

# **The "Mouthpiece of al Qaeda" That's Giving a "Voice to the Voiceless" in the Southern Hemisphere**

**An Analysis of Al Jazeera English's Reporting on U.S. Relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan**

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## INTRODUCTION

What is Al Jazeera English? Well, that depends on whom you ask. If you ask the Director General of the Al Jazeera Network, Wadah Khanfar, he'll describe the network as a "voice for the voiceless...a diverse, reflection of the collective mind of the nations and cultures and civilizations...a bridge of dialogue."<sup>1</sup> However, if you ask FOX News terrorism analyst Walid Phares, he'll tell you that Al Jazeera English is part of "a militant institution that wants to convey an ideological *jihadi* message."<sup>2</sup> The *New York Times* has hailed the Al Jazeera Network as "the kind of television station we should encourage."<sup>3</sup> But despite winning a multitude of international television and journalism awards, including "Best 24 Hour News Program" and "Service of the Year,"<sup>4</sup> some non-profit media watchdog organizations, like the conservative Accuracy in Media group, call Al Jazeera English a "terrorist propaganda channel" and "a mouthpiece for enemies of the United States."<sup>5</sup> It's been called "Osama bin Laden's network,"<sup>6</sup> yet reputable international non-governmental organizations like the Committee to Project Journalists and Reporters Without Borders have backed the rights of the network and its journalists.

Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense during the administration of George W. Bush, called the network the "mouthpiece of al Qaeda and a vehicle of anti-American

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<sup>1</sup> Goodman, Amy. "Al Jazeera Chief Wadah Khanfar on Obama's Expansion of the Afghan War, US Policy in the Middle East and the Role of Independent Voices in the Media. Web. 02 Apr. 2010. <[http://www.democracynow.org/2010/3/31/al\\_jazeera\\_chief\\_wadah\\_khanfar\\_on](http://www.democracynow.org/2010/3/31/al_jazeera_chief_wadah_khanfar_on)>.

<sup>2</sup> "FOXNews.com - Al Jazeera's Presence on PBS Alarms Some." FOXNews.com. 8 Apr. 2009. Web. 16 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/04/08/al-jazeeras-presence-pbs-alarms/>>.

<sup>3</sup> "Why Al Jazeera Matters - Editorial - NYTimes.com." 30 Mar. 2003. Web. 20 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/30/opinion/30SUN2.html?pagewanted=1>>.

<sup>4</sup> "Al Jazeera English - Europe - Al Jazeera Wins Prestigious Award." Al Jazeera English - AJE. 14 June 2008. Web. 16 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/europe/2008/06/20086150182634319.html>>.

<sup>5</sup> "Al-Jazeera for Obama." Accuracy In Media - For Fairness, Accuracy and Balance in News Reporting. 19 Oct. 2008. Web. 04 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.aim.org/aim-column/al-jazeera-for-obama/>>.

<sup>6</sup> Levine, Joanne. "Al-Jazeera, as American as Apple Pie" Washington Post. 23 July 2006. Web. 16 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/23/AR2006062301367.html>>.

propaganda” and described the channel’s reporting as “vicious, inaccurate and inexcusable.”<sup>7</sup>

Yet members of the Bush administration still agreed to interviews on the network’s English language channel. More recently, high-ranking members of the Barack Obama administration, including Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as well as General Stanley McChrystal, granted interviews to Al Jazeera English. Secretary Clinton even paid a visit to Al Jazeera’s Doha headquarters while she was in Qatar in February 2010 to “further dialogue with Al Jazeera.”<sup>8</sup>

How can a single network inspire such paradoxical rhetoric and sentiments? Is it possible for Al Jazeera English to simultaneously be a “mouthpiece of al Qaeda” and a “voice for the voiceless?” If Al Jazeera English is anti-American, why do U.S. government leaders agree to interviews or meet with the network’s directors? How does the average U.S. citizen navigate their way through all of the promotional catchphrases and unabashed ideological diatribes in order to decipher between fact and fiction?

### **Statement of Intent**

This research paper intends to evaluate the quality of Al Jazeera English’s reporting. The assessment holds the network accountable to the promises and objectives detailed in its code of ethics and mission statement. In order to narrow the sphere of the assessment, the content analysis focuses on Al Jazeera English’s coverage of U.S.- Afghani and U.S.-Pakistani relations. Is Al Jazeera English’s coverage fair and balanced? Or does it present a blatant anti-American

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<sup>7</sup> "NOW. Politics & Economy. Al-Jazeera and Arab Press Online." PBS. 14 Jan. 2005. Web. 29 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.pbs.org/now/politics/aljazeera2.html>>.

<sup>8</sup> Documentaries, Aljazeera English. "Clinton Meets With Al Jazeera Brass In Qatar." Breaking News and Opinion on The Huffington Post. 15 Feb. 2010. Web. 15 Apr. 2010. <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/02/15/clinton-meets-with-al-jaz\\_n\\_463050.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/02/15/clinton-meets-with-al-jaz_n_463050.html)>.

bias? Does Al Jazeera English present an alternative to CNN and the BBC? Does it challenge the status quo? Does the channel approach issues from the perspective of the marginalized and disenfranchised? What role will Al Jazeera English play in the geopolitical discourse of the next decade?

This paper initially evaluates the validity of Al Jazeera controversial reputation and the factors that led to its contentious notoriety. The analysis concludes that although AJE is critical of US foreign affairs in the region, its coverage is far from anti-American and does not sympathize with ‘terrorists’. On the contrary, some of its reporting is indistinguishable from that of the US media. This paper recommends that AJE be vigilante not to conform to US or Western media standards. AJE’s coverage of the US’s presence in the region is fair and accurate. Although opinion is present in AJE’s reporting, its inclination is toward humanity rather than geopolitical interests. Finally, this analysis concludes that the presence of opinion in AJE’s reporting does not violate journalistic ethics because objectivity is relative - not concrete.

### **WHAT IS AL JAZEERA ENGLISH?**

Al Jazeera English is the sister channel of the original Arabic-language news network Al Jazeera and claims to be the first truly global high-definition television network. Unlike its competitors, the Cable News Network based in Atlanta and the British Broadcasting Corporation based in London, Al Jazeera English is not managed by and broadcast from a central headquarter. The twenty-four-hour news channel is based out of Doha, Qatar, but it also broadcasts from its centers in Kuala Lumpur, London, and Washington DC. Each broadcasting

hub has editorial independence and news management rotates to each center throughout the day.<sup>9</sup> Al Jazeera English's coverage literally "follows the sun" around the globe, the network touts on its website.<sup>10</sup> Although the network concentrates on news and documentaries, its programming also includes live debates, entertainment, business and sports shows. News headlines and updates are generally broadcast every half hour. The English and Arabic versions of Al Jazeera, Arabic for 'the Peninsula,' are primarily funded by the tiny, oil-rich, Persian Gulf emirate of Qatar.

### **Al Jazeera English's Mission**

Al Jazeera English aims to "set the news agenda and act as a bridge between cultures" by "providing accurate, impartial and objective news for a global audience from a grass roots level, giving a voice to different perspectives from under-reported regions around the world," the press release stated the day the channel officially launched.<sup>11</sup> The channel portrays itself as an alternative news source rivaling the western media's monopoly, particularly the BBC and CNN. AJE claims to be "reversing the North to South flow of information" by "balancing the current typical information flow by reporting from the developing world back to the West and from the southern to the northern hemisphere." Promoting debate and challenging established perceptions are also among AJE's stated objectives.<sup>12</sup>

Al Jazeera English has a plethora of slogans and catchphrases; many of which are as controversial as the network itself. Shortly after the network's launch, critics claimed slogans

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<sup>9</sup> Seddon, Mark. "Al-Jazeera - TV Most Americans Still Can't Watch." Big Think. Web. 08 Mar. 2010. <<http://bigthink.com/ideas/18390>>.

<sup>10</sup> "Al Jazeera English - About Us - Presenters - Doha." Al Jazeera English - AJE. Web. 08 Mar. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/aboutus/2008/10/2008104175037838670.html>>.

<sup>11</sup> "Al Jazeera English - About Us - Release: Al Jazeera English Launches." Al Jazeera English - AJE. Web. 02 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/aboutus/2006/11/2008525172949768994.html>>.

<sup>12</sup> "Al Jazeera English - About Us - Corporate Profile." Al Jazeera English - AJE. Web. 02 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/aboutus/2006/11/2008525185555444449.html>>.

like, "*Every Angle | Every Side*", "*The Opinion and the Other Opinion*", "*Fearless Journalism*" and "*If it's newsworthy, it gets on air, whether it's Bush or Bin Laden,*" were brazen gibes at the United States and the administration of George W. Bush. However, Khanfar, the Director General of the Al Jazeera Network, told reporters during a July 2009 visit to Washington D.C., that the network is not biased, anti-American or sympathetic to al-Qaeda. On the contrary, he said that by giving a voice to the antagonists Al Jazeera English is actually maintaining objectivity.<sup>13</sup>

Al Jazeera English's former Washington bureau chief, Hafez al- Mirazi, told Hugh Miles, author of *Al Jazeera: How Arab TV News Challenged the World*, that AJE should bring Americans Arab voices, the same way Al Jazeera brings Arabs the voices of American political figures. "If I am broadcasting to Americans I would give them what they are not hearing, people who are marginalized for example," al- Mirazi said. "The people from Washington on Al Jazeera, like Richard Perle and people, we get them as it is important to get the Arab audience to know about them – we need them to learn about America and these voices even if they object to it. In America, people already know these voices, but they are missing some other people in the debate."<sup>14</sup> Al Jazeera's mission to be a global news network does not just mean representing the Arab world's perception of world events, Ben Connors, an Al Jazeera English editor working out of the Washington DC bureau said in an in-person interview. "Our charge as journalists in America is not just to explain to Americans the Arab mindset but to take that American mindset and represent us as something different than a bunch of twenty-somethings running around Iraq

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<sup>13</sup> "Mr. Al-Jazeera Goes to Washington - IPS Ipsnews.net." IPS Inter Press Service. Web. 02 Apr. 2010. <<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=47870>>.

<sup>14</sup> Miles, Hugh. *Al-Jazeera How Arab TV News Challenged the World*. London: Abacus, 2005. Print.

with guns,” Connors said. So, the flow of information and exchange of perspectives goes both ways.<sup>15</sup>

During a March 31, 2010 interview with Amy Goodman for the “Democracy Now” T.V. program, Khanfar, said the goal of Al Jazeera English is to create a dialogue that reflects the collective mind of the nations and cultures. He also stressed the importance of living up to their audience’s trust. “Al Jazeera is a mission,” he said. “We cannot be part of centers of power. We do not accept association of centers of power, neither commercial nor political. We would like to be independent.”<sup>16</sup> Giving no priority to commercial or political considerations over journalistic standards is included in the code of ethics posted on the networks website. Additionally, the code states that the network vows to give “full consideration to the feelings of victims of crime, war, persecution and disaster, their relatives and our viewers” and “recognize diversity in human societies with all their races, cultures and beliefs and their values and intrinsic individualities in order to present unbiased and faithful reflection of them.” The code of ethics also asserts that the network will not allow media competition to adversely affect the network’s journalistic standards “so that getting a ‘scoop’ will not become an end in itself.”<sup>17</sup> In the contemporary 24-hour news cycle, which is becoming increasingly dependent on commercial revenue, thorough news reporting is often sacrificed so that network’s can claim that they got the story first; so this is an is audacious, and potentially economically disadvantageous ambition. However, just because AJE promises to adhere to certain principles, does not mean that it regularly practices that ideology when political, commercial or cultural rewards are at stake. Some people don’t think the channel values its ethics code. “We’re probably asking too much if we request that Al

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<sup>15</sup> "Al Jazeera English - DC Bureau with Ben Connors." Personal interview. 15 Apr. 2010.

<sup>16</sup> "Al Jazeera Chief Wadah Khanfar on Obama's Expansion of the Afghan War, US Policy in the Middle East and the Role of Independent Voices in the Media."

<sup>17</sup> "Al Jazeera English - About Us - Code of Ethics." Al Jazeera English - AJE. Web. 02 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/aboutus/2006/11/2008525185733692771.html>>.

Jazeera take its ethics code down from its official website since it's painfully clear that the rules don't apply," the editor of the Accuracy in Media Report, Cliff Kincaid, wrote in a 2010 article published on the non-profit's website.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Birth of Al Jazeera**

Al Jazeera's Arabic language sister channel first hit airwaves on November 1, 1996. The network was developed after the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani overthrew his father and began a series of government and media reforms. Sheikh Hamad desired to convert the small peninsula into the Switzerland of the Arab world. One of the first steps toward achieving this goal he reasoned, while simultaneously reaping the benefits of good publicity, was to lift the hefty restrictions on the press. He first suggested the idea in 1994 while his father was in power, so by the time he ascended the throne he had already been mulling over the idea for quite some time. Less than a year after assuming authority, the Emir issued a decree loaning 500 million Qatari riyals, about US \$137 million, to the creation a pan-Arab version of CNN. The payment was intended to be a one-time investment that would cover a span of five years, by which point Al Jazeera was projected to be a financially independent commercial operation.<sup>19</sup>

The BBC had started an Arabic language version of the BBC in Qatar with Saudi money in 1994. However, the venture failed when the Saudi Arabian corporation Mawarid withdrew financial support after the BBC aired a documentary critical of Saudi Arabia. That left 250 unemployed BBC-trained journalists in Qatar. Sheikh Hamad hired some of them and production began. At first, Al Jazeera was only broadcast six hours a day, but the station quickly expanded

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<sup>18</sup> "Al-Jazeera for Obama." Accuracy In Media - For Fairness, Accuracy and Balance in News Reporting. Web. 04 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.aim.org/aim-column/al-jazeera-for-obama/>>.

<sup>19</sup> Miles. 2005. 417.



its coverage and by 2000 the station was broadcast 24-hours a day. The channel quickly gained popularity amongst Arab audiences. In its infancy, the Al Jazeera Network served primarily Arab and Muslim nations. But 10 years after the network's creation, Al Jazeera expanded the reach of its programming and established itself in the global media market by launching an English language sister channel.<sup>20</sup>

### **But it's State Sponsored Media! How Can it Not be Propaganda?**

Technically, Al Jazeera Network is government sponsored. However, its staffers and the Qatari government insist that it is not government controlled. After he helped conceive the network, the Emir agreed that Al Jazeera would be independent of his control and decisions about the network would from then on be under the control of the editorial board that was appointed by the Qatari Council of Ministers.<sup>21</sup>

Initially, the Emir only intended to pay for AJE's launch. However, over thirteen years later, Al Jazeera has failed to generate enough revenue to be financially self-sufficient. The Emir still foots 75 percent of the station's bills.<sup>22</sup> The Emir agreed to several more loans after the network failed to become self-sufficient by 2001 and in 2004 he agreed to loan the station US\$30 million on a year-to-year basis.<sup>23</sup>

The network supplements the loans from the Emir by obtaining very modest advertising revenue and subscription fees and selling its footage of the Middle East to international media outlets. Still, *Fobres Magazine* reported in 2009 that the Qatari government is absorbing at least

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<sup>20</sup> Boyd-Barrett, Joseph Oliver, and Shuang Xie. "Al-Jazeera, Phoenix Satellite Television and the Return of the State: Case Studies in Market Liberalization, Public Sphere and Media Imperialism." *International Journal of Communication* 2 (2008): 206-22. Print.

<sup>21</sup> Miles. 2005. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Seddon.

<sup>23</sup> Boyd-Barret.

US\$100 million a year in losses on the whole operation. The network brings in about \$70 million from subscription fees, but it has failed to bring in substantial advertising revenue. Most commercial spots are for state-owned companies like Qatar Petroleum or Qatar Airways. Because the large US cable companies refuse to carry the network, it does bring in money from US advertisers. The Saudi government, angered by the network's coverage of its kingdom, also let it be known that any company advertising on Al Jazeera would be barred from doing business in Saudi Arabia.<sup>24</sup>

On the one hand, it could be argued that the Al Jazeera Network is dependent on the Emir and money from the Qatari government, so its directors will be careful not to offend or criticize the Qatari government. But on the other hand, Qatar is a small country and is not a key player in the international arena. So does it really matter whether Al Jazeera's coverage is not critical of its home country? How often does Qatar actually make headline news? It could also be said that because Qatar is an Arab country, Al Jazeera's coverage will serve only to advance the interests of the Arab world and its coverage will be anti-Zionist and anti-American. However, the US has been one of Qatar's major allies for years, it's home to the biggest US air base in the region, and its biggest foreign investor is ExxonMobil. So it would be contrary to Qatar's national interest for the country to be blatantly anti-American or anti-Israeli. It could also be argued that because it is predominately state sponsored, it is therefore a mouthpiece of the government. However, the Public Broadcasting Service is also sponsored by tax revenue in addition to donations and it is not considered a government mouthpiece. Finally, it could also be said that Al Jazeera's independence from commercial revenue has protected its journalistic integrity. Unlike the

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<sup>24</sup> Helman, Christopher. "Will Americans Tune To Al Jazeera?" Forbes 13 July 2009. Forbes.com. 24 June 2009. Web. 23 Apr. 2010.

deregulated media in the United States, Al Jazeera English does not have to worry about ratings and chase profits.<sup>25</sup>

### **Al Jazeera's Coverage of the U.S. Invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq**

Al Jazeera began attracting global attention in the wake of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Nine days after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Al Jazeera re-ran an exclusive 90-minute interview with Osama bin Laden by the network's correspondent Gamal Ismail from December 1998. During the interview bin Laden explained why it was the duty of Muslims to carry out a *jihad* against the *infidels*; Israel and the United States. Al Jazeera's producers said they aired the interview a second time to give viewers an insight into the mind of bin Laden. Shortly after, on September 24, Al Jazeera's Qatar office received a fax with the handwritten signature of bin Laden. Al Jazeera decided to read bin Laden's 'Message to the Muslims of Pakistan' on air. With the exception of two radical Arab newspapers, the Arab press did not print his picture or the full contents of the fax. The information ministries of many of the Arab governments insured that bin Laden receive sparse press attention. The network also aired a fax from Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar that encouraged Muslims to help finance the war against the West in case the U.S. attacked Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup>

The Taliban government had closed Afghanistan's border to foreign journalists, so before 9/11 only three foreign national correspondents working for the western premium service wires were stationed in Afghanistan. Al Jazeera was the only TV station with an established 24-hour satellite link to Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Therefore, Western media outlets were

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<sup>25</sup> Helman.

<sup>26</sup> Miles. 110-113.

dependent on Al Jazeera's footage as the U.S. prepared to invade Afghanistan and Al Jazeera had a monopoly on all pictures and broadcast interviews coming from Afghanistan. Al Jazeera profited from the situation by selling its Afghanistan footage to TV networks around the world. However, U.K. and U.S. governments quickly claimed that Al Jazeera's footage, especially the pre-recorded statements by bin Laden and videos of al Qaeda, should be censored in its retransmission on other networks to prevent al Qaeda leaders from communicating covert messages to sleeper cells. All the major British and American TV networks agreed to the governments' requests to limit their use of Al Jazeera's footage.<sup>27</sup>

Al Jazeera asserts that the Bush administration attempted to indirectly censor the network on numerous occasions. A Sudanese Al-Jazeera cameraman named Sami al-Haj was detained in Afghanistan in 2001 and held in extrajudicial detention as an "enemy combatant" at Guantanamo Bay. Al Jazeera and the Committee to Protect Journalists demanded al-Haj be given the right to a trial and denounced the U.S.'s actions as a threat to journalism. He was released without charge on May 1, 2008, over six years later.<sup>28</sup> On August 7, 2004, the Iraqi Iyad Allawi interim government supported by the U.S. government closed Al Jazeera's Baghdad office, citing national security concerns. It was originally suppose to be a one-month ban, but the time frame was extended indefinitely.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to indirect censorship, Al Jazeera's journalists and directors claim they were intentionally targeted during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent invasion of Iraq. On November 13, 2001, Al-Jazeera's bureau in Kabul was destroyed by a U.S. missile attack. No one on Al Jazeera's staff was hurt, but some of their homes were damaged. Al Jazeera's

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<sup>27</sup> Miles. 115-125.

<sup>28</sup> "Sami Al-Haj: The Enemy? - Reports - Committee to Protect Journalists." Press Freedom Online - Committee to Protect Journalists. Web. 19 Apr. 2010. <<http://cpj.org/reports/2006/10/prisoner.php>>.

<sup>29</sup> "Al Jazeera Timeline | Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ)." Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ). Web. 19 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.journalism.org/node/1530>>.

managing director, Mohammed Jasim al-Ali, declared that the attack on Al Jazeera's office was intentional. "This office has been known by everybody, the American airplanes know the location of the office," he said. The U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Victoria Clarke responded to the accusation in a December 6, 2001 letter to Al Jazeera saying, "the building [U.S. forces] struck was a known Al Qaeda facility in central Kabul."<sup>30</sup> In April 2003, U.S. forces in Iraq bombed the Basra Sheraton Hotel, which Al Jazeera was using as a base for its correspondents at the time. The only guests at the hotel were Al Jazeera journalists.<sup>31</sup> On April 8, 2003, U.S. bombs hit Al Jazeera's office in Baghdad. Iraq correspondent Tareq Ayyoub was killed in the attack and cameraman Zohair al-Iraqi was seriously wounded. On November 22, 2005, the British tabloid *The Daily Mirror* published a story claiming that it had obtained a leaked memo from the April 16, 2004 meeting between President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, in which Bush suggested bombing Al Jazeera's world headquarters in Doha, Qatar. The Bush administration called *The Daily Mirror* report "outlandish" and the British government tried and convicted the two men who released the memo.<sup>32</sup>

The U.S. government quickly noted the importance of Al Jazeera's reporting in shaping the U.S.'s image in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Middle East as a whole and could determine the success of the U.S.'s efforts in the region. A 2003 Congressional Research Service report entitled "The Al Jazeera News Network: Opportunity or Challenge for U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East" stated that, "with the United States heavily engaged in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, Al Jazeera will continue to play a role in reporting and interpreting U.S. foreign policy to the Arab world." The report concluded the U.S. had a few options in how to handle Al Jazeera: it

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<sup>30</sup> "Al Jazeera Timeline Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ)."

<sup>31</sup> "Al-Jazeera's Basra Hotel Bombed." *Guardian* | [Guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk). Web. 19 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2003/apr/02/broadcasting.iraq1>>.

<sup>32</sup> "Al Jazeera Timeline | Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ)."

could create an alternative Arabic Language Television Network, tie foreign aid to media reform, buy commercial air time on Arab networks, have U.S. officials appear in more interviews in the Arab media, encourage the privatization of the media and/ or favor the more moderate Arab satellite networks in order to foster Al Jazeera's competitors.<sup>33</sup> What the U.S. government didn't bank on, was that it would soon have to deal with Al Jazeera's influence in shaping the perspectives of Western audiences.

### **The Birth of Al Jazeera English**

Al Jazeera English's creation was partly due to the magnitude of attention the Arabic language channel received for its coverage of the war in Afghanistan and a renewed U.S. interest in foreign affairs. Al Jazeera's directors also saw an opening in the U.S. media market. "At the time that AJE began to blossom, the U.S. media networks were very concentrated on the political right and a vacancy existed at the more liberal end of the spectrum. The AJE staff believed they could capitalize on this," Miles wrote in *Al- Jazeera: How Arab TV News Challenged the World*.<sup>34</sup> With the launch of the English language channel, Al Jazeera intended to reposition itself as a global channel akin to the BBC and CNN and not as a strictly pan-Arab Network.

When Al Jazeera English launched on November 15, 2006, it became the first worldwide TV news operation based outside of the United States or Britain.<sup>35</sup> The channel was originally going to be called Al Jazeera International, but the day before it went on air its name was changed to Al Jazeera English, because the channel's Qatari backers decided that the Arabic

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<sup>33</sup> United States. Cong. The Al-Jazeera News Network Opportunity or Challenge for U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East? By Jeremy M. Sharp. Cong. Bill. [Washington, D.C.]: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2003. Print.

<sup>34</sup> Miles. 414.

<sup>35</sup> Miles. 417.

language channel was international in scope and this was just the English language version of an already international network.<sup>36</sup>

Al Jazeera English didn't only inherit the golden calligraphic logo of its Arabic language counterpart; it also inherited its contentious reputation. An Accuracy in Media poll found that 53 percent of Americans opposed the launch of the channel and two-thirds of Americans thought the U.S. government should not allow the channel to enter into the U.S. market.<sup>37</sup> In March 2003, Al Jazeera English's plans to launch its website were foiled by adversaries. Almost immediately after its creation, the website was shut down by hackers. The website's domain name and that of the Arabic-language site were usurped so that visitors were redirected to U.S. patriotic slogan pages or porn sites. The website re-launched in 2006 along with the TV channel.<sup>38</sup>

The day the Al Jazeera English broadcast aired, the channel was available in 80 million homes in Europe, Africa and Southeast Asia, but it was not in the US.<sup>39</sup> Not a single U.S. cable company or major satellite provider agreed to carry the channel because of concern over the network's alleged anti-American bias. Al Jazeera circumvented this impediment by streaming live on the Internet.<sup>40</sup>

Al Jazeera English's launch garnered positive reviews from many of the countries prominent media outlets. The day of its launch, the *USA Today* published an article welcoming the channel, saying, "in a globalized world, the broader the conversation and greater the

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<sup>36</sup> "Al-Jazeera Renames English-language Channel | Media | MediaGuardian." Latest News, Comment and Reviews from the Guardian | Guardian.co.uk. 14 Nov. 2006. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/nov/14/tvnews.television1>>.

<sup>37</sup> Dajani, Jamal. "Al Jazeera English Falls Short of Expectations - NAM." New America Media, 21 Nov. 2006. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <[http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view\\_article.html?article\\_id=f3d3ade3488a2bca1e957e754c4ebd08](http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=f3d3ade3488a2bca1e957e754c4ebd08)>.

<sup>38</sup> Miles. 260.

<sup>39</sup> Stanley, Alessandra. "Not Coming Soon to a Channel Near You." The New York Times- nytimes.com. 16 Nov. 2006. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/16/arts/television/16watch.html>>.

<sup>40</sup> Farhi, Paul. "MHz Networks Introduces Al Jazeera English to Washington Area Cable TV Viewers - Washingtonpost.com." Washingtonpost. 29 Apr. 2009. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/28/AR2009042803918.html>>.

competition for credibility, the better.”<sup>41</sup> The day after its first broadcast *The New York Times* published an article stating it was “a shame” that more Americans wouldn’t be watching the channel. Al Jazeera English “points to where East and West actually meet,” the article declared.<sup>42</sup> Dante Chinni of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, monitored the first five hours of Al Jazeera English’s coverage and concluded that, “the channel seems likely to offer more in-depth coverage of the Middle East than anything else most Americans are going to see.”<sup>43</sup> Journalists from the *Washington Post* and NPR criticized the cable companies for not airing the channel. However, not everyone was enthusiastic about the new kid on the block.

About two months after AJE began broadcasting, *The New York Times* published an op-ed by Judea Pearl, the father of the Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl who was kidnapped and murdered by al Qaeda extremists. “Al Jazeera has been taking its mixture of news coverage and extremist propagandizing to our front door through an English-language station,” Pearl wrote. “Even if Al Jazeera English waters down its alarmist content, it should still be seen as a potential threat: it will bestow respectability upon the practices of its parent network.” Conservative organizations, like The Media Research Center and Accuracy in Media, condemned the channel and criticized the journalists who spoke in favor of it. “Al-Jazeera English is like Al-Jazeera Arabic in that it serves as a mouthpiece for terrorists,” Accuracy in Media’s Cliff Kincaid wrote in a January 2, 2007 column. “American journalists seem unable to recognize enemy propaganda even when it hits them in the face.” The Accuracy in Media group campaigned to keep Al Jazeera off the airwaves in 2006, producing a report entitled “The Al

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<sup>41</sup> Kincaid. 2007.

<sup>42</sup> “Not Coming Soon to a Channel Near You.”

<sup>43</sup> “Five Hours with Al Jazeera in English.” The Christian Science Monitor - CSMonitor.com. 27 Nov. 2006. Web. 21 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1127/p09s01-codc.html>>.



Jazeera Hall of Shame” and a documentary entitled *Terror Television: The Rise of Al Jazeera and the Hate America Media*.<sup>44</sup>

Yet on the other hand, Link TV’s senior director of Middle Eastern Programming, Jamal Dajani, thought Al Jazeera English conformed too much to Western standards and did not live up to the reputation of its Arabic language counterpart. He said the channel’s editorial policy appeared to be very restrained and he was disappointed by “ the detached, analytical attitude of hosts.” “On Al Jazeera English, no matter how hot the topic, their demeanors remain unruffled,” he complained. “This is in direct contrast to the exciting and fiery style on the Arabic Al Jazeera’s programs.”<sup>45</sup> Dajani appears to have changed his mind by 2009, when he announced that his network, LinkTV, would air Al Jazeera English’s Word News hour.<sup>46</sup>

### **Combating Stereotypes: Who Really Works for Al Jazeera English?**

The reporters and anchors on Al Jazeera English look no different than the reporters on the BBC or CNN. They do not all wear *hijabs* and the women do not all cover their hair. Although there are Arab reporters working for Al Jazeera English, there are also European, Asian, American and Latino journalists. When you watch AJE’s newscasts, you will hear accents from all over the globe, including some ‘American accents’. The network’s journalists do not stand out, until they tell you which network they represent.

Connors says there have been situations where it has been a struggle to get access to interview subjects once staffers say they are reporting for Al Jazeera English. “You want to say

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<sup>44</sup> “Enemy Propaganda on Al-Jazeera English.” Accuracy In Media - For Fairness, Accuracy and Balance in News Reporting. 2 Jan. 2007. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.aim.org/media-monitor/enemy-propaganda-on-al-jazeera-english/>>.

<sup>45</sup> Dajani.

<sup>46</sup> Barnhart, Aaron. “Al Jazeera English Not Just about the News | TV Barn.” The TV Barn. 28 May 2009. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <<http://blogs.kansascity.com/tvbarn/2009/05/al-jazeera-english-not-just-about-the-news.html>>.

who you are and where you're from and give them the whole picture, partially because you want to be honest as a journalist," Connors said. "And partially because that's the way that we change the perception of the name. To say, 'ya, I am from Al Jazeera and I'm some white guy with a cup of coffee and I'm not scary or different in any way'." Connors, who joined Al Jazeera English six months before the channel was launched, says that he finds that perceptions about the network have changed in the US over the past four years.<sup>47</sup>

Al Jazeera English has attracted some big names to its staff that have helped the channel establish credibility. Its list of prominent TV personalities, journalists and directors has included Riz Khan, Sir David Frost, Tony Burman, Dave Marash, and Josh Rushing. Khan, a former CNN anchor, currently hosts 'The Riz Khan Show' on AJE. Frost, best known for his series of interviews with US President Richard Nixon, hosts 'Frost Over the World' on the channel. Burman, a former news chief of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, is now AJE's managing director. However, the two additions to the news team that generated the most buzz, were probably Marash and Rushing.

Marash served as the channels Washington anchor for two years. In addition to being a respected American correspondent for ABC's 'Nightline', Marash, who is Jewish, helped the network combat accusations that it was anti-Semitic. However, in 2008, Marash announced his decision to leave the network because of an "anti-American bias" that he said resulted in "stereotypical and shallow" coverage of the US. Marash told Brent Cunningham of the *Columbia Journalism Review* that he felt that "in a globe where Al Jazeera sets a very, very high reporting standard, and a very, very high standard for both numerical and qualitative and authentic staffing, that the United States was becoming a serious exception to their role, and a place where

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<sup>47</sup> "Al Jazeera English - DC Bureau with Ben Connors."

the journalism did not measure up to the standards that were set almost everywhere else by Al Jazeera English's very fine reporting." Marash said part of his decision to leave was also the fact that he was asked to leave his position as anchor and become a full-time correspondent, which he said would greatly diminish editorial input from a US perspective and was another effort to sideline Americans. However, even after leaving the network Marash has said that the Al Jazeera Network's coverage is important for people in the US to be able to watch.<sup>48</sup>

Josh Rushing sort of accidentally stumbled into his role as a poster child for the Al Jazeera Network. He became famous for his appearance in *Control Room*, a documentary released in 2004 about Al Jazeera's coverage of the US invasion of Iraq. Rushing, at the time a Marine spokesman at CENTCOM in Doha at the time the US started invading Iraq, is portrayed in the documentary as a young officer who is gradually becoming more skeptical of how the Pentagon is handling the war and portraying it to the American public. After the documentary was released, the Marines ordered Rushing to stop defending Al Jazeera to the press. When Al Jazeera English launched Rushing was offered a job as a correspondent. Rushing wrote a book shortly thereafter defending the network called, *Mission Al Jazeera: Build A Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World*.<sup>49</sup>

### **Al Jazeera's International Coverage**

Al Jazeera English boasts a staff originating from over 50 countries and reports out of 65 bureaus worldwide on six continents.<sup>50</sup> The network's 500-plus journalists are not just stationed in the traditional news centers in Europe and North America, they are also located in numerous

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<sup>48</sup> Cunningham, Brent. "Dave Marash: Why I Quit." Columbia Journalism Review. 4 Apr. 2008. Web. 23 Apr. 2010. <[http://www.cjr.org/the\\_water\\_cooler/dave\\_marash\\_why\\_i\\_quit.php?page=all](http://www.cjr.org/the_water_cooler/dave_marash_why_i_quit.php?page=all)>.

<sup>49</sup> "Ex-Marine Josh Rushing on His Journey from Military Mouthpiece to Al Jazeera Correspondent." Interview by Amy Goodman. Democracy Now. 20 June 2007. Web. 23 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.democracynow.org>>.

<sup>50</sup> Goodman. 2010.

bureaus in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.<sup>51</sup> Foreign bureaus have been among the hardest hit by cost-cutting measures in print and television media alike. At the time of its launch, *The Los Angeles Times* noted that AJE had "more foreign correspondents in world capitals than all the U.S. networks combined."<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, David Chater, a correspondent for Al Jazeera English since 2006, says the network stations television journalists in parts of the world largely that are neglected by the mainstream networks and air stories that normally get bypassed the top evening news shows.<sup>53</sup>

A paradoxical situation has arisen in the media industry: the world is more interconnected than ever before but comprehensive international news coverage by the US media is diminishing. According to the Pew Research Center's annual State of the News Media report, coverage of international events by American media fell by about 40 percent in 2008. That year, NBC, CBS and ABC only devoted about 6 to 7 percent of their newscasts to foreign affairs not involving the US.<sup>54</sup> In 2009, cable news became more US-centric. On average only 3 percent of the cable newshole was devoted to foreign affairs not directly related to the US, of course that percentage was higher when it directly involved the US. For example, CNN devoted 18 percent of its newscast to US-involved international news and 5 percent to strictly foreign news, Fox News devoted 15 percent of its newscast to US involved foreign affairs and 4 percent to non-US news and MSNBC devoted just 11 percent of its coverage to U.S.-involved foreign affairs and 2 percent to non-US news. However, online news started to fill that gap in 2009. Online media covered more international news than any other medium. More than one-third of the online news

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<sup>51</sup> Farhi, Paul. "Al Jazeera's U.S. Face." *The Washington Post* 15 Nov. 2006. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/14/AR2006111401363.html>>.

<sup>52</sup> Neuman, Johanna. "Al Jazeera, Wide Angle." *The Los Angeles Times*. 15 Nov. 2006. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <<http://articles.latimes.com/2006/nov/15/entertainment/et-jazeera15>>.

<sup>53</sup> Chater, David. "Al Jazeera English- Afghanistan Correspondent." E-mail interview. 2 Apr. 2010.

<sup>54</sup> "Journalism.org." *Journalism.org- The State of the News Media 2010*. Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, Mar. 2009. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <[http://www.stateofthemedial.org/2009/narrative\\_networktv\\_contentanalysis.php?cat=1&media=6](http://www.stateofthemedial.org/2009/narrative_networktv_contentanalysis.php?cat=1&media=6)>.

hole was devoted to international news, stories with a focus on foreign affairs directly relating to the US represented 18 percent of the online news hole and 17 percent concerned matters that did not involve the US.<sup>55</sup>

Dajani, of LinkTV, says Al Jazeera English is filling that newshole. "At a time when international news coverage has been receding rapidly in most U.S. news outlets due to closures of foreign news bureaus," Dajani said. "Al Jazeera English has been filling the void with professional, and comprehensive reporting from around the globe."<sup>56</sup> Another trend in the media has been a reliance, and perhaps an over-reliance, on premium service wires. Although Al Jazeera English does use the services of Reuters and the AP, most of the material is original because of its extensive network of bureaus and foreign correspondents around the globe.<sup>57</sup>

### **Al Jazeera English's Global Reach**

Al Jazeera English's global reach is about 190 million in just over 100 countries. However, few of those viewers are in the US. Almost four years after the channel's launch, Al Jazeera English is still not broadcast nationally.<sup>58</sup>

### **Watching Al Jazeera English in the U.S.**

In 2009, more than two years after Al Jazeera English's launch, the channel was still only available to audiences in Toledo, Ohio and Burlington, Vermont, as well as a few buildings in

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<sup>55</sup> "The State of the News Media 2010." Journalism.org. PEW Project for Excellence in Journalism, 15 Mar. 2010. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <[http://www.stateofthemedias.org/2010/year\\_sectorhighlights.php#Network](http://www.stateofthemedias.org/2010/year_sectorhighlights.php#Network)>.

<sup>56</sup> Barnhart, Aaron.

<sup>57</sup> Quresi, Sophia. "Al Jazeera English Interview- DC Bureau with Sophia Quresi." E-mail interview. 22 Apr. 2010.

<sup>58</sup> "Al Jazeera Chief Wadah Khanfar on Obama's Expansion of the Afghan War, US Policy in the Middle East and the Role of Independent Voices in the Media."

downtown Washington D.C. served by private cable hookups. Al Jazeera has also struck a few deals with existing networks that allowed its programming to get some US exposure. In September 2008, LinkTV agreed to broadcast Al Jazeera English's 'Witness' program, allowing AJE to reach 30 million U.S. households nationwide each week. The Al Jazeera Network also landed a deal with PBS, to provide content for its nightly news program WorldFocus. According to the arrangement PBS did not have to pay Jazeera English for its reports, however, it would allow its reports to bare AJE's gold logo.<sup>59</sup> In an article entitled "Al Jazeera's Presence on PBS Alarms Some," Fox News reported that US lawmakers where concerned about PBS's decision to air reports by Al Jazeera. "According to some in Congress," the article said, "PBS, which is partially funded by taxpayers dollars, is recklessly promoting Al Jazeera by airing the segments." The article went on to quote Republican Rep. Sue Myrick saying, "American people should be pretty darn upset about the fact that their tax payer dollars are going to fund this...they're already upset about what their tax dollars are going to fund, and now they're funding propaganda." The Fox News article included a statement by 'WorldFocus' saying, "though many people who have not seen Al Jazeera English think of it as a propaganda machine for Islamic extremist causes, much of what it produces is not ideological. We also believe Al Jazeera English does sometimes offer us and our viewers a unique perspective from various parts of the world where it has access that others don't."<sup>60</sup> However, Al Jazeera English's 24-hour broadcast still lacked significant US distribution.

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<sup>59</sup> Moss, Linda. "Al Jazeera To Provide News for 'Worldfocus' Public TV." The Cable Industry Book-of-Record Homepage | Multichannel News. Multichannel News, 15 Jan. 2009. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <[http://www.multichannel.com/article/162225-Al\\_Jazeera\\_To\\_Provide\\_News\\_for\\_Worldfocus\\_Public\\_TV\\_Show.php](http://www.multichannel.com/article/162225-Al_Jazeera_To_Provide_News_for_Worldfocus_Public_TV_Show.php)>.

<sup>60</sup> Sawn, Eric. "FOXNews.com - Al Jazeera's Presence on PBS Alarms Some." 8 Apr. 2009. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/04/08/al-jazeeras-presence-pbs-alarms/>>.

That's when Al Jazeera signed a deal with MHz Networks, a Falls Church, Virginia-based educational broadcaster. On April 29, 2009, AJE's half-hour evening newscast aired at 10pm on MHz Networks' primary local channel. Then on July 1, 2009, MHz Networks expanded that coverage to 24-hours on Network 5. "For over two years, Al Jazeera English has been setting new standards in international reporting by providing a platform for the under-represented corners of the world," said Phil Lawrie, Director of Global Distribution for Al Jazeera. "It is essential to the mission of MHz Networks to bring news coverage from across the globe to make as many perspectives as possible available to U.S. audiences," said Frederick Thomas, chief executive of MHz Networks. The 24-hour AJE channel is now available to the D.C. market on channel 30.5 and cable audiences can also tune in on Comcast channel 275, Cox channel 474, RCN channel 34 and Verizon FIOS channel 457. The deal with MHz brought AJE to 2.3 million more U.S. households.<sup>61</sup> That said, there are over 307 million people in the US and many of their households don't receive the signal for Al Jazeera English.<sup>62</sup> However, US audiences without access to the MHz Network can watch Al Jazeera English online, via streaming on AJE's website, Livestation or YouTube. Official numbers for how many web-based viewers AJE has in total are hard to come by. However, the network's YouTube channel has over 6 million views.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> MHz Networks. MHz Networks Launches Al Jazeera English on MHz Networks 5. 1 July 2009. Web. 21 Apr. 2010. <http://www.mhznetworks.org>.

<sup>62</sup> Census Bureau Home Page. Rep. Mar. 2009. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <http://www.census.gov/popest/estimates.html>.

<sup>63</sup> "YouTube - AlJazeeraEnglish's Channel." YouTube - Broadcast Yourself. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/user/AlJazeeraEnglish>.

### **Al Jazeera's Online Traffic**

It is hard to compare AJE's US viewership to that of the US networks, because it is not available to the wider American public. However, traffic on AJE's website can be compared to traffic on the websites of the major US networks. During the Israel-Hamas Gaza war in 2008-2009, online US viewership of Al-Jazeera English rose dramatically because the channel had what CNN and other the BBC didn't have: reporters inside Gaza. US viewership has since declined, but AJE has retained some of those viewers. AJE still lags far behind CNN and Fox News among U.S. web-surfers. Al Jazeera is ranked #1,907 on the Alexa US online traffic rank index. It is ranked # 933 in the world. Fox News on the other hand, is ranked #41 in the US traffic rank index and #190 in the world. CNN is ranked #18 in the US traffic rank index and #59 in the world.<sup>64</sup> Managing Director of AJE Tony Burman told *Forbes Magazines* in June 2009, that 60 percent of AJE's Internet traffic is from North America.<sup>65</sup>

### **WHY IS AL JAZEERA ENGLISH CONTROVERSIAL?**

Al Jazeera English has stirred up controversy since the day it went on air, or perhaps even before that. The contentious past of its Arabic language sister channel and the controversial nature of its editorial stance have granted AJE a fair share of international media attention; however, that hasn't helped the network establish a stable U.S. viewership. "The very name Al Jazeera is a bigger obstacle than most cable networks have at launch," said Phil Swann, president

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<sup>64</sup> Alexa the Web Information Company. Web. 22 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.alexa.com/help/traffic-learn-more>>.

<sup>65</sup> Helman.



of TVPredictions.com, a website that tracks the television industry. In 2006, when Al Jazeera officially launched, Swann predicted that the network's name would hinder the channel's ability to attract U.S. audiences. Indeed, despite its popularity in other parts of the globe, the network still only reaches a limited U.S. audience. Misconceptions and preconceived ideas about the network are abundant and feed controversy, even when there isn't any controversy to begin with. The network's competitors and critics play a vital role in keeping Al Jazeera's 'anti-American' reputation alive.<sup>66</sup>

The day Al Jazeera English was launched, Fox News, which was then, and remains to be, the most watched cable news channel in the US, claimed that the Arabic Al Jazeera showed videos of western hostages being beheaded by masked terrorists.<sup>67</sup> Fox News was referring to several videotapes received and broadcast by Al Jazeera throughout 2004, of blindfolded Americans taken hostage in Iraq that were pleading for their release or reading prepared statements. The channel also broadcast the pleas of family members of the hostages, pleading for the return of their loved ones. Although, Al Jazeera did show the videos sent to them by the kidnappers, it did not show any of the victims actually being beheaded. Al Jazeera has never broadcast a beheading on TV or posted a video of a beheading on its website.<sup>68</sup> The closest the channel ever came to actually broadcasting a beheading was in 2004, when it was fooled into airing a hoax beheading video, made by a California man who wanted to prove how easy it was to fake those videos.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "Al Jazeera, Wide Angle - Page 2 - Los Angeles Times," Featured Articles From The Los Angeles Times. 15 Nov. 2006. Web. 04 Apr. 2010. <<http://articles.latimes.com/2006/nov/15/entertainment/et-jazeera15/2>>.

<sup>67</sup> The State of the News Media. Pew Center for Excellence in Journalism. 2010. Web. 16 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.stateofthemedias.org/2010/>>.

<sup>68</sup> "Al Jazeera's Global Gamble: A PEJ Interview, Al Jazeera Timeline."

<sup>69</sup> Vanderford, Benjamin. Iraq Beheading Video Hoax Press Release - Vanderford, Martin, Kirchner. 13 May 2004. Web. 24 Apr. 2010. <<http://videohoax.ctyme.com/>>.

However, once a theoretically 'reliable' government official accuses you of broadcasting beheadings it's difficult to clean up your image. On June 4, 2005, Donald Rumsfeld accused Al Jazeera of encouraging radical Islamic militants by broadcasting the beheadings of American soldiers. "But America is not wrong," Rumsfeld said. "It's the people who are going on television chopping off people's heads, that is wrong."<sup>70</sup> In response, Al Jazeera's former media spokesman, Jihad Ballout, pointed out that beheading videos were readily available on other websites but "because of Al Jazeera's reputation, people mistakenly attribute the pictures to [Al Jazeera]."<sup>71</sup>

In addition to sharing its name with its Arabic language sister channel, it shares its name with other Middle Eastern media. On February 15 2006, *The Times*, published an editorial accusing Al Jazeera English of deliberately inflaming tensions in the Middle East by posting footage of British troops beating Iraqi prisoners. Everything the article described finding on the website, [aljazeera.com](http://aljazeera.com), was indeed there. The only problem was that the TV network's website is actually [AlJazeera.net](http://AlJazeera.net). It's domain name is also similar to that of the Al Jazeera Newspaper, [al-jazirah.com](http://al-jazirah.com), and the Al Jazeera Information Centre, [aljazeeraah.info](http://aljazeeraah.info). Material on all those websites is all much more radical than anything published on the TV network's website. Al Jazeera attempted to obtain the domain name [aljazeera.com](http://aljazeera.com) because it was confusingly similar to their own; but it lost the case. Al Jazeera cannot have trademark rights of its name because it is a universal word that existed before the creation of the company.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> "Resources for the Global Journalist." Boston University. 7 June 2005. Web. 16 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.bu.edu/globalbeat/index060605.html>>.

<sup>71</sup> "Rumsfeld Claims Al Jazeera 'Promotes Terrorism'" Al Jazeera English. 4 June 2005. Web. 16 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.blythe-systems.com/pipermail/nytr/Week-of-Mon-20050530/017989.html>>.

<sup>72</sup> "WIPO Domain Name Decision: D2005-0309." WIPO - World Intellectual Property Organization. Web. 04 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/decisions/html/2005/d2005-0309.html>>.

However, the channel's name is not completely to blame; sometimes it is the reporters that throw coal into the fire. Just as Al Jazeera English was struggling to hit airwaves in 2003, one of the Arabic channel's leading war correspondents in Afghanistan, Taysir Allouni, was arrested for allegedly aiding the al Qaeda cell responsible for the Madrid bombings by working as their financial courier. Allouni was well known before his arrest for a one-on-one interview with bin Laden just weeks after the Sept. 11 attacks. Allouni claimed innocence and said he was only doing his journalistic duty by interviewing bin Laden and was in no way associated with al Qaeda. However, prosecutors found enough evidence linking him to al Qaeda to convict him in a Spanish court in 2005. Critics said that proved that Al Jazeera at least sympathized with al Qaeda.<sup>73</sup>

Then of course, there are the infamous Osama bin Laden tapes. Out of the 60 plus messages bin Laden and al Qaeda leaders have released since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, Al Jazeera and Al Jazeera English have collectively aired about 20 of bin Laden's major statements. The first bin Laden tape, in which bin Laden said, "America has been hit by Allah at its most vulnerable point, destroying, thank God, its most prestigious buildings," in reference to the Sept. 11 attacks, was aired on October 7, 2001. The most recent bin Laden tape, in which bin Laden threatened to kill any Americans captured by al-Qaeda if the U.S. executes the self-professed mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks Khalid Sheik Mohammed, was broadcast by the Al Jazeera Network on March 25, 2010.<sup>74</sup> Whether or not bin Laden's messages should be made available to the public has been a national security, geopolitical and journalistic ethics quandary. Is Al Jazeera abetting bin Laden by giving him media attention? Or it is the responsibility of the

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<sup>73</sup> Miles, Hugh. "Al Jazeera Supports Terrorism" Foreign Policy Magazine. 12 June 2006. Web. 4 Apr. 2010. <[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2006/06/12/think\\_again\\_al\\_jazeera](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2006/06/12/think_again_al_jazeera)>.

<sup>74</sup> "Al Jazeera English - Middle East - Timeline: Messages from Bin Laden." Al Jazeera English - AJE. 25 Mar. 2010. Web. 16 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/01/2010124123232335456.html>>.

media to air bin Laden's tapes because he is a formidable geopolitical actor and his messages provide insight into what the US can do to change its image abroad and dissuade dissidents from resorting to terrorist actions?

The Bush Administration was not pleased by Al Jazeera's coverage of bin Laden or the "War on Terror" in the months following Sept. 11. The White House said Al Jazeera was broadcasting too many reruns of an old bin Laden interview and was giving too much airtime to analysts hostile to the US. So the White House invited the Qatari Emir to Washington for a meeting with the Organization of the Islamic Conference. During the Emir's time in Washington, Secretary of State Colin Powell purportedly took the Emir aside to talk about the news network broadcasting from his country. According to Bush Administration officials, Vice President Dick Cheney asked the Emir to not give bin Laden a "platform or use the Arab press to spread propaganda" because he was concerned Al Jazeera was legitimizing al Qaeda by giving bin Laden free airtime. After the meeting, the Emir told CNN that Powell asked him to try to influence the tone of Al Jazeera's reporting. However, the Emir denied that Al Jazeera's coverage was unbalanced and pointed out that the network had granted U.S. and Afghani officials equal airtime. "We give all opposing views," the Emir said. "Bin Laden is a party to the conflict and his opinions must be heard."<sup>75</sup> Two weeks later, Al Jazeera broadcasted another bin Laden tape. The White House's rhetoric was much stronger after that incident.<sup>76</sup>

After The Al Jazeera Network aired nearly the entirety of bin Laden's audio "Message from Osama to Obama" on January 24, 2010, Al Jazeera English's program 'Listening Post', a half-hour program hosted by Richard Gizbert that looks into how the news is covered by the world's media, explained Al Jazeera's editorial decision to air the bin Laden tapes and defended

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<sup>75</sup> Miles. 2005. 122-124.

<sup>76</sup> "CNN.com - Source: Cheney Warned Al-Jazeera about Bin Laden Tapes - February 1, 2002." Web. 03 Apr. 2010. <<http://edition.cnn.com/2002/US/02/01/cheney.al.jazeera/index.html>>.

the network's decision as "good journalism." The program aired a long-format package piece on the bin Laden tapes which approached the dilemma from the stance that bin Laden's messages affect US international diplomacy and people have the right to be informed. Al Jazeera Network's editor in chief, Ahmed al Sheik, explained in the package piece that Al Jazeera deemed that particular bin Laden recording worthy of broadcast "because it is going to put more pressure on the US president to take more drastic action against so-called terrorists and terror actions and [Al Jazeera] thought it was also important to tell the world that [bin Laden] is still active and he still has something to say." The package also pointed out, pointedly using a video clip with the Fox News insignia in the bottom left-hand corner, that other networks still talk about and play clips from bin Laden's messages, even if they don't play them in their entirety. "In other words, when Al Jazeera or the BBC broadcasts someone's message, its not because the journalists' there agree with the message," Gizbert said. "They do it because it's news." Furthermore, the program stated that the reason bin Laden chooses to send his messages to Al Jazeera time and time again, not because Al Jazeera and al Qaeda are affiliated, but because he knows his messages will reach a global audience and that those in the Arab world regard Al Jazeera as a credible news source.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, al Sheik explained during the package how Al Jazeera's editorial team decides which parts of the bin Laden messages are newsworthy and which parts it would be journalistically irresponsible to air. "We have developed a sort of a mechanism for when we receive any tapes through which we decide whether this tape is authentic," al Sheik said. "We have the experience to tell whether this is really bin Laden or not and then we decide which parts of it should be put on air and which parts are just mere propaganda which shouldn't go on our

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<sup>77</sup> " Listening Post - The Osama Bin Laden Tapes." Al Jazeera English - AJE. 29 Jan. 2010. Web. 24 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/listeningpost/2010/01/201012912127297610.html>>.

screen.”<sup>78</sup> Some experts on terrorist propaganda tactics agree that by making appropriate editorial decisions, Al Jazeera can make bin Laden’s messages available to the public without playing into the hands of al Qaeda and becoming a tool for al Qaeda to disseminate propaganda or invoke scare tactics. Brigitte Nacos says in *Mass Mediated Terrorism: the central role of the media in terrorism and counterterrorism*, that the messages from bin Laden should be aired and the government’s only credible argument against the broadcast of these messages is that they increase public anxiety. However, Nacos says that the media can avoid this by playing bin Laden’s messages in full and providing the appropriate context, rather than playing and replaying a specific inflammatory passage from the message and having commentators, ‘experts’ and pundits analyze the message.<sup>79</sup>

The network’s approach to reporting often ignites debate as well, especially in conflict zones involving the US and/ or its allies; as in the Gaza Strip, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. “Your media cover the rockets taking off. We report from where they land,” Al Jazeera reporters explained to Mike Ferner, author of *Inside the Red Zone*.<sup>80</sup> In his 2006 *New York Times* op-ed, Pearl expressed concern that Al Jazeera English’s coverage would fuel anti-US sentiments and provoke terrorist acts within the US, which Pearl said its Arabic counterpart had done in the Middle East for years:

Al Jazeera’s editors choreograph a worldview in which an irreconcilable struggle rages between an evil-meaning Western oppressor and its helpless, righteous Arab victims. Most worrisome, perhaps, it often reports on supposed Western conspiracies behind most Arab hardships or failings, thus fueling the sense of helplessness, humiliation and anger among Muslim youths and helping turn them into potential recruits for terrorist organizations (Pearl, 2006).

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<sup>78</sup> " Listening Post - The Osama Bin Laden Tapes."

<sup>79</sup> Nacos, Brigitte Lebens. *Mass-mediated Terrorism: the Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007. 162-63. Print.

<sup>80</sup> Ferner, Mike. *Inside the Red Zone: a Veteran for Peace Reports from Iraq*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006. 10. Print.

Critics say Al Jazeera's word and picture choices are carefully selected to paint the US in a bad light.<sup>81</sup> For example, the "War on Terror," as christened by the Bush Administration, is often prefixed by the network's anchors and reporters as the "US' so-called 'war on terror'".<sup>82</sup> The word "resistance" often replaces what the US media labels as "insurgency."<sup>83</sup> The US's "War in Iraq" is referred to as the "War on Iraq."<sup>84</sup>

The Al Jazeera Network has been disparaged, by the US government, pundits and other media outlets, for its extensive coverage of civilian casualties in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The editorial boss at CNN, Walter Isaacson, told *The New York Times* after U.S. forces began military operations in Afghanistan that, "It seem[ed] perverse to focus too much on the casualties or hardship in Afghanistan." Many of the other US networks agreed and focused little of its coverage on civilian casualties.<sup>85</sup> The network has been accused of having a tendency to air graphic images of violence and civilian casualties in the aftermath of American or Israeli military actions. The 2003 CRS Report for Congress on Al-Jazeera, states that the Arabic channel is known to air "lead-in segments to news reports, which often feature montages of violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Afghanistan, or Iraq. These short snippets contain flashes of provocative pictures, usually of human suffering, accompanied by dramatic background music."<sup>86</sup> Some military and government officials argue that Al Jazeera's focus on civilian casualties only serves to rally anti-American sentiment in the Middle East and around the globe.

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<sup>81</sup> Pearl.

<sup>82</sup> Khan, Riz. "War on Terror' through Muslim Eyes." Empire. Al Jazeera English. 27 Feb. 2010. Television.

<sup>83</sup> "Afghan Offensive Meets Resistance." Al Jazeera English - AJE. 16 Feb. 2010. Web. 25 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2010/02/2010215191137598388.html>>.

<sup>84</sup> Schechter, Danny. "Focus - Making the Iraq War Disappear." Al Jazeera English - AJE. 21 Mar. 2010. Web. 25 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/focus/2010/03/201032018391360446.html>>.

<sup>85</sup> Zelnick, Bob. "Nieman Reports | War Reporting: How Should Civilian Casualties Be Reported?" Nieman Foundation. Harvard College, 2003. Web. 27 Apr. 2010.

<<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=101255>>.

<sup>86</sup> Jeremy M. Sharp. Cong. Bill.

In 2004, senior military spokesman Mark Kimmitt was quoted by the *New York Times* giving advice to Iraqis who watch Al Jazeera in Arabic, to “change the channel to a legitimate, authoritative, honest news station. The stations that are showing Americans intentionally killing women and children are not legitimate news sources,” he said.<sup>87</sup> In 2005, a US State Department official described Al Jazeera’s focus on civilian casualties and its emphasis on the civil liberty violations of American Muslims as the “equivalent to shouting fire in a crowded theatre every single day.”<sup>88</sup>

However, Al Jazeera’s journalists contend that the network is full-filling its duty as a government and military watchdog when it shows unpleasant or graphic videos of civilian casualties. Al Jazeera’s editorial choices regarding WikiLeaks’ “Collateral Murder” video. On April 6, 2010, the Al Jazeera Network devoted a significant amount of its coverage to a classified government video released by WikiLeaks that shows a US helicopter firing on civilians in Baghdad, Iraq in 2007. Two Reuters journalists were among those killed. Al Jazeera chose to air the whole unedited video. Meanwhile, the WikiLeaks story recieved little attention in the US media.<sup>89</sup> “Al Jazeera’s approach is obviously very different and clearly uncomfortably so in many cases for the military establishment [in Afghanistan]: both Afghan and foreign,” Chater, a correspondent for Al Jazeera English in Afghanistan, said in a personal e-mail exchange. Chater says because of Al Jazeera English’s network of stringers that are located across the country and not just in Kabul, the channel is able to balance the picture of events in Afghanistan as painted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces, the International Security Assistance Force and the Afghan government led by President Hamid Karzai with “beyond the wire” pieces

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<sup>87</sup> "CNN to Al Jazeera: Why Report Civilian Deaths?" Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR). 15 Apr. 2004. Web. 16 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=1587>>.

<sup>88</sup> Miles. 2005. 403.

<sup>89</sup> "Video Shows 'US Attack' on Iraqis." Al Jazeera English - AJE. 6 Apr. 2010. Web. 28 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/americas/2010/04/201045123449200569.html>>.



that approach the topic from the viewpoint of the Afghan locals.<sup>90</sup>

We're not embedded viewing the country behind a screen of rifles and uniforms. Such perspectives are valuable and relevant, but very narrow....One perspective we're very keen on, is to give the views of the ordinary Afghan families caught in the middle of this bitter war. Our PR guys call it "giving a voice to the voiceless." It's not an idle boast. In this information age it's that voice which is often drowned out by the flood of press statements coming out of the military and government press machines" (Chater 2010).

So the question becomes, in what context does Al Jazeera English show the images of civilian casualties or the destruction of neighborhoods? Should the media focus on the macro-level of geopolitics or should it focus on the individuals marginalized or killed by inter-state affairs? Is there an ethical balance between the two?

Qureshi, a Pakistani American who works as an Interview Producer at Al Jazeera English's Washington DC bureau, says she left CNN to work for Al Jazeera English because she felt the network had a different focus. From what she has seen, the mainstream US media tends to focus its coverage of Pakistan on politics and violence. "This is only a sliver of what is going on in Pakistan. I rarely see stories about women, children, education, health, art, culture, development," Qureshi said in a personal email exchange. "We cover the violence and we cover the politics. But we also do stories on humanitarian issues, development, and even cultural issues."<sup>91</sup> Although the network's coverage of Pakistan primarily focused on violence and politics in 2010, Al Jazeera English has also done stories on the Pakistani film industry, a ban on Lahore's kite flying festival, a hydroelectric project, the story of a Pakistani school girl in the Swat Valley, Pakistani comedians, a Pakistani film star leading a new women's equality movement in the SWAT valley and the country's cricket and field hockey teams.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Chater, David.

<sup>91</sup> "Al Jazeera English Interview- DC Bureau with Sophia Quresi."

<sup>92</sup> Al Jazeera English - AJE. Web. 25 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/>>.

Pakistani journalist Faiz Uwnh Jan and professor of political science at the University of Peshawar Nasir Khattak, think Al Jazeera needs to cover even more of those types of human interest stories. Jan says while its true that the Western media tends to depict his home country as part of the epicenter of the “War on Terror,” particularly in Waziristan and his home of Peshawar, and focus on stories of US and NATO troop successes while neglecting stories about civilian casualties, Al Jazeera doesn’t show the complete picture either. “The reality is lying between found on the BBC and CNN and Al Jazeera,” he said in an in-person interview. Al Jazeera, in its attempts to demonstrate the realities of war on the local Pakistanis, begins to sensationalize the news and neglects to show a modern and developed Pakistan. Khattak agrees with Jan and says that Al Jazeera at times forgets the human element and falls into the same patterns of “disaster tourism” as CNN, the BCC and Fox. Khattak says he is offended by all of the international media coverage of Pakistan, including Al Jazeera, he says they all present his country as backward. “When we see coverage of Pakistan on TV, we don’t recognize that this is our country,” he said. The international media he says, present only a “selective reality,” in which they choose a particular Pakistani from a particular neighborhood, which is usually the most impoverished in the area, that serves the purpose of their story, but fail to put it into context by showing that not all of Pakistan is Third World.<sup>93</sup>

The network has also been called anti-Semitic, for its purportedly pro-Palestinian stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The network heavily covered the Israeli government’s announcement in March that it would be expanding its settlement of “illegal housing units” into the “occupied Palestinian land” of East Jerusalem. However, even if Al Jazeera English has a pro-Arab slant to its reporting, which is understandable since it is based out of an Arab state and is a branch of a originally Arab network, that does not automatically make the network anti-

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<sup>93</sup> Khattak, Nasir, and Faiz Uwnh Jan. "Pakistan and Media Coverage." Personal interview. 11 Mar. 2010.

Semitic. Miles pointed out in an article published in *Foreign Policy Magazine* in 2006, that until the Arabic Al Jazeera arrived, most Arabs had never even heard an Israeli's voice. Therefore the network was promoting Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. The network has also devoted more time to Arab issues and interviewed more Israeli officials than any other media outside of the country. Furthermore, Miles points out that just as Al Jazeera was banned from Bahrain because of its supposed Zionist bias, its bureaus were also shut down in some Arab countries because of news coverage that angered the government.<sup>94</sup> Israeli media like, *The Jerusalem Post* and *Haaretz*, have also published pieces on Al Jazeera English that describe the channel's reporting as "unbiased," according to the Al Jazeera English's new public relations website.<sup>95</sup>

Although some critics believe that Al Jazeera English's tendency to cover contentious issues leads to cultural and political tensions in the international arena by provoking existing tensions, other scholars suggest that Al Jazeera English's coverage actually functions as a "conciliatory media" that contributes to the development of an "environment that is more conducive to cooperation, negotiation and reconciliation." In 2008, Mohammed el-Nawawy and Shawn Powers conducted a study on Al Jazeera English as a model of the propensity of satellite news to mediate contemporary international conflicts. The study found that over time viewers of AJE became less dogmatic in their perceptions of conflicts and thereby receptive to cross-cultural dialogue, a characteristic that el-Nawawy and Powers conclude is essential in the contemporary globalized society.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Miles. 2006.

<sup>95</sup> I Want Al Jazeera English. 2009. Web. 25 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.iwantaje.net/>>.

<sup>96</sup> El-Nawawy, Mohammed, and Shawn Powers. *Mediating Conflict Al-Jazeera English and the Possibility of a Concilia Tory Media*. Rep. Los Angeles: Figueroa, 2008. Print.

## **US PERCEPTIONS**

There are no recent surveys of the US perception of Al Jazeera English. I conducted my own survey of 100 people from different regions of the country and of different ages. 50 percent said they had never seen Al Jazeera English and 8 percent said they will never watch the channel and 40 percent said they had seen it once in passing. Still 14 percent said that they firmly believed that Al Jazeera English was the mouthpiece of terrorists. Another 9 percent said it was anti-American and 28 percent said the channel's coverage was too critical of the US. The majority of those surveyed reporting considering themselves liberal or moderate. Only 11 percent considered themselves conservative. That nixes the idea that it is just conservatives who have an unfavorable view of the channel. That would mean that the channel either is anti-American or many people have pre-conceived notions about the channel.

In 2009, Al Jazeera English launched a public relations campaign that aims to combat the myths and misconceptions that the network says are hindering its ability to reach North American audiences. The campaign website, IWantAJE.net, asks viewers to email their cable providers and ask them to carry AJE.<sup>97</sup>

## **Brief Background on Current Situation in Afghanistan**

Under the administration of President Barack Obama a troop surge of 30 thousand additional US troops was sent in to Afghanistan in 2010 as part of a timetable for US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Washington will begin to withdraw its troops in mid-2011. NATO foreign ministers have also recently agreed on a plan to begin turning responsibility over to Afghan

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<sup>97</sup> I Want Al Jazeera English.

troops over the course of the 2011.<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile Afghan President Hamid Karzai has announced that he plans on holding a “peace jirga” with Taliban members that are willing to reconcile with the government.<sup>99</sup>

### **Brief Background on Current Situation in Pakistan**

The United States has increased the number of drone attacks in Pakistan’s northwestern region, especially in the Waziristan region, where the US military reports many of the militants supporting the insurgency in Afghanistan are hiding. Waziristan is said to be a fortress of al Qaeda and the Taliban. More than 870 people have been killed in nearly 100 drone strikes in Pakistan since August 2008 a wave of suicide bomb attacks in the region has also killed over 3,000 people since 2007.<sup>100</sup> The capture of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who is said to have been second-in-command to Taliban chief Mullah Omar and the commander in charge of attacks against US and NATO troops in Afghanistan, in Pakistan in early February was hailed as a significant development in the War in Afghanistan. Recent targeted killings of pro-government people in the Swat Valley could indicate a Taliban resurgence. Pakistan’s Intelligence is leading the interrogation of Baradar and it has been suggested that the country is using the militant leader’s arrest to secure a role in the Taliban-Afghan government reconciliation talks.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> "Afghanistan Says 4-5 Years to Take over Security." Washingtonpost. Reuters, 25 Apr. 2010. Web. 25 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/25/AR2010042501237.html>>.

<sup>99</sup> Rahimi, Sangar. "Talks on Taliban Postponed." NYTimes.com. 21 Apr. 2010. Web. 25 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/22/world/asia/22briefs-afghanjirga.html>>.

<sup>100</sup> "AFP: US Drone Kills Seven in NW Pakistan: Security Officials." AFP, 24 Apr. 2010. Web. 25 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hLGEC-kaT7BG1NzrXJ7WO3tib31A>>.

<sup>101</sup> Tiedemann, Katherine. "Daily Brief: Afghan Peace Jirga Delayed." The AfPak Channel | Foreign Policy. 21 Apr. 2010. Web. 25 Apr. 2010. <[http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/04/21/daily\\_brief\\_afghan\\_peace\\_jirga\\_delayed](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/04/21/daily_brief_afghan_peace_jirga_delayed)>.

## **CONTENT ANALYSIS**

In order to conduct a comprehensive content analysis of Al Jazeera English, the analysis was broken down into three main components: an analysis of the individual video packages included within the channel's newscasts and posted on their website, an analysis of the channel's average nightly newscast rundown and an analysis of the front page and accompanying articles on AJE's website. The analysis spanned over a ten-week period.

How does a news outlet report a story objectively without injecting bias into a story? How do consumers of the news media detect media bias? First, I will state the obvious, every statement included in a report made must be correct. But even if the facts are correct they can be misconstrued. The selection and ordering of facts, the context in which information is reported, the quotes and soundbites that are included in the piece and the video that is matched to particular words spoken by the reporter, all create an impression of events that may or may not reflect events or facts accurately. The breakdown of a newscast rundown can also give key insight into a news media outlet's bias. Which stories are prominently featured in the opening block of the newscast? Which stories are package pieces? Which stories are only allotted a measly 20-second voice over? What topics inspire long-format interviews?

It is also important to critically look at how reliable a news outlet's sources are. Do the sources have ulterior motives that might prevent them from telling the complete truth? The news media tend to over-rely on "official" government sources, who basically reiterate the government press releases. Consider from whose point of view the news is reported. Also look at whether the media represents opposing sides. Are parallel examples given for both sides of a debate? Do the reporters resort to stereotypes? Also consider whether there are unchallenged assumptions? Take a look at the language. Is it loaded with heavy and salacious words aimed at getting the attention

of audiences? How do those words alter a reader or viewers interpretation of the information? Is there a lack of the relevant context necessary for a media consumer to understand a story or fact in its entirety? Do headlines and teases match the story? Are important issues sidelined by sensationalist celebrity news and political scandal?<sup>102</sup>

### **Video Analysis: Packages covering US relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan**

There are a few key elements characterizing the packages aired on Al Jazeera English about US relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan. First of all, the correspondents report from locations all over the countries and are not just located in the capital cities of Kabul and Islamabad. Secondly, the stories tend to focus on Afghani and Pakistani internal affairs as a result of US policy and there is little emphasis on the actual US policy decision-making process. Two common themes weave their way through all of the video pieces: rather than focusing on the militaristic aspects of US troop presence in Afghanistan or the US military's campaign against the al Qaeda and Taliban members hiding in Pakistan, the packages focus on the humanitarian aspects of war and the marginalized voice.

In February, Al Jazeera English devoted a significant amount of its coverage to the Moshtarak Operation launched by ISAF in Helmand province, Afghanistan. The primary objective of the Afghan-led-counter-insurgency operation was to take control of the town of Marjah. Every package on Operation Moshtarak mentioned either the affects of the offensive on the locals living in Helmand province or the importance of earning the trust of the Afghans.

One package, by James Bays, reported that there were warnings of a humanitarian crisis in Marjah because civilians caught in the crossfire between the Taliban and NATO forces were

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<sup>102</sup> "How To Detect Bias In News Media." Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR). Web. 26 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=121>>.

fleeing their homes and, because the town was shut down and the roads and markets were not open, many Marjah residents did not have food or access to medical treatment. The reporter interviewed the refugees about the fighting taking place inside of their homes and their quality of life since they fled Marja. The reporter also interviewed a representative from the International Red Cross about how difficult it was for the NGO to transport aid to the refugees.<sup>103</sup> Another package showed the black, red and green Afghan flag being raised in a marketplace, a sign that the Taliban was defeated in the area. However, despite NATO forces success in “securing” a key town, the package showed Marja residents complaining to the governor that their “families [were] trapped, terrified in their homes.” The issue that angered local Afghans more than any other, Bays said, was the number of civilian casualties and the recent deaths of local Afghans in Lashkar Gah had damaged the operation in the eyes of the locals.<sup>104</sup> Another package reported that Operation Moshtarak seemed to be a success, however, the Taliban was likely to take control of the region again as soon as the international forces left, unless ISAF was able to win the support of the local people, which is the key long-term success.<sup>105</sup>

Rather than focusing on the logistics of the military operation, although that was addressed as well, during an interview on the eleventh day of the Moshtarak offensive with the commander of the US Marines in Afghanistan's Helmand province, Brigadier-General Larry Nicholson, Bays asked about the Afghan civilians that were trapped in their homes during the offensive and how the US Military would assure that the civilians had access to food and medical treatment. Bays also asked the Brigadier-General whether the deaths of civilians in the ISAF

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<sup>103</sup> Bays, James. "Civilians Flee Marjah Fighting." Al Jazeera English. 22 Feb. 2010. Television.

<sup>104</sup> Bays, James. Offensive 'secures' Key Afghan Town. Al Jazeera English. 18 Feb. 2010. Television.

<sup>105</sup> Khodr, Zeina. "Forces 'positive' on Afghan Assault." Al Jazeera English - AJE. 14 Feb. 2010. Television. Web. 25. Apr. 2010. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2010/02/20102148583438899.html>



airstrikes was undermining the whole operation, to which Nicholson replied ‘yes.’<sup>106</sup> Al Jazeera has been criticized for its emphasis on civilian casualties. Yet, ranking military general acknowledges that a high rate of casualties is detrimental to its efforts. When you consider that a high rate of civilian casualties is not just a number, but a human life, it seems that casualties of war should be a top priority in media coverage. “Journalists ought to begin by examining the superficial fact that civilian casualties are a part of every war,” Bob Zelnick, a former ABC correspondent wrote for the Neimann Report in 2003. It begs the question, why then are the casualties of war not more prominent in mainstream media coverage?<sup>107</sup>

In the buildup to the offensive in Helmand, correspondent David Chater interviewed the civilians from Marjah that had fled to displacement camps near Kabul about living conditions in the camps, where the temperature often drops below zero degrees. “In the warmth and cover of their armored columns, the Americans speed by, oblivious to the squalor that surrounds them,” Chater said. Meanwhile, the corresponding video shows refugees carrying sacks of lumber through the snow while Army vehicles drive by on a street in the background. That combination of language and imagery certainly is emotive. It stirs up sympathy for the Afghans while implying that the American forces are insensitive to the struggles of the refugees; the latter being an assumption and not established fact. One could argue that that qualifies Chater’s package as slanted or biased journalism. However, while opinion was undeniably injected into the piece, it does not interfere with the viewer’s ability to contextualize the information.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Bays, James. "Interview: US Commander in Helmand." Brigadier-General Larry Brigadier-General Larry Nicholson. Al Jazeera English. Lashkar Gah, Afghanistan, 23 Feb. 2010. Television. Web. 25. Apr. 2010. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2010/02/20102231621247927.html>

<sup>107</sup> Miles. 403.

<sup>108</sup> Chater, David. "Afghan Displaced Face Harsh Winter." Al Jazeera English. 8 Feb. 2010. Web. 26 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2010/02/201027205338502472.html>>.

Chater's script does not violate journalistic ethics. He was reporting how he perceived the situation and had video to support his assessment. The camera-shot at that precise moment in the package reflects of the purpose of the piece as a whole. It appears the camera was located within the refugee camp while it videotaped the Army vehicles passing in preparation for the upcoming offensive. The package looks at the offensive from the perspective of the Afghans in the refugee camp and the writing and videography does not try to hide that. Chater wraps up the package saying, "these people are still casualties of the war, a war being fought in their name. A war that has left them stranded in a no-man's land." Emotive? Definitely. Biased? No, because he made his perspective on the story apparent to his audience and does not try to mislead them. Can and should a reporter be completely impassive while reporting on a story about human suffering? "The idea that journalists must be detached and neutral in the middle of chaos is outdated and wrong. In a disaster zone, journalists are not neutral observers. They are part of the world's response, an essential communication channel for the rescue effort, and for the raising of funds for humanitarian agencies." Reporters are human, and audiences do not expect, nor appreciate when, a journalist reports a story with expressionless writing and a deadpan voice.<sup>109</sup>

No government officials are interviewed in Chater's package. Only the voices of the refugees in the camp are heard. Chater quotes General Stanley McChrystal during his standup, pointedly located within the refugee camp, but he critiques the General afterward saying that the General is speaking in military terms when he says conditions in Afghanistan are improving and he is not speaking in terms of living conditions for Afghans. Is the package balanced without the representation of military or government officials? Yes. What is a military spokesman or government pundit going to say that audiences don't already know? The military's position is

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<sup>109</sup> Ward, Stephen J.A. "Emotion in Reporting: Use and Abuse." The Canadian Journalism Project. 19 Jan. 2010. Web. 26 Apr. 2010. <[http://www.j-source.ca/english\\_new/detail.php?id=4693](http://www.j-source.ca/english_new/detail.php?id=4693)>.

reiterated on the news on a daily basis without being balanced out by the voices of Afghan civilians who are and will be affected by the outcome of the War in Afghanistan for years to come. In addition, Afghan civilians are probably the most valuable and reliable interview sources on the situation in Afghanistan: they see the situation on the ground on a daily basis, know the landscape, know the culture, are familiar with all key players and have few, if any, ulterior motives, i.e. political or economic gains, that would lead them to misrepresent the truth to reporters.

During an edition of 'Inside Story' that aired April 6, 2010, anchor Nick Clark spoke with the editor of the *South Asia Journal*, a sociologist at the University of Strathclyde and co-editor Pulsemedia.org and a fellow at the Hudson Institute, about the attack on the US consulate in Peshawar. Clark purposed the question of whether Pakistan is "paying the price for the US's so-called 'War on Terror'" and mentions that no Americans died in the attack but at least six Pakistanis were killed and then continues to say that there is speculation that the attacks may be revenge for US drone bombings targeting the Taliban in the Swat valley. The b-roll is jarring, including the video of a pool of red blood on the ground with flies swarming around it, and buildings razed by attacks. If Al Jazeera was truly anti-American, there is no question that the majority of the program's guest panelists, or at least one among the guest panel, would argue that the US should cease its military campaign in Pakistan. However, two of the guests stated that there has been progress in Pakistan over the past year because of the US military strategy in Pakistan and although a strictly military solution will not succeed in Pakistan, it is important to uproot the Taliban before political and economic rebuilding can begin in the country. Furthermore they stated that the withdrawal of US troops will not bring peace to the country. The third guest, the sociologist and co-editor of *Pulsemedia.org*, said that "the US strategy is

myopic” because it fails to put the situation into context. He explains that the Pakistan government is hesitant to bring down the Taliban because of its terse relationship with its neighbor India, a country that the US has good relations with. Again, a common theme emerged during this debate: the suggestion that the US has a narrow-minded approach to its relations with Pakistan and for that matter, with the rest of the world.<sup>110</sup>

AJE Correspondent Zeina Khodr took an interesting approach to a report on the efforts of the NATO forces in the Kandahar province. She reported that NATO forces would need to win the support of tribal Pashtun elders in order to expel the Taliban and secure the province. Many of the Pashtuns however, are not willing to work with US forces she said because they feel that the Americans do not respect them. Kohr interviewed the tribal elders about their sentiments about the foreign forces and the Taliban and asked whom they would support if they were forced to choose. Kohr concluded that the Taliban has been successful in exploiting the grievances of the Pashtuns and that was going to be a difficulty for US forces to overcome. The package was visually exquisite. Tight shots of the crows feet around an elder Pashtun’s eyes and pans of the tribal village make the story more intimate and the viewer feels like they are there with the elder as he explains why he wants the foreign forces to leave his country. Tight shots of the young men listening intently to the elder as he speaks help demonstrate how influential the elders are in the tribal areas of Afghanistan. The package included a soundbite from the elder, in Pashtun of course and translated into English, saying that even if the Americans offered him a kingdom he would not work along with the Americans, because he had done that before and received nothing

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<sup>110</sup> " Inside Story - Pakistan: A New Wave of Attacks?" Al Jazeera English. 6 Apr. 2010. Web. 28 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/insidestory/2010/04/2010479941998798.html>>.

for his efforts and had not been treated with respect. Marginalized voices, like those of the Pashtun tribal elders, are rarely represented in the mainstream media.<sup>111</sup>

The marginalized voices are not just in the Middle East. Al Jazeera English's packages appear to include political minorities in the US whose opinions rarely make the 10 o'clock news. One video on a US congressional hearing on the use of the unmanned aerial vehicles that Washington is suspected of using in Afghanistan and Pakistan, begins with "a lone protestor" in the audience who claims that civilian lives are among the collateral damage caused by the UVAs that are targeting al Qaeda and the Taliban. The corresponding b-roll shows Afghans carrying wooden caskets and the ruins of Afghan neighborhoods struck by the UVAs. Although the reporter never actually says that the "lone protestor" is right, it suggests it through its b-roll selection.<sup>112</sup>

The day President Barack Obama made his unannounced trip to Afghanistan to meet with President Karzai and speak to the US troops on the ground, Al Jazeera reported that the president's message was well received by the troops, however, his message might "fall on deaf ears" in the Kandahar province, where a series of suicide bombs has resulted in a "deteriorated" security situation. The report was not unfavorable of President Obama; however, it put his speech into context by pointing out that a morale-inducing speech does not necessarily mean a successful offensive and that giving the perspective of the local Afghans. Once again, the underlying and not-so subtle message that AJE seemed to be presenting in this report was that

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<sup>111</sup> Khodr, Zeina. "Afghanistan's Influential Elders." Al Jazeera English. 8 Feb. 2010. Television. Web. 25 Apr. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2010/02/20102895347413333.html>

<sup>112</sup> "Al Jazeera English - Americas - US Panel Debates Drone Legality." Al Jazeera English - AJE. 24 Mar. 2010. Web. 28 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/americas/2010/03/2010324132827997625.html>>.

the US is losing the support of the Afghans because the Afghan civilians are suffering because of Taliban retaliation attacks.<sup>113</sup>

One particular interview stands out as something you would never see in the mainstream US news: an exclusive interview with a member of the Taliban who was fighting against Afghan-NATO forces of Operation Moshtarak. Al Jazeera's website notes beneath the video that the interview took place just after an airstrike in which over 30 civilians were killed by NATO forces who mistakenly bombed a bus that was assumed to be transporting Taliban fighters. The Taliban member, whose face was not shown, said Operation Moshtarak was failing because the deaths of Afghan civilians was resulting in increased local support of the Taliban. He explained that the Taliban uses guerilla warfare tactics and when the NATO forces arrive in the area with its air-support to attack the Taliban fighters, the fighters have already retreated and the NATO forces only end up killing civilians. During the interview, the Taliban fighter states that, "Islam means no corruption, it means innocent people are not hassled. People here do not want democracy they want *Sharia* law." While the Taliban fighter pauses during that sentence, the natural sound is amplified so that the viewer can hear the hum of a helicopter over head. The amplification of the natural sound is undoubtedly intended to catch the viewer's attention and encourage the viewer to connect the images of NATO forces and Afghan civilians being hassled. Was this an unethical editorial decision? Was this a subtle way for Al Jazeera English to voice support for the Taliban? No. As long as that helicopter noise really was in the background, the amplification of the natural sound was not journalistically unsound. The helicopter noise is actually context that helps the viewers understand how what the Taliban member is saying plays out in the real world. Imagine you are an Afghan civilian and every day you hear the sounds of

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<sup>113</sup> Chater, David. "Obama Urges Progress in Afghanistan." Al Jazeera English - AJE. 29 Mar. 2010. Web. 30 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2010/03/201032816319310458.html>>.

helicopters overhead and wonder whether there will be an airstrike in your neighborhood. AJE is not inferring that NATO forces are evil and promoting the Taliban, it is giving audiences an opportunity to understand how the Taliban is able to garner the support of locals.<sup>114</sup>

The next question is whether it was ethical for AJE to provide a Taliban fighter (AJE noticeably refers to him as Taliban fighter and not as a terrorist) the opportunity to express his views in a public medium? Yes. The interview gave audiences insight into the Taliban's perspective on the war, something that is needed in order for audiences to have a complete picture. Does interviewing a Taliban member actually mean that AJE is achieving greater objectivity because it is presenting both sides of the conflict? Similarly, in March, AJE also broadcast the latest bin Laden recording and posted it on its website. In his book *Imperial Hubris*, Michael Scheuer says the media is guilty of exacerbating what was already a "distorted America-centric vision of reality." Scheuer says US and Western media are failing their audiences by not airing bin Laden's messages, which would allow for his actions to be put in cultural and historical context. "We need to know, for example, in America, how angry the rest of the world is at Americans," David Marash told the *Colombia Journalism Review* in 2008. No matter how unpleasant voices are important for US audiences to hear.<sup>115</sup> It allows audiences to have a clearer understanding of their 'enemy's' motives and perspectives and may also function as a mirror and allow US audiences the opportunity to look at their society from an outside perspective.

If the AJE supports the actions of al Qaeda and the Taliban, I doubt it would refer to the Taliban as "the enemy." However, that is how the native Pakistani correspondent Kamal Hyder refers to the Taliban in one news package on the Pakistani Army's success in taking over a

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<sup>114</sup> "Nato 'losing Afghan Support'" Al Jazeera English. 23 Feb. 2010. Television. Web. 25 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2010/02/2010222131354638461.html>>.

<sup>115</sup> Cunningham, Brent

Taliban stronghold in Bajaur on the border with Afghanistan. Rather than giving the Pakistani Army however, Hyder says the *lashkars*, or the local militias, are the reason Pakistan has been successful in its effort to root out the “the intruders” from Afghanistan. Hyder show the locals dancing to music in celebration of the defeat of the Taliban.<sup>116</sup> Hyder has done several packages on the *lashkars*. In another package, Hyder says the *lashkars* are the key to stability in the SWAT Valley because after the last defensive in the SWAT Valley the “biggest difficulty was how to identify friend and foe but with the formation of the *lashkars* that job has become quite easy because the villagers are now defending their own patch of territory and they know the enemy from a friend.” The trend running through Hyder’s packages seems to be that local militias are more successful than state armies or foreign forces in defeating the Taliban because they know the people and the area in a way that outsiders cannot and you need the support of the locals in order to maintain stability. Hyder seems to insinuate that the villagers near the border shared by Pakistan and Afghanistan should be permitted to wage their own battle against the Taliban; all they need are weaponry and training.<sup>117</sup> David Chater has also done similar packages on local militias in Afghanistan. The local militias receive little media in the U.S. media. However, AJE has produced numerous reports on touting the capabilities of local militias to defeat the Taliban.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Hyder, Kamal. "Pakistan 'takes Over' Taliban Base." Al Jazeera English - AJE. 3 Mar. 2010. Web. 30 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2010/03/2010331460778788.html>>.

<sup>117</sup> Hyder, Kamal. "Tribal Armies Guard against Taliban." YouTube. 16 Jan. 2010. Web. 30 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCQclFkLiPQ>>.

<sup>118</sup> Chater, David. " Afghan Villages Form Local Militias." Al Jazeera English - AJE. 28 Jan. 2010. Web. 30 Apr. 2010. <<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2010/01/2010128142452123541.html>>.



## Analysis of the Nightly Newscast

Rough rundowns for an average week of nightly newscasts are attached in charts A-F. This selected week demonstrates how much coverage the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan are allotted on an average week when there are few major headlines coming out of the countries. Afghanistan and Pakistan made the news every night and the stories were not just 25-second voiceovers regurgitating information from the wires with archive b-roll pasted in. The stories were produced by foreign correspondents based in the countries. Approximately 17 minutes of coverage were devoted to Pakistan during the nightly newscasts for that week and another 17 minutes of coverage were dedicated to Afghanistan. That's about 6 percent of the newscast that was devoted to each country during the nightly news that week. That's a considerable amount when you consider that Afghanistan coverage only makes up about 1 percent of the newshole on NBC and ABC and even less than that on CBS according to the 2009 State of the Media Report. Pakistan didn't even make the list.<sup>119</sup> On March 12, the Lahore bomb attacks was the lead story. Pakistan and Afghanistan often made the first half of the newscasts, which is generally devoted to stories that producers think are the most important. The stories about Afghanistan and Pakistan also appeared in many of the teases. Teases are designed to keep viewers tuned in for stories later on in the newscast, so AJE's producers assume that viewers of the station are interested in the stories about suicide bombings in Pakistan, securing stability on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and the relationship between locals and the Taliban. The majority of the stories that appeared during the week of March 8-13 about Afghanistan and Pakistan, concerned the motives behind suicide bombings and the relationship between stability in Pakistan and stability in Afghanistan.

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<sup>119</sup> "Network TV Content" State of the Media Report 2009.

Please see attached charts A-F for a break down of the content in AJE's newscasts.

Noticeably absent from the rundown are a preponderance of stories about US domestic affairs, celebrity news and sensationalist stories about murder and sex. The stories are predominately international in scope.<sup>120</sup>

**Monday March 8, 2010 9:00 p.m. News**

**Bureau: Washington D.C.**

**Chart A**

Segment	Time	Story Topic	Type
A0	9:00:00	Open Animation & Welcome Tease: Nigerian religious violence; U.S. gender gap; Singapore security threat	ON CAM- VO
A1	9:01:00	Vice President Biden goes to Israel to encourage Israeli-Palestinian peace talks	VO
A2	9:03:00	VP Biden's Middle East tour, the viability of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, Israel's announcement that it is developing settlements in East Jerusalem.	PKG
A2	9:05:15	Interview with Israeli- Palestinian relations expert: how will settlements in East Jerusalem affect the peace process?	PKG
A3	9:09:00	Tease: Iraqi election- women's roles in Iraqi parliament; civil servants strike in UK; personal losses of Haiti medical professionals	VO
A4	9:10:00	Nigerian violence	VO
A5	9:11:10	Christian- Muslim violence in Nigeria	PKG
A6	9:14:15	Live Interview with experts on Nigerian about the underlying causes of the religious massacres of Christians by Muslims.	ON CAM- SPLIT SCREEN
A7	9:18:50	Fraud in Togo elections	VO
A8	9:19:45	Turkey earthquake- rescue efforts and mourning losses	PKG
A9	9:21:16	Pakistani Taliban will continue to maintain a presence as long as drone strikes continue in tribal areas	VO-SOT- VO
A10	9:21:43	Taliban in northern Afghanistan. Taliban persecute people for cooperating with the government of Karzai. "We're not against schools but they are against our national interest"	PKG
A11	9:24:20	Workers strike in UK	PKG
A12	9:27:01	Tease: Iraq election, mourning the dead after Chilean earthquake	VO
A13	9:27:25	Commercial	X
A14	9:29:00	Turkey earthquake survivors	VO
A15	9:29:25	Iraq elections	VO

<sup>120</sup> Please see attached charts A-F.

A16	9:31:46	Female candidates Iraq election	VO
A17	9:32:31	Pre-taped interview with United States Institute of Peace's Manal Omar about tie between women's rights and women politicians in Iraq	PKG
A18	9:35:13	Women working for gender equality in SWAT Valley and women's rights under the Taliban.	PKG
A19	9:38:14	International Women's day- U.S. not so far advanced in gender equality: i.e. wage, fortune 500 CEOs, government.	READER
A20	9:40:42	U.S. men rethinking traditional gender roles. Is the recession a victory for the women's movement?	PKG
A21	9:43:34	U.S. health care reform	VO
A22	9:44:28	Chile: students going back to school; restoring power and water sources	PKG
A23	9:46:48	Tease: Singapore security, Haitian doctor lives in car but continues to help those in need.	VO
A24	9:47:20	Commercial	X
A25	9:49:01	Welcome back Headline review tease: Biden meeting with Palestine and Israel; Nigeria	READER
A26	9:50:00	Singapore water security	VO
A27	9:52:48	New election laws in Myanmar rules on the length of campaign, candidate registration	VO
A28	9:53:11	Snow leopard	VO
A29	9:53:28	Haiti frees U.S. missionary	VO
A30	9:53:46	Troops/ assistance leaving Haiti	VO
A31	9:54:18	Haitian doctor living in his car, no salary, no time to grieve for family	PKG
A32	9:57:55	Commercial	X
A33	9:58:39	Weather	ON CAM
A34	10:00:18	Top stories: U.S. VP in Israel for peace talks	PKG
A35	10:03:03	Nigerian violence	VO-SOT- VO
A36	10:03:48	Myanmar campaign/election laws	VO
A37	10:04:09	Women are 62 percent eligible voters in Iraq	VO
A38	10:04:29	Turkey earthquake	VO
A39	10:04:44	SIG OUT, music, closing animation	ON CAM

**Tuesday March 9, 2010 9:00 p.m. News**

**Bureau: Washington D.C.**

**Chart B**

Segment	Time	Story Topic	Type
A0	9:00:00	Tease: Israel Open Animation & Welcome	ON CAM-VO

		Tease: Indonesia; Rachel Corrie lawsuit, Karl Rove on the Bush era	
A1	9:01:28	Vice President Biden and Israeli- Palestinian peace talks	READER
A2	9:02:03	“Embarrassing setback”-Biden condemns building in East Jerusalem.	PKG
A2	9:04:43	Live interview with Palestinian scholar- Biden pursue indirect peace talks with Palestinians and President Obama’s response that Israel should stop all settlement activity.	ON CAM- SPLIT SCREEN
A3	9:10:03	Tease: Iraqi elections, the next battleground in Afghanistan-Kandahar, rebuilding Haiti	ON CAM
A4	9:10:42	Violence in central Nigeria between Muslims and Christians	PKG
A5	9:14:00	Togo post election unrest	VO
A6	9:14:40	Iraqi election	PKG
A7	9:17:19	Nuclear ambitions- Damascus	READER
A8	9:18:08	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty	PKG
A9	9:20:09	Greek financial crisis	VO
A10	9:20:29	Annie Leibovitz	VO
A11	9:20:55	Karl Rove- defends Bush era and publishes book “Courage and Consequences: My Life as a Conservative in the Fight”	PKG
A12	9:23:55	Live Interview with the director of movie “Bush’s Brain” on “spin doctors”	ON CAM- SPLIT SCREEN
A13	9:27:39	Kandahar, Afghanistan- the next battleground	PKG
A14	9:30:00	Tease: rebuilding Haiti, how gold is making Guatemalans sick	VO
A15	9:30:40	Commercial	X
A16	9:31:35	Welcome back Headline Review: the massacre of about 500 Nigerian Christians, Iraqi elections, East Jerusalem settlements and Israeli Prime Minister	ON CAM-VO
A17	9:33:00	Rachel Corrie lawsuit- Protester killed while demonstrating against Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes	VO
A18	9:33:30	Pre-taped Interview with Corrie’s parents	PKG
A19	9:35:50	IDF Protest in NYC in front of Waldorf	VO
A20	9:36:15	Indonesia and Australian Prime Ministers meet	ON CAM- READER
A21	9:36:36	Sri Lankan refugees are a political bargaining tool for Indonesia and Australia	PKG
A22	9:40:05	U.S. President Obama offering aid to Haitian president René Préval	VO
A23	9:40:32	Earthquake aftermath- Préval: “stop sending food aid into Haiti because it will destroy local economy”	PKG
A24	9:43:05	Private contractors looking for opportunities in Haiti	VO
A25	9:43:29	Gold mining is making local Guatemalans sick.	PKG
A26	9:47:25	Chilean President Michelle Bachelet’s exiting approval rating of 84% and Piñera getting ready to step up	VO
A27	9:50:35	Tease: police kill suspected terrorist behind Jakarta bombings	VO

A28	9:51:00	Commercial	X
A29	9:52:20	Headlines: Biden response to 1,600 new homes in “occupied East Jerusalem”	VO
A30	9:52:49	Al Qaeda Indonesia- Bali bombing suspect is dead	PKG
A31	9:55:07	Myanmar elections commission announced Aung San Su Kyi banned from elections	VO
A32	9:55:36	Copenhagen Climate Accord	VO
A33	9:57:29	SIG OUT	ON CAM
A34	9:57:46	Commercial	X
A35	9:58:10	Weather	ON CAM
A36	10:00:00	HEADLINES: Israel’s “provocative” move	VO
A37	10:01:04	Joe Biden- “Embarrassing setback”	PKG
A38	10:03:19	Rachel Corrie’s death lawsuit going to court	VO
A39	10:03:44	Nigerian Violence	VO
A40	10:03:58	Myanmar Elections	VO
A41	10:04:20	Obama to meet with Préval	VO
A42	10:04:50	Music, closing animation	ON CAM

### **Wednesday March 10, 2010 9:00 p.m. News**

**Bureau: Washington D.C.**

#### **Chart C**

Segment	Time	Story Topic	Type
A0	9:00:00	Tease: Israel Open Animation & Welcome Tease: Biden on indirect peace talks between Israel and Palestine, sanctions on Iran, violence in Mexico, Nigerian terrorist	ON CAM- VO
A1	9:01:20	No indirect negotiations between Israel and Palestine	READER
A2	9:02:00	Biden’s tough words for Israel. Biden talks with President Mahmoud Abbas	PKG
A2	9:04:25	Interview with Biden: “The Palestinians deserve a separate state”	PKG
A3	9:06:22	Live interview with Israel government’s Ofir Gendlemen	ON CAM
A4	9:12:54	Gaza war crimes	READER
A5	9:13:19	Tease: Haiti: why are the children taken by missionaries still waiting to be taken back?, Kenyan health care system, lawsuit going to court about peace advocate killed by Israeli bull dozer	VO
A6	9:14:01	Terrorist attack in Pakistan kills NGO workers	VO
A7	9:15:40	Ahmadinejad in Kabul	VO
A8	9:16:49	Tease Iran sanctions	VO
A9	9:17:00	CPJ investigates a series of kidnappings in Mexican Drug War and self-censorship among journalists	PKG
A10	9:19:58	Rebuilding Haiti-Obama talks with Préval	VO-SOT-VO

A11	9:21:10	Children taken by missionaries stuck in limbo in Haiti	PKG
A12	9:24:21	Inauguration of Piñera in Chile	VO
A13	9:24:45	Piñera's challenge of reconstruction in earthquake aftermath	PKG
A14	9:26:59	Somalia food aid not getting to the people and Mogadishu violence	VO
A15	9:27:42	Nigerian police killed 2 people out after curfew	VO
A16	9:28:11	Kidney disease in Kenya	VO
A17	9:28:29	Exchange program between Kenyan and Spanish surgeons.	PKG
A18	9:31:17	Tease: political leverage Israel v. Biden, court case of protestor killed by Israeli bull dozer	VO
A19	9:31:48	Commercial	X
A20	9:33:00	Headline Review: Middle East peace talks	VO
A21	9:33:36	Amr. Moussa "Palestine to withdraw from any talks"	VO-SOT-VO
A22	9:37:03	Live interview with Palestinian-American journalist	ON CAM
A23	9:41:40	Death of American peace activist in Gaza Rachel Corrie	PKG
A24	9:44:39	Tease: Security vs. civil rights at airports	VO
A25	9:44:57	Commercial	X
A26	9:46:50	Headline: Middle East Peace,	VO
A27	9:47:24	Biden interview on Iran sanctions	PKG
A28	9:51:23	Senate hearing on security concerns vs. civil rights	PKG
A29	9:54:23	Arrests with murder attempt on cartoonist who put Prophet Mohammed's face on body of a dog	VO
A30	9:54:58	Egyptian religious leader died	PKG
A31	9:55:07	Myanmar elections commission announced Aung San Su Kyi banned from elections	VO
A32	9:57:33	Tease headlines: Israel, Nigeria, Iran, Pakistan	READER
A33	9:58:02	Weather	ON CAM
A34	9:59:18	Commercial break	X
A35	9:58:10	Headline Tease	ON CAM-VO
A36	10:00:00	Felicity Barr anchors the headlines: Israeli-Palestinian peace talks	PKG
A37	10:03:16	Curfews in Nigeria	VO
A38	10:03:39	Suicide bomber in Pakistan	VO
A39	10:03:57	Iran and nuclear weapons	VO-SOT-VO
A40	10:04:16	Death of famous Egyptian leader	VO
A41	10:04:45	SIGOUT	ON CAM
A42	10:04:50	Music, closing animation	ON CAM

**Thursday March 11, 2010 9:00 p.m. News**

**Bureau: Washington D.C.**

**Chart D**

Segment	Time	Story Topic	Type
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A0	9:00:00	Tease: President Piñera in Chile Welcome Biden in the West Bank, Iraq parliamentary elections, Hillary Clinton US Human Rights Report, Beijing Reaction to annual People's Congress	ON CAM-VO
A1	9:01:34	Chile Piñera dealing with earthquake and rebuilding	PKG
A2	9:04:03	Pre-taped interview with Ricardo Israel on the being the President or reconstruction	PKG
A2	9:06:27	Tease: Iraq living under sanctions, hunger in Zimbabwe, politicians pleading on guilty in UK	VO
A3	9:07:16	VP Biden in Israel and the settlements in East Jerusalem and the Arab neighborhoods.	PKG
A4	9:10:17	Biden concluded trip with praise for Israel despite Israel's announcement of settlements	ON CAM-SOT- ON CAM
A5	9:11:15	Human Rights Report: occupied Gaza, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Iran	PKG
A6	9:13:45	China National People's Congress communism and social economic development	PKG
A7	9:16:53	Iraq elections and complaints about poll fraud, UN defends election process	PKG
A8	9:19:50	Iraqi independence US sanctions are hurting the country's agricultural sector	VO
A9	9:23:05	State Department Human Rights Report: tape of Riz Khan show on the report as not a policy making report but a report to inform the people who make policy decisions.	PKG
A10	9:25:52	Live interview with Victor Gao in China On China's response to being on the human rights list.	ON CAM
A11	9:29:30	Commercial break	X
A12	9:30:42	Welcome back, Headline tease: new Chilean Presidents, Biden deals with Middle East peace talks	VO
A13	9:31:25	Palestine drops out of talks, what will that mean for Abbas's credibility	VO-SOT-VO
A14	9:32:50	"Slap in the face" by Israel and is a relationship between Israel and Palestine possible.	PKG
A15	9:35:20	Pre-taped interview with Biden about the two-state solution	PKG
A16	9:42:23	Karzai. Pakistan's stability essential to Afghanistan's stability	VO
A17	9:42:49	Violence in Mogadishu	VO
A18	9:43:08	Nigeria women's rally	VO
A19	9:43:20	Zimbabwe in crisis. Millions of people hungry and AIDS	PKG
A20	9:45:49	Tease: Haiti's challenge, UK politicians held to account	VO
A21	9:48:06	Headlines on al Jazeera: Biden condemns Israel, Chilean president, Rene Preval's visit to Washington	VO
A22	9:49:11	Self-sufficiency in post-hurricane Haiti, spirituality as a	PKG

		way to cope with the destruction	
A23	9:53:46	Obama donated Nobel Peace Prize money to 10 charities	VO
A24	9:54:17	Mexico- gay marriage	VO
A25	9:54:37	Greece- protests outside of Parliament	VO
A26	9:55:05	Ukraine – new prime minister	VO
A27	9:55:24	Labor Party false accounting in the UK	PKG
A28	9:57:23	Goodbye	ON CAM
A29	9:57:57	Weather	VO
A30	9:59:10	Commercial	X
A31	10:00:00	Headlines: Chilean President Piñera	PKG
A32	10:02:26	Biden condemns Israel	VO
A33	10:02:50	Iraq- elections	VO
A34	10:03:17	Pakistan-bomb attack	VO
A35	10:03:40	Greece protest	VO
A36	10:04:05	Zimbabwe	VO
A37	10:04:34	SIGOUT	VO
A38	10:05:00	Music, closing animation	ON CAM

### **Friday March 12, 2010 9:00 p.m. News**

**Bureau: Washington D.C.**

#### **Chart E**

Segment	Time	Story Topic	Type
A0	9:00:00	Tease: Lahore Pakistan bomb attacks	ON CAM-VO
A1	9:00:38	Welcome: child abuse scandal in Catholic Church, Russia signs nuclear energy deals with India, Sept 11 attack, Israel riots about settlements in Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods	VO
A2	9:02:09	Lahore- series of small bombs, second suicide attack there in one week	PKG
A2	9:03:55	Pre-filmed reporter "live shot"	PKG
A3	9:04:40	Tease: aid workers freed in Haiti, budget shortfall for education, Portugal's economy looks for outside help	ON CAM-VO
A4	9:05:24	Germany's Catholic Church meets with Pope Benedict about sex abuse scandal	PKG
A5	9:08:29	Yemen media clamps down	VO
A6	9:08:50	Somalia fighting kills at least 60	VO
A7	9:09:08	Ugandan rebel chief in Sudan	VO
A8	9:09:30	Pakistan test missiles "to deter those with nefarious designs against the country" (India)	VO
A9	9:10:01	Russia and India-nuclear proliferation	PKG
A10	9:12:10	Live interview with Raymond Tanter from UN Security Council on Russia- India deal	ON CAM
A11	9:16:00	Haitians dressed in white march in memory of dead/	VO



		Policeman shot dead in Haiti	
A12	916:28	International aid agency says they were kidnapped from the Port-Au-Prince streets	PKG
A13	9:18:29	Live interview on security for aid workers with Michelle Pearlman	ON CAM
A14	9:21:22	Haitian children far from home in a case of possible human trafficking	PKG
A15	9:23:50	Piñera says Chile does not need aid for reconstruction	VO
A16	9:24:14	Obama postpones overseas trip to focus on health care	VO
A17	9:24:35	Michelle Obama in Mexico City	VO
A18	9:24:45	Sept. 11 settlement for health problems among police, firefighters etc.	PKG
A19	9:27:40	Public schools closing due to education budget cuts	PKG
A20	9:30:07	Teases: Portugal economy, clampdown in the capital	VO
A21	9:30:30	Commercial break	X
A22	9:31:43	Pakistan booming in Lahore	VO
A23	9:32:09	Catholic church abuse scandal	VO
A24	9:32:30	Myanmar Aung San Su Kyi banned from participating in elections	ON CAM VO
A25	9:38:58	Clinton condemned building of settlements in East Jerusalem	VO
A26	9:39:24	The Middle East quartet has announced that Israel's actions will not be recognized by the international community	VO
A27	9:39:55	Israel seals off West Bank/ "occupied East Jerusalem"	PKG
A28	9:42:14	Iraqi elections – al Malaki in front	VO
A29	9:42:36	US sales up in February and Obama approval rating down	VO
A30	9:43:15	Portugal is reaching out to Brazil for opportunities (a former colony of Portugal's)	VO
A31	9:45:41	Strike. Pay freeze for British airways	PKG
A32	9:46:04	Protests in Bangkok	PKG
A33	9:48:12	Tease: bomb gives convicts in California hope, porpoise hunting affecting human health	ON CAM VO
A34	9:48:36	Commercial	X
A35	9:50:00	California jobs for convicts	PKG
A36	9:52:45	Porpoises in Japan	PKG
A37	9:57:10	Goodbye	ON CAM
A38	9:58:00	Weather	ON CAM
A39	10:00:00	Commercial	X
A40	10:00:45	Headlines: Pakistan bombings	VO
A41	10:01:35	Child abuse scandal in Catholic Church	PKG
A42	10:03:17	Russia signs nuclear energy deals with India	VO
A43	10:03:46	Myanmar	VO
A44	10:04:16	Israel riots about settlements in Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods	VO
A45	10:04:45	SIGOUT	ON CAM

A46	10:05:00	Music, closing animation	ON CAM
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**Saturday March 13, 2010 9:00 p.m. News**

**Bureau: Washington D.C.**

**Chart F**

Segment	Time	Story Topic	Type
A0	9:00:00	Tease: Israeli Army in West Bank	ON CAM-VO
A1	9:00:38	Welcome: Kandahar Province, SWAT Valley, Tight security in Bangkok	VO
A2	9:01:00	Israel will extend land lock in West Bank	VO-SOT-CO
A2	9:03:43	Pre-taped interview US-Israel relationship. Review of old policy of not criticizing Israel	PKG
A3	9:06:45	Tease: camping in Colombia, Pakistan mudslides, Chinese government talks to press	ON CAM-VO
A4	9:07:36	Suicide bombing in Kandahar	PKG
A5	9:09:14	Pre-recorded interview with correspondent in Kabul. US and NATO forces planning offensive in Kandahar	VO
A6	9:11:00	Pakistan SWAT Valley. Mobil phone footage of suicide attacks that are becoming a “daily reality”	PKG
A7	9:12:43	Iraqi elections	VO
A8	9:12:56	Roadside bombs in Iraq	VO
A9	9:13:10	Violence in Mexico	VO
A10	9:13:40	Hostage release in Colombia	VO
A11	9:14:02	Colombia-Uribe tried to run for a third consecutive term. 2500 candidates	PKG
A12	9:17:48	Profile of a candidate in the Colombian election with support of socialist and Indigenous Groups. Financed by renting washer machines	PKG
A13	9:20:09	French election	READER
A14	9:22:22	Tea Party and Coffee Party movements	VO-SOT-VO
A15	9:27:10	Catholic Church is condemning people for looking into sex scandal	VO
A16	9:24:14	Live interview with someone from the survivors groups	ON CAM
A17	9:31:22	Tease: Afghan President changes election policy, National People’s Congress in Beijing, President addressed the people	VO
A18	9:31:49	Commercial	X
A19	9:33:00	Welcome back: top stories: Israel announces lock down of the West Bank to head off protests	ON CAM VO
A20	9:33:38	Kandahar bomb attacks	VO
A21	9:33:48	Pakistan suicide attack at Security check point	X

A22	9:34:02	Live interview with US's former top Afghan Envoy Peter Galbraith on Afghanistan's parliamentary election and fraudulent re-election of Karzai	ON CAM
A23	9:37:58	Western Union- cash wired to narco-traffickers new border security in AZ	PKG
A24	9:41:20	Portugal's debt: Lisbon- poor development, illegal construction of slums and violence	PKG
A25	9:44:23	Italy- anti-Burseunoli protests	VO
A26	9:44:48	Attempted murder of cartoonist	VO
A27	9:45:10	Boy used as human shield in Israel	PKG
A28	9:48:37	Tease: people affected by the mudslides in Pakistan	VO
A29	9:48:49	Commercial	X
A30	9:50:44	Top Story headlines-Israel West Bank tensions	VO
A31	9:51:09	Pakistan mudslides affecting trade with China and displacing Pakistanis	PKG
A32	9:54:23	Sri Lanka's Tamil Party	VO
A33	9:54:08	Thailand protest being organized	
A34	9:55:58	Live shot National People's Congress in China	ON CAM
A35	9:56:35	Egypt has reclaimed part of its ancient history- mummy	VO
A36	9:57:00	Georgia oldest woman	VO
A37	9:57:15	Olympics	VO
A38	9:57:35	Weather	ON CAM
A39	9:57:50	Summary of the World News	VO
A40	10:00:00	Israel lock down of West Bank	VO
A41	10:01:46	Taliban claimed responsibility for attack on NATO commanders	VO
A42	10:01:58	Bombing in Pakistan	VO
A43	10:02:19	China's National People's Congress	VO
A44	10:02:30	Mass protests in Thailand	VO
A45	10:02:53	Vatican denounced aggressive attempts to link pope to sex scandal	ON CAM
A46	10:03:48	Elections in Colombia	VO
A47	10:04:24	Gang shooting in Mexico in Acapulco	ON CAM
A48	10:04:32	SIGOUT	ON CAM
A49	10:05:00	Music, closing animation	ON CAM

## Website

The front page of Al Jazeera English's website is designed like a newspaper. There is always one large picture on the top left hand corner with links to a corresponding article and video links and other related articles (both recent and old) listed to the right. Two other headline stories are located beneath the lead story with corresponding pictures. As you scroll down the

front page the pictures become smaller and the prominence of the story coverage decreases.

Stories that are not highlighted are located on the page dedicate to their respective region of the world. Al Jazeera English's website is very advanced technologically and the network is up to date on social media; there are links to blogs on specific regions as well as specific international issues like climate change.

About 80 percent of the time either Afghanistan or Pakistan or both appeared on the front page, usually on the third tier, although Afghanistan and Pakistan were both top stories when suicide bomb attacks occurred, when prominent al Qaeda leader Mullah Baradar was captured and when a United Nations commission has found that Pakistani officials could have done more to have prevented and investigated the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the former female Pakistani Prime Minister.

Generally, the articles take the same tone as the packages in regards to US relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although information from the wires are undoubtedly included in the articles on the website a lot of the information comes from the primary reporting of the reporters on the ground. For example, when President Obama made an unannounced visit to Afghanistan the article associated with the video package John Terrett provided the Washington D.C. perspective on Obama's visit and David Chater provided the perspective from Afghanistan. The article, as most of the articles on AJE's website, included analysis from the correspondents and did not strictly list bullet-point facts. The articles tend to be rather long, about 900 words, and are broken down into sub categories. For example, the aforementioned article first gives the essential headline information about Obama's visit and the content of his speech. It is then further broken down into the categories "Afghan Partnership," "Tremendous Sacrifices," and Elusive pullout

date.” The additional context allows the reader to see how Obama’s speech fits into the big picture.

## **CONCLUSION**

Al Jazeera English’s reporting is biased to a certain extent. However, that does not mean that its reporting is tainted or unreliable. AJE’s editorial slant is inclined toward the marginalized and disenfranchised and their concerns are presented as paramount to the geopolitical tactics and commercial interests of nation-states. The facts are never intentionally twisted so that the US is presented in a negative light. However, an unflattering spotlight often highlights US policy when the interests of the global hegemon are presented in a parallel fashion with the interests of the individual global citizens whose voices are usually muffled by the overriding opinion. Stories regarding the US troop presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan are presented from the perspective of the Afghans and Pakistanis whose daily lives are affected by the fighting. They do not think in terms of political and military theory. They think in terms of how they can survive day by day and provide for their families. It is crucial that the US understands the viewpoints of the locals if US forces are going to continue to fight on their turf.

Although AJE does present the viewpoints of bin Laden and the Taliban fighters it does not espouse their ideology. AJE acknowledges that the violent actions of al Qaeda and the Taliban are not acceptable, however, the channel stresses the point that anti-US sentiment and actions against the US are not motivated by religious ideological hatred, abhorrence for democracy and resentment of the US’s living standards. The anti-US sentiment is provoked by the US policy. The viewpoints of these people are vital to understanding the contemporary state of international affairs and the purported ‘clash of civilizations.’ Presenting the perspectives of

the Taliban actually makes presentation of the news about the violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan more objective because it puts their actions into perspective. Rather than just reporting that there are evil people out there that hate Americans and want to kill US citizens, AJE reports that there are people out there that hate US policy, this is why they are angry and this what the US can change about its policy that will pacify those that are angry. By giving the ‘terrorists’ an opportunity to express their opinions, AJE is giving audiences a balanced story that gives them the context required to understand the situation as a whole and understand the perspectives of their peers.

AJE does not hide the fact that it presents the news from a particular perspective, one that is not necessarily pro-Arab but rather an altruistic, pro-human socio-economic equality stance. However, is AJE violating journalistic ethics by sacrificing objectivity and espousing a particular perspective? The conclusion of this study is no, it is not, because objectivity is just a theory of relativity and is not attainable in the real world. Every reporter has personal experiences that shape the manner in which they interpret the world and they report the news according to the context in which they see the situation and utilize their own philosophy to decipher between right and wrong. Therefore, who is to say that CNN or the BBC are more objective? They are held up to the standards of objectivity of the American and European media outlets. As long as the media outlet is fairly reporting the facts and presenting them in a fashion that represents the perspective of their audience, the news source is performing its duty as a the fourth branch of government and the voice of the people. Al Jazeera represents the people that they claim to represent- the voiceless. Therefore they are a legitimate news source. AJE deserves its controversial reputation, it is try to do something that no other international TV network has done---challenge the US’s

perception of the world and reflect a mirror image of US policy to Afghanistan and Pakistan back to US that focuses on the human result and not the Washington harangues.

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