Putting Peace in the Frame: Alternative US Media Framing of the War in Syria

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Abstract

The central question of this thesis is, how has the alternative US media framed the war in Syria? The analytical approach is informed by recent scholarly debate regarding peace journalism and constructive journalism. The framings of the war in Syria have been studied in three alternative US online news sources through a qualitative content analysis. The news sources are *Truthout*, *The Progressive* and *Common dreams*. Results show that these alternative US media has framed the war in line with characteristics of peace journalism and constructive journalism. This tendency departs from how the conflict is regularly framed in mainstream US media. The three studied media have for example promoted diplomatic and peaceful solutions to the war in Syria and tend to give voices to people that are not part of the US political elite.

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1. Introduction

The increasing globalisation, commercialization and production of news in contemporary trans-nationalised society is challenging the professionalization and autonomy of journalism and democracy (Waisbord, 2013). Part of the challenge is related to conglomeration, the increased domination by business and political elites, with their own economic interests in mind. Waisbord suggests that media adapts its content to the wishes of the audience (rather than the needs) and the financial interests of advertisers. The professional journalists may have to serve the elites, reinforcing their powers of interests and norms, instead of serving the public. The process of deregulation and the creation of a global media oligopoly have allowed media companies to demand power over the global media landscape. With less competition, they can easily decide prices in global media. The effect of this is a declining professionalization and quality of journalism (Waisbord, 2013).

Private media companies are emerging as producers of goods with the aim to produce a successful product to a large audience for the highest economic profit. In that way companies control the media information and the audience is seen as consumers, which is known under the term commercialization (Nygren & Dobek-Ostrowska, 2014). The increasing tendency of this is seen across the world, moving towards a commercialized Western media (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Many critics of this trend have defined media globalization and commercialization as the expansion of consumer-based culture across borders, dictated by the elites, reinforcing their powers of interests and their norms. Instead of providing a public sphere, open for a diverse representation of reality and neutral information, the audience is offered a distorted view of reality and democracy (Waisbord, 2013).

A global media system has emerged, apart from the national media system, in which the US media dominates in the Western media world (Hafez, 2007). Media companies such as Time-Warner-AOL and Disney, and media magnates such as Rupert Murdoch, have become symbols of globalization. These media companies and magnates have global market domination (Vineet, 2011). Ninety percent of US media is owned by only six companies: News Corporation, Comcast, Viacom, Disney, Time Warner and CBS. The US media company Cable News Network (CNN) is owned by Time Warner; ABC owned by Disney; Fox News Channel owned

by News Corporation; and NBC owned by Comcast (Margolies, 2019). The US media conglomerates reinforce ideologies that benefit corporate interests in profit (DiMaggio, 2008).

This points to that the US media industry dominates the global news production, including to a large extent news distributed through various media platforms on the internet (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2014 p. 32). The US political and business elite make profit from wars, by controlling oil resources in Middle Eastern countries and to gain political power in those regions. When it comes to reporting conflicts, the research presented in this thesis has found that the mainstream US media almost exclusively report views of wars from the US political and business elite's perspective (Simons, 2016, DiMaggio, 2019). Dimaggio claims that corporate elites in the US media and US government elites cooperate to promote pro-war-framing with a uniform view of the world, in which the USA is depicted as the leading force for democracy and humanitarianism (DiMaggio, 2008).

Given this mainly economic perspective on contemporary news production and media landscape, where do we end up when it comes to reporting of wars and conflicts? If mainstream US media is dominated by a few media conglomerates, these conglomerates also dominates the depiction of wars disseminated throughout the Western media. Research shows that Western or international news surveillance tend to use second-hand information from leading Western news providers and global media sources such as CNN and BBC (see e.g. Hoxha & Hanitzsch 2018). Cottle (2009) points out that global media such as the CNN and BBC have dominating narratives in their content. This rhetoric is then adopted by news organizations in Western countries and disseminated through news reports as 'facts' (Cottle, 2009). This trend is especially true with news about conflicts in the world where the US is a co-player and where mainstream US media news sources becomes dominant (see e.g Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2014). Hoxha and Hanitzsch (2018) conclude that journalists deliver what they call 'an intellectual reconstruction of "reality"' by updating the actual evidence that best speaks in a central story of history and best exemplify 'what they think has "really happened"' when framing conflicts (Hoxha and Hanitzsch, p. 61, 2018). According to Hoxha and Hanitzsch, the story that journalists deliver can contribute to either escalation or de-escalation of conflicts (Hoxha and Hanizsh, 2018). Scholars also often conclude that media representations of conflicts comes out as war journalism, meaning that the depiction of war is black and white, dualistic and victory oriented. An important aspect of this theorising of war journalism is that it tends to escalate wars, since it is reported as a power game

with a winner and a loser (see e.g. Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2014: more on war journalism in the previous research and theoretical framework-section).

Many scholars have pointed out that there is a complex relationship between the US media and the US government, which steers outcomes in the US media. Researchers have concluded that the mainstream US media largely frame the war in Syria through war journalism. The researchers that I have reviewed have analysed at a linguistic micro level how this interacts with a political macro level through discourse analysis (I return to this on page 16).

The depiction of conflicts could be made by alternative framings than war journalism in order to give the audience a different view of the war in Syria. Journalists could help prevent escalations of wars by choosing peace journalism or constructive journalism. As a critique towards current and dominating framings of conflicts, peace journalism and constructive journalism have come up with suggestions for alternative approaches. Following Nohrstedt and Ottosen (2014), the idea is basically that journalists could help prevent escalations of wars by offering a more nuanced way of framing wars and by focusing for example on peaceful solutions to conflict, and giving voice to others than representatives of the conflicting parts. This, Nohrstedt and Ottosen argues, has the potential of giving the audience a different and more realistic view of wars, than what the mainstream US media offers (Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2014).

When scholars debate the concept of alternative approaches to current and dominating conflict reporting, alternative media is often brought forth. Alternative US media challenges the dominant values and beliefs that are apparent in mainstream US media, by giving voice to the people and not only to the political US elites (see e.g Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2014; Allen & Zelizer 2004; Hoxha and Hanitzsch, 2018). According to DiMaggio (2008), there are alternative US media outlets that exist in the USA, which are non-profit and are known for their adversarial reports and editorials. Furthermore Alitavoli (2019) claims that alternative media expresses alternative visions for the hegemonic monopoly of mainstream US media. Alternative US media framings of war has not been investigated to a large extent before, but it seems to me that there is anyhow a consensus of the perception that mainstream US media mainly uses war journalism when depicting wars in the Middle-East. Alternative media is not synonymous with criticizing the government from a political left perspective, but alternative media can be defined in different ways. The alt-right is an example of this in that alternative media can be associated with media run by various groups

of so-called alternative right-movements, but this is not how I use it in this thesis. I draw on Curran and Couldry (2003), who suggest that alternative media challenges the mainstream media's view of the government. In this thesis, alternative media is defined as having a critical attitude toward the US foreign war policy.

Whether alternative US media can be said to represent an alternative, and in line with peace and constructive journalism, is what I will deal with there. In this thesis I will examine how three US media that can be categorised as alternative media frame the war in Syria. The three are *Truthout, the Progressive* and *Common dreams.* Articles in these online newspapers are evaluated in order to see if they frame the war with characteristics of war journalism, peace journalism and/or constructive journalism.

2. Research question and purpose

The principal research question is: How have the alternative US media *Truthout, The Progressive* and *Common dreams* framed the war in Syria?

The question will be answered through qualitative content analysis of articles produced by the three alternative online US newspapers *Truthout*, *The Progressive* and *Common dreams.* The main purpose is to identify patterns of framing the war in Syria, and to make use of theoretical aspects of so called war, peace and constructive journalism to pursue this analysis. The term "alternative" implies a difference from mainstream media. Two sub-questions are therefore included. How has the mainstream US media framed the war in Syria, according to current research? How does the alternative US media differ from mainstream US media in its framing of the war in Syria?

3. Background

The war in Syria started in 2011 and has now continued for eight years and is one of the worst conflicts in the world's history. In 2011, opposition groups protested against the Syrian government as they wanted to overthrow it. The Syrian government tried to suppress the opposition. The protests quickly advanced to armed organized groups from the free Syrian army against government forces. A terrorist organization called the Al-Nusra Front, affiliated with another terrorist organization Al- Qaeda, became involved in the conflict and tried to fight Bashar Al-Assad's government. According to Alitavoli (2019), the CIA has sent military support to the

Al-Nusra Front and to other opposition groups that opposed Assad's government. In August 2013, a chemical weapons attack took place in the city of Ghouta in Syria, which hit the civilian population. The US government accused the Assad government of being guilty of the chemattack. The Assad government denied this and claimed that the chemattack was caused by rebel groups. The UN's investigators on the spot inspected the use of chemical weapons, but according to the state secretary John Kerry, the investigation was done too late to be credible. Despite this, Obama's government continued to blame the Assad government for the chemical attack and in a speech Obama said that Syria had crossed a red line for what was considered permissible. This led President Obama to try to receive support from Congress for a military intervention in Syria. However, Russia's government managed to prevent a US-led military intervention in Syria this time and instead made proposals for diplomatic solutions, which were adopted by Obama. Obama says in a well-known speech to his global audience in September 2013 that "no boots on the ground" would be needed in Syria.[1] In 2014 Obama ordered airstrikes on Syria as part of a military campaign against ISIS. In November 2015, things changed. Obama made a reversal of his foreign policy promises, in which "no US boots on the ground" in Syria would be needed, and US forces entered Syrian territory with boots on the ground. After these initial steps and conflicting claims of the US president and Assad, the war entered its long-term and complex stage which is still ongoing.

According to Chomsky, Isaacson and Falcone (2016) the conflict in Syria has involved world powers and with all its international players it is a critical platform for escalating the likelihood of World War III. Syria is located by the border to Israel which, put into a historical perspective, makes the conflict more sensitive. Allan and Zelizer (2004) stress the importance of journalists framing wars in an objective way. Even if their own countries are involved in the conflict, there should be a transparent coverage of the conflict with voices heard from all sides. According to Allan and Zelizer that is not the case in the reality, since a common phenomenon is that journalists take a patriotic stance of the conflict (Allan and Zelizer, 2004). According to scholars, the US government has failed in wars in the Middle East such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, which suggests that to promote invasion in Syria in the media framings is perhaps not the best solution for helping the country (Simons, 2016, DiMaggio, 2019). With so many lives at stake in Syria,

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the need for objective reporting is important. Yet this has been difficult, not least since the Assad regime has limited media supply of foreign reporting of the war in Syria, which has complicated the media coverage of the war on the ground (Salama, 2012). The temporary presence of UN monitors in Syria has given some insight into the reality, but access has still been a continuous problem (Salama, 2012).

On a more general level, and regardless of access to the war in terms of territory, objective reporting is conditioned by news production routines and processes (see e.g. Allen & Zelizer 2004; Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2014). In a conflict there are rights on each side that can interfere with the opposite side endeavour. In a conflict there are also common rights, which can form the basis of mutual understanding. A conflict can take constructive development or escalate into devastation. An important aspect of understanding realities and dynamics of a conflict is the framing in global mass media. A conflict framed as competition processes, tends to escalate a conflict (Kempf, 2002). By using the same facts about a conflict, journalists can construct narratives or frames that picture either a war on terrorism, or a history of social inequality and political oppression. The former would require a military solution, while the latter suggests alternative solutions (Hoxha and Hanitzsch, 2018, p. 62). Years of journalism research has shown that the way conflicts are framed and represented does not live up to the ideal of objectivity and this is also the case with the war in Syria (see e.g. Allen & Zelizer 2004; Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2014). Hoxha and Hanitzsch (2018) conclude that Western journalists often produce news about the wars by using or starting from other media coverages. According to them, the market-leading global media outlet is the BBC, which has the power to dominate the framings that subsequent stories by other journalists builds on. This means that some political agendas in conflicts (such as military intervention) for the most part seem to be without alternatives in mainstream Western media (Hoxha and Hanitzsch, 2018). Peace journalism gives the audience alternative solutions to wars, which I will further discuss in the following part.

4. Previous research and theoretical framework

In this chapter, I will start with framing theory, which is the overall theory under which war, peace and constructive journalism can be placed, as types of framings. I will explain all of those framing-alternatives here. Then I will continue describing Herman and Chomsky's theory and

how the US media system works today according this theory. Finally, I will review the US mainstream media framing of the war in Syria, according to different scholars.

4.1 Framing Theory

The main discussion in this thesis is how the war in Syria is framed. Shehata (2015) cite Robert Entman's description of framing theory from his 1993 publication: "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman 1993, quoted in Shehata 2015, p. 361). Framing theory is about how people understand their surroundings through communication and how a matter is presented or perceived (Shehata, 2015, p. 360). Entman's idea is primarily based on problem formulations in journalism, which govern the public debate on matters of fact. Furthermore, it is about what arguments journalists emphasise, which sources may express themselves, how the words used are charged, the facts used and the journalistic approach (Shehata, 2015, p. 362).

This thesis touches on conflict framing that is a common dramaturgical approach in journalism, which is characterized by a conflict between several, usually two, actors who are opposed to each other. Instead of discussing how politics affect society in a war, it is common for journalism instead to focus on conflicts and to build up a dramaturgy around a dualistic spectacle (Shehata, 2015, p. 362).

In the framing of conflicts, there are various stakeholders who want to push their point of view forward through their framing to public opinion (Chong and Druckman, 2007). The sources for the creation of framing therefore have an important role when it comes to the power aspects. According to Manning (2001), journalists in the mainstream Western media have become more dependent on political sources in recent years due to the decreased amount of employed journalists and the increasing of commercialization and the conglomeration of media outlets, which makes the political sources to become dominant in framings of conflicts.

4.2 War journalism and propaganda

War journalism is the most common and dominant way of depicting war. Peace journalism has evolved from a criticism of war journalism, which constitutes of a program to improve war reporting. Peace journalism will be explained later. War journalism and propaganda are described here, since this is the key to understanding how the mainstream US media produces its news about wars. Ottosen and Övrebo (2016) suggest that war journalism often includes a degree of propaganda on behalf of one side of the conflict. War journalism is elite-, violence-, propaganda- and victory-oriented with a winner and a loser in a dualistic approach in a zero-sum game (Ottosen & Övrebo, 2016). War journalism contributes to risking an escalation of war, in which media plays an important role in the execution of the propaganda war. War journalism could contribute to an escalation of war, since conflicts are portrayed as a dual power-game between winners and losers; are black and white and lack context, which leads to psychologically electrifying of conflicts (Ottosen & Övrebo, 2016). Therefore, war journalism results in a policy that is not supported by public opinion through debates and which could have lethal consequences (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2014).

Researchers has come to a conclusion that propaganda exists in war journalism, which is against the ideals of journalism and is primarily driven by warring parties. Propaganda strategies are characterised by repeating favourable buzzwords, blaming the opponent by vilifying him/her, focusing attention away from one's own mistakes and/or deficiencies, selectively reporting information and reporting incorrect information (Ottosen & Övrebo, 2016). In order to get the audience's consent for a desired action plan, propaganda must include motivational factors. This is done by stimulating the audience's emotional response of disgust, fear or hope and thereby leading them to demand 'justice'. These emotions inhibit people's ability to think rationally and logically (Simons, 2016).

4.3 Peace journalism

The focus is now on a particular genre of journalism that takes as its main ambition to see through propaganda: peace journalism. Ottosen and Övrebo explain that peace journalism is about seeing through propaganda and misinformation on both sides and contributing to journalists being able to make conscious choices about framing of conflicts. Peace journalism is

depicted as a people-oriented, truth-based, solution-centred and non-dualistic approach and is focusing on possibilities for peace (Ottosen & Övrebo, 2016).

According to Nohrstedt and Ottosen (2014) a peace journalism approach gives alternative options for the readers/viewers. "Peace journalism is people-oriented in the sense that it focuses on the victims (often civilian) and thus gives a voice to the voiceless. It is also truth-oriented in the sense that it reveals untruth on all sides and focuses on propaganda as a means of continuing the war" (Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2014, p. 86).

PEACE/CONFLICT JOURNALISM	WAR/VIOLENCE JOURNALISM
I. PEACE/CONFLICT-ORIENTED	**I. WAR/VIOLENCE-ORIENTED**
explore conflict formation, x parties, y goals, z issues general "win-win" orientation	focus on conflict arena, 2 parties, 1 goal (win), war general zero-sum orientation
open space, open time; causes and outcomes anywhere, also in history/culture	closed space, closed time; causes and exits in arena, who threw the first stone
making conflicts transparent	making wars opaque/secret
giving voice to all parties; empathy, understanding	"us-them" journalism, propaganda, voice, for "us"
see conflict/war as problem, focus on conflict creativity	see "them" as the problem, focus on who prevails in war
humanization of all sides; more so the worse the weapons	dehumanization of "them"; more so the worse the weapon
proactive: prevention before any violence/war occurs	reactive: waiting for violence before reporting
focus on invisible effects of violence (trauma and glory, damage to structure/culture)	focus only on visible effect of violence (killed, wounded and material damage)
II. TRUTH-ORIENTED	**II. PROPAGANDA-ORIENTED**
expose untruths on all sides	expose "their" untruths
uncover all cover-ups	help "our" cover-ups/lies
III. PEOPLE-ORIENTED	**III. ELITE-ORIENTED**
focus on suffering all over; on women, aged, children, giving voice to the voiceless	focus on "our" suffering; on able-bodied elite males, being their mouth-piece
give name to all evil-doers	give name of their evil-doer
focus on people peace-makers	focus on elite peace-makers
IV. SOLUTION-ORIENTED	**IV. VICTORY-ORIENTED**
Peace = non-violence + creativity	peace = victory + cease-fire
highlight peace initiatives, also to prevent more war	conceal peace-initiative, before victory is at hand
focus on structure, culture the peaceful society	focus on treaty, institution the controlled society
aftermath: resolution, re- construction, reconciliation	leaving for another war, return if the old flares up

Table 1. Galtung, 2006:1

Galtung (2006) has classified war journalism and peace journalism into four categories: peace-/war-oriented, truth-/propaganda-oriented, people-/elite- oriented and solution-/victory-oriented. According to Galtung, it is more common for mainstream media to use war journalistic

characteristics when framing conflicts. Above is a table of the differences between peace journalism and war journalism (see table 1).

Lynch (2015) explains that peace journalism means that reporters and editors, through their own choices in their petitions, can create opportunities for society as a whole to consider non-violent responses to conflicts and prevent propaganda proliferation. According to Lynch, it is not a fair or honest process when journalists choose to show some aspects of reality and can 'keep the rest in the dark' (Lynch, 2015). To simply report what the political elite says in a conflict is to camouflage facts; and by reducing itself to dualism. The framing of the conflict with war journalism becomes a power measurement, a controversial reporting that can lead to an escalation of the conflict. Therefore, Lynch raises an objection to war journalism and emphasizes that framing a conflict without context creates more violence in response, with a winner and loser. He argues that if no underlying causes become visible, there is nothing concrete to work towards in order to find a solution. Conflict is a relationship between parties who seek incompatible goals and each party wants to present itself as a worthy winner. Therefore, Lynch believes that war journalism, without background or context, is distorted and limited. War journalism promotes duality, which puts groups or people in opposition to each other. In the field of peace journalism, journalists are urged to ask questions about the context, which process led to a certain action, the motives behind it, and what caused dissatisfaction. Lynch maintains that peace journalism is more realistic and truthful than war journalism, as it presents causes and alternatives in every direction and casts votes for all rival parties and views at all levels. In this way, escalation of the conflict can be prevented at an early stage. In addition, peace journalism explores creative ideas for conflict resolution, peace-making and peacekeeping and draws attention to post-war development (Lynch, 2005). Nohrstedt observes that peace journalism is a way for journalists to avoid being a tool for propaganda from the political elite (Nohrstedt 2014).

Many researchers criticize the concepts of war and peace journalism. Hanitzsch (2007) believes that Galtun`s (2006) method is oversimplified and dichotomous in its representation of complex matters. Hanitzsch (2007) argues that suggesting peace is not nobler than promoting a military intervention against the violation of human rights, and that peace journalism, therefore, interferes with balanced public relations. He believes that the exposure of cover-ups, lies, and war crimes that are promoted in peace journalism could simply be considered as good journalism. Loyn (2007) suggests that Galtung`s (2006) method is too dualistic,with a division of conflict journalism into only two categories and, therefore, violates

journalistic objectivity. According to Loyn, conflict journalism does not fit into either of the war and peace journalism categories, and he argues that content that is not considered as peace journalism should not be put in the category of war journalism (Loyn, 2007, p. 2-6). Nohrstedt (2014) criticizes Loyn's standpoints of Galtung's model by claiming that propaganda should be detected in objective journalism. Propaganda used by great powers through PR and spin doctors is, according to him, a challenge for journalists in depictions of conflict zones.

4.4 Constructive Journalism

Another genre of journalism that has been developed in the last few years is constructive journalism, which can also be used as an alternative or complement to war journalism.

Herman and Drok (2018) suggests that constructive journalism calls for people to interact with a positive solution to war. Furthermore, it considers all parties' feelings and behaviours towards each other. Journalists can make conscious choices about the framing of war. Constructive journalism is action-, public-, solution-, and future-oriented. Building on Herman and Drok (ibid), let me say a few more things about these aspects.

Action-oriented means that journalists provide information about possible resources and collaborations where there is common ground and mutual understanding, instead of just informing people. Constructive journalism sees people as socially competent citizens and motivates people to make their own decisions by actively engaging them. Constructive journalism wants to help people act on problems. *Public-oriented* means that journalists should not only be independent observers, but collaborate with the public in exchange of information, opinions and feelings. To reflect society's diversity, different groups should be involved at all levels of society. *Solution-oriented* means that journalists not only inform the audience of problems, but also use solution-oriented frameworks when they cover social problems. *Future-oriented* means that journalists should look beyond just current news by asking questions about future opportunities. Herman and Drok emphasize that critical review is part of the journalist's work, but journalists should be able to present an approach by clarifying what needs to be done, how things can be improved and how people can contribute to this. Constructive journalism, they explain, has evolved from social responsible theory, based on the idea that journalists have a

social responsibility for how reality is reflected and, thus, perceived by people in society. Journalists are responsible for the consequences of creating news for individuals and society. Herman and Drok point out that research on positive psychology and the media's effects on people has shown that exposure to constructive journalism can contribute to increased well-being. In the same way, it has been noted that media with a negative focus leads to negative feelings such as fear, which, in turn, affects how people think of others and how they relate to them. Media with a negative attitude can lead to polarization in society and reduce engagement and mutual understanding. As Herman and Drok show, constructive journalism tries, instead, to give greater understanding and commitment to others and reflect a positive outlook on the outside world (Herman & Drok, 2018).

Having thus accounted for a few relevant studies on mainstream US media, and discussed the tendencies towards war journalism and propaganda, in the next section I will move ahead with Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model.

4.5 Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model in the mainstream US media system of today: researchers' views

The 'Propaganda model', developed by Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman (1988), is described in their book *Manufacturing Consent - The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. The model explains how the mainstream US media is used as a propaganda tool by the US government and large corporations to obtain public consent for certain political decisions. These elite sectors exercise pressure over society and engage in voluntary censorship, over- or under-reporting on particular issues and pursue purposeful prejudice. In this way, a distorted image of the world is presented which is beneficial to the powerful elite. Herman and Chomsky's model concentrated mostly on US media in their research, but according to Mullen and Klaehn (2010), it is also applicable to other countries' media, especially in the Western world (Herman and Chomsky 1988; referenced in Mullen & Klaehn, 2010). According to the model, the media works as a company that sells its products, rather than performing the function of educating and informing its citizens. A central aspect of Herman and Chomsky's model is the existence of five filters in the news production process (Herman and Chomsky 1988; referenced in Mullen & Klaehn, 2010). In what follows I will account for analysis of the US media system of today through those filters and by referring foremost to two scholars, DiMaggio (2008) and Goss

(2013). DiMaggio is explicit on the relevance of Herman and Chomsky's model, and the reason I add Goss is that he also explains how Herman and Chomsky's model can be used and is relevant when analysing the mainstream US media system of today. I will also review what Herman (2018) think of his model of today.

(1) The ownership, size and profit orientation of mainstream media. During the last few decades there has been an increasing conglomeration and commercialization of the US media. The major news-channels, newspapers and other media are conglomerates owned by a few elites. The news presented depends on media organizations' interests, in which some news are sacrificed in order to maximize profit (DiMaggio, 2008).

(2) Advertising as the principle source of revenue for mainstream media and the corresponding influence of advertising values on news production processes.
Herman (2018) claims that the resources for the US media have decreased and, as a result, subsidies for media in the form of providing sources have increased, which also increased the US elites' influence in the US media. He also states that the increased use of the PR industry has increased the influence of the elites in the media.

(3) Mainstream media's routine reliance on agents of power as the primary definers of social reality. This filter concerns mainstream media's routine reliance on agents of power as the primary definers of social reality. Media companies usually view their relationships with their political information sources as valuable, which means that they benefit from portraying the politicians or the government positively in order to maintain good relationships with them. In this context, scholars have pointed out corporate US media's close ties with the US government, leading to promotion of the interest of US economic and political elites (see e.g. DiMaggio 2018 and Goss 2013)

(4) Organized flak that represents a mechanism of social control. According to DiMaggio (2008) negative criticism is avoided by the media through self-censorship. This affects news coverage, for example, they do not write negatively about the government, as it can affect the media company's profits. DiMaggio claims that the American editors and reporters fear to insult the sources of the US government, which they trust to report the news. If they do, they can be criticized by US government officials and lose their business relations with them (DiMaggio, 2008). Serious flak can have the consequence of banning journalists from their positions or

disabling entire media organizations (Goss, 2013). Goss (2013) claims that US editors and journalists receive negative criticism from US government officials by mail, letter, telegram, telephone calls, lawsuits, speeches and bills before Congress. (Goss, 2013).

(5) Various ideological forces, which may be deployed and adapted to correspond to elite interests when required. The US companies and the US political elites want to preserve their positions of power and control over the citizens, which is why they adopt a policy of censoring media that does not favour them. According to Goss, the US elite promote a rhetoric of 'us and them' and impose a common threat onto the public (Goss, 2013, p. 6).

One could ask if Herman and Chomsky's model is still relevant today. Some researchers believe so and others do not. On the side of those who do not agree with Herman and Chomsky's model, we find, for example, Sparks (2007). He claims that the model is limited, since it is not applicable to countries other than the USA (see also Bergman, 2014). He believes that other countries usually have higher market competition in the media business. This increased competition makes their media landscape more diverse than in the USA. He also argues that the elite are more multifaceted within this category than the model depicts. Media's dependency on sources from the political elite, he claims, does not necessarily make the media compliant with these sources. Spark agrees that the US mainstream media are predominantly communicating the voices of the elite, but he believes this is only done in subjects about politics, economics, and business. Furthermore, regarding the socialization of journalists in Herman and Chomsky's model, which maintains that the US mainstream media is governed by the elite, he argues that the elite group running the media tends to choose and promote those journalists who share the management's values from the start (Sparks, 2007).

Moreover, Daniel Hallin (2002) believes that Herman and Chomsky's model is too deterministic. As Sparks, he claims that the media only reports events in a way that is linked to the degree of consensus of the political elite on the actual issue and that other voices than the political elite are heard on other subjects (Hallin, 2002 referenced in Tumber, 2009, p. 389).

According to Mullen (2008), Herman and Chomsky's model has to some degree been ignored within the academy, with one of the explanations being that the companies and state authorities earned from this marginalization, and, more importantly, that it has been heavily criticised by a variety of sources. The criticism includes that it presented a conspiratorial view of the media,

which many scholars have accounted for (e.g. Entman 1990; Lemann 1989; Nelson 1990). It also suggests that Herman and Chomsky overstated the power of the propaganda system and downplayed popular opposition to elite preferences (e.g. LeFeber 1988). Others argue that the propaganda model was deterministic, functionalist and simplistic (e.g. Eldridge 1993; Golding and Murdock 1991; Schlesinger, 1989), and that it neglected the impact of journalistic professionalism (e.g. Goodwin 1994; Hallin 1994; Sparks 2007). As a final thread of criticism, Lang and Lang (2004) argue that it was methodologically flawed and 'political' (see also Salmon 1989), and that it represented a 'simple set of beliefs' (Brahm 2006, quoted in Mullen, 2010, p. 678).

Switching to the side of those who agree with Herman and Chomsky´s model, we find for example Brian Goss. In his book, *Rebooting the Herman & Chomsky Propaganda Model in the 21st Century* (Goss 2013), Goss puts forth his views on Herman and Chomsky's model. I will refer to a review of the book by Andrew Mullen (2015). According to Mullen, Goss describes Herman and Chomsky's model and claims that advertising is the primary source of media revenue. According to Herman and Chomsky's model, media companies rely on the purchase of information from private companies and governmental bodies, forming a symbiotic relationship between US government and media conglomerates. In this relationship, Herman and Chomsky suggest, several principles, tools or strategies operate to reproduce the character of the relationship in their model of five filters (Mullen, 2015).

Another researcher who agrees with the model is Klaehn (2002). He states that Herman and Chomsky's model is appropriate concerning the way media plays an important role in democratic societies, reflecting public opinion, responding to public concerns, making voters aware of government policies and reflecting important events and views. According to Klaehn, Chomsky believes that a well-informed voter forms the basis of democracy. Though, notes Klaehn, Herman and Chomsky's model suggests that, in reality, the mass media is an instrument of power that mobilizes support for elitist interests in government and private actors and the media in capitalist democracy functions as a central mechanism for propaganda for the political elite (see also Robinson, 2013). The most fundamental argument in Chomsky's theory is that the meaning of the media is 'filtered' by the constraints inherent in the system and that it is produced at an unconscious level by indoctrination of journalists, so that conscious decisions are considered realistic and objective (Klaehn, 2002). Klaehn argues that Herman and Chomsky's five filters are

very valid as a general approach in analysing the power relation between the mainstream US media and the US political elite. He suggests that the elite's dominance, through these filters, becomes so natural that journalists in media news can be convinced that they choose and interpret the news 'objectively' and on the basis of professional news stories that are received from the political elite. Through this process, the filters are internalized by psychological unconscious processes of journalists and passed, secondarily, to citizens. The relationship between media conglomerates and the political and business elite in society becomes symbiotic, since their relationship consists of gains, power control and hegemony over the media system (Klaehn, 2002).

Herman and Chomsky's model points out that, by operationalizing news stories in mainstream media, systematic manipulative patterns can be obtained, which can explain the macro system in the media production. According to Mullen, globalization of media has strengthened and broadened the Herman and Chomsky's model to be able to apply among several countries. Mullen also suggests a need to investigate both the elite news media and the alternative news media through the model's five filters (Mullen, 2008).

4.6 Mainstream US media framing of the war in Syria

Given the presentation of Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model in the previous section, how has mainstream US media framed the war in Syria? Let me present some research findings that answers this question, since it is relevant for the questions I ask regarding the alternative US media I have studied.

According to mainstream US media, the USA is framed as a benevolent hero that has the power to act as a global enforcer through the promotion of US military force, combating the terrorists and humanitarian threat as having a stabilizing role in the war in Syria. But the underlying interest by the US government is, DiMaggio claims, to gain control over the Middle Eastern oil as its major source of power. He further claims that the anti-war movement among US citizens is not covered in the mainstream US media. DiMaggio suggests the mainstream US media has politicized human rights, declarations of war, and ignored competing and critical views coming from the non-establishment, which prevents its readers from consider competing views. He believes that without access to criticism of US invasions, it is difficult to imagine that

newsgroups can form political opinions that are independent of the established political elite. He states that the mainstream US media avoids disclosing that the US military presence is itself illegal according to international law, since it was not authorized by the UN Security Council and was not self- defence against an ongoing attack (DiMaggio, 2019).

Robinson (2013) believe that the US and British governments have, by using propaganda techniques through the media, provoked moral battles against terrorism and dictatorship in their invasions of Syria, which are similar to the propaganda used in order to justify the invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. Robinson (2013) and Simon (2016) have identified these propaganda terms in the mainstream US media framings the US invasions in Syria and the other Middle-Eastern countries such as: war on terror, weapons of mass destruction, chemical attacks, industrial scale killings, humanitarian warfare, coalition of the willing and responsibility to protect. They claim that the propaganda arises from the US government and that the mainstream US media is repeating that rhetoric to credulous audiences, influencing and shaping public perceptions in ways that promote their preferred policies such as support for military intervention. Fairclough (2006) suggests that mainstream US media rhetoric such as 'global war on terrorism', is fear mongering propaganda, which has allowed the US government to justify its attacks in the Middle-East, by establishing fear in the global audience. Garud-Patkar (2017) similarly finds that the dominant framing in mainstream US media of the war in Syria is war journalism-like, highlighting the US government's direct involvement in the war. Robinson (2013) points out the polarizing usage of terrorism and dictatorships in media texts, furthermore Anderson (2015) provides ample evidence of demonizing rhetoric which paints the Syrian President Bashar Al Assad and his army as evil monsters, while Simons (2016) argues that the purpose underlying the mainstream US media framings is regime change in Syria. Simons draws parallels to the US invasion in Iraq in 2003 and the invasions in Syria. The agenda of regime change, Simons argues, led to claims of Saddam Hussein having 'weapons of mass destruction', which were later proven to be false.
Overall, the general thread in these scholarly accounts is that of war journalism-like framings of the conflict in Syria, which they believe, escalate the war.

Anderson (2015) argues that there is a shortage of US and Western media that search for independent sources in reports of the war in Syria. Journalists should, according to Anderson, assume bias of the information from warring parties, since their opinions about a war is influenced by their own interests. Anderson argues that US journalists and editors rely on the US

government's sources when 'building' the news about the war in Syria and claims the US government's close relationship to intelligence forces. He claims that there is also a pressure on the US journalist staff to internalize the US government's ideological framework, since the conglomerates are interested in making profits and maintaining good relationships with political sources (Anderson, 2015) Therefore Robinson claims, there is a need to identify the degree of media autonomy in the power relationship with the US government. Editors of the US conglomerates make their staff follow an ideology that is based on the US government, which is considered a credible source in depiction of the war in Syria, justified by the idea that 'facts' are presented. According to Robinson, there is an increased tendency towards media companies' legitimacy through an ever-increasing consolidation of the media industry into large media conglomerates, which has reduced the proportion of independent newspapers. One result of this is that US government officials have gained more power to influence the news framing through its own agendas (Robinson, 2013).

Alitavoli (2019) states that there is an emerging distrust against the mainstream US media, which makes the US audience to be following the alternative media instead. Therefore he has studied the framework of the war in Syria by comparing the mainstream US media cnn.com to the alternative US media antiwar.com. According to Alitavoli, the differences between mainstream media and alternative media is that the mainstream media speaks on behalf of the powerful elite, while the alternative media speak on behalf of the ordinary people. He also suggests that alternative media is more ideology driven and less commercially minded than mainstream media Alitavoli concludes that the White House produces frames in the mainstream US media in support of its policies (Alitavoli, 2019).

As a final note, one may ask how exactly the influence between mainstream US media and the US government looks like and what mechanisms one can identify or speak about as necessary for an influence to take place. Robinson maintains that the US government disseminates war propaganda through global engagement, public diplomacy and the exploitation of relationships with media conglomerates in order to dominate Western media and through carefully designed promotional campaigns (Robinson, 2013). In more concrete terms, this is done through press conferences, press releases, media speeches and personal appearances. The purpose of these are to influence the media's framing of wars in ways that support the government's causes. Through propaganda techniques such as minimizing harmful media coverage of the governments,

discrediting oppositional counter-stories and repeating announcements serve the government's agenda positively (Robinson, 2004).

Apart from certain points in the media, we need to identify certain actors. Robinson claims that the governments of the USA and Britain employed political PR advisors and spin-doctors during their invasions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. According to Rogers (2012), public relations agents are paid by the US government in order to disseminate war propaganda and thereby mislead news conglomerates, journalists and the audience (Rogers, 2012).

5. Methodology and empirical data

I have chosen a qualitative content analysis method. Bryman believes that the validity in a qualitative method is stronger than in a quantitative research designs (Bryman, 2016, p. 44). With a quantitative approach it is difficult to choose the exact words that would reveal a valid correlation between variables.

I have used a qualitative content analysis method to examine the framings of the war in Syria in alternative US media. For a general account on what alternative media is, Downing (2001) states that it can take many forms, but that a general characteristic is that it differ from established or dominant types of media in terms of their content, production or distribution. Herman and Chomsky's work is often referred to in the discussion about alternative media. As I have accounted for, they suggest that on the whole it should be understood basically as an opposite to mainstream media which represent government and corporate interest. Some scholars argue that this is a limiting approach and argue that one needs to further explore how and where these media are created and by whom (see e.g. Lievrouw 2011 and Atton 2002). In this thesis, I have used DiMaggio's (2019) list of what he reckons are alternative US media, which are *Truthout*, *The Progressive* and *Common dreams*.

The articles are chosen from three different alternative US media sources printed online: *Truthout*; *The Progressive*; and *Common Dreams*. They newspapers are independent and non-profit and accept no corporate backing or advertising, but depend on foundations and their readers. *The Progressive* has a left-leaning perspective, but the other two other magazines aim at giving transparent reporting of social issues. I have searched the databases of each media on the

words "war in Syria" or "Syrian war" and have read approximately 50 articles. In this reading I have been inspired by Kempf's and Galtungs's categories of war and peace journalism (see below), from which I developed a set of questions that I posed to the articles (a full list of questions is included in appendix 1). I thus identified overall patterns and also a number of recurring key topics. The time frame that I looked at was the war in Syria between 2011 and 2019. The patterns that I revealed were that the most controversial subjects were Obama's withdrawal of the promise not to invade Syria on the ground in 2014, the chem attack in Ghouta in 2013, and the frequent occurrence of interviews of Noam Chomsky about the war in Syria. I then selected a smaller number of articles, three per media, that I think represent these patterns and which are linked to three key events or topics, namely, "Boots on the ground", "Gas attack in Ghouta" and "Chomsky in alternative media", and I use them in the organisation of results that will follow (I explain the key events or topics further in the introduction of Results and Analysis).

Again making use foremost of Kempf and Galtung, I deepened my understanding and analysis of framing patterns by looking more closely at these few articles. In the summary of each alternative media's three articles, the general patterns are accounted for, stemming from analysis of the individual articles. The purpose of my study is to see how the war in Syria has been framed, and I had the intention to study articles that can be characterized as regular news. My impression is that the alternative media I have selected do not always clearly state what kind of article it is. In a few cases, the articles that I came across and picked out could be interpreted as editorials. I decided to include these articles based on the conviction that similar principles of framing can be taken as underlying both regular and editorial texts. I return to this issue in the concluding part of the thesis.

5.1 Qualitative content analysis

Hsie och Shannon (2005) describes what a qualitative content analysis is as follows: A qualitative content analysis is a "research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns." (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005 s.1278). Qualitative content analysis examines the language of a text in order to classify texts in a number of categories. In a content analysis, the aim is to find patterns and themes in the text to be analysed (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). Qualitative content analysis can be made by using *inductive* or *deductive* methods. *Inductive* content analysis categorizes content

by finding new patterns in it and is used to produce new theories when previous theories about an occurrence does not exist. *Deductive* approach aims at testing previous theories in different contexts or comparing categories at different time periods in order to come to specific conclusions and is used when previous theories have already been categorized into methods (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis has three main approaches: *conventional*, *summative* or *directed*. All three methods are used to interpret the meaning of the content of a text. *Conventional* content analysis is an inductive method and is used to describe a phenomenon. Keywords and variables are coded from the text, which capture important thoughts or concepts and is organized into different categories. In *summative* content analysis is a mix between inductive and deductive methods, in which key concepts and variables are initiated through previous research or theories for a categorization. The content is categorized through keywords that are counted, and then interpreted together with the underlying context. I will use Hsieh and Shannon's *directed* approach, which is a deductive method using existing theoretical framework that is expanded to focus the research issue, an expansion which Hsieh and Shannon calls the deductive application. My theoretical framework is based on the three journalistic genres I have accounted for, namely war journalism, peace journalism and constructive journalism (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

I draw on Kempf (2002) and Galtung (2006) to develop and expand the theoretical framework which I then use to carry out my analysis, in line with Hsieh and Shannon. Both authors have formulated and developed specific aspects, categories, dimensions or questions that can be put to use in analyzing media representations of conflict. In other words I have used categories from Kempf´s method and from Galtung's model deductively in order to analyse whether the framings in the articles are war journalistic or peace- and constructive journalistic of the war in Syria. Both Kempf and Galtung have categorized war journalism and peace journalism into different themes. Galtung has a model of four themes:

Peace- oriented versus war-oriented: win-win orientation or zero sum game

People-oriented versus Elite-oriented: Are voices given only to the elite or are other peoples voices heard?

Solution-oriented versus victory-oriented. Are solutions to a conflict given or not?

Truth-oriented versus Propaganda-oriented. Are propaganda on all sides exposed or not? Propaganda electrifies war and is defined in the theoretical framework section (see p. 12) and refers to the terms that the researchers have identified as propaganda, used as PR by the US government in justifying the invasions of Middle Eastern countries (see p. 21-23).

Hanitzsch (2007) argues that it is impossible to recreate any true picture of reality, since all of these are selective and constructed. However, the term truth-oriented means in this thesis transparent and versatile, which is based on Galtung (2006) and Kempf (2002), who suggest that traditional media coverage results in a distorted representation of reality, since it is dominated by the political elites' worldviews of conflicts. According to them, to see through the worldview of the political elite in mainstream media coverages of wars, is a truth-oriented approach.

Kempf (2002) has developed a qualitative method that analyses escalating and de-escalating aspects in framings of conflicts through seven dimensions, which are:

Conceptualization of the conflict: Escalation-oriented journalism depicts the conflict in a way that supports war and military logic, while de-escalation journalism strives for peaceful solutions and questions war and military logic.

Evaluation of the war parties rights and intentions: While propaganda journalism evaluates the rights and intentions of war parties in a hostile way, peace journalism strives to portray a balanced evaluation of the interests of both parties.

Evaluation of the war parties actions: While propaganda evaluates the war parties' actions through antagonistic confrontation, de-escalation-oriented keeps a journalistic critical distance to both of them and focuses on the chances of cooperation.

Emotional involvement of the conflict: War journalism and propaganda causes negative emotions as distrust of the enemy, while peace journalism tries to reduce the audience's emotional stress by focusing on reconciliation. Propaganda gives confidence that the war can be won, while de-escalation-oriented journalism is rather aimed at the price that must be paid for a military victory.

Social identification and personal entanglement: While escalation-oriented journalism aims to give rise to partial identification with one's own side and renounce those seeking a peaceful conflict resolution, peace journalism would rather aim at mutual engagement with peaceful alternatives.

Two sided messages: It has the function that the criticism against its own side is turned towards the other side and also to anticipate and precede criticism against the opposite side which could have been directed towards own side.

Double bind communication: Rhetoric that brings up conflicting perceptions and emotions, such as fear and hope, which already exist in people and societies involved in escalating conflicts. It is a statement by the other person or institution who at the same time carries two contradictory

messages, which means that the party concerned is not able to respond to or withdraw from the contradictory information (Kempf, 2002)

Kempf's (2002) list of themes can be detected in and made use of in analyzing conflict reporting, and there is a clear connection between his approach and that of Galtung (2006) in that it makes use of insights and arguments put forth by academic theorizing of war and peace journalism. As stated, informed by Kempf's model and work, and by scholarly accounts on peace journalism more generally, I have formulated a list of questions that I made use of when reading and analyzing the sample of texts chosen for the thesis. Anong the central questions are the following: Are voices given only to the elite or are other voices heard? Are propaganda or propaganda-like statements on all sides exposed or not? Are solution to a conflict given? (Again a full account of my questions, see appendix 1).

The ten themes which I used in my analysis are:
(1) *Conceptualization of the conflict,* (2) *Evaluation of the war parties rights and intentions*, (3) *Evaluation of the war parties actions,* (4) *Emotional involvement of the conflict,* (5) *Social identification and personal entanglement,* (6)) *Two sided messages,* (7) *Double bind communication* (Kempf, 2002) ,
(8) *People-oriented versus Elite-oriented,* (9) *Truth versus Propaganda oriented* and (10) *Solution-oriented versus victory-oriented* (Galtung, 2006).

As a final note on propaganda: according to Kempf, the purpose of propaganda is to increase its own side's will and confidence to fight and win the war and to reduce the confidence of the enemy. The aims of propaganda is to make the identification with one's own side stronger. This understanding of propaganda clearly does not differ from Herman and Chomsky's, and Kempf also refers and appears supportive of Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (Kempf, 2002).

6. Results and analysis. Alternative media`s framing of the war in Syria

From the newspapers *Truthout*, *The Progressive* and *Common Dreams* three topics are covered, with one article on each topic for each source, all together nine articles. The topics are "Boots on the ground", "Gas attack in Ghouta" and "Chomsky in the alternative media".

Topic 1) "Boots on the ground". The first topic refers to the time period beginning November 2015, when the White House announced that a team of 50 special forces was to be sent to Syria. This is particularly relevant since it is, historically, the first US land forces sent to Syria since President Obama launched a bombing campaign against the Islamic State (IS) in September 2014. It is also a reversal of Obama's foreign policy promises, which he made in September 2013, in which he claimed 'no US boots on the ground' in Syria would be needed.

Topic 2) "Gas attack in Ghouta". The second topic concerns articles that have been published in close connection with the gas attack in Ghouta near Damascus on August 21, 2013, which is a featured event in the US media.

Topic 3) "Chomsky in the alternative media". In the third topic, articles have been chosen which include interviews or speeches with Noam Chomsky. Chomsky features frequently in the alternative US media that I have analysed. To many, Chomsky is a symbol for critical, transparent and independent journalism and he is well-known for criticising US governments, especially in connection to international conflicts (see e.g. DiMaggio, 2019). For these reasons, I have found it interesting to study more closely in what way he appears in the alternative media which I have chosen.

The way I shall proceed is to examine three articles from each newspaper (*Truthout*, *The Progressive* and *Common dreams*), connected to each of the three topics I have focussed on, that is to say nine articles all in all. These articles exemplify the general framing tendencies I have found in the first overall reading of the larger sample of texts I have studied. I account briefly for the contents of the articles and then proceed with an analysis. Each media section is then concluded with a summary where I point to the general framing patterns.

6.1 Alternative media 1: *Truthout*

6.1.1 Topic 1: Boots on the ground

In the article "Obama Sends US Forces to Syria, Reversing Pledge of No Boots on the Ground" (*Truthout* Nov 2, 2015), *Truthout* reported on special forces being sent to Syria. In connection with this, the newspaper reported that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and the President of the International Red Cross Committee, Peter Maurer, launched a campaign which they called an 'unprecedented joint warning' for the United States to end war, respect human international laws and to help refugees who became homeless because of the conflicts in Syria. *Truthout* writes about an initiative by Russia to pursue diplomatic talks under the Geneva Convention between the United States, Russia and Iran.

Analysing the article in terms of war journalism, peace journalism and constructive journalism, *Truthout* magazine highlighted the catastrophic human consequences that the US-led invasions in the Middle East have had, pointing at the price that must be paid for a military victory, which falls into the category *emotional involvement of the conflict*. This is done by giving voice to Bank Ki-Moon's plea to the US not to invade Syria. The article is opposed to a US invasion of Syria and, therefore, reminds the audience that Obama reversed his promise of 'no US boots on the ground' in Syria, given in 2013. The article has a *truth-oriented* approach, since it saw through propaganda and claimed that using the propaganda rhetoric 'war of terror' and 'humanitarian interventions' was a way of justifying the US invasions of Syria. The article also had a *solution-oriented* approach, since it stressed hopes of peace in the upcoming diplomatic talks under the Geneva Convention between the United States, Russia and Iran.

6.1.2. Topic 2: Gas attack in Ghouta

Truthout's article "NYT Backs Off Its Syria-Sarin Analysis" (*Truthout* Sept 30, 2013), stated that the *New York Times* acknowledged it hurried when it blamed President Assad for killing his own people in August 2015. The statement was taken from White House politicians in Washington. Moreover, the article also stated that the *NYT* acknowledged that it made a mistake when blaming the gas attack on President Assad and his government and that it attempted to hide its mistake with excuses under the headline "New Study Refines View of Sarin Attack in Syria".

This shows that the alternative online newspaper *Truthout* has a *truth-oriented* approach, since it tries to help its readers to see through the blaming and portrayal of president Assad's regime as the evil doer, with 'industrial scale killing' of its own people. It stresses that the *New York Times* and *The Times* made a mistake by blaming President Assad for the gas attack in Ghouta, without having facts. According to research previously mentioned, it is not only the *New York Times* and *The Times* in mainstream US newspaper magazine that made this 'mistake.' This matter is important, since the rhetoric serves to justify Obama's starting point of ordering the US military air strikes on Syria in 2014.

6.1.3 Topic 3: Chomsky in the alternative media

In the article "Noam Chomsky: Instead of 'Illegal' Threat to Syria, US Should Back Chemical Weapons Ban in All Nations" (Truthout, Sept 11, 2013), *Truthout* noted that Obama was postponing plans for a military attack on Syria, while diplomatic efforts were being made by Russia in order to get international monitors to take over and destroy Syria's arsenal of chemical weapons. The article stated that Obama was threatening to use military force against Syria if the plan failed. Obama had planned to try to obtain Congress's support for a military attack on Syria because of its use of nuclear weapons, but he suspended this plan thanks to Russia's appeal for a diplomatic solution. The article contained a statement on the issue by Noam Chomsky, who said that Obama did not have international support for a military air raid in Syria. Chomsky also claimed, according to the article, that military attacks in Syria by the US government would be considered war crimes because the UN did not give its approval of the attack.

I suggest that *Truthout* tried to encourage *solution-orientation* by promoting peaceful diplomatic resolution instead of military action. To allow Chomsky to have his voice heard is a way of reminding people that the mainstream US media frames the political elite as the heroes. The newspaper also reminded people of earlier military invasions in the Middle East that failed to succeed, which encourages the audience to believe that a military solution is not the only way to handle the situation.

6.1.4. Summary of *Truthout's* framing patterns

Truthout highlighted the catastrophic human consequences that the US-led invasions in the Middle East have had, which belongs to the category *emotional involvement of the conflict* and is de-escalation-oriented journalism, since it points out the consequences of war. *Truthout* has a *solution-oriented* journalistic perspective, since it encourages a diplomatic solution of the conflict in Syria. The newspaper also has a *truth-oriented* approach, since it sees through the mainstream US media's propaganda terms such as 'war against terrorism', 'humanitarian interventions' and 'industrial scale killings.' It seems reasonable to suggest that *Truthout* nurtured a hope for peace in future diplomatic negotiations under the Geneva Convention. The articles make use of de-escalation journalism falling into the category *conceptualization of the conflict*, since they strive for a peaceful *solution-orientation* approach and they question war and military logic.

By including Noam Chomsky in the debate on a US-led invasion of Syria, *Truthout* reminded the public of the consequences of the former military invasions of Middle Eastern countries. This gave the audience an opportunity to form a different view of US foreign policy and to see that there are alternatives to a US military solution to the war in Syria, which is a characteristic of peace journalism.

Overall, based on the articles reviewed, *Truthout* appears to have predominantly peace journalistic and de-escalation-oriented framings. It highlights the consequences of war (*emotional involvement of the conflict*), hopes for peace, sees through propaganda terms and allows audiences to see diplomatic alternatives to a military intervention (*solution-orientation*).

6.2 Alternative media 2: *The Progressive*

6.2.1 Topic 1: Boots on the ground

In the article "Obama's Escalation in Syria" (*The Progressive* Nov 5, 2015), it was stated that President Obama announced that he would send up to 50 US special forces to Syria, marking an escalation in US military engagement in the country. The article claimed that Obama thereby was departing from the promise of 'no US boots on the ground' in Syria and that his announcement meant that, for the first time, there would be American troops on the ground in Syria for a

continuous time. The article pointed to the outcomes of US invasions in the Middle East over the past few decades, which indicate that the larger the amount of military involvement in the Middle East, the more violent and destabilizing the region has become. The article claimed that the US commits war crimes, as invasions in Syria are not approved by the United Nations, which is not only a threat to the US Constitution but a very dangerous precedent. US-led military invasion, the article noted, raised serious legal, political, strategic, ethical and constitutional issues and could lead to dangerous consequences. Moreover, the invasion would occur despite the absence of approval by the United Nations.

The article strives to raise awareness among the public about the possibility of escalation due to the US military and foreign policy. De-escalation tendency under the category *conceptualization of the conflict*, which questions war and military logic, is prominent here. The article highlighted the negative consequences that a military solution could have in the future, which falls into the category *emotional involvement of the conflict,* The article has *truth-oriented* tendencies, since it stresses the implications of US foreign policy and shows a perspective on the conflict in Syria other than the ones communicated by the political elite.

6.2.2 Topic 2: Gas attack in Ghouta

The article "What Gives the U.S. the Right to Bomb Syria?" (*The Progressive* Aug 28, 2013) did not place the blame for the chemical attack on one party but, rather, showed that everyone involved in the war was complicit in the bloodbath. Instead of continuing the bloodbath, it called for a diplomatic solution. The article foresaw that the consequences of an US attack in Syria would be potentially devastating for both the country and the Syrian people. It also reminded the audience of the US government's two failed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. These wars had crippling consequences and had lasted for over a decade. The article also criticised the US government for having created a state of chaos in Libya in 2011, after a supposed 'humanitarian intervention' to remove Muammar el-Gaddafi.

This article, according to framing theory, avoided making President Assad the evil doer and placing the guilt for the attack in Ghouta on him. Instead, it was leaving the question open as to who was behind the attack, a more realistic and *truth-oriented* approach that is not misleading the audience. Furthermore, the article stated that no one had an answer as to how the war should end, how stability should be created and how justice should be served. This depiction of the war is a

realistic *truth-oriented* way, with a quest for peace. The article wanted to show that Muslim and Arab states, as well as foreign forces, all have their own agendas in the war, based on competing calculations, indicating that the article does not attribute being a winner or loser to anyone. This approach is a characteristic of peace journalism. The article foresaw consequences of an US invasion in Syria by pointing to the devastation that earlier invasions in the Middle East had caused, which has a de-escalating tendency and falls into the category *emotional involvement of the conflict*. The article also has a de-escalation approach, which falls into the category *conceptualization of the conflict*, since it questions war and military logic.

6.2.3 Topic 3: Chomsky in the alternative media

The article "World Gets a Two-Minute Warning on the Risk of Nuclear War" (*The Progressive* May 14, 2018) noted that in New York in May 2018 the International Peace Movement had a conference about nuclear weapons, titled "Two Minutes to Midnight.". According to the article, fears of an Israeli attack on Iran with nuclear weapons – since Iran is invading Syria on the border to Israel – were discussed during the conference. The article explained that international co-operation was planned to coincide with a UN high-level conference on Nuclear Disarmament in May 2018, which the UN General Assembly postponed indefinitely. The reasons for the postponement was that none of the NATO member countries was chosen to organize the conference and that not all nine nations that have nuclear weapons had undertaken to attend the high-level conference. At least fifty countries would have to have ratified the nuclear disarmament agreement for the conference to take place, and which then would have become binding on all countries that had signed the agreement. According to the article, the USA, France and the UK expressed a clear opposition to signing an agreement of disarmament and the other NATO countries were negative towards it. Noam Chomsky, the article noted, was a speaker on the conference and said: "An objective and informed observer might conclude that, since World War II, the species has been dedicated to establishing the thesis that humans are simply a mistake."

The article brought up the point that all countries are not willing to agree upon a nuclear disarmament, which could take place if collaborative action between countries could be brought about. The article focuses on de-escalation, since it speaks about the chances of diplomatic international co-operation in a *solution-oriented* spirit and belongs to category *evaluation of the war parties' actions.*

6.2.4 Summary of *The Progressive's* framing patterns

To repeat, and as I established in the methodology section, the three articles I have examined here, and the analysis I have pursued to deepen understanding, point to a few general framing patterns of the alternative medium in question, *The Progressive.*

The Progressive stresses the negative consequences of a US-led military attack on Syria. It tries to convey a realistic, *truth-oriented* picture of US foreign policy, but is *people-oriented* and give voices to other people, rather than just the political elite. President Assad is not painted as the evil team player and the US as the good hero. This stance falls into the category *evaluation of the war parties' rights and intentions* with a de-escalation-orientation, aiming at a balanced portrayal and an evaluation of the interests of both parties. The magazine states that all parties of the war are guilty in the conflict in Syria. It sees through propaganda such as the US' attempts to justify a military attack on Syria by claiming that they are working for 'democracy' and 'human rights', which shows a *truth-oriented* tendency. *The Progressive* advocates diplomatic international cooperation on the disarmament of nuclear weapons, which is a *solution-oriented* approach.

Overall, *The Progressive* has a predominantly peace journalistic and de-escalation-oriented framing of the war in Syria, as it looks into the negative consequences of war, sees through propaganda, trying to convey a true picture of all parties in the conflict, without pointing out any party as evil or good, or as a winner and a loser. Furthermore, *The Progressive* tries to convey a realistic and *truth-oriented* picture of the US foreign policy in Syria and has a de-escalation approach that falls into the category *conceptualization of the conflict,* since it is questioning war and military logic.

6.3 Alternative media 3: *Common Dreams*

6.3.1 Topic 1: Boots on the ground

The article "Rebuffing Peace Chances in Syria" (*Common Dreams* Oct 25, 2015) concluded that the US is 'obsessed' with dictating the 'regime shift' in countries in the Middle East and demonizing presidents like Putin and Assad. According to the article, a group of Democrats from

the White House had recently sent a letter to President Barack Obama about the US military escalation in Syria, calling for a change in US policy. "It is time to devote ourselves to a negotiated peace, and work with allies, including surrounding Arab states that have a vested interest in the security and stability of the region," they wrote. "Convening international negotiations to end the Syrian conflict would be in the best interests of U.S. and global security, and is also, more importantly, a moral imperative." The article further described the United States' huge controversy over Syrian 'chemical weapons of mass destruction' with the White House claiming that the Assad regime had crossed the 'red line', which, instead of peace, caused a great escalation of the war in Syria. The article described how the US, through its militant foreign policy, had prevented and missed opportunities for a peace process in Syria on a diplomatic basis.

My analysis of the article is that it demonstrated *truth-oriented* tendencies by seeing through the US government's 'obsession' of promoting a 'regime shift', as it looks through political elite-driven propaganda. The article also made the audience aware of the rhetoric of 'chemical weapons of mass destruction', which is the same propaganda rhetoric that was used during the invasion of Iraq. The article also pointed to the consequences of escalation of the war in Syria, indicating a de-escalating tendency which falls into the category *emotional involvement of the conflict* and aims at pointing out the cost that must be paid for a military victory. Furthermore, the article gave voice to political officials that believe in a diplomatic solution instead of a military attack on Syria, which is a *solution-orientation* approach.

6.3.2 Topic 2: Gas attack in Ghouta

The article "Post 9-11 Veterans Oppose U.S. Military Strikes in Syria" (*Common Dreams* Sept 6, 2013) describes how Obama was trying to receive Congress approval for a US military intervention in Syria following the attack in Ghouta, which post 9/11 veterans protested against. It was explained in the article that post 9/11 veterans from the organization Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) pushed for diplomacy instead of a military air attack on Syria. They were reminded of how they were sent to war in Afghanistan, Iraq and to the neighbouring countries of the Middle East. The article indicated that the veterans believed that war only leads to more civilian deaths and a destabilized region. The veterans were striving to remind the US government that war does not save people and does not make Americans safer. A quotation from the article: "After decades of militarism abroad and austerity at home, it's time to radically

change the reckless, criminal, and morally bankrupt foreign policy of the United States. As veterans know from first-hand experience, so called 'surgical strikes' in Syria will only lead to increased civilian casualties and violence, not stability and peace. We need more diplomacy, and less war."

The article did not paint the US government as a hero or a winner, but instead, gave voice to war veterans – *people-orientation* – who spoke against military intervention in Syria and expressed a desire for *solution-oriented* diplomacy. This falls into the category *social identification and personal entanglement*, since it is opposing escalation-oriented journalism that aims at giving rise to partial identification with one's own side.

6.3.3 Topic 3: Chomsky in the alternative media

According the article "The US' Language of Terror and the History of Pre-emptive Aggression" (*Common Dreams* Dec 10, 2015), terrorism cannot be prevented by attacking other countries such as Iraq or Syria with military means. The article suggested that the actual profit of waging war on another country is the profit to an elitist group of companies. According to the article, Bruce Tanner, Executive Vice President of Boeing, said that conflicts lead to increased sales for his company. The article stated that stock prices for weapons manufacturers rose sharply shortly after the terrorist attacks in Paris the month before and that the ISIS threat made it possible to sell more Oshkosh-made M-ATV armoured vehicles, allowing western companies that sell weapons to flourish. According to the article, the US Defence Forces celebrated the government granting a budget of $607 billion in 2015. The article made a correlation between 'terrorism' and western gains. In the article, Noam Chomsky was asked about the issue and he mentioned that the rhetoric 'war on terror' is political propaganda. A quotation from the article: "The propaganda campaign that's been wrought through political rhetoric and mass-corporatized media, which is the US' political machine for the most wealthy amongst us, has done great work to keep the public in a constant state of fear and paranoia."

Chomsky makes people aware of the US government's propaganda by taking a *truth-oriented* approach of seeing through propaganda terms such as 'war on terror.' He also claims that the US government's and the mainstream US media's fear-mongering propaganda serves the wealthy elite, which falls into the category *evaluation of the war parties' actions*, since it is de-escalation-

oriented and keeps a journalistic critical distance to war and focuses on the chances of cooperation.

6.3.4 Summary of *Common Dream's* framing patterns

The articles I have chosen to represent and use for further analysis of framing patterns of *Common Dreams* shows that the magazine mainly has a *truth-oriented* approach, since it looks through propaganda from the US government by questioning and further investigating the rhetoric 'regime change' of President Assad and 'chemical mass destruction' and by labelling them as propaganda rhetoric. It also provided space for Noam Chomsky, who raised the point that rhetoric such as 'war on terror' is propaganda. *Common Dreams* suggested that US-led invasions of Syria could lead to consequences that entail an escalation of the war, which falls into the category *emotional involvement of the conflict. Common Dreams* is *people-oriented*, since it gives voice to people such as war veterans, who speak against an invasion of Syria and instead advocate a peaceful diplomatic *solution-orientation.* Giving voice to others on the invasion of Syria, not just the political elite, falls under the category *social identification and personal entanglement,* which encounter escalation-oriented journalism that gives rise to partial identification with one's own side. Instead, it favours a de-escalation-oriented approach, which focuses on mutual engagement with peaceful alternatives. *Common Dreams* criticises US foreign policy of the war Syria by pointing out past failures such as in the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Moreover, it has a de-escalating approach by pointing to the negative consequences of an US invasion of Syria, which falls into the category *emotional involvement of the conflict.*

In summary, *Common Dreams* has a predominantly peace journalistic framing of the war in Syria. By calling for a diplomatic *solution-orientation* to the war in Syria, it has a *truth-oriented* approach, which sees through propaganda, demonstrates negative consequences of war and gives voices to people other than the political elite, which is a *people-oriented* approach.

As a final note, Chong and Druckman (2007) point out that all parts in a conflict want to push their framings forward to the audience. The magazines in my study want to push framings for peace, but in peace journalism there are also elements of opinions against wars. My conclusion is that Kempf's and Galtung's concepts in their models work well in analyzing media content about conflicts.

7. Conclusions and discussion

In my thesis, I have presented several researchers' studies of the mainstream US media, all of whom concluded that war journalism and propaganda dominate in the mainstream US media in framing of the war in Syria. In the thesis it is also explained what war journalism and propaganda are and I have discussed researchers' views of how the US government's propaganda strategies have been used during the war in Syria. As I have accounted for, researchers conclude that the rhetorical patterns in the mainstream US media's framing of the war in Syria are similar to those that are dominant during the US involvement in conflicts in, or outright invasions of, other Middle Eastern countries. According to several researchers, as stated in the previous research-section, the US government's propaganda is disseminated through the use of the mainstream US media.

Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model has been outlined, and some researchers' views of the model have been reviewed. According to this model, there is a symbiotic relationship between the US government and the mainstream US media, which according to several scholars I have referred to, is not the case between alternative US media and the US government.

Two alternative framings to war journalism have been presented in this paper: peace journalism and constructive journalism. According to scholarly accounts on peace journalism, which I have referred to, peace journalism sees through propaganda on all sides. Peace journalism is more truthful, meaning versatile and transparent, than war journalism, as it presents causes, alternatives and views in in all directions and at all levels. In this way, escalation of the conflict can be prevented at an early stage. Peace journalism explores moreover nuanced ideas for conflict resolution (Lynch, 2005). Constructive journalism uses positive psychology, which can counteract the fear-mongering that is used in propaganda. Proponents of peace and constructive journalism argue that these styles of approaching conflicts provides opportunities for people to receive alternative perspectives of wars, in which the political elite is not dominating as in the case of war journalism. According to Lynch (2005), to simply report what the political elite says in a conflict is to camouflage facts, and to reduce reporting to dualism. In academic debate, it is argued that journalists can counteract propaganda and warfare escalation by being consciously aware of framings in conflicts, and by opting for alternatives such as peace journalism and constructive journalism. Peace journalism and constructive journalism have, for the last couple of

decades, been developed as genres, models or procedures that generally contain a critique of the way in which conflict reporting tends to be constructed (as, for example, war journalism).

As I accounted for in the previous research and theoretical framework-section, an important aspect of understanding the reality and dynamics of a conflict is the framing of globally influential media. A conflict framed with characteristics of war journalism, as competitive processes, tends to escalate a conflict (Kempf, 2002). According to Hoxha & Hanitzsch (2018) and Cottle (2009), Western or international news surveillance tend to use second-hand information from global media sources such as CNN and BBC. Moreover Western media has become more dependent on political sources in recent years due to the decreased number of employed journalists and the increased commercialization and conglomeration of media, which makes the political sources dominant in the framework of conflicts (Manning, 2001). In conlusion, sources for creating framing of conflicts have an important role when it comes to power aspects.

The thesis set out to answer the following question: How have the alternative US media *Truthout, The Progressive* and *Common dreams* framed the war in Syria? Two sub-questions were included: How has the mainstream US media framed this war, according to current research? How does the alternative US media differ from mainstream US media in its framing of the war in Syria? Given the insights and scholarly accounts of war and peace journalism I accounted for in the previous paragraph, the material I have studied, with the help of analytical categories and themes developed foremost by Kempf (2002) and Galtung (2006), shows that much of what is identified as peace- and constructive journalism, can be detected in the alternative US media. The thesis demonstrates that the focus on and problematization of contexts and solutions to conflicts are characteristics of the articles reviewed. Let me now answer the research questions in more detail.

Regarding mainstream US media framing of the war in Syria and the scholarly debate referred to in this thesis, researchers maintain that mainstream US media frame the war in Syria according to a war journalistic approach. They all stress that the US political elite's rhetoric are communicated through the mainstream US media system as facts, which gives a filtered perception of wars, including the war in Syria. Voices with other interpretations of the war in Syria are marginalized in the mainstream US media as the war is framed through elite-oriented war journalism. This makes it difficult for audiences to form opinions that are different from those covered by the US

established political elite. Researchers claim the powerful reach of mainstream US media, and argue that their way of framing influence many people's view of conflicts around the world, which maintains a power-structure as, according to DiMaggio (2019), becomes a vicious circle. This vicious circle in a power perspective, scholars argue in different ways, could be broken with a more people-oriented approach in framing conflicts (see e.g. Anderson, 2015, 2016; Alitavoli, 2019; Cottle, 2009; DiMaggio, 2019; Fairclough, 2006; Garud-Patkar, 2017; Goss, 2013; Hafez, 2015; Klaehn, 2002; Margolies, 2019; Mullen, 2010; Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2014; Ottosen & Övrebo 2016; Robinson, 2013; Rogers, 2012; Simons, 2016).

Regarding my own analysis of the three alternative media, here follows a summary of the overall framing patterns, in the terminology of Kempf (2002) and Galtung (2006): All the articles in *Truthout, The Progressive* and *Common dreams have* solution-oriented framings of the war in Syria, since they advocate a peaceful diplomatic solution to the war. *Truthout*, *Common dreams* and *The Progressive* have truth-oriented tendencies in their framing, since they see through propaganda from the US government such as such as 'war against terrorism', 'humanitarian interventions', 'industrial scale killings', 'regime change' of President Assad and 'chemical mass destruction', by labelling them as propaganda rhetoric and aims at portraying the warring parties in realistic ways. *Common dreams* is mainly people-oriented and give voices to other people than the US political elite. *Truthout* and *The Progressive* have de-escalation tendencies, falling into the category of conceptualization of the conflict, since they strive for peaceful solution-orientation and questions war and military logic. Overall, the alternative US media *Truthout, The Progressive* and *Common dreams* have a predominantly peace journalistic and de-escalation tendencies of framing the war in Syria, as they promote negative consequences of war in Syria. They are also trying to convey a true picture of all parties to the conflict, without a dualistic approach with winner and a loser. The alternative US media that I have studied give voices to people and grass-roots organisations in order for the audience to form a more nuanced picture about the war in Syria. Taking into account the criticism of Galtung`s (2006) model, which I have outlined, my conclusion is that Kempf's and Galtung's concepts in their models work well in defining and analyzing the media content about conflicts.

My conclusion regarding the differences between alternative US media (that is to say the ones I have studied) and the mainstream US media are, first, that alternative media appear more critical about what the US political elite say, and give more space for voices to others that may not have the same standpoints of the war in Syria as the US government. Second, alternative media has not

promoted a US invasion of Syria, which the mainstream US media has. Third, alternative media frame the wars through peace- and/or constructive journalism, not through war journalism as the mainstream US media does. Fourth, it does not frame President Assad as the evil part and the US government as the good part. Fifth, as I mentioned in the method section, the alternative media I have studied do not always declare what category their articles belong to and the distinction between regular reporting and editorials appears not to be so sharp. This could be an object for further inquiry, to what extent a push towards peace- and solution oriented journalism also involves a blurring of the boundary between objectivity and subjectivity.

As a final note, many researchers consider Herman and Chomsky's model to be relevant to mainstream US media and there is a lot published about this that I have reported on in this thesis. Herman and Chomsky have not studied alternative media per se, but Mullen (2008) suggests a need to investigate both the elite news media and the alternative news media through the Herman and Chomsky's model's five filters (Mullen, 2008). Herman and Chomsky's model could be used in connection for example with framing theory, in further studies about the difference between the US mainstream media and the alternative US media. Robert Entman's (1993) description of the framing theory is to select certain aspects of the framing and make these more prominent, which promotes some interpretation of the reality of a described object. Therefore, voices of other interpretations, especially victims, of the war in Syria are silenced in the mainstream US media, since the war is framed mainly through war journalism. It could be discussed whether alternative US media is generally against the political establishment or not. My understanding is that it depends on the social issue being discussed. About the war in Syria, the alternative US media is not against the government as such, but against a US invasion in Syria, which happens to go against the US political agenda. A question to ponder further is whether alternative media has a government-critical approach when it comes to other areas and topics they cover. In any case, my study shows that when it comes to conflict reporting, and the Syrian war more specifically, alternative US media chooses another path than that of mainstream US media, one that can be linked to peace and constructive journalism.

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Appendix 1

Code-book (see in Kempf, 2005; Galtung, 2006)

Conceptualization of the conflict: Are escalation-oriented journalism depicted in a way that supports war and military logic? Are de-escalation-oriented journalism used that strives for peaceful solutions and questions war and military logic?

Evaluation of the war parties rights and intentions: Is propaganda journalism, which evaluates the rights and intentions of war parties in a hostile way used? Is peace journalism, which strives to portray a balanced evaluation of the interests of both parties used?

Evaluation of the war parties actions: Is propaganda used that evaluates the war parties' actions through antagonistic confrontation or is de-escalation-oriented used which keeps a journalistic critical distance to both of them and focuses on the chances of cooperation?

Emotional involvement of the conflict: Is war journalism and propaganda used, which causes negative emotions as distrust of the enemy or is peace journalism that tries to reduce the audience's emotional stress by focusing on reconciliation? Is propaganda, giving confidence that the war can be won used or is de-escalation-oriented journalism used, which aimed at the price that must be paid for a military victory?

Social identification and personal entanglement: Is partial identification with one's own side and renounce depicted or is there an urge for a peaceful conflict resolution, aiming at mutual engagement with peaceful alternatives?

Two sided messages: Is there criticism against its own side is turned towards the other side?

Double bind communication: Is rhetoric brought up aiming at fear, hope or contradictory messages?

People-oriented versus Elite-oriented: Are voices given only to the elite or are other peoples voices heard?

Truth versus Propaganda oriented. Are propaganda on all sides exposed or not? Are propaganda or propaganda-like statements on all sides exposed or not?

Solution-oriented versus victory-oriented. Are solutions to a conflict given or not?