

**The Impact of Al-Jazeera Satellite News network □
On the International News Flow
A Meta – Analysis Study**

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Abstract

In 1980s, satellite technology has contributed in promoting the control of global satellite news networks on flow of international news from the North to the South. And the international news networks became a main source for the news and information. The South globe has suffered from ignoring these networks to their problems and issues and demanded from UNESCO to solve this problem which created a social and technological imbalance between the societies of the world , because of the free flow of information threatens the cultural identity of the South globe.

At the end of last century, news network have emerged from the South in an attempt to achieve the balance in flow of international information and news between the north and the South and to identify the North globe in their suffering through the news covering for their problems in depth .

In this study, **the researchers used the Meta-Analysis** approach to discuss the experiment of Al-Jazeera network in competition the international news networks. **The results showed** that Al-Jazeera played an important in creating opportunities of the cultural convergence between the North and the South where it works to be a conciliatory medium. In addition that Al-Jazeera contributed in achieving the balance in the international news flow regarding the events in the world, especially the war on Afghanistan in 2001and the war on Iraq in 2003and more events .

Keywords: *International News Flow, Al-Jazeera News Network, International News Networks .*

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المخلص

ساهم ظهور تكنولوجيا الأقمار الصناعية في تعزيز سيطرة الشبكات الإخبارية الغربية الدولية على تدفق الأخبار الدولية من دول الشمال إلى دول الجنوب، وأصبحت الشبكات الإخبارية الغربية الدولية المصدر الرئيس للأخبار والمعلومات حول الأحداث العالمية. ونتيجة لهذه السيطرة الغربية على الشبكات الإخبارية الدولية عانى سكان دول الجنوب من تجاهل هذه الشبكات مشاكلهم وقضاياهم الأمر الذي دفعهم إلى مطالبة منظمة الأمم المتحدة للتربية والثقافة والعلوم (UNESCO) بالتدخل لوقف سيطرة هذه الشبكات الإخبارية الدولية والتي أدت إلى خلق حالة من عدم التوازن الاجتماعي والتكنولوجي بين المجتمعات في العالم.

وفي العقود الأخيرة برزت شبكات إخبارية دولية من دول الجنوب في محاولة لتحقيق نوعا من التوازن في تدفق الأخبار والمعلومات الدولية بين دول الجنوب ودول الشمال ولإطلاع العالم على واقع المعاناة والمشاكل التي يعيشها سكان دول الجنوب من خلال تقديم هذه الشبكات الإخبارية تغطية إخبارية شاملة وعميقة للأحداث في دولهم.

في هذه الدراسة ومن خلال استخدام المنهج التحليلي لما بعد التحليل (Meta-Analysis) يستعرض الباحثان تجربة شبكة الجزيرة الإخبارية الدولية في منافسة الشبكات الإخبارية الدولية في تقديم الخدمة الإخبارية المتميزة، وأشارت نتائج الدراسة إلى أن الشبكة ساهمت في تحقيق التقارب الثقافي بين دول الجنوب ودول الشمال من خلال تبني هذه الشبكة مبدأ "الوسيلة التصالحية" التي تعمل على تقديم تغطية إخبارية للأحداث في دول الجنوب ودول الشمال باللغتين الانجليزية والعربية على عكس الشبكات الإخبارية الدولية. كما ان الشبكة ساهمت في تحقيق التوازن في تدفق الأخبار والمعلومات على الصعيد الدولي حول الأحداث المختلفة في العالم، والحرب على افغانستان في عام ٢٠٠١م والحرب على العراق في عام ٢٠٠٣م بشكل خاص.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التدفق الدولي للأخبار، شبكة الجزيرة الإخبارية، الشبكات الإخبارية الدولية.

1. Introduction :

In 1980s, the emergence of satellite technology has contributed in promoting the monopoly of Western news networks and agencies on the international news market. Historically, The flow of international news considered in a one way from the North/rich to South/poor. but there are a serious attempts to balance the flow of international news and make it in a two ways .in 1996, Al-Jazeera satellite

channel launched from Qatar with a big financial support from the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. In short time, the channel was able to compete the international news networks in news coverage the events in the world especially the Middle East where the channel played important role in news coverage for the war in Afghanistan 2001 (war on terror). Some communications scholars described the channel as primary source for news and information for Arab audience and international audience and contra-flow for international news from the Western news networks.

In 2006, the channel transformed to network and launched Al-Jazeera English Channel which aims to balance the flow of international news through its in depth news coverage for the issues and suffering of people in the South and covers the events in the wide world. The channel also seeks to create opportunities to achieve the cultural convergence between the South and the North. Several communication scholars argue that Al-Jazeera can achieve the ideals of Habermas' theory of overcoming the residues of ignorance and misunderstanding through enlightened forms of public discourse El-Nawawy and Gher (2003 cited in Wessler and Adolphsen 2008).

This study aims to discuss the experiment of Al-Jazeera network in competition the international news networks, and Al-Jazeera's attempts to balance the flow of international news, and its role in creating opportunities the cultural convergence between the North and the South through it work to be a conciliatory medium. The study will explain the political motives that made Emir of Qatar to create the channel and support it through the financial returns of Qatar's oil wealth.

2. Flow of International News :

After the second war, the international news agencies and networks dominated on the international news markets, where they are important players in the process of international news flow that considered in a one way from the North to the South. Fignschou (2010) confirmed the news flow studies have documented that the international flow of information has been overwhelmingly one way, North/West to South/East. With developing the media technology the domination of Western news organizations become increasing, not reducing. We can see this since the emergence of newspapers, radio, television, and satellite and internet .But in the recent years, new competitors started to enter international

news market from the South and their aims were selected to balance the international news flow between the South and the North.

According to Thussu (2006) the Third World which was heavily dependent on the North for both software and hardware in the information sector and demanded to a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). Tunisian Information Minister Mustapha Masmoudi explained the demands of the Third World to the UNESCO. He pointed out that the flow of information in a one way from the North to the South created a wide gap between 'haves' and the 'have nots'; and lead to the socio-technological imbalance in the world .this vertical flow was dominated by the Western corporations. As the international media treated Information as a 'commodity' and subjected to the rules of market(Masmoudi 1979 cited in Thussu 2006).

These demands were evidence on the suffering of the South globe as result of the free flow of information from the North to South, Where the international news organizations ignored the Third World's issues and were looking to economic side for the South market. According to Thussu (2006) for Western governments, the 'free flow' helped to ensure the continuing and unreciprocated influence of Western media on global markets. McPhail (2010) confirmed that international news and information gathering changed because of Ted Turner's Cable News Network (CNN).And a new era of global reporting was born in 1980 as domestic boundaries become absolute in an era of satellite and cable. He explains although several countries and companies were entering the global information marketplace, no one was to be successful as CCN, is the world's international news leader. Powers and El-Nawawy (2009) indicated during the last decade of the 20th century, several communication scholars argued that we were entering an era of globalization whereby international news media were creating, for the first time, a global public sphere. One news channel in particular, CNNI, stood out due to its wide reach and impact on the global political scene, as well as its role in setting new standards as a pioneer in global 24-hour news reporting. This reflects the important impact for the satellite technology which broke the borders between the countries in the world; and has contributed in confirming the free flow of information in the world .According to McPhail (2010) The CNN network submitted the real example for the monopoly of international news when reported for the word the events of Tiananmen Square in China in 1989.

In the Gulf war 1991, the Arab and International audiences depended on news coverage of CNN network for the events of war. The only source was CNN network which broadcasted live coverage with helping from the US military forces and this event was a real example on the domination on the international news flow (Thussu 2006). I argue this event was the beginning point which made the South globe to think seriously in facing the monopoly of western networks and agencies on international news market and was turning point in news flow. Because of the Arab world witnessed the birth a new channel was able to compete the international news networks and achieved important prestige between them. The channel was Al-Jazeera, launched in 1996. The Emir of Qatar decided to launch it in line with the progressive image he wanted to project for his country after the unconventional transition of power in Qatar from his father to him in a bloodless coup in 1995 (Zayani 2008). The Emir of Qatar supported Al-Jazeera \$140 million to help to start in broadcasting for five years, and he stills in funding the channel by the financial returns of Qatar's oil wealth (Wenden 2005). I argue that the Emir Qatar will continue in funding Al-Jazeera because it shows Qatar as democratic country and to make the world forget the coup that happened in 1995. The experiment of Emir Qatar considers a successful model for employing the oil wealth in media industry in order to play important role in Arab policy.

3. Al-Jazeera vs. International News Network:

During the war on terror in Afghanistan in 2001, Al-Jazeera emerged in international news market. When it received \$20 thousand per minute for Bin Laden's speech from CNN which was forced to enter a contract with its competitor in order to be able to show what was happening in the region for its audience (Al-Jenaibi 2010). I argue this the first time that the Western media depended on Arab media to cover the events for its audiences where Al-Jazeera became player in international news market. According to Wessler and Adolphsen (2008) the first channel to contest the monopoly of Western-dominated global TV news journalism was the Arabic-language station Al-Jazeera. The news coverage of Al-Jazeera for the war in Afghanistan counterbid in its entering international news market. Al-Jenaibi (2010) indicates the number of Al-Jazeera's viewers had increased because of the unique coverage by Al-Jazeera. For example, the network's web-site traffic jumped after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attack in the U.S. from about 700,000 pages views a day to about 1.2 million page views. Then

it jumped to about two million page views a day in the first week after the U.S. strike on Afghanistan, and reached about three million page views a day in the second week. More than 40% of Al-Jazeera visitors are from the U.S. The highest traffic comes first from the U.S, second from Europe as a whole and third from the Arabic countries. This reflects that Al-Jazeera is news contraflow.

Zayani and Sahraoui (2007 cited in Figenschou 2009) indicated Al-Jazeera has repeatedly been portrayed as challenging major Western international news channels and an alternative contra-flow in global news. Al-Jazeera developed from an obscure Arab news channel to a well-organized multi-channel global news network. Figenschou (2009) confirmed that the growth of non-Western regional satellite news channels has encouraged the use of the concept of news contra-flows which seeks to change the international news flow from a one way to a two way, but there continues to be few empirical mappings of the phenomenon. According to Thussu (2006) Al-Jazeera is a prominent example of contraflow in global media products and the “war on terrorism” has catapulted Al-Jazeera into an international broadcaster whose logo can be seen on television screens around the world. Lynch (2006 cited in Thussu2006) indicated the Arab satellite networks have led to what one commentator has called ‘the structural transformation of the Arab public sphere’.

McLuhan and Powers (1989 cited in Pintak 2008) confirmed that the arrival of Arab satellite television brought urban renewal to McLuhan’s “global village” No longer did all the world view events through a Western lens. Thussu (2007 cited in Wessler and Adolphsen 2008) Confirmed Al-Jazeera is evidence that global media traffic is not just one way – from the West (with the USA at its core) to the rest of the world. Al-Jazeera constitutes a textbook example of contra-flow in global media products, as it weakens ‘Anglo-American domination of news and current affairs in one of the world’s most geo-politically sensitive areas’ by serving as an ‘alternative source of information’. It therefore is a direct antipode to such dominant outlets as BBC World or CNN International. I argue the effects of satellite technology are not limited on people in developing world, as happened in the last when satellite technology started in 1980s and threatened the cultural identity for developing world. Today, the effects of satellite technology begin to appear again on peoples and news organizations in

developed world because some of countries in developing world started to use satellite technology as news contra-flow of information and to achieve the cultural convergence between peoples in the world and Al-Jazeera a real example.

Al-Jazeera's news agenda do not agree with the American policy like the international news networks, Al-Jazeera became a US military target only two months after 11, September. On 13 November 2001, the US military dropped a 500-pound bomb on the network's Kabul station .as On 8 April 2003, the US military engaged in a similar attack in Baghdad striking not only Al Jazeera's broadcast facilities but those of another Arab network, Abu Dhabi as well as the Palestine hotel where many international correspondents were known to have been staying. The US military killed three journalists that day, including Tariq Ayoub of Al-Jazeera, Taras Protsyuk of Reuters, and Jose Cuso of Spanish network Telecin (Parks 2007). I argue these attacks reflected Al-Jazeera's impact on the American policy and aimed to break the flow news from Al-Jazeera to audiences. This Evidence confirmed that the American government intervenes in flow of international news. In its efforts to break Al-Jazeera, the U.S. government triggered media campaign against Al-Jazeera and accused it in the terror where the American officials described it as "Bin Laden TV" (Mills 2005).

Al-Jazeera attracted on Arab audiences who represent a large percentage of the market of international news. Zayani (2008) and Mills (2005) indicated the number of viewer's Al-Jazeera who reaching an estimated 40-60 million viewers in the Arab world, with another 15 million throughout the rest of the world. According to Al -Jenaibi (2010) indicates while CNN and Fox News are battling for ratings, Al-Jazeera has captured a giant international audience. Exact ratings numbers on a daily basis are not available from the Arab world regarding Al-Jazeera, but Al-Jazeera's website is listed as one of the 50 most popular in the world, with 161 million visits in 2004.

On other hand, the international networks as BBC World and CNN networks started losing important market in the Middle East, so they went to establish in Arabic - language news channel. As the U.S government felt that Al-Jazeera became a real danger and threatens the American political and economic

interests in the Middle East. So the US government allocated \$62 million in 2004 to launch Arab-language satellite-television network called Al Hurrah, which means “the free one.” (Parks 2007). This means that the American government started to feel in great worry from Al-Jazeera’s experiments and impact on **Arabic audience** so the American government went to create alternative channel to Arabic audience. Recently, Sky News announced a joint venture with investment firm Abu Dhabi Media Investment Corp (ADMIC) to bring a new, free-to-air Arabic-language news channel to viewers across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region from 2012. The channel will compete with Arabic language TV news channels including Al-Jazeera and the BBC World Service's Arabic Television (sky news network 2010). The launch of sky Arabic news channel is a new evidence for the Al-Jazeera’s impact as contra-flow from the South. This anew attempt to put borders for Al-Jazeera’s expansion.

4. Al-Jazeera English and Flow of International News :

In 2006 Al-Jazeera was transformed into network, with the launch of four channels: Al-Jazeera English, Al-Jazeera Sports, and Al-Jazeera Children’s and Documentary channels (Miladi 2006). The launch of Al-Jazeera English aimed to enhance the position of Al-Jazeera network as a player in international news market where its attempt to balance the flow of international news and information between the North and South.

5. Multicultural Staff and Open Budget :

From the beginning, Al-Jazeera English confirmed its aim to present a voice for the voiceless. It wants to make changes in the map of international news and break the flow of international news from the North to the South. The staff and administration of Al-Jazeera English have a great confidence to success in achieving their aims. Although they are facing Competitors considering a giants in international news marketing as CCN, BBC, Reuters and others media organizations. Al-Jazeera English Derived its confidence from the success of Al-Jazeera Arabic. Al-Jazeera English wanted to employ news coverage in building the bridges between people in wide world through its review the issues and suffering the developing countries and creating the chances to open the cultural

dialogue between the developed world and developing world and stop the clash of civilization.

With great preparations for a hard task, Al-Jazeera English Launched on 15 November 2006, AJE, the world's first global English language news channel to be headquartered in the Middle East. According to Aljazeera website, the channel is already accessible in over 100 million households on six continents in more than 100 countries, and also distributes much of its programming on the internet, free of charge. It represents a new form of transnational media that has the declared purpose of revolutionizing the global newscape. Al-Jazeera English is broadcast from four strategic broadcast centres: Doha, Kuala Lumpur, London, and Washington, has over 25 bureaus worldwide.

Al Jazeera English broadcasts news and current affairs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with 12 hours broadcast from Doha Headquarters, and 4 hours from its centres in Kuala Lumpur, London and Washington, DC. It employs 1200 staff and 600 reporters of more than 45 nationalities; in 50 countries and 25 bureaus (Figenschou 2010).according to Al-Njjar (2009) the channel is described as the "New United Nations," where journalists who work in it from over 50 nations are brought together. It is supported by an "open budget". According to El-Nawawy and Powers (2009) confirmed Al-Jazeera started with an initial budget of over US\$1 billion, mostly coming from the Emir of Qatar.

These preparations reflected that the channel wants to achieve its aims through an integrated work plan. And Al-Jazeera's staff and management point out that the channel is multi-cultural channel. McKelevy (2007 cited in Al-Njjar 2009) indicated the channel's staff and management consist of more than (50) nationalities many of whom have American nationality or have had an American education and profession. (140) have been hired from CNN, NBC, CBS and other US stations like Fox News Channel and the Associated Press Television.

6. Voice of the voiceless:

The aims of Al-Jazeera English explain that the channel wants to balance the information flow between the South and North through its news coverage for

events. The channel's strategy emerged its work lines clearly. Waddah Khanfar, **former** general director of Al-Jazeera Network, Said "One of our goals is to reverse the flow of information to the South" (*Indo-Asian News Service, 2006* cited in Al-Najar 2009). on other hand, Figenschou (2010) indicated AJE aims to balance the information flow between the South and the North – a flow that historically has run from North to South, from rich countries to poor. Sakr (2007) cited in El-Nawawy and Powers 2009) Al-Jazeera English has a news agenda that aims at 'redressing global imbalances in the flow of information'.

Figenschou (2010) explains the channel has employed a number of editorial strategies. First, Al-Jazeera English aims to cover the world without a domestic agenda, as a truly global news channel. Secondly, the channel aims to report forgotten stories from the perspective of the voiceless – the global South. Thirdly, the channel intends to cover the other opinion in international news, those diverging, oppositional, controversial views and voices that are rarely invited onto mainstream news media programs. According to Marash (2007) "Al-Jazeera English reports the world from the bottom up, or to be more politically-geographical, from South to North .With the rise of Al Jazeera, the Global Axis of Information has changed. A global information flow which had for centuries been Washington DC flowing strictly North to South, from the enlightened salons and studios of Western Europe and for the last 60 years, overwhelmingly from North America, to the rest of the world is now AC, Alternating Current, with impulses, attitudes and analyses pulsing from every point of the compass; in Aljazeera case, from Doha, London, Washington and Kuala Lumpur". Chalaby (2009) explained that al-jazeera English aimed from distribution of broadcast centres in Doha, London, Washington and Kuala Lumpur to solve the difficult of frame time. In addition, al-jazeera can follow the sun around the globe by broadcasting its news bulletin where the world is awake.

Figenschou (2009) examined how Al-Jazeera English worked to achieve its aims through quantitative content analyses of Aljazeera English's flagship news. He found that the channel airs more news items from and about the global South than the global North, and that the South is covered in more in-depth news formats, with more correspondents on the ground. While in mainstream (Western) international TV news, news from the South has largely been covered in briefer news formats, from the main newsroom. Consequently, reports from the South have largely provided only fragmented glimpses of distant suffering. These

findings correspond with Painter's (2008) analysis of one week of Al-Jazeera English newscasts. He finds that Al-Jazeera English had more coverage of the developing world (with particular emphasis on the Middle East, and less from Europe and the USA) than BBC World and CNN International. On other hand, we have to point that the channel airs news items from and about the North globe in depth news format and do not ignore the North globe. This important point shows the channel tries to be reference for the south globe. The channel is really "voice of the South" and we do not know if it will change in the future.

7. A Conciliatory function:

After four years from launch of Al-Jazeera English, some scholars studied the role of Al-Jazeera English in achieving the cultural convergence between the South and the North. Some of them confirmed that the channel has a positive role in cultural convergence and the audience started to feel in this role. The channel does not aim only for news coverage .it also tries to make audiences in the world as one audience. El-Nawawy and Powers (2009) explain Al-Jazeera English stands out amongst its competitors and is considered by many an anomaly when it comes to its journalistic code and identity. The channel is neither dominated by geopolitical nor commercial interests, and is the first of its kind to have the resources, mandate and journalistic capacity to reach out to typically ignored audiences throughout the world. They argue that AJE's model of journalism offers an alternative to today's mode of news journalism that continues to encourage stereotypical and counter-productive attitudes towards cultural 'others'. The channel's programming represents a fresh break from the traditional news agenda of other global news giants, such as CNN International and the BBC World Service.

According to El-Nawawy and Powers (2010) audiences around the world found Al-Jazeera English to work towards a conciliatory function and the channel points to the possibility of a global news broadcaster that can bring diverse audiences together and encourage dialogue, empathy. They presented findings that point towards AJE's ability to function as a 'conciliatory media'. And the channel's Journalists and editors produced the news in a way that focuses on

providing a voice to the voiceless. And the viewers of AJE in Asia, Middle East, Europe and North America all found AJE to work towards a conciliatory function. Conciliatory media' is a term that is coined by El-Nawawy and Powers (2010), is defined as any news media that work to meet a number of criteria when covering issues of collective social importance. By doing so, such media can deviate from the 'war journalism' style that has dominated today's post (9/11) mediascape and instead contribute to creating an environment that is more conducive to cooperation, negotiation and reconciliation.

El-Nawawy and Powers (2010) suggested a number of criteria outlining the precise characteristics of a media that can serve a conciliatory function, the criteria are follows:

- 1) Providing a public place for politically underrepresented groups.
- 2) Providing multiple viewpoints on a diversity of controversial issues.
- 3) Representing the interests of the international public in general, rather than a specific group of people.
- 4) Providing firsthand observations from eyewitnesses of international events.
- 5) Covering stories of injustice in the world.
- 6) Acknowledging mistakes in journalistic coverage when appropriate.
- 7) Demonstrating a desire towards solving rather than escalating conflicts.
- 8) Avoiding the use of victimizing terms, such as martyr or pathetic, unless they are attributed to a reliable source.
- 9) Avoiding the use of demonizing labels, such as terrorist or extremist, unless they are attributed to a reliable source.
- 10) Abstaining from opinions that are not substantiated by credible evidence.
- 11) Providing background, contextualizing information that helps viewers fully understand the story.

El-Nawawy and Gher (2003 cited in Wessler and Adolphsen 2008) confirmed the perspectives offered by Al-Jazeera and the other Arab Satellite channels not only challenge and complement Western views on current affairs they can also create 'a bridge between two worlds the West on one side and the Arab world on the other. In more specifically Al-Jazeera can improve the communication between the United States and the Middle East and achieve the ideals of Habermas' theory

of overcoming the residues of ignorance and misunderstanding through enlightened forms of public discourse.

8. Conclusion :

Al-Jazeera Arabic network reflects an unique experiment in the world of news through its coverage for the events in the Middle East specially Afghanistan war 2001, Iraq war 2003 and the Israeli and Palestine conflict .It emerged as news contra-flow of international news from the South. The technical and finical capabilities have contributed in Al-Jazeera's successes. In addition to the unique staff of Al-Jazeera who consists of international journalists from 50 countries and described as new United Nations.

In 2006, Al-Jazeera network launched Al-Jazeera English which aims to play a role in achieving the cultural convergence between the North and South by the distinct and neutral coverage for the events. The studies proved that the channel is working to bridge the gap between the North and the South rather than expand. Al-Jazeera English is designed to be news channel performs a conciliatory function unlike other news networks. Hence, Al-Jazeera has achieved great success and became a fixture in the global news market. Given to its substantial role, the international news networks such as CNN and BCC and Sky directed to launch Arabic- language news channels to face Aljazeera. For these successes some scholars argue that Al-Jazeera can achieve the ideals of Habermas' theory of overcoming the residues of ignorance and misunderstanding through enlightened forms of public discourse.

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