts to find lost relatives (Aly and Baumann; 2013). Audience studies in the 1960s and 1970s showed that BBC had more than half of all radio listeners, and letters to the station reached over 70,000 in the mid-1980s (Ayish; 1991).

The tactical differences have kept the BBC at good terms with the Arab audiences. The broadcasts ensured the loyalty of the Arab audience loyal and reflected good on the image of Britain. BBCWS defended its independence to maintain its reputation for being a credible source of news; nonetheless it has never renounced its role as an organization that would reflect British interests (Sreberny, Gillespie & Baumann; 2010, Gillespie and Webb; 2013 Sreberny; 2014). The BBC management believed that acting as a cultural diplomacy agent, the overseas services would do better for Britain and its image- by projecting its values and building a relationship of trust with the Arab audience- more than being an arm of direct propaganda (Vaughan; 2008).

The technological transformations of the 1990s and the internet age have brought changes to how BBCWS addresses audiences and how it presented Britain to the Arab world. Communication and engagement with the public abroad became a requirement given that the public became vital players in international politics. It is a shift from a 'propagandistic approach' to one that fits more into 'public diplomacy' (Sreberny: 2014). The BBC Arabic TV initiative was an outcome of this new change. The establishment of BBC Arabic TV was for "public diplomacy purposes" (Sreberny, Gillespie & Baumann; 2010: 280). But did this shift bring any changes in the overall objectives set for BBCA? Or in their approach to audiences?

BBC Arabic TV channel was keen to launch with programmes that reflect the channel's keenness of interactivity with the audiences. The BBCATV flagship programme Nuqtat Hiwar, or Talking Point, engages and involves audiences and let them have a say in the causes and issues that matter to them. Yet a study by Hill and Alshaer (2010), of the programme concluded that the questions of debate and the debate itself are in accordance with the FCO's public diplomacy objectives and the "western liberal democratic standpoint" was evident (Hill & Alshaer; 2010:155). Issues discussed were: Do you support women gaining leadership positions? Or, what comes first for you as an Arab, religion or ethnicity? This puts the audience in a state of "ongoing questioning about their identity, their life and their place in the world" (Hill & Alshaer; 2010:159).

The recent BBC News Arabic Survey (2018/19) which was carried out by the Arab Barometer, interviewed more than 25,000 people face-to-face in 10 countries and the Palestinian territories about a wide-range of subjects including religion, corruption, sex and mental health. The BBC says that the results "give an unprecedented insight into the opinions of those living in the Middle East and North Africa today" (Media Centre; 2019). BBC being the initiator of the survey is the side which decides on the subjects, what to ask, which group of people to ask and where to ask which steers the discussions to its own course. Such coverages have provided "gains for the country associated with that brand" as Lord Carter put it in his UK Public diplomacy review in 2005 (National Archive; 2005: 25).

Despite the BBCWS continuous denial of any public diplomacy activity, yet the broadcasting agreement between the FCO and the BBC that sets out the objectives and targets of the WS clearly requires it to keep British interests in mind while maintaining

its editorial values. This makes it impossible to think of the BBCA as separate from the British establishment (BBC Trust; 2016).

4.3.2 FCO and BBCA

For seven decades up until April 2014, the BBCWS have depended on the British government funding through a parliamentary grant in-aid that is administered by the Foreign Office (BBC Online; 2011). But as part of the government's 2010 spending review, the World service funds became funneled through the license fee. Despite joining the licence fee in 2014, the BBCWS affiliation with the FCO continued. The World Service still worked by the objectives set out by the broadcasting agreement between the two which "commits the BBC World Service to broadcast programmes and deliver other services as agreed with the FCO" (Select Committee on BBC Charter Review; 2006: 1).

The relationship between the FCO and the BBCWS is defined and governed by the a) Broadcasting Agreement that looks into the "aims and objectives of the World Service, its target audiences and provisions for performance assessment" (Foreign and Commonwealth Office; 2005: 4); b) the Financial Memorandum which sets the BBCWS financial framework.

The objectives set out for the WS requires it (BBC Trust; 2016),

- To provide an accurate, impartial and independent news service covering international and national developments
- To be the most trusted international news provider in the world
- To provide inspiring and engaging programmes and content that help its audiences understand the world and their place in it
- To reflect the UK – its people, cultures and national life

Though it is regularly stated that the BBCWS enjoys independence and that it should not be "allowed to be treated or seen as a 'tool' of public diplomacy or of governmental goals" (Further Issues for BBC Charter Review 2nd Report; 2006: 20), the reliance on government funds has given the FCO leverage over the World Service (BBC Trust; 2016). According to Lord Triesman, the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the FCO- this dependence puts the World Service in a direction that serves the United Kingdom (Further Issues for BBC Charter Review 2nd Report; 2006).

It is not just funding that could compromise BBC independence, the “Broadcasting Agreement” between the BBC and the FCO which “commits the BBC World Service to broadcast programmes and deliver other services as agreed with the FCO” makes it hard for the World Service, in which Arabic is part of, to be completely independent of the influence of the FCO.

Even after the BBCWS joined the licence fee funding, the Broadcasting agreement remains the framework for the objectives and goals of the World Service. Under the broadcast agreement, the FCO had and still has the power to launch or close services in terms of location, language and timeframe (Gillespie and Webb; 2013).

The Foreign Secretary agrees, jointly with the BBC Trust, the Service’s objectives, priorities and targets, although editorial control rests entirely with the BBC. The Service cannot open a new language service or close an existing one without the approval of the BBC Trust and Foreign Secretary (BBC Trust; 2016a).

What is equally crucial is that the decision to launch or close services is based on the “strategic importance” of these countries to Britain ¹³ (Further Issues for BBC Charter Review Evidence; 2006: 189, Fisher; 2009: 256). The process by which the BBC Arabic TV Service was launched, and others were closed, sheds light on the affinity with British government foreign policies. The push for an Arabic TV service, which was of interest to the foreign office as acknowledged by the World Service management, was needed to maintain “impact in that part of the world” (Ibid; 2006: 195).

“The World Service will struggle to continue influencing world opinion unless it launches a television service in a range of languages. The case for an Arabic language channel is a notable instance” ¹⁴ (The Review of the BBC’s Royal Charter 1st Report: 2005; 51-52).

In other words, launching an Arabic channel launching was a political initiative and the closure of eight services in 2006 to provide funds for the Arabic TV was also a political motivated decision. Closures were based on a review that rendered the former

¹³ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200506/ldselect/ldbhc/128/128ii.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200506/ldselect/ldbhc/50/50i.pdf>

services “strategically unimportant” (Further Issues for BBC Charter Review Evidence: 2006: 192).

Many of the European services being closed had their roots in the Second World War, and they have continued to make excellent programmes through the Cold War years and right up to the present day. However, Europe has fundamentally changed since the early 90s. Now, the countries to which these languages are broadcast are members of the EU or are likely to join soon (Further Issues for BBC Charter Review Evidence; 2006: 190).

Services can face cuts then refunds at certain periods of time which much relates to the British political interest. The Ukrainian service is one example. The Ukrainian radio broadcast which offered programmes since 2009 ceased on 29 April 2011, leaving only Internet publication. In 2018, the service launched a TV news programme in Ukrainian on a local channel, Hromadske TV five days a week. This came amid Russia’s control and grip of Ukraine, a move clearly rejected by Europe. The launch of the TV news programme makes it politically motivated since funding was from a governmental grant that to enhance BBCWS in Africa, Asia and Europe (Media Centre, 2018).

The £289 government grant which was given to BBCWS in 2016 two years after joining the licence fee funding to spend on new services and to improve the regional content of BBC Arabic Service and Russian service was part of the soft power strategy to secure global reachability of the UK and “global influence” (Conlan; 2015).

The Arabic share of the project was 29.4m and the goals set for this spending is to focus on serving North Africa and the Gulf (BBC Trust; 2016). This only came years after the world service went under severe cuts to its services (The Guardian; 2017), but for the need to pump money to the WS was necessitated by the “the rapid growth of rival international news services from Russia, China and the Middle East” (BBC Online; 2015)

Choosing these specific regions and the timing cannot be disconnected from the political scene in Britain. The boost for the Arabic service to engage with the public of these regions is part of this international relations practice whereby broadcasters are expected to influence those publics in a favourable manner towards Britain. Funding that specifically targets specific audience means that stories from that region get the

bigger coverage and share of the output. Whether the material is challenging to the Saudi royalty like the 2017 investigative Arabic TV documentary 'Kidnapped Saudi Princes' which cost the BBC to be denied access to Hajj season, or a watered down coverage of the Saudi-waged war on Yemen where Britain is accused of taking part of it through advise, armament and ammunition to Saudi Arabia (Merat; 2019), the issue remains that any extensive coverage is taking into account foreign policy strategy.

The BBC Trust review in 2013 of the coverages of the Arab Spring have touched upon the sensitivity of covering Saudi Arabia in particular, though it was a major player in many of the uprisings in these countries. The content analysis has looked into the coverage of different countries from North Africa to the Levant and specifically showed that coverage of Saudi Arabia 'has been thin'. The importance of keeping Saudi Arabia's regime untriggered affects BBC's journalistic performance.

The problem is very simple. Everyone knows that Saudi Arabia, because of its vast oil reserves and production, is extremely important to the world economy. Its willingness and ability to keep the oil flowing into world markets is particularly important for Western interests – though also for those of other oil consumers – and therefore the continuation of the current regime is generally considered by Western strategists to be paramount among their policy objectives in the region (BBC Trust; 2012: 57).

This importance of Saudi Arabia to western interests influences one way or another, journalistic standards of the coverage. Even when journalist manage through their contacts to get visas for a short stay to Saudi Arabia this is never 'unconditional'.

There is always at least a tacit understanding that certain taboos will be observed, and few journalists want to jeopardise their chances of being allowed to come back. That also applies to relations with other regimes in the region, but Saudi Arabia is where the arrangements are most constricting, and also where they matter most (BBC Trust; 2012: 58).

In comparison to other places where coverages did not affect, rather was in line with Britain's foreign policy, BBC have produced documentaries about Assad family, 'A

Dangerous Dynasty: House of Assad, to show a 'troubled and suspicious family' without the necessity of gaining access to Syria.

The impact of foreign policy strategy on BBCA and the rest of the services is not a precedent. A former BBC Arabic radio editor revealed in 2004 a confidential paper outlining recommendation that the service should deal with the Gulf affairs, Islam, and shift global strategy within western perspective (Jiad; 2004). The BBCWS maintained the British voice and interests throughout the world in its more than eighty years of broadcasting as set out in the broadcasting licence. Another factor which also makes it an integral part of the establishment is the identity. The BBCWS is after all a British channel that followed the same guidelines as the BBC, and share the same values of the milieu which is in (BBC Trust; 2016).

4.4 BBCA Identity

Throughout major events in the Arab world, the Arabic radio service managed to maintain a good relationship with Arab listeners. The identity of the BBC Arabic service and how this played on its content, engagement and delivery have been watered down because it came at a time when the Arab world was deprived of credible news. BBC Arabic radio however offered credible and uncensored news to a deprived audience. Despite this trust, audiences could not think of it as "completely independent of British policies in the Middle East" (Ayish; 1991).

Historical accounts revealed the affinity of the Arabic service with its identity as a British organization because it is bound by the same guidelines and values as the rest of the BBC. This means that the British point of view or value take precedence over any other value that the receiving end might cherish. And despite the changes in the Arab world in terms of the media market, an active audience and how this raises the stakes for BBC Arabic service which is a latecomer, in many of the incidents, the BBC reflected the views of its milieu rather than that of the audience.

The Arabic TV Service inherited the good traits of the Radio Service but, on the other hand, it inherited the identity: a British channel tied to Britain, the country that invaded Iraq and which, at the time of the launch, still had troops based there. The ever more persistent issue, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is one of the topics that would keep the BBC under scrutiny from its Arab audience. The perception in the mind of some of the

Arab audiences is that what the BBC presents is what the British government wants, keeps the audience alert to bias or attempts to influence their opinion (Amin; 2006).

Advocates of a BBC Arabic TV believed that the Arab audience would accept the BBC for its legacy, but other voices believed that the new channel “is coming into this market as an outsider, so people will definitely be a bit sceptical as well about the BBC’s point of view when it comes to very sensitive topics...” (BBC Online; 2008b: 2).

Coverage of the Israeli Palestinian conflict remains a thorny issue, especially for a foreign medium. In the evidence for the review of the BBC Charter this was made clear as concerns were raised about whether a broadcaster in the Middle East can give a balanced reportage on the conflict (Further Issues for BBC Charter Review Evidence; 2006: 214).

The BBC’s refusal in 2009 to air a Gaza aid appeal by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) during an Israeli offensive on the heavily populated area, caused dissatisfaction among the Arab audiences. Then the Director General, Mark Thompson, said that the BBC cannot “broadcast a free-standing appeal, no matter how carefully constructed, without running the risk of reducing public confidence in the BBC’s impartiality in its wider coverage of the story” (Thompson; 2009: 2). The refusal prompted many including politicians to accuse the BBC of submitting to Israeli-lobbying pressure (Sawer; 2009). In an interview, the former BBC news editor, Charlie Beckett, echoed the same reasons.

If there was no pro-Israeli lobby in this country, then I don’t think [screening the appeal] would have been seen as politically problematic. I don’t think it would be a serious political issue and concern for them if they didn’t have that pressure from an extraordinarily active, sophisticated, and persuasive lobby sticking up for the Israeli viewpoint (Osborne & Jones; 2009: 12).

However, Suzanne Franks, a former BBC producer, and Jean Seaton, the BBC’s Historian, list a number of reasons why the BBC’s decision was judged editorially rather than politically on the grounds that it protected independent journalism, truth and integrity (Franks & Seaton; 2009:13-19). This however brought forward the dilemma of bringing foreign channels to engage with their foreign audience.

In that context, the BBC’s refraining from broadcasting the Gaza aid appeal drew an unwelcome reaction from Arab audiences. For an Arab audience which some

might feel passionately about the appeal, BBC appeared heedless to their views. In that context, the BBC's refraining from broadcasting the Gaza aid appeal drew an unwelcome reaction from Arab audiences. Commenting on this point in a report by the BBC Trust in May, 2009, the BBC said:

Following the conflict, the BBC's decision not to broadcast the DEC Gaza appeal attracted widespread criticism in the MENA region... (BBC Trust Report; 2009: 6) It drew accusations of bias from the audience, caused some interviewees to boycott the BBC and led to at least one programme not being transmitted (BBC Trust Report; 2009: 7).

One of these interpretations of why the BBC stopped the appeal could be the right one, but whether it is the lobbyists pressures or the editorial rules, the decision reveals the foreign services nature, identity and adherence to internal policies of the countries they come from. The Arabic service adheres to the same journalistic and editorial guidelines as the rest of the BBC which requires them to "act in the public interest, serv(e) all audiences through the provision of impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain".

It is more bound by the local British rules and politics rather than the audience that is actually receiving that content. Other problems that face the BBC and its staff, in covering the Israeli Palestinian conflict is the term use. A BBC Arabic Gaza reporter, who was covering the 2014 War on Gaza, received threats because of alleged bias coverage. Abiding by the BBC guidelines, the reporter didn't use the term 'martyr', which apparently angered one armed faction.

Coverage of stories like the Arab Israeli conflict or sensitive topics like homosexuality would be therefore tackled according to how British values are rather than the local rules and norms of these audiences. Chapman, referred to cultural and religious sensitivities before launching the Arabic TV saying they would be "careful" about that but insisted that carefulness does not mean, "watering down the BBC's determination to do strong journalism which is fair to all parties" (Gibson; 2008:3). Incorporating these two values, however, constitutes a problem for a service that maintains the same journalistic and editorial guidelines as the rest of the BBC.

This clarifies that foreign services cannot be global in what they deliver or how they deliver and the local element would always be the impetus for international broadcasters. Yet it cannot be disputed that BBC Arabic service content appeals to some audiences whose views resonate with what it is offering. But it would a mistake to assume that BBC delivers to their views rather than internal considerations be it the guidelines or the foreign strategy. The Syria war is a perfect example of how BBC Arabic TV was accused by the opposition of changing course. This is quite right as the BBC Arabic TV had lots of mishaps while covering the Syria conflict made Arabic TV's output look supportive of the opposition as discussed above.

4.5 The Diaspora Diplomacy

BBC World Service (BBWS) comprises 40 language services that speaks to different corners of the world. Its programmes have been credited for creating reputable and loyal audience but that success depended much on the diasporic staff whose role is not very much appreciated or realised in the studies of BBCWS (Gillespie and Webb; 2013). The importance of the role of diasporic staff was raised in the testimony to the House of Lords by the two academics Marie Gillespie and Alan Webb in 2013 just as the BBCWS was about to join the licence fee funding scheme.

Under the 2010 spending review, the service experienced changes to its funding starting from April 2014 when it switched from grant-in-aid funds to licence fee, putting it under the governance of BBC¹⁵;

- a) when setting the overall strategic direction of the BBC, for defining the position of the World Service within that strategy,
- (b) for setting the budget for the World Service (subject to paragraph (5)) and having regard, in particular, both to the need to provide sufficient funding for the delivery of the World Service as it is defined in the World Service Licence and to the interests of the public); and (c) for assessing the performance of the World Service.

This generated a wave of restructuring for the Arabic service starting from 2013. Changes began within the services to ensure that they deliver to a domestic audience¹⁶.

¹⁵https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/553234/Draft_Framework_Agreement_Web_Accessible.pdf

The Change Project put the Arabic service under the direct control of the central BBC management; managers from other departments, mainly English, assumed key posts in the Arabic Service. Tarik Kafala (2013-2016) a long serving BBC journalist who is half British and half Libyan, became the head of the Arabic service. Martin Asher, a British national who covered the Middle East and is fluent in Arabic, became the online editor.

Arabic newsgathering and planning desks are constantly managed by staff appointed from BBC Newsgathering. The main task for these two desks is to provide news and material to the Arabic service, and to liaise more closely and share material and information with the rest of the BBC. Arabic TV would also offer some exclusive interviews, translations and pictures as well as offering Arabic service reporters and journalists to contribute to the output of the BBC as well as other services when covering international news.

Arabic service resources and plans were now shared with the wider BBC with an emphasis on what it can offer for the rest of the BBC. Arabic service managers as well as other services attend morning meetings with BBC in order to give insight into the stories of the day, the plan the resources and what they are offering.

The new form of governance had raised concern that Britain would lose its voice abroad and that BBCWS would lose its 'distinct' entity within the BBC (Gillespie and Webb; 2013a: 429). The emphasis on the role of the diasporic staff whose contributions not only made BBCWS a trusted and emphatic broadcaster but also helped Britain's image among the addressed audiences are feared to be weakened or undermined by the new governance plan according to written evidence by Gillespie and Webb to the House of Lords.

What is often forgotten in political debates is that for the last 80 years, the World Service derived much of its intellectual, creative and diplomatic significance from the diasporic broadcasters who have been at the heart of the BBC's foreign language service. Refugee intellectuals, dissident poets and migrant artists have provided the essential skills and creative energies that power the BBC's international operations. Yet, they have remained largely absent from the public understanding of the World Service. Yet their diasporic voices and the intimacy

¹⁶ BBC was already feeling the pressure from licence fee payers who feel BBCWS is irrelevant to them. To ensure that their money is being spent for them, BBC World Service launched an ad campaign in 2016 to promote itself to the local audience "and address the misconception that it is solely for overseas audiences" (Sweeney: 2016:1).

they create with audiences in imparting trusted information and news is critical to the WS's soft power (House of Lords; 2013b: 429).

Early on, the BBC have realised the power of diasporic elite, migrants and expatriates, in benefiting Britain's foreign policy objectives. The recruitment of diasporic staff in the Arabic service not only gained the trust of 'country natives' in a British born service, but also presented Britain in the most favourable and desired manner (Aly and Baumann; 2013). Diaspora staff kept the Arab world loyal to the service even at very crucial times of British involvement in wars in the Arab world. In the Suez crisis, the diasporic staff were described in a BBC memorandum as 'behav[ing] extremely well' and delivered the British view to the Arab listeners.

There were a few murmurs at first about the nature of the statements which our Arabs were called in to broadcast, but these died down after a careful explanation to all concerned by the Arabic Programme Organiser about the reasons for the British stand (quoted in Partner; 1988: 102).

The diasporic elite were used as facilitators to shape the perception of the audience in accordance with Britain's views. But it is important to look at how the Arabic service staff functioned and if and how the change in the media market and platforms empowered and changed diasporic staff.

Up to the mid 1990s, the Arabic service staff were journalists doing translation work as described earlier (Andari; 2016). In the first Gulf war, radio Arabic service had no reporters to cover the war and instead its journalists relied on translating reports from their colleagues in domestic BBC who were on the field (Jiad; 2004). By copying and pasting, Arabic service ended up protecting the image of Britain in a war that it helped building up (Aly and Baumann; 2013).

But the changes that gradually swept in to the Arabic service in the mid 1990s laid more powers to the staff. From translation of news from the English central newsroom to having their own journalists, the radio service staff generated their own news having their own journalists in the field and their own sources (Andari; 2016). The power granted to the staff who as Gillespie and Webb described as cosmopolitan workforce have reflected on Britain's image. But in his recommendations for public diplomacy in Britain, Leonard who advocates diaspora diplomacy points out that there are dangers in

dealing with diaspora as they might be inclined to their ethnic or country's politics. BBC journalists acknowledge that personal prejudices prevail sometimes which affects the image of BBC as biased. Abdelsamad and El-Sayegh both acknowledged that journalists sometimes tend to be subjective and biased in their reporting

Sometimes you get the impression that the reporter is passing his/her own message because the BBC has no political line... So what is objectivity? Is there a definition? You can be objective by putting both sides of the story, but you leave the opinion that you like till the very end, so then the viewer will be influenced by the last part he/she watched (Abdelsamad; 2015).

The Syrian conflict demonstrated that atmosphere of personal and prejudiced reporting. Unlike other countries that witnessed the Arab Spring, the Syrian issue was quite sensitive as it officially demarcated the Arab world into two opposing camps, with or against, a mood that was reflected inside BBC Arabic TV. Political views among journalist manifested itself in the coverage of the Syria conflict. Pro-opposition journalists inside the newsroom took charge of the coverage. As I was a participant observer, there was a covert policy of allocating journalists who are considered to be pro-opposition to tackle the Syria coverage. As a result, other journalists, who were considered 'pro-Assad', were excluded indirectly from dealing with packages that related to Syria.

Some journalists, who were regarded as having no political view on the issue, complained of receiving instructions from colleagues of how to write the story. Reports that went on air reflected a 'revolutionary' tone: Journalists began to refer to the Syrian army as 'Assad's forces', in line with Al-Arabiya and Aljazeera; the Syrian opposition flag was once placed on the BBC Arabic website as the country's flag, instigating a wave of abuse on the BBC Facebook page; many packages ended with a chanting phrase 'Hafez (Al-Assad) May your soul be cursed' which was seen as a statement from the broadcaster.

A mini-hub of Syrian opposition sympathisers was so active in the newsroom that some journalists believed the newsroom was 'hijacked' by the opposition. Several of BBC Arabic staff have emailed the management criticising BBC Arabic biased

coverage through the absence of fact check, of guests' credentials, of the biased and zealous reporting of the story.

BBC Arabic later introduced a guide on the terms to be used when covering Syria. The word 'regime' was discarded; the caption on the BBC screen was changed from 'Uprising in Syria' to 'Syria Conflict'. Some journalists regarded this as adherence to the BBC guidelines, but the opposition supporters within the BBC regarded this as pro-Assad reporting.

I spoke to one BBC staffer who was opposed to this change, and who believed that the Arabic service changed its coverage of Syria in line with the British government's change in foreign policy. The staffer believed that as world powers shifted their fight from changing the Syrian regime to fighting terrorism when ISIS took over Mosul in Iraq, that was reflected on BBC screens.

The clash between BBC Arabic and the staff escalated. The Arabic Service produced a documentary in December 2012, called: A TV for the President, which examines the Syrian government-funded the TV station Al-Ikhbariya, propaganda arm of the government. According to the BBC, the Arabic Service "gained unprecedented access to show a very different perspective from inside the station"¹⁷. The documentary also examined how journalists work in a state-owned station, by closely looking into the day-to-day work of three journalists who work for Al-Ikhbariya Syrian TV. Many of the staff raised the issue to the higher management accusing the Arabic service of bias.

Articles posted on opposition websites named journalists in Arabic TV as working according to a Syrian agenda¹⁸. The naming of journalists, their family and their backgrounds raised concern among BBC Arabic service that it was done by their colleagues. The management hinted that it might be an inside job and that things would be closely monitored.

The war between staffers and the BBC escalated when on May 1st, 2016, a Syrian presenter, Dima Ezzedin, known for supporting the opposition, announced on her Facebook account that she was quitting the BBC for what she regarded as the organisation's deviation from the editorial guidelines in relation to the coverage of the Syrian crisis (Huffington Post Arabi; 2016).

The powers that the staff enjoyed according to Andari was that there was trust in

¹⁷ BBC Trust Review of the Impartiality and Accuracy of the BBC's coverage of the Arab Spring: follow up report, July 2013 [online] available from http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/arabspring_impartiality/follow_up.pdf

¹⁸ All for Syria website, 2013. Syria's pro-regime and intelligence people in BBC Arabic, <http://all4syria.info/Archive/67815>

them that they would adhere to the guidelines in their editorial decisions. Andari (2016) said there is no actual monitoring of every detail. He gave an example of how, few years back, “one-sided stories were broadcast especially when it comes to the Arab Israeli conflict, like not having an Israeli voice, but as long as no one complained about it, it went unnoticed” (Andari; 2016).

The diasporic staff remains to be one of the most important assets for BBCWS as they provide their knowledge and experience of the regions, they have come from to the BBCWS, and in turn to the wider audience and Britain in the end. But it is also important to look at the diasporic staff as being part and parcel of the places they come from, their background and their realisation of the changing political scenes around them. The power of diaspora staff is not just about offering BBC knowledge of the region but they can and would offer the BBCWS what they want to offer, what they deem important, and what is of interest to them.

4.6 Challenges of the Arab Media Market

Arab media, especially radio and television, have been under the direct authority of governments since independence. In some Arab countries, governments have dominated the broadcasting system fully (Egypt, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Iraq, Algeria, and South Yemen) and the programming was highly politicised and mobilising. In other countries, media was said to be loyalist or pro-government, with a less revolutionary tone (Amin; 2001, Rugh; 2004)¹⁹. One of the main breakthroughs of satellite broadcasting, though, was that TV channels can be privately owned, located in any part of the world, and, hypothetically are not subject to the authority of the nation-state.

The Arab satellite channels ushered in a new era for the Arab media, one that is distinctively open and bold in comparison to the state-run media, but what does the Arab media world look like in reality? Does the BBC understand the Arab media system, and can it benefit from its loopholes?

When Hossam El-Sokkari, the former Head of the BBC Arabic Service was asked what the BBC could offer in a crowded market, his answer was that the market might not be as crowded as suggested, because the BBC is coming to the Middle East “with something unique to offer” (Pintak; 2007:3). He emphasised that the BBC would be

¹⁹ There have been exceptions, as in the case of Lebanon where privately-owned TV stations operated during the civil war (1975-1990), and continued to do so. However, TV stations in Lebanon reflect the sectarian fabric of the society, mainly by figures in the political circle making their productions compatible with their political views (Rugh: 2004, Kraidy & Khalil:2007, Sakr:2007).

different for its non-biased coverage, for having no political messages, and for showing people's views (Pintak; 2007:4). These factors could play with the BBC aspirations given that

First, the highly saturated market; the High Committee for Coordination among Arab Satellite Channels (HCCASC), and the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) revealed in 2014 that 1300 satellite channels are reported to broadcast for the Arab region (ASBU; 2014). There are multiple channels on Nilesat and Arabsat that are dedicated 24 hours a day to Arab drama, Western drama, the food network, cartoon channels, religion promoting channels, music, classic films etc. as well as reality shows that are a copy of Western style reality shows and American sitcoms.

While Arab viewers have different sorts of channels to appeal to different audience tastes, the question posed by many academics, researchers and scholars is whether satellite was used in any sense for development. They argued that television in the Arab world is "being moulded by media globalisation", for its highly sophisticated visual style and the programme genres, something which is applauded by youth, but deplored by religious and political voices who see it as cultural globalisation (Kraidy & Khalil; 2007: 91).

In their current form, the contributions of these media to transferring knowledge and information, or to generating political reform were regarded as limited (Hafez; 2001:10, Fandy: 2007: 141). Aljazeera was said to have filled the vacuum by serving "as a de-facto pan-Arab opposition views and a forum for resistance" (Zayani; 2005:2). Zayani (2005:3) explains that the channel gained popularity for tackling sensitive and controversial issues that frequently angered governments, like Kuwait, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and even the US causing strains in their relationships with Qatar.

However, Lynch (2006) Kraidy (2002) and Fandy (2007), contend that for Arab media to be able to build a civil society it has to be emancipated. Sakr (2001) notes that it is "freedom of expression, not transnational television technology as such that is crucial to development".

second, media in the Arab world are still tied to the sponsor or the funder. In his book (Un)Civil War of Words, Mamoun Fandy explains that media in the Arab world are "inherently political" and are used in the political struggle and for hegemony. He presents a detailed description of the context that led to the birth of Aljazeera and Al-

Arabiya, which was basically based on rivalry between two bordering countries that had rounds of tension from time to time (Fandy; 2007:58).

Third, the concentration of media ownership in the hands of figures from the political circle, or of those who are close to them²⁰. Aljazeera, for example, maintains a soft policy when talking about Qatar (Kraidy; 2002). Similarly, Saudi Arabia's full or partial ownership of channels and newspapers, as well as production companies, meant that these organisations would consider not talking about matters that were sensitive to Saudi Arabia (Atwan & Khazen 1997 Quoted in Hafez; 2001: 9).

While the BBC Arabic service was thought it can do what Arab channels cannot, there are other factors that poses challenges for BBC other than the editorial issues which we discussed earlier. The market in itself is challenging. The BBC Arabic TV 1994 venture is one example of how owners can instantly pull the plug if what is broadcast runs against their interests. The current venture which relies on British money does not face this problem anymore but the power of nation-state restrains the channels journalistic work (Fandy; 2007).

The British broadcaster cannot but take into account the rules of the nation-state in where BBC Arabic staff operates. This is quite significant in the BBC's relationship with the authorities in Cairo. A policy of tip-toeing is pursued by the BBC to avoid any fury from the authorities that might lead to the closure of the bureau. The BBC Cairo Bureau has faced two encounters with the authorities. One incident took place in August 2015, when the Arabic online service published a story about officers who were accused of planning a coup, including information that one of the accused people was a relative to a member of the military council.

Under pressure from the security apparatus in Egypt, the BBC had to recall the published item. The fluid implementation of the licences granted to foreign bureaux gives the authorities an upper hand in clamping down on media work. Even though Cairo bureau has a licence to operate, each reporter, producer and cameraman has to have permission to be able to work in the field. This permission is for only three months, and the staff have to apply every time in order to get a renewal.

²⁰ In February 2015, the Al-Arab channel, owned by Waleed Bin Talal, went off air less than 24 hours after launching, for hosting a Bahraini opposition figure. A similar incident happened in December 2015, when Arabsat stopped al-Manar TV, which was affiliated with the Lebanese Shia party Hezbollah, from broadcasting, due to a rift in views regarding the conflict in Yemen and Syria (Monitoring, 2015:1).

In 2010, reporters and cameramen whose permission had expired, were denied a renewal for around 4 months. This happened at the backdrop of a dispute between the former Head of the State News Department Abdel Latif Minawi, and the BBC, during a workshop for the programme Question Time about the upcoming general elections.

Minawi, who was to take part in the show, was said to be behind the permission denial, and also the episode never made it to air, as the studio rented by the BBC cancelled the booking at the last minute. The BBC aired a package explaining that the studio manager told them that he had received a phone call from the security apparatus asking them to cancel the booking, because BBC supposedly had no licence.

The increased newsgathering network in the North Africa and Gulf to meet the objectives of the 2020 project illustrates also the curtailments that BBC faces. The Arabic service embarked on a plan to reflect North Africa and Gulf more widely in its output. But in order not to compromise on its editorial line, judgement or value, the team appointed for the Gulf is based in Beirut; Gulf planner, a producer, cameraman and a reporter. The Arabic service contracted a provider in the Gulf to provide material for the team.

Not having a team that is based in the designated area compromises on the quality of the output from that region. Working on the newsgathering desk that receives material coming from the Gulf, BBC Arabic finds it hard to get access to material requested. It is either that BBC does not get access to film, does not get access to interviewees and does not get access to verify stories. Providers that send material to BBC are mostly propaganda material. In the end providers are companies that are more business oriented and it would be unexpected of them to risk their business to get a story that is journalistically valid.

The interest in covering and reaching Gulf and North Africa population have seen also radio programmes dedicated to those regions. As digital media is taking over the traditional form of broadcasting, engaging Gulfers with the BBC is important given that they form the highest number of internet users amongst the Arab world.

4.7 Conclusion

I have attempted in this chapter to examine how the political and economic rules govern BBCATV and how this makes it more focused on delivering to Britain rather than Arab audiences. I have looked into how it operates, under what conditions to

understand how this would impact on the relationship with the audiences (chapter 5). I have started by questioning the birth of BBC Arabic service and how this moulds it to be more inclined to reflect Britain's point of view. In this section I have questioned whether international broadcasters can interact and engage with audiences if they are born out of necessity and in line with a government vision.

The data reveal that although the BBCWS is editorially independent, it comes under pressure from the FCO, whether because of the broadcasting agreement that defines the objectives and targets for BBCWS, the funds and the power to close or launch channels all of which impact on the organisation's impartiality. The findings reveal that BBC's differences with the FCO have been 'tactical differences' on how to deliver rather than what to deliver as historical encounters reveals. The findings revealed that BBC was always aware of its responsibilities towards Britain but differences that emerge is only on the method of delivery. Data also showed that British political interests can interfere in the extent of coverage that a country gets. The case of Saudi Arabia and the very low-profile coverage of its role in the Arab spring has been quite significant.

This chapter also focused on the identity of BBCA to understand whether an international media can globalise. The findings have revealed that BBCA though it speaks in Arabic and has an Arabic staff, yet it is bound by the values of its milieu, the guidelines which stem from Britain's perspective and the rules of the country it broadcasts from. Data showed that it faces challenges in terms of its identity, mainly when covering the Israeli Palestinian conflict. However, the latest internal Arab conflicts, which have taken the lead over any other conflict, showed that they have had repercussions inside the newsroom itself, as staff accused the Service of partiality and biased reporting. I have also discussed the diaspora staff role within the BBC to understand how this play with or against the mission envisaged for them. Though the case of diaspora staff as soft power assets has been fought fiercely, yet I argued from my own examination of the Arabic Service on a day to day basis, that staff at times function independently and use the BBC platform for their own political interests.

In terms of the Arabic Service's positioning in the Arab world, I have found that the BBCA being a foreign channel not only faces competition from other channels, but also challenges from the rules of the countries they are broadcasting to. I have given examples of Egypt where BBCA sometimes had to tone down its coverage to maintain

presence in the country. It remains important to mention that although I am a BBC staff and have undertaken observations, on which I based my analysis, for a researcher it is never really clear what goes on in side-line meetings, what emails or phone calls editors get, or even what conversations, and how all this might be the driving force behind the all too organised and ready-made decisions seen inside the conference rooms.

Chapter Five:

Audience Reception and BBCA in a Changing Media Environment

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to give a perspective of audiences in the Arab world and the challenges that faces BBCA in its attempt to research, measure and understand its audiences.

The first section will look into how BBC sees the audience. This section will include a part on BBC research of audiences. This macro image of BBC perception of its audiences will be followed with a micro image of how BBCA sees and perceives its Arab audiences.

This second section aims to understand the changing dynamics of the audiences within the satellite revolution and internet age and if empowerment of audiences creates an interactive relationship between BBCA and audiences. I will be looking into the changes within BBCATV programming to engage with audiences and the limits of these changes so as not to lose control.

The third section will look into Lebanese audiences' and their complexities through the form of governance, which impacts on the performance of media in Lebanon, the Lebanese audiences' preferences, dynamics and differences. The findings of this chapter will be triangulated with focus groups findings to understand the shape of the relationship with BBCA. This chapter is informed by interviews with two former senior BBC staff, Liliane Landor, the head of the World Service's Middle East region at the time, and Naglaa El-Imary, then programmes department director at BBCA, by data gathered from day to day work as well as documents available in the public domain. Landor's interview was conducted in English and El-Imary's interview was conducted over the phone.

5.2 BBCA: Audience Research

Measuring the preferences of the Arab audience is 'surprisingly challenging', (Lynch; 2008:19), because of the absence of an audience measuring system for TV consumption in the Arab market (Lynch; 2008) or "what the people of the Middle East watch, and how they interpret that information" (Alterman; 2005: 207). One of the main

obstacles for conducting audience research as Amin explains has been the governmental barrier whereby permission is needed for public opinion surveys.

As communication research is very new to the Arab world, much of the research work is translated from the western models of research that have proved to be inaccurate, because it did not take into account the socio-economic and cultural features of the Arab world (Amin; 2008:74).

The only existing studies are those carried out by TV channels or advertisers, but the data obtained “is of limited utility for academic research except for broad generalisations (Lynch: 2008:19). TV stations are usually market -oriented and they use statistics, rather than audience... to appease advertisers who in turn use these statistics to compare popularity of certain channels (Sakr; 2009). Like other broadcasters, BBC World Service conducts audience research to measure performance, but the service has developed a method of understanding and studying the audience to measure its performance and influence its editorial purposes.

The size of the influence of the BBC’s audience, the reach of its programmes, audibility and reception conditions, and the impacts of outputs, were shown to have the potential to be measured. Thus, a set of vital statistics were developed and used... to measure the success of overseas broadcasting (Gillespie, Webb & Mackay; 2011: 6).

Audience research data is crucial for BBC to keep up and increase audiences, to be informed of new content to create, and most importantly to justify its spending policy. The BBCWS audience research projects has been undertaken since 1990 to measure services performance mainly in regard to accountability (Wilding; 2011) and to make sure that they are “in line with the FCO performance indicators and targets” (Gillespie, Webb & Mackay; 2011: 3). The BBC’s audience researches were not market oriented; rather the preferences of the audiences were the roadmap for BBC content and editorial strategy which much attribute to the BBCWS globally as it is more knowledgeable of the audiences than all other international broadcasters (Gillespie, Webb & Mackay; 2011).

Prior to launching the Arabic TV service, BBCWS has done opinion research in seven Arab cities and gathered that there is a demand for a BBC Arabic Television Service in the Middle East (Further Issues for BBC Charter Review 2nd Report: 2006,

190). In the first two year of its launch, the TV service conducted an audience research to look into what makes audiences engage with BBC, what they expect and what they like following the Gaza appeal controversy (BBC Trust; 2009 BBC Trust; 2009a). Recently, BBCA have conducted 'The Arab Survey'²¹ to get better understanding of what issues interest the Arab public (BBC Online; 2019). This constituted a guideline for BBCA to deliver to audiences based on the findings of the survey (internal emails source).

According to BBC, the survey does not include several Gulf countries due to access denied by governments; Kuwait results were not included because they came in too late and Syria could not be included because of difficulty of access. Some questions had to be dropped in some countries because of their sensitivity. Yet the BBC talks about 'Arab audiences' findings' when it comes to this research rather than defining it as findings from the countries surveyed. Arab audiences are mainly described as a one whole. It is one that is "hungry for news and analysis and that wants to know what is happening first and foremost in its own region..." as Landor (2015) put it. This lumping up of the whole Arab world into one poses the question of whether BBC knows its audiences, understands its complexities and differences and how this impact on its delivery to the audiences.

One other problem that affects BBCA relationship with the audiences is what Landor described as a lack of trust because it is still perceived as "the white man talking to the third world masses" (Landor: 2015). She explains that the BBC has worked on that by trying to get closer to the audience, to speak the language of the audience, to look like the audience and to sound like the audience. But BBCA approach in what it offers to the audiences is still within that discourse of seeing and dealing with the audience as one that is in need of BBCA, in need of adopting what it offers and to assimilate with it.

As audiences are becoming more digitised, measuring audiences have become more challenging. Participant observation showed that analytic measurements of how many females or males are engaged with a story, where the highest number of users are, which social media they are mainly using and for how long tells BBC Arabic where its audiences are, their interests and therefore how to speak to them. However, the use

²¹ Countries included in the survey are Lebanon, Tunis, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Sudan, Palestinian territories, Jordan, Iraq and Yemen

of social media in the Arab World varies because of accessibility to devices, of internet connections, of wealth and also on government censorship creates disparities among users (Population Reference Bureau; 2012). In Gulf countries people mainly use twitter, snapchat, Instagram, whastapp. Saudi Arabia recorded a high usage of Youtube. It is also related to the size of the population like Egypt. BBC Arabic gets huge number of users from Egyptians whose total population exceeds 80 million in comparison to Lebanon which has a population of 4 million. This means that some audiences will be unrepresented, and almost rendered non-existent because because not all have the same availability or affordability to have multiple technological communication devices.

5.2.1 Arab Audience Complexities

The total population of the Arab people is, according to World Bank 2017 data, over 400 million²². Though they all share the same language, countries in the Arab world have different heritages, diverse cultures, ethnicity and religions, different histories, geographies, and even different physiognomies, but they are all described in terms of a unifying feature: the language. The Levant for example, which refers to Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Jordan, are different from the Maghreb countries, a term which refers to Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Tunisia, which make up, together with Egypt, North Africa. Even dialects differ in such a way that it is hard for someone from the Levant to understand the Moroccan or Algerian, unless they speak what is mostly close to formal Arabic.

Therefore, preferences and needs change and differ from one country to other and even from one community to other. Second, audiences' preferences are complex and sometimes not compatible with the BBC guidelines. Throughout different events, several studies of the audience's preferences have revealed what the audience want from media and what they expect from it.

In April 2009, the BBC Trust published a report to gauge perceptions of the Arabic TV Service. Talking to 36 opinion formers in six Arab countries, the key findings were that while viewers were looking for professionalism in news (credibility, variety, speed of news coverage, in-depth analysis), they are also looking for emotional engagement (empathy and connection with the Arabic world, affinity with presenters, more country-specific news) (BBC Trust: 2009: 9). The report concluded,

²² <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=1A>

Achieving a strong emotional connection will always remain a challenge for BBC Arabic TV and may limit its mass appeal and potential reach. However, management believes that impartiality and accuracy must always take priority over emotional engagement (BBC Trust; 2009:6).

On the contrary, BBC Arabic service audience have rocketed during the 'Arab Spring' events, as an independent study carried out by the Broadcasting Board of Governors' International Audience Research Program (IARP) have shown. Measuring audiences between February and July 2011, the beginning of the Arab Spring, it was found that, "overall audiences to the BBC's Arabic services have risen by more than 50% to a record high of 33.4 million adults weekly - up from 21.6 million before the 'Arab Spring' " (Media Centre; 2011).

The survey conducted in Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabic, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco saw the largest increase of audiences' viewership of BBC happening in Egypt. BBC said that Arabic TV viewership has risen because viewers wanted "to better understand the events happening in their own country" (Couri: 2013:1).

Since then BBC Arabic's overall audience reach has risen by more than 11 per cent to 36.2 million adults weekly - up from 32.5 million in 2012 to 2013", according to an audience research carried out in 2014²³ (Media Centre; 2015) . The increase in viewership does not necessarily entail an affinity between all Arab audiences and the channel. Rugh, explains that audiences watch different channels "even if they disagree with the editorial slant" (Heil; 2007). But according to different studies of a number of Arab audiences, viewers tend to watch or listen to channels that mainly resonate with their own beliefs and views which creates some challenges to international broadcasters.

Today, the Arab television viewer with a satellite dish has a choice of dozens of channels. But like most TV viewers around the world, the Arab television viewer tends to watch only six or seven of them in a given week. Typically, an avid Lebanese television viewer might watch Aljazeera, Al-Arabiya or Arab news network for round-the-clock coverage of news and public affairs; Middle East Broadcasting, Orbit, Arab Radio and Television or Lebanese Broadcasting Company International for entertainment including western and Arab programs;

²³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2015/bbc-arabic-anniversary>

The Hezbollah channel al-Manar for aggressive pro-Palestinian commentary and news; plus the local TV channel for local news (Rugh; 2004a: 2)

In a highly polarised region at times of crisis, such as during the invasion of Iraq, or the Palestinian-Israeli wars audiences tend to watch channels that resonate with their views. Audiences want a deep and detailed coverage of their local 'issues' and their 'stories', with which the BBC might not always see eye to eye. Braizat and Berger (2011; 124 & 136) conducted a study between 2003 and 2008 about the consumption habits of Jordanians to determine the relationship between satellite television and public opinion. They looked into three channels Aljazeera, Al-Arabiya and Jordanian National TV. The findings were that half of the population resort to the local TV for local news, while Aljazeera comes first for international news, followed by Al-Arabiya. The researchers concluded that there is a "selective bias by the audience and individuals tend to select information sources that conform to their already held beliefs (Braizat and Berger; 2011: 136).

The role attributed to Arab transnational media for creating a pan-Arab audience (Rinnawi; 2011; 163&165, Kraidy; 2002: 8), or a new Arab public opinion (Ghareeb; 2000: 396), has been reconsidered after the Arab Spring. The Syria conflict has divided the Arab world immensely, and that was reflected in the choice of media for information. Shibley Telhami's decade long polls in Lebanon to measure Aljazeera viewership showed that preferences vary according to sectarian lines. In 2006, for example, just prior to the 2006 Lebanon-Israel war, 43 per cent of Lebanese Shiites, 33 per cent of Sunnis, 25 per cent of Druze, and 16 per cent of Christians, identified Al Jazeera as their first choice. By 2011, with Al Jazeera seen to be taking sides in favour of Sunnis, only 7 per cent of Shiites identified it as their first choice for news (Telhami; 2013: 4). The changes in the Arab audiences' preferences could play in favour of BBCA's relationship with them, but as Cull argues it might just be that their interests overlap with that of the government (Cull; 2009).

5.2.2 BBC Arabic TV and Audiences in a Changing Media Environment

The free-to-air BBC Arabic TV service was launched in March 2008, with the notion that it is entering a very demanding environment in a different fashion. Since its launch, the channel prides itself for giving a platform to Arab audiences to participate

and engage in discussions with each other, to advance “audiences’ causes” (Pintak; 2007: 4). BBC Arabic focused on giving audiences a voice and a platform to discuss the issues that touches their lives according to former head of BBC Arabic Hosam El Sokkari" (Press Office; 2008).

The Arabic TV offers bulletins, talk shows, documentaries, and other programmes. News and current affairs remain to be the prime offerings of the channel with bulletins, specials and summaries run each hour. Newshour a programme similar to Newsnight is a flagship discussion programme that sees three to four topics that made the news agenda discussed. World at One is a newsy programme that runs at 1300 GMT. It has fixed features, like business news, light stories and sports. Without Restraint, a programme similar to Hardtalk where a high-calibre guest is interviewed once a week.

The channel also offers a technology programme and a programme on Arab cinema. Our World is a talk show that focuses on women issues and see female guests from different parts of the Arab world discuss women empowerment. BBC xtra is a colourful programme that includes more than one presenter from different nationalities discussing several topics that concern the youth including controversial topics. But the channel has built up on its interactive programmes throughout the years with the change of the audiences demands.

The flagship programme Talking Point or Nuqtat Heward, a tri-platform programme that was launched as BBCATV went on air was described as “the pioneering live multimedia interactive debating forum that gets to the heart of the matter of a single issue in each edition” (BBC Press Office; 2008). The programme which runs three times a week is aired on radio and TV with a 30-minute extra for radio. Topics discussed could be political or social including taboo stories and the choice is either a current affairs topic depending on the news agenda or a trending topic on social media that is gathering a lot of debate. The programme relies on different technologies to communicate with the audiences including phone calls, emails, text messages, blogs, pictures, and professionally shot pre-recorded Vox pops in key cities, as well as 3G and webcam contributions.

The fast-developing technology in terms of how audiences consume news and information required more programmes that reflect those changes in the industry of media. The increase in the use of social media in the Arab world have changed the

audiences' demands and required that BBC Arabic TV act to deliver news to the audiences in the format they desire. News consumption according to the Head of BBC Arabic Sam Farah is changing and the BBC is adapting its format accordingly to serve the audiences (BBC Media Centre; 2017).

Trending, a 30-minute news bulletin of what is trending on social media was launched late 2017 and runs from Monday to Friday at 15:00 GMT, a peak time in the Arab World. The programme selects the most popular and interesting stories on social media and discuss them with experts or the individuals behind the trending topic. The programme's format features a large touch screen and graphics and unlike the conventional way of reading news, presenters explain the story in their own words 'in an innovative style which appeals to a younger generation' as described by BBC.

The Arabic service have also expanded on its vision that sees more social media and trending stories make it on the website page. Several breaking news stories began as a tweet or a post on social media: Rahaf Al-Qanoun was the news and the source as she posted on social media about her ordeal, Khashoggi's dramatic disappearance began as a tweet by his fiancée and circulated around by twitter users. Now many leaders make their statements on twitter before going out to the conventional way of addressing audiences. These new dynamics have changed the old rules of media communication as social media users are alerting newsrooms to stories and UGC are feeding them pictures and videos. Changes to how BBCA should engage audiences - mainly the young ones who are more internet active than others- became necessary. A social media team was formed in 2013 with the task of monitoring trending stories and choosing one of these stories to publish it online. BBCATV have made all of its social media platforms available for comments to ensure a bigger engagement of audiences with its service.

The changes in technology heralded by the spread of the use of social media have created challenges for international broadcasters from the audiences themselves (BBC Trust; 2016a). The technological and communication revolution lend powers to the public which are becoming more involved in foreign affairs and interlocutors in diplomatic activity (Stizinger and Coombs; 1992, Vickers; 2004).

The role of non-state actors in international communication is more powerful and effective that they influence each other as people-to-people interaction beyond national border is facilitated by the internet (Cull; 2009, Snow; 2009). Non-state actors

are able to organise in groups either on Facebook through pages or on twitter through hashtags or use Youtube as a channel. These internet-facilitated socialising forums, allowed people across borders to debate, inform, instigate, recruit, appease or mobilise others (Langman; 2005, Eltantawy & Wiest; 2011).

Non-state actors are becoming independent and in command that they are able to “develop public diplomacy policies of their own” (Melissen; 2005: 12). Control of the flow of information has become mutual, pressing mass-media to work within a ‘relational framework’, whereby engagement is the key component (Zaharna; 2009). Amid these changes, Wang (2006) questions the validity of broadcasters.

In light of the growing contact points in international interactions and, especially, with the rising prominence of the internet and other new communication technologies we can no longer take for granted the centrality of the mass media in communication with foreign publics (Wang; 2006: 93).

New technologies are challenging international broadcasters, because it questions their powers, defies the system of unilateral flow of information and undermines their commands. Gillespie (2013) argues that in a digital age, transnational media must come up with ways to engage the audience through social media. But the structure and functionality of international broadcasters are one of the main features of international broadcasters which makes their ability to apply public diplomacy tactics a bit murky.

Zaharna framed public diplomacy communication initiatives into two frameworks depending on how public diplomacy tools communicate with the public. These are the ‘information framework’ and the relational-framework’. ‘Information framework’ is communication which is “primarily a linear process of transferring information, often with the goal of persuasion or control” and relational framework which views communication as a process that favours “fellowship”, whereby engagement is the key component, like relationship building, exchange of programmes and visits (Zaharna; 2009).

International broadcasters are situated in the ‘information framework’ because they “tend to reflect the views of their political sponsor explicitly in their pronouncements or implicitly via the subtle selection, tone, and phrasing of their information content” (Zaharna; 2009: 90). News departments, as Cull states, are the

most reliable public diplomacy practice. His argument is that when International broadcasters present news in an objective manner, they are disseminating an image of an ethical culture, one which is reflected on the state by associating it with good deeds (Cull; 2009). News, documentaries, interviews and on-to-one talk shows are formats in which any broadcaster can have total command of and can fulfil the desired objectives.

These genres of communication, are one-way communication, in which the broadcaster can decide how to prioritise news, what elements to focus on, what elements to neglect, who to interview and how to steer the interview, what stories are worth tackling in a documentary, and what elements are included in this documentary are all decisions made and executed within the control of the broadcasters.

As audiences are becoming involved in the production process international media cannot afford to remain within the 'information framework', they have to work within the 'relational framework'. Broadcasters tended to move away from the classical broadcasting mission which is 'telling', to listening mainly through online options and services like 'on demand' (Fisher; 2009).

But studies have shown that international broadcasters cannot engage with the public in a way that would empower non-state actors beyond the international broadcasters' control (see Gillespie's study of G710 programme; 2013). International broadcasters cannot mould themselves into the 'relational framework", as they cannot but operate within a defined line of goals. Issues of engaging the audiences opened up a lot of avenues of debate. What is published or goes on air remains controlled by BBCA as teams choose which trending story to publish and which to discard, what topics to put up for discussion and what to side-line.

5.3 Lebanon's Sectarian Rule

Some of those who have heard of the Lebanon know it for its cuisine and for those who are more interested in the politics of the Middle East know that it is a country that lived through 15 years of civil war, has a confessional system and witnesses rounds of tensions with bordering Israel. Understanding the political and social makeup of Lebanon would explain why focus groups were chosen along sectarian lines.

Lebanon is an Arab country that sits on the Mediterranean coast from the west and is bordered by Syria from the north and the east, and Israel from the south. Lebanese inhabitants were estimated at around 4 million in 2010. The overall number

of inhabitants of Lebanon has now reached around 6 million, with the influx of refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict since 2011, as well as Iraqi asylum seekers²⁴.

The country is made up of 18 different religious sects, six of which are Muslim and twelve are Christian. Lebanon is ruled by a confessional system, which is one form of consociationalism under which groups of ethnic, religious or linguistic differences manage to co-exist. When co-existence is based on religious differences it is called confessionalism, a system which is based on equal power-sharing among religious sects. In Lebanon, power is distributed based on confessional lines. Political rights and entitlements are allocated to individuals according to their confessional affiliation and personal status law through which certain laws are under the authority of the religion. Lebanon's current political and social structure was and remains to be shaped by its birth as a state and the history of events that followed.

It is quite hard to tell when Lebanon plunged into sectarianism. Some argue that Lebanon, the geographical area as we know it now, practiced confessionalism since the 13th century (Harb; 2006). Others mark the 1860 civil war in Mount Lebanon over power between Druze, a Muslim sect, and Maronite, a Christian sect, as the beginning of division along confessional lines (Khalaf; 2002). Because of these historical disagreements and fights, people were already becoming geographically distant, relocating along confessional lines in major cities. Ayoub (1994) argues that this made it hard for Lebanese communities to form a nation bound by a single history and common destiny. However, the formation of Lebanon in 1920, marked the beginning of a series of events that deepened the sectarian divide among the population.

Up until 1920, Lebanon was not a state, but it was part of what was known as Greater Syria. The colonial French established "Greater Lebanon" annexing this proportionate piece of land from Greater Syria. Lebanon was mainly formed for the Lebanese Christian Maronite, who enjoyed much more privileges than their fellow Muslim citizens (Dekmejian; 1978). But this newly established and quite tiny state of 10,452 Km², slightly bigger than London, had encompassed 18 different sects of both Muslims and Christians putting it under constant tension and flareups. Muslims

²⁴ In February, 2016, Amnesty International published on its website that "Lebanon hosts approximately 1.1 million refugees from Syria, which amounts to around one in five people in the country." <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/02/syrias-refugee-crisis-in-numbers/>. The UN's 3RP regional statistical overview for 2016-2017 showed that the total number of Syrians "including registered Syrian refugees, unregistered Syrian refugees, as well as Syrians residing in the host countries under alternative legal frameworks had reached 1,500,000 by November, 2015. (p. 8) <file:///Users/w1301682/Downloads/3RPRegionalOverview2016-2017.pdf> In its 2015 profile of the Lebanon, The UNHCR also reported that by December, 2015, there were a total of 1,846,150 refugees from Syria together with asylum seekers from Iraq currently living in the Lebanon. <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486676.html>

opposed that annexation and wanted to remain part of Greater Syria. This point in history marks the beginning of the sectarian division, recurrent instability, tension, demographic change, political division and different communities and identities in this small country.

Following the termination of the French mandate in 1943, Muslim and Christian leaders worked out what was known as the National Pact, which laid the foundation for a confessional state under which religious sects shared power. The power sharing system between Christians and Muslims was based on the 1932 census that was conducted by the French mandate which found that Christians constitute the majority of the Lebanese population with a ratio of six to five (Joseph; 2000). Therefore, the Maronites who constituted the majority even among Christians got the post of presidency, the Sunnis who came second assumed the post of the premiership, and the Shia who came third were allocated the parliament head post, the deputy parliament speaker is always Greek Orthodox, and members of parliaments were six to five in favour of Christians.

The National Pact also stipulated that the Muslims of Lebanon would cease seeking to incorporate Lebanon in a single Arab or Syrian state and accept the existing geographical boundaries. In return, the Christians of Lebanon would cease looking to France for protection or seeking military pacts with Western powers (Ben Jelloun; 2005).

The differences between Christians and Muslims in regard to their country's identity –an Arab country, or a country with an Arab face- deepened the divisions among them and that was apparent in different violent rounds. This agreement which was meant to maintain stability accentuated the divisiveness between Christians and Muslims. In 1958, violence ensued between the Arab nationalist camp also known as pro-Nasirite camp, who were the Muslims, and the pro-western camp, who were mainly Christians (Khalaf; 2002).

The prolonged 1975 civil war which continued for 15 years was the result of sectarian division over political alliances. This war known among the Lebanese as the 'War of Others on the Land of Lebanon' (Tueni; 1982: 86), was also due to the disagreement about Lebanon's identity, its political choices in regard to Arab Israeli conflict and Lebanon's role in the region. The war took its toll on the people as sectarian cleansing began to take hold. People were killed at checkpoints because of their religion,

villages and houses were raided. This drove people who used to live in cosmopolitan areas to regroup into similar communities to avoid threats and killing during the years of war.

As the war ended with the signing of the Taif accord in 1991²⁵, mediated by Saudi Arabia in the city of Taif, Lebanon officially became a confessional state. Power sharing, equal representation at parliament, equal administrative positions were all enforced to enhance co-existence between Muslims and Christians until they reach a point where that system could be lifted, and the country would be ruled by the democracy of the majority. But up to this day Lebanon is still managed by the Taif accord because of the fragility of the co-existence. People kept the barriers with their fellow citizens, each confining to their own geographical territory, having their own schools, TV stations, jobs and benefits system like charities and so on; the capital Beirut is still divided between western Beirut where majority of Muslims are and eastern Beirut where the Christian stronghold is.

These form the breeding ground for a confessional culture that prevents social and political integration and undermines any true democratic experience (Khairallah; 1994). Confessional democracy in that sense, makes it harder for members of these sects to emancipate themselves from falling under the sectarian rule. Sects tend to be more reclusive, building their own mini-state within Lebanon.

The different confessions developed their own welfare and education services over the years to cater for their co-religionists... It has been estimated that up to 70% of school children in Lebanon passed through schools of their own confession, barely meeting those of another faith (Rigby; 2000: 171)

Confessionalism hence, maintained peace in the country for 15 years, but not reconciliation. The lack of trust among different sects is reflected in everyday life experiences. Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, an assistant professor of politics at the American University of Beirut said that 90% of her students now "are Shiites, and some of them told me that they were taking my course because I was a Shiite and that if they were going to get a lousy grade, they would only accept it from a Shiite" (Blanford; 2006: 2).

²⁵ https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_tauf_agreement_english_version_.pdf

Similarly, Obeid (2010) argues that “confessionalism promotes primacy of religious identity... this encourages close vertical assimilation within confessional communities and obstructs horizontal integration across them, incubating religious-based states within the state. As a result, the country suffers from a weak national identity and anaemic levels of integration across its communities” (Obeid; 2010: 2)

The different sects of Lebanon managed to co-exist within the boundaries of Lebanon but created their own internal boundaries drawing virtual lines between Muslims and Christians, socially and even historically. Take a tour around different Lebanese areas and it would be easy to tell which sect lives here. It is not just by the way people dress, or talk, but also it is visible on the streets with signs of their idol political leaders, sprayed comments on walls, or even banners by some parties.

The Taif Accord that ended the civil war, formally rendered Lebanon a confessional state. Under the accord, Christians no longer enjoyed supremacy over Muslims. The number of seats in parliament became equally divided; the president was stripped of most of his constitutional powers, while the prime minister acquired many of those powers. Irani (2000) points out that in such a system the individual must be part of a patronage network. Integration among different communities, then, is weakened. Rigby (2000) argues that Lebanese of different sects rarely meet because of entrenched sectarianism.

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Confessionalism has constituted an endorsement of this demographic alignment and the confessional system in Lebanon rendered the religious identity much more important than the nation’s identity. Many Lebanese have never ever met another fellow citizen from a different religion and attempt to preserve this homogeneity through different measures the latest of which was a ban on Muslims to buy Christian land.

5.4 Lebanese Media, Audiences, and Confessionalism

Confessionalism in Lebanon is part and parcel of every detail of Lebanese people's lives. It affects their lives and they are drawn into the sectarian system whether they approve of it or not. Marriage and divorce papers are all based on the sect, inheritance can also be done according to the sect's norms. Individuals who do not wish to be to any sect usually find themselves excluded and vulnerable. Sect is the safety net for the Lebanese as the political system ensures representation for its sectarian communities.

Media is not an exception. Lebanon was one of the few countries in the Arab that launched a TV station in the 1950s. Lebanon's first experience with television began in 1959 when a state broadcaster was launched followed by another in 1961. But as the civil war started in 1975, and geographical division across Lebanon began to take pace, the state television named Tele Liban was divided as well. Channels 7 and 9 (French speaking channel) were broadcasting from western Beirut, a majority Muslim section of the capital, and channels 5 and 11, broadcasting from eastern Beirut where Christians mainly resided (Shabshoul; 2015). Media began to officially slide into the sectarian division gripping the country.

The civil war undermined the power of laws which saw among other things channels belonging to warlords, politicians, political parties, began to emerge. By the time the war ended, Lebanon had over 50 channels (Kraidy; 1998) all politically and sectorial affiliated (Shabshoul; 2015). The Taif accord which ended the war put forward a plan to regulate the mushrooming of these channels.

All the information media shall be reorganized under the canopy of the law and within the framework of responsible liberties that serve the cautious tendencies and the objective of ending the state of war²⁶.

The stipulation did not end the stations' affiliation with parties or politicians. Major parties and political figures who are considered representatives of their sects remain to have channels that reflect the sect's political or cultural views. Lebanon has now around 6 channels all patronaged by political parties or figures. The programmes of these channels mirror the cultural political and historical background of the sect they are affiliated and reflects their communities' preferences, needs and beliefs.

²⁶ https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_tauf_agreement_english_version_.pdf

Lebanon's media remains to be the most open and diverse in the region, because of the presence of different sects in Lebanon. For example, Hezbollah affiliated channels would practice restrictions on broadcasting certain films or series that are deemed religiously or culturally inappropriate, while other channels would not have these restrictions. While some channels would refer to Israel in its name, others would refer to it as "the Zionist enemy". Channels impose their own censorship which reflects Lebanon's social structure. Because of this pluralism, media in Lebanon enjoys freedom of expression on different matters. Even though Lebanon is still bound by some traditions and norms, and laws²⁷ that subject it to prosecution, yet channels are more apt to tackle sensitive issues without any restrictions.

Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC), the first private channel to launch in 1985 enjoyed wide success among the Lebanese population with its variety of programmes, news, game shows that it outdid Tele Liban. LBC was famous for talk shows that touched on sensitive issues like sex, and homosexuality. The channel ran a programme called *El-Shater Yehki* or *The Bold Speak Out* from 1995 to 2000. On this programme, an audience and a group of specialists discussed issues of poverty, bribes, sexual education, Satan worshipping, etc. Nötzold quotes a study by Melhem Chaoul, who considered the nature of 72 episodes of the programme from 1995 to 1998. His conclusion was that,

Thirty-one episodes (39.7 per cent) were about beliefs, traditions, and communication (committing suicide, racism), whereas eighteen episodes (23.1 per cent) dealt with economic and social life (rape, prostitution), followed by seventeen episodes (21.8 per cent) that were concerned with the private life of individuals and families (marital betrayal, domestic violence, cohabitation) and only twelve episodes (15.4 per cent) dealt with topics related to the government and public issues (revenge, bribes)" (quoted in Nötzold; 2009:271).

Nötzold adds that many in the audience spoke publicly about topics that cannot be discussed in other parts of the Arab world and are considered part of the western values" (Nötzold; 2009: 272). Another programme, with a similar theme, ran on *Future*

²⁷ According to audio-visual media law, media are subject to prosecution if they publish anything that harms the state, incite sectarian violence and undermine foreign relations.

television, and was hosted by Zaven Kouyoumdjian. It was called *Sire we infatahit*, or A story to talk about. Later on, other programmes of the same nature replaced them. *Ahmar bil-khat Al-Arid*, meaning Bold Red Line, is a newer version of *The Bold Speak out*, on LBC. With Zaven is also a replacement of the Future TV programme, and it is hosted by the same person. The Aljadeed Channel also has different programmes of this nature, including *Lil-nasher* (For Publishing), *Wahsh El-Shasha* (The Screen Monster). Almost every Lebanese channel now has such programmes. However, given this country's cultural and political history, it has created its own taboos, which depend on the social and political context: instigating sectarianism, pro-Israeli stances, an anti-Syrian stance.

The BBC entered the Arab world with confidence that what it offers is unique, but it was criticised for appearing to be the same as its competitors, offering the same news, hosting the same analysts, and misjudging what was actually “newsy” (Abbas; 2008:1). Najm Jarrah, who also referred to similarities with other Arab satellite television stations, like Aljazeera, in terms of programmes and news, believed that if the BBC is to stand out in the Arab world it has to revert to the investigative journalism, for which the wider BBC is known (Jarrah; 2008).

However, the BBC's choice of documentaries and programmes may be seen to reflect a stereotypical image of what kind of investigative reporting the Arab world needs. Audiences in the Arab world are diverse and multiple. Though the majority are Muslims and speak Arabic, there are cultural differences in each and every country, which renders their understanding of the BBCA, and what it gives, different. Documentaries that tackle sex or religion, which the BBC regard as taboos, for example, are not perceived in the same way in different Arab countries.

When interviewed El-Imary (2015) said BBC wanted to transfer the experience of documentary making into the Arabic service and onto the region, presenting BBC Arabic to the Arab world as a mentor. The underestimation of BBC Arabic to both the audience's expectations and the quality of what is available on other channels, feeds into the rhetoric of 'Us and Them'.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter looked into audience reception to understand how BBCA researches its audiences and the effect of such research on its understanding and delivering to

audiences, to gauge Arab audiences' preferences and complexities, and to understand the particularities of the Lebanese audiences. In the first section which looked into BBC research of audiences, findings revealed that BBC research gathers data and insights from audiences to measure its performance rather than the marketing method of measurement which relies on number of viewership. Yet, findings revealed that research of Arab audiences, their views, and needs are dealt with as one lump despite their complexities and differences.

This chapter also covered the changing dynamics of audiences within the new media technology and the challenges for BBCA. The findings revealed that internet has empowered audiences and put them at equal footing with broadcasters in sourcing and gathering news, yet their powers are still curtailed by the broadcasters which decide on what is publishable and what is not. I also looked into the audiences' complexities and preferences and how the political upheavals in the region impacts on their choice of channels, their preferences and their needs.

The last section covered the Lebanese audiences. This section looked into the political cultural and social factors that fragment, the Lebanese audience into audiences. This section also looked into the Lebanese media history and their broadcastings mainly of taboo issues giving an insight of the media environment that Lebanese audiences have had and their experiences with it.

Chapter Six

Focus Groups: Audiences' Perception of how BBC Sees Them

6.1 Introduction

This chapter uses focus groups method to understand the relationship between BBCATV and the Lebanese audiences. Focus group discussions is used here to answer the following research questions:

How does the audience see BBCATV?

How does the audience think BBCATV sees it?

What does the audience want from BBCATV?

Does BBCATV reflect the audiences' needs?

The questions asked for the focus groups therefore were designed to answer the aforementioned research questions. Five themes were derived from the discussions of the focus groups after watching four Arabic TV produced documentaries.

6.2 Themes

Themes chosen for this chapter are related to discussions obtained from each group. Five themes were derived from the participants' answers. The first theme is media's role in society. The discussions among the majority of the participants who watched *Buried Secrets* and *Je suis Gay* revealed that they see media as a mentor, rather than just to inform. This theme explores the question of what the audience want from BBC.

The second theme, which is interrelated with the first theme, is 'cultural differences.' What I mean by this is the differences between what BBCATV is offering and the participants' perception of what should be discussed and how it should be discussed. The avenues that this theme opens relate to concerns of cultural sensitivities and imperialist approach to break these sensitivities. This theme explores whether BBC can deliver to its audiences.

The third theme is the stereotypical image. Most of the participants felt that there is a wrong image conveyed of them, either that they are 'terrorists', or 'backwards'. This theme explores how the audience think BBCATV sees it.

The fourth theme is "detachment". Participants revealed that BBCATV treatment of topics did not relate to them. This theme explores what the audience needs from

BBCATV. The fifth theme is 'political biases. Participants who watched the two documentaries that talk about Israel and the Jews *Africa... The Upcoming Battle* and *Jews... Loyalty to Whom?* felt the BBC is biased towards Israel. This theme explores how the audience sees BBCATV and whether the service reflect its needs. A sub-theme was identified from their interpretation of a biased coverage of Israel; they believed that BBCATV is conveying messages which is unacceptable to them like promoting peace with Israel or tarnishing their image.

6.3 Method

The focus groups interviews were conducted in a span of one month, April 2012. The number of groups gathered was 14 in total. The number of participants was 85 The groups were gathered in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and in the South and North of the country. My attempt to go to Eastern Lebanon was thwarted because of the security situation that had erupted at the border.

Four groups watched the documentary *Je Suis Gay*: A Druze group of 4 (2 males and 2 females); a Shia group of 6 (2 male, 4 female); a Sunni group of 7 (3 male, 4 female); a mixed group of 7 (5 Christians, all male, and 2 Sunnis, 1 male and 1 female). For the documentary *Jews of Lebanon... Loyalty to Whom?*, I had 3 groups: A Christian group of 7 (1 male, 6 female); a Druze group of 5 (3 male, 2 female); and a mixed group of 8 (5 Sunnis, all female, and 3 Shia, 1 male and 2 females). Four groups watched the *Buried Secrets*: One Christian group of 6 (4 male, 2 female); one Druze group of 4 (2 male, 2 female); one Shia group of 6 (3 female, 3 male); one Sunni group of 6 (3 male and 3 female). As for *Africa... The Upcoming Battle* I had three groups: A Christian group of 9 (2 female and 7 male); a Shia group of 5 (3 female and 2 male); a mixed group of 4 (one Christian, a female, and 3 other males: a Druze, a Sunni and a Shia).

The fully mixed groups were gathered in the capital Beirut, mainly on the western side where one can find different sects, which makes it easier for them to come together. The venue for the mixed groups was in Hamra, a widely known and popular area in Beirut. From Northern Beirut, I had three purely Christian groups, two from the Lebanese university in Fanar, and one group from AUCE University in Sin El-Fil. For the purely Druze groups I went to Mount Lebanon, to an area called Ba'aklyn, where they are demographically distributed. This was also the case with the purely Shia group. I went to the South Lebanon city of Nabatieh, which is a Shia town, and visited two

universities: LIU and AUCE. In Sidon City, which is called the gate of the south, I had a mixed group of Shia and Sunni from the University of LIU, given that the city is already mixed.

For the purely Sunni group, I headed to the North of Lebanon, and specifically to the city of Tripoli, which is a Sunni city. I went to the University of LIU. I also had a purely Christian group from the same university. It was also easy to find Christians because North Lebanon is also inhabited by Christians, which makes the universities in the area quite mixed.

Each documentary, gender, and the sect of the participants is referred to by letters and numbers, so the participants will be numbered based on their sect.

- Christians: 1
- Druze: 2
- Shia: 3
- Sunni: 4

The mixed group are referred to as number 5. So each participant will bear the number of the sect plus number (5) if in a mixed group.

- Christians: 1.5
- Druze: 2.5
- Shia: 3.5
- Sunni: 4.5

The gender is referred to as: M for male; F for female. For the documentaries, I used the initials from the titles:

Africa... The upcoming Battle: A

Je Suis Gay: G

Buried Secrets: B

Jews of Lebanon... Loyalty to Whom: J

6.4 The Role of the Media: Raising Awareness and Giving Solutions

This theme emerged from comments of participants who watched *Buried Secrets* and *Je Suis Gay*. What is noticeable was the participants' own understanding of the role of the media as being a mentor rather than just an informative tool. Participants' expectations from the media is connected to how Lebanese media operate. For example,

all Lebanese channels start their main bulletins with an op-ed introduction which is clear-cut politicized and opinionated.

For audiences, media is part and parcel of their life and it is only normal and acceptable that it sends messages and contributes towards societies. Having said that, their comments reflected what they expect from the media and that is not just to say something but to do something as well. The themes therefore that emerged from the groups' discussions were the media's role to 'raise awareness' of issues existing in society and talk about it. They don't just expect it to make them aware of problems in their societies, but they attribute another task to media which is 'giving solutions'. The audiences praise the BBC when they feel that it is giving solutions and they criticize it when they feel it is absent.

This theme first measures if BBC can actually deliver to audiences' needs, if its content resonates with them, and if it can win over an audience which has its own mindset of how media should look like or what should do. Second, the theme highlights the participants different interpretations of the BBC coverage and their expectations from the BBC based on their different social and cultural backgrounds.

This raises the question of which audience BBCATV speaks and if it can deliver to an audience(s) of Arab people. Theme of awareness emerged with the groups that watched the two documentaries *Buried Secrets* and *Je Suis Gay*. There was a significant general understanding that media should have a message. There was an overall satisfaction among the groups that BBCATV is covering a topic that is not much talked about, as they said (this is one of the points that the BBC wanted to tackle... touching on taboo stories). Comments by some participants that watched the two documentaries reflected their need to know about these issues.

Christian Group

Participants in this group felt BBCATV delivered what they wanted in terms of the choice of the topic when watching *Buried Secrets*.

- It's an important topic. (...) The good thing is that it showed these girls the religions' views (Raidi/1/M/B).
- I found it realistic (Christie/1/F/B).

Druze Group

- The BBC understands the circumstances and talks about it (Amal/2/F/G).
- ... I kind of felt I should change my opinion about them (Omar/2/M/G).

Shia Group

- The good thing is that it introduced me to new things, like it is widespread in Marrakesh where it is not a big deal (Badr/3/F/G).

Sunni Group

- The topic is important... (Mohammad/4/M/B).
- The aim... is to talk about something that people don't talk about... (Haissam/4/M/B).

As their comments reveal at the beginning of the discussion that they are interested in what BBCATV offered them. But their comments below show that they expect a channel to contribute to society and play a responsible role to the community. What would define if BBCATV understands them and deliver to their needs is the channel's engagement with their society and their culture. In the documentary, *Buried Secrets*, the participants' understanding was that BBCATV was trying to raise awareness of the bad consequences of pre-marital sexual relationships, something which they praised. To describe BBCATV content, they used words like warning, fixing a problem in society, and sending a message of caution. This made them feel satisfied with the content and reflected their needs.

Druze Group:

- There is a message by the BBC and that is: if you make a mistake you should not fix it by making a bigger mistake (Ghinwa/2/F/B).
- (The BBC) is helping girls socially so that they don't make such a mistake (Imad/2/M/B).
- It is a coverage that raises awareness among girls and boys... (Nora/2/F/B). The message is that of awareness, because such a mistake is detrimental (Baligh/2/M/B).

- The BBC aims at changing the stereotype in society that girls are the only ones to blame... (Ghinwa/2/F/B).
- The message is that there are hidden societies. It showed us [homosexuality] is spread everywhere... (Rawda/2/F/G).

Shia Group:

- The BBC is trying to fix a fault in the society. Whoever watches this documentary refrains from having a relationship (Abbas/3/M/B).
- The BBC... is showing these real stories so that girls can think before they make a mistake (Mohammad/3/M/B).
- It is like a warning. They are telling us what happened, so as to know that it should not happen. It is making us aware (Fatima/3/F/B).
- The documentary gives a message to be cautious (Sukeina/3/F/B).

Mixed Group:

- We got to know more about the topic and we got to know how much it is spreading (Arabiya/4.5/F/G).
- The message is to introduce us to these people. I didn't know that there was homosexuality in Arab countries (Salman/1.5/M/G).
- The message is that of awareness for people. It is not necessarily that if a person is gay they should be persecuted (Patrick/1.5/M/G).
- Homosexuality is everywhere. It is to make people aware of how to deal with them (Yusef/1.5/M/G).

Sunni Group:

- The important point is that BBC tells girls: look what will happen to you if you do this (Ahmad/4/M/B).

The Christian group were divided over the message of awareness. Female and male participants considered that the topic is to raise awareness among girls whose culture does not tolerate pre-marriage relationships. Others criticized BBCATV for sending the wrong message of awareness, a message that makes girls afraid of relationships. But their comments reveal that despite their differences on what the message should be

they all believe that a media plays a role in society just like other groups do. The comments below show their expectations from BBC and also to understand if the audience feel related to the service or not.

Christian Group:

- (...) It is trying to show the girls what to expect... (Fadi/1/M/B).
- It (the BBC) is trying to show... different cultures so that they avoid doing it (relationships) (Christie/1/F/B).
- There is a message sent to boys and girls to be responsible. If you want to have a relationship, you have to be responsible (Maggie/1/F/B).
- (The BBC) showed just one type of opinion. It is trying to make people shift to this type of person only (Fadi/1/M/B).
- (The BBC) is trying to make a girl scared of a relationship (Raidi/1/M/B).
- If a girl watches this documentary and she is hesitant about a relationship, what would she think? The BBC could be giving a negative kind of awareness, not a positive one (Elie/1/M/B).
- BBCATV talked about an issue that exists in society, and we face it a lot. It is no longer a taboo... (Elias/1/M/B).

While audiences expect BBCATV to raise awareness, the findings show that they also expect it to give solutions to phenomena or a problem that exists in society. Participants of different groups were disappointed and confused that BBCATV narrative gave only information and no solution when they watched *Je Suis Gay*.

Sunni Group:

- I waited for the message that the BBC wanted to give, but it is only giving information (Ashwaq/4/F/G).
- The BBC showed a problem but did not give a solution.... We did not understand what the BBC wanted (Jindi/4/M/G).
- The BBC should have given advice (Ola/4/F/G).
- The BBC told the story without encouraging it, but it should have said that this is wrong and that they shouldn't have done that (Rayan/4/F/G).
- ...The BBC just narrated and did not give any solution (Yacoob/4/M/G).

- You feel there is something missing. You do not get to a result at the end (Tahsh/4/m/G).

Like the Sunni group, the Druze and mixed group expected a solution to the issue of homosexuality. Their understanding is that media are responsible to contribute to a society and that was clearly evident in their comments:

Druze Group

- There should be more awareness (Omar/2/M/G).
- It was not tackled very well. They should be raising awareness of this topic (Rawda/2/F/G).

Mixed Group

- I felt it was only giving information. It does not impact society because the BBC did not give a solution (George/1.5/M/G).
- The solution was missing (Salman/1.5/M/G).
- The missing points are: the lack of an awareness message, how to deal with them, how to save them from this... (Haissam/4.5/M/G).
- The BBC should have highlighted whether they were born like this or whether something happened to them (Said/1.5/M/G).
- We did not know what the result is (Arabiya/4.5/F/G).

However, this does not make the audiences all too homogenous. While all participants expect media to raise awareness and give solutions, their answers show that they differ on how to do that. The cultural and social backgrounds clearly define how audiences look at what BBCATV is offering and reflect on the extent to which BBCATV content relate to them and their culture. The plurality of the Lebanese audiences ascertains how impossible it is to speak about 'an Arab audience'.

The findings show that when watching *Buried Secrets*, participants in the Christian group praised BBC for giving the girls a solution to a detrimental problem.

- There are lots of girls who have had a relationship, and they are scared and don't know about this operation. It is a good kind of awareness that girls now know there is a solution (Maggie/1/F/B).

- The good thing is that it is saying to the girl: “there is a solution, a religious one and a physical one....” (Elias/1/M/B).
- The BBC is giving a girl a solution. So, if she makes a mistake she can fix it. Should a girl commit suicide if she has had a (sexual) relationship)? No, there is a solution (Maggie/1/F/B).

The comments below reveal that BBCATV is dealing with different audiences who cannot be categorised in one group of ‘Arab audience’. On the contrary, the Druze group criticised BBC for making girls aware of a solution to pre-marital relationships which they saw as an encouragement. Comments from all three groups clearly highlight the audiences’ plurality in terms of what they expect from BBCATV.

Druze Group

- The BBC says do not make a mistake and, on the other hand, it says do whatever you want, because there is a solution (Imad/2/M/B).
- The negative thing is that the BBC made girls know that there are solutions (Baligh/2/M/B).
- Some might look at the BBC documentary as raising awareness and others might see it as encouragement. Examples of real characters encourage people (Bahaa/2/M/G).
- We see it as awareness, but for others it could be encouragement (Omar/2/M/G).

Most of the participants in the Sunni group echoed the views reflected by the Druze group.

Sunni Group

- There is contradiction. The BBC is saying “try not to make any mistakes”, and at the same time it is giving a solution... (Darine/4/F/B).
- I would delete the part with Kamil, who said he couldn’t live with traditions. This part should not be broadcast. It looks like it is encouraging people [to pre-marital sex] (Darine/4/F/B).

- Some people might understand this as if it is fine to have a relationship, because there is a solution (Mohammad/4/M/B).
- There was no message of awareness so that people do not make these mistakes. The awareness was how you can solve it if happens! (Ahmad/4/M/B).

However one voice believed that media's role is just to inform. Haissam from the Sunni group seemed the only one in the group to believe that BBCATV had no message whatsoever from the documentary *Buried Secrets*.

This ensued a debate with the members of the group:

Ahmad: BBC gave the wrong solution. I believe they shouldn't have mentioned the solution. That allows a girl to fix the problem.

Haissam: The aim of this documentary is to talk about something that people don't talk about... They are showing a problem, but they are not telling you that there is a solution. So, you do whatever you want.

Ahmad: but if a girl hears this solution, this could drive her to engage in a relationship.

Haissam: but the solution already exists.

Darine: It does, but the BBC is highlighting it in the wrong way.

Haissam: The BBC is just highlighting the issue, but it is not encouraging it.

Ahmad: By showing it and having people getting to know that there is a solution, then, yes, they are.

Amani: Certainly, they are not encouraging it. But there are people who are looking for a solution.

Mohamad: they are making people aware of the wrong things. The BBC should not give details about the cost of the (hymen repair) operation and where it can be done.

This divide in their different interpretations of BBCATV content not just between different groups but among members of the same group plays into BBCATV ability to deliver to all audiences. This leads to the theme of cultural clash between what audiences want and what BBKA thinks they want.

6.5 Cultural Clash

This theme emerged as participants criticized BBCATV choice and treatment of a topic that they regard 'alien' to their culture. Participants in the Druze group and the Sunni group that watched the same documentary felt that there is an attempt to shake their traditions. Comments from most of the participants in these two groups showed that they are against pre-marital relationships, therefore they regarded BBCATV approach as distant from their society and culture.

Druze Group

- What is bad for me is that BBC broadcast these things that are shameful (Nora/2/F/B).
- I'm against this coverage and the way it was tackled (Nora/2/F/B).

Sunni Group

- The BBC should have been aware of the (Arab) traditions and should give a solution that is compatible. It gave a solution that does not relate to the Arab traditions (Ahmad/4/M/B)
- It is good to tackle such an important topic, but solutions could have been mentioned without going into details (Darine/4/F/B)

The documentary *Je Suis Gay* drew similar reactions. BBCATV was criticized by the Shia group for promoting, defending and encouraging homosexuality. Their comments show how distant they were from BBCATV.

Shia Group

- I would not broadcast such a documentary, because it gives an excuse for being gay... The BBC did not mention any negativity in being gay (Nabih/3/m/G).
- ... Why did not the BBC focus on the bad things about homosexuality and what it does to a person? (Zeinab/3/F/G).
- I did not like the coverage. The BBC is encouraging it (Abbas/3/M/G).
- The BBC can draw attention to this topic, but it should put the good and bad points of it (Badr/3/F/G).

- I like the topic, because few people talk about it, but I don't like it being biased. It shows that they are right (Jamila/3/F/G).
- The BBC looked like it is defending them. There is a bad message (Badr/3/F/G).
- The BBC wants to give them freedom (Nabih/3/M/G).
- I think the documentary encourages people to become gay (Hiyam/3/F/G)
- The BBC does not show them as being wrong, but that they are right, and the society that does not accept them is wrong (Badr/3/F/G).
- The Marrakesh part gives them a solution (Abbas/3/M/G).
- I think the story of Marrakesh and the freedom they are enjoying is to tell gays that there is a haven for you... or, why don't other cities become like Marrakesh...? (Jamila/3/F/G)
- I think some people would be affected. The documentary encourages homosexuality (Nabih/3/M/G).
- The whole documentary is negative. It is biased and wants to pass on a lot of messages through the pictures it showed... (Zeinab/3/F/G).

Similarly, the Druze group regarded BBCATV as encouraging homosexuality by giving them a platform.

Druze Group

- ... The BBC is giving a chance for (homosexuality) to happen, without any deterrent. This encourages these practices (Amal/2/F/G).
- The BBC has a message to convey. The BBC talks of their suffering. It supports them (Bahaa/2/M/G).
- The BBC gave them a platform (Omar/2/M/G).
- There are people who would come out and say after watching it: there are people like me, so why don't I become open about it? (Rawda/2/F/G).
- The BBC paved the way for changing the structure of the community. Why? They are trying to tip the balance (Bahaa/2/M/G).

The comments from the Sunni below show that participants have no problem with tackling homosexuality, but some think that it is tackled in a way that resonates with their beliefs.

Sunni Group

- The BBC showed them as good people. The BBC is encouraging them and telling them that if you have these tendencies, don't be shy of expressing it in front of people (Tahsh/4/M/G).
- The BBC is saying that you have no right to go near them. They mind their own business, and you mind yours. The BBC did not show the effect of homosexuality on society... (Jindi/4/M/G).
- The BBC showed them in such a way that the viewer will sympathise with them. They did not show the negative side of gays (Ola/4/F/G).
- If one watches it and has tendency to become gay but not aware of that, this documentary will make them aware (Iman/4/F/G).
- I think the BBC is trying to change the society in a bad way. It is encouraging it. It is saying you should accept it and it is normal (Ashwaq/4/F/G).

Others believe the BBC is just showing a phenomenon in society.

- I saw the BBC as very unbiased. It is not giving an opinion, or advice by saying this is right or wrong (Rayan/4/F/G).
- The BBC is not trying to change society. It is just narrating. It is making the picture clearer (Liliane/4/F/G).
- The BBC does not want us to sympathise or to change. It is just showing what is happening. It does not tell us to be with them or against them (Rayan/4/F/G).
- The aim is not to make people aware, but to show the life of these people (...) (Haissam/4/M/B)
- I did not see that they are sending a message. I see it only as showing opinions (Haissam/4/M/B).
-

The mixed group believed did not feel any culture invasion from the BBC.

- On the one hand, I understood that the message says homosexuality is wrong and that gays should be persecuted. On the other hand, we understand that homosexuality is a normal thing, and that it should be legalised (Said/1.5/M/G).
- I felt the BBC wants to make us sympathise with homosexuals (Patrick/1.5/M/G).
- If one has a tendency to homosexuality, this documentary is encouraging (Yusef/1.5/M/G).

6.6 Stereotypes and Images

This theme reveals how different audiences interpret and understand stereotypes. Among all the groups, participants felt there is a stereotypical image of the Arab world. Comments showed that the participants felt BBCATV is picking on Muslims and presenting Arabs as backward and intolerant. Participants from the three Muslim groups felt that Islam is under attack in BBCATV coverage. Those who watched *Buried Secrets* and *Je Suis Gay* felt that BBCATV is stigmatizing Islam as an intolerant religion.

Druze Group

- If I were to make this documentary, I would show people from all religions.... We saw that they focused on Islam and barely touched on Christians (Baligh/2/M/B).
- I don't like the fact that the BBC focused on a specific society when we are talking about a social issue (Imad/2/M/B).
- What drew my attention is that the BBC focused on Islam, as it appears that most of the girls are veiled (Ghinwa/2/F/B).

Shia Group

- The BBC sees Muslim society as wrong, and that it acts wrongfully. The documentary started with a group of men being dragged to prison. As if it is taken for granted that this is the way to deal with them in a Muslim society (Nabih/3/M/G).

- If the BBC interviewed a Christian person, or a person from any other religion, I think it would have shown that homosexuality was wrong (Nabih/3/M/G).
- The good thing is that the BBC is trying to give a bad image of Islam and this means that Islam is being attacked because it is perfect (Nabih/3/M/G).
- I think the BBC's aim is to show that people are not following Islam, and it is trying to expose it. The BBC wants to show the world that there are gays in the Arab world, although they claim the opposite (Nabih/3/M/G).

The Sunni group argued that although the BBC did not name Islam, when it speaks of Arab societies, it means Muslims.

Sunni Group

- The first thing that comes to mind is that Arabs means Islam. You don't think that an Arab means a Christian (Liliane/4/F/G).
- Every time the BBC focuses on the mosque... what is the point? The BBC is trying to say that the biggest enemy to this phenomenon is Islam, although there is no religion that accepts it. Yet it only focused on mosques... (Jindi/4/M/G).
- They are focusing on Islam. Why? (Liliane/4/F/G).
- The BBC focused on Islam as if Muslims are the only ones who reject them. The BBC also focused on the mosque and I find it wrong (Ola/4/F/G).
- The BBC is trying to say that Islam deals violently with this phenomenon, like the prisoners in Egypt (Jindi/4/M/G).
- The BBC showed him (Sheikh Mohamad Awadi) as doing (woooo), if the BBC had put the whole clip in, it would show that he did not say (woooo), but it took it all out to make people afraid ... (Jindi/4/M/G).
- They did not talk about the Christian religion much, as if Islam is the only religion that refuses this... (Zeinab/4/F/B).

Similarly, the Shia group believed that the way they are portrayed as Arabs is defamatory as comments show.

Shia Group:

- Their message is to give a negative image of Arabs (Hiyam/3/F/G).
- The BBC sees us as a closed-minded society, uneducated and ignorant (Badr/3/F/G).
- The BBC sees us as backward, with no civilisation, and that we do not know how to deal with these people (Jamila/3/F/G).
- The BBC sees us as people that needs to be modernised (Zeinab/3/F/G).
- I think the BBC is trying to tell people that we are backwards... (Mohammad/3/M/B)
- Being an Arab, means that you are fundamentalist, terrorist and ignorant (Ashwaq/4/F/G).

While the above participants felt that their religion and traditions are targeted by stereotypical images, a member from the Christian group Believed BBC is reflecting the real image of the Arab world.

Christian Group:

Christie: The documentary gives an idea of the Arab world, but not all the Arab world, just part of it. The documentary showed woman as a commodity, like someone said. If Westerners were watching this documentary, they would think the Arab world is borne' (a French word meaning limited)

Elie: But the Arab world is borne'. The documentary in itself is borne'. Most of the Arab world thinks this way. Maybe Lebanon and Dubai are more open-minded, but the rest -- they are.

Other debates between members of the group show that some believe that BBC understands who it is addressing and how it should address them.

Raidi: BBC should have interviewed girls who had relationships and they find it normal

Fadi: but this idea does not work in the Arab world

Raidi: Why not?

Fadi: it is because of society and traditions

Elie and Elias got into a debate about how Lebanon is different from other Arab countries and that it should be addressed differently by BBC.

Elie: I would not watch it, because such topics would make people bored. Everyone is discussing the same topic in different ways.

Elias: not true. Which channel actually talked to the Arab audience about it?

Elie: MTV²⁸

Elias: don't talk about Lebanon. This topic is a taboo in the Arab world.

The discussions also revealed that participants believed that BBCATV portrayed them this way because of its identity as a foreign media. This notion featured a lot in the comments of participants from different groups, leaving them to feel that the channel is alien to them and their cultures. This leads to the fourth theme; detachment.

6.7 Detachment

This theme derived from comments by the participants who felt that the BBC failed to give them what they wanted. The sense of being unrepresented was general among the groups' participants despite their different cultural and social backgrounds. This highlights the problem of dealing with the audience as one entity when in the same country as Lebanon multiple audiences exist.

There was a sense of detachment from BBCATV among the Christian group participants that watched *Buried Secrets*. As one member of the group said, he would not watch it because "it does not resemble me" (Elias/1/M/B). Almost all members felt BBCATV did not express their culture. The Christian group, which is open-minded about pre-marital relationships felt alienated.

Christian Group

- There is part of the society that is different.... This should have been shown in the documentary... (Elias/1/M/B).
- (The BBC) should have met girls who had relationships and feel normal about it (Raidi/1/M/B).

²⁸ MTV is a Christian Lebanese channel with far-right views

- The bad thing is that they did not show the others, who accept relationships. I know girls who live with their boyfriends, and their parents know about it. Not all girls have the same problem (Maggie/1/F/B).
- I did not sympathise because I did not feel that any of the characters are close to me. The documentary does not make you sympathise (Elie/1/M/B).
- If I look at it from their perspective, of course, I sympathise, but our parents are not theirs; our area is not theirs. I cannot compare myself to them (Elias/1/M/B).

Shia Group:

Similar to the Christian group the comments of the participants show that BBC failed to address their needs and preferences. For them, there was no real journalistic work, boring and not up to their expectations

- In the three cases there was a solution... I did not feel that there was a real problem (Sukeina/3/F/B).
- The BBC should have compared those who accept and those who refuse relations before marriage... I would interview more people (Mariam/3/F/B).
- I would not put three stories that are the same as each other. I would interview a girl who accepts such relationships (Mohammad/3/M/B).
- The BBC did not give me what I want. The show felt outdated... The BBC focused on one place only and those who are against (Ali/3/M/B)

Participants from the Shia group that watched the documentary *Je Suis Gay* also voiced that sense of alienation. They felt the BBC did not understand them because it chose topics that do not relate to them, do not interest them or because these topics do not reflect their identity and culture. Part of the reactions of the Shia group was because the topic was something they would object to. This reflect the sense of cultural invasion that they felt BBCATV is practicing by imposing changes to their beliefs and traditions.

Shia Group:

- I did not like the documentary, because I don't like this topic (Hiyam/3/F/G).
- I wouldn't watch it, because I did not like it (Abbas/3/M/G).

- I would watch it, but it annoyed me. There should have been two views, but we have seen only one (Badr/3/F/G).
- I would not continue watching it. The BBC is saying “poor them”. So, enough. I will stop watching (Jamila/3/F/G).
- I wouldn’t watch it. I don’t care (Zeinab/3/F/G).
- I would not watch it. I don’t care about them, or how they live (Nabih/3/M/G).

One of the main findings that came out of the focus groups showed that audiences are interested primarily in their environment and their societies. BBC have stressed that it is offering the audiences what they cannot get on local media. However, comments below from the only mixed group in this category show that participants do not relate to BBCATV either because the choice of the topic does not interest them, it talks about other countries, or simply because they get what they need from local channels.

Mixed Group:

- The BBC went to all of the countries, except Lebanon. I care about what is going on here, and not in other countries (Haissam/4.5/M/G).
- If the BBC had covered Lebanon, it would have been more interesting (Said/1.5/M/G).
- The BBC could have tackled the issue in a more attractive way. Like the program Ahmar Bilkhat el-Arid, which answers a lot of questions, but this was only a show (Yusef/1.5/M/G).
- In Ahmar Bilkhat el-Arid, they bring those who are with and those who are against, and they start talking to each other. You love to watch it (Salman/1.5/M/G).

While some participants do not relate to BBCATV because local channels are more capable of reflecting their needs, some other participants do not relate to BBCATV because of its identity. One of the main findings that came out of the focus groups discussion was the skepticism with which participants viewed BBCATV. The identity of the channel made them feel detached because they did not trust it enough. Participants

from the Shia group believed that pan-Arab channels would be more objective when talking about the Arab world.

Shia Group

- I do not think it would be biased on other channels (Zeinab/3/F/G).
- When it started, I said to myself that if the BBC made it then definitely there will be bad stuff about the Arabs. I think Aljazeera would do it differently, because they are Arabs and they understand the society more (Hiyam/3/F/G).
- I think any Arab channel would put the good side and the bad side of homosexuality. It would be fair (Badr/3/F/G).
- Other channels would show the bad points only (Nabih/3/M/G).
- ... Any other Arab channel would have talked about religion and said that there is something wrong about homosexuality (Jamila/3/F/G).
- Other channels would show the bad points more than the good points of homosexuality (Badr/3/F/G).

Sunni Group

One participant expressed same views as in the other group and believed that BBC is giving a 'bad idea of Arabs because it is foreign' (Zeinab/4/F/B). What is interesting is that another participant from the same group believed BBCATV is trustworthy because it is Arabic produced documentary. 'If a non-Arab person at the BBC did it, I would say that the idea is to give a bad image of us but it was done by an Arab, so whether it is on Aljazeera or the BBC the person who did the documentary is an Arab... (Haissam/4/M/B)'. It is quite evident that the participant is reassured because the staff are Arabs, otherwise he would have had similar views of suspicion.

The participants appear to relate between the choice of the topic and its treatment with the channel's identity. The Arabic service, being a British funded and established organisation, affects many of the participants' perception of the content and the message that might be hidden behind it. This makes them approach what they see on BBCATV carefully and even reluctantly as they feel detached. Many of the participants told me that they only watched the documentaries because they are taking part in the project, but that if it were to them they wouldn't watch it because they don't

relate to it. Participants expect media to be on their side, to mirror their views and culture. This is quite noticeable when the BBC touches on a very sensitive issue which is Israel, Jews and Hezbollah. Therefore, the theme that emerged from the discussion of the second category of documentaries is Political bias. How the Lebanese audiences think the BBC sees them and approaches their causes answers the question if BBC Arabic service knows its audience or not.

6.8 BBC's Political Bias

This theme shows that the Lebanese audiences are highly politicised and opinionated in their approach to an extremely sensitive topic: Israel. The findings revealed that audiences believed that BBC is biased in favour of Israel and that it is defamatory of the Lebanese people and their country. They were attentive and careful to unearth BBCATV message. For example, the participants believed that BBCATV shows compassion towards Israel and Jews, leaving them feeling alienated and underrepresented.

One comment from the participants demanded BBCATV to show the other side as well. "When I want to speak of the humanitarian side of Israel, I should not forget the humanitarian side of Lebanon (Carine/1/F/J). This theme showed also that BBC identity as a British-funded channel played a role in audiences' approach and acceptance of what BBCATV is offering. As one of the participants sarcastically put it as he describes 'Africa... the upcoming Battle: it is "the most balanced documentary I have ever seen on the BBC, and very objective!" (Firas/2.5/M/A). What was significant was that the majority of participants who watched the two documentaries *Africa... The Upcoming Battle*, and *Jews of Lebanon... Loyalty to Whom?* regarded BBC's handling of the topics as one-sided and biased in favour of Israel and the Jews.

Of all the groups that watched *Je Suis Gay*, the Sunni group felt that the BBC was trying to give a good image of Israel as one sequence shows Palestinian gays finding refuge in one of the gay centres in Tel Aviv. The political bias theme is broken down to sub-themes: pro-Israeli BBC's pro-Israeli message, the image of Israel versus that of the Lebanese.

6.8.1 BBC's Pro-Israeli Coverage

Participants in this category were outspoken of what they described as BBC's bias towards Israel. They criticized the BBC for choosing to pass on messages that serve the Israeli interests. The findings from the focus group discussion of 'Africa... The Upcoming Battle' show that participants questioned the BBC for investigating Iran and Hezbollah activities in Africa, while disregarding Israel's activities there.

Christian Group:

- ... Why didn't the BBC focus on the Jewish funding to Israel as much as they focused on Lebanese funding Hezbollah (Patricia/1/F/A).
- The BBC showed a car factory and likened it to a nuclear plant. It did not give any friendly information about Iran, but for Israel it showed the Israeli friendship association (Michelin/1/F/A).
- The part where the BBC was not objective was when the reporter was in the car with the taxi driver -- in an Iranian made car. With one interview with a driver, he summarised the whole picture! (Abu Zeid/1/M/A).

While they saw a favourable coverage towards Israel, some of them believed that BBC was not biased, but that the sensitivity of the topic itself makes it difficult to balance things out.

- We see the documentary as being unbalanced because the journalist was not able to interview any Iranians. I would say that the reason might be the circumstances (Hiyam/1/F/A).
- Not being 100 per cent objective is because the topic is taboo. The reporter had no information to work on (Ruba/1/F/A).
- When the BBC talks about the presence of Iran there, it speaks of factories, cars, schools, but with Israel, it shows them helping an animal species from extinction. I don't know if the aim is to convey that (Israel is better), or because the relation with Israel is only recent, and it has just begun to gain power (Roy/1/M/A).
- I cannot say it was not objective (Roy/1/M/A).

- The BBC tried to be objective, but the way things happen on the ground changes things. For example, when he went to see the Israeli friends' committee he ended up with trivial information (Abu Zeid/1/F/A).

Shia Group

Participants in the Shia group also believed that BBC was biased towards Israel not intentionally but because Israel is off limits.

- I think the BBC does not want to investigate more on a topic about Israel because it sees that this will cause trouble (Katia/3/F/A).
- I don't think the coverage was pro-Israeli, but there are some political issues that BBC did not talk about as to why Israel is in Africa... I think even if the BBC wanted to dig deeper, Israel would not allow it (Saad/3/M/A).

In their comments they explain what information they expected BBC to give them.

- The BBC should explain about Israel's intentions in Africa (Katia/3/F/A).
- The question that was not asked was: why is Israel doing what it is doing? It is buying property and doing humanitarian projects... so why is that? Only for humanitarian reasons? There is a goal that was not shown in the documentary (Mohammad/3/M/A).
- BBCA showed us the Lebanese agenda in Africa. As for the Israelis, BBCA said they are there for humanitarian reasons, but we did not know what their wider agenda is (Saad/3/M/A).
- The bad thing is that it lacked balance (Mohammad/3/M/A).
- It lacked balance (Nour/3/F/A).
- The BBC talked about Iran and its factories.... Are there any Iranian humanitarian contributions? It did not come to that. Are there any interests for Israel? It did not get to that either (Mohammad/3/M/A).

Mixed Group

The mixed group saw that BBC had lots of avenues to take in order to report fairly on what is happening in Africa. Why that was not pursued, they asked.

- I think the BBC should focus on the Israeli side as well. Why are they there? The diamond trade, for example, is controlled by the Israelis (Fadlallah/3.5/M/A).
- If I want to be impartial ... I look for the truth. If there is a conflict over power, what is that power? What is the interest of each side? (Wehbi/4.5/M/A).
- Why are the Israelis there? The BBC did not explain this to me (Wehbi/4.5/M/A).
- The whole story and the focusing on some points show that the BBC is not impartial (Fadlallah/3.5/M/A).
- The problem is that the BBC was trying to show that it was doing pure journalism (Firas/2.5/M/A).
- The BBC was trying to appear impartial, but it wasn't... (Wehbi/4.5/M/A).
-

The groups that watched *Jews of Lebanon... Loyalty to Whom?* also perceived BBC as biased towards Israel by sending value-laden messages like promoting peace with Israel. This was clearly mentioned in the comments from participants in the mixed group and Christian group.

Mixed Group

- The message to the Lebanese is that you should not be against Israel or the Jews. The idea of the documentary is to bring up the issue of peace between Lebanon and Israel (Aya/4.5/F/J).
- The BBC is trying to say: look at the Israelis, there is no need to fight for the Palestinian cause anymore. The Israelis are very good people (Maha/4.5/F/J).
- Peace is the idea you get when you watch this documentary. This is the message... This serves Israel not Lebanon (Aya/4.5/F/J).
- I noticed the ruins. These pictures are to say that the Jews were with us (Hasan/3.5/F/J).
- The cemetery pictures also tell us that Jews used to live here. It is a fact (Nadine/4.5/F/J).
- The BBC tells us through these pictures that there is something that relates them to Lebanon (Jamila/3.5/F/J).

- The documentary should be balanced. Do they all love Lebanon? Bring me the other side..., but to show me only the positive things! (Hasan/3.5/M/J).
- When one person said that the problem with the Israelis started in 1948, I wanted them to focus on that, and to talk about the reasons that led to the conflict and what happened afterwards (Jamila/3.5/F/J).
- I think they could have talked to the man who screamed at the reporter in more details. Why didn't they interview people with similar views to understand their position? (Rawan/4.5/F/J).
- I wanted them to interview people who suffered from the Jews, and put their views, not only neighbours and good memories (Manal/3.5/F/J).
- Why didn't they speak to people from outside the Jewish neighbourhood? Those interviewed would certainly say good stuff about their Jewish neighbours (Aya/4.5/F/J).

Christian Group

- The message is that Israel is trying to do peace with a lot of neighbouring countries. The documentary shows us a beautiful image of Israel in order to make the Lebanese feel guilty.... That is why the documentary did not talk at all of war. It was so positive, from the humanitarian side, maybe taking into account the peace treaties (Serena/1/F/J).
- As if the BBC is talking about the right to return (Jamila/3.5/F/J).
- The documentary certainly makes you sympathise, especially with the peace issue (Carine/1/F/J).
- You feel it is politicised, because it is incomplete and focused on certain sides (Issa/1/M/J).

Druze Group:

Unlike the two other groups, the Druze group did not see any political message.

- No political agenda. It is just highlighting an important issue ... and that we all should be equal and no one is better than the other (Rania/2/F/J).
- There is no propaganda. The BBC shows these people, what happened to them and what they feel (Malek/2/M/J).

- If we think about it from a political point of view, in a way, the documentary calls for us to accept Jews and the state of Israel. However, if we think of it from another aspect, we find that it is more of a social topic than a political one (Salam/2/M/J)
- Generally, humanitarian stories interest people. BBC reflects me in such kinds of stories. I sympathise with them. The social stories express me, but talking about political issues, like Israel, then, no, it does not reflect me (Wiam/2/M/J).
- The documentary made me change my mind about Jews on some issues, humanitarian side more than the political and religious sides (Malek/2/M/J).

6.8.2 Images of Sympathy to Israel

Starting with *Je Suis Gay*, the Sunni group believed the BBC wanted to give good image of Israel.

- ... The BBC gave much time and opinion for Israel.... Do they want to show Israel as the good one... while they are the most oppressing? (Ashwaq/4/F/G).
- The BBC is showing that although Israel is an enemy, it attracts them (Yacoob/4/M/G).
- This documentary that talked much of Israel is addressing foreigners to show them that Israel is the good one, and, of course foreigners will not say the opposite. They would say Israel is good and we are bad (Ashwaq/4/F/G).
- I think they gave it time (the Israel part) more than they should have (Iman/4/F/G).
- The BBC showed that Arabs are killing, destroying and responding violently, but in Israel there is freedom that allows these things to happen normally.... How far is this true?! (Jindi/4/M/G).

In other groups, participants' comments showed that BBC attempted to present Israel and the Jews in a positive way in order to draw sympathy towards them. The comments below show their criticism to the way BBC portrayed Israel vis-à-vis theirs in *Africa the Upcoming Battle*.

Christian Group

- The BBC showed that those who sympathise with Israel and put up its flag are acting normally, even though they are not Israelis. On the other hand, the Lebanese Christians who sympathise with Hezbollah were shown as doing a wrong thing (Patricia/1/F/A).
- When the BBC talked about Lebanon, it talked about the resistance and that all we do, as Lebanese, is fund it. However, when the BBC spoke about Israel, the first thing it did was to put on nice music. The BBC showed them as very much interested in the animals... (Agnes/1/F/A).
- I think a non-Lebanese viewer will sympathise with Israel and feel that Hezbollah is a terrorist organisation (Dominique/1/F/A).
- If a person has no knowledge of the facts then, indirectly, he/she will sympathise with Israel and will be appalled by Hezbollah and the Lebanese community (Michelin/1/F/A).
- The BBC showed Iran as colonising lands, while Israel is helping people (Michelin/1/F/A).
- The BBC showed Iran as colonising, while Israel is not. So what is then the parliament building that was built by Israel? (Agnes/1/F/A).
- The BBC showed the co-operation thing from the Israeli side. As if the Israelis have no problem with us, and we have a problem with them (Dominique/1/F/A).
- The coverage was balanced at the beginning but then it shifted and showed Iran as extremely bad (Joelle/1/F/A).

Mixed Group

- The BBC showed that Iran has car companies, is capitalist and makes dirty money, and then talked with an Israeli from a humanitarian perspective who came to save an animal that is in danger of extinction. The BBC showed Israel as keen about people (Carmen/1.5/M/A).
- The report that speaks about Hezbollah is an intelligence service one, while the part about Israel's security work was never mentioned, and it was not highlighted at all. The Israeli appeared to be doing an agricultural

environmental project, but what is Israel's interest in such a project? (Firas/2.5/M/A).

The BBC is trying to make the viewer sympathise with Israel (Carmen/1.5/F/A).

- The reporter compared the factory to a nuclear plant. He is giving that impression (Fadlallah/3.5/M/A).
- I wonder why he made a fuss about filming the factory. What is the point of saying that they are making weapons there? (Wehbi/4.5/M/A).
- The reporter wasted, like, five minutes of the documentary talking about the factory and filmed it from outside.... The question that pops into the mind of the viewer is: what is going on inside the factory? (Firas/2.5/M/A).

Shia Group

- I think the BBC is promoting the idea that Israel went into Senegal to help and not to profit, and that there is nothing behind what it is doing (Saad/3/M/A).
- (The BBC) showed Iran as a colonial country... but with the Israelis, the BBC started from the point that they are humanitarian and helpful (Mohammad/3/M/A).
- I wonder what the intention of the reporter was in using the words 'nuclear plant' (Katia/3/F/A).
- The BBC mentioned good and bad things about Lebanon, but it only mentioned good things about Israel (Hiba/3/F/A).
- The only idea the BBC gave us is that the Israelis are there to help (Nour/3/F/A).
- The bad thing is that it gives a good image of Israel (Saad/3/M/A).

The groups who watched the documentary about Jews clearly show their anger at BBC more sympathetic to Israel than them.

Mixed Group

- The BBC showed the Jews as good, and also showed that they want to come back to Lebanon, but I did not see the other half of the Jews -- those who hate us (Maha/4.5/F/J).
- The BBC did not talk about the bad side of the Jews and did not mention the wars on Lebanon. (Jamila/3.5/F/J).
- I think the documentary leaves a bad impression of Lebanon and a good one about Israel and the Jews (Aya/4.5/F/J).
- The BBC introduced me to those Jews, but not to the biased ones (Aya/4.5/F/J).
- I know that the BBC wants me to care for them (Maha/4.5/F/J).
- What made me aware of what is going on around the world? The media. What do the others know about me and my situation, and my wars? They only know what they see. In this documentary, they say “poor Jews, they were displaced. Look what they did to them” (Hasan/3.5/M/J).
- The idea I get (a picture of a Lebanese Jew standing at the border Israeli Lebanese border) is that the Lebanese kicked him out (Jamila/3.5/F/J).
- They all say they love Lebanon and they want to come back, but the question is: is it possible that no interviewee said “I don’t like Lebanon and I hate the Lebanese because they displaced me!” (Hasan/4.5/M/J).
- The other side is absent. I know they exist, but the BBC just focused on those so that we pity them and tell ourselves that there are good Jews. However, there are both good and bad Jews (Layana/4.5/F/J). The documentary did not show any of the sufferings of the Lebanese. The focus was just on the Jews (Maha/4.5/F/J).
- I felt the BBC was trying to make us sympathise with them as if they are weakened or that their rights are taken. This is the message I get (Manal/3.5/F/J).
- When somebody takes you back in memory, this means they want to make you feel nostalgic and sympathetic. The whole documentary is about feelings and emotions.... The BBC wants to take me to that place, but it should ask me first if I have suffered (Hasan/3.5/M/J).
- The aim is not just to give information. The BBC wants us to sympathise with the Jews (Maha/4.5/F/J).

- The BBC showed a Lebanese who does not like Jews. But did not show any Israeli who does not like us (Rawan/4.5/F/J).

Christian Group:

The Christian group also believed that the BBC is trying to make them sympathise with the Jews.

- If we had no knowledge of the situation, we would have received a humanitarian message and sympathised (Shirine/1/F/J).
- Maybe the only aim is to make us sympathise with them, and if this is their goal then they succeeded. However, other people who are quite aware of this conflict would say the BBC is trying to bluff us (Sandy/1/F/J).
- ... I felt that the documentary is trying as much as possible to polish the image of the Israeli people in front of public opinion. It did not give any negative picture. All of it was positive (Serena/1/F/J)
- The invasion was put in a humanitarian context. Young men are coming in the middle of the night and happy as if there is no war (Carine/1/F/J).

Druze Group

The participants in that group looked favorably to the image that BBC has conveyed through the documentary. They did not associate it with the political conflict or that it placed the image of the Jews opposite to them.

- There is a message to raise awareness about the life of Jews and how they were taken out of Lebanon (Rania/2/F/J).
- The message could be that of reconciliation between the two (Sally/2/F/J).
- The message is to reconcile (Malek/2/M/J).
- There is a message that calls for resuming contact (Salam/2/M/J).
- The message is that a human being is a human being, whatever their religion is, and this human being is able to connect. I regard this documentary as an attempt to raise awareness that Jews also have rights and a land that they yearn to come back to (Wiam/2/M/J).
- The BBC aims at making changes in the community. In the end, this is a human being, wherever he was, even if he was a Jew living in another

country. I sympathised with the characters. If they were not obliged to get out of Lebanon they wouldn't go (Sally/2/F/J).

- The aim is to change. We are all human and should live together and co-exist. There are people who truly were taken out against their will (Rania/2/F/J).
- I feel that the BBC want us to sympathise with them. They also have their problems. Even if we were from different religions, we are all humans in the end (Malek/2/M/J).
- This documentary leaves a humanitarian impact on others... If a person hears this, he will sympathise with this humanitarian cause (Wiam/2/M/J).

6.8.3 The Image of the Lebanese people

Participants were upset with BBC's coverage for what they regarded as showing a bad image of the Lebanese people in contrary to the Israeli image. The mixed group (Africa) also believed that a bad image of the Lebanese community passes into the mind of the viewers.

Mixed Group

- When the BBC started talking about the Muslim Shia in Senegal... it began with a provocative scene: people praying on the street... Then the reporter talks about Christians in Senegal, saying a very strange comment, that he was surprised with the Christian position (Carmen/1.5/F/A)
- I did not like the words "convert to Shi'sm" ... The documentary leaves a bad image (Firas/2.5/M/A).
- When the reporter talked about Christians, he was surprised with their stance. Also he used the term 'spreading Shi'sm'. When he talks about sects, he uses strong terms (Carmen/1.5/M/A).
- It will leave the impression that they are converting to Shi'sm (Fadlallah/3.5/M/A).
- The impression is: They are converting. They are making Africans hate us (Firas/2.5/M/A).
- The image is that they are smuggling weapons, supporting wars, igniting wars (Carmen/1.5/F/A).

- The reporter showed the Lebanese working in diamonds as opportunists (Firas/2.5/M/A).

Their comments also showed that the BBC gave a bad image of the Lebanese people for using Africa resources to fund Hezbollah.

- Any other viewer will end up thinking that this country is just a source of money for Hezbollah (Wehbi/4.5/M/A).
- The last Israeli said that Africa is different from the Middle East. Which means that here contact takes place... It won't be a good picture in the minds of the Arab viewers (Carmen/1.5/F/A).
- They (Lebanese) looked as if they were being pragmatic (Fadlallah/3.5/M/A).
- The BBC showed us a person who loves Israel who says his DNA is Israeli, and then moves to another Senegalese who talks about his grudge and hatred of the Lebanese (Carmen/1.5/M/A).
- Why did the BBC focus all the time on the Lebanese who are working in diamonds and showed them in an ugly manner, while the third largest company to produce diamonds is Israeli? (Wehbi/4.5/M/A).
- The BBC showed the Lebanese, who are powerful and capitalists, but it did not show the Lebanese who are being targeted. They disregarded this topic... (Carmen/1.5/F/A).
- The aim of the documentary is to say that money is getting to Hezbollah, and not to talk about the conflict (Fadlallah/3.5/M/A).
- The BBC wants to send a specific message.... that because of Hezbollah's action in Africa, the Africans have started to hate the Lebanese (Firas/2.5/M/A).

Shia Group

The Shia group drew a comparison between the portrayal of the Lebanese and that of the Israelis.

- The documentary shows as if the Lebanese went to Senegal to help themselves only, and not to improve the economy there, but the Israelis are shown in a different way. They went there to help people (Hiba/3/F/A).
- I think the BBC gave a bad image of the Lebanese, because it mentioned good and bad points about them. However, it showed nothing about the Israelis except that they are there to help (Saad /3/M/A).
- The BBC showed the negative side of the Lebanese and not of the Israelis. Of course, the viewers would say: “oh, they are better than the Lebanese.” (Mohammad/3/M/A).
- The animal part is good for the Israelis, because the Europeans care about animals that are becoming extinct, and that someone is helping them. If a foreigner was watching it, of course, he will like the Israelis (Saad/3/M/A).
- I felt it ended with the idea that we are bad and the Israelis are good. (Hiba/3/F/A)
- I think the documentary conveyed to the viewer the idea that there is support from Africa for Hezbollah. This is the idea that the BBC worked on to get it to the viewer (Mohammad/3/M/A)

The Christian group criticized the impartiality of the journalist when he reacted to the views of Lebanese towards Hezbollah.

- The journalist expressed his shock when there were Lebanese defending Hezbollah, but he showed no surprise when an African said that his DNA is Israeli (Joelle/1/F/A).
- The reporter did not comment on the fact that the parliament that was built like the Israeli Knesset... but when he saw school hall with the name of Mussa Sadr, he asked the interviewee if they explain to the students who he is (Patricia/1/F/A).
- When the reporter said “I was surprised by the reaction of the Lebanese (Christians)”. He appeared to be taking sides! (Joelle/1/F/A).
- I did not like that he showed his surprise (Dominique/1/F/A).

The participants’ comments showed that they believed BBCATV is “vilifying” Hezbollah the resistance movement by tarnishing its image and activities in Africa.

Christian Group

- The BBC interviewed a guy who attacks the Lebanese community and accuses them of funding [Hezbollah], but the BBC did not follow it up. It did not give proof... (Abu Zeid/1/M/A).
- ... The BBC framed funding as an accusation. That's how a non-Lebanese person will see it (Patricia/1/F/A).
- The BBC's message is compatible with what the reporter concluded, and that is, to show a bad image of Hezbollah (Hiyam/1/F/A).
- When he said Hezbollah is the biggest enemy to Israel, it looks as if Hezbollah is the one attacking Israel. Switching it would mean that Israel is the one attacking Hezbollah (Michelin/1/F/A).
 - The BBC showed Hezbollah and Iran as bad, but it did not focus much on Israel (Joelle/1/F/A).
 - The BBC showed Iran as the colonising country, while Israel is not. Instead, it is living with people (Dominique/1/F/A).
 - I felt that the co-operation part is suspicious. Why is it that 90 per cent of the documentary is about conflict, and then it talks about co-operation? So is there co-operation or conflict? (Patricia/1/F/A)
 - The documentary gives messages that the Lebanese in Senegal fund Hezbollah in Lebanon. The BBC gave a lot of indications about this in the documentary (Agnes/1/F/A).
 - Why did the BBC focus on the issue of funding, while the reporter started with a different scenario? (Dominique/1/F/A).
 - I don't know what the agenda of the BBC is, but I say that it considered funding to be an accusation. The BBC might be promoting this idea... (Hiyam/1/F/A).
 - There is an implicit message that the BBC tried to pass. By showing Hezbollah as the bad side when it comes to funding, the BBC is giving a message, rather than information (Ruba/1/F/A).
 - I felt that the goal was to make us stand against Hezbollah (Patricia/1/F/A)
 - I felt the BBC is showing Iran as being terrorist, especially when they talked about the factory in a conspicuous way (Dominique/1/F/A).

- BBC put the Israeli friendship association opposite to Iran's factory (Hiyam/1/F/A).
- The taxi scene gave a bad image of Iran. He is saying that Iran is colonising and even their cars are not good. So, this was on purpose to give a bad image of Iran... (Michelin/1/F/A)

Similarly, the findings from the groups that watched the doc Jews... showed that participants feel they are being sidelined in favour of Israel. One sequence in the documentary shows a Lebanese who is angered by the topic. The participants believed BBCATV did not tell the whole story.

Mixed Group

- In the documentary, the other side was abrupted. It is when a person from Sidon screamed at BBC team: "You want to restore the rights of Jews!" and then stopped them from filming. What is the point of this little piece of footage? Certainly, there is a target from that part (Hasan/3.5/M/J).
- The BBC put it on purpose. Maybe because they wanted us to look like people who do not accept the other (Aya/4.5/F/J).
- I wonder what the aim of this documentary is. Because if the aim is just to tell us that there are good Jews, why did they include this part then? (the man screaming at the reporter) (Layana/4.5/F/J).
- I think others will get a very bad idea about us. The Jew who said that he is sorry that his father died in Canada and not in Lebanon. So why is that? It is because Lebanon is banning the Israelis from coming back... For a minute, you sympathise with these Jews (Rawan/4.5/F/J).
- The mainstream idea around the world is that the Lebanese hate the Jews and that they do not accept them. So when someone from outside listens to these Jews saying that they love us and they love Lebanon, this gives a negative view of the Lebanese, that we do not want them... (Aya/4.5/F/J)
- I did not like BBC filming the Jewish temple where people are living. Let's say there is a mosque in Israel, and I knew that somebody lived in it... As a Muslim, I would be upset because it is God's place. So why did the BBC show

that the temple is inhabited? The Jews would ask why they are living there... That's what I would say, if it were happening in a mosque (Layana/4.5/F/J).

The participants in the Christian group had similar thoughts.

- Why did the BBC show a Lebanese who was angry when mentioning the Jews, and did not show a Jew who was angry with the Lebanese people (Sandra/1/F/J).
- The BBC should have asked this angry Lebanese. Why do you feel that way? (Carine/1/F/J).
- This part was used to show why the Jews left (Sandy/1/F/J).
- The documentary showed two views of the Lebanese. One that is against them and one that was sad and cried for her friend. Why doesn't it show the opinion of both sides of the Jews towards the Lebanese people? (Sandra/1/F/J).

Druze Group

Despite that the group had a positive interpretation of BBC message, yet they felt that BBC failed to reflect the diversity of Lebanon by interviewing just Christians only.

- The BBC focused a lot on Christians and churches, as if the Jews had a relationship only with Christians (Sally/2/F/J).
- They took the opinions of the Christians more than those of other sects (Malek/2/M/J).

6.9 Lack of Trust and Engagement

The theme reflects how the audiences see the BBC and what they expect from it. The participants' comments reveal that they felt BBC is not reflecting their ideas, their needs and their culture or beliefs. They don't just express disappointment but along with it comes suspicion of the BBC overall message and goals. Participants did not just feel bias is biased but they also felt that it lacks credibility and it is sensational. They also feel that the BBC identity plays into that outcome. In terms of BBC's engaging with their causes, the comments below from the mixed group that watched *Jews... Loyalty to Whom?* show that the participants want their causes to be more recognized, highlighted and supported just as that of the Israelis.

- I want the BBC to send a message saying: look what Israel did to me and to my country (Hasan/3.5/M/J).
- I don't feel related to this channel. It should show both views so the viewer can decide on themselves. If I knew that the BBC was airing a documentary about Jews, I would not watch it (Layana/4.5/F/J).
- If I find that the BBC is broadcasting a documentary about us and about our region, I would watch it, because I know they would cover things negatively and not positively (Aya/4.5/F/J).
- If the aim is to show Lebanon as a country of civilisation and co-existence, the programme is good and I accept it. However, the way it is shown, I don't think it represents reality. There are things missing (Jamila/3.5/F/J).
- The BBC does not understand me. I felt the documentary ended as it began... The BBC is not addressing all of the people (Rawan/4.5/F/J).
- I think the BBC wanted to tell me that it is unbiased, but it failed (Manal/3.5/F/J).
- I had a perception even before the documentary started; I knew it would be biased (Hasan/3.5/F/J).
- I think it will be different on Aljazeera. The coverage will not be the same. I think they would interview the other side (Manal/3.5/F/J).

The identity of the channel had significant impact on how they viewed and interpreted the documentary. Their comments show that because BBC is western it is expected to be biased against them and their causes.

- Who is the audience? The BBC's audience is Western. This is a point of view and I accept that, but Aljazeera, being an Arab channel, it wants to preserve its Arabism more, and wants to fulfil the needs of the viewer (Carine/1/F/J).
- You would know what would be said about Jews just by knowing which channel broadcasted it (Sandra/1/F/J).
- BBC's management is Western, but Aljazeera's policies are known, and it is known how it deals with Arab issues (Serena/1/F/J).
- I think the BBC will not be objective and it will present what suits it (Joelle/1/F/J).

- You don't feel that the channel is an Arab one. What it shows fits the British audience. If a British audience is interested in the Arab world, they like these things. The only thing that the Lebanese audience comes out with is that we are seeing Lebanese immigrants (Fadlallah/3.5/M/A).
- The BBC does not reflect me, but it is playing a very smart game. It finds a topic that interests me to watch it but I do not agree with it (Carmen/1.5/F/A).
- The BBC addresses an Arab audience, but the questions asked, and the way the documentary answers them, does not interest the Arab audience. You feel that these are the questions of a British journalist who wants to know what Hezbollah is doing there, or a person who is anti-Hezbollah (Fadlallah/3.5/M/A).
- If the BBC was interested in giving me what I want, then I want it to tell me what the Israeli agenda is (Saad/3/M/A).
 - I think I would have a positive reaction if the documentary were broadcast on Manar or Aljadeed (Aya/4.5/F/J).
 - I watched this documentary because you made us, but, for me, I will not watch the BBC to tell me who Jews are loyal to (Maha/4.5/F/J).

The groups sense that the BBC lacked credibility also played on their relationship with it.

Mixed Group

- To say that one per cent of the Lebanese there, control 60 per cent of the country's economy, what is the credibility of this number? Where did the reporter get it from? (Firas/2.5/M/A)
- The reporter talks about the power of two countries in a third country in West Africa, and then a taxi driver comes to sum that up! (Firas/2.5/M/A).
- The sources used, ie the documents, are mostly Western and American reports, as well as the Kuwaiti journal Alsiyasa Alkouwtiya.... In one part, he relied on documents, and in another part, he relied on what people were saying (Firas/2.5/M/A).
- The BBC mentioned that diamonds passed through Libya's Qaddafi. The idea of Hezbollah and Qaddafi is not convincing. It is irrational (Carmen/1.5/F/A).

- The BBC did not show us anything documented... The reporter should speak to official figures... (Carmen/1.5/F/A)
- The BBC has to explain this (why the Iranians don't want anybody to get into the factory). Iran is targeted all over the world, so no wonder that it has all these security measures (Firas/2.5/M/A)
- The BBC did not talk to known figures or to credible personalities. The documentary lacks credibility (Carmen/1.5/F/A).
- I can describe this documentary as shallow with no depth... The BBC started with the conflict over power, but never mentioned how this conflict began (Wehbi/4.5/M/A).
 - Some people look at the BBC as the best... like it always does the right thing (Carmen/1.5/F/A).
 - Like... this is the BBC (Fadlallah/3.5/M/A).
 - Marco's story is missing some things and there are a lot of questions...The BBC should have asked him why you were recruited into the army. Even those who said they left -- they did not give us the whole truth, but half of it, maybe for their safety (Sandy/1/F/J)
 - The documentary concealed too many facts... The BBC did not focus on the issue of invasion a lot (Issa/1/M/J).
 - The bad thing is that the opinion of the Lebanese was concealed and, what is more dangerous, the hiding of facts by the BBC (Carine/1/F/J).
 - The BBC concealed facts (Issa/1/M/J).

The mixed group that watched Jews also believed that BBC was sensational. They believed the music that BBCATV used was put there for a purpose.

- What the BBC did is that, for the first time, it made us look at the Jews with the sound of music. We are used to associating them with missiles (Maha/4.5/F/J).
- I was touched by the music. If the music was strong, of course, this will give me a scary feeling (Layana/4.5/F/J).
- It would be dull without music. For example, if a person is angry he is asked to listen to nice classical music, why? So that he relaxes. Here, they used classical music as well. It makes me relax and sympathise (Hasan/3.5/F/J).

- The soft music is to make us forget what Israel did to us (Nadine/4.5/F/J)
- The music gave an atmosphere of emotions (Jamila/3.5/F/J).

6.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I examined whether Lebanese audiences' relationship with BBCATV through themes emerging from the focus group discussion. Through their answers I was able to address the research questions that aimed to understand what the audiences want from the BBC, if they feel BBC understands them and to understand the positioning of the BBCATV in their preferences. The discussion showed that although the participants liked BBC choices of the documentaries, they did not like how the BBC tackled them. In terms of what the audiences' want from BBC, the findings showed that audiences want a channel to be engaged in their societies and to play a responsible role that helps in the betterment of their society.

The audiences' expectations of BBCA are to more engaged with their issues and their country, similar to what local media do. One of the crucial features of Lebanese TV channels is that several programmes attempt to pose a problem and try to help the interviewee whether it is a sick person who needs money for an operation, a parent who wants to reunite with children etc. The audiences' expectations from BBC are to play the role of a mentor, and to be more focused on its own society.

As long as the BBC cannot fulfil these demands, the audience will always feel disconnected and unrepresented by BBCA. The presence of local media has exacerbated the problem for the Arabic service. These local media understand the audiences' milieu and offer a broader and more in-depth picture of what is happening in their own country.

While the focus group discussions showed that the Lebanese audiences have the same understanding of what media should do, they also showed the complexities and differences in the audiences' preferences which is mainly affected by their sectarian and cultural background. Participants discussions reveal that they want a channel that mirrors their beliefs and ideas, an understanding which is the norm in Lebanon where sects have channels that reflect their political and social views. This understanding is influenced by how the Lebanese local media operate and brings out the dilemma of

BBCATV in how it sees its role as doing journalism only and what the audiences want from it.

I also introduced the reader to the Lebanese audiences' approach to BBCATV. The findings showed that audiences do not feel engaged with BBCATV because of how it negatively reflects them and their societies. The discussions also revealed that the identity of the channel plays on their engagement with a medium mainly when tackling the Israeli Lebanese conflict.

The participants clearly said that their causes would be better reflected by either a local channel or a pan-Arab channel. What was evident was the feeling of a hegemonic rhetoric from BBC prompting them to be defensive and attentive. The participants developed a suspicious view of the BBC because of its British identity, so they scrutinise what it says from the perspective that it is a foreign channel with a foreign agenda. This would pose the question of whether Lebanese audiences need BBC Arabic service. The next chapter will answer the questions of how BBC Arabic service sees the audiences how it thinks the audience sees it and how it sees itself.

The findings also revealed that there are striking differences in how groups of different sects approach BBCATV. This leads us to the question how BBCATV understands and sees its audience through studying the discourse in BBCA communicative events, what ideology is enacted in the text, and within what political and social context the encoding of these processes has taken place.

Chapter Seven

Critical Discourse Analysis of BBCATV Documentaries

7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to analyse BBCATV documentaries to find out if BBCATV discourse reflects Britain's foreign policies and British values. Choosing critical discourse analysis method is quite important in understanding BBCATV use of language in political or social discourse that is ideology.

This chapter engages with Fairclough's three-dimensional process of analysis. The first section in the analysis will look into the interpretation which informs us of how and why the content, or the documentary was produced in the way it was. This stage is important to identify discursive patterns that would be extracted and analysed from the text. The description stage will include textual analysis of the vocabulary, tone of the producers and production, thematic structure of sentences and transitivity which look for these verbatim that might indicate if BBC is working within government goals. This will be divided into textual and visual analysis.

This chapter is also informed by interviews with the producers of three of these documentaries, Wissam El-Sayegh of *Africa... The Upcoming Battle*; Nada Abdelsamad of *Jews of Lebanon... Loyalty to Whom?* and Naglaa Aboumerhi of *Buried Secrets*. The questions focused on the production process of each one's documentary. This chapter is also informed by interviews with former BBC staff Landor and El-Imary who were introduced in chapter 5. Questions to these two focused on the importance of launching such programmes and how they assess the relationship with the Arab audience.

Questions for the managers focused on getting a macro perspective of BBC Arabic TV: its views of itself, its perception of the audience and its view of how the Arab viewer sees the BBC. The questions for the producers were meant to give a micro perspective, by looking into the production process of these documentaries: the ideas, the BBC's criteria, and the audience reaction to these documentaries.

Questions for Landor and El-Imary focused on the idea behind launching the programme: how do they see the BBC performing in the Arab world? What do they think the audience needs from them? What makes them think that what they offer is what audiences want? Questions for these aforementioned interviewees are focused on why the BBC wanted to launch such a 'controversial' programme, and how the BBC sees

and talks to an audience that is diverse, different, fragmented and varies in norms, traditions, religions and political views.

The second group of interviews includes the producers of the documentaries. The questions for this group intend to understand the production process, which includes, the idea, the producers, the ideal viewer. Triangulating the answers with the focus groups and the discourse analysis, I aim to find out how BBCA sees and speaks to its audiences, and whether the audiences resonate with BBCA offering and how they think BBCA sees them. The following section introduces the series *Ma La Yuqal*. This section will contextualise BBCA's aim from these documentaries and the positioning of the audience in BBCA perspective.

7.2 *Ma La Yuqal* Programme

The launch of the era of documentaries began with *Ma La Yuqal* programme, the brainchild of Landor, assisted by El-Imary. As indicated by the programme title, which means 'The Unsaid', the programme focuses on issues that are not spoken about in the Arab world.

Looking at issues perceived as taboo would be something expected of us... whether these have to do with personal issues of sexuality, divorce, single women etc. or whether they are to do with issues that the Arab world does not necessarily speak about freely like corruption, Saudi money, Dubai oil, etc (Landor; 2015).

Tackling taboo issues are bound by certain rules as mentioned by BBC guidelines. The guidelines refer to applying "due impartiality to all our subject matter. However, there are particular requirements for 'controversial subjects', whenever they occur in any output, including drama, entertainment and sport" (Controversial Subjects: 4.4.5)²⁹. The guidelines outline ways to determine whether subjects are controversial or not. Part of this is related to measuring the

sensitivity in terms of the relevant audience's beliefs and culture, how topical the subjects are, whether the subjects are matters of intense debate or importance in

²⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/impartiality/controversial-subjects>. P.41 in BBC Editorial Guidelines

a particular nation, region or discrete area likely to comprise at least a significant part of the audience (Controversial Subjects: 4.4.6)³⁰.

The focus on taboo issues in a region that has immeasurable problems ranging from poverty to child labour, homelessness, corruption etc, raises questions as to why these stories take precedence over other pressing stories. BBC Arabic wanted to be seen as a channel that has no red zones and that looks into stories that other media organisations don't (Landor; 2015, El-Imary; 2015).

The interest in discussing taboo stories takes precedence over how and what the audiences would think of it. "It's not my problem and I don't care" as El-Imary said (2015). But the fact is that BBCA's aim from this programme is to present what reflects its own thoughts, ideas and values regardless of how this would be perceived.

7.3 Africa... The Upcoming Battle

Africa... The Upcoming Battle is a 45-minute documentary that was produced by BBC Arabic TV and aired in April 2011. It attempts to investigate the struggle over power and control in West Africa between Israel, and both Iran and Hezbollah through the Shia community there. Producer of the documentary Wissam El-Sayegh, a Lebanese national, toured two countries for his quest: Senegal and Sierra Leone. He tries to find if the Lebanese Shia there are supporting Hezbollah financially through projects and the diamond trade.

In Senegal, El-Sayegh tracks the competition between the warring sides through the projects they do, the Israeli agricultural projects, Iran's factory for cars manufacturing, and the Lebanese influence. He tries to discover if the Lebanese there, who are mainly Shia, are spreading Shiism and financially supporting Hezbollah. The second part of the documentary is in Sierra Leone. El-Sayegh tries to discover the truth behind accusations that Hezbollah is funding itself by making use of the diamond trade through the Lebanese community.

³⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/impartiality/controversial-subjects> . P.42 in BBC Editorial Guidelines

7.3.1 Interpretation

El-Sayegh is a Lebanese journalist whose name was mentioned in an article published by a Syrian opposition site called Kolona Shurakaa (KurdFuture; 2012). The article described El-Sayegh as being, “close to Wiam Wahab” and as being the middleman who allegedly led efforts with the Syrian government for the release of two BBC journalists in return for pro-Syrian coverage. Wahab, is a Lebanese Druze leader who heads the Tawhid party and is known for his support of both Hezbollah and President Bashar Assad. El-Sayegh’s father was Wahab’s deputy.

The second producer, Dimitri Collingridge, is currently a producer at UK-based Blakeway Productions. He was the producer director and cameraman for this documentary. He has produced and directed other films for BBC, including one about Iran’s opposition movement: *Iran’s Rebel Voices: Hopes Betrayed*, and a panorama documentary about British forces in Southern Iraq: *Bringing our Boys Home*. He has worked for many international broadcasters, including BBC, Arte, ZDF, PBS and Al Arabiya.

As for the production process, El-Sayegh told me that the idea of investigating Hezbollah’s presence and strength in Africa was that of Naglaa El-Imary and not his. He said that BBC was interested in making a documentary about Hezbollah and its sources of funding. Though the documentary talks about the power struggle of two forces, El-Sayegh said that the story was focused on Hezbollah, and not Israel.

He acknowledges that he hardly touched on the Israeli side, though “the Lebanese power there is balanced by the Israeli power, so we tried to show bits and pieces of the conflict.”

Though El-Sayegh asserted that no criteria were set but that the BBC was in a way “pushing me to say that Hezbollah was using diamonds to fund itself.” The Israeli section on the documentary seemed to be quite contentious for El-Sayegh. He described Collingridge’s questions to the Israeli interviewees as “PR for Israel and unchallenging” (El-Sayegh; 2015). As El-Sayegh said, some managers were “convinced that Hezbollah is engaged (in blood diamonds) and that if I don’t clearly say it, t’s because I want to hide the truth. When I returned from the trip, the reaction was that I did not do enough research and I did not dig enough.”

The analysis below will look for differences in reporting Hezbollah and Israel. The patterns will be informative to the last section on whether BBC’s course of coverage

mirrors that of the British foreign policy. The following section will be answering two questions: What textual values are used and is there any inconsistencies in the subject position portrayal?

7.3.2 Subjects' position: The Demonising Image

The textual analysis for this documentary aims to carve out vocabulary and the thematic structure of text tone and transitivity. The lexical selections are derived from the theme of the documentary and the context which informs the argument: the power struggle. The opening sequence of the film sums up the whole documentary theme. It starts by El-Sayegh's description of how the rich resources in Africa is drawing countries to it.

(1)

El-Sayegh: Africa... a continent that is trying to find a place for itself on the world map... here there is countless money. [El-Sayegh in vision] there is a lot of money in there [pointing to a bag full of money]. It is also an arena of conflict between forces that do not necessarily have good relations (a placard having the word Iran)

Senegalese interviewee: I think that the cooperation with Iran is a very good thing

(2)

El-Sayegh: Iran is an emerging power on different sides. Its activities [footage of Muslims praying on the side of the road] are not necessarily accepted by many precisely its traditional foe: Israel.

Israeli interviewee: I don't see that Iran is giving any help around. Iran is buying vast lands, and this is neo-colonialism.

(3)

El-Sayegh: Israel's view of the Iranian danger expands to include Israel's most bitter foes: Lebanon and Hezbollah.

Lebanese interviewee: many people support the resistance [Hezbollah] financially, but they don't announce it. It remains secret (footage of El-Sayegh looking into a diamond).

(4)

El-Sayegh: I began the journey from Senegal to Sierra Leone to see for myself how West Africa became the upcoming battleground for power. [In vision] and does the conflict

in the Middle East affect the relations between Israelis and the Lebanese in this part of the world?

Title: Africa, the upcoming Battle

El-Sayegh used the word conflict with a banner showing the word Iran. We don't know yet who it is in conflict with, but there is an affirmation that Iran is one part of this struggle.

This is also confirmed when describing Iran as emerging power. The vocabulary usage does not hold any connotations but the words traditional foe which describes Iran's definition of Israel gives meanings to neutral words within a social contest. In Arabic this sequence of words implies a one-way hostile nature. He sets the scene for viewers to question Iran's presence, power and actions. So how is this power used and executed? How aggressive that power might be?

The viewer gets to know from the sequence that Israel is that other side in the conflict however the way Israel was introduced does not put both countries on equal footing. The terms used are all in connection with Iran: an emerging power, Iranian danger, neo-colonialism. We don't see any questioning or comment on the nature of Israel's presence in West Africa, rather we see the Israeli side – one party of the conflict-questioning the Iranian presence. The sequence makes the viewer put Iran under investigation while the other party in the conflict is not scrutinised. Iran is the one taking action, (active vs. passive). Israel is the receiver.

At the end of his sequence, El-Sayegh talks about Lebanon and Hezbollah also as being Israel's enemies, bitter foe. He includes a clip of the support that Hezbollah receives from the Lebanese community in West Africa which is justifiable as part and parcel of this investigative documentary is to understand how African resources are used in this conflict. But the sequence ends without putting under scrutiny Israel activities in that part of the world as well. The viewers' mood would be set on what Iran and Hezbollah are doing as if Israel's presence there is natural.

El-Sayegh then begins his quest to map out the conflict of power between Iran/the Lebanese, and Israel, in the first part of the documentary that takes place in Senegal. El-Sayegh's first line after the opening sequence is about Iran's presence in Senegal.

(5)

El-Sayegh: Dakar the capital of Senegal; a country that is described by Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmedinejad as Iran's gate into Africa. In the last few years, Iran strengthened its presence here. Taxis here, famous for their yellow colour, are being substituted by Iranian-manufactured cars. Iran Khodro factory... manufacture around 15,000 cars of this line a year in Senegal alone. Still taxi drivers don't seem much happy about it.

(6)

El-Sayegh [in a taxi interviewing a driver] Are you happy that you bought this car?

Cab driver: Oh no I'm not happy. When I bought this car, I thought I would make some money... I sold my Toyota to buy this Iranian made car because I thought it is better than toyota...

El-Sayegh [comments]: It doesn't seem that the car business has succeeded in promoting Iran as it was hoping. But the Islamic Republic has other projects here such as power plant and oil refinery.

The linguistic selection of words like Gates into Africa, strengthen its presence and promoting Iran acquire meanings as they are tied to the context of utterances. As El-Sayegh takes a tour with the taxi driver who is unhappy with the Iranian cars the viewer gets to put meanings to these neutral words as they become to refer to Iran's profit- oriented aims. He ends this sequence without giving details of these two other Iranian projects. But as the car manufacturing seems to be established for business achievements, this leaves the viewer to question if these businesses are different. El-Sayegh builds on this rhetoric of suspicion, first because he was not allowed to film the car factory from a short distance. The terms used to describe the factory arises suspicion of Iranian activity.

(7)

As the convoy moved to the shooting location, I felt like we were filming a nuclear plant and not a car factory. While we did not face any problems in interviewing or filming around the country, it was highly sensitive every time we came close to an Iranian plant, even at that distance (pictures showing the convoy quite far from the factory).

The use of the word nuclear plant to refer to an Iranian factory draws on the discourse of Iran's nuclear programme and the then thorny negotiations with P5+1 countries. Both sides were in negotiating ways to curb Iran's nuclear activity for fear of building a nuclear weapon in return for a lift of sanctions. El-Sayegh used the word plant to refer to the factory. The use of the term here therefore acquires a meaning: why is the filming so secretive? Everything related to Iran seems clandestine, does this mean they are always engaged in unlawful activity? Does this also apply to Iran's nuclear activity though it says it is only using it for generating energy? El-Sayegh again uses the word Iranian plant to refer to the factory. In terms of the lexical meaning of the word, plant means a place where machines are compiled. However, the thematic structure of the sequence loads meanings to the word that comes to refer to Iran's dodgy activities.

The way Iran's presence is portrayed vis-à-vis Israel, is different. El-Sayegh gives a backgrounder that explains why Israel is in Africa.

(9)

El-Sayegh: The Israelis have always faced difficulties in maintaining their presence here because of the Middle East conflict. Following 1973 war, Senegal joined other AU countries and severed ties with the state of Israel. Following Oslo accord and the resumption of relationships Israel began a full-fledged plan to push its economic and political projects forward to improve relations with Senegal.

El-Sayegh used the word project to refer to economic as well as political goals or plans. Project is a positive term that refers to work done for the advancement of things. In the text, the word is coined with 'political'. This gives a very friendly understanding of the Israeli actions in Senegal. He also uses the term 'improve relations. The overall text therefore gives a sense that Israel's presence in Senegal is a natural right and that it is just regaining what it had unlawfully lost.

However, Arab influence in Africa was not the only reason for throwing Israel out. Israel's relations with South Africa's apartheid (Arthur & Gyimah Boadi; 2006), its actions towards Palestinians that drew images of the similarity to the Africans struggling for liberation (Nadelmann; 1981), and the geography that links Black Africa with Northern-Arab Africa (Nadelmann; 1981) contributed as well. Moreover, there are ties between most of the African countries and Israel, ties continued at an informal

level, mainly in arms exports, as 35% of the Israeli arms exports reached the African continent” (Chazan; 2006: 5)

To understand if there is a pattern in how Israel is portrayed vis-à-vis Iran and Hezbollah, I will compare between two interviews one with a Lebanese expatriate and the other with the Israeli ambassador to ask them about their projects. This part starts with El-Sayegh heading to a Lebanese school founded by a Shia cleric, named Abdel-Minim Zein.

(10)

El-Sayegh voiceover: Most of the Lebanese here are Shia [shots of men praying at the streets] these along with Iran play a significant role in spreading Shia faith in Senegal. I was invited to visit Al-Zahraa school which was established by a Lebanese Shia cleric in 1984, Sheikh. The school has around 700 students from different sects. Those who manage the school say that there is no political or religious agenda. But as I was touring inside, I noticed that one of the halls is named after Sayed Musa Sadr, a figure who is seen by Lebanese as the founder of the Lebanese resistance. He described Israel, the utmost evil.

El-Sayegh asking the headmaster: Do you teach them who he was and his relationship with the resistance?

Headmaster: Not much. We speak in general about historical and international figures who had a role in history.

El-Sayegh: Don't they ask why Moussa Sadr and not someone else?

Headmaster: Yes, and then we tell them.

El-Sayegh starts by talking about converting Senegalese to Shia. He sets the scene for a suspicious view towards the activity of converting and the activities of Shia in Africa. His tone, terms used and questions asked when he is inside the school indicate that there is a hidden truth thus putting all Shia in Senegal under accusation that they support Hezbollah or are engaged in some sort of clandestine activity.

In terms of vocabulary, El-Sayegh used the term agenda when asking about any religious or political activity. Agenda is defined as the underlying intentions or motives of a particular person or group. By using this term, he conveys an attitude of suspicion to what is happening inside the walls of this school. His question on whether students are told who Musa Sadr implies a tone of suspicion. The same rhetoric in regard to Shia conversion is used when introducing Sheikh Zein before the interview.

(11)

Pictures of Sheikh Zein are all over the school walls. He was sent to Senegal by Musa Sadr in 1969. Now he is the highest Shia reference in West Africa (Sheikh Zein praying). He says he succeeded in converting thousands of Senegalese to the Shia faith. In a report by the Congress in 2005, Senegal was classified as the second in place, after the Ivory Coast, through which Hezbollah gets its fund. I had to visit Sheikh Abdelmin'im Zein in the Islamic social centre which he heads. After Friday prayers he received me in his office

(12)

Sheikh Zein: We are not flying the Hezbollah flag here. We do not have any cells. I don't know of anyone sending funding to any party.

El-Sayegh: But Israelis are saying that Senegal is the second largest source of funding for Hezbollah.

Sheikh Zain: And I am saying that Israel is the number one source of lies in the world. They're not afraid of anything, they lie without end. All the money comes from Iran for Hezbollah, nobody denies that, not even Hezbollah or Iran. Everyone knows this.

El-Sayegh: What about Moral support?

El-Sayegh displays a discourse of power with the interviewee as he focuses on the converting issue and portrays it as a dangerous and a political act. Within the strained Arab Iranian relations, and accusations that Iran is spreading Shiism (Janabi: 2009:1), any converting missions in Sunni majority areas add to the fuelling Sunni-Shia split. His tone of questions is challenging and requires from the interviewee to explain and justify his position.

We are not... We do not.. I do not know... These words indicate that the interviewee and the interviewer are unequal and the interviewee is on the defensive side. El-Sayegh question 'What about moral support' is posed as an accusation. Though the words are neutral but within the context of the interview the question is aimed to put the interviewee on the spot..

As we come off from this to an interview with the Israeli ambassador Gideon Bihar the tone changes. El-Sayegh's co-producer Dimitry Collingridge^{31v} conducts the

³¹ ³¹Collingridge does all the interviews with the Israelis in this documentary because Lebanon is still in a state of war with Israel and Lebanese are forbidden to contact any Israeli.

interview in Senegal's national forest. Before the actual interview starts, BBC takes a tour in the woods with the ambassador to the forest where Israel is sponsoring a project to save the Oryx from extinction.

(13)

*Collingridge: (to the Israeli Ambassador), were you expecting such a reception?
(Senegalese soldiers greeting the Israeli ambassador)*

Israeli Ambassador: No they are wonderful people, very hospitable

El-Sayegh (voiceover): here Israel helps Senegal to save Oryx animals from extinction (filming the ambassador in the car as he leads a team to look for Oryx animals)

Ambassador: It's a very symbolic issue. What we are aiming is to improve relationship between religions, between Jews and Muslims. Western Africa is predominantly Muslim so it's important that we cultivate a good relationship.

El-Sayegh voiceover: In 1999, Israel brought 8 Oryx animals to Senegal. (search continues). Filming the oryx animals inside the forest is not easy. The ambassador leads the search himself.

Ambassador: this is the Oryx waste

Collingridge: oh yes, it is (more search continues)

El-Sayegh (voiceover): Finally, it appears. Today the number of oryx in Senegal is much more than that of the Israelis. It is time now to ask the ambassador if Israel actually succeeded in this power struggle war.

Collingridge: The Senegalese government has a certain amount of friendship with Iran, does that worry you at all?

Ambassador: No. We mind business and we want to advance our co-operation with Senegal, we don't do competition and we don't compete with others. Our interest is to focus on our bilateral cooperation with Senegal.

Collingridge: But isn't this affected by a country that's so hostile to Israel?

Ambassador: No. We do our job, and this is our limit

Collingridge: Could there possibly be a situation where you collaborate with an Iranian company?

Ambassador: if the Iranian government changes its policy, I mean, becomes a democratic country, stops supporting terrorism or pursuing nuclear weapons or, you know, Ahmadinejad is attacking Israel almost every day now calling for the destruction of Israel and things. If these things are changed then why not?

Collingridge: ... a number of reports have referred to an influence of Hezbollah here, is that something that you're concerned about?

Ambassador: I think this is something that should concern everyone...

Collingridge: Most of the Lebanese that I spoke to here said they don't believe that any funding really goes to Hezbollah from West Africa. Do you agree with that?

Ambassador: These are types of questions that I'd rather not answer or deal with.

Collingridge Right, right okay, okay. You have no idea, general idea or anything like that?

Ambassador: As I said I'd rather not.

Collingridge: Alright, alright okay. Is that because you're not familiar with it?

(The Israel Ambassador chuckles and pats Collingridge on the back).

As an Israeli ambassador who represents his country's policies, the ambassador was not challenged in regard to Israeli goals. Rather the interview offers the Israeli ambassador an opportunity to do PR for Israel without any challenge, to express Israel's stance towards Iranian-Senegalese relationships, and the fears about Hezbollah's influence here.

The thematic structure of the interview gives two different images. First Israel is friendly as we hear the Israeli ambassador using specific terms of goodwill: good relationship, advance our cooperation, we don't compete. Though these are the ambassador's words, but this refers to the fact that no challenging questions were asked about Israel's projects and ambitious in the region in contrast to the terms that are used to describe the Iranian and Hezbollah presence. Collingridge questions to the Israeli ambassador fed into the rhetoric of the Hezbollah Iranian danger; are you concerned in reference to Hezbollah presence, is that something that worry Israel in reference to Iranian Senegalese friendship, Hostile to Israel in reference to Iran. This portrays an image that what is happening in Senegal is not a conflict between two powers rather it is one hegemonic power that is intimidating others.

Though both Israel and Lebanese are fighting for power in Africa, what is significant is that we see that the Lebanese projects are put under scrutiny by the interviewers, however the Israeli projects are given much platform to explain what they do rather than why they do it. Israel is making its way to Africa through humanitarian

projects. On the contrary, the Lebanese or the Iranians are using Africa's resources for their own benefit only.

(14)

El-Sayegh (leaving Senegal to Sierra Leone): The conflict between Israel and Hezbollah is not just in Senegal. It is apparent in other countries in West Africa. Sierra Leone... here lives around 5000 Lebanese most of them Shia. Israeli daily Haaretz described it as Hezbollah state. Iran is not present on this arena, but the conflict of power between Israelis and Lebanese cannot be missed.

From the start of his tour in Sierra Leone, the producer builds a sequence that profiles every Shia of being Hezbollah. The term Hezbollah state steers the viewer to focus on what Hezbollah is doing rather than Israel even though that El-Sayegh referred at the end to the conflict of power between Israeli and Lebanese.

(15)

El-Sayegh: The parliament building... It was built by Israel in 1961 as a replica of the Kennest in Tel Aviv to celebrate the independence of Sierra Leone from Britain.

El-Sayegh (interviewing an MP): So this is the house of parliament.

Phillip: Yes, It was originally used as a military point to look out for the enemies at sea. It was a national decision that the Israelis should come and build it.

El-Sayegh: The Israelis had power in the past, but it retracted in the face of the Lebanese. Some are worried as is the case with Philip an MP of the opposition.

Philip: The Lebanese are the most affluent citizens in this country. You talk about good living, driving good cars, in terms of business they are the economic bourgeois, they dictate even government policies... I'm sick to the heart because they are a menace in our economy, I'm really sick of that as a professional economist - but they are in every aspect of our economy, every aspect.

El-Sayegh: do you think that the Lebanese community is linked to Hezbollah?

Philip: Sierra Leonean Government Official: Oh yes, yes...

The building of a Kennest replica is approached neutrally. El-Sayegh gives the viewer the chance to decide on whether this building is a show of power or not. However, the terms used in his interview with the MP seemed as justifying why Israel is

putting on this show of power. Terms that refer to Israel's struggle to keep a foot are evident: power retracted, worried. His second question also puts the Lebanese community under scrutiny even though he uses the term, think, which indicates possibilities. He did not use the term 'know' so that the viewer can get a clear-cut confirmation of the Lebanese community. Despite the fact that so far El-Sayegh delivered no evidence, and all the terms he used were 'reports' accusations', yet he built a rhetoric of suspicion towards the activity of the Lebanese community on all sorts even schooling. El-Sayegh continues to investigate Lebanese community activity (15).

(16)

El-Sayegh: But how do these accusations affect the life of the Lebanese community? The Lebanese international school is one of the oldest Lebanese institutions in Free Town. I met the head of the community Samir Hasaniya. I asked him about accusations that the Lebanese are exploiting the resources of Sierra Leone.

Hassaniyeh: We have many investments in this country. You can't imagine how much. I can say that we are the only foreign community that cares about this country.

El-Sayegh: in the last years, the bank accounts of many Lebanese were scrutinised after rumours about activities for Hezbollah.

Hassaniyeh: if you want to transfer money to Beirut your money goes to New York. Just as they see that your name is Ali, Mohammad, Hussain or Mustafa they stop the transfer and open up an investigation. We here at the school buy books! OK, we buy books...

But are all transactions that transparent and innocent? In 2003 after a plane in Benin crashed during its flight to Lebanon, the daily Kuwait "Siyasa Kuwaitiaya" said that there were Hezbollah officials on board who had donations of two million dollars. Information that has not been confirmed yet. While this part gives the Lebanese interviewee the chance to fend off accusations, El-Sayegh uses the term 'transparent and innocent' to question the interviewee's answer, quotes a newspaper that confirms Hezbollah using Africa money, follows it by unconfirmed reports. Through the text so far there is an ideology that accusations to Hezbollah are common sense, just as much as there is an ideology that what Israel does in Africa is common sense.

(17)

El-Sayegh: As the accusations against Hezbollah ascends, Israel found new friends who support its battle to win hearts and minds. It is the Israeli Sierra Leone friendship committee that was founded in 2005 and has 5000 members. The founder is Sierra Leone called Saraj Ronlengis and he has the full support of Israel. Siraju wanted to prove to me how much Sierra Leoneans love Israel. He introduced me to one of the members, he could be described as obsessed with Israel.

El-Sayegh: why did you decide to put the Israeli flag on your shop?

Israeli Supporter: because I have a heart for Israel...

El-Sayegh: Are you Israeli or Sierra Leonean?

Israeli Supporter: I'm a Sierra Leonean but my DNA is where Israel is because I love Israel, Israel's part of me. People say Israel is not a friendly nation and I say no, Israel is a friendly nation.

El-Sayegh: we went back to the headquarters. Today is the weekly lecture of Siraju. His supporting message for Israelis is advocated here but it was challenged strongly by Lebanese and Iranians.

Saraju: one of my friends puts on a badge of Israel, to show the friendship, and he went to a Lebanese shop and this Lebanese shouted at the guy: "I hate you for putting that". Of course, I have received a lot of threats by texts. I have received condemnation from the Consular of Iran

The first part of section 18 makes Israel actions in Africa look defensive. Here we see different terms used, with Hezbollah we always read the words accusation. With Israel it is friends, love, friendly nation. The producer also puts a rhetoric of one side, the Iranian and the Lebanese intimidating the other challenged strongly

(18)

El-Sayegh: Iran could be the main supplier of Hezbollah. But many believe that the civil war in Sierra Leone provided a lot of money for the party...

El-Sayegh: though there is no clear-cut evidence that Hezbollah is involved in the smuggling of diamonds, I wanted to know why these rumours are spreading...In 2002, the US ambassador at Sierra Leone, said in his testimony before the congress that Hezbollah is using the mines in the area to fund its armament especially with the increase of smuggling operations at the nearby Liberian borders.

El-Sayegh (asking one Lebanese businessman): there's a lot of talk that Lebanese who trade in diamond in Sierra Leone, contribute in financing Hezbollah in Lebanon, to what extent is this true?

El-Sayegh investigates if diamond mining resources are used by the Lebanese Shias to fund Hezbollah and visits one diamond mining field that is owned by a Lebanese family in Sierra Leone. Though El-Sayegh says that there is no evidence and base his investigations on assumptions 'many believe', as he said, however there is a pattern in the documentary that puts Hezbollah under scrutiny rather than Israel. He interviews a person on condition of anonymity to get to the bottom of the issue of diamond trade.

El-Sayegh: Now that the war is over and the rebels left, the diamond trade has been subject to regulations. But if the diamond trade cannot fund the party so why all these rumours? Is there someone who is actually funding it here? a difficult question. We met someone here who asked to conceal his identity. He told us that ways of collecting money in west Africa is numerous.

Anonymous person: We have a good number of Lebanese here and therefore a good amount of money is transferred to Lebanon. Is there a direct funding? I don't think so. Lebanese families here send money to their families like any expatriates. How those families spend this money, or who they give it to is a different issue... The resistance functions secretly. I do not think it is extremely easy to send money to the resistance, but you can send money to charities.

El-Sayegh: this means that in case money was transferred then it is done secretly. But this complicates things. Is there really someone sending money to Hezbollah or it is just rumours?

The documentary built a case that Africa money is used to fund Hezbollah. Using the term done secretly indicates an action which might be illegal or endangering. Towards the end of the documentary El-Sayegh and Collingridge interview two businessmen: a Lebanese and an Israeli. Hashem, the Lebanese businessman, is challenged and asked about accusations of funding Hezbollah. On the other hand, when Collingridge meets Alan Gil, an Israeli who heads one of the biggest diamond mining companies in Sierra Leone, he asks him about Hezbollah's activity.

Collingridge: There's been a lot of reports especially by, I think, American think tanks, that there is presence of Hezbollah in Sierra Leone– is that something that you're aware of at all?

Gil: I heard that. One day I took one Israeli, to buy a shirt. So I took him to the shop and there was a picture of the Ayatollah there and Nasrallah, and he said to us: "we sent money to Hezbollah because this is our army".

Collingridge: So are they saying that they give money to arm Hezbollah, which is what has been suggested?

Gil: Maybe, maybe, I don't know, I don't want to ask...

Gil heads the biggest diamond trading company, yet he was not asked about his trade, where the money goes, and so on. Gil was given a platform from which to assess if there is funding for Hezbollah. The closing statement by El-Sayegh ascertains that the documentary is to investigate Lebanese actions only, rather than looking into Israeli and Lebanese actions in their fight for power. El-Sayegh's closing statement:

El-Sayegh: A lot of money passes between Israelis and Lebanese. And this might end eventually in the hands of Israel's number one enemy in the Middle East: Hezbollah.

The thematic structure of the closing statement clearly focuses on the actions of Hezbollah and the Lebanese Israel's number one enemy. What about Israelis who support Israel in West Africa? And why did the documentary fail to investigate Israeli actions in Africa and only given a platform to either promote what it is doing or how it is coping with Iranian and Lebanese threats,

7.3.3 Visual Analysis

The producers of the documentary presented activities of Hezbollah and Iran and Israel in two actional images: suspicious image of the activity of Hezbollah and Iran, and a reactional image as well. The second actional image is the friendly image of the activities of Israel as well as a reactional image from Israel.

The suspicious image of the activity of the Iranians and Hezbollah is depicted beside the images chosen, the length of the clips, the tone of the producer and the visual production. When El-Sayegh talks about the conflict between yet unidentified rivals in

line (1) he shows a picture of a banner with the word Iran. First, the viewer is associating Iran with conflict, second the viewer is steered to think that Iran is the major player in Africa. He adds more scepticism to the role of Iran as he puts out a picture of African Muslim men praying on the street. The images were used to talk about Iranian and Hezbollah presence in Africa:

El-Sayegh: Most of the Lebanese here are Shia. Beside Iran, they play a significant role in spreading Shiism in Senegal...

The 20 second footage from the beginning of this sequence till the end is all of African men praying on the streets. El-Sayegh doesn't expand on that idea throughout the documentary but the pictures feeds into the rhetoric that converting is more a political act, putting all Shia converters in Africa under suspicion of working for Hezbollah. It is important to note though that from the way the men are performing the prayers they are Sunnis not Shias.

The 4.5-minute sequence of filming the Iranian factory which was mentioned in paragraph (7) created a rhetoric of suspicion. The car movement, the music, the nervousness of the producer added to this suspicion narrative. Finally, the reactional process from the producer of building an image of undeclared activity.

El-Sayegh: As the convoy moved to the shooting location, I felt like we are filming a nuclear plant and not a car factory.

Another reactional image from the producer when he was interviewing a group of Christian men in Senegal. The men were defending any support to Hezbollah which surprised El-Sayegh:

El-Sayegh: What I heard from them was a surprise!

This feeds into the rhetoric that Hezbollah activity is suspicious and therefore it is unusual to find supporters outside the Shia milieu. While in that section we see an actional/reactional process, in the interviews with the Israelis we see an actional/conversational process.

The actional process from the tour in the forest with the Israeli ambassador feeds into a theme of friendliness. The 2-minute sequence of images that precedes the actual interview sets a favourable image. Meeting the ambassador in the forest, going with him on a tour, being in the car with the ambassador, having different shots of him engaging with the animal search. The journey with the Israeli ambassador seemed enjoyable and informal: soldiers greetings, the producer's comments on the warm welcome, the ambassador tending to the Oryx and the producer having a laugh with the ambassador enforces this rhetoric.

The symbolic process in the documentary enforces the political rhetoric to demonise Hezbollah. At one scene we see an Israeli flag on a building that bears the inscription "I pray for the peace of Jerusalem", just as an Israeli interviewee talks about Iran's neo-colonialist approach. The Knesset building and the water plant build by an Israeli are symbols of a friendly state.

Taking into consideration the interpretation, textual and visual analysis, these analyses will be put in perspective ie within social context to understand the ideology encoded within the text.

7.3.4 Explanation

This stage will answer the question of which political ideology this discourse conforms with? To answer this question, I will start by contextualising the topic of the documentary by explaining the context of the demonising of Hezbollah.

Hezbollah is a Lebanese Shia party that was founded in 1982, by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini to resist the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. (Qassim; 2010). Hezbollah's emergence is intertwined with the social and political history of the Shia in Lebanon. The Shia, who were run in the 1960s by the Zuma (family leaders), found an escape through joining secular political parties like the Lebanese Communist Party, and the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party, and later the Palestinian fidayeen (Norton; 2009).

However, the rise of the Shia was marked with the arrival of Imam Mussa Sadr, an Iranian cleric of Lebanese origin, in Lebanon in the 1950s, when he tried to integrate this sect into the political and social system after decades of being under-privileged (Norton; 2009).

When the Lebanese civil war began, Imam Sadr formed the Amal (hope) movement to protect the community from PLO fighters and the Israeli forces (Fuller &

Francke; 1999). His disappearance in 1978, followed by the emergence of an Islamic state in Iran in 1979, saw the emergence of a party called Hezbollah in 1982 that was formed on religious grounds and that later became a resistance group to fight the Israeli occupation (Qassim; 2010). Hezbollah is regarded as Iran's arm and policy in the region. Since the Islamic revolution in Iran, relations between the Persian state and its Arab neighbours have been filled with animosity and war. Iran's expanding powers in the region through supporting financially anti-Israeli movements, like Hamas the Sunni Palestinian faction, kept Arab leaders weary of their image among the Sunnis in the world who kept the Palestinians to their fate after the signing of peace treaties.

After the Israeli withdrawal from parts of southern Lebanon in May 2000, Hezbollah was hailed across the Arab world for defeating Israel, so that it became a role model for Palestinians in Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory. Pictures of Hezbollah leader, a Shia leader, were held across Arab streets. Palestinians launched their second intifada, which began against the Israeli occupation in the same year. Efraim Sneh, a former Israeli deputy defence minister later argued that the 2000 withdrawal had portrayed Israel as weak (Sneh; 2010), and Tel Aviv became more and more wary of the increasing power of Hezbollah and its well-respected image among Arabs.

In 2005, the overall mood in Lebanon began to change after the former Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri, a Sunni tycoon and a well-connected figure who had strong ties with Saudi Arabia- a leading country for Sunnis- was assassinated and fingers pointed at Syria, the neighbouring powerful country that was allied with Hezbollah and Iran. The Shia party was monitoring developments cautiously as the March 14 Alliance that was established following the assassination began to take things further: Hezbollah must disarm.

In the summer of 2006, war erupted between Israel and Hezbollah, after the latter captured two Israeli soldiers at the borderline in order to attempt to secure the release of Lebanese and other Arabs who were being held in Israeli prisons.

According to widely accepted commentary, the 2006 war was meant to "restore the credibility of the Israeli deterrence after the unilateral withdrawals from Lebanon in 2000... and damage or cripple Hezbollah" (Cordesman & Sullivan & Sullivan; 2007: 6). It was also understood that the war was intended to root out Hezbollah. Al-Akhbar daily newspaper (2011:3) published Wikileaks cables that revealed such a plot by Arab countries. According to a Wikileaks cable, Saudi Arabia proposed creating an Arab force

backed by the US and NATO, to destroy Hezbollah in Lebanon (MacAskill; 2010), but the outcome was completely different, as Israel failed to root out Hezbollah (Chadwick; 2012:2, Perry and Crook; 2006: 4, Knickmeyer; 2008:2). Its failure strengthened the trend to resistance over negotiations, but the goals were not met, according to the Winograd Report³² (Zino & Sofer; 2008:1).

When the military war failed, a new kind of war began to end the resistance through damaging its reputation. Wikileaks cables on the July 2006 war revealed that Lebanese politicians from the March 14 Alliance, as well as certain Arab countries, had united to end Hezbollah (MacAskill; 2010). In May 2008, the Lebanese government decided to remove the telecommunications network operated by Hezbollah, which played a major part in the 2006 war (BBC online; 2008). In 2009, Der Spiegel published an article based on leaks from inside the international tribunal that was formed to investigate the assassination of Hariri, and that states that Hezbollah was behind the assassination³³ (Follath; 2009:2).

In March 2011, the March 14 Alliance stepped up the campaign to disarm Hezbollah (Asharq Al-Awsat; 2011). This came after Hezbollah ministers and their allies resigned from the government of Rafik Hariri. The alliance labelled this as a coup by Hezbollah and as an attempt to impose an Iranian agenda (Chulov; 2011). Throughout these events, the feelings of mistrust between Shia and Sunni began to emerge (Crisis Group; 2010).

The documentary was produced at a time when Hezbollah's iconic image in the Arab world was withering. The first discourse relates to the Sunni-Shia rivalry and Sunni-Shia alignment which was touched on when talking about converting. While conversion here is mentioned to show the extent of rivalry that the Israelis are facing, yet conversion here also plays on the rift between the two sects. Conversion here is not portrayed as a religious rivalry. After all, Shia constitute less than %10 per cent of Muslims, so the disproportionality between Sunnis and Shia means the number of conversions will not tip the balance in favour of the Shia. Conversion in the discourse of

³² An Israeli probe committee assigned to investigate the decision-making that led to this war

³³ A group of politicians who later formed the March 14 Alliance accused Syria of assassinating the former Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri, in 2005. Four pro-Syrian Lebanese army generals were detained without charge for four years, but they were later released due to lack of evidence. Saad Hariri, the son of the deceased, said that it was a mistake to accuse Syria of the assassination, acknowledging that it was based on political accusations (Black; 2010).

the text is portrayed within a political ideology that would be threatening to Sunnis. In the Arab world, this political ideology threatens to provoke the Arab street against the inaction of Arab leaders when it comes to the Israeli Arab conflict while Iran, the non-Arab state, is taking this cause as its own. The discourse of scepticism and mistrust that the producer portrays about these subject positions play with the interests of the anti-Shia sentiment in the Sunni world and also reflects Britain's foreign policy which has strategic ties with Saudi Arabia, the representative of the Sunnis in the Arab world, and on the other hand strained relations with Iran due to its policies towards Israel.

Britain's strategic alliance with Saudi Arabia, the most powerful country in the Arab world and, dates over a hundred years ago, despite an interval of diplomatic boycott, as described by a UK parliament publication:

The current UK-Saudi relationship is based on these historical ties as well as a continued sense of common interests in defence, security, and trade. These shared interests continue to be important in the 21st century, with ongoing co-operation with Saudi Arabia on some of the UK's greatest security concerns, including Al Qaeda, Iran and, most recently, Syria. The Government told us of Saudi Arabia's importance across a wide range of areas, including as: a regional influence, a global religious influence, a key counter-terrorism partner, a key player in global energy markets, a major market for British goods and services and a country visited by tens of thousands of Britons every year (Parliament Publications; 2013: 29).

This strategic alliance in comparison in comparison with the Iran relationship cannot be jeopardised as stated in Chapter 4. In comparison, with how Hezbollah and Iran are seen within Britain's foreign policy, BBC discourse cannot but maintain that relationship with Saudi Arabia is mainly for economic reasons.

It can be argued that BBC's policy is not to appease the Saudis and some documentaries have been produced which have angered the Saudis and resulted in denying BBC staff visas to cover the Hajj season, but it remains important that none of these documentaries have been produced in a way that would affect British Saudi foreign relations.

The second discourse is the demonising portrayal of the two subject positions demonising vis-à-vis Israel. In terms of the Israeli Hezbollah power struggle, the

documentary is of a highly journalistic value in terms of investigating a conflict in a third country, but the discourse in the documentary which focuses on demonising one side much serves the interest of Britain's foreign policies. The documentary ignores mentioning the gigantic diamond mining companies run by two Israeli businessmen Dan Gertler and Lev Leviev. Gertler and Leviev are both involved in diamond mining and financing the building of new settlements in the occupied West Bank (Silverstein; 2018, Stearns; 2010). The UN had labelled Israel's diamond trade as the "bloody diamond trade". The diamond industry in Israel is one of the most profiting trade as it amounted to 30% of its national gross income in 2011 (Al-Assi; 2017). Britain's imports of diamond from Israel amounts to 7% according to House of commons UK-Israel trade publication (Ward and Curtis; 2018)

Focusing on these two subject positions Iran and Hezbollah within a political ideology discourse indicates that the producers had first an ideal viewer in mind and that ideal viewer would have the same convictions as the producers, and second these convictions resonates with Britain's foreign policy towards Israel and Saudi Arabia whereby relations are based on cooperation and coordination.

7.4 *Jews of Lebanon... Loyalty to Whom?*

On May 10th, 2010, BBC Arabic TV aired a documentary entitled: *Jews of Lebanon... Loyalty to Whom?* In the 46-minute documentary, Nada Abdelsamad traces the story of four Jewish Lebanese who left Lebanon with their families for Israel and other places. They narrate about their life in Lebanon, their good memories, and their aspirations to return. There are also interviews with Muslim and Christian Lebanese who lived with Jews.

7.4.1 Interpretation

Nada Abdelsamad is a Lebanese journalist who started her career in journalism at the Lebanese radio station called Sawt Al-Shaab (The Voice of the People), a pro-communist station. She moved to BBC Arabic radio in 1997 and became quite known in the political corridors and among the media sector in Lebanon. Her name circulated after she published a book called "Wadi Abu Jamil stories about Jews of Beirut"

published by Dar Annahar³⁴, while it was turned down by other publishers. Abdelsamad first started doing series of radio packages for BBC on Lebanese communities, including the Jewish community right after the 2006 war. Then she turned it into a book in 2009, and later into the BBC TV documentary in 2010.

Many hail Abdelsamad for objectively covering events although she has a reputation inside the media sector for having pro-March 14 views. Some do not see her as objective. Ass'ad Abu-Khalil, a Lebanese-American professor of political science at California State University who writes on Middle East issues, wrote on his blog about Abdelsamad's reporting of the 2009 general elections. In her reporting she said that "spending in the elections had reached unprecedented levels: a billion dollars, evenly split between both sides" (Quoted in Hage Ali; 2010:2).

Sarcastically, Abu-Khalil asked: "How cute of Nada Abdelsamad (who supports March 14) to want to appear even-handed. Evenly split? Are you kidding me? It is like ten times more--in favour of the March 14" (Abu-Khalil; 2010).

The idea to do a documentary about the sects in Lebanon began after Abdelsamad had done a radio series about the sects of Lebanon. She said she got the idea right after the 2006 war, when Annahar published an article by Mona Fayad entitled: *To be a Shi'ite Now*, which objected to Hezbollah's military actions. So the BBC decided to produce a series about the Shia of Lebanon. Abdelsamad said that she was working simultaneously on a book about the Jews of Lebanon. So she pitched the idea of a documentary about Jews. Her assessment is that the documentary is not sensitive. "It only talks about memories and there's nothing political... [it addresses] anyone who is interested in the idea of disappearing minorities" (Abdelsamad; 2015).

However, the time of the airing of the package gives it a political connotation, as the week that the documentary went on air marked the 62nd anniversary of what the Palestinians and the Arabs call "El-Nakba" or 'the catastrophe', i.e., the day Israel became a state. At this time of the year, Palestinians and their advocates commemorate this event, vowing to return to their land, thus the documentary could be understood as

³⁴ Dar Annahar is part of Annahar newspaper (The Day) that adopts a rightist liberal approach since its establishment in 1933. *Annahar Daily*, About us. [available from] <http://www.annahar.com/about>
Annahar is one of the oldest Lebanese newspapers established and was established by Jibrán Tuéini, a Greek Orthodox Christian of Syrian heritage. His son, Ghassan Tuéini, is a distinguished journalist and politician, who sought Lebanon's national sovereignty, became the publisher and editor in chief, in 1948 after his father's death. After his retirement in 1999, his son Jibrán, one of the hawks of the March 14 alliance, took the helm of the newspaper, but he was assassinated in December, 2005, (Fox: 2012: 2&3) prompting his daughter, Nayla Tuéini, an MP and one of the March 14 Alliance's members, to take over.

equating the ordeal of Palestinians who lost their land in what was to become Israel, and Jews who left Lebanon.

As the topic draws debate on whether there are political messages, the analysis below will look for patterns of peace and reconciliation within a discourse of memories, identity and belonging.

7.4.2 Textual Analysis: Discourse of Memory and Amnesia

The thematic structure of the documentary revolves around identity. It's a narration of memories, of places, of experiences, and of people. Therefore, the text is not confrontational, rather it brings in a nostalgic atmosphere, a different angle and twist to the Arab Israeli conflict, and a different image of Jews from the one that prevails in the Middle East. The discourse of identity is not only identified through memories, but also through places, sites and belongings.

Memory uses tools to reconstruct identity like place. French historian Pierre Nora explains that memory is attached to 'sites' that are concrete and physical—the burial places, cathedrals, battlefields, prisons that embody tangible notions of the past—as well as to 'sites' that are non-material—the celebrations, spectacles and rituals that provide an aura of the past..." (Hoelscher and Alderman; 2004:348). The very first sentence in the documentary highlights the importance of place. Places is one element that demonstrates identity.

(1)

Abdelsamad: Wadi Abu Jamil... in this area that is in the heart of the capital Beirut, most of the Lebanese Jews lived...In this valley of Jews as it was known they built their companies, religious institutions and schools.

The focus on the place in the text set an uncontested fact that the Jews lived in Lebanon and they have landmarks here which are still standing. In fact they did not live on the border, rather they lived 'in the heart of the capital Beirut' a term that highlights the fact that not only they are indigenous residents but they are part and parcel of the thriving and vibrant city. Added to this is that the buildings in the valley are the traditional Lebanese houses, and not the modern ones, which also stress the fact that they were here long time ago. The narrative 'their places' extends to areas across Lebanon.

(2)

Abdelsamad Just as in Beirut, in Sidon city, the capital of the south, Jews had a neighbourhood that was known as Jews neighbourhood.

Sidon is not just a city, but it is the third important city in Lebanon following the capital Beirut and Tripoli in the North. Sidon is regarded as the gate and the capital of south Lebanon. The significance of that city is that it is mixed with Christians and Muslims, but their neighbourhood is not just in any part of Sidon.

(3)

Jews Neighbourhood is in the heart of the old city which can be reached by foot and through its markets. It's hard to find it without a guide.

The vocab used in (2) and (3) stresses on how entrenched the Jews were in Lebanon. They are 'The heart' of the cities, and not any cities but those that are quite old and historically significant.

The presence of the temple inside the city and the cemetery intensifies this relation between memory and place. They did not just live here, but they died here. They had a cemetery, which consolidates the idea of belonging.

(4)

Here by the city's sea and away from the old neighbourhoods, the graves of its children from the Jews still exist.

The word "its children" is a literal translation from Arabic. The sense of belonging that is expressed in this term could not be gauged if the journalist used the word its residents...Residents are people who live in the city but when they leave, the sense of connectedness disappears, but when people from the city, children, leave to another place it does not mean that they lost all connectedness. From the south to Mount Lebanon, a summer resort area, they also had their own sites.

(5)

Abdelsamad: For the Jews of Lebanon Aley formed the basic summer resort. So they built a temple there. They did the same in the nearby town of Bhamdoun³⁵

The presence of Jews around different areas in Lebanon does not only give a sense of their roots, but also of the co-existence atmosphere that prevailed given that the Jews were in the capital Beirut which is a mixed area, in Sidon, a Muslim-dominated area and in Bhamdoun and Aley a Christian and Druze areas. Though the Jews left but the rhetoric used by the BBC is stressing on 'theirs'...

(6)

Abdelsamad: Nowadays, nothing is left for Jews in their valley except for this temple... it is Magan Abraham temple that was built in 1925

The sense of belonging therefore is evident in memories of places. The term 'their valley' emphasises the sense of belonging. Even though they left it is still theirs. The text (6) also gives a sense of emptiness; nothing is left which requires an explanation of why and how this happened.

(6)

Abdelsamad: As Israel became a state, tens of Lebanese Jews left for Israel as well as other places

Mentioning Israel and referring to countries as 'other places' Abdelsamad is emphasising the fact that leaving for Israel is not like leaving for other places. IN another text, we understand that Lebanese Jews departure was mainly related to the Israeli Arab conflict.

Abdelsamad: Zack had left Lebanon in 1967 after few months of the six-day war which was a turning point in the decision of many Jews to leave.

The words turning point here indicates that their departure was driven by something that is out of control. So did they leave unwillingly or willingly? The text keeps the information vague. Did they leave because they were persecuted and targeted

³⁵ Aley and Bhamdoun are two areas in mount Lebanon

just because they were Jews? Or because they were encouraged by Israel's victory and the belief in a homeland?

However, in the sequence of the documentary, the reasons why Lebanese Jews left for Israel were portrayed as if it was mainly caused by events other than the belief in the state of Israel. It is like any other Lebanese who goes to Europe, America or Australia and still regard his identity and culture as Lebanese.

(7)

Abdelsamad: In 1975 when the civil war started, the valley turned into a warring line. The harsh battles forced most of its residents to leave their homes among them Alan Abadi.

Abadi: In the 1975 war, we left because there was no work. I remained unemployed for a year. I had a visa to Canada and another one to France. My mother started telling me to come here (Israel), that her sister is there, and that life is easier. So, I came. First, we were in one room, a place where new immigrants are placed then I managed.

Abdelsamad uses the term 'harsh battles' to refer to what drove one Lebanese Jew to leave Lebanon. But the viewer is not given much details about the Israeli Arab war. The thematic structure portrays the departure of the Jews generically as a flee from war and not a political or religious motivation non whatsoever like unemployment. A Lebanese woman who recalls her memories with her Jewish neighbour Salim Mezrahi and his wife who left for Israel explains why they left.

(9)

Marcel Hnayne: ... They were not with the entity of Israel... Mary and Salim had five daughters and the Jewish girl needs to pay dowry to get married. They could not afford it. She (Mary) told me that she told my parents they needed to go. I have daughters who should get married.'

The text emphasises the idea that they are Lebanese and that they left because of social reasons rather than political ones (They were not with the entity of Israel). Had it been for the marriage dilemma, they would have remained in Lebanon. While these may be facts, but the documentary does not refer to any other reasons: was the belief in the

homeland of Israel the reason, were they driven out by other Lebanese in revenge attacks to what Israel was doing etc.

They are therefore like any other expatriate, who despite travelling, they are still connected to their homes, friends, memories and identity. We get that message when we hear three Lebanese Jews talking about their experiences. Alan and Marco, the son of Salim and Mary Mizrahi, who live in Israel and Jack Basal who lives in Canada as his father refused to go to Israel.

(7)

Alan Abadi: we were young (recalling memories in Lebanon). We used to laugh and talk about films, music, and girls. We would tell stories and eat together. That was it. we would play backgammon. We would throw the dice and bang... I have LBC and Future TV. I do not have French or English stations. I listen and watch their programmes. I turn on tv and watch star academy. I listen to songs. I watch political programmes. I love it when they start fighting. It is hilarious (laughs). Sometimes the Lebanese accent crack me up. You cannot find the Lebanese slang here... I love the Lebanese slang when they say ..how are you baby? What? What are you doing? (laugh) it is difficult for me to sing Arabic songs, like the song Abdo is in love with Ghandoura.

(8)

Marco Mezrahi: This is the Lebanese channel (watching LBC. He is watching a comedy show and laughing to the jokes) ... Oh and this is Sanaye' park. There was a motorcycle rent shop round in the park, called ABS. I used to go there and rent one. I used to and still love to listen to Wadi' El-Safi, Fairuz and Sabah. I only know singers of my days not the new ones. My mother used to listen to new singers because she always used to watch Future TV she used to call me and say tune in to Future TV they are putting Fairouz or Wadi' El-Safi or Nasri Shamesdeen.

(9)

Jack Basal: We used to feel the joy of the Jewish festivities in the synagogue. I've been here in Canada for 40 years I don't get this feeling ever.

The identity discourse is emphasised through the text of the interviewed Jewish Lebanese. Hearing from the people who actually lived in Lebanon, who know its streets, who had homes in Lebanon, who had friends, who speak Arabic and who are still

indulged in the Lebanese daily life through gives a stronger meaning and reality to the identity. So the viewer is not just seeing abandoned places or ruins that could become tourist sites, but actually listening and seeing Lebanese Jews who talk about their experiences and who speak the same language and know the same places and love the same iconic singers and watch the same shows and channels.

The whole narrative is based on selection of events and characters, therefore memories are selective too and are presented in a certain form. Memory can be used for reconciliation as well through pushing for 'numbing' or amnesia of certain historical events or encounters (Muller: 2004). Past events therefore are "selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with political meaning" (Said: 2000:185). Therefore, the sense of belonging that the interviewees expressed feeds into peace discourse.

(10)

Alan: No one loves war. I want them to agree, for the borders to open. This is what I want... (pictures of Beirut and Lebanon overlaying his voice) Do I wish to return to Beirut? Of course. All the time... when I log in to Facebook. I always talk about Lebanon. I have Lebanese friends. I have a lot. Now they renovated our synagogue. They spent one million dollars on it. Now when I talk to friends and they tell me all the news, I always say I can only see it in pictures. what can we do? sometimes I go to the border I walk there and look from a distance..... memories... what can I say? it's like a film... but we cannot forget...Beirut, Lebanon. I cannot forget the thirty or thirty- five years that I have lived there.

(11)

Marco: When we came here, they told us you know when there is peace the first country, we will have peace with is Lebanon... look how things turn... apparently there will never be Dafka (peace) with Lebanon. It would be the last country that we will see peace instead of being the first.

The sequence of the documentary set the stage for such an ending: the yearn for peace. While peace talks have been on the table for decades, however this call for peace have a different flavour. It is not by Jews who came from Europe and just want peace to

live safely or by politicians who want to ensure Israel's presence, it is by Lebanese Jews who still have a sense of belonging and the peace that they want is the peace that can unite them again with places, friends.

7.4.3 Visual Analysis

As the documentary constructs a narrative of nostalgia, visuals are more picturesque of old buildings and places. The opening of the documentary is attractive to any Lebanese. The beautiful blue sky, the coastline of Lebanon, and the nicely constructed houses with arches and painted roofs that represent the traditional Lebanese house appears from afar; a view that takes defies the modern tall buildings that are engulfing the capital. Pictures from Wadi Abu Jamil shows some of the old Beirut houses that are still riddled with bullet holes, or those that are abandoned adds to the feeling of nostalgia to a previous era. These visuals were always accompanied by soft Arabic music. Pictures of war, battles and destruction made only 50 seconds of the whole documentary. They are mostly painted over the interviewees' voiceover as they narrated a memory.

(15)

Therese (one of Mizrahi family neighbours): One day, Israeli soldiers entered this area and trucks kept coming in and they were filled with soldiers heading to south (archive pictures of Israeli tanks in Beirut). One day I was on the balcony and a truck came and parked in front of the house (Therese back in vision) they spread through the place. Soldiers started coming out and they were all young men. I looked at them and started saying what is going on, get out of here! Go home, leave. What did you come here for? I stated yelling at them but then I thought to myself. They came from Israel, maybe the Mizrahi boys are with them. So I started calling: Marco, Marco Mizrahi. Is there a Mizrahi boy among you? ... (footage of shelling) I guess Mizrahi boys were not among them that's why no one answered.

(16)

Abdelsamad: (footage of Israeli tanks) As Theresa thought, Marco Mizrahi returned to Lebanon during the 1982 invasion as a soldier in the Israeli army.

The pictures of war are used for editing reasons rather than to talk about the details and causes of war. The documentary draws emotions through capturing the sighs of the Lebanese Jews, their tears, their pauses, and their facial expressions. Zack Ilya, a Syrian Jew, narrates his life and departure from Lebanon. The interview was conducted in the Lebanon after he came for a visit using his European passport. Ilya speaks Arabic. He recalls his memories in an emotional way.

(17)

Ilya: I'm not Lebanese. I was born in Beirut and I grew up in Beirut. Beirut made me (Holds his tears). I'm very emotional about it (in English. slightly smiles, then pauses). Beirut moulded me but did not give me nationality. I knew that when I used the 'Laissez-Passer' (holds his tears again, and pauses) it was a one-way street (in English). This means no coming back (moves his hand in a way to show that there is no return. Pauses). Then the war and destruction began (a sigh and closes his eyes) ... that is what happened.

Zack's tears, voice hands movement text does not only reflect the level of emotions but also a high level of belonging and connectedness to Beirut. His words, his pauses, his facial expressions and how he is pushing himself hard not to cry shows the attachment and loyalty to Lebanon. Therefore, throughout his narration, we see Ilya in vision all the time as he was visually expressive.

The emotional and tearful visuals are also captured with Danny, another Lebanese Jew who left for New Mexico. Danny is filmed as she receives books written by her father, Desiré, which the BBC found in Beirut and sent them to her. Inside, there was a letter addressed to her from her father. Danny's moment when she burst into tears after she received her father's books, was captured.

She reads out the letter in a wailing and soft voice:

(18)

Danny: (Desiré's words read by Danny in French) To my daughter Danny so she can read it when she grows up... I will be very content if you were able to read a page, or a sentence or even a word and whatever follows.... (Danny's words) This book was lost in Beirut and now it is back... but when? Now that he is gone!

Desiré's stance on the state of Israel is quite clear. He hails 1948, the year Israel was established by writing: Goodbye 1947, long live 1948. Whatever was the past of Desiré, this emotional moment of a daughter reuniting with her father through his books would draw the viewer's emotions. The documentary is visually rich with old pictures, letters, documents and belongings that they the interviewees have kept.

This does not just bring back memories but also pain and bitterness as the interviewees yearn to come back to Lebanon and the beautiful life they enjoyed. Like other people, the Jews had also parted from their past, one way or another. It is not only the Palestinians life that were shaped and defined by the Arab Israeli conflict in this documentary makes us draw an analogy and think that the Arab Jews faced a similar destiny when they had to leave.

(19)

Danny: We also had to leave Beirut. We went to Mount Lebanon and remained in Aley. I was pregnant. We left everything and fled..."

The word 'had to leave' means there was no choice. Had there been, they would have stayed as we can understand. The rhetoric is that they are part of the Lebanese fabric. Regardless of the reasons that made them leave whether it is unemployment like Alan's case, or social reasons like Marco's parents' case, they all had to leave as they had no choice.

7.4.4 Explanation

The number of Jews living in Lebanon until the mid-20th century was around 22,000. According to Schulze (2009), who was the first to write a book about the Jews of Lebanon, the Jewish community was active and engaged in public life: trade and business, media and politics. Today, the number of Jews in Lebanon is estimated between 200 and 300 (Albiyari; 2010). The civil war in Lebanon, first in 1958, and then in 1975, followed by the 1967 war and then the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, impacted the life of the Jews in Lebanon. Though Judaism is one of the recognised faiths in Lebanon (Blanford; 2012), those who stayed tend to keep a low profile because, as they say, some people do not distinguish between an Israeli and a Jew (Antelava; 2010).

In 1989, Lebanon formally came under Syrian patronage. The notion of the unity of path and destiny marked the relation between the two. This meant that Lebanon

would not sign a peace treaty with Israel separately from Syria.³⁶ Once Syria withdrew from Lebanon following Hariri's assassination, the Lebanese MP Sami Gemayel, of the Christian Phalange Party³⁷ said "the Lebanese are left to choose their own path and destiny. In previous years, it was the Syrians and not the Lebanese that chose the political course for us" (Paraipan; 2008: 1). What he meant by choosing the political course was in regard to Lebanon's relations with Israel.

The March 14 Alliance, of which Gemayel is a member, does not clearly state that it wants to negotiate a peace treaty with Israel (CNN; 2006:1), but given that the alliance has the full support of Washington and the European countries, commentators believe "it can be assumed that its pro-American stance would imply favouring negotiations" (El-Ezzi; 2012: 74). In his testimony at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in The Hague, the MP Marwan Hamade of the March 14 Alliance, said that "Syria had blocked Lebanon from engaging in peace talks with Israel" (Bob; 2014: 1).

Campaigning or calling for a peace deal with Israel remains very critical matter. It would be provocative to many Lebanese who regard negotiations with Israel as treachery. However, this documentary in a way 'legitimised' an interaction between the two sides. It presented talking to them as common sense since they are Lebanese. Through them we hear calls for peace, which also becomes 'common sense' since it is coming from them. Words like 'return' is no longer confined to the Palestinians who preserve the right of return to their land, but also Jews of Lebanon. The political ideology in the text and visuals therefore equates between the suffering of Jews and that of the Palestinians.

Abdelsamad also envisioned an 'ideal reader' of the text, one that resembles her own intertextual experiences. Abdelsamad told me that she wanted the audience to know what she knew about the Jews of Lebanon. "I put myself in their place because I lived in a country where this sect existed, but I didn't know anything about it. I grew up with the idea that a Jewish person is an Israeli" (Abdelsamad; 2015).

³⁶ Israel was so close to signing a peace agreement with Lebanon back on May 17th; 1983, but this was thwarted by the anti-Israeli camp that regarded it as an attempt to legalise the everlasting occupation of the Lebanese soil (Saba; 2000). Syria, which had some influence in Lebanon during the civil war, was against the agreement too, for fear the agreement would put Lebanon under the influence of Israel, thus cornering Syria (Dawisha; 1984:228). Syria had much political and military authority over the Lebanon, as well as facilitating the arming of the resistance in fighting the Israeli occupation

³⁷ The Phalange party (al-Kataib) was founded in 1936 by Pierre Gemayel as a right-wing party, predominantly Maronite, modelled on the European fascist groups of the mid-1930s. (Russell: 1985:18). The party established relations with Israel in an attempt to remove the PLO from Lebanon (Schiff; 1984).

The intertextual context which Abdeslamad used is the aspect of knowledge of the history of a long-forgotten sect, assuming that the presuppositions would reflect that intertextual context. However, the dominant discourse which gave a favourable image of Lebanese Jews who many of them are Israeli citizens left the reader/viewer resisting that discourse. An article that documented the mood during the screening of the documentary says that a viewer was overheard accusing Abdelsamad of being an Israeli agent. Another was saddened that the journalist sympathised with the Jews "given that they've killed our people and occupied our land" (Abu-Fadil; 2010: 7).

There is resistance to the discourse enacted by the text of the documentary. Abdelsamad tells me that one of the audience members approached her and expressed anger that she made her "feel that Jews can be loved" (Abdelsamad; 2015). The producer presupposes as common sense differentiating between Jews and Israelis in the minds of Lebanese, accepting loyal Jews, sympathising with them as people who speak the same language, knowing the areas, laughing to the same jokes, listen to same music. The ideal reader or viewer in mind would sympathize and eventually accept their return and eventually peace as 'common sense', rather than ideological view.

7.5 *Je Suis Gay*

This 36-minute documentary tackles the issue of gays and lesbians in the Arab world and the difficulties they face in a society that is bound by traditions, norms, and religion, making it intolerant of homosexuals. The documentary narrates the story of gays and lesbians from Egypt, a lesbian from the Gulf, two Palestinians from the West Bank, and a French national in Marrakesh, who found this place much more tolerant towards homosexuals than France.

7.5.1 Interpretation

Abdul Rahman Al-Shayal, the producer of the documentary, is the Business and Development Manager, Middle East and Asia, for BBC World Service. The documentary On which went on air on April 24th, 2010, was voiced by former BBC radio anchor Gamal Abdel-Latif. Al-Shayyal is Egyptian-born, and his father, Mohammad Fareed, is an academic and one of the Muslim Brotherhood's spokesmen in the UK (BBC Online; 2013). It is divided into four parts: Egypt, the Gulf, Marrakesh and Tel Aviv. Each part starts with a map and a word that reflects the case.

El-Imary (2015) says that the idea of this documentary was to talk about the political and social powers that define who you are and what you do, and not to defend homosexuality. She gives as an example: the group of Egyptian gays who “define themselves as the children of ministers, making them untouchable. So, they practice their personal freedom because of a social status which determines what you can do, regardless of what it is that you are doing” (El-Imary; 2015). She also cites another story, which is that of the Palestinian boy, Rami, who fled to Tel Aviv after he was accused of homosexuality in the West Bank. “We talked about the Palestinian young man as a political issue because when he fled to Tel Aviv he was treated as a Palestinian and not as any other thing.”

The whole theme of *Ma La Yuqal* documentaries was to talk about what is not said. “From the very beginning we began with the idea of taboos in the society which are, sex religion and politics... We were interested in personal freedom, so we focused on the first two: sex and religion” (El-Imary; 2015). The focus on personal freedom by El-Imary holds meanings of sympathy. In this analysis, I will look for patterns of sympathy and social injustice to identify whether the text is loaded with discourse of acceptance to homosexuality or that of injustice. In this analysis, I will look for patterns of sympathetic rhetoric towards homosexuals in the Arab world.

7.5.2 Textual Analysis: Discourse of Sympathy

The opening of the documentary starts by building the image of a very dividing and controversial issue: homosexuality and homosexuals’ ordeal in the Arab world.

(1)

Doctor: there is neither a biological nor a physical cause.

Sister of a lesbian: we don't talk about it we don't think about it

Preacher: what is wrong with you (Softly) what is wrong with you? (harshly)?

Sister of a lesbian: it is forbidden ever since teenage years.

Egypt Lesbian girl: you are a threat. A catastrophe

Boya: when a girl is bullied at home it leaves traces of violence in her

Egypt Lesbian girl: they are beaten, kidnapped, raped and killed.

Group of Egyptian gays: ... all we ask for is security (last word in English)

Doctor: you can't differentiate a man from a woman, certainly there is a big crisis inside that person

Title: Je Suis Gay

The quotations chosen refer to a conflict between the society of homosexuals and the rest of the society. The rest here is medicinal and religion which allows for an attitude of rejection towards them. The quotations of the doctor and the preacher refers to the abnormal behaviour while the quotations of the homosexuals are not confrontational, rather they refer to the ordeals they face in their society 'beaten; kidnapped; raped; killed; all we ask for is security', 'bully'. This sets the stage for an empathetic approach to the plight of homosexuals in the Arab world. The documentary is mostly narrations by the characters, which gives them a platform to talk about themselves, their thoughts and their experiences. So, the analysis will look into patterns of emphatic approach towards homosexuals. This will be done through analysing the sequences, their content and how they might be

The first part takes us to Cairo. Starting from the Queen boat story, a partying boat on the Nile we get a general idea of the conditions that gays endure in Egypt.

(2)

Voiceover: (caption- Summer 2001, Cairo) Here, where there is nothing left but an anchor, began the case that changed forever the lives of 25 people.

Lawyer: they came from the beautiful and tranquil city of Alexandria to practice vile in Cairo.

Voiceover: Nariman Queen or Queen Boat as it was known was one of the floating night clubs which are abundant in the Nile. The attendants that night were Egyptians and foreigners. Things happened (footage of men being dragged to court as they are covering their faces).

Voiceover: tens of Egyptian were sent to the national security court based on the emergency law. Some others were released in addition to all the foreigners.

(pictures of newspaper releases) The attack on Egypt... targeting Egypt. Big headlines accompanied unprecedented coverage.

(prisoners shouting ... there is no god but Allah)

Prisoner one: this is unfair. 50 families are torn now. What is happening is more than anyone can handle. Humiliation inside the prison outside and everywhere. Why all that?

Prisoner two: there is no god but all, and Mohamed is his messenger. They accused me of everything. They accused me of worshipping the devil, of collaborating with Israel, that I'm with Islamic groups.

This sequence gives a sense of the gravity of being homosexual in Egypt, 'changed forever the lives of 25 people', 'unprecedented coverage', 'humiliation', 'high security' cordon. We notice also the part about prisoners shouting, 'there is no god but all'. This expression is used by Muslims and it is a submission to god. The use of this clip would make a number of audiences think these are religious people and they are homosexuals, so there doesn't seem to be a contradiction, so why are they treated this way? This archival sequence sets the scene for how homosexuals are treated. This macro image leads us to a more personal and micro experiences of individuals in Egypt. BBC meets two homosexuals separately Safaa and Nouredine plus a group of homosexual friends who talk about family, the society's reaction and the authorities clamp on them. Below is an extract that shows the authorities' ways to clamp down on them

(3)

Voiceover: ...there is still some fear

Nouredin: After Queen boat, they had this spy thing. A person would chat with you and then you meet up and you find out he is from the police. So, you have to be careful online.

Safaa: Shortly after the Queen boat case small things began to happen. Things on the internet. Like one state security guy will come up on the chat page and he would disclose himself as gay. You start talking about common things and if you could meet up.

The BBC uses the word fear to introduce the viewer to how homosexuals live in Egypt. It is not only the scenarios they narrated, but the fact that the faces are blurred, the names are changed, and the words used, like 'spy', police, be careful, refers to an atmosphere of intimidation that they are subjected to. It is not only the police, but the society that also harasses them.

(4)

Voiceover: Nouredin took us to a group of his friends, all gays. They too use English words especially when talking about sex.

Gay One (group of gay friends- face blurred): I'm out to most of my friends and some of my family (In English). Of course, I cannot tell everyone in the family. Families seem to accept you having a gay friend but not to have their brother, their son, their daughter as gay. I feel that there is progress. Probably it is related to social classes because we are kind of upper middle class.

Voiceover: The social gap explains to them what happened at Queen boat

Gay Two: People who faced violence from the police or security forces were those who had no connection, no one to defend them or they were scared

Gay 1: Lately there was this gay character in a film... at the end of the film a thief kills the gay person. after he was killed people inside the cinema clapped. Why all this anger and hatred to gays? On the contrary, I think that most of the gays are ... (dim voice and the shot to the mosque plus music)

Safaa (outside on the street): (a man and a veiled woman looking at her). I got verbally abused, like wheel, watermelon, mounted, kids' lover.³⁸ Sometimes it is physical. Someone would push you, pull you, or throw a bottle at you. They do this because you are persona non grata. You are a threat, a catastrophe.

Gay Three: this issue in Egypt is very much related to the culture, norms and traditions. I don't see that we can ask for rights like in other countries, for example, marriage. All that we ask for is security nothing more (he repeats the word security in English).

This sequence is the last part in the section on homosexuality in Cairo. It is a long narration by interviews who talk about society's prejudices. Through this sequence, BBCA makes the case for homosexuals as we move from one experience to the other. Their tone was that of despair: cannot tell everyone in the family; why all this hatred to gays'; verbally abused; throw a bottle at you. The part on Cairo was ended with an emotional appeal from one of the interviewees 'all we ask for is security nothing more' The plea tone underpins a sense of injustice and fear. Even though they are privileged as they described themselves, yet they seem to live the same fear and worry that others do. The BBC is showing a human-interest story of people who are being bullied. The experiences are stories are presented to the audiences through the characters themselves. Though there is no bias in how the homosexual characters were conveyed

³⁸ In the Egyptian society these words have sexual connotations.

textually but this section depicts an atmosphere of the fear that homosexuals face in the Arab world and draws sympathy to their experiences.

The discourse of sympathy is also present in the next section about homosexuality in the Gulf. This part includes four main sequences, an interview with a journalist in Bahrain who explains about the term Boya, a word used in the Gulf to refer to lesbians, how it started and how spread it is, YouTube clips of pro-and anti-boya campaigns, interview with a doctor and a boya whose name and country are kept anonymous. The boya named Blu tells her story of how she became a boya.

(5)

Blu: she (grandmother) denied girls everything. The girl was like a carpet and the boy was like the moon. This made us hate being girls and, at the same time, hate men. Then I discovered the boya life and engaged with women. This eases my suffering. I went deeper and began sexual relationships with girls. We would become so close like a husband and wife. Some are interested in sexual relationships only others need caring, understanding and comforting.

Voiceover: on the internet boya sites are spreading; diaries, comments, and songs. A new society that began to express itself in reality. (Pictures of girls hugging each other)

Zahra:(Journalist): The number of people who come out have increased. They are no longer afraid. Now you see them in shops...

Voiceover: Gulf countries have begun campaigns in schools against boyas.

(6)

Blu: Lots of things which are forbidden for girls become a need. They wed the boya against her will or they put severe punishment on her like drop her out of school. They deprive her of everything.

Blu's words (5) refer to a life of discrimination and injustice: girl was like a carpet... boy was like the moon, refer to a life of discrimination and injustice. The word carpet, which is what one walks on, refers to girls being loathed and disdained because of men and the consequences for that treatment: hate being a girl, hate men. There is a sense of low self- esteem which is the result of this discrimination. This draws a sense of sympathy to Blu who pursued boya life which as she described: eases my suffering. Her choice of words makes the viewer justify her choices and find excuses for her.

BBCA's use of words: spreading, new society, express themselves refer to an increase trend of homosexuality. The clip that follows also gives that powerful presence of homosexuality in the gulf; come out, they are no longer afraid. This gives the viewer the sense that homosexuality is becoming normal as more people are joining, but also that homosexuality and homosexuals are still discriminated and refused form society. Despite this widening society of homosexuality, BBCA shows the bullying injustice that boyas face. Blu's other clip also shows a painful image of the life of boyas: forbidden, wed against her will, severe punishment. These words refer to experiences of unfairness and make the viewer refrain from passing judgements on her and girls in her situation.

(7)

Voiceover: In Dubai there is this centre for psychiatric therapy which is said to cure homosexuals.

Doctor: Women don't come a lot. They don't. They don't discuss these issues. However (mosque) in our societies there is a religious and cultural rejection for this idea. In history, we see that in America, psychiatrist diagnosis began to look at sexual abnormality³⁹ as normal because those who wrote the book some of them, or the majority of them were abnormal

Zahra: The cultural understanding about these people is that they are a source of moral degeneracy, they are the source of all problems happening in schools and societies as a whole.

(YouTube pictures with the caption: a gathering about the boya phenomenon)

Anti-gay woman on YouTube: This phenomenon is of unnatural sexual practices

Anti-gay man on YouTube: I tell those girls, god created you like this, a female. Are you willing to tell your god when you meet him: why did you create me wrongfully?

This sequence introduces a centre for curing from homosexuality. BBCA uses the term is said to cure. This term refers to uncertainty of what the centre does and questions whether homosexuality needs cure. It comes straight before the doctor's clip who is against homosexuality. The term used sexual abnormality quite used in the Arab

³⁹ Sexual abnormality or sexually abnormal is a term which is used in Arabic as well to refer to homosexuality or homosexuals as well.

world to refer to homosexuals points out to the atmosphere of rejection towards these people. The clips following that of the doctor all show how homosexuality is seen in the gulf: moral degeneracy, problems, unnatural sexual practices, god created you female. However, BBCA ends the next part with Blu who defends the case of homosexuals.

(8)

Doctor: My assessment is that there is a loss of identity. And homosexuality reflects that loss of identity.

Blue: I feel that this assessment is wrong. It is an instinct which is present since birth, to love your same sex. The doctor cannot change that because it was born with them.

Doctor: psychiatry says abnormality is normal. How? when it is referred to as abnormal which means what is unnatural.

(9)

Blue: no one has the right or power to say that about anyone, that you are sexually abnormal, or you are bad or pervert (sad music... pictures from Dubai at the sea.) because at the end this person will be punished or rewarded by god. Boyas are normal but they are outcasted, they are seen as useless or dead as they say. But no, these people have rights, responsibilities and duties towards society and people.

(girl standing at the beach). People who knew boyas knew well why they became like this. Boya is a human being at the end of the day. She has the rights of a normal human being. (girl walking along with the beach at sunset with soft music)

BBCA last sequence builds the case for homosexuals. Blu's clips are positioned in a way to reply and defend the practice. His description loss of identity is faced with a defensive position from Blu: wrong, it is instinct, doctors cannot change. These words which emphasises that homosexuality is something which exists with a person. In a comparison between what he says and what she says in the last two clips, the viewer can sense the agony of Blu and can sympathise with her in contrast with what the doctor says: abnormality is normal. How? Blu's last clip with which this section from gulf ends is like a statement for most girls of the gulf: no one has the right or power to say that, Boyas are normal, have rights, Boya is a human being. Blu's tone of voice, the music playing underneath, refer to aspirations of how she and other boyas want to be seen and treated. The last sentence, she (boya) has the rights of a normal human being

is something that people generally relate to when someone talks about rights and human beings

Homosexuality is still a rejected behaviour in the Arab world which looks at it as abnormal unlike the west which regards it as a life choice. Choosing to tackle the issue of homosexuality on BBCA which share the same British values means the documentary would be interested in tackling this issue, presenting the stories of homosexuals and their plights. BBCA presented the stories of homosexuals and their ordeals. It did not advocate for or against homosexuality, but the documentary is put together in a way that draws empathy to a group of people who are being persecuted for their sexual orientation.

BBCA then moves to Marrakesh in Morocco where the viewer is invited to see a more tolerant society. This part starts with a French homosexual who finds his haven in Marrakesh.

(10)

Francois: I came to Morocco in 2003. I fell in love with the country after a two-weeks holiday and I decided to live here. People here live differently than in Europe. Frankly the warm weather all year long is so pleasing.

Voiceover: the reasons that brought Francois here from his town in South France are the same reasons that contributed throughout the last decade to the transformation of Marrakesh into a haven for European homosexuals. The British and French fled to it in search for freedom that was not tolerated in their societies.

This part presents Marrakesh as a different Arab city; a city where a European leaves Europe and finds refuge here. In the voiceover, the terms fled to Marrakesh, freedom in Marrakesh, a haven are used to refer to the tolerance found here. We see a positive image of a city as old as Marrakesh embracing homosexuality since long time ago.

(11)

Francois: Marrakesh has always been the destination for actors and singers because they are less famous here and can live without being heckled by people (mosque). It enhanced as flight tickets became cheaper and affordable to everyone.

Voiceover (pictures of mosque): Marrakesh old houses as known 'Riad'⁴⁰ added to the feeling of pleasure. Francois, like tens of other Europeans, turned one of these into a small hotel which promotes itself as welcoming to homosexuals.

Francois: Yes, I welcome homosexuals and there are a number of riad and hotels that welcome them.

This part also emphasizes the positive atmosphere towards homosexuals. Marrakesh is portrayed as the destination, as welcoming to homosexuals, a place where one can promote for homosexuality. Francois's use of the word yes, is an affirmative answer that indicates an emphasis on that positive atmosphere. BBCA brings in a Moroccan national who also casts this image of a tolerant city

(12)

Voiceover: the unlimited and unrestrained freedom makes people like Mohamed Bou Kahlan boast about.

Mohamed: the homosexual in Morocco generally have the freedom that others don't have in the Arab world. We see homosexuals on streets. They stand out because of the way they talk, the clothes they wear as well as the makeup. It is so obvious, and no one attacks them.

BBCA uses the terms unlimited and unrestrained freedom, and the term boasts to refer to the level of tolerance that homosexuals enjoy. They don't just tolerate them, but they are proud of having them. The interview with the journalist who describes the life of homosexuals in Marrakesh also emphasize that atmosphere. Again, terms we have freedom which is not enjoyed in the rest of the Arab world, reveals that homosexuality does not contradict traditions or religion. Morocco is a Muslim country after all that is bound by tradition and religious laws yet there is acceptance and tolerance. He also said we see homosexuals on the street, which is a statement that they are there, they are known, they don't hide, and no one attacks them. This makes viewers compare between what other countries do to homosexuals and what Marrakesh does.

(13)

Voiceover: but in reality, the law puts restraints.

⁴⁰ Meaning the organised gardens

Mohamed: the legal text says that whoever announces his homosexuality is punishable by law.

Voiceover: however just take a walk to Mohamed V street at night to see young men waiting for the request of this tourist or that.

Francois: At one point, people point fingers at homosexuals as causing a bad reputation to Marrakesh. On the other hand, the homosexuals have a high purchase power more than others because their responsibilities are much less because they have no children. There is a French proverb that says: To live happy, live away from people's eyes. I think it works for Morocco.

This last part about homosexuality in Morocco gives another image. It gives an indication that homosexuality is still targeted. The terms restraints, punishable, bad reputation reflect as well that homosexuals face harassments. But BBKA chose to end this part with Francois who gives a positive image of Morocco for homosexuals. His sentence to live happy, live away from people's eyes. I think it works for Morocco. His proverb of happiness makes the case for Morocco and present it as a haven for homosexuals.

The last section talks about homosexuality in the Palestinian territories. The sequence starts with a graphics of a map that zooms in to Israel with the caption: enemy? The choice of word, enemy refers automatically to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, but the question mark cast doubts into that conflict and whether Israel is actually an enemy or not. The caption would automatically refer to the fact that homosexuals face difficulties in the Palestinian territories. The sequence is more about the place than the story of homosexuals, unlike the other sections where the characters formed the main story.

(14)

Voiceover: Tel Aviv... The heart of Israel... here Palestinians took refuge after fleeing Palestinian territories. A reversed equation which made our mission to find someone despairing. Everyone said no because these people live without a name, without an identity and without a face. After few days of searching we found Rami, that's what we named him. He gave us the first appointment but didn't show up. He gave us a second appointment for 4am.

Rami (speaking in a flat and toneless voice): once they caught us in the field. They made a scandal for both of us in the neighborhood. It was a day that I will never forget. All the neighborhood humiliated us. One beating, one shouting...

The usage of terms took refuge in Tel Aviv, and fleeing Palestinian territories shows that Tel Aviv is tolerant more than one's own land. BBC did not use the term left for Tel Aviv, rather 'refuge' which means being safe and sheltered from danger. There is an endangered life and that life was saved in Tel Aviv in the 'heart of Israel', which indicates the importance of this city in Israel. This sentence could change the notions of viewers who are quite sympathetic to homosexuals in the Arab World. It also gives an image of the Palestinian territories as rough and intolerant place even for its own people. Tel Aviv here is presented as a way out for someone in danger, and that Palestinians can find refuge and freedom in a city regarded as enemy.

In (14) BBC uses the word 'despairing' to express how hard it is to find someone as they are in hiding. They Live without a name, without identity without a face, a very emotional and metaphorical expression to convey how hard their life turned to be.

BBC now introduces Rami. The mentioning of the time of meeting, the change of name, the cancellations all indicate how much his life is in danger and the fear he lives with. The viewer is then emotionally drawn to sympathize with Rami even before he starts talking. As Rami talks there is no music overlaying his voice as his words and tone are more expressive and stronger. The viewer can listen to Rami's flat and toneless voice as he utters his words: It was a day that I will never forget; they humiliated us; beating; shouting. So whatever mistake Rami has made the viewer is drawn to sympathize with him.

(15)

Voiceover: this scandal happened when he was 12 years old. He lives in the West bank. He fled to Tel Aviv, but he came back when he missed his mother. He had a surprise waiting for him.

Rami: Police came and arrested me. I spent three years in prison for charges that I'm gay. Besides being accused of homosexuality, they accused me of selling myself to Israel that I worked with the Israelis. They did whatever they could accuse me of to get me death sentence. I was taken to (pause and deep sigh) prison. I spent three years. It was the

hardest three years of my life; to go to prison as a kid, to a jungle full of beasts, and you have to manage.

Here BBC uses his own word 'scandal' to express how severe the reaction of the neighbourhood was. But BBC uses it in a context to show the injustice inflicted on a child 'this scandal happened when he was 12 years old'. The other term which focuses on his innocence as a child, 'he missed his mother'. We follow Rami's journey and what happened to him. 'prison, death sentence, accused me, hardest three years, a jungle' all these terms used by Rami now set the stage for a comparison between what happened to him in the Palestinian territories among his family and community vis-à-vis the safety he found in Tel Aviv, the enemy.

(16)

Voiceover: from the prison in the West Bank to Tel Aviv once again as a 15-year old.

Voiceover: Rami had to sell his body to live... until he found this place

Shaul: This is Agouda... welcome. We have activities and service that we give to the community from legal services, to persuading people to vote against discrimination laws. And every Saturday this place becomes kind of a club for youth. We give few things to eat and drink. This is where all takes place.

Voiceover: Shaul runs the place

Shaul: In the last 12 years we handled around 600 to 700 hundred people, Palestinians from west Bank and Gaza strip. If we succeed to have permission for them to stay here for one month, its good. After one month maybe we'll get another month, maybe another 3 months... It's unbelievable situation. They cannot go back because their own family and the Palestinian authority are chasing them. They cannot stay here because the Israeli police will chase them too. The Israeli police would like to deport them back. The Palestinian authority, police, security forces as well as their own family, close family would want to hurt them sometimes even kill them just because they're gay.

The thematic structure of the sentence 'Rami had to sell his body... until he found this place' indicates the presence of a saviour. 'Had to'... indicates an act done against one's will. We know that Rami had to because his community rejected him. This community is then put opposite another tolerant place. The BBC does not move to

another story of another homosexual, rather we get to know in more details what this place offers and also the plight of being Palestinian in Tel Aviv and a gay in the Palestinian territories. This part emphasises the plight that these homosexuals go through not. The terms used in Shaul's clip indicate the injustice and fear that they face. Their own family, close family would want to hurt them', Palestinian authority is chasing them, Israeli police wants to deport them. Here we see institutions, communities all putting their efforts to sanction a homosexual. The terms hurt, chase, deport, indicates a life of everlasting fear and running away It does not only draw emotions towards them, but also anger towards a society that is intolerant.

(17)

Radwa, a Palestinian who left for Tel Aviv to practice her gay rights, calls on her society to accept her.

Voiceover: Tel Aviv attracted Radwa as well

Rawda: Tel Aviv was known as the place where you do what you want. That was my intention; to go to Tel Aviv and be far from Arab society, from people's gossip, but I found the opposite... Tel Aviv is a place that persecutes you for being a Palestinian -- an Arab... To all homosexuals who are listening to me in the West Bank and Gaza, I say the ultimate threat to them is the Israeli entity, not their state, because, first, Israel is not a place that one can escape to, and, second, no one runs to the place of the enemy.

Though Rawda labels Tel Aviv as being discriminatory to Arabs, yet she also calls on Arab society to accept gays.

(18)

I want to practice my identity; I want to be myself without hiding without living in Jewish Tel Aviv (sad music). I want to live in an Arab society with Arab friends.

The city as such is presented as place of refuge against the backdrop of another image of an Arab society that is abusive to people, repressive and merciless. So after listening to Rami's arduous experiences, the viewer is introduced to Aguda, a gay centre in Tel Aviv. Then the journalist talks about Aguda itself and the shooting attack in 2009.

(19)

Voiceover: August 2009, Aguda Centre is subject to an armed attack.

(BBC News-English): Witnesses described how a lone gunman shot indiscriminately into the crowd killing a 26-year old man and a 17-year old girl and wounding 11 others, before running away.

Shaul: (In English) The centre got hit. A bullet got through the microwave and went out from here to the wall. One of the other bullets got here. Then he started to shoot the other kids who were here. Few of them fell on the ground, few (some) of them (were) shot once few (some) of them (were) shot twice. The whole floor was full of blood (close shot), screaming (sigh). (music, footage of flowers being laid outside the centre). I'm in contact with a lot of Palestinians, and they told me they actually cried when they saw this on TV, because they say: hey, I know this place, it was a safe place for me too.

The part about Aguda centre shows that atmosphere of hostility towards homosexuals. The term *shot indiscriminately* refers to an attack that targets homosexuals in general. Shaul's detailed description: a bullet got through microwave, shoot the other kids, *shot once, shot twice, blood*, terms that means that people were shot because of their sexual orientation. Also, BBCA focus on what happened to Aguda the centre that provides help to Palestinians draws the viewer to believe that the shooter must be a Palestinian and feeds into the rhetoric of violence that ensues that part of the world⁴¹.

7.5.3 Visual Analysis

The viewer is presented with three images, an image that draws sympathy, an image of cultural and religious animosity to homosexuals, and images of a tolerant Muslim city. The discourse of sympathy is shown through different images. Most of the interviewees in the documentary had their faces covered, even some had their voices changed like Blue and Rami. These two characters depict the status of fear that many homosexuals live through just as the viewer sees the secrecy that they requested.

Rami to begin with, was filmed from behind a curtain that a viewer only sees a silhouette of a human being. He looks motionless as he barely moves. His voice, his

⁴¹ In 2013, the findings of the investigation referred to the attack as being personally motivated and said that the attacker was targeting a specific person (Skynewsarabia; 2013).

sighs, and the slow utterance of words gives a sense of a tired and exhausted person. This arouses empathy feelings towards him as he narrates his story of rejection, harassment and fear.

As Blu talks about lesbians in clip (9) we hear yearning for freedom and openness towards lesbians. As she talks, we see images of a girl wearing Abaya walking barefooted along the beach, sky, sea, beach, birds and kites flying. These images are in contrast to the image of Blu. Blu had her identity hidden, her voice changed and even her country undisclosed. All we can see of Blu is a silhouette of a human being talking monotonously. This not only confirms the sense of hiding and fear but also the restraint of personal freedom. Sad music accompanies Blu's clip and continues to play 15 seconds after she finishes talking. Along the music we see the picture of the girl on the beach. The music and the images stir feelings of sympathy towards Blu and makes the viewer feel more tolerant towards homosexuals. Similarly, images of beach, sea, two men playing tennis, talking, sitting at the beach were all seen as Rami describes how his life was shattered.

Rami: there are days when you have to work 18 to 20 hours and you have to maintain composure because you fear losing your work, you fear coming to a situation where you have no food for tomorrow. Where would I go? If I hadn't come here where would I have gone? (picture of two young men at the beach) I know two who were in the same situation and they decided to go back. They were executed. May they rest in peace. That is it, when you get to this point you cannot go back (young men playing tennis) there is no turning back. My dreams are simple, I want to live like any human being. I want to be free in my choice. That's it (two young men on beach chairs)

Here we see a young man who is confined to live in hiding to sell himself to survive in contrast to an image of young men free, healthy and openly being together. The focus in the pictures is of young men and a couples mainly. BBC in a way is showing that this Rami's choices are normal and that he is denied practicing his freedom to choose. Rami's last clip with which BBKA ended the documentary sheds light on the dim future that awaits him.

Rami: (Sad music) I'm a person waiting to die. This is not a life. I tried to commit suicide more than once. You get to a point where you cannot endure more than that (Music continues, a freeze on Rami's shot, the end).

Throughout this clip we see Rami behind the curtain. The viewer is not taken to images of beach or sky as previously. The image of Rami as he speaks of his wish for his life to end is meant to be stuck in the viewers mind to memorise even the silhouette and voice of a shattered man. That all was overlaid by sad music that played along. BBCA ended its documentary and paused on Rami's image behind the curtain as the credit came up. The viewer is invited to memorise that image which represents homosexuality status in the Arab world.

The second image presented is that of culture and religion and their animosity towards homosexuality. Pictures of mosques featured a lot, even when there is no mention of religion. A picture of a mosque appears as a group of face-blurred Egyptian gays are interviewed on the roof of a building. At the end of the sequence, a close shot of the mosque appears again as one of the interviewees talks about how people reacted in the cinema when a gay character in an Egyptian film was killed.

Gay one: ... People in the cinema started clapping. All this hatred against gays?! On the contrary, I believe that most of the gays... (The image of a mosque appears as the voice is dimmed and music takes over)

Other pictures that refer to Muslims appear as Safaa is filmed walking in the street.

My parents had a hard time with me because I could do one of two options. I could just go public and then there will be no contact (Safaa passes by a window display of Islamic clothes) or I could play their game in front of the society and that would be it... First off all I'm not alone. Second there are people like me in Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Yemen, Morocco and Algeria. (music with pictures of the Nile river at sunset).

BBCA wanted to say that religious boundaries are making the life of homosexuals hard. While Safaa talks about parents, society, game the close shot of pictures of veiled mannequins refer to that power which stands in their way.

The third image is that of the tolerant city. In the part of Marrakesh, the general footage that the viewer sees is of a typical Muslim country. Traditional clothing, architecture, veiled women, and mosques everywhere, but it is presented as tolerant, as a model city.

Voiceover: The reasons that made Francois come from his town in South France helped turn Marrakesh to a place for gays from Europe. The English and the French fled to it, searching for a freedom that was unacceptable in their societies.

The Islamic style of the city is present almost in every shot. The background scene where François is interviewed shows the minaret of a mosque. The cutaway in François's clip shows the mosque, as he talks about the tolerance of the city.

François: (wide shot of Marrakesh where three mosques are evident) Marrakesh has always been a place for celebrities, because here they are not known and can live normally. (Close shot of a mosque, then a shot of Francois with the minaret behind him) Then things developed as tickets became cheaper and travelling has become affordable to everyone

The part about Marrakesh is just 4 minutes. The number of times that the mosque appeared is 16 times, including the mosque behind François. So does religion contradict homosexuality? How far are these hotels positioned from the mosques, and yet all live in harmony? There is an emphasis on the Islamic identity of the city and yet embraces homosexuals.

7.5.4 Explanation

Though the Lebanese law does not state openly that homosexual orientation is illegal, Article 534 of the penal code reads: "Any unnatural sexual intercourse is punishable by imprisonment between a month and a year, and a fine between 200,000 to one million Lebanese pounds" (Assafir; 2010:1). Arrests or trials under Article 534 have been rarely made (Torbey; 2005). Yet the presence of this article remains a threat to them, because it gives power to the police to make arrests. In 2013, the Lebanese

mayor of Dekwaneh defended ordering “Lebanese security forces to raid and shut down a gay-friendly nightclub in the Beirut suburb town” (Marwan; 2013:1).

Lebanon casts two contrasting image when it comes to gay rights in Lebanon. Gays have their clubs, their centres and organisations, some are even open about their homosexuality. The LGBT community have organisations like Helm, an Arabic word for dream, which was founded in 2004 for the purpose of leading a “peaceful struggle for the liberation of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and the Transgendered (LGBT)...”⁴² . Other organisations like Proud Lebanon, LebMASH, Mosaic Mena and ABAAD all offer support on all sorts of levels for the LGBT community. In 2013, the Lebanese Psychiatric Society issued a statement that “homosexuality is not an illness and does not need treatment” (The Economist; 2013:1). In 2019, Lebanon's Daily Star reporter that a top military prosecutor chose not to prosecute four soldiers dismissed from their posts in a "sodomy" case. He ruled that homosexuality is not a crime and that the article of the Lebanese penal code failed to determine what sexual acts are "against nature" (PBS; 2019).

Yet the contrasting reality is that homosexuals in Lebanon cannot be open about their sexual orientation in public because they would be repudiated. In 2018, Lebanon’s Gay Pride was cancelled and later that year there were attempts to close down the annual *NEDWA* conference of the Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality (HRW; 2019). It is not just the official attempts to crackdown on LGBT. They are at times subject to attacks from people. Several years ago, it was reported that four men in Beirut beat up a man whom they decided looked as if he were gay (Irin; 2005). Merabet (2004; 30&31) argues that even those who are gays tend to disavow other gays “in order to protect and reinforce the phallic image of the potent male.”

Despite this atmosphere, Lebanon is still regarded as a gay-friendly place for gay people (Arestis; 2019). But as the law, though vaguely, still interpret homosexuality as punishable, and because of the religious and cultural composition of the country, homosexuality is not openly accepted even though the LGBT are becoming more inclined to go public. The issue of homosexuality is not accepted and taken lightly in Lebanon and other Arab countries. However, BBCA looks at the issue from a British perspective which regards homosexuality as a universal issue.

⁴² <http://helem.net/ar/node/9>

There are universal issues; issues that exist anywhere in the world, whether it is in Africa, whether it is here, whether it is in the Arab world, and I think it would be doing our audiences a disservice if we were to say: ah, because of cultural sensitivities we are going to talk about these things here, but we are not going to talk about them in the Middle East. Public interest is the same” (Landor; 2015).

Homosexuality is regarded as part and parcel of one’s personal freedom in the West but in more religious communities, homosexuality is not acceptable and for BBCA to describe it as a universal issue is an imposition of an ideology which is considered as controversial.

7.6 Buried Secrets

This BBC Arabic produced documentary tackles the cases of three Arab women, Nada and Mona from Lebanon, and the Moroccan French Sonia, who lost their virginity before marriage and felt they had to undergo hymen repair to save themselves from death or shame. The 29-minute documentary went on air on April 10th, 2010. Former BBC journalist Najlaa Aboumerhi interviewed the three, who kept their experience a secret. Aboumerhi also speaks to two doctors, two clergymen, a lawyer and some ordinary people.

7.6.1 Interpretation

Aboumerhi joined the BBCATV Service in 2007 as preparations to launch were underway. She moved from Lebanon’s Future TV, which was owned by the late Rafik Hariri, until his assassination in 2005, now owned by his son, Saad. Aboumerhi proposed the idea of pre-marital relationships as part of *Ma La Yuqal* series. Her interest was to show that relating pre-marital sex with dishonour are not a religious text, but more related to traditions. “We had a cleric who said that during the era of the Prophet there was no condition for a girl to be a virgin and even if she turned out not to be, this should not dishonour her” (Aboumerhi; 2015). During the production process, Aboumerhi practiced self-censorship. “When we talk about sex and religion, we are very cautious of the issues that might be of sensitive nature. So, we practice censorship by

not using sensitive terms...” (Aboumerhi; 2015). However, she did not compromise on the story itself. Aboumerhi told me the aim was to “...ask questions that are not asked elsewhere and to shed light on taboos” (Aboumerhi; 2015). The interviewees suggest that any issue, even if it’s a taboo issue, can be tackled, as long as it is not done in a sensational form (Aboumerhi; 2015). In the textual analysis, I will be looking for patterns of oppositional discourse to Arab traditions.

7.6.2 Subject positions: Tradition

The opening sequence starts with giving a negative image of the Arab society.

(1)

Mouna (interviewee): Our society does not show tolerance to a non-virgin girl who wants to get married. If you tell the man who wants to marry you that you had this experience, he will always bring up that issue even if you had a family together.

Nada: I was afraid of my parents. I was afraid that they know and because they are against it. I thought I’m facing death. They might slaughter me.

Sonia: I thought of suicide right after my first relationship. I couldn’t find any other solution then.

Title: Buried Secrets

The documentary starts with building up an image of fear, secrecy, and pain that women of such experiences go through. The terms that the women use refer to an atmosphere of intimidation do not show tolerance, afraid, facing death, slaughter me, suicide, no solution. We get to know also who is inflicting these intimidations on them: parents, family, man. The documentary therefore is drawing upon the discourse of inequality between men and women in terms of sexual relationships. Be it parents, family or society we can see the negative image weaved around those authoritative institutions which impose their control over girls. The negative image of the patriarchal society is portrayed evidently in the sequence below.

(2)

Aboumerhi: Hymen repair operation to restore virginity before marriage is not a secret anymore. The stories of Arab girls who have done this operation remain Buried

Secrets. Why do they do it, how do they live before and after the experience? All these questions made me search for some of them to hear their stories.

The questions posed by the producer is clearly meant to lead the viewer to make the link between doing the operation secretly and the traditions they live with. The clips used following Aboumerhi's comment make this connection clear.

(3)

Sonia: like most of Moroccans, my family wanted me to receive an oriental upbringing. So, I spent years in my home country. Then I came to live here. At the time I didn't think of having sex before marriage, but the person I was with kept saying that I had issues and was not normal. Later, with time I agreed.

In Sonia's clip we can clearly detect that link between the upbringing and the consequences. She used the term oriental upbringing as opposed to the western upbringing to refer to a culture of tradition and conservatism. We can also sympathise with her as she said I didn't think of having sex before marriage, but... We can clearly see how she did not intend to break the traditions and that something beyond her powers led her to that. We can see the same rhetoric by the other girls.

(4)

Nada: I was 16 years old and I made a mistake. I was living in the village and village girls know nothing. My parents did not allow me to go out, see men or think of men. I was so scared that if they knew they would kill me...They would say: why did you do that? didn't you know better? I didn't know what sexual intercourse is until it happened.

The clip draws a discourse of innocence of girls vis-à-vis the men whom they had a relationship with. I was living in the village and village girls know nothing; I didn't know what sexual intercourse was until it happened. Sonia's and Nada's clips suggest that girls have been drawn to relationships by man who attributes labels of 'honesty' and 'decency' to virgin girls and who also imposes rules of punishment. This also suggests a discourse of linking between Arab culture and culture of intimidation: kill me, scared.

(5)

Aboumerhi: Generation after generation, different places, it is the same story that happens across time. Here in France, and in other European countries, girls of Arab origin are still bound by the same traditions that besiege other girls in the Arab countries. Most of the families of Arab origin here in France still adhere to their traditions at different scale depending on the level of their engagement in the French society, and this mainly what makes Arab girls face a clash of two cultures.

Sonia: I had the first relation around ten years ago. I was 15 years old. The relationship ended but then I met other boys. I tried to be honest with them, but it didn't do any good. I had 10 years to think. I had three options either suicide which I tried at first, or to take responsibility and in this case my family will suffer, or to do the operation. Today I think the operation is the best solution. The one that suits me most.

In Aboumerhi's part we notice an expressive value in the use of words: bound; besiege clash. The negativities embedded in these words assume that Arab tradition are bounding, encircling and clamping. These vocabularies refer to being forced to behave or act in a certain way, so we can detect from the use of the terms the 'oppositional' position of the producer, a dominant discourse present in the documentary.

Aboumerhi's parts are always followed by the girls' clips explaining their ordeal, the fear and what they have gone through which have a relational value. The textual structure refers to having to do the operation for the society and family more than themselves: I tried to be honest; My family will suffer; the operation is the best solution. We can see the link between being honest and suffering or being honest and facing death as in Nada's clip. The discourse in the documentary ideologically contests norms and traditions as man-made. The producer gives two contrasting images

(6)

Aboumerhi: Hymen is the evidence that a girl has not known a man before her husband who usually wants to be the first man in her life and not to be compared by anyone else.

Nour (a male interviewee): the society now finds it normal for a woman to marry a man who had previous experiences, but for a man to do the same, that would be impossible.

Aboumerhi: Nour says he is with equality between men and women. But his conviction does not hold when things become personal.

Nour: I refuse to marry her definitely. Even if society acknowledges equality, I refuse to marry her.

The vocabulary structure ascertains a behaviour of superiority by men; Usually want to be/ not to be. This term which refers to having a desire to possess or do something shows decisiveness. There is coherence in ascertaining this superiority: I refuse; impossible (for men to accept women with previous relationships). The tone in which he said impossible refers to an outright rejection.

The assumption that men do not want to be compared by anyone else constructs a chauvinistic image of men who refuse women's previous relationships not for 'honour' and 'decency' but for their own sexual image. In the thematic structure of that part Aboumerhi deconstructs the solid basis of traditions because they are tailored to men's needs. Notice in the coming clip, Aboumerhi's terms that solidify the 'oppositional' approach to traditions

(7)

Aboumerhi: In the famous Hamidiye market in Syria, known for selling sexy lingerie, the industry of sex toys is increasing, though not openly, because of the high demand (clips and music of different sex toys and lingerie)

Here there is an attempt to raise questions about the validity and the durability of these traditions. First this market, which was built during the Ottoman rule, is very popular in Damascus, one of the oldest capitals. It quite reflects the old Damascene culture and traditions. It is visited by families, by young and old. In there one can find everything, from food, clothes, antiques, to kitchenware and house accessories. Aboumerhi framed the market as 'known for selling sex toys' as if this is the only thing that is famous for, or that these can be found only in this market. Aboumerhi's description frames a society as being obsessed with sex. In the text she refers to the industry of sex toys as spreading though not openly. The word though here refers to a two contrasting images. Spreading though not openly. The discourse embedded here shows a society of double standards, one that applies rules on women under the name

of traditions and norms but acknowledge their sexual needs. The clips following Aboumerhi's comment ascertain that image of inequality between men and women which both genders seem to accept it.

(8)

Ammar: I think that women have tolerance more than men. There are lots of women who reached the age of 60 or 70 and they are not married, and they remained virgins.

Mona: Girls are different from boys. A girl can find things to take her mind off of it like having a job, coming home, cooking. She would forget about it. But men are different.

We can see here the relational value in text that makes this discourse of inequality obvious. Women have tolerance more than men. More here ascertains the inequality in society and justifies the traditions that expect women to refrain from sexual activity before marriage and shame them if they did. Even Mona a female accepts the inequality in terms of sexual approach. Girls are different from boys. This also assumes that girls accept the traditions that they should refrain from sexual activity before marriage. The sequence below highlights the oppositional discourse to traditions.

(9)

Aboumerhi: The doctors I spoke to told me that the girls who do the operation are from different religions but from countries that share same traditions.

(10)

Muslim cleric: We should keep in mind that what people do by sitting outside waiting for the red tissue is all related to traditions and not the sharia. Sharia law is based on privacy and if a person is aware that his wife had made a sin, he is obliged by the sharia law to hide it. He can stay with her on good terms or leave her on good terms,

(11)

Christian priest: The church does not agree to what she has done but the church does not tell her that you are no longer accepted in your society, that you can no longer get married that you cannot have a family that you cannot fall in love, the church never said that. She has to come and confess and not to hide it from her partner.

Aboumerhi uses a comparative value to make her oppositional approach as common sense. She puts the two defining factors opposite each other. Religion which is a reference point in the lives of the Arab people as it represents their identity and tradition which is the inherited and passed on culture. Aboumerhi brought in the views of the Muslim and Christian figures to outweigh the power of traditions.

We can notice the words that the Muslim and the Christian figures use connects with the 'oppositional' ideology presented in the documentary. The Muslim used a powerful word: Sharia which is the Islamic law that governs Muslims in their daily lives. He uses Sharia word three times: To differentiate it from tradition, to indicate privacy and to hide a sin. The discursive meaning in the sentence related to traditions and not the Sharia clearly invalidates tradition rule as the two words are mentions: Tradition and Sharia. This discourse of opposition to traditions is also evident in the two terms, privacy and hide, which are obligatory by Sharia and opposite to the traditions approach of shaming and punishing.

We also notice the declarative value in the lexical structure of the Christian figure words. The first word in his clip is the church. Starting with the noun, that is an active sentence, holds an affirmative value. The church does not agree... the church does no say. The power that the church represents in the lives of Christians of the Middle East gives the words an imperative value vis-à-vis the norms and practices of traditions.

(12)

Aboumerhi: Sonia Mona and Nada succeeded in protecting themselves from the society's judgement. But after knowing them and listening to their stories I detected that they have a feeling of bitterness in their hearts.

In this comment from Aboumerhi she uses the word society's judgement. Putting these two words together assumes an act of injustice. The last past makes a coherent link with the first. The use of the word bitterness confirms the injustice inflicted on these girls. This sets the stage for the following clips.

(13)

Nada: For me all men are the same. I do not trust men. They are all the same all liars. I want to teach my daughter not to make this mistake. I want to tell her that this is wrong. If someone proposes to her at the age of 12, I will get her married.

(14)

Mona: the man I would marry and who would be the father of my children... I wouldn't think about him emotionally or with love. I would just think about him logically. For him to be responsible for the family... The society is unjust in everything.

(15)

Sonia: I learned to hide my feelings quite early. I kept everything to myself. I had to joke with them and laugh in front of them. But the reality is I was in a bad shape. If I had a daughter, I will tell her everything. I will advise her. I will not let her make the same mistakes I did. It is unfortunate to say this, but we have to comply to the rules of society, so my daughter has to stay virgin.

Clip (13) which comes directly after Aboumerhi's comment creates a relational value that links between the society's harsh judgement on women and feeling of bitterness to men. *I do not trust men... all liars.* Society and traditions here are portrayed as men: *the man I would marry... I wouldn't think about him emotionally.* Man, here is society and is blamed for the consequences and the pain she is facing.

Notice the obvious link in the last sentence when she talks about the society. *Society is unjust...* The society is unjust because men do not accept a girl who lost her virginity. Also, in Sonia's clip, the words used reflect the unjust power of the society. It is unfortunate to say this, but we have to comply to the rules of society. The word but here links two states of thought. The word unfortunate in the first part of the sentence refers to something which is detrimental, disadvantageous, pitiful. But which comes in the middle prepares the viewer to the worst. But here means that the detrimental issue has prevailed.

The second part of the sentence says it clearly: we have to comply with the rules of society. Comply is to act in accordance with a wish or command. It is to follow and consent. Her last words: my daughter has to stay virgin. Has to also holds meaning of

compliance. It is not a choice but an obligation. The viewer here can assume that many girls who stay virgin do it for fear and not conviction that this is the right thing.

In this documentary, the viewer is invited to sympathise and revoke the traditions that is victimising them. The lexical structure and the distribution of clips participants clearly indicate the gender inequality that puts women under scrutiny by men who themselves cannot but have sexual relationship.

7.6.3 Visual Analysis

The three women filmed have their faces and body as silhouettes to hide their identity. The rooms they are filmed in are darkened as well. The choice of having their identities hidden adds depth and sincerity to their experiences. It also gives depth to their feelings of insecurity, danger or shame that the women are subjected to. The darkened atmosphere around them reflects the secrecy they have managed to live with for over 10 years. These two images enforce sense of fear and intimidation that traditions inflict on them. The three women are also filmed opposite very dim light. Nada is filmed in a balcony but with curtains shut. Mona is filmed just at the door to a balcony with dim light coming through. Sonia is filmed standing by the window with blinds slats open entering very dim light.

The visual depth of the three locations gives an atmosphere of confinement, and restraint that the society imposed on them through imposing the rules of traditions. What we see from the location where Sonia is standing is just a very close building which adds to the feeling of a dead end. Though we don't see their faces, their expressions, yet the fact that they decided to keep their identities covered, that the location is hidden in a way so that no one recognises who they are, enforces an oppositional approach to a society that is so judgemental that it forces them to live in hiding.

While we see Sonia filmed in the same location throughout the interview. Nada is filmed sitting in front of the coastline alone facing the sea. She is not being interviewed. She is just filmed on her own sitting and looking afar. This staged shot is overlaid on her clip (11).

The thematic structure of sentences in Aboumerhi clearly points to traditions as the reason for shaming these girls. Yet the pictures used imply a link between religion and traditions. Shots that focus on veiled women appear 17 times throughout the

documentary, but only two of these shots are consistent with the script. One example is when the Islamic cleric talks about religion's point of view on the operation; here, the picture of a veiled woman is justifiable. However, in many parts of the documentary where the interviewees are not talking about Islam, pictures of veiled women are inserted.

Mona: (...) It's only a 15-minute operation (a wide shot of two veiled girls in a café and two other unveiled girls on a different table) but I felt like any normal girl (close shot of the veiled girls). I have done it for my parents for my religion.

The second shot on her clip refers to her religion, but do we know if Mona is Muslim or not? Mona's face is covered during the filming, but as she is filmed from behind, she appears to be unveiled. But the visuals along with the participants words clearly tells us about her religion and her environment. In another sequence, Aboumerhi interviews a Lebanese man, who advocates sex before marriage. Here we see shots of unveiled girls.

Aboumerhi: Kamil does not think that his parents will object his marriage to (shot of a couple) a non-virgin girl. Rather, they will urge him if he is the one who caused this.

When Aboumerhi explains about Kamil's liberal ideas, we see a shot of a group of young boys and girls, and then a close shot of a couple. However, when Aboumerhi talks about having to marry a girl who has lost her virginity with him, we see a shot of a couple where the girl is veiled. The viewer here is left to assume that all religious societies practice discrimination of sexual freedom.

In another sequence, where the Arab society is presented as schizophrenic and obsessed with sex, this experiential value is reinforced by the images of sexual elements. Around 20 seconds of pictures of lingerie, baby dolls and sex toys, which are displayed openly in a popular market are used to show a society that encourages men to seek pleasures, but harshly judges' women if they do the same. This experiential value is reinforced by a relational value as one of the participants confirms the producer's content belief.

Nour: Frankly, Arab men today cannot bear what they are seeing. Look at girls' clothing, tight jeans and shirt (shot of a baby doll). What we are seeing now in the streets is new to us. We did not see it before, but as we started growing up, we started seeing these bodies and this is gruesome. I think it can make the life of any man disgusting.

Shots of baby doll are also used while Nour blames women for men's sexual drive. The affirmative value in his words Arab men cannot bear and the imperative value Look at girls' clothing feeds into the discourse of a double standard society, the debilitating traditions, and the gender inequality in the Arab world.

7.6.4 Explanation

The producer given that she is Lebanese chose to have most of her participants from Lebanon. In comparison to Arab countries, Lebanon is said to be the most liberated and modern country of all. Yet Lebanese society is, to some extent, conservative. The sex education curriculum in Lebanon was withdrawn from schools in 1995 after coming under criticism from religious sides, who slammed it as encouraging sex (Alabaster; 2011), but several voices in Lebanon have called for sexual freedom. The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR) launched "One Day One Struggle", which aims to highlight the struggle against the violation of sexual and bodily rights in Muslim societies.

Sex before marriage is unacceptable in Arab countries, which are dominantly Muslims, for two reasons: it is rendered as being adultery from a religious point of view, and it is shameful from a family point of view. From a religious point of view, both male and female are accountable if they have committed adultery as stated in the Qu'ran.

Al-zaniya (female adulterer), wal zani (and male adulterer), whip each of them 100 times.⁴³

Similarly, Christian teaching regards sex as something that should happen within a marriage, otherwise it is wrong.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body (1 Corinthians 6:18-19).⁴⁴

⁴³ Sourat Alnour, Verse: Two

The religious viewpoint is not about honour, but about an immoral act committed by two people without undergoing a religious bond. Yet the cultural point of view is different. If two people have sex before marriage, usually the female bears the brunt of this act, and this is because of the Arab notion 'Honour.' The honour (sharaf) of a man is

... attained through family reputation, hospitality, generosity, chivalry, and to some degree, socioeconomic status or political power. While that of a woman (honor=ardh) is chastity and sexual virtue (Ilkcaracan; 2008:19).

Wynn (2005: 90) explains that, unlike women, a man does not dishonour the name of the family if he is known to have had sex before marriage. However, a girl is regarded as having disgraced the name of the family, and the only way to wash it away is by killing her. Such killing is widely known as an 'honour crime'. Human Rights Watch (2011) says that honour crime reports are relatively low in Lebanon. Only 66 honour crimes are cited between the years 1999 and 2007 (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013). On August 4th, 2011, the Lebanese Parliament⁴⁵ annulled Article 562 of the criminal code that allows for a mitigated sentence on those who kill a relative for "honour" reasons.

What is noticeable is Aboumerhi's focus on traditions rather than religion to appeal to viewers. When the producer decided to include a religious view in the documentary, the focus was to have them comment on the practices of these traditions rather than their views on sexual relationships before marriage. In other words, it might be easier to attack traditions in a conservative country rather than attack religious norms that does not accept a sexual relationship without marriage.

While the documentary does not directly call for sexual freedom, but the discourse of inequality in terms of sexual freedom, double standards and men's obsession with sex invalidates those traditions. Aboumerhi said her ideal viewer was the "young, mainly those who are 18 or 19 and think of sex and their right to personal freedom, but also think of the boundaries imposed by society. Also, I think of the parents who think how they are going to grant their children freedom and how their children will protect themselves from the society and the ideas out there" (Aboumerhi;

⁴⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/rs/relationships/chloveandsexrev1.shtml>

⁴⁵ <http://alliedlegals.com/assets/files/69.pdf>

2015). She said that the reaction to the documentary from audiences was that “a girl has to have freedom and should not undergo such surgery, and others agreed to such a surgery only to save girls’ lives” Aboumerhi (2015). BBCA tackling of sexual freedom is not just about doing proper journalism, but it stems from the values of the country they broadcast from which regards sexual relationships as an issue of personal freedom or what El-Imary called ‘universal values’ (El-Imary; 2015).

The BBCA focus on issues of sexual freedom, sex before marriage and sexuality is gaining pace throughout the years of broadcast. The 3-year old women’s page on the BBC Arabic online page shows lots of interest in stories that cover women, sex and

7.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have used critical discourse analysis method to understand if BBCATV identity as a British organisation and its relationship with the British establishment influences its coverages. Through analysing documentaries, I was able to understand if there is a discourse of ideology enacted by BBCA. This was done through engaging with Fairclough’s three-dimensional analysis process. I also combined the elite interviewing method with CDA. The use of this method was important to understand the discursive practice of the communicative event. I have also put the analysis of each documentary into the wider context socially and politically.

The analysis showed that the BBC choice of topics, sex, religion and politics are related to doing good journalism as the topics were. But it also showed that the choice of the topics are part and parcel of British foreign policies and values. The analysis of the documentary *Africa... the Upcoming Battle* was focused on patterns of shows a dominance of that related to foreign policies.

The analysis of the documentary, *Jews of Lebanon... Loyalty to Whom?* focused on patterns of identity and belonging. The findings from the analysis showed that the documentary’s time of broadcast was politically loaded as it coincided with the Nakba week. Also, the documentary’s theme equated between the plight of Palestinians and Arab Jews. The other two documentaries stem from a social perspective which reflects Britain’s values and ideologies. In the analysis of *Je Suis Gay*, findings have shown that there is a discourse of sympathy that the viewer is drawn to. BBCA presents personal experiences in an emotional way which reflect the unjust status of homosexuality in the Arab world from North Africa to Palestine and the Gulf. The documentary *Buried Secrets*

showed that there are oppositional patterns towards traditions which were quite obvious in the reporters' comments. Pre-marital sex and homosexuality are part of personal freedom in UK and BBCA are presenting them as "issues that matter in the Arab world and to the Arab world (Landor, 2015). This discourse feeds into an imperialist culture of 'we' know what 'they' want and refers to a relationship that still looks into the audience as one that still needs BBCA, and that accepts whatever it is given.

I clarified at the beginning of this chapter that some of content can be easily detected as ideologically loaded visually or textually. However, I also made it clear that some of the analysis is subject to the analyst's background, culture, experiences and readings. This could play both ways. For example, as a Lebanese myself who experienced Israeli occupation, my readings of a discourse that relates to Israel could be subjective and personal, but yet it could be richer as I would be attentive to the common-sense ideology which other analysts might miss. While my reading to the discourse of other topics like, homosexuality as an example, might be less subjective. Some of the meaning extracted from the BBC material could mean different things to others, or it could hold no meaning at all.

During the process of analysis, I have also found out that other discourses could be extracted from the text. For example, in *Buried Secrets*, I was mostly interested in finding the oppositional discourse which would inform my research of a relationship between BBC and British values of personal freedom. Other discourses like discourse of sympathy and tolerance to pre-marital relationships could be detected in the text. As this research is interested in looking for patterns that would relate between BBC and its British values,

I have attempted, in this chapter, to see how BBCA sees and talks to audiences through analysing meaning in the text. The textual analysis as well as the interviews conducted with the producers of the documentaries, and managers were used in the interpretation to explanation stages to gauge elements of power and ideology. Through this analysis, I explored that BBCA construct an ideal viewer who needs and prefers what the BBCA offers. This discourse of 'our knowledge [of] what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves" (Said; 2003) stems from an imperialist approach to audiences.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This research has attempted to understand the relationship between BBC Arabic TV and the Lebanese audiences. To achieve this, this research investigated the perceptions of Lebanese audiences of BBCATV, and how they think it sees them. Their views were gathered after each group watched a documentary produced by BBCATV. This was complemented by the analysis of the power relations between BBC and the audience through analysing BBKA discourse. I used critical discourse analysis method to analyse the same documentaries in terms of production process, choice of topic, the timing of their broadcast, content, the production, and the team. The aim was to know how the BBC speaks to its audience and whether there is a discourse of power and ideology. This method allows also to explore how BBC thinks of its audiences through analysing the discourse in language use.

Studying the BBC as an organisation, the staff, the legacy and the history, all give an insight into the discourse of an organisation, and if and how it interacts with its audiences. This research also relied on documents in the public domain, interviews with staff and participant observation which were used across the chapters. The study also explored the political economy of BBKA and also the complexities of Arab audiences.

8.2 The Lebanese Audience(s)

Lebanon, as I explained earlier, is made up of both diverse and plural societies. The discussions among participants in the focus group have therefore shown that audiences in Lebanon understand BBKA's message differently depending on their backgrounds. This was mainly evident when the participants discussed social issues.

To ensure a representative sample of Lebanese society, which is divided both socially and politically, I gathered Sunni, Shia, Druze and Christian participants. The participants were young and educated, the categories in which BBC Arabic is most interested. The discussions and the answers of the participants were divided into

themes: Media as mentor, cultural differences and detachment, stereotypical image of Arabs, and pro-Israeli coverage. The focus group method aligns itself with Hall's encoding decoding model which gives prominence and power to audiences in how they decode a communicative event, either accepting it, rejecting it or negotiating it. By applying this method, I explore how audiences perceive BBCA, what they expect from it, how they think it sees them and whether they feel it speaks to them.

8.2.1 Lebanese Audiences and their Understanding of the role of the Media

What was noticeable in the complete focus group data was the participants' own understanding of the role of the media. For them should raise awareness of a problem or a fault in society and present solutions to it. For example, the groups that watched *Buried Secrets*, the majority of the participants believed that BBCA was making girls aware of the repercussions of a pre-marital relationship, and they felt it resonated with them. Some other participants praised BBCA for 'giving a solution' to the girls who found themselves in such a situation by talking about the hymen repair operation. Even if groups had different interpretations of what BBCA awareness message was, as the Sunni and Druze group believed it was warning girls not to having pre-marital sex, while the Christian group believed it raised awareness that there is a solution, both believed that BBC was acting as a mentor.

For the documentary *Je Suis Gay*, some criticised the BBC for just showing 'a problem' without offering 'a solution'. The audiences' concept of media as mentor or has a mission towards society is also seen in the documentary *Je Suis Gay* as some participants criticised BBCA for just showing 'a problem' without offering 'a solution'. This made them feel confused as to what BBCA wanted to say and the point from this documentary if it was just telling a story. This theme showed that audiences believe that media should act in the 'public interest', however, their understanding of the application of public interest is quite different from BBC guidelines. In the section on 'serving the public interest' in the editorial guidelines, it is about reporting stories "of significance to our audiences"⁴⁶. But as results in the coming sections show BBCA perception of what is in the 'public interest' does not necessarily bare the same meaning for audiences. Many criticised BBCA for choosing to tackle sensitive topics and questioned the reasons behind this. This impacts on the level of engagement between the two sides.

⁴⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/bbc-editorial-values/editorial-values>. P. 9, 1.2.6 in BBC Editorial Guidelines

This theme also showed that while audiences agreed that media has a responsibility towards society, they differed on how media could best perform its role. The cultural background experiences and understanding of communicative events influences their decoding of the message. This highlights a problem for BBCA which talks about an Arab audience as one homogenous lump and address that audience based on what it thinks the audience needs to know. Findings show that while there are multiple audiences, BBCA talks to one audience, the preferred or ideal audience, and passes on content

8.2.2 Cultural Difference and Detachment

In the BBC's coverage of social issues, like hymen repair and homosexuality, both Christians and Muslims criticised BBCA, but on different grounds. After watching the documentary *Buried Secrets*, the Sunni and Druze groups believed BBCA was trying to impose 'intrusive ideas' on their conservative society. Christians felt also that BBCA was trying to introduce ideas that were 'strange' to their society. They felt it was talking to other audiences, other societies, ones that are different from theirs which does not accept relationships.

In the documentary *Je Suis Gay*, the Druze group criticised BBCA for giving them a platform while the Sunni group also criticised BBCA for encouraging homosexuality. On the contrary, the mixed Sunni Christian group showed neutral reaction to the coverage of this topic analysing what the message of BBCA might have been.

The difference in how multiple communities decode BBCA content gives a macro image of the complexity of Arab audiences, their different norms and cultures. The participants have shown that BBCA does not offer them what they want. This also explains why participants feel detached, underrepresented and framed in a stereotypical image. This feeling of underrepresentation makes them feel detached from BBCA output. The participants discussions showed that the feeling of detachment was common across the groups but that each felt detached for different reasons which is linked to their different backgrounds. For example, the Shia group which watched *Je Suis Gay* felt detached because the topic is seen as against their beliefs and does not reflect their needs or preferences. While in the Christian group, the participants said, that topics of homosexuality have long since been discussed on Lebanese screens, so they did not feel engaged.

The Lebanese audience wants BBCA to reflect its views, it wants it to take the role of a mentor, and it wants it to be more focused on its own society. As long as BBCA cannot fulfil these demands, the audience will always feel disconnected and underrepresented. The presence of local media has exacerbated the problem for BBCA. These local media understand their milieu and offer a broader and more in-depth picture of what is happening in their own country; something that foreign media and BBCA are unlikely to be able to do. After all, BBC Arabic service, as one editor put it, is not about reporting the Middle East to the Middle East, but about reporting the world to the Middle East (Soliman; 2016).

I also gathered from the focus groups discussions that BBCA's perception that the audience would see it as a taboo breaker was not accurate. This also made them feel detached from BBCA. Some of the participants questioned whether BBCA was actually tackling 'daring' topics. In the Shia group, for example, participants regarded *Buried Secrets* as boring and outdated.

The focus group discussions highlight that there is no such thing as a Lebanese audience, rather, there are Lebanese audiences. Consequently, the Arab world is comprised of audiences: The Lebanese are quite different from the Saudis or the Iraqis. The Egyptians do not share the same traditions as the Moroccans. The Yemenis don't speak like the Syrians. When the BBC talks about an Arab audience, and addresses it as one entity, this enhances the dissemination of a stereotypical and unified image of the Arab people.

8.2.3 BBCA Political Bias and Stereotypes

In terms of the BBC's coverage of political issues, there was a shared attitude of cautiousness and mistrust. The participants' discussion of the documentaries that touch on Hezbollah, Israel and Jews, showed that they monitor closely how foreign media tackle matters which they have a strong political opinion about. Almost all of the participants questioned BBCA's portrayal of Hezbollah, the Jews of Lebanon, and Israel's image, in these documentaries. In the mixed Sunni Shia group, which watched *Jews of Lebanon... Loyalty to Whom?* participants felt that BBCA was trying to promote 'peace' and 'make us sympathise and feel emotional towards Jews'.

Other groups, that watched *Africa... the Upcoming Battle*, also felt that BBCA was 'promoting a good image of Israel and a bad image of us' (as in the Lebanese people).

They were sceptic as to why BBCA did not investigate Israel's activities in Africa, while focusing only on Hezbollah. The Christian participant in the mixed group believed that BBCA was promoting a stereotypical image Christians as being against Hezbollah and of trying to demonise Hezbollah and the Lebanese in Africa.

Even in the documentary *Je Suis Gay*, participants in the Sunni group believed that BBCA wanted to promote Israel as being humane and a protector of Palestinians. The data show that in a highly politicised environment, like Lebanon, the foreign media are usually viewed suspiciously, especially when it comes to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Findings from the focus group analysis have shown that the identity of BBCA as a British organisation has much affected and played on the participants' decoding of the content. They questioned BBCA's tackling of sensitive issues to them like Israel and the Jews and of issues which are rejected in their communities like homosexuality and pre-marital sex.

Participants also believed that BBCA is casting a stereotypical image of them as being 'barbaric' and 'backward' in terms of how they perceive sex before marriage or how they deal with homosexuality. Participants clearly said that because it is BBC it is understood why it is discussing these issues.

Audiences therefore not only decode messages based on their own social and cultural backgrounds, but also the identity of the encoder plays a role in the decoding process. The sceptical approach towards BBCA was attributed to who it was: A British organisation. Audiences can therefore attribute meanings to the text based on who is saying it and not only on what they understand, or how they interpret, the text.

8.3 International Broadcasters: A Foreign Policy Necessity

Foreign policies, conflicts, rivalry and wars are the main factors behind the existence of international media. World-changing political events require that a country protect its interests through different means one of which is influencing foreign audiences. The influential role of media in that respect has been fully used. International media achieved what weapons did during the two great wars (Nelson; 1997). Many accounts were written of how the Cold war was won by radio invasion not by arms (Nye; 2004, Webb; 2014). It is the application of 'soft power' whereby countries use 'attraction rather than coercion' to promote their ideas and values (Nye; 2004).

The contentious issue here is that international broadcasters were presented in a friendly form. BBCA, the focus of this study was presented as delivering to audiences what others don't dare to deliver, giving a platform for audiences when others don't and most of all that there is a need for it in the Arab world. This study showed that BBCA still thinks of the audience as that of the colonial era when media was almost non-existent, when audiences lacked the means to get information, and when political polarisation was less acute. BBCATV delivered what it thinks the audiences need, based on a specific image of that audience and in the form and manner that relates and reflects the guidelines and values of the channel and the country from which this channel derived its guidelines and values.

International media has become part and parcel of a country's public diplomacy strategy along cultural exchange, scholarships, nation branding etc. It is within that contest that the study of political economy of a news organisation is important because it helps understand the behaviour of a media outlet. This research adopted the propaganda model because it engages with studying the political economy of media through filters. Though this model was formulated mainly for the study of commercial media, its advantage is that it can be moulded to be used for different media outlets such as BBC by applying filters that are applicable in time and place.

This model therefore constitutes a framework for the study of political economy. This research applies this model to BBC the first such application to a non-commercial television. Therefore, this research attempted to question the functionality of BBCA within its own milieu, the viability of a 'global' media within the new Arab media market.

8.3.1 BBCATV: A British Service with an Arabic Accent

A few months after I started this research, the 'Arab Spring' began. Throughout the course of the research, the implications of the 'Arab Spring' started to gradually unravel. I had been with BBC Arabic TV for only two years and I began to realise how Middle East conflicts define and shape the newsrooms of local and pan-Arab channels. Aljazeera, which was the leading news channel in the Arab world, supported the regime changes in Egypt, Tunisia and Syria, for example, but stood against the revolution in Bahrain.

In a country like Lebanon, where the media sector is plural and diverse, different channels promote messages that reflect their political views. Lebanese Future TV, owned by the late Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri, supported the opposition in Syria, whereas others, like Al-Manar TV, which is owned by Hezbollah, did not. My research showed that Arab viewers expect a channel to voice a message or to work for a cause. Words like 'raising awareness' and 'giving a solution' featured a lot in the participants' answers in the focus groups when they were commenting on BBC coverage. This reflects how viewers in the Middle East attribute roles to the media and expect them to deliver on that basis. In that respect, where does BBC Arabic stand in all this?

When I embarked on studying the political economy of BBCA, I argued that it is governed by the milieu in which it operates. Even though it is independent, BBCA is subject to pressures because of funds, identity and responsibility towards FCO. The dilemma for BBC Arabic TV, however, is that it has a dual identity: that of the BBC and that of its Arab character.

In other words, it is an Arabic-speaking foreign medium that is first and foremost bound by the rules and regulations of the milieu, like the rest of the BBC, but it is also affected by the rules and regulations of the Arab media market: it is affected by the political upheavals in the Middle East in terms of the practices inside the newsroom and the audiences' understanding of how a channel should speak to them.

The characteristics of the BBC Arabic service, as a British organisation, means it cannot operate in the same way as the rest of the Arab channels. The political polarisation in the Middle East, the internal conflicts, the Arab Israeli conflict, are all matters that shape the daily lives of people in that region. Arab media, which is the product of that society, is attached to the same norms.

An analysis of the BBC Arabic service vis-à-vis the Arab media market shows that the BBC's ability to compete is hindered by the fact that localised media relate to the audiences, making it harder for 'global' foreign channels to compete. Research has shown that audiences seek information and answers from channels that share their political views. 'Global' foreign media, like BBCA, are also moulded by the norms of their own milieu, making them 'local' rather than 'global'.

The British organisation is often affiliated with Britain and its foreign policies, and it is sometimes accused of applying the British government's agenda when certain coverages are not favoured, which I have shown in Chapter 4. The discussions with

participants in the focus groups showed that, although they regarded BBC Arabic coverage as professional (first theme), they were still sceptical about its impartiality when it tackled the political issues of the region (Israel, Hezbollah, Jews) and issues that touch on their culture(s). Covering these sensitive stories highlights the fact that the BBC is not necessarily biased or partial, rather, it relates to British values. The provisions set for the World Service in 2006, in the agreement between the BBC and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, fall within that scope (2006:35&36):

The BBC must agree with the Foreign Secretary, and publish, general long-term objectives for the World Service, including:

- (a) the provision of an accurate, unbiased and independent news service covering international and national developments;
- (b) the presentation of a balanced British view of those developments; and
- (c) the accurate and effective representation of British life, institutions and achievements⁴⁷.

This relational link between BBCA and British values, is the basis upon which the Arabic Service and the audience approach each other. Issues raised by BBCA in these documentaries are facts: pre-marital relationships are, in many Arab societies, unacceptable; homosexuality is regarded as a sin. Nevertheless, choosing to discuss taboo topics because they should be discussed, as one editor told me, is not actually related to what the audience wants, but it is related to what the BBC thinks the audience wants.

The BBC's confidence that it is needed in the Arab world and that it is different and unique, is derived from how the BBC sees itself in comparison to the other media in the Arab World, and to its own perception of how the audience sees it, as a needed media outlet in the Arab world. The interviews I conducted with BBC staff revealed that they do not know their audience, or what the audience think of the BBC productions, yet they were quite confident that this is what the audience needs. It is not only about what stories the BBC tackles, it is also about how the BBC tackles these stories, and the imperialist approach that is embedded in them. The discussions with participants from the focus groups about how they assess the BBC coverage reflects that understanding.

⁴⁷Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2006. An Agreement Between Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the British Broadcasting Corporation, http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/about/how_we_govern/agreement.pdf

Moreover, the 2020 project- which refers to the grant by the British government to BBC World Service to recruit and launch programmes that focus on the North African countries that are known as the Maghreb region, and the Gulf- reveals that audiences are not decision makers at all; rather, they get what the BBC offers.

8.3.2 The Dilemmas of 'Global' Media

This research poses questions about the viability of global media in an environment like the Middle East. The participants have shown that audiences are actually interested in their own milieu, problems and communities. The more they are interested in the events taking place in their localities, the more they resort to local media, a situation that intensifies at times of conflict. The constraints surrounding BBCA have also shown that it cannot globalise. This means that the BBC speaks to the audience from its own local perspective.

The dilemma of global media is also related to the constraints imposed on them either by the rules of the countries they have bureaus in or the country of origin whose political and economic interests are taken into account. The study touched on the cases of Saudi Arabia and Egypt whereby political and economic factors affect BBCA level and scope of coverage.

As I studied the BBC Arabic newsroom, I attempted to study the diaspora staff and their role in globalising/ localising BBCA in a way that makes it closer to audiences. The participant observation that I did inside BBC Arabic service in order to understand how editorial decisions are made, indicated that editors, reporters and senior producers actually enjoy autonomy in line with their day to day responsibilities and duties. As one editor told me, this autonomy is granted because each of the BBC staff is trusted enough and they are expected to know and comply with the BBC guidelines. That very independence, as I have observed, provides a margin for personal views to be expressed.

The composition of the BBC Arabic newsroom is a miniature version of the Arab world and its conflicts. That independence, coupled with a highly politicised region, makes it easier for journalists to practise politics and transform the BBC newsroom into a politicised one. The recent Arab conflicts have 'personalised' coverages. The coverage of the Syria conflict has shown that journalists have taken to air what they see fit, rather than the journalistic value it has.

Schudson's (1989) mapping of the social organisation of news work cited studies that found journalists to be bound by the reporter-official relationship, that editors respond to the requirements of the organisation, and not a subjective selection of news, and that the background of the journalists had no effect whatsoever on what they publish. In contrast, I have argued through the data collected that the background of journalists in BBC Arabic is used to express their personal views, and as long as no senior staff member or colleague objects to it or reports any bias, many stories and views, with all their political connotations, are voiced on the BBC's screen.

Media in the Middle East have always been a platform from which to promote a cause. The difference in the sociology of a Middle Eastern newsroom, compared to the sociology of a BBC newsroom, is caused by the ongoing events and conflicts in the Middle East: Discrimination based on religious beliefs was reported (Marsden; 2013); discrimination based on nationality was also reported (Kanter; 2013).

A newsroom is therefore formed and shaped by journalists who are, in turn, shaped by the events that touch on their daily lives. When journalists transform a BBC Middle East newsroom into an Arab newsroom, this suggests that the rules and regulations that BBC Arabic, as a service, is supposed to comply with- just like the rest of the BBC- are sometimes violated turning BBCA into another local Arab channel.

8.4 BBCA Discourse

The long contested cultural imperialism paradigm whereby the powerful impose their norms and cultures over others, was revisited in this research to understand how BBCA speaks to audiences and how it sees them through analysing texts and ideology discourse. Imperialism is manifested in how the powerful think of others, and texts are just the outcome of this thinking or belief

This has been done through adopting critical discourse analysis method which is mainly interested in power relations between the sender and the intended receiver. Findings reveal that BBCA choice of topics refer to a colonialist understanding of the audience as deprived and a pre-conceived idea that audiences need to know about these topics. The interviews with staff revealed that what BBCA offers is what it sees important and what it thinks the audience need and should know. The analysis of BBCA discourse through the four documentaries therefore showed an ideology discourse whether political or social which resonate with Britain's foreign policy and British

values. The analysis of the two documentaries, *Africa the Upcoming Battle* and *Jews of Lebanon... Loyalty to Whom?* have shown that they both have an ideological discourse which feeds into the political rhetoric of Britain's foreign policy.

The documentary *Africa... the Upcoming Battle*, used the political hype between Sunni and Shias at the time and the rhetoric prevailing against Hezbollah to pass a political ideology that vilifies Hezbollah and the Shia community and demonises them as opportunistic and engaged in funding an organisation which under Britain's law is terrorist. The documentary shifts the focus from an Arab Israeli conflict and puts it into a context of a party which is posing danger to everyone, Sunnis- by showing Shia as interested in converting, Africans- by using their resources without contributing to the countries they live in, and Israelis by using this raised money in battles against Israel. The discourse much focused on drawing a suspicious image of the Lebanese community activity in Africa while barely touching on the Israeli activity

In the documentary *Jews of Lebanon... Loyalty to Whom?* the images constructed of Jews of Lebanon constructed is also based on an ideological discourse of peace. The timing of the documentary which marks the year Israel was established puts the focus on the 'plight' of the Lebanese Jews in perspective just as that of the Palestinians.

The other two documentaries, tackle issues which relate to personal freedom as El-Imary (2016) described them. While gays and pre-marital sex are issues that are not tolerated in the Arab world for religious and cultural reasons, in Britain these are considered part of which focus on gays plight in the Arab world and pre-marital sex have their

8.5 Limitations of this Research

While this study has attempted to contribute to knowledge by a) applying different methods through, to explore the relationship and b) by revisiting theoretical models which have been deemed outdated or inapplicable. However, there are limitations to this study on different levels

First, in terms of the focus groups, this study could have benefited from a wider number of groups that include young people in villages. Though this thesis was mainly concerned with understanding the audiences that BBCA says it is aimed at, yet throughout the course of the analysis, I came to find that a wider representation of

young people would give a more in-depth understanding of the positioning of BBCA among these audiences see the environment and the s research could have benefited from more

The environment of focus groups always risks a margin of unscientific results, in other words, the moderator, the influence of dominant participants, the topic itself could all make participants say what resonates with others or refrain from saying the actual opinion. The difficulty of gathering focus groups affects the planning process which is thrown up in the air for a rather instantaneous and on the spot gathering of groups. This has resulted in a waste of time, and impacted on the number of the focus groups and the number of participants in each group.

Second, the application of critical discourse analysis method. Despite the systematic process of analyses laid out by Fairclough, this method will always be plagued by a subjective perspective. The use of different research methods allowed to balance out subjectivity by applying focus group method and interviews, yet the background, ideology and own convictions of the researcher are elements that retain impact during the analysis process.

Third, this study was conducted at a time when documentary production at BBCA was at its infancy. The tackled documentaries were produced before the Arab spring. But ever since the production of documentaries at BBCA has spiralled over the years that now the Arabic service conducts festivals for screening short filmed by young Arab filmmakers and producers. The changing media environment of the Arab world, the changing political scene, and the audiences' approach to both media and politics, could mean changes to how audiences see the BBCA, how they engage with it but also could enforce the findings obtained in this study.

8.6 Recommendations for future Researchers

This study looked into BBCA relationship with audiences through applying several methods but all were qualitative. Future researchers are recommended to include quantitative methods such as a questionnaire to ensure a more scientific approach to the study of audiences. While qualitative methods give more in-depth approach to audiences' studies, yet as stated above with focus group method, data obtained could be affected by different factors that sometimes cannot be controlled due to the environment.

In this research I have touched on audiences in a new changing media environment. As social media and users are becoming the new competitors to channels, future researchers are recommended to conduct a comprehensive study into the relationship between audiences and international broadcasters within the new defined powers. This new research could look more into the functionality of international broadcasters within 'new public diplomacy' which lends more powers to audiences, and if a relationship of engagement is viable.

This research also touched on the diasporic staff and their role in public diplomacy activity. Future researchers could conduct an in-depth research into the relationship between BBCA management and staff. Studies of international media could be more comprehensive if future researchers embarked on a comparative analysis and study of two organisations and more audiences from different Arab countries. There are many publications on Arab speaking international broadcasters (Lahlali; 2011, Youmans; 2009, El-Nawawy; 2006, Clark and Christie; 2012, Tawfiq; 2015) but more is needed to dissect international broadcasters as discourse and audience, as staff and management within the new power changes.

8.7 Conclusion

This research attempted to understand BBCA relationship with Lebanese audiences through applying different methods of research. The study was informed by models that focused on understanding the functionality, behaviour and discourse of international broadcasters all of which puts international broadcasters under scrutiny. This research's objective was to open the debate about why these channels exist, the real benefits from it and in whose interest. It is to make researchers ask the question: are international broadcasters, designed and established for the benefit of the audience and if the audiences actually benefited is it because it was intended or it happened that interests intersected.

The research also studied the audience to understand how they decode messages and content. Focusing on a specific part of the audience, the Lebanese was important to reveal the diversity of the Arab world. This should also make a researcher ask: How can international broadcasters understand, deliver and engage with Arab audiences if they are all seen as one: the Arab audience.

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Appendix A: Interviews Log

BBC producers and an anchor

Wissam El-Sayegh: Documentary Producer

Date of Interview: January 16th, 2015

Location: BBC- London

Najlaa Aboumerhi: Documentary Producer

Date of Interview: January 20th, 2015

Location: BBC- London

Nada Abdelsamad: Documentary Producer

Date of Interview: February 5th, 2015

Location: Phone Interview to Beirut

Nour Zorgui: BBC Arabic Radio Anchor

Date of Interview: June 2nd, 2016

Location: BBC- London

BBC current and former editors

Naglaa El-Imary: Former Editor of Programmes, BBC Arabic TV

Date of Interview: March 7th, 2015

Location: Phone Interview to France

Liliane Landor: Former Language Controller- BBC World Service

Date of Interview: April, 16th 2015

Location: BBC- London

Bassam Andari: Newsgathering and Planning Desk, Editor

Date of Interview: May 26th, 2016

Location: BBC-London

Adel Soliman: Arabic Radio Editor

Date of Interview: August 5th, 2016

Location: BBC- London

Appendix B- Lebanon's Focus Groups

Christians: 3 groups

Group one

Number of participants: 6

Location: AUCE University- Beirut

Date of interview: April 25th, 2012

Group two

Number of Participants: 9

Location: Lebanese University- Fanar

Date of interview: April 27th, 2012

Group three

Number of participants: 7

Location: Lebanese University- Fanar, North of capital Beirut

Date of interview: April 27th, 2012

Druze: 3 groups

Group one

Number of participants: 5

Location: AUCE University- Ba'aklyn, Mount Lebanon

Date of interview: April 23th, 2012

Group two

Number of participants: 4

Location: AUCE University- Ba'aklyn, Mount Lebanon

Date of interview: April 23th, 2012

Group three

Number of participants: 4

Location: AUCE University- Ba'aklyn, Mount Lebanon

Date of interview: April 23th, 2012

Shia: 3 groups

Group one

Number of participants: 5

Location: LIU University- Nabatiyeh, South Lebanon

Date of interview: April 17th, 2012

Group two

Number of participants: 6

Location: LIU University- Nabatiyeh, South Lebanon

Date of interview: April 17th, 2012

Group three

Number of participants: 6

Location: AUCE University- Nabatiyeh, South Lebanon

Date of interview: April 20th, 2012

Sunni: 2 groups

Group one

Number of participants: 6

Location: LIU University- Tripoli, North Lebanon

Date of interview: April 24th, 2012

Group two

Number of participants: 8

Location: LIU University- Tripoli, North Lebanon

Date of interview: April 24th, 2012

Mixed sect: 4 groups**Group one**

Number of participants: 4 (Shia, Sunni, Christian and Druze)

Location: interview conducted in a house- Beirut

Date of interview: April 19th, 2012

Group three

Number of participants: 8 (Shia and Sunnis)

Location: LIU University- Sidon, South Lebanon

Date of interview: April 18th, 2012

Group four

Number of participants: 7

Location: Location: LIU University- Tripoli, North Lebanon

Date of interview: April 24th, 2012

Appendix C- Focus groups' questions

- What do you think of the BBC coverage?
- From what you have seen, do you think the BBC's coverage indicate that it was doing mere journalism?
- What message do you think the BBC is conveying?
- Do you feel the BBC's coverage of these topics is a) to inform audience of an existing problem, b) to draw emotions, c) or to force change
- Can you tell me two positive points and two negative points in the coverage?
- If you were in charge, what would you change?
- Would you cover such stories? What stories you feel the BBC should cover?
- Which image of these actually caught your attention?
- What do you think of the language used?
- What do you think of the music used?
- What would you think of the coverage if these documentaries were broadcasted on a channel like Aljazeera?

Appendix D- Questions to the documentaries’ producers

- How did you get the idea?
- Where there any difficulties pitching the idea to BBC?
- Where there any changes requested by the BBC?
- Where there any specific criteria set out by the BBC?
- What new grounds do you think the BBC is breaking, or opening up, through this documentary?
- How is BBC’s message different from others?
- Did you think of the audience when forming the idea?
- Which viewer are you speaking to in this documentary?
- What do you think of the Lebanese audience – is it special or different in any way as compared with audiences in other Arab countries?
- In your opinion, what do you think the Lebanese viewers thought of the documentary?

Appendix E- Questions to El-Imary and Liliane

- How did *Ma La Yuqal* come to life?
- Who came up with the title?
- How did you feel about the title?
- What message do you think it sent to the audience?
- What was the aim of this programme?
- Was there any topic that simply still couldn't be aired, despite the programme's ambition as expressed in its title?
- Was the BBC trying to present itself as a taboo breaker? Is that how it wants to be seen?
- As a member of the management team, was there an agreement about what new grounds the BBC Arabic should be breaking and needs to be broken?
- What do you make of the cultural sensitivity notion that former BBC director general Nigel Chapman talked about upon the
- What is your understanding of public interest?
- Do you think the public interest is the same for both British and Arabic audiences?
- Why do you think the audience needs a programme like *Ma La Yuqal*?
- What is your perception of the Arab audience?
- What type of audience you address?
- What do you think of the Lebanese audience?
- Do you have a typical Arab viewer?

Appendix F- Consent form for participants in the focus groups

**PARTICIPATION
INFORMATION SHEET**

Measuring the relation between Lebanese Audience and BBC Arabic TV

Researcher _____

Staff Supervisor (if applicable) _____

You are being invited to take part in a research study on the relation between BBC Arabic TV and the Lebanese Audience, which involves a group of young female and male participants between. Participants will sit together and discuss the coverage of the BBC of certain topics. The group will watch a documentary and then engage in discussion of what they have watched. If approved by participants, the group will be filmed. The filming will only be used for academic purposes. The aim of the filming is to be able to monitor the discussion progress and to capture the body language. The footage will be destroyed once the data is analysed.

-----please separate

CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: How well does the BBC Arabic TV understands its audience. Case Study: Lebanese audience

Lead researcher: _____

I have read the information in the Participation Information Sheet, and I am willing to act as a participant in the above research study.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

I have provided an appropriate explanation of the study to the participant

Researcher Signature _____