

THE CNN EFFECT AND THE AL JAZEERA EFFECT
IN GLOBAL POLITICS AND SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how global media, as represented by the CNN Effect and the Al Jazeera Effect, increasingly influence and illuminate global politics and society. First, this paper investigates the historical and intellectual foundations for both the CNN Effect and the Al Jazeera Effect. While the two media phenomena can refer to many news sources besides CNN and Al Jazeera, this thesis focuses on these two networks. Then, it considers three geopolitical frameworks that put media trends into context. Fareed Zakaria's *Post-American World*, Thomas Friedman's *The World Is Flat*, and Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* reveal how media forces are playing out in current politics and society. Finally, this paper presents a case study of the 2008-2009 war in Gaza that reveals aspects of the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects discussed in the previous two chapters.

This thesis finds that the CNN Effect and Al Jazeera Effect are growing in influence. They apply pressure on world leaders to address problems in society, and they offer increasing avenues to stir public opinion and to allow the viewing, listening, and reading public to participate in discussions of national and international

consequence. While international media can increase dialogue and mutual understanding throughout the world, on occasion they can also lead to global conflict and misunderstanding. By examining this paradoxical situation, the thesis sheds light on the complex nature of our increasingly globalized century.

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INTRODUCTION

When CNN began in the 1980s, founder Ted Turner knew that Western news organizations dominated all others throughout the world. Though he intended CNN to broadcast to a mostly American audience, Turner said he hoped that with the 24-hour span of news available, plenty of time would be left to present international news.¹ He instituted the show *World Report*, which highlighted news that local reporters from around the world presented to CNN's international audience. A reporter from Tokyo, for example, could tell the CNN audience about goings-on in Japan. Through this venue, viewers could learn about those from other nations, even ones hostile to the United States, like Cuba. Journalists from many nations shared their countries' living conditions, points of view, and political outlooks. Rather than simply presenting war, famine, disaster, or political crisis stories about other countries, CNN presented spots about day-to-day life.² These reports did not have a high priority on the regular news agenda, but they made air regularly on *World Report*.

At an event to celebrate the show, Turner said, "Since its inception, there has been only one goal for this program, a goal likely shared by the founders of the United Nations: to bring the people of the world closer together by letting them tell each other

¹ Don M. Flournoy, *CNN World Report: Ted Turner's International News Coup* (London: John Libbey & Company Ltd., 1992), 6.

² Flournoy, *CNN World Report*, 87.

about themselves.”³ Turner said the show was CNN’s finest accomplishment.⁴ At a time when globalization was gaining speed and America was standing as global hegemon, people welcomed even this small space to show different perspectives. Twenty years later, *World Report* no longer airs for American viewers on CNN’s domestic channel, though it retains a spot on CNN International (CNNI). However, CNNI is not widely available in the US, and a weatherman anchors the show.⁵ The disappearance of *World Report* on American CNN symbolizes an overall downturn in the amount of world news on most networks available to Americans. Reporting on international affairs has declined despite its importance to our worldwide interests.

Still, CNN, CNNI, and other Western networks remain influential as they broadcast around the world on TV and online. What is more, these news outlets ferry American and Western perspectives and assumptions to a global audience. This condition has not escaped the world’s notice, and many have lamented and resented it. Thus, in the past fifteen years, news networks from other regions have offered their perspectives on international—and American—events and politics. Al Jazeera is the prime example of this phenomenon, and it seeks to bring different perspectives to the

³ At the time, UNESCO had published a report calling for a remedy to the dearth of global news, and Turner said *World Report* was an answer to this call. Flourney, *CNN World Report*, 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵ CNN, *World View*, CNN Web site, <http://edition.cnn.com/CNNI/Programs/world.report/> (accessed March 23, 2010). The show is now called *World View*, and viewers can watch it online too.

West to fill “the information void.”⁶ As it stands now, tension exists between widespread American and Western news viewpoints and those of the rest of the world. CNN and Al Jazeera are just two networks engaging in the global news phenomenon, but their stories explain how news and international perspectives are changing.

Each has such influence in politics and society that scholars have designated both a “CNN Effect” and an “Al Jazeera Effect.” The CNN Effect was first recognized during major crises of the 1990s, and the Al Jazeera Effect has been acknowledged since September 11, 2001. The CNN Effect idea gained acceptance first, and the notion of the Al Jazeera Effect builds upon it. These terms refer to these networks’ abilities to shape public opinion and foreign policy through transmission of powerful images and reporting. The phenomena encompass not only CNN and Al Jazeera, but also a range of Western television and Web outlets, as well as new networks from Latin America to Indonesia. This thesis focuses on the effects’ namesakes because they remain the most prominent players, and it investigates how these two phenomena are playing out as international politics and global perspectives change.

Both networks have been undergoing transformations as they adjust to home and global markets. CNN’s domestic coverage, which Americans primarily watch, does not heavily cover international events except in times of crisis. But ironically, for its international market, CNN has established new bureaus at home and abroad, and it has hired new foreign correspondents and created or expanded its newsgathering

⁶ Allister Sparks, “A Bridge at the Frontier,” in *The Al Jazeera Decade: 1996-2006* (Doha: Al Jazeera, 2006), 173.

operations in at least ten international cities.⁷ Sometimes, CNN and CNNI overlap in programming, but for the most part, they remain distinct. Moreover, CNNI retains a Western flavor. For its part, Al Jazeera has expanded globally with the inception of its English language news channel, launched in 2006. Nearly 200 million households worldwide can watch it on television, and many more people can take in its coverage online. Its Internet reporting draws many Americans looking for international news. While American viewers in only a few local markets can watch it on cable, Al Jazeera's executives are looking to expand. The influence of both networks is steadily growing as they are hawking their "news product" around the world.

Each channel, however, brings distinct outlooks to viewers. CNN presents an American perspective on international events, while Al Jazeera prides itself on being the voice of the Middle East, the southern hemisphere, and the most impoverished regions on earth. For news watchers, political stakeholders, and journalists, these two views create broader understanding of some events, especially if one has the luxury of considering both networks' coverage. But these news channels also possess potential to foster conflict, whether by perpetration of a written or verbal political spat, or ginning up support for a hot war. Philip Seib, author of *The Al Jazeera Effect*, writes:

‘The media’ are no longer just the media. They have a larger popular base than ever before and, as a result, have unprecedented impact on international politics. The media can be tools of conflict and instruments of peace;

⁷ Chris Ariens, "Major Expansion for CNN International," TVNewser.com, November 14, 2007, http://www.mediabistro.com/tvnewser/cnn/major_expansion_for_cnn_international_71058.asp (accessed November 24, 2009).

they can make traditional borders irrelevant and unify peoples scattered across the globe. This phenomenon—the Al Jazeera Effect—is reshaping the world.⁸

The dynamic between these two international news organizations and the values that they represent challenges everyone's views about politics and society. Could this worldwide interplay of media lead to greater conflict or peaceful integration?

These media events fit into broader political context, and this thesis looks into how they match geopolitical frameworks. Journalist Fareed Zakaria investigates the “post-American world,” and his outlook helps to explain the role that news networks play as the world changes. He has explained that world economics and culture are experiencing “the rise of the rest.” The new media environment, which encompasses many new TV networks, Web sites, and other venues, reflects his views. While the West and the U.S. once dominated communications, reportage from non-Western perspectives challenges assumptions about history and culture.

On similar lines, Thomas Friedman examines the “world flatteners” of the Internet and personal communication devices. These hold direct relevance to the new media environment to which these two news giants are adapting. New technology holds the news' future, so his discussion of geopolitics and the “flat world” can aid understanding of the two “Effects.” Finally, Samuel Huntington's “clash of civilizations” theory discusses conflict among cultures, especially the West and the Islamic-Confucian world. He predicts conflict rather than integration, and many recent

⁸ Philip Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect: How the New Global Media are Reshaping World Politics* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), xii.

events in the media bear out his thesis. These authors' observations provide key insights for investigating the changes that global media have wrought. In addition, a case study of media coverage of the 2008-2009 Gaza War reveals not only how the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects are playing out currently, but also how they relate to the post-American, flat, and clashing world.

The investigation of this thesis matters because values in both news and culture are rapidly changing, and society must understand these transformations if it wants to shape the world in a positive fashion. In America, the definition of news has been shifting away from what people *need* to know to what they *want* to know.⁹ But the news that people in the U.S. are familiar with affects the decisions they make as citizens and thus impacts much of the world. On the other hand, in the Middle East and other global hotspots, reportage has profound consequences because politics there often amounts to a matter of life and death.¹⁰ And in these regions, the West enters through warfare, business, and cultural activities. Through media, cultures are encountering each other in both hostile and conciliatory ways, and the consequences will affect affairs of state worldwide. This thesis argues that both the CNN Effect and the Al Jazeera Effect increasingly impact and illuminate global politics and society as

⁹ David Fanning, Lowell Bergman, and Michael Sullivan, "What's Happening to the News?," Part III, *News War*, DVD, produced by *Frontline* and WGBH (Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 2007).

¹⁰ David Fanning, Greg Barker, and Michael Sullivan, "Stories from a Small Planet," Part IV, *News War*, DVD, produced by *Frontline* and WGBH (Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 2007).

political systems and media networks change. These phenomena can extend a global clash of civilizations, or they can offer the chance for cultural understanding.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT DO THE “CNN EFFECT” AND THE “AL JAZEERA EFFECT” MEAN?

The Origins of the CNN Effect

CNN waited for a decade from its birth in 1980 to claim a role as a news leader. Throughout the 1980s, it had a reputation for being “Chicken Noodle News,” rather than a hearty diet of information that people needed to know. But its news timing was already changing the reporting game. It began reporting stories as they broke, rather than waiting all day to report in the evening as the “Big Three” newscasts had to do.¹ By the end of the decade, a couple of major stories gave CNN news dominance. During China’s Tiananmen Square uprising in 1989, CNN remained on air to report student protests until the Chinese government canceled the broadcast license. President George H.W. Bush followed the coverage, as his administration had little information from the protest sites. The coverage of Tiananmen showed that CNN had the equipment, personnel, and position to report global events well.² CNN won respect through its 24-hour, global presence.

The Persian Gulf War in 1991 entrenched CNN as the “gold standard” for news reporting. While other organizations did not have the infrastructure needed to report from the war zone, CNN could broadcast from the front lines. It was the only American news organization to transmit images and reportage from Iraq for two

¹ Thomas McPhail, *Global Communication: Theories, Stakeholders, and Trends*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 146.

² McPhail, *Global Communication*, 148.

weeks. Additionally, its images broadcast from the so-called Highway of Death, a road of refugee exodus, may have goaded the Bush Administration to end the war. This war reporting established CNN firmly as a prestigious and trustworthy news outlet, one with political influence.³ According to former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, CNN's coverage helped the administration to figure out what was happening. He said, "During the Gulf War you could always figure out by turning on the television where things were going in Iraq a hell of a lot better than I could tell from any telegram." He said CNN began to influence policymakers because "it's there all the time."⁴ With the Gulf War coverage, CNN made an impact on high-level decision-makers, as well as with the public.

This influence continued through crises of the 1990s, and other news sources began to contribute to the CNN Effect. As the crisis in Somalia loomed, television images pushed President Bush toward action.⁵ Eagleburger said, "Somalia, yes, television made a big difference as such because of the daily drumbeat of pictures of starving children. No question about that. But that was television across the board, that

³ Babak Bahador, *The CNN Effect in Action: How the News Media Pushed the West toward War in Kosovo* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 3-4.

⁴ Brookings Institution and Harvard forum on Press Coverage and the War on Terrorism, "The CNN Effect: How 24-Hour News Coverage Affects Government Decisions and Public Opinion," Brookings Institution, http://www.brookings.edu/events/2002/0123media_journalism.aspx (Accessed November 1, 2009).

⁵ James O. Goldsborough, *CNN Effect?: The Media's Role in Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 1997), 1-2.

wasn't just CNN by any means.”⁶ Indeed, CNN only symbolizes the effect of constant video news. The sounds, images, and impression of “being there” that 24-hour networks began to provide shifted society’s consciousness in some measure. German television executive, Claus Klebler of Germany’s ARD, has noted that this phenomenon occurred because people could actually see what was happening. According to him, “They reacted to the facts on the ground that became visible. You couldn’t hide them any more.”⁷ Americans and their policymakers did not solely experience this media power. All over the world, audiences and policymakers saw and reacted to crises as they never could before. Klebler remarked, “This is why it’s not a CNN effect, it’s a television modern communications world effect that you cannot close your eyes to something that happens in Mogadishu.”⁸ Other networks that have contributed include Klebler’s ARD, Deutsche Welle, and the BBC, as well as wire services like the AP that have added video services to their news write-ups. CNN founded this international phenomenon that changed the way people perceive events and even themselves.

Many scholars have written about the CNN Effect. Some take it as gospel, and some dismiss its importance. However, a literature review reveals that this CNN Effect exists, even though it has more complexity than simple cause-and-effect.

⁶ Brookings Institution and Harvard forum on Press Coverage and the War on Terrorism, "The CNN Effect: How 24-Hour News Coverage Affects Government Decisions and Public Opinion."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Scholars hold varying definitions, but all agree that this phenomenon describes the amount of influence that real-time media have on both elite policymakers and public opinion.⁹ Steven Livingston has defined it this way:

I think a good way of thinking about “the CNN effect” is to think about the relationship between government officials and the media as sort of a dance, and the claim of “the CNN effect” is that at various points in time it’s the media who are leading in this dance. Government is responding to the initiatives of news media and journalists. Whereas most of the time, scholarship suggests that news agendas are established by the agenda of the State Department [or another government office]. So the claim of “the CNN effect” is that that typical relationship is reversed.¹⁰

This phenomenon, then, contains many paths that bring reportage to its full influence. Moreover, the CNN Effect represents a conflict of the pressure of public opinion on leaders who feel that they should make decisions based on expertise and rationality, rather than the news cycle.¹¹ The degree to which policymakers, military leaders, members of congress, and other influential people pay attention to this factor will remain unclear. Each person in a position of power follows his or her own agenda, and media pressure may not apply in every circumstance. But the CNN Effect exists, and world capitals, especially Washington, must pay attention to its power.¹²

⁹ Bahador, *The CNN Effect in Action*, 4.

¹⁰ Brookings Institution and Harvard forum on Press Coverage and the War on Terrorism, "The CNN Effect: How 24-Hour News Coverage Affects Government Decisions and Public Opinion."

¹¹ Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus, "Humanitarian Crises and U.S. Foreign Policy: Somalia and the CNN Effect Reconsidered," *Political Communication* 12, no. 4 (October 1995): 414.

¹² McPhail, *Global Communication*, 156.

Categories and Critiques of the CNN Effect

Babak Bahador, a media scholar, has broken down the CNN Effect into several types: the agenda-setting effect, the impediment effect, the challenging effect, and the accelerant effect. These categories define ways that media impact high-level government policy, as well as public opinion. First, the *accelerant effect* refers to the media's ability to hasten policy decisions. It holds that politicians feel that they must respond quickly to news reports either because they want their message to define public discussion, or because they need to assuage a crisis as soon as possible.¹³ Bahador notes, however, that the accelerant function may not result in the best decisions. He writes, "Of course, policy substance might also be influenced indirectly by the need to generate policy faster, making it more likely for misunderstandings and errors to form part of the policy."¹⁴ The media's way of speeding up a decision may not make the conclusion better. It can lead to impulsive and emotional choices from policymakers. Indeed, the CNN Effect may have banished the privilege of careful and slow policy deliberation that leaders used to enjoy.¹⁵ The accelerant effect reveals that the CNN Effect does not set moral or value standards, but rather places timing and appearance as top virtues.

¹³ Bahador, *The CNN Effect in Action*, 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁵ Livingston and Eachus, "Humanitarian Crises and U.S. Foreign Policy," 414.

Next, the *impediment effect* refers to media impact on military strategy. In this factor, the interplay between battle strategy and public opinion dominates. Images or reportage of humanitarian suffering, dead soldiers, “collateral damage,” or other heart-wrenching scenes can call into question the purpose of a given war or conflict. News stories that point out gaps in rhetoric and frontline realities can make people on the home front ask, “Is it worth it?” The impediment effect can *impede* military operations because of the public outcry it generates.¹⁶ Military leaders pay attention to this dynamic. For example, the Pentagon extensively discussed CNN reporter Christiane Amanpour’s whereabouts during the Bosnia conflict during the mid-1990s. In a profile piece of Amanpour, *Vanity Fair* reported:

They thought that if they went in she would be popping up behind every bush to film the atrocities, and that would somehow shape American public opinion into forcing the troops to stay longer. She was the symbol of the unruly press...with a similar impact on the domestic debate.¹⁷

This example reveals that impediment effect means that reporters can become crucial pieces of military action, even though journalists are and should be much harder to control. As in every aspect of the CNN Effect, the impediment effect causes public outrage that worries and galvanizes officials to action of some sort.

¹⁶ Bahador, *The CNN Effect in Action*, 8.

¹⁷ Leslie Bennets, “Woman o’War,” *Vanity Fair*, September 1996, <http://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/archive/1996/09/amanpour199609> (accessed January 20, 2010).

Public reaction to the Vietnam War represents the classic example of the impediment effect at work. Granted, CNN did not exist at that time, but the principles of the impediment effect played out through media sources of the time. According to Eagleburger, the Vietnam lesson gives policymakers pause. He said, “As you're sitting there trying to make decisions about whether you're going to do X, Y or Z there is an impediment effect before you ever do anything in the sense that you're sitting there thinking now if it goes bad, what are we going to see and what are the consequences going to be?”¹⁸ Indeed, the impediment effect may have been the reason that the Clinton Administration did not intervene in Rwanda. Considering news coverage of the Somalia intervention, the president and his aides wondered if involvement was worth the risk.¹⁹ The impediment effect may stand out as the CNN Effect category carrying the highest stakes. For this reason, scholars consider propaganda a related effect. The government feels the need to defend and control perceptions of military actions in war and peacetime.²⁰ Like the accelerant effect, the impediment effect shows that response time and appearances may be replacing careful deliberation, even as media reveal humanitarian situations that often require action.

Next, Bahador outlines the *agenda-setting effect*, which refers to how the news agenda can create a policy plan or even rearrange a government’s course of action.

¹⁸ Brookings Institution and Harvard forum on Press Coverage and the War on Terrorism, "The CNN Effect: How 24-Hour News Coverage Affects Government Decisions and Public Opinion."

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Bahador, *The CNN Effect in Action*, 10.

Scholars suggest that media have the most power to influence policy when the government has not made a firm decision, as well as when it tries to avoid a public relations disaster.²¹ But while media can tilt the schedule to address human suffering, it also can give sensational stories top billing. Measuring the true agenda-setting power of the media is difficult because political or national interest does not always align with that of the media.²² Answers are more likely to emerge in history books rather than press conferences or official statements.

Using historical records, Bahador illuminates how the agenda-setting power held true during the Kosovo war and NATO intervention. In several specific instances, he shows that media attention provoked a policy response. For example, in the aftermath of the Gornje Obrinje massacre, images of suffering people dominated American television news coverage. As a result, the National Security Council held an emergency meeting where policymakers formulated an ultimatum to Slobodan Milosevic—withdraw troops or face firepower.²³ Policymakers attested to media power during their deliberations. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, for example, said a *New York Times* photograph sitting on the meeting table compelled her to think of her moral responsibility. She wrote, “That morning, as I looked at that photo and read the accompanying story, I thought again of my vow not to allow a repeat of the

²¹ Piers Robinson, “The Policy-Media Interaction Model: Measuring Media Power During Humanitarian Crisis,” *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 5 (September 2000): 615.

²² Bahador, *The CNN Effect in Action*, 11.

²³ *Ibid.*, 142.

carnage we had witnessed in Bosnia.”²⁴ In this instance, the impediment and accelerant effects also seemed to be at work.

On the same lines, the final category of the *challenging effect* refers to news’ ability to push for decisions to alleviate human suffering during war or another major crisis. This effect encourages media to fill a void in policy or to get involved in wars that seems irrelevant to national interest.²⁵ The entry into the Somalia conflict in 1992 stands as an example of the challenging effect. President Bush, looking at images beaming from the disaster, supposedly told top military advisers, “I—we—can’t watch this anymore. You’ve got to do something.”²⁶ This example shows that sometimes, simply showing images has enough power to mobilize leaders for action. While horrific images in the news may affect leaders, however, sometimes politicians may think more of national ego than humanitarian concern. For example, as the Bosnia conflict exploded with the Srebrenica massacre, President Clinton spoke of the U.S. losing prestige and looking weak if it did nothing.²⁷ Other administrations have made the same type of decision. The challenging effect does not refer to media’s power to generate compassion alone.

²⁴ Ibid., 145.

²⁵ Ibid., 11.

²⁶ Ibid., 21.

²⁷ Piers Robinson, “The Policy-Media Interaction Model: Measuring Media Power During Humanitarian Crisis,” 625.

The entry into Somalia reveals values in conflict through the CNN Effect's challenging and agenda-setting roles. Eagleburger has described how simultaneously with the Somalia crisis, the humanitarian crisis in the Balkans was making the news as well. Televised images of both crises made the administration feel that it had to do something to alleviate suffering, but the Somalia crisis seemed easier to handle than the Balkan conflict. A Somalia intervention presented an opportunity for the administration to present itself as compassionate.²⁸ However, the administration's decision did not rely on sympathy at the expense of rationality. At a panel discussion, Eagleburger recounted:

If every time all we did was respond to the press or the television we would long since have passed Mexico on the way down the list of powerful republics. But you make choices, and in this case... the television, the press, the whole thing gave us an opportunity to make a choice which to some degree, I'll be blunt about it again, to some degree took pressure off the constant drumbeat that the Bush Administration didn't give a damn about human rights.²⁹

Even if responding to the challenging effect makes a country seem heroic, it can deplete resources and political capital needed for other ventures. Still, in this instance media generated enough humanitarian concern to spur action in Somalia, and eventually in the Balkans.

²⁸ Brookings Institution and Harvard forum on Press Coverage and the War on Terrorism, "The CNN Effect: How 24-Hour News Coverage Affects Government Decisions and Public Opinion."

²⁹ Ibid.

The Somalia intervention reveals additional complexity of the CNN Effect. Apart from the administration, government advisers on Somalia in the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) pressed news networks to pay attention to Somalia for some time. Thus the government—not media—led in part to the horrific images being captured. Then, news outlets like CNN transmitted them to the public and generated an emotional response as well as action. In this way, the CNN Effect reveals itself as the complex dance that Livingston has described. The issue bounced from the OFDA to the media, and these efforts combined to secure the president’s attention. This example shows that one cannot view the CNN Effect as a simple cause-and-effect relationship, but it shows the phenomenon’s power to inspire action to remedy humanitarian disasters.³⁰

However, some scholars look at examples like Somalia and dismiss the CNN Effect altogether. Critics point out, for example, that the full boom in coverage of Somalia did not happen until President Bush approved military action.³¹ While that may be, these scholars seem to be searching for a pure link between policy and reportage, even though no one claims that the CNN Effect plays out simply. For example, Warren Strobel writes, “The closer one looks at those incidents that supposedly prove a CNN Effect...the more the Effect shrinks. It is like a shimmering

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Livingston and Eachus, "Humanitarian Crises and U.S. Foreign Policy," 422.

desert mirage, disappearing as you get closer.”³² He seeks proof in obvious, concrete links between media stories and foreign policy decisions. Moreover, the idea of the CNN Effect has garnered criticism because sometimes media seem to play a servile role. For example, political candidates and policymakers often use the media to present themselves in a certain way and to get attention.³³ Occasionally the media even plays a cheerleader role to a government decision, as some claim it did for the Persian Gulf War.³⁴ Many people believe the media did the same thing in the run-up to the Iraq War in 2003. In these cases, critics explain that policymakers are influencing the media rather than the other way around. So could the CNN Effect simply be a circle that begins and ends with government decisions? Another criticism holds that the CNN Effect may simply misname the general news effect, which has always sought to change opinions and policies. Scholar James Goldsborough writes, “News does what it has done since long before CNN; it informs public opinion to democratize a process once the private domain of a privileged elite.”³⁵ Has CNN and its counterparts really added a new dimension to news reporting? These scholars raise many important questions.

³² Warren Strobel, "The CNN Effect: How much influence does the 24-hour news network really have on foreign policy?" *The American Journalism Review*, May 1996, <http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=3572> (accessed November 1, 2009).

³³ Goldsborough, "CNN effect? The Media's Role in Foreign Policy," 19.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

Detractors, however, want to banish the idea of a CNN Effect because they see its complexities, which do not halt the increasing impact of real-time media. When one considers influencing public opinion, creating policy, and producing television pieces, no simple and neat process has ever existed. One cannot ask for perfect clarity on how media alter affairs of state, but one can acknowledge that the CNN Effect exists as a complicated process. One cannot say that every account on the news will force policy to change, but one can acknowledge that some stories carry tremendous power that audiences would never see or hear without news available around the clock. A CNN Effect may not play out in every part of an ongoing news event, but media will impact situations at various points in the process.

In addition, people have always been concerned that the reporters have acted like cheerleaders, rather than fair observers and critics. Indeed, in some conflicts like World War I, American media followed the dictates of the Committee on Public Information, a propaganda organization. Concerns about objective reporting have been active for at least a hundred years, but now most Western journalism organizations profess to seek balance and hold the government accountable. Criticisms of government action often anchor modern reporting even though media demonstrate a mixed record of holding government accountable. For example, the media may have followed the Bush Administration's argument for invading Iraq in 1990, but journalists also revealed the Highway of Death and called for action to alleviate humanitarian suffering. One cannot say media play the role of observer and critic perfectly. But

even in these cases, they still can demonstrate the CNN Effect. News coverage can influence public opinion to go to war or to produce another major decision. If the news coverage of a policy like going into Iraq stays positive, that only amps up a government's decision and brings more of the public along. Thus these apparent criticisms of the media's cheerleader role reveal the agenda-setting role of CNN Effect, even though the government and reporters seem to agree. The process does not play out simply, but the CNN Effect exists because technology has brought world events before our eyes and connects people around the globe. The CNN Effect is real because of the means to confront everyone with major events, not because reporters themselves have labeled events as wrong, right, or worthy of attention. Critics of the CNN Effect idea misread the complexity of the way media work in the modern communications realm.

However, even though the CNN Effect happens, it does not necessarily have the power it once did for its namesake and for other American networks. The fault lies with the strategy of covering news to make money. CNN's economic and competitive imperatives have forced it, like other American news outlets, to cover news differently. The *LA Times*, for example, won acclaim for its international reporting, but corporate influence forced it to cover more local news.³⁶ This trend predominates throughout the American news "market." American audiences see little international news, unless

³⁶ David Fanning, Lowell Bergman, and Michael Sullivan, "What's Happening to the News?," Part III, *News War*, DVD, produced by *Frontline* and WGBH (Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 2007).

they seek it out, and few have the time or inclination to do so. Fox News, the most popular network, shows very little international news. Journalist Robert Kaplan writes that Fox demonstrates an “utter lack of interest in the outside world...except where that world directly and obviously affects American power.”³⁷ For its part CNN’s domestic channel displays the same tendency. These days, it gives less international news to the domestic audience. While CNN International reports world events in detail, it broadcasts mostly outside the U.S. and does not commonly come with normal American cable packages. Usually, except in times of a significant international crisis such as the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, so-called catchier stories seem to dominate. The constant stream of celebrity news and fluff stories like that of the so-called Balloon Boy in late 2009, or multiple reports on first lady Michelle Obama’s wardrobe frustrate those who want to see real journalism. Much good political reporting exists on TV news, but it often devolves into shouting matches, or it morphs into political drama rather than a helpful explanation of policy. For its part, CNN does not seem to focus so much on news as on “infotainment” and star personalities like Anderson Cooper that bring huge ratings.³⁸ Though it remains influential, CNN has forsaken some of its journalistic ideals to fulfill popularity goals. This stance has opened the door for other international networks to fill the void of information about the world.

³⁷ Robert Kaplan, “Why I Love Al Jazeera,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (October 2009), <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200910/al-jazeera> (accessed 15 November 2009).

³⁸ McPhail, *Global Communication*, 156.

Game Changers

While some American news networks have wanted to stick to local news, they seem to have forgotten that the global is increasingly the local. This understanding gap has become ever more apparent in the past decade. Game changers like September 11, Internet reporting, the digital divide, and a backlash against Western media have altered the CNN Effect but also have expanded it.

Networks had sensationalized much news before September 11, 2001, but after that day even more changes came to American journalism. Piers Robinson points out that it became “far more deferential and constrained, thereby reducing the chances of an adversarial or oppositional media that might influence policy.” He argues that these circumstances dampened the idea of the CNN Effect’s positive influence on policy.³⁹ He also writes that as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq ensued, the government strove to control information even more, and many news outlets went along. He and other critics have pointed out that few news stories that showed American or civilian casualties made air, and the media’s humanitarian concern seemed to have diminished.⁴⁰ American media looked at international events with a patriotic viewpoint after 9/11 in many cases. The government’s interest, as well as media’s interest in economic gain, constrained the public’s view of international affairs. This kind of programming did not adequately expand knowledge of foreign affairs or other

³⁹ Piers Robinson, “The CNN Effect Revisited,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, no. 4 (2005): 346.

⁴⁰ Robinson, “The CNN Effect Revisited,” 346-347.

peoples, even at the time when citizens and reporters sorely needed better understanding.⁴¹ Still, this viewpoint did not deter real-time media's impact, and it led to even greater forms of media influence.

Significant changes in technology, for example, have irreversibly expanded media's ability to spread news reports and commentary. The original idea of the CNN Effect relied on satellite television to impact the audience at some point during a 24-hour period, whenever one happened to turn the channel to news. Elite newspapers supplemented the phenomenon.⁴² Television producers have used these papers, as well as wire services like the Associated Press and Reuters, to form a large chunk of the news agenda for years. These methods have remained, but more people are getting news from the Internet, and Internet reporting has changed the job of reporter. The Pew Research Center has found that the public views about the same amount of Internet and cable television news, and many more people follow online news than watch the nightly network broadcasts on CBS, NBC, and ABC.⁴³ As a result, news organizations around have been building reporting strategies around the Internet and heavily investing in converged reporting. CNN, for example, has hired "all-platform journalists" who report by writing stories for television and the Internet, managing

⁴¹ Brookings Institution and Harvard forum on Press Coverage and the War on Terrorism, "The CNN Effect: How 24-Hour News Coverage Affects Government Decisions and Public Opinion."

⁴² Bahador, *The CNN Effect in Action*, 5-6.

⁴³ Pew Research Center for People and the Press, "Key News Audiences Now Blend Online and Traditional Sources," August 17, 2008, Pew Research Center Publications, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/928/key-news-audiences-now-blend-online-and-traditional-sources> (accessed January 2, 2010).

videography and photography, and presenting information on-air. Journalists have been supplementing this reportage with new media outlets like Twitter and Facebook. Networks are thus relying on cheaper and more portable reporting tools for the new digital environment, rather than expensive bureaus in major cities.⁴⁴ Digital newsgathering has been fundamentally changing the industry. In turn, these forms of reporting have been influencing how people and policymakers around the world react to events. News arrives to Internet and cable watchers nearly immediately. As a result, opportunities abound for the accelerant effect to impact policymakers and even daily life.

Coupled with this phenomenon, however, remains the international “digital divide.” While the U.S. and other nations have widespread Internet access and can reap its benefits, access slowly reaches poor areas. The Internet holds much promise for the developing world—for education, entrepreneurship, and political activism. However, those living in poverty cannot successfully use the Internet for these activities—even if they have access—because illiteracy and illness get in the way.⁴⁵ Even if an impoverished area has the Internet, affluent people in the community typically receive the benefits.⁴⁶ Sometimes the digital divide coupled with the lack of

⁴⁴ Brian Stelter, “CNN to adapt overseas strategy to U.S. bureaus,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/13/business/worldbusiness/13iht-bureaus.1.15232343.html> (accessed November 24, 2009).

⁴⁵ Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat, 3.0: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, 3rd ed. (New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 540-541.

⁴⁶ Philip Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect: How the New Global Media Are Reshaping World Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 49.

education in impoverished regions proves problematic. Internet users in these areas can spread some of the rampant misinformation that the Internet carries.⁴⁷ But of course, this phenomenon affects every society. Philip Seib writes:

Wider dissemination of information should be a good thing, but caveats exist. ‘Information’ and truth are not necessarily the same, and the Internet has already proved to be a hospitable laboratory for fraud and other deception, ranging from scams aimed at individuals’ bank accounts to hate-filled polemics targeting large audiences. The speed and reach of new media are wonderful when there is a need to alert people about an approaching hurricane or such, but those same qualities can be poisonous when vicious rumor is presented as the ‘news’ of the moment.⁴⁸

For both the developed and developing worlds, the Internet provides many outlets for edifying content, as well as seedier stuff. In any case, the continuing prevalence of satellite television channels, along with the growing influence of new media, provides many more opportunities for reportage to impact policy and public opinion.

This informational impact increasingly belongs to people all over the world, rather than the few American and Western networks that have dominated news for the world. As Seib notes, CNN’s motto used to be, “The world is watching CNN,” which truthfully described it because so few options existed.⁴⁹ However, people around the world did not want to see themselves and world events from one perspective—the

⁴⁷ Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect*, 175-176.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

American and Western one. Although Westerners may not realize it, people in the developing world have resented this informational flow. Scholars have called this media dominance a modern form of colonialism. The perception holds that Americans have viewed themselves as citizens of the “city on a hill,” and this attitude has led them to “other” different cultures, meaning that they view them in a condescending and flippant way.⁵⁰ While news networks may not have intentionally bragged about American and Western ways to the world, their viewpoint has been the sole one to broadcast on international airwaves.

To describe this situation, scholars have defined an “Electronic Colonialism Theory” to warn of Western media’s influence. This theory holds that cultural values learned from offerings flowing out of media giants like Viacom, Disney, and Time Warner have the power to supplant traditional cultural values of family, tribe, or community. As a result, media empires have altered social roles and behaviors, and those under this influence can end up having more similarities with people thousands of miles away than those in their own purview.⁵¹ Many think the trend is insidious. As Thomas McPhail writes, “What we are in is the early stages of a new ‘Empire of the Mind.’ Not an empire based on land or territory, but an empire based on taking over

⁵⁰ Lawrence Pintak, *Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens: America, Islam, and the War of Ideas* (Ann Arbor: Pluto, 2006), 6.

⁵¹ McPhail, *Global Communication*, 23-24.

the minds of global listeners, viewers, readers, or users.”⁵² If so, then CEOs and executive news managers of major media companies reign the ‘Empire of the Mind.’ While some of this change could be welcome because companies can expand access to information, people from poor regions fear this influence because it seems like a form of mind control. They think it wants to modify their beliefs and behavior and to influence them to take in more Western goods, ideas, and mores.⁵³ Therefore, if media are changing the makeup of the mind, then news reporting has tremendous power to impact culture.

In fact, media are facilitating globalization and worldwide human connections and conflicts. Media open informational flows, help people to understand events, and establish shared value systems across borders and cultures.⁵⁴ Seib even writes that media power, not military might, establishes prestige and power in this era.⁵⁵ Media hold the power to generate greater peace or conflict, and this power has resided exclusively with Western sources. With so few options, audiences from other parts of the world have longed for a more balanced view internationally. Al Jazeera stands as the prime example of a reaction to this viewpoint. However, other news networks have risen to challenge the overwhelming Western view. In Latin America, Venezuela’s President Hugo Chavez started Le Nueva Television del Sur (New Television of the

⁵² Ibid., 24.

⁵³ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁴ Terry Flew, *Understanding Global Media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 72.

⁵⁵ Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect*, 38.

South), known as Telesur. This channel, like some others, presents a political tone due to Mr. Chavez's open hostility to the U.S., but it tries to give Latin Americans reports of and solutions to their conditions.⁵⁶ Even in the West, some countries want to offer more points of view than American networks offer. France has started France 24. Executive Alain de Pouzilhac has said, "This channel will not be anti-American. But this channel has to discover international news with French eyes, like CNN discovers international news with American eyes."⁵⁷ These two stations represent ways that people are seeking new opinions about the world and themselves, whether the tone is hostile or moderate. These news networks can generate the CNN Effect in their own way to influence public policy and opinion.

Nevertheless, the factor of American power and media influence will not vanish. American news began the CNN Effect, which has built a foundation for understanding how media impact modern society. But with the proliferation of new media outlets with different points of view, the CNN and American news factor has diminished. The world news camera has swung away from an exclusive American and Western viewpoint for good.

The Rise of Al Jazeera

The Al Jazeera phenomenon has not replaced the CNN Effect so much as expanded and supplemented it. Al Jazeera's coverage largely acts in the same manner,

⁵⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 37.

providing accelerant, challenging, agenda-setting, and impediment functions. In addition, Al Jazeera grew to prominence much as CNN did—fighting for legitimacy in its homeland for a decade and winning eminence through outstanding coverage of war. In fact, CNN’s coverage of the Persian Gulf War created a demand for an open and independent channel in the Middle East.⁵⁸ Al Jazeera was born in 1996 when the Emir of Qatar’s money combined with talent from the defunct BBC Arabic service.⁵⁹ Traditionally, Arab governments strictly controlled most newspaper and TV journalism.⁶⁰ In addition, the viewing public did not respect journalism because it considered most reporters to be mouthpieces for dictators or political groups.⁶¹ But the Emir broke the habit of heavy-handed media management because he had progressive ideas of expanding political participation and allowing an independent press.⁶² His vision did not end at Qatar’s borders; Al Jazeera was to be a pan-Arab station. Thus this station began with hope for political potential in the Middle East.

Founders set up Al Jazeera to counter the dominant Western viewpoint.

Throughout the 20th century, Arabs depended on the BBC, CNN International, and the wire services—all European or American. These networks consistently reported on the

⁵⁸ Flew, *Understanding Global Media*, 182.

⁵⁹ William Rugh, *Arab Mass Media: Newspapers, Radio, and Television in Arab Politics* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004), 215-216.

⁶⁰ Rugh, *Arab Mass Media*, 6-7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 215.

Middle East, but the region's citizens were frustrated that they had to listen to Western viewpoints about themselves all the time.⁶³ One reason for resentment stemmed from the fact that American journalists and media consistently stereotyped Arab and Muslim people. Americans had been conditioned to think of Arabs as either wealthy oilmen or terrorists, and this viewpoint came out in news coverage. Journalists seemed to report the clichés about Arabs, rather than bothering to learn keys to the culture that would enhance the reportage.⁶⁴ Western news seemed to dominate the world, and at the same time it showed Arabs extremely negative views of themselves, so they viewed the West as a hostile entity.⁶⁵ Al Jazeera was born in part out of resentment for the West, while it also turned to Western broadcast journalism as a model for presentation and reporting.

Al Jazeera grew quickly because it presented such a fresh, startling, and familiar viewpoint to Arabs. It established bureaus in many Arab cities, as well as in Israel. It had exclusive access to events like Operation Desert Fox in Iraq, Sadaam Hussein's call to overthrow Arab kings, and the Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas. It even covered the Israeli elections and interviewed its leaders, rather than shunning Israeli affairs altogether, as had been the traditional Arab stance.⁶⁶ These occasions called attention to Al Jazeera because it could show Arab goings-on to Arabs

⁶³ Pintak, *Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens*, 63.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 31.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁶⁶ Rugh, *Arab Mass Media*, 216-217.

in Arabic from Arabian cities. In addition, other major news networks like CNN relied on some of Al Jazeera's video of these occurrences because they had no access. Still, the network needed some incredibly important news stories to make its name, and these came rather quickly. Al Jazeera's coverage of the Palestinian Intifada in October 2000 established it as a major player in world media. It offered extensive coverage of the uprising, and it tugged at Arab heartstrings by repeatedly showing a 12-year-old boy dying in his father's arms with the background music a Palestinian song—"Jerusalem will return to us." This presentation of the conflict remained one-sided, but at the same time it amazed viewers because they were not getting the story through the lens of Western interests.⁶⁷ Events like this ballooned Al Jazeera's influence, and it became the most-watched station in the region.

However, while the station grew more popular with the public, political leaders had less enthusiasm for Al Jazeera's open talk of politics and policy. People were hailing it as a step toward openness, even democracy, and Arabian dictators and monarchs felt threatened. Some Arab leaders banned satellite dishes and closed bureaus to prevent access to Al Jazeera.⁶⁸ Robert Menard of Reporters Without Borders wrote, "[Autocrats] reacted brutally and without provocation. Since Al Jazeera's launch, its management cannot keep track of all the harassments, expulsions,

⁶⁷ Ibid., 230.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 232-233.

prohibitions and, more serious still, imprisonments, bombardments and deaths.”⁶⁹

Even though Al Jazeera was to gain a notorious reputation in the West, Arab leaders were the original critics of Al Jazeera.⁷⁰ The station still faces threats and bans in its homeland, but it has become extremely popular and influential despite adversity. As a result, some Arab politicians have realized that Al Jazeera will remain, and they have been trying to use it for their political benefit. So that they will look progressive, leaders in Jordan, Egypt, and Bahrain have allowed media liberalization to some degree. Egypt even opened a “media free zone” with less censorship to host media outlets from around the region.⁷¹ In this way, Al Jazeera truly has demonstrated an agenda-setting effect with Arab leaders to bring more freedom of thought and speech.

For all the open talk on the station, however, it has not caused free discourse to bloom fully in the Middle East. While the channel provides an outlet for discussion, political power still rests with dictators and autocrats. As a result, the talking heads on the station may be just talking and engaging in politics vicariously.⁷² Can Al Jazeera create a true agenda-setting effect? It is beginning to do so. Al Jazeera and Internet sources that encourage openness are improving the odds for democratic change in the

⁶⁹ Robert Menard, “Challenging the Monopoly of Meaning,” in *The Al Jazeera Decade: 1996-2006* (Doha: Al Jazeera, 2006), 168.

⁷⁰ Menard, “Challenging the Monopoly of Meaning,” 168.

⁷¹ Hugh Miles, *Al-Jazeera: The Inside Story of the Arab News Channel That Is Challenging the West* (New York: Grove Press, 2005), 330-331.

⁷² Miles, *Al-Jazeera: The Inside Story*, 328.

Middle East. Arabs do not have to merely take in longwinded speeches from dictators on TV or other propaganda. They can listen to many viewpoints on Al Jazeera. They can even call into shows, submit e-mail questions, and generally participate in political discourse. The change happened from the top levels of government down to family dinner-table conversations.⁷³ Network executive Walid al-Omary said, “People can start asking their leadership, ‘Why are we in this situation?’”⁷⁴ The CNN Effect’s agenda-setting and accelerant effects clearly apply to Al Jazeera’s growth. This network has the potential to bring democratic change to the Middle East, although the progress will be slow.

Elsewhere, Western leaders and citizens welcomed Al Jazeera’s birth in the mid-1990s. President Clinton’s administration described the network as a “beacon of light.”⁷⁵ According to Georgetown University scholar Michael Hudson, Washington had something of a love affair with Al Jazeera. He has written that American leaders were pleased that the network based itself on Western models and how it “was prepared to challenge existing political orthodoxies in the region, even to the point of including Israeli spokesmen in its programming.”⁷⁶ They recognized the benefits of the American-style free press in the Arab world.

⁷³ Ibid., 335.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 336.

⁷⁵ Pintak, *Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens*, 71.

⁷⁶ Michael C. Hudson, “Washington vs. Al Jazeera: Competing Constructions of Middle East Realities,” *Transnational Broadcasting Studies* 14 (Spring 2005), <http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Spring05/Hudson.html> (accessed March 15, 2010).

In addition, Arab expatriates in Europe and the U.S. also followed Al Jazeera intently. An audience grew in England, where many Arabs and other minorities live. Like their fellows in the Middle East, they had hoped for this kind of news and open discussion from their viewpoint. British Muslims had distrusted Western news sources because of sensationalism and “limited and limiting perspectives.”⁷⁷ Even in the West, some people resented the exclusive American-Western viewpoint, and they welcomed change.

However, positive Western reactions to Al Jazeera quickly diminished after the September 11 attacks. Al Jazeera became famous in the West because it was at the scene of the action in Afghanistan, but the images it captured provoked negative reactions. While networks like CNN and “the big three” often could not get to the scene of action—whether because of the Taliban or lack of infrastructure—Al Jazeera maintained a bureau in Kabul. It filmed bombs falling, civilian casualties, and even an interview with Osama bin Laden.⁷⁸ This kind of coverage became the network’s standard fare, and it continued to report the new wars in this way. During the Iraq War, the network presented graphic and startling video of suffering that American weapons caused. Pintak has described the contrast to Western reporting:

Al Jazeera specialized in an up-close, in-your-face approach to covering the Muslim world’s first television wars. Dead babies, wounded children, screaming

⁷⁷ Miles, *Al-Jazeera: The Inside Story*, 410-411.

⁷⁸ Pintak, *Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens*, 153-154.

mothers dominated the channel's coverage of Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine. Almost nothing was too gruesome to show: close-ups of open wounds, limbs torn asunder, people collapsing in agony. But those pictures were largely ignored by the U.S. networks. Where audiences watching Al Jazeera and the other broadcasters saw bleeding children and destroyed homes, Americans experienced the war as a Hollywood extravaganza on the small screen, billed in advance by the White House as certain to evoke 'shock and awe.'⁷⁹

Westerners usually saw slick presentations of wars on television, but Al Jazeera did not edit its coverage in the same way. When these reports made their way into Western homes and government offices, through other news networks or the Internet, it was shocking. Westerners were seeing the wars they waged from the perspective of those who were living in "hostile territory."

In addition, Al Jazeera's sympathetic reporting of the perspective of families living through the conflict in Iraq looked like an endorsement of terrorism and anti-Americanism. Its coverage of the war in Iraq precipitated charges that it had links to terrorist groups that would tell the network in advance where a bombing would happen, so that it could film it, and thus propagate a negative view of the war.⁸⁰

Whether these charges were true or not, they are an indication that the network was providing both a challenging and impediment effect to American military power.

Eventually, coalition weapons began to hit Al Jazeera crews working around Iraq. Al Jazeera correspondent Tareq Ayyoub was killed in one of these incidents. While the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 208-209.

⁸⁰ Miles, *Al Jazeera: The Inside Story*, 297.

coalition said the attack that killed him counted as self defense against enemy gunfire that was close at hand, many others believe that the strikes were meant for Al Jazeera.⁸¹ At the same time as Al Jazeera was enhancing political discourse in the Middle East, it was perceived as a tool of terrorism in the West.

Despite this environment, Al Jazeera wanted to begin an English language channel, and it has done so with success. Al Jazeera English, which began broadcasting in 2006, is now several years old, and it is expanding its presence. It reaches millions in Australia and Canada, and it is prying open the U.S. market gradually. It must fight its negative image to make headway into the market. But to Al Jazeera, getting into Western homes represents its mission to reverse the flow of news and information from the wealthy West to developing regions, especially the global south. According to one network executive, “One of our objectives is to communicate with the West in its own language about issues pertaining to the Middle East as direct, credible, alternative sources of information.”⁸² But while the network wants to move away from Western dominance, it also presents a Western show format, and it follows Western journalistic standards. In addition, most of the staff has lived, worked, and studied in the West.⁸³ And when the network sought a manager, it looked for a

⁸¹ Ibid., 264-267.

⁸² Ibid., 412.

⁸³ Ibid., 346.

Westerner.⁸⁴ The tension between Al Jazeera's views of the West—the need to emulate and the need to distance—could make it a success. Prominent pollster James Zogby says that the network could become popular if Americans see it as chic and exotic. In this way, it could draw viewers who want a different take on Middle Eastern affairs and who want to appear sophisticated.⁸⁵ Al Jazeera English has potential for growth and cultural influence.

The Al Jazeera Effect

The growth and seminal coverage of Al Jazeera—both Arabic and English—have had a massive impact on political discourse throughout the world. It has led to an Al Jazeera Effect that expands upon the workings of the CNN Effect. On one level, the Al Jazeera Effect changes perspectives, disrupts censorship and propaganda, and sends information from the global East and South to the West. Author Philip Seib has expanded the idea of the Al Jazeera Effect even further. He counts it as part of the entire system of new media, from satellite broadcasting, to digital technology, and even to text messaging.⁸⁶ He writes:

To varying degrees throughout the world, the connectivity of new media is superseding the traditional political connections that have brought identity and structure to global politics. This rewiring of the world's neural system is proceeding at remarkable speed, and its reach keeps extending farther. It changes the way states

⁸⁴ Ibid., 406.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 422-424.

⁸⁶ Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect*, x.

and citizens interact with each other and it gives the individual a chance at a new kind of autonomy, at least on an intellectual level, because of the greater availability of information.⁸⁷

He argues that the force of this change has momentum to liberate people to think as they would like, and even to contribute to the conversation through citizen journalism.⁸⁸ Seib even points out that “Virtual States” are rising that do not depend on physical borders for a sense of nationality. The Kurdish State stands as an example because many outlets for Kurdish identity exist online. In addition, Muslims throughout the world can participate in the longed-for universal Muslim community online.⁸⁹ The concept of the Al Jazeera Effect provides a way to describe the impact that new media are having upon global society.

The idea of the Al Jazeera Effect takes the CNN Effect many steps further because of new media and technology. In fact, CNN itself participates in this idea, as it provides many outlets for citizen journalism and online activism. It is also seeking to bring more news about local “CNN Heroes”—normal citizens attending to problems of poverty—to the forefront, rather than constantly covering bigwigs in Washington or other world capitals.⁹⁰ In this way, CNN is also reversing the news flow. The Al

⁸⁷ Ibid., 175.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 180-181.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 72.

⁹⁰ CNN, “CNN Heroes: Everyday People Changing the World,” CNN.com, <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cnn.heroes/index.html> (accessed January 5, 2010).

Jazeera Effect represents a change in the flow of information around the world, not just for the network itself. It applies to CNN as well as networks around the world.

Mass Opinions, Mass Media, Mass Money

While the CNN Effect and the Al Jazeera Effect are expanding, they illuminate the powerful mix of emotional and monetary power that they carry. Media scholars write that some images or stories are so powerful that they awaken moral responses and cultural memories, even ones that viewers or readers may not be aware of. For example, an instance of ethnic cleansing may subconsciously conjure up memories of the Holocaust and create a demand to stop atrocities.⁹¹ Many Middle Easterners feel the same way about events similar to the Crusades or the creation of Israel. Media outlets play the largest role in fostering such emotions. Through news, society can learn who its friends and enemies are, and a sense of nationalism, rebellion, or both can develop. Recent history holds pertinent examples.

Pintak, for instance, links America's falling popularity to proliferation of Al Jazeera and other new media. He writes that in Indonesia prior to the Iraq war and Second Palestinian Intifada, most citizens polled favorably toward Americans. But that was when they got their news from CNN and other Western sources. They saw the 2003 war and the Second Intifada through Al Jazeera and new Indonesian networks, and the perspective created anger for American policies and media.⁹² Thus the

⁹¹ Bahador, *The CNN Effect*, 33.

⁹² Pintak, *Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens*, 246.

network created a sense of rebellion against America, as well as a sense of solidarity with people living in Iraq and Palestine. On the other hand, in 2005 movements like the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon occurred where people demanded more Western-style self-rule. Pintak says this revolution probably would not have happened without Al Jazeera. With heavy Arab censorship that had dominated airwaves, people could not have seen the large, spontaneous, defiant protests against Syrian rule.⁹³ The mediated images of protest galvanized thousands of people to unite for a dream of democracy. These two examples show how powerful feelings can be either nurtured or exacerbated in the media.

Governments have always been eager to control information because of this potential. However, governments have increasingly lost control of information, as they continually acknowledge. New sources of control are tied to economic imperatives. In America, the media *business* has control. Money and accolades must keep flowing to networks for news to flow out. Even Al Jazeera, which does not have to answer to Wall Street, has to have some financial success and wide popularity to keep going. Thus networks must cater to their audiences to survive, and sometimes truth, perspective, and serious journalism become casualties. In one respect, networks cater to nationalism to keep a strong audience. As former Pentagon Spokesman and current Al Jazeera reporter Josh Rushing notes in the documentary *Control Room*, reporting biases result. He says, “It benefits Al Jazeera to play to [Arab] nationalism because

⁹³ Ibid., 304-305.

that's their audience, just as Fox plays to American patriotism for the exact same reason—because that's their demographic.”⁹⁴ Thus either simple curiosity or powerful emotions may get a ride from media bosses looking to keep a network afloat or make money.

Different networks have different ownership models and priorities for programming. The degree to which programming caters to the audience seems to depend upon who owns the network, and how much the owners or shareholders care about making money out of journalism. CNN and Al Jazeera represent two distinct models of economic survival. The difference is important because it reveals how the networks may continue to influence politics and society through the “Effects.”

Al Jazeera hails from the small gulf state of Qatar, and the Emir of Qatar bolsters it financially. The network stays nominally independent of the government, although it benefits from its support. Additionally, it was born of the Emir's desire to modernize society by putting a stop to rampant Arabian censorship of news.⁹⁵ The exact nature of the Emir's relationship with the station remains unclear, but he has probably given tens of millions of dollars since his initial starter loan of \$137 million. According to Miles, no clear distinctions exist between his personal money and the government's money. And though he supposedly maintains a “hands-off” relationship

⁹⁴ Andrew Hurwitz, Jehane Noujaim, Abdallah Schleifer, and Rosadel Valera, *Control Room*, DVD (Santa Monica, CA: Lions Gate Entertainment and Magnolia Pictures, 2004).

⁹⁵ Flew, *Understanding Global Media*, 182-183.

to the network, it probably does not possess full editorial independence.⁹⁶ The network does not disclose its exact costs or expenditures, but it gets money from advertising and selling footage to other networks as well.⁹⁷ Questions remain about the business model of Al Jazeera, but it has proven effective enough to secure and grow the network, if not to make major profits.⁹⁸ But even though the network does not have freedom in the sense of the First Amendment, it continually produces serious and thoughtful journalism.

For its part, CNN started off with a major financial push from Ted Turner, also a wealthy, progressive patron who wanted to change journalism in his country. Though CNN operated on a business model, Turner told staffers to show the news how they thought it should be and let him worry about the competition. CNN focused on ratings, but they were not the first priority so that shows like *World Report*, not an American ratings grabber, could air.⁹⁹ Things changed enormously once Time Warner took over, and Turner left the network. The traditional business model kicked in with more fervor. CNN was going through the same thing that other news networks were facing as corporate takeovers proceeded through the 80s and 90s. Executives expected

⁹⁶ Miles, *Al-Jazeera: The Inside Story*, 346-347.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 346.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 406.

⁹⁹ Don M. Flourney, *CNN World Report: Ted Turner's International News Coup* (London: John Libbey & Company Ltd., 1992), 20.

reporting to make money.¹⁰⁰ This means that CNN operates in the market and so is beholden to investors, advertising revenue, and additional sources of money. In addition, it functions in the “market for creative content,” a business realm in which producers must put out compelling “products” which satisfy a demand for “originality and novelty.”¹⁰¹ This market operates at odds with public service journalism.

The business has only become more complicated since the Internet became prominent and made obsolete the need for a physical newspaper and set television news time. Indeed, the marketplace and confusion over how journalism should handle new technology has been threatening serious reporting and changing the definition of news to anything “that matters to people.”¹⁰² Critics point out that this definition produces entertainment rather than true journalism. Ted Koppel has said that judging news by the standards of entertainment precipitated a “great tragedy” for American journalism.¹⁰³ In addition, these changes came about as the FCC lost some regulatory power. The FCC’s provision that directs news organizations to operate in the spirit of public service lost power as deregulation of the media business ensued and corporate takeovers began.¹⁰⁴ In the U.S., both business and government seemed less interested in fostering a sense of mission in journalism.

¹⁰⁰ Fanning, Bergman, and Sullivan, “What’s Happening to the News?”

¹⁰¹ Flew, *Understanding Global Media*, 10-11.

¹⁰² Fanning, Bergman, and Sullivan, “What’s Happening to the News?”

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Somewhat paradoxically then, government support in the manner of Al Jazeera, PBS, and the BBC unfailingly produces serious journalism and investigations of stories that would not make “good TV” but create good discussions. Stations that operate exclusively on the market such as CNN, Fox, and MSNBC produce more fluff, even though they may freely criticize the government. Still, every network must cater to an audience to some degree to survive. Programming provides a different tone depending on the national or international market to which a network broadcasts, and networks often gratify audiences’ preconceived opinions and preferences. According to Dr. Mohammed el-Nawawy, leader of the Al Jazeera English Research Project, declares that people choose news sources that present a worldview that mirrors their own.¹⁰⁵

One can see this situation through CNN and Al Jazeera. They present obvious contrasts, but one can see differences in audience preferences within these networks as well. Major differences in programming exist among Al Jazeera’s English and Arabic arms, as well as CNN’s domestic and international broadcasts. CNN International presents many more international stories, while CNN domestic brings far less international news to American viewers. On the other hand, Al Jazeera Arabic presents more stories that cater to a pro-Palestinian, anti-Israeli viewpoint. It will use the term “martyr,” while Al Jazeera English (AJE) will not. Dr. el-Nawawy says this policy does not reveal simple bias, but it shows how the network caters to international

¹⁰⁵ Dr. Mohammed el-Nawawy, phone interview by author, February 4, 2010.

audience.¹⁰⁶ For the same reason, the English network presents stories about gay rights issues, while the Arabic station caters to the Middle East's widespread anti-gay sentiments.¹⁰⁷ Thus people get the news that most other people want to watch, and audience preferences will continue to shape the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects.

Many questions remain about the viability of both business models—government support and corporate control—and the future does not look calm or clear for either. Could Al Jazeera be swallowed up in a massive media conglomerate? Could Qatar's progressive ruler change his mind or somehow leave the picture?¹⁰⁸ Will ratings continue to drive CNN and others? Will they survive as the Internet dominates? Whether one can answer these questions or not, business models hold ramifications for the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects. Big money can bring technological innovation and the ability to fly news crews and equipment all around the world. Money brought these networks into being and thus provided the genesis of the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects. But as Americans are seeing, using news to make money can create breakneck competition, an excess of shallow stories, and pandering to audience sentiments. Audience demand and news business supply drives what we know, what

¹⁰⁶ El-Nawawy, interview.

¹⁰⁷ David Hauslaib, "Al Jazeera's English network is much gay-friendlier than its Arabic channel. Duh," Queerty Blog, entry posted February 8, 2010, <http://www.queerty.com/al-jazeeras-english-network-is-much-gay-friendlier-than-its-arabic-channel-duh-20100208/> (accessed February 12, 2010).

¹⁰⁸ Miles, *Al Jazeera: The Inside Story*, 425.

issues become prominent, and thus what stories make a major impact in politics and society. Money, media programming, and major issues and emotions are at stake.

Summary

Both the CNN Effect and the Al Jazeera Effect increasingly influence global politics and society as political dynamics and media structures change. This chapter has described the historical, intellectual, and financial foundations for these phenomena. CNN introduced 24-hour news, and it set a precedent for the way other news networks could influence politics and society in modern communications. Its influence in major media events like the Persian Gulf War and the Somalia intervention showed its clout and called for a way to define it.

Scholars explained the phenomenon by defining the CNN Effect. Scholar Babak Bahador defined the following categories: accelerant, agenda-setting, impediment, and challenging. These describe how reporting can speed up politics, place tasks on policy outlooks, impede military action, and urge leaders to save those living through a humanitarian crisis. Critics say the CNN Effect does not display clear links between reportage and decisions, although no one claims that the process simply proceeds. Critics also argue that media stay deferential to government policies, even though media organizations consistently challenge government actions, and even though news reports that agree with leaders still have influence. Currently, the CNN Effect remains powerful, even though CNN itself does not focus solely on news of consequence.

Moreover, other networks have begun to influence the world through the CNN model as digital reporting has boomed and as many countries and regions have reacted against the exclusive Western viewpoint. They have started their own networks to do something about it, and Al Jazeera has become the symbol for this phenomenon. It began by giving Arabs their perspective on news and challenging governments in the Middle East. It grew to worldwide influence as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq ensued, and it sometimes gained a notorious reputation as it challenged American power. But overall, it has generated an Al Jazeera Effect that builds upon the CNN Effect's workings. It symbolizes the liberating effect that new media have on global society, and Philip Seib has explained this phenomenon and declared that it amounts to "a rewiring of the world's neural system." Finally, this chapter discussed how the business models of government support and corporate authority control the definition of news, and thus manage what people around the world know about their societies and governments. What they see on the news can influence how politics and culture play out on a global scale, as the next chapter discusses.

CHAPTER 2

THE CNN AND AL JAZEERA EFFECTS AS SYMBOLS OF GEOPOLITICAL REALITIES

Introduction

New York Times writer Roger Cohen has described how some American soldiers in Afghanistan watch Al Jazeera English (AJE) at the gym. Even though some military leaders derided the channel in the past, some soldiers now tune in to grasp how views about America are changing. They want to understand the dynamics of the country in which they fight. Cohen contends that more Americans need to do the same thing. He writes, “America, and not just its front-line soldiers, needs to watch Al Jazeera to understand how the world has changed. Any other course amounts to self-destructive blindness.”¹ Self-destructive blindness? Why does Cohen use such stringent language, and why cannot American news sources suffice?

He, like many others, realizes that the encounter between Americans and Westerners with people from Asia, the Middle East, and developing world have produced powerful new dynamics. If people pay attention to these changes and try to understand them, the possibility for reconciliation can flourish. If not, the potential for conflict increases, and many recent examples have shown how cultural misunderstandings propagated through media have done so. Many scholars have been attempting to explain happenings in international affairs, but three of them especially relate to the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects. This thesis examines their work because of

¹ Roger Cohen, “Bring the Real World Home,” *New York Times*, November 12, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/12/opinion/12cohen.html> (accessed February 1, 2010).

the influence and prominence of their ideas in international affairs and journalism. None deal directly with the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects, but the frameworks these authors have built place them in context. Fareed Zakaria edits *Newsweek's* International edition and hosts *Fareed Zakaria GPS (Global Public Square)* on CNN. His book, *The Post-American World*, describes how American-Western dominance has been fading, yet remaining strong. His description matches the media environment for Western organizations such as CNN. Thomas Friedman, the *New York Times* journalist, helps to explain the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects through his book *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century*. This work reveals the technological and economic forces at play in the proliferation of new media, social, and economic networks. Finally, Samuel Huntington's now-classic work, *The Clash of Civilizations*, provides both context and warning regarding the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects. His writings have influenced other scholars who have written about modern media, and his work reveals the potential for conflict inherent in the encounter between Western and non-Western points of view. These three works provide frameworks for how the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects are functioning among major political and social transitions. Zakaria, Friedman, and Huntington reveal how relevant media phenomena have become to global politics and society.

The Post-American World

To Fareed Zakaria, “post-American” does not connote “without” America or “with a defeated” America. Instead, he means that other nations are catching up with

America's economic and political success. He calls the phenomenon the "rise of the rest," and he reveals that it has happened because of inspiration from American and Western power *and* rejection of it.² Zakaria says that the "rest" comprises Asia, developing nations, and non-state actors. He writes, "Power is shifting away from nation-states, up, down, and sideways."³ Zakaria does not argue that the world has moved beyond American and Western authority because the U.S. still possesses political and military superiority. Instead, he contends:

In ever other dimension—industrial, financial, educational, social, cultural—the distribution of power is shifting, moving away from American dominance. That does not mean we are entering an anti-American world. But we are moving into a *post-American world*, one defined and directed from many places and many people.⁴

The way that news networks around the world are behaving has facilitated these shifting social, economic, cultural, and political power dynamics. Chapter 1 described how the non-Western world created a backlash against the dominant Western viewpoint in news, resulting in greater influence for the CNN Effect and the rise of the Al Jazeera Effect. But that reaction did not finish the story because, as Zakaria contends, the world still cherishes American and Western ways. *The Post-American World* describes this situation, and it places it in historical context.

² Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2009), 2.

³ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

Zakaria describes how media are influencing the world as a part of his overall discussion of politics and economics. He contends that the growth of news channels like Al Jazeera constitute a revolution in thinking about world history and current affairs. He writes, “Many of the ‘rest’ are dissecting the narratives, arguments, and assumptions of the West and countering them with a different view of the world.”⁵ While Western outlets like the BBC or *Time* used to define current events, many indigenous stations now provide local takes on society and international politics.⁶ This situation applies to history as well as current events. Americans and Englishmen see World War II as a heroic triumph and laud events like D-Day and the battle for Sicily. But they most often ignore significant battles like Kursk—one of history’s biggest with 1.5 million combatants—and the fact that many colonial subjects contributed to victory as well.⁷ Non-Westerners have resented these Western viewpoints and have decided that they must mitigate them with their own news sources on TV and online.

While these sentiments seem to symbolize anti-Americanism or anti-Westernism, they actually reveal that people simply desire to hear more about local events and understand them through their own perspective. As journalist Robert Kaplan writes, Al Jazeera can come across as a biased news source, but so can other networks. He distinguishes between developed and developing world broadcasting:

⁵ Ibid., 35.

⁶ Ibid., 83.

⁷ Ibid., 34-35.

Al Jazeera is forgivable for its biases in a way that the BBC or CNN is not. In the case of Al Jazeera, news isn't so much biased as honestly representative of a middle-of-the-road developing-world viewpoint. Where you stand depends upon where you sit. And if you sit in Doha or Mumbai or Nairobi, the world is going to look starkly different than if you sat in Washington or London, or St. Louis for that matter.⁸

In other words, the agenda of news stations not headquartered in the U.S. or Europe comes from genuine cultural differences. People around the world simply do not see things the same way, and they would like to hear about what is going on in their neighborhood or capital, just as Americans with extensive local news networks do. Zakaria says the same thing: "Where you sit affects how you see the world."⁹ While one could take this phrase as common knowledge, seeing these perspectives with such immediacy through broadcasting technology has shocked many Westerners who took their possession of the flow of information for granted. Bringing new vantage points to global discussions about events makes up part of the Al Jazeera Effect, and this trend has been evident in the post-American world.

The Iraq War beginning in 2003 clearly showed how the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects fit these aspects of the post-American world. During the war, journalists from Al Jazeera and similar networks brought the Iraqi perspective to the discussion, and they usurped the Western media's monopoly on defining the war. For example, the

⁸ Robert Kaplan, "Why I Love Al Jazeera," *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 2009, <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200910/al-jazeera> (accessed 15 November 2009).

⁹ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 83.

documentary *Control Room* starkly reveals Al Jazeera reporters making their way through the war in the control room in Qatar and in Baghdad. As producer Hassan Ibrahim watches video of bombs pounding Baghdad, he sarcastically sighs, “Ahhhh, democracy.”¹⁰ He mocks the concept of democracy brought with outside force. Other Al Jazeera producers express similar views about the war, including a female producer who compares the war to an American movie. She remarks, “You know the end, you know who’s the hero, you know the bad guys, they’re going to die. But you still watch because you want to know how its going to happen and what weapons they’re going to use.”¹¹ These producers were not railing against everything American, but it was their duty to show how the war was unfolding from their viewpoint.

In fact, these very producers express admiration for democratic ideals, as well as Americans throughout the film. Ibrahim befriends the Pentagon spokesman, and he says he holds faith that the American people will not stand for what he believes is an unjust assault. Likewise, senior producer Samir Khader remorsefully watches the American invasion, but he says that Al Jazeera exists to educate Arabs about democracy and to shake up their stagnant societies.¹² These men admire Western ways, but these feelings could never force them to remain silent about what they were witnessing in their homeland. Their reports of the war broadened the Al Jazeera Effect

¹⁰ Andrew Hurwitz, Jehane Noujaim, Abdallah Schleifer, and Rosadel Valera, *Control Room*, DVD (Santa Monica, CA: Lions Gate Entertainment and Magnolia Pictures, 2004).

¹¹ Hurwitz et al., *Control Room*.

¹² Ibid.

and presented a challenging and impediment effect to worldwide audiences and governments. For this vantage point to broadcast internationally constitutes a new reality of the post-American world.

In fact, the push and pull between admiration and abhorrence of the West, which the Al Jazeera producers in *Control Room* display, has existed for centuries, and Zakaria discusses this history. Many have resented the West, but many have longed to emulate it as well. Because of the economic and political success in Europe and the U.S., leaders like Peter the Great, Kemal Ataturk, and Jawaharlal Nehru instituted Western political, economic, and cultural values. This attitude flourished even under colonial domination. Zakaria quotes an old letter from an Indian leader to the prime minister as the British were building a school for Indians in Calcutta in 1823. They were trying to provide Indians an additional opportunity to teach local ways and language. The leader, however, forcefully wrote that additional learning of Hindu customs and Sanskrit would be “a lamentable check on the diffusion of knowledge.”¹³ He, like many people today, equated the Western with the progressive.

This attitude persists today as a debate over what constitutes being modern and thus desirable. The West has symbolized advancement and modernity, so people have wanted to emulate it. As a result, people continue to fuse ways of the West and “the rest.” Scholars debate whether modern equals Western, but Zakaria writes that so

¹³ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 70-71. Zakaria also points out that people from many developing countries want to emulate Western education, which trains people in critical thinking rather than only memorization for tests. *Ibid.*, 193. This is interesting in light of the fact that many journalists at Al Jazeera have Western educations or are themselves from Europe or North America.

many symbols of contemporary life look Western that the stereotype holds. For example, he notes that communities worldwide celebrate Christian holidays like Valentine's Day and Christmas, and businessmen and women around the world wear Western business suits.¹⁴ According to Zakaria, these days populations discover and spread these values from media such as TV shows, news stories, movies, and books that come in an increasingly Western mold.¹⁵ Many consider this situation threatening, as the Electronic Colonialism Theory described in Chapter 1 explains.

Still, even though many resent Western and American cultural influence and foreign policy, Zakaria declares that "America *the place*" stirs dreams worldwide.¹⁶ One of Al Jazeera's producers, Samir Khader says as much, even as he witnesses the Iraq War that he does not support. He ruminates:

Between us, if I am offered a job with Fox [News], I will take it – to change the Arab nightmare into American dream. I still have that dream, maybe I will never be able to do it, but I have plans for my children. When they finish high school I will send them to America to study there.¹⁷

Put simply, he would work for the news network many have considered a cheerleader for the war that he hated because he holds the American Dream. This example reveals that the West draws cultural imitators and admirers continuously, no matter what they think of the power politics. Even networks like Al Jazeera, which have struck out

¹⁴ Ibid., 74-76.

¹⁵ Ibid., 78.

¹⁶ Ibid., 257.

¹⁷ Hurwitz et al., *Control Room*.

against the dominant Western viewpoint in news will continue to demonstrate such ambivalence as the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects continue to influence politics and society. Media reside at the cutting edge of discussions about values in the post-American world.

International news organizations consistently reflect this rejection and embrace of American and Western mores of the post-American world. Like Al Jazeera, most foreign news organizations display local points of view in a Western-looking package. For example, Al Jazeera English looks like any Western channel, with the exception of its Arabic logo, and the Arabic channel has a similar format. Al Jazeera's programming follows the same model too: political talk shows, on-air experts and debates, an anchor at a desk, and news pieces timed and displayed like Western counterparts. In addition, Al Jazeera English, which is expanding Al Jazeera's global clout, broadcasts in English. France 24 and Russia Today are English language channels too. The choice to broadcast in English, ironically, symbolizes the post-American world. English has become the most widely spread language in history—much more than Latin, which only literate, elite Westerners spoke. English has become the speech of commerce, business, diplomacy, education, and the Internet. Nearly a quarter of the world's population speaks at least a bit of it.¹⁸ Both the look and language of networks like Al Jazeera place them in the post-American world as they expand in influence.

¹⁸ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 79.

On the other hand, local media markets around the world are booming and distancing themselves from the Western model and its emblem, the English language. They are producing news in their own words. Broadcasts and Web sites have proliferated in many languages like Hindi, Tamil, Mandarin, and Spanish. Zakaria writes, “In the first stage of globalization, everyone watched CNN. In the second stage, it was joined by the BBC and Sky News. Now every country is producing its own version of CNN—from Al Jazeera and Al Arabia to New Delhi’s NDTV and Aaj Talk.”¹⁹ To demonstrate power, cultural assertiveness, and progress, these nations start news networks in Western style, if not the language. Zakaria explains that this situation makes up part of the challenge of globalization. People wish to keep local mores while employing Western technology and systems.²⁰ But whether news stations broadcast in English or the local tongue, they are increasingly generating aspects of the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects around the globe.

On a more somber note, Zakaria also reveals that media are changing worldwide perspectives on violence. Satellite TV and Internet news reports offer more intensity and immediacy to stories about war, terrorist attacks, shooting sprees, and the like.²¹ Zakaria says that it seems pervasive because of the information revolution, but

¹⁹ Ibid., 83.

²⁰ Ibid., 86.

²¹ In addition, Zakaria notes that economic and political welfare have not necessarily kept lockstep through the decade. The stock market rose in Israel during the 2006 war with Hezbollah, and despite the chaos the war in Iraq wrought, areas of the Middle East like Dubai and Turkey have seen an economic boom. Ibid., 8.

the media are not presenting reality. Even though viewers see more reports of attacks, bombings, and destruction, scholars have analyzed actual patterns of conflict and learned that the world is seeing less violence now than perhaps ever. The immediacy and prevalence of news, much of it exaggerated, merely has heightened worry as well as the horror of war.²² Zakaria observes:

The immediacy of the images and the intensity of the twenty-four-hour news cycle combine to produce constant hyperbole. Every weather disturbance is ‘the storm of the century.’ Every bomb that explodes is BREAKING NEWS... The randomness of terrorist violence, the targeting of civilians, and the ease with which modern societies can be penetrated add to our disquiet... It *feels* like a very dangerous world. But it isn’t.²³

This phenomenon causes war to feel much more intense. For example, in *Control Room*, an Al Jazeera journalist argues with a U.S. military spokesman over the extent of bombing in Baghdad. Did it amount to complete destruction or precision bombing? The spokesman brings up the Dresden carpet-bombing. Were not targeted bombings more fair-minded than World War II attacks like that? The journalist argues no, and he contends that in the age of television, the magnitude of destruction often looks worse than it is.²⁴ Fewer people have physical wounds, but the psychological effects seem greater because of media like CNN and Al Jazeera broadcasting pictures of suffering.

²² Ibid., 8.

²³ Ibid., 9.

²⁴ Hurwitz et al., *Control Room*.

Zakaria's ideas about the post-American world show how the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects fit into global society as political systems and ways of communicating transform. News networks outside of the West have separated the tone of their reporting from Western patterns, yet they have styled them like Western counterparts. Moreover, the choice to broadcast in English or the local vernacular symbolizes how news organizations think that Western ways are both key to greater influence abroad and barriers to local traditions. These news outlets have seriously challenged American wars and actions around the world, as Al Jazeera did during the 2003 Iraq War, while they continue to hope that their programming brings democratic change and American-style openness to their societies. Finally, media are changing how each society experiences violence; people see more of it on TV, while wars and terrorist attacks may be producing less damage than ever. These conflicting values of the post-American world broadcast worldwide and create more opportunities for the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects to impact policy and public opinion.

The Flat World

Friedman reveals more about the technological and economic advancements that have carried society into the post-American world. Worldwide broadcasting through television and the Internet cannot exist or grow without a solid technological and economic base. Cables, cameras, satellites, computer systems, and engineers provide the means to get information out to everyone. Messages must have means of transportation—and the money that makes it possible—to have an impact on society

and politics. And as Friedman points out, all of these systems are changing in profound ways. Friedman’s “flat world” explanation illuminates how new business and technological models are changing news, and thus humanity.

The flat-world framework describes how people are more, better, and faster connected than ever before and that “globalization has gone to a whole new level.” Through the “flat-world platform” of the personal computer, fiber-optic cable, and work flow software, almost everyone in the world can participate in global business and events.²⁵ While Friedman acknowledges the potential for destructive actions to flourish in the “flat world,” he has an optimistic tone and outlook. He writes:

What the flattening of the world means is that we are now connecting all the knowledge centers on the planet together into a single global network, which—if politics and terrorism do not get in the way—could usher in an amazing era of prosperity, innovation, and collaboration, by companies, communities, and individuals.²⁶

This process began in earnest in the 1990s, and it has accelerated quickly. Many of the processes and innovations of the flat world have changed journalism, and thus the impact media outlets can have.

Friedman describes “flatteners” that have forced these changes, and many of them relate to journalism. He first mentions how the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 flattened the world by breaking down political barriers and creating more political

²⁵ Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, 3rd ed. (New York: Picador, 2007), 9-10.

²⁶ Friedman, *The World Is Flat*, 8.

freedom. He says that after the political controls of communism began to break down, the “practical constraint on individual reach collapsed.” People began to exchange news and information more freely, especially as the nearly borderless Internet developed.²⁷ The launch of Netscape constitutes another flattener because it led the way to global connectedness through the Internet, as well as the digitization and super-fast transfer of content.²⁸ In addition, Friedman describes how workflow software has flattened the world for companies and business processes. The computer networks opened through software have allowed “more people in more places to design, display, manage, and collaborate on business data previously handled manually.”²⁹ News organizations constitute global communication networks as well as businesses, so the economic innovations that Friedman describes for companies like UPS, Infosys, and Google have irrevocably altered the news business as well. The flatteners that Friedman describes facilitated the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects by providing the basis for quickly and easily spreading reportage through the world.

Continuing on, Friedman discusses “uploading,” a flattener that includes the phenomenon of blogging. This flattener means that virtually anyone with a computer can contribute to the global news flow. One does not have to endure traditional journalism training or news business hierarchy. “More than ever,” writes Friedman,

²⁷ Ibid., 58.

²⁸ Ibid., 60.

²⁹ Ibid., 79.

“we can all now be producers, not just consumers.”³⁰ People no longer have to wait for others to dictate information to them or tell them what they need to know as members of society. News organizations, including CNN and Al Jazeera, have noticed and used this hunger for “citizen journalism.”³¹ Now, a person with something to say can use his or her cell phone to record video and pictures and a personal computer to write and edit content. Then he or she can upload it to the Internet to allow anyone to access and process the information.³² This new way of journalism allows people to have a say in political and social processes as well as comb different information sources for a fuller picture of the truth.³³

Blogging has amplified the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects because people can discuss recent media events or political ideas online, for anyone to read, rather than only in a circle of family or friends. For its part, the U.S. government does not possess simple means to respond to American bloggers’ concerns. But Seib, in *The Al Jazeera Effect*, reveals how blogging and citizen journalism are changing the way other governments around the world interact with citizens. He writes, “Particularly in countries where governments have tried to suppress political organizing, blogging may

³⁰ Ibid., 95.

³¹ Ibid., 118.

³² Ibid., 46.

³³ Ibid., 47.

prove to be valuable in orchestrating pressure for reform.”³⁴ Recent examples include Lebanese bloggers who pressed for open debate about Rafik Hariri’s assassination in the run-up to the Cedar Revolution in 2005. In addition, Bahraini bloggers have challenged the ruling family and state scandals. Seib claims that blogs can prove their political worth in time. They have the potential to generate volumes of public debate and in turn, democratic reforms.³⁵

Friedman also discusses how outsourcing has been flattening society. This business practice has already infiltrated journalism, even though one would not expect journalism to either benefit or suffer from the phenomenon. Reuters has outsourced some of its operations. Now, employees in India can go through earnings reports or simple notices that do not need much analysis and get the information online. This workflow supposedly frees up journalists in other bureaus to focus on analytical or personally fulfilling reporting.³⁶ But this practice raises many questions. Could more significant stories be outsourced if the cost to the company lessens? Does news coverage lose too much perspective if journalists do not report “on the ground?” Could more journalists lose their jobs if data processors can do them on the cheap? One questions whether technological advances in speed and cost can precipitate a loss of news quality for an ever-bigger audience.

³⁴ Philip Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect: How the New Global Media Are Reshaping World Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 149.

³⁵ Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect*, 149-150.

³⁶ Friedman, *The World Is Flat*, 18.

Friedman discusses a couple of more flatteners that build upon the Internet, workflow software, and uploading. These empower individuals and news organizations to discover and respond to current events. For example, Friedman writes about “in-forming,” whereby people can find out more information than ever before, on their own, with a search engine, almost anywhere. In this way, as Friedman writes, people have “the ability to build and deploy your own personal supply chain—a supply chain of information, knowledge, and entertainment.”³⁷ This phenomenon empowers individuals because they can find information for themselves, and they do not have to wait as often for news anchors or officials to explain goings on.³⁸ Added to in-forming, personal and business technological devices have advanced so much that almost any kind of information will be available anywhere. Friedman calls these revolutionary devices “steroids” because “they are amplifying and turbocharging all other flatteners.” Steroids will make business and information run even more smoothly.³⁹ These advances in technology are moving so swiftly that Friedman, who re-edited this book only a few years ago, did not have a chance to write about the iPhone, which is a steroid that makes all kinds of information and news available anywhere. In fact, Al Jazeera English now streams to iPhone and CNN produces daily podcasts. Media effects can gain greater influence if news is available anywhere in hand, rather than on a stationary television screen or computer.

³⁷ Ibid., 178.

³⁸ Ibid., 183.

³⁹ Ibid., 187.

The “flatteners” that Friedman discusses have enormous relevance to the news business, and they amplify the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects. News companies constantly update their communications technology, whether software or web based. CNN sometimes uses the web service Skype to secure remote interviews through personal computer, rather than through an expensive local studio. Al Jazeera, which does not broadcast widely on American TV, posts most of its stories on YouTube for anyone to see. Both networks use an array of blogs to let their correspondents have more of an in-depth or current say on events. CNN bloggers write for the *Political Ticker* and for shows like *Anderson Cooper 360*. Al Jazeera maintains blogs for each world region, as well as major events like the Haiti earthquake in 2010. In addition, both networks’ correspondents and producers constantly use their stereos, iPhones and Blackberries, even as they welcome input from viewers with the same devices as “citizen journalists.” In this way, news can become a conversation among citizens, rather than an exclusive dialogue—or even shouting match—by television commentators.⁴⁰ Flatteners have increased the scope and availability of news and information. They have fundamentally changed newsroom workflows, just as they have changed productivity in factories, boardrooms, and trading floors.

Indeed, Friedman’s flat-world echoes even more of Seib’s discussion in *The Al Jazeera Effect*. Seib writes that the Internet and new technology provide outlets to bring more attention to worthy causes. New technological “knowledge centers” in

⁴⁰ Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect*, 55.

places like rural India are bringing knowledge about agriculture and medicine through technology. Some entrepreneurs are developing small and cheap computers for children living in impoverished regions.⁴¹ These projects can be expensive and cumbersome, but as cell phone technology develops, more of the flat-world benefits can reach poor areas. Seib looks forward to cell phone technology spreading and giving even the most humble people access to news information. While these changes make exciting possibilities for development, no amount of technological devices will matter if people do not first get medical, financial, and political attention.⁴² Still, flatteners expand the effect that news can have in society because they facilitate the free exchange of ideas, even to the remotest places on earth.

New modes of communication, however, carry some dangerous repercussions as well as benefits. Seib writes that terrorists and others with malicious intentions can manipulate information and move it so swiftly that it can stir up great numbers of people, causing “the distance between discussion and riot” to shrink.⁴³ Seib declares that people will be receiving news and information so quickly that getting one’s news will be a completely new experience. He writes:

The emotional ambience of watching news at home on a television set or computer monitor is different from that of hearing news by way of a cell phone in the midst of a crowd of strangers on a bus or a street corner. And if

⁴¹ Ibid., 48-49.

⁴² Friedman, *The World Is Flat*, 541.

⁴³ Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect*, 48.

others in that crowd are receiving the same information, a chain reaction among the recipients could occur. News providers should recognize this and consider it when delivering potentially inflammatory news reports.⁴⁴

A negative chain reaction would not necessarily happen in all cultures, buses, or street corners in the world. However, this example shows that as the experience of news changes in the flat world, so will its force.

Flat-world technologies amplify the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects by making them present in people's homes, pockets, handbags, and work commutes. As millions of citizens and stakeholders around the world receive new technological means of digesting news, they can influence society on their own terms. As leaders and policymakers view news on their iPhones or Blackberries, they can instantly comment, respond, and be informed about pressing issues faster than ever. And as newsrooms and reporters gather and employ new technology, they are providing better, in-depth reporting through the Internet. All of these technological revolutions in the flat world will keep changing journalism and thus the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects. What to expect remains unclear, but as Friedman writes:

Whenever civilization has gone through a major technological revolution, the world has changed in profound and unsettling ways. But there is something about the flattening of the world that is going to be qualitatively different from the great changes of previous eras: the speed and breadth with which it is taking hold.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid., 51.

⁴⁵ Friedman, *The World Is Flat*, 49.

The speed of technological change proceeds so quickly that quantifying the force of it is nearly impossible, but the way people and governments respond to news media will be changing in some fashion. Because the world is flattening, the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects can influence decisions and minds in almost any location.

The Clash of Civilizations

Both Friedman and Zakaria hold largely optimistic views of current political and cultural encounters, but Huntington's work provides warnings. This influential explanation of the meeting of the world's distinct civilizations appears in many news stories. Media organizations are not themselves civilizations, but they provide the means through which civilizations perceive one another in peace and conflict. While outlets like CNN and Al Jazeera strive to present balanced accounts of conflicts between the West and the rest, they still present views that cater to their audience. And often, members of the civilizations to which these networks tend, as well as some journalists, see themselves in opposition to each other.⁴⁶ According to scholar Edward Said, these circumstances mean that all sides find the will to fight from what they hear and see on the news. "Thus," he writes, "the polarity is deepened and the chance of dialog between cultures is postponed."⁴⁷ Media networks can inflame the clash of civilizations, even as they possess the potential to assuage it.

⁴⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2003), 249.

⁴⁷ Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How The Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), xv.

Huntington writes that conflicts in the post-Cold War world are playing out on civilizational lines, with the West on one side and a coalition of Islamic or Confucian states on another. He posits many scenarios of bandwagoning with and against the West, and he forecasts arguments—even total war—as states align with core states or carry out “fault line wars” within civilizations.⁴⁸ Though writing before 9/11, Huntington’s work seems prophetic, as the U.S. has recently had confrontations with Islamic societies, and both sides have displayed deep misunderstanding of and hatred for each other. The clash has not only referred to Muslim fundamentalism; it has resulted from centuries of mistrust and conflict. Huntington writes, “The dangerous clashes of the future [which is now] are likely to arise from the interaction of Western arrogance, Islamic intolerance, and Sinic assertiveness.”⁴⁹ These attitudes construct frosty relations with “cold peace,” economic wars, quasi wars, and even arms races.⁵⁰ These kinds of conflicts will characterize global politics in years to come.

The CNN and Al Jazeera Effects can play crucial roles in these developments, for good or ill. Media comprise part of the culture of nations. And because power and culture spread together “values, practices, and institutions”—like those of the press—will spread into other societies.⁵¹ The spread of media should produce hope because it can facilitate dialogue and understanding, but Huntington does not seem hopeful about

⁴⁸ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 207-209.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

what media can do during a clash of civilizations. Even if societies have more information about and contact with other because of satellite TV, the Internet, and personal communication devices, knowledge does not equal trust or admiration. Huntington claims that wars often happen between societies that have much contact, and frequent associations can sometimes strengthen nationalism and produce hostility.⁵² He writes, “Every civilization sees itself as the center of the world and writes its history as the central drama of human history” even though a multi-civilizational time makes this perception obsolete.⁵³ Nevertheless, as Huntington explains, “hate dynamics” emerge between civilizations where “each side dramatizes and magnifies the distinction between the forces of virtue and the forces of evil and eventually attempts to transform this distinction into the ultimate distinction between the quick and the dead.”⁵⁴ Media like CNN and Al Jazeera constitute the principal means through which societies dramatize, magnify, and write their experiences, so they can deepen a clash of civilizations.

Many scholars believe that recent media revolutions facilitate Huntington’s conceptions of the clash. Philip Seib writes that media will play significant roles in cultural collisions, whether they become economic, cultural, or military. Because of

⁵² Samuel P. Huntington, “If Not Civilizations, What?” in *The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate*, edited by the Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Foreign Affairs, 1996), 63. He also says that these dynamics are only possible in modern society, which has increasingly mobilized as literacy rates, education opportunities, and urban areas have grown. Peasant society could never have made these changes possible. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 86.

⁵³ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 54-55.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 266.

quick exchanges of information, governments and people have little time to properly respond to news, or even to comprehend it. Even though the world has become so interconnected, media often present superficial views of events, and people end up not getting the truth or misunderstanding it.⁵⁵ Seib calls to mind the master propaganda of Hitler's Nazis and Rwanda's genocidaires that showed how powerful mediated messages are when conflict looms. He notes, however, that "media can also discourage internal conflict by fostering transparency and giving those who might be caught up in disorder a chance to see a preferable world outside their own borders and experience."⁵⁶ But the record of media as an "honest broker" of information will remain mixed. Networks like Al Jazeera and CNN try to stand apart from their own civilizations as objective informers, but they cannot help but be representatives of their home cultures with all that entails.

Some scholars note that media can facilitate reconciliation, but they do not think it will come through Western media. Kishore Mahbubani, a Singaporean diplomat and writer, contends that many Westerners falsely assume they always make the right decisions in foreign policy. He claims that media "aggravate this genuine blindness:"

CNN is not the solution. The same visual images transmitted simultaneously into living rooms across the globe can trigger opposing perceptions. Western living rooms applaud when cruise missiles strike Baghdad. Most living outside see that the West will deliver swift

⁵⁵ Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect*, 1-2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

retribution to nonwhite Iraqis or Somalis but not to white Serbians, a dangerous signal by any standard.⁵⁷

He believes that old traditions, racism, and nationalism continue to drive Western perceptions and thus analyses of current events. While these perceptions may be false, many people believe them and gain confrontational attitudes. For example, Mhbugani calls the Tianenmen crackdown story a Western-media-created “legend” of a human rights abuse, although Western and Asian diplomats alike have conceded that the crackdown precluded civil breakdown.⁵⁸ Thus this event, for which CNN received greater recognition and prestige, may have presented a skewed view to the world and additional hostility between China and the West. There is no way to tell how many other events have been distorted through news presentations, and this possibility can exacerbate civilizational clashes.

Dr. Mohammed el-Nawawy of Al Jazeera English Research Project concurs. He leads a project to investigate the clash of civilizations model in media. His project notes that antagonisms are playing out in the media, and Western and non-Western outlets alike demonstrate “antiquated, stereotypical and harmful methods of covering international conflicts.” He says these attitudes result in a climate of fear and tension

⁵⁷ Kishore Mahbubani, “The Dangers of Decadence: What the Rest Can Teach the West,” in *The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate*, edited by The Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Foreign Affairs, 1996), 37.

⁵⁸ Mahbubani, “The Dangers of Decadence,” 38.

while weakening prospects for dialogue.⁵⁹ He said in an interview that he would like to think the clash is not increasing, but he repeatedly sees how it continues as a Middle Eastern professor in an American classroom, where students associate Al Jazeera with terrorism and Osama bin Laden. He believes that reconciliation probably will not emerge from U.S. television markets, but possibly can arise outside the West.⁶⁰

He hopes for “conciliatory media” that would perform to the highest journalistic goals of bearing witness, presenting in-depth reports, and demanding accountability while avoiding storylines of victimization.⁶¹ He suggests that Al Jazeera English can play this role. He remarks that people in six countries that he is investigating say the channel has made them less dogmatic. But on the other hand, his research has found that people generally seek media outlets that reinforce their previously held views, and so they are less likely to care about new perspectives.⁶² Even though more perspectives on current events are available, they will not generate understanding if people do not want to listen.

In the meantime, media’s effect on public opinion and policy often reveals more clashes than reconciliations. Most of these have to do with the confrontation

⁵⁹ Dr. Mohammed el-Nawawy and Shawn Powers, “Al Jazeera English: Clash of Civilizations or Cross-Cultural Dialogue?” The Al Jazeera English Research Project, <http://ajerp.com/> (accessed January 10, 2010).

⁶⁰ Dr. Mohammed el-Nawawy, phone interview by author, February 4, 2010.

⁶¹ El-Nawawy and Powers, “Al Jazeera English: Clash of Civilizations or Cross-Cultural Dialogue?”

⁶² El-Nawawy, interview.

between the West and the Islamic world. Recent history shows many examples: The Mohammed cartoon published in Denmark that sparked international protests, the Abu Grahیب prison scandal, Donald Rumsfeld’s condemnations of Al Jazeera during the Iraq war, reports of ISAF strikes on Afghan civilians, Pope Benedict XVI’s statements about Islam at Regensburg, and more. None of these events would have carried so much weight in society if global news networks did not report them, creating divisions that broadcasts can exacerbate. On one side of the debate, Westerners face cultural values, historical perspectives, and religious practices that they have not considered and do not accept as part of modern society.⁶³ On the other side of the argument, Muslims see how many Westerners hold shallow and stereotypical views about them as terrorists or menaces to society.⁶⁴ On both sides, extremist views can do damage. The Muslims who do pose threats and the Westerners who detest or misinterpret foreign influences can find ammunition for their viewpoints from news reports.

For instance, with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, both the West and the Arab world had to reconsider each other, and opportunities abounded for hostile attitudes to grow through media. American leaders clumsily learned to grapple with a new media environment. Information that the Bush Administration intended for domestic ears played on Al Jazeera too, and it sounded much different—even inflammatory—in

⁶³ Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, “The Modernizing Imperative: Tradition and Change,” in *The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate*, edited by The Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Foreign Affairs, 1996), 52.

⁶⁴ Said, *Covering Islam*, xxviii-xxix.

another cultural context.⁶⁵ When President Bush used the word “crusade” to describe the conflict, anti-Americanism exploded. And the Administration’s failures to explain pictures like those from the Abu Ghraib Prison fostered hatred toward America, as well as confusion and frustration for American citizens. While these topics should have been addressed, in the current media environment they have generated excessive hatred for the U.S. and additional conflict. In this case, media amplified civilizational conflict.

At the same time that some Americans had doubts about the new media environment, extremist groups like Al Qaeda welcomed it. Because of Al Jazeera and its clout throughout the Middle East, Osama bin Laden knew he had a way to broadcast his message and encourage anti-American views, as well as general frustrations. He sent his taped messages to the network, which aired them because they were newsworthy.⁶⁶ Pintak claims that Osama bin Laden would not have had the same impact if he had not appeared before Al Jazeera did. Bin Laden had been on TV before, but Western networks could easily filter and deflect his rhetoric because they did not broadcast in Arabic or give much time to his comments. But through Al Jazeera, he could speak directly to the Arabs he wanted as partners.⁶⁷ The network edited his speeches and did not want to incite terrorism, but he could connect with

⁶⁵ Lawrence Pintak, *Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens: America, Islam, and the War of Ideas* (Ann Arbor: Pluto, 2006), 94.

⁶⁶ Pintak, *Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens*, 73.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

sympathizers on his territory, in their own language. He became a media star with inspirational political power. Had he not had this direct avenue to speak with sympathizers, he could have remained an obscure leader.⁶⁸ This example reveals a dark aspect of the Al Jazeera Effect.

Other media events within civilizations reveal fault-line conflicts within countries about an overarching issue of culture. For example, Al Jazeera English recently secured broadcasting rights in Canada, but only after several years of debate within the society. Among others, the Canadian Jewish Congress vehemently opposed AJE availability in Canada. It said that the programming amounted to “hate propaganda” with Jews represented as a “duplicitous, corrupt, world-dominating conspiratorial force.”⁶⁹ Others plugged for AJE’s entry to Canada, saying it would give citizens a balanced worldview that they deserved to see.⁷⁰ In America the debate about letting in AJE proceeds along the same lines—Is it a terrorist channel or not? The conflict in Canadian society persists even though the channel now has broadcasting rights. In this instance, Al Jazeera English has not played a conciliatory role, even though it may have the chance to do so in the future in Canada and the

⁶⁸ Ibid., 69.

⁶⁹ Hugh Miles, *Al-Jazeera: The Inside Story of the Arab News Channel That Is Challenging the West* (New York: Grove Press, 2005), 408.

⁷⁰ Walied Khogali and Anita Krajnc, “‘Al-Jazeera’ Effect Counters ‘CNN Effect’: Canadians Deserve Al Jazeera.” *Toward Freedom*, June 5, 2009. <http://towardfreedom.com/home/content/view/1599/1/> (accessed 15 November, 2009).

United States. The CNN and Al Jazeera Effects can generate passionate debate about encounters of civilizations within countries, as well as lead to international conflict.

This debate, however, does not always spread animosity. For example, Al Jazeera has already produced a conciliatory function in an Arabic community in the United States. Al Jazeera Arabic has been airing in some parts of the U.S. for years even though its English service has been meeting resistance and attracting attention. In one city, Al Jazeera has been entrenched for several years—Dearborn, Michigan. In this city populated by many Arab Americans, most watch the network. But they did not automatically embrace it; many residents deplored the network's coverage of the Iraq war in 2003. They thought it was pro-Saddam Hussein, and many people hated this stance because they had fled Iraq because of him. Many in the Dearborn community wanted him to be thrown out, so they saw bias in Al Jazeera's negative coverage of the war. After more exposure to the network's reportage, however, many changed their minds and acknowledged that it showed a fair perspective of events back home.⁷¹ If these Dearborn residents, who had allegiance to both the U.S. and Iraq, could appreciate an objective yet harsh view of the war, then potential exists for others to reach a balanced viewpoint.

Still, the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects can and have contributed to the global clash of civilizations. As symbols of their home cultures, news networks ferry their views and cultural assumptions all around the world. In turn, messages that they carry

⁷¹ Miles, *Al-Jazeera: The Inside Story*, 397.

can inflame the emotions of whole populations. Western news sources may not adequately address these circumstances, but the potential for conciliatory media to emerge holds promise. Seib ruminates on this situation. “Will the Al Jazeera Effect help to advance democracy, and in doing so, reduce the likelihood of a clash of civilizations?” he asks. “The definitive answer to that is, perhaps.”⁷² Thus, the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects have a chance to mitigate conflict, but the degree of success will remain unclear as international media networks develop.

Summary

The CNN and Al Jazeera Effects influence and shed light upon the post-American world, the flat world, and the clash of civilizations models. These three frameworks reveal that media are facilitating changes in modern society by bringing different views about Western and non-Western cultural values, politics, wars, and mores to global audiences. As a result, people have opportunities to garner fresh perspectives on themselves and others. But the path to these new views has been rough, and it will continue to swerve and buckle as Western and non-Western perspectives continue to encounter each other. Meanwhile, the need grows for cultural understanding. Huntington writes, “The futures of both peace and civilization depend upon understanding and cooperation among the political, spiritual, and intellectual leaders of the world’s major civilizations.”⁷³ News sources can facilitate or block this international exchange of ideas. But in this mediated battle for hearts and minds, can

⁷² Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect*, 191.

⁷³ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 321.

the Arab world abandon conspiracy theories and anti-Western grudges? Can Americans remain patriotic and optimistic while trying to understand the developing world and to wage responsible wars? Does a “correct” point of view exist? This thesis will continue to examine such questions.

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDY: THE 2008-2009 GAZA WAR

Introduction

In the last days of 2008 as Israel launched its major offensive in the Gaza strip, CNN and Al Jazeera struck significantly different notes in coverage. On December 27, the first day of air strikes, a reporter on domestic CNN explained that Israel was targeting Hamas, it had killed Hamas operatives, and civilians were in danger. “Heartbreaking” pictures were coming out of Gaza.¹ A couple of days later, on *The Situation Room*, substitute anchor Suzanne Malveaux reported that the Palestinian death toll was climbing and that Hamas rocket attacks continued into Israel. The show gave political context in terms of the outgoing Bush administration’s stance, which blamed Hamas for the conflict. It ran a brief comment from the UN Secretary General and then carried more extensive reporting on what the conflict meant for the incoming Obama Administration.² The show moved on to other subjects quickly.

On Al Jazeera, the story seemed very different. Both the English and Arabic versions of the network heavily covered the event as a humanitarian disaster, and it had reporters in Gaza to relay the events. The network reported that the Israeli Air Force

¹ CNN, *CNN Saturday Morning News*, CNN.com Transcripts, December 27, 2008, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0812/27/smn.01.html> (accessed March 1, 2010). This broadcast was among the first accounts on CNN domestic of the air strikes.

² CNN, *The Situation Room*, CNN.com Transcripts, December 29, 2008, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0812/29/sitroom.01.html> (accessed March 1, 2010).

had “unleashed devastation on the Gaza strip” and that Hamas vowed revenge.³ A reporter stationed in Gaza, Ayman Mohyeldin, later recalled, “What had become so visible in those first 24 hours was that everything in Gaza was being hit.”⁴ As coverage of the conflict ensued, both networks were falling into typical patterns of coverage. Al Jazeera reported the war as a humanitarian disaster, while the Western media explained it as yet another Middle Eastern crisis that its leaders must address. But even though these accounts seemed typical, they challenged conventions in politics and journalism. Al Jazeera English’s coverage of the war has been compared to CNN’s coverage of the Persian Gulf War, which ballooned the network’s prestige and revolutionized war reporting.⁵ Through coverage of the war in Gaza, news networks demonstrated and broadened the CNN and Al Jazeera effects in politics and society.

Watching the Same War?

CNN International, CNN America, and Al Jazeera English had distinctly different ways of covering the war in Gaza.⁶ On CNN International the coverage stayed balanced and portrayed the conflict as a complicated political tussle. As one

³ Clayton Swisher, “Israel launches missile attacks on Gaza,” Al Jazeera English, December 27, 2008, You Tube video file, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZaG96pnnEQ> (accessed March 1, 2010).

⁴ Ayman Mohyeldin and Sherine Tadros, *Reflections of War*, Al Jazeera English Web site, February 14, 2009, You Tube video file under Programmes General, <http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/general/2009/02/2009213145635172149.html> (accessed March 1, 2010).

⁵ Daoud Kuttab, “Winners and Losers in Gaza,” Al Arabiya, January 22, 2009, <http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2009/01/22/64762.html> (accessed March 1, 2010).

⁶ This thesis focuses on Al Jazeera English’s coverage for content analysis because the author does not speak Arabic.

anchor said, it was "Two sides to every story, two opinions on a deadly war."⁷ The network spoke of the devastation of Gaza, although the Israelis did not allow CNN reporters into Gaza for the duration of the war. As a result, the pictures CNN showed throughout the conflict consisted mostly of distant shots of Gaza with rising plumes of smoke from attacks, supplemented with shots of squealing ambulances, and some casualties. After the ceasefire, reporter Ben Wedeman revealed the "post apocalyptic" scenes from Gaza, and he reported touching civilian perspectives. He even took up for Gazans with a UN representative for not doing enough to help homeless Gazans. He stated, "It seems that Israel, in perusing Hamas, has only managed to ruin thousands and thousands of lives."⁸

But CNN International did not represent the conflict as a war *on* Gaza. It offered arguments from both the Israeli and Palestinian sides. The journalists and those they interviewed addressed possibilities for a two-state solution and dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. On one segment, Palestinian legislator Mustafa Barghouti criticized CNN for not reporting from inside Gaza and accused the network of giving more weight to Israeli views. Anchor Hala Gorani countered his argument by saying CNN could not get into Gaza at the time, and she calmly brought up the fact

⁷ CNN International, "Israeli and Palestinian students about the war in Gaza," September 1, 2009, You Tub video file, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooFYPW33GZU> (accessed March 1, 2010).

⁸ Ben Wedeman, "Israeli army had 'fun' destroying Gaza," CNN, January 22, 2009, You Tube video file for the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4bRmZvQxik> (accessed March 1, 2010).

that Hamas consistently had fired rockets into Israel for some time.⁹ On CNN International, the journalists presented the war in a rational and unemotional way but also showed the reality of civilians' suffering.

CNN viewers in the U.S. saw the conflict through a different lens. Domestic CNN devoted some prominence to the issue, but it was heavily following American issues like the recession, the presidential transition, New Year's celebrations, and the "Miracle on the Hudson" USAir crash landing in New York in which a pilot safely landed a passenger jet on the Hudson River and saved all passengers' lives.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the reporting on Gaza came from an American perspective, and the human suffering there had little attention compared to Al Jazeera. One day, as *The Situation Room* continued to cover the war, it focused on a "smackdown from Hamas directed at Barack Obama." Correspondents analyzed how a Hamas official had criticized the president elect, what it mean for his transition team, for the war itself, and for the Bush White House.¹¹

Several days later, the show brought up civilian hardships in Gaza, as well as Israeli hardships. Anchor Wolf Blitzer stated, "Beyond the casualty toll, this war has triggered a humanitarian crisis. In Israel, where a million people are within Hamas

⁹ CNN International, "War on Gaza 9th Day," January 4, 2009, You Tub video file, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRFPNxM9Qjg> (accessed March 1, 2010).

¹⁰ CNN, *The Situation Room*, CNN.com Transcripts, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/sitroom.html> (accessed March 1, 2010). Transcript topics from December 27, 2008 to mid-January show a range of topics discussed in addition to the war.

¹¹ CNN, *The Situation Room*, CNN.com Transcripts, January 2, 2009 <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0901/02/sitroom.01.html> (accessed March 5, 2010).

rocket range, schools and public institutions near the border have been closed. But in Gaza, it's truly a nightmare.” Reporters described how some aid had entered Gaza, and they also discussed how Israel might have started using white phosphorus, a dangerous incendiary weapon that international treaties have banned for use in civilian areas. Reporter Barbara Starr said, “Whatever these weapons are all about, the Israeli Defense Forces insist they abide by all international laws regarding the use of weapons and ammunition.”¹² The coverage remained a “he said, she said” between the Israeli and Palestinian points of view.

The coverage that Americans saw on television from CNN mostly dropped from view as the “Miracle on the Hudson” happened and the presidential inauguration ensued. For its part, the Fareed Zakaria show displayed the same patterns as CNN International in terms of Israeli and Palestinian perspectives. The suffering in Gaza came through in the show’s discussions, but Zakaria discussed the war in terms of other geopolitical factors like Iranian influence, Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, and worldwide anti-Semitism.¹³ His show, after all, exists for analysis rather than straight reporting. Overall those in the U.S. watching CNN coverage of the conflict saw a balanced storyline, with Hamas as the bad guy. In addition the story seemed like yet another distant crisis in the Middle East. The tone of coverage matched that of other

¹² CNN, *The Situation Room*, CNN.com Transcripts, January 7, 2009, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0901/07/sitroom.02.html> (accessed March 5, 2010).

¹³ CNN, *Fareed Zakaria GPS*, January 4, 2009, CNN.com Transcripts, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0901/04/fzgps.01.html> (accessed March 3, 2010).

American broadcast networks, as well as the editorial stance of major newspapers like the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Washington Post*.¹⁴

Al Jazeera, on the other hand, covered the war as an event of epic humanitarian suffering, a “War on Gaza.”¹⁵ The coverage excoriated the Israeli rationale for going to war as its reporters in Gaza spoke about the suffering of families, showed bloodied and even dead children lying in hospital beds, and even showed a home that Israelis appeared to have ransacked. The coverage remained heavy and steady on the television and Internet throughout the war, and the network followed the story consistently to follow up on the aftermath, both physical and psychological. Al Jazeera told viewers the Israeli side, but overall the Israeli government and military appear as villains attacking helpless civilians. Speaking a week after the ceasefire, reporter Mike Hanna stated:

Throughout their history the Palestinians of Gaza seem to have suffered it all. They’ve experienced invasion, occupation, an ongoing blockade by the Israelis. They’ve seen what amounts to a civil war. Yet never, never has so much wanton destruction been caused.¹⁶

¹⁴ Marda Dunskey, “The Rest of the Story,” *The Christian Century* 126, April 21, 2009, <http://0-proquest.umi.com.library.lausys.georgetown.edu/pqdweb?did=1682398881&sid=8&Fmt=3&clientId=5604&RQT=309&VName=PQD> (accessed March 5, 2010).

¹⁵ Al Jazeera English, “War on Gaza,” http://english.aljazeera.net/focus/war_on_gaza/ (accessed March 1, 2010).

¹⁶ Ayman Mohyeldin and Mike Hanna, “News Special: Gaza in Ruins,” Al Jazeera English Web site, January 23, 2009, YouTube video file under Special News Programme, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/01/2009123125042229157.html> (accessed March 1, 2010).

The network reported that Israel launched attacks to destroy Hamas, but as a rule the reportage condemned Israel for using illegal weapons, employing scorched-earth tactics, waging a war for domestic political gain, and generally destroying lives.¹⁷ In addition, each day it relayed news about worldwide protests against the war.¹⁸

Al Jazeera English had reporters Ayman Mohyeldin and Sherine Tadros stationed in Gaza when the air strikes began. They covered the war from the tops of buildings while bombs pounded, as well as from hospitals where casualties mounted. Both said they felt an immense sense of responsibility to report on the crisis, as well as sadness for Gazans and fear for themselves. Their coverage revealed people who were expecting death. One child said he clung to his mother throughout the bombings so that *when* she died, he would be with her.¹⁹ Tadros said she identified with the mothers of Gaza, and she wanted viewers to do the same. She recounted:

I think the reason why I found it, from a journalistic point of view so easy to write these stories—and it literally took me maybe ten minutes to write each one of those scripts—was because I identified so much with what they were feeling, in terms of the fear, in terms of the feeling of being helpless, in terms of feeling that you could be the next person to go.²⁰

This reporting gave an overall sense of pathos for Gazans, portraying them as heroes and victims. Seeing the video Al Jazeera's reporters captured—extensive destruction,

¹⁷ Al Jazeera English, "War on Gaza."

¹⁸ Dunsky, "The Rest of the Story," 11.

¹⁹ Mohyeldin and Tadros, *Reflections of War*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

bloodied children, furious mothers and fathers—is shocking and provoking. One comes away from Al Jazeera’s coverage of the Gaza war thinking that the air strikes and ground invasion unjustly came out of nowhere. No doubt that was how it felt to many Gaza people trying just to live their daily lives.

Access, Audience, Influence

CNN’s TV headlines called the war a “*Crisis in the Middle East*” while Al Jazeera’s said “*War on Gaza*” (emphasis added). These perspectives and the commentary that they have generated show many aspects of the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects. CNN revealed both sides of the story, but sometimes it skirted the events on the ground to report only on the conflict’s relevance to Americans. Al Jazeera reported the suffering of Gazans unforgettably, but the big picture of the war’s context, as well as the Israeli view, seemed lost. Dr. William A. Rugh, a media scholar and former U.S. ambassador to Yemen and the UAE, says that the difference was one of audience and access. Both networks naturally cater to their home audiences and did so for this war. In addition, Al Jazeera had been covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with reporters in all relevant areas for years and had good access to the Palestinian side.

CNN, for its part, tended more to the Israeli side because more Americans are interested in that view, and CNN has better rapport with the Israelis.²¹ Despite good relations, Israel’s military prevented most reporters from entering Gaza to report the war. Al Jazeera’s correspondents could report from Gaza only because they were

²¹ Dr. William A. Rugh, phone interview by author, March 12, 2010.

already there. Because of these networks' literal and figurative points of view, the reality of the conflict changed depending on the news sources one surveyed. Marda Dunsky, a scholar who writes about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in media, has written, "News is sometimes described as a constructed reality that is a product of the interests of those who report it and those who consume it. Nowhere is that more evident than in the coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."²² The difference in access, audience, and "constructed reality" amplified the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects during the war.

For instance, criticism of American media from Arabs reveals the dynamics of media in the post-American world. Al Jazeera reporters and commentators frequently commented on reporting differences between American and Arab news outlets during this war. One writer, Habib Battah, remarked that frustration abounded because American media seemed to equalize casualty rates of Israelis and Palestinians, when so many more Palestinians died. He wrote, "On some level, the relatively small American broadcasting output [of this war] can be attributed to a general trend in downsizing foreign reporting. But had a bloodbath on this scale happened in Israel, would the networks not have sent in reinforcements?"²³ Reporter Ayman Mohyeldin

²² Dunsky, "The Rest of the Story," 11.

²³ Habib Battah, "In the US, Gaza is a Different War," January 7, 2009, Al Jazeera English Web site under Focus: Opinion, http://english.aljazeera.net/focus/war_on_gaza/2009/01/20091585448204690.html (accessed March 10, 2010).

noted, “The West and others blame Hamas, while the people here continue to suffer.”²⁴

These comments display a sense of outrage that Western and American media did not pay enough attention to the Palestinians’ plight.

These sentiments were easy to find in the network’s reporting of the war, and they make one question why Arabs and Al Jazeera journalists care. In the past, Arabs did not have the kind of candid and in-depth reporting on Israeli-Palestinian issues that Al Jazeera now provides. Now that they have someone to vouch for their issues, why do they feel the need to criticize Western reporting? According to Rugh, they are concerned because they know that most Americans are getting information only from American networks. In addition Arabs look to Americans as both politically powerful and unquestioning of the Israeli rationale for going to war. Rugh underscored, “They look at American media coverage as being biased against Arabs and therefore unhelpful because it does not present a balanced picture of Gaza. And they think if it did, we would have a more balanced policy.”²⁵ The assumption is that media exposure translates into political action. These sentiments reflect Zakaria’s post-American world operating in conjunction with the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects. “The rest” wants to move away from U.S. dominance, but a sense still exists that Americans hold the promise of progress. In this aspect of the Gaza war, media outlets firmly demonstrated

²⁴ Mohyeldin, “News Special: Gaza in Ruins.”

²⁵ Rugh, interview by author.

that they reside in the post-American world, demanding both solutions and independence from the West.

In addition, the media coverage of the war demonstrated how news affects people in the “flat world.” Neither CNN nor Al Jazeera reported the full picture of what was going on, and after reviewing coverage and commentary on the war, one wonders a clear picture of these events exists. To approach understanding of what happened in the Gaza war, one needs to look at several news sources. With the Internet and other flat-world technologies that allow normal people access to all kinds of information, audiences could get a broad understanding of the conflict. They did not have to wait for a news anchor to tell them what was happening.

For instance, the gaps in both networks’ coverage are one reason why so many Americans turned to Al Jazeera during the war for news accounts. The network said that visitors to its website increased 600% during the Gaza war, and about 60% of the increase came from the U.S.²⁶ *The New York Times* reported that because Al Jazeera sought influence in the U.S., it was driving hard during the war to put more of its video content online, to establish a Twitter outlet, and to advertise its web site.²⁷ As Al Jazeera’s new media analyst noted about the Gaza conflict, “War 2.0” raged on the Internet through both independent journalism and government-sponsored information

²⁶ Associated Press, “Al Jazeera gets boost from U.S. viewers during Gaza war,” *USA Today*, January 24, 2009, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2009-01-24-al-jazeera_N.htm (accessed March 3, 2010).

²⁷ Noam Cohen, “Few in U.S. See Jazeera’s Coverage of Gaza War,” *The New York Times*, January 12, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/12/business/media/12jazeera.html> (accessed March 2, 2010).

campaigns. He wrote, “With the Internet becoming a battleground of ideas, the average person, armed with a keyboard and an Internet connection, became a participant in the conflict.”²⁸ The flat-world platform of the personal computer, Internet cables, and software made it possible for people to take up virtual arms during the war. They could upload and share information that they thought was relevant and important for others to know. They could have their say in blogs, or simply comment on YouTube postings, or other stories posted online. These circumstances match the new-media aspects of the Al Jazeera Effect that Philip Seib describes. Through this war, media had a role in liberating more people to have their say on the war. Media are symbols of power just like armies, and new media are creating greater avenues to encounter other cultures in war and peace. Al Jazeera was using flat-world platforms to influence audience opinions outside its normal purview and to reverse the global flow of information.

All of the new ways to learn about the Gaza war did not necessarily change everyone’s minds about the issues of the conflict. While this war revealed increasing avenues to impact public opinion, polling conducted after the conflict did not reveal major attitude shifts. In the U.S., American support for Israel remained strong after the war. About 59% said they supported Israel, 18% said they sided with the Palestinians,

²⁸ Riyaad Minty, “Waging the Web Wars,” Al Jazeera English Web site, December 27, 2009, http://english.aljazeera.net/focus/war_on_gaza/2009/01/200912112395904603.html (accessed March 1, 2010).

and 23% said they sympathized with both or neither.²⁹ And during the war, Americans did not think that the country needed to play a larger role. Well over half of respondents to a Gallup poll said they did not think the U.S. should do any more, that the U.S. should make less of an effort, or that they had no opinion of the matter.³⁰ Establishing a direct link between media coverage of the conflict in the U.S. and these poll results is difficult, but these poll results reflect the perception that the CNN coverage of the war was leaning towards the Israelis. During the conflict, media generally reinforced Americans' preconceived ideas about who started the war and why it was necessary, so it was not likely to push the public or leaders in a new direction.³¹ While Americans may have been watching more Al Jazeera, polling shows that they were still thinking CNN.

Arab public opinion played out in the same manner. The fighting in Gaza reinforced existing anger about Israel's actions. Arab media showed that the Palestinians were suffering and that the UN said Israel committed war crimes, and these new events fit into the storyline of the aggrieved Palestinians.³² A recent poll of Arab public opinion taken after the war revealed several facts: They believed Israel

²⁹ Lydia Saad, "Americans Support for Israel Unchanged Since Gaza Conflict," Gallup, March 3, 2009, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116308/Americans-Support-Israel-Unchanged-Gaza-Conflict.aspx> (accessed March 11, 2010).

³⁰ Lydia Saad, "Americans Not Pressing for Bigger Role in Gaza Conflict," Gallup, January 9, 2009, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/113707/Americans-Pressing-Bigger-Role-Gaza-Conflict.aspx> (accessed March 11, 2010).

³¹ Rugh, interview by author.

³² Ibid.

won the war, they thought the war weakened Israel, they wanted a Palestinian unity government, and they preferred Hamas slightly to Fatah. In addition the poll showed that Arabs still distrusted America, even though President George W. Bush was no longer in office, and that they vilified Israeli leaders.³³ Polling reflects that in both the U.S. and Middle East, the great swath of public opinion both remained similar to what it had been, and mirrored the news that they watched. These circumstances show a truth of the CNN Effect literature that media are unlikely to change strongly held opinions. These survey results, however, do not mean that the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects did not influence other aspects of public opinion or leadership during this war.

A True Match for the CNN Effect?

Even at this point, a little more than one year after the war, plenty of evidence exists to show that the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects influenced the complex dance between media and policymakers described in Chapter 1. One premise of the CNN Effect holds that media can accelerate policy decisions. In the case of Gaza, did media do so? Did it even rush decisions to the detriment of thoughtful deliberation? This question will be answered in historical perspective as more information about leaders' decisions during the war emerge. But already, evidence suggests that news networks accelerated policy decisions by governments and other actors. For example, when pictures of white phosphorus attacks aired on CNN, BBC, and Al Jazeera, civil groups

³³ Jim Lobe, "Obama has Real Chance to Change Arab Opinion – Survey," Zogby International, May 20, 2009, <http://www.zogby.com/search/ReadClips.cfm?ID=18845> (accessed March 11, 2010).

and NGOs sprung into action.³⁴ In this case, media accelerated attention to the use of an illegal chemical weapon. This conflict has also demonstrated Al Jazeera's ability to accelerate Arabs' responses to the war. For example, a post-war report said that when Al Jazeera gave interview space to people who opposed Egyptian policy on the conflict, officials "mobilized its formidable media machine to retaliate" and stirred up debate in the local press. In this case, media seem to have accelerated a debate between moderates and so-called "rejectionists."³⁵ While history will definitively reveal whether media coverage of this war accelerated policy, news sources certainly facilitated attention to white phosphorus attacks and added urgency to political debates.

Next, a premise of the CNN Effect contends that media demonstrate an agenda-setting function by creating or rearranging policy priorities. Did news sources do so in this war? Much evidence exists at this point to say that it did. Some scholars already agree that in this conflict, Arab media were "setting the agenda and creating different wars through their distinct coverage."³⁶ Hamdi Qandil, an Arab journalist, said that news coverage of the war pressured neighboring countries to call for an end to hostilities. He said, "The media successfully created a real Arab public opinion against

³⁴ Dr. Mohammed el-Nawawy, phone interview by author, February 4, 2010.

³⁵ Adam Morrow and Khaled Moussa al-Omrani, "MidEast: Coverage of Gaza War 'Aggravated' Rifts Among Arabs," *Global Information Network*, February 13, 2009 <http://0-proquest.umi.com.library.lausys.georgetown.edu/pqdweb?did=1645021501&sid=12&Fmt=3&clientId+5604&RQT=309&VName=PQD> (accessed March 5, 2010).

³⁶ Miren Gutierrez, "Q&A: Propaganda Expert Looks at Holes, Biases in Gaza Story," *Global Information Network*, January 23, 2009, <http://0-proquest.umi.com.library.lausys.georgetown.edu/pqdweb?did=1631695121&sid=13&Fmt=3&clientId+5604&RQT=309&VName=PQD> (accessed March 5, 2010).

the Israeli aggression. It has brought the Palestinian issue back on top of Arab states' priorities as a central issue for the region."³⁷ Thus by some accounts media certainly created an agenda through coverage of this war.

Dr. Mohammed el-Nawawy of the Al Jazeera English Research Project says Al Jazeera's impact has not reached the point of initiating government action, and it is too early to tell exactly how the network influenced leaders' decisions during the conflict. However, he notes that political change comes from grassroots civil society, and there is no question that civil society was more aware of issues in the war because of Al Jazeera. He said, "Arabs are watching Al Jazeera every day and this makes Arab governments say, 'We are doing this,' to save face."³⁸ In fact, for several years the coverage of destruction from Al Jazeera that often streams into Arab homes and halls of government has spurred public protests, rare in that region. Al Jazeera's coverage, according to journalist Robin Wright, has "led to a kind of alarm among leaders like they've never felt before in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict."³⁹ This war demonstrated the same ability to initiate protests in society and to create a sense of urgency to attend to the crisis in Gaza. Therefore, not only did media keep the Israeli-

³⁷ Anwar Elshamy, "Arab media coverage 'effective' in Gaza truce," *Gulf Times*, February 7, 2009, http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=271429&version=1&template_id=36&parent_id=16 (accessed March 2, 2010).

³⁸ El-Nawawy, interview by author.

³⁹ Brookings Institution and Harvard forum on Press Coverage and the War on Terrorism, "Tinder Box: How the Press Covers the Middle East," Brookings Institution, <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2002/0424middle-east.aspx> (accessed March 1, 2010).

Palestine conflict at the top of the Arab agenda—at least for a time—it made some Arab leaders put some form of accountability to the people on the priority list.

Another characteristic of the CNN Effect holds that it can impede military action by showing pictures of humanitarian suffering that call into question the purpose of a war. Future historical accounts can provide the best evidence of how military movements changed because of media during the Gaza War. But if the storyline holds that the images of suffering civilians in Gaza accelerated calls for a ceasefire, then the Israeli army did not have time to finish off Hamas because of pressure generated through media, and therefore its military operations met obstacles through media pressure. In any case, both Israel and Hamas rallied their propaganda forces to mold storylines during the war.

Israelis had anticipated the mediated onslaught to the military campaign. Officials knew they would have to respond to the harsh military actions in Gaza as seen through constant, live news coverage. They were anticipating the impediment effect. For months before the war, Israel had carried on a public diplomacy and propaganda campaign to convince foreign governments and the media of their rationale for the war. The campaign coordinated Israeli government offices and supporters such as diplomats, bloggers, and lobbyists to insure that they sent out a message that Israelis

were victims of Hamas missile attacks and had to defend themselves.⁴⁰ London's

Guardian reported:

In briefings in Jerusalem and London, Brussels and New York, the same core messages were repeated: that Israel had no choice but to attack in response to the barrage of Hamas rockets; that the coming attack would be on "the infrastructure of terror" in Gaza and the targets principally Hamas fighters; that civilians would die, but it was because Hamas hides its fighters and weapons factories among ordinary people.⁴¹

Many people in governments around the world knew that an attack against Gaza was coming, and they were listening to the Israeli explanation even before the air strikes started. At a United Nations panel on media impact during the war, Gideon Levy, an Israeli journalist with *Haaretz* who often criticizes Israeli policy on Palestine, said that Israeli media cheered the war, used "soft names" to describe destruction and deaths in the strip, and dehumanized the Palestinians. He said that had Israeli media not championed government lines, the war and the perception of it would have been different.⁴²

The Israeli government worked to control the message about the war throughout the conflict, but clearly they failed in many respects. While American and

⁴⁰ Chris McGreal, "Why Israel Went to War in Gaza," *The Guardian*, January 4, 2009, for *The Observer*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/04/israel-gaza-hamas-hidden-agenda> (accessed March 10, 2010).

⁴¹ McGreal, "Why Israel Went to War in Gaza."

⁴² United Nations Department of Public Information, "United Nations International Media Seminar on Middle East Peace Concludes with Call on Journalists to Expand Public Dialogue, Help Bridge Divide," Press Release PAL/2119, PI/1901, <http://www.un.org/news/press/docs/2009/pal2119.doc.htm> (accessed March 2, 2010).

Western media presented the Israeli rationale for war, Arab media kept an adversarial position to Israeli justifications for the war in Gaza. Pictures of the humanitarian suffering poured out of Gaza because the Israelis could not keep Al Jazeera out of Gaza. Felice Friedson, who runs a non-profit news organization in Jerusalem, said that despite the Israeli ban on access to Gaza and the propaganda campaign, information leaked. Public debate arose over media access to the conflict, and people even filed lawsuits against Israel's efforts to control the media.⁴³ The impediment aspect of the CNN Effect was at work during this war. Israel, anticipating that media would impede its military operations, launched a counter campaign even before the war started. It feared that the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects would impede military action and challenge the world to halt humanitarian suffering in Gaza during what it saw as a necessary war.

Israel, however, was not the only party counting on the media's impediment effect. Hamas and similar organizations have proven adept at using the media to show the war from their perspective. Groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and al Qaeda believe that true power resides in the media and that they will win their war against the West on the "information battlefield." Footage that shows sensational events like an exploding Humvee or a dead child can diminish support for military actions.⁴⁴ Thus

⁴³ United Nations, "United Nations International Media Seminar on Middle East Peace."

⁴⁴ Marvin Kalb and Carol Saivetz with the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University, "The Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetrical Conflict," (paper presented at the U.S.-Islamic World Forum, Doha, Qatar, February 18, 2007): 5-6, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/events/2007/0217islamic%20world/>

they are trying to use the impediment effect to their advantage. *Time Magazine* reported that Hamas was searching for such media moments in the Gaza War. It was waging a propaganda campaign like the Israelis, although its methods were not as polished.⁴⁵ The magazine reported:

Hamas fighters have shed their uniforms and blended into the civilian population, hiding weapons and communications systems in houses and mosques. That may have contributed to a death toll so lopsided that it speaks louder than any Israeli press officer — and weakens Hamas' political rival, the moderate Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.⁴⁶

But while Israeli charges that Hamas uses human shields seems to hold, Hamas won the propaganda war in the Gaza conflict. The Hamas fighters did not plan or air Al Jazeera's heart-wrenching footage, but it certainly served their purposes.⁴⁷ By some accounts, even though Gaza remains in ruins, Hamas remains powerful in Gaza.

Thus this war, fought in the media and on the ground, reflects how asymmetrical warfare is changing the power of media organizations and militaries. When a state like Israel fights a nebulous enemy like Hamas, hard power does not solely determine success. Even though Israel's military is more powerful, it has lost

2007islamforum_israel%20hezb%20war.pdf (accessed March 5, 2010).

⁴⁵ Andrew Lee Butters, "Fighting the Media War in Gaza," *Time Magazine*, January 14, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1871487,00.html> (accessed March 19, 2010).

⁴⁶ Butters, "Fighting the Media War in Gaza."

⁴⁷ In past wars, Al Jazeera has been accused of creating propaganda for such organizations because it shows civilian suffering and allows people to say harsh things about Israel, allowing Arab public opinion to vent. Kalb and Saivetz, 8.

the propaganda war in recent wars against Hamas and Hezbollah.⁴⁸ These groups are using the media because they know it can impede military action and because the media facilitate the wars that they are waging against Western culture. These conditions make journalists' jobs more difficult. According to Kalb and Saivetz, "The challenge has become much more daunting: the coverage of asymmetrical wars between states and radical, religious, ideological groups, creating political, diplomatic, journalistic and military dilemmas few fully grasp or understand."⁴⁹ In the new environment of media and war, the impediment effect will continue to grow.

Pictures of humanitarian suffering clearly have other consequences than facilitating propaganda or impeding military operations. The CNN Effect also creates a challenging effect, whereby heart-wrenching pictures make an impact on leaders and mass opinion and spur them to action. This challenging effect clearly applies to the Gaza War, and this war reveals new dimensions of it. If pictures of suffering Gazans did not actually change policy, they galvanized global public opinion. One Egyptian legislator commented, "Arabic news media revealed Israeli war crimes in Gaza to the entire world. The enormous demonstrations held worldwide in solidarity with Gaza came as a direct result of this news coverage."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Kalb and Saivetz, "The Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetrical Conflict," 14.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁰ Morrow and Moussa al-Omrani, "MidEast: Coverage of Gaza 'Aggravated' Rifts Among Arabs."

However, the coverage of the humanitarian aspect of the war also generated controversy. The pictures called for aid and attention, but they also raised questions about the true role of journalism. Tempers flared over a broadcast of a fundraising appeal for Gaza in England. The BBC decided not to run the advertisement, which the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) had produced.⁵¹ The ad showed heart-wrenching scenes of Gaza's destruction and families weeping over loved ones, and it asked for money to assuage the situation.⁵² The BBC said it would not air the ad because it could damage its appearance of impartiality. The network stated, "The BBC decision was made because of question marks about the delivery of aid in a volatile situation and also to avoid any risk of compromising public confidence in the BBC's impartiality in the context of an ongoing news story."⁵³ This rationale has been standard in journalism—do not get emotionally involved when on the story. The BBC was taking a traditional stance in journalism that says journalists should report the news, rather than advocate for story subjects.

⁵¹ Kim Andrew Elliott, "Controversy over BBC's refusal to broadcast Gaza aid appeal (third update)," Kim Andrew Elliott Reporting on International Broadcasting, entry posted January 28, 2009, <http://kimelli.nfshost.com/index.php?id=5749> (accessed March 2, 2010).

⁵² Disasters Emergency Committee members, "DEC Gaza Crisis Appeal," Disasters Emergency Committee, <http://www.dec.org.uk/item/372> (accessed March 15, 2010). The DEC represents 13 charities, and its stated goal is: "At times of overseas emergency, the DEC brings together a unique alliance of the UK's aid, corporate, public and broadcasting sectors to rally the nation's compassion, and ensure that funds raised go to DEC agencies best placed to deliver effective and timely relief to people most in need." DEC, "Who We Are," http://www.dec.org.uk/who_we_are/ (accessed March 15, 2010).

⁵³ BBC News, "BBC defends Gaza appeal decision," BBC News online, January 22, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7846150.stm (accessed March 15, 2010).

However, this decision garnered heavy criticism from fellow news networks, the public, and even former BBC staffers. One former BBC producer who supported the ad wrote, “The question of partiality is a red herring. It is for the general public to respond to a humanitarian disaster as they choose.”⁵⁴ Protesters gathered outside the BBC’s office with the same opinion—the BBC should have a heart. Even Al Jazeera criticized and attempted to remedy the BBC’s decision. The network said it would air the appeal itself during England’s prime-time hours, for free. One AJE executive stated, “As a news organization whose mandate it is to give a voice to the voiceless wherever they may be, we will use Al Jazeera English’s extensive reach to citizens in the UK and across the world to help ease the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.”⁵⁵ Thus the news network that was broadcasting the most heart-wrenching stories about Gaza also was advocating for the people it was covering. This spat over the Gaza humanitarian appeal reveals a new aspect of the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects. Al Jazeera is pushing journalism out of its comfort zone of seeking balanced reporting to push for remedies to humanitarian crises of wartime.

This circumstance represents how journalists’ roles have been changing in the climate of asymmetrical warfare like the Gaza war. The stance has been moving “from a quest for objectivity and fairness to an acceptance of advocacy as a tool of the

⁵⁴ Elliott, “Controversy over BBC’s refusal to broadcast Gaza aid appeal.”

⁵⁵ Kim Andrew Elliott, “If BBC won’t broadcast the Gaza relief appeals, Al Jazeera English will,” Kim Andrew Elliott Reporting on International Broadcasting, entry posted February 2, 2009, <http://kimelli.nfshost.com/index.php?id=5799> (accessed March 2, 2010).

craft...it has become increasingly acceptable for the journalist to be an activist player and a fiery advocate.”⁵⁶ This new aspect of journalism clearly showed up in Sherine Tadros’ reporting when she said that she identified with the mothers of Gaza and that she felt Gazans’ fear and helplessness as she wrote her stories. Al Jazeera’s adoption of advocacy journalism has resonated with fellow professional journalists and the public, but it remains questionable. As Kim Andrew Elliot, a broadcasting expert, asked on his blog, “Isn’t the mandate of a news organization to report the news, as objectively as possible?”⁵⁷ This issue has been debated in journalism for years, but during the Gaza conflict networks like Al Jazeera brought urgency and a clear position to the discussion. This advocacy effect deepens the notion of the challenging CNN and Al Jazeera Effect.

In addition to challenging conceptions of journalists’ roles, the news of the Gaza war and like events seems to be changing the world’s views on violence and highlighting the clash of civilizations through media. As Zakaria noted in *The Post-American World*, news organizations make it seem like hostility fills the world, when research has found that violence worldwide is less than it has perhaps ever been. Global media are fostering this conception of events by the images they are willing or unwilling to show to viewers, and the two media systems most relevant to world security, the Western-American and Arab media, have different journalism styles

⁵⁶ Kalb and Saivetz, “The Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetrical Conflict,” 6.

⁵⁷ Elliott, “If BBC won’t broadcast the Gaza relief appeals, Al Jazeera English will.”

regarding bloody footage. Al Jazeera will not air all graphic footage for the sake of showing it, but it will show more than CNN and other Western networks. Rugh observed the phenomenon during the Iraq war:

It is traditional practice in America to avoid showing close-ups of dead and dying people, but many Arab TV channels do not hesitate to show such footage, and when they do show Iraqis who have been injured or killed by US forces, Americans tend to regard that as an editorial decision deliberately intended to show America in a bad light. American TV editors have even complied with the Bush administration's request not to show caskets of dead Americans returning from Iraq, on the grounds that such footage is inappropriate.⁵⁸

Thus, the images that networks choose to show or hide have political ramifications. To Americans, it looks like a deliberate violation of their sensibilities, but Arabs have grown accustomed to these scenes. However, these editorial decisions seem like political statements to outsiders. When Arabs see that Americans have not shown dead children on news reports, they think that means they are covering up Israeli atrocities. When Americans see gory images on Arab TV or Internet sites, they think they are propagating extremist views. These different media habits, ingrained in the culture, complicate relations and perceptions of each other.⁵⁹ It amounts to a clash of civilizations in the media.

⁵⁸ William A. Rugh, "Anti-Americanism on Arab Television: Some Outsider Observations," *Transnational Broadcasting Studies* 15 (January-June 2006), <http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Fall05/Rugh.html> (accessed March 11, 2010).

⁵⁹ Rugh, Interview by author.

The footage aired during the Gaza war reflects this dynamic. Al Jazeera and fellow Arab networks showed many gory scenes of the Gaza war, such as dead children laying on hospital beds, and gurney after gurney of bloodied people. On Al Jazeera's web page that offers in-depth coverage of the war, one of the major pictures is a severed foot. On American news outlets, the pictures of the war mainly consisted of distant shots of gunfire and smoke from explosions, ambulances rushing by, and shots of bombed-out buildings. Compared to Al Jazeera, few casualty shots show graphic human suffering. If the viewing public considers these choices of pictures to be political statements, then the coverage of the Gaza war extends the clash of civilizations.

Media may even have produced a "hate dynamic" that Huntington describes. For Arabs, this would mean believing that they are seeing helpless Gazans versus Israeli aggressors. For Western media watchers, it means perceiving Israelis defending their democratic advanced society against the medieval Hamas militants. In the case of Gaza, where no news source seemed to present the full picture, everyone was probably receiving a skewed view of the conflict. In addition, Al Jazeera set up another level of conflict by indicating that Western nations were standing by as Gazans suffered. This war amplified the conflict of civilizations that Huntington describes. While American media sources spoke often of facilitating Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, the topic must be addressed on Arab TV because that is where the conflict rages, and that is the source of news that the stakeholders watch. The footage that each organization shows reveals

different news standards and different cultural values, and the coverage of the Gaza war has not facilitated reconciliation.

Conclusion

Reviewing the reports of this war and the coverage of the coverage shows that Al Jazeera and the Arab news outlets made the strongest impressions during this war through the CNN and Al Jazeera Effect models. So was CNN living up to the CNN Effect that it started? Indications are that it did not influence American policymakers, nor the public, for several reasons. First, CNN was not reporting from the war's ground zero, and thus did not capture the most powerful images of the war. In addition, CNN's coverage of the war fell into typical Western patterns of covering the Arab-Israeli conflict, and one of these tenets is to reflect American policy on Israel. Much American coverage, according to journalist Todd Purdum, adheres to a "threshold presumption that we have a moral commitment to Israel's existence and security and safety...as Israel's sometimes almost lone defender on the world stage."⁶⁰ In addition, according to scholar Marda Dunsky, American reports provide simple storylines without much nuance. She elaborates, "Stop-and-start diplomacy and cycles of Israeli-Palestinian violence are main features of the coverage, but two major underlying factors that connect the violence to a lack of resolution to the conflict are rarely covered." Despite these weaknesses, American attention to the issue remains critical.

⁶⁰ Brookings Institution and Harvard forum on Press Coverage and the War on Terrorism, "Tinder Box: How the Press Covers the Middle East."

Arabs want American support for Palestinians, and Americans are involved militarily, politically, and economically in other spots of the Middle East.⁶¹

Overall, coverage of the Gaza war demonstrates that the CNN and Al Jazeera Effects are at work, even though the actual influence that their namesakes are having is very different. The two networks took distinct editorial viewpoints on the war, and both allowed audiences to drive the coverage. Al Jazeera's coverage of the war demonstrated the characteristics of the CNN Effect—accelerant, agenda-setting, impediment, and challenging. Real-time coverage of the war in general facilitated the clash of civilizations and revealed many aspects of the flat world and the post-American world. In addition, news networks deepened the media's challenging effect by opening the door wider for advocacy journalism. Al Jazeera won journalistic prestige with the coverage of this war, and it has stayed on the story to give comprehensive coverage of "Gaza: One Year On." It takes a look at the aftermath, recovery efforts, and lingering political issues from the conflict. CNN has not addressed it much. Its coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict certainly displays the "stop and start" characteristic. But both networks will return to cover more conflicts in Gaza. Civilians live in fear of more Israeli attacks, and political experts acknowledge

⁶¹ Marda Dunsky, Interview by Columbia University Press, <http://cup.columbia.edu/static/interview-marda-dunsky> (accessed March 10, 2010).

that Hamas and its leaders are unfinished business in the conflict, even if a two-state solution works out.⁶²

⁶² Sources reviewed for content analysis include: CNN.com for video reports, transcripts of broadcasts, and written reports; the Al Jazeera English Web site for video and written reports, documentaries of the war, and general Internet coverage; video of CNN and Al Jazeera broadcasts placed on You Tube.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In the documentary *Control Room*, senior producer Samir Khader ruminates upon how future generations will remember the Iraq War begun in 2003. He remarks, “All that will be left from this war is scripts and history books.”¹ Indeed, news broadcast scripts and stories posted in newspapers and on the Internet will remain as part of the historical record of how news shaped perspectives and events. With so many media outlets available for everyone from veteran journalists to blogging teenagers to vent ideas, the sources to understand this time will be vast.

Moreover, the way that people see and respond to these happenings will continue to transform. As Philip Seib explains, advances in technology that have made information so easily available have changed what it means to be a citizen as well. He writes, “New technological capabilities should be accompanied by a new sense of responsibility. Media technologies have effect, and the people who use them have responsibilities; they are not mere bystanders while conflict and change occur.”² The CNN Effect and the Al Jazeera Effect are changing how members of society comprehend the past, as well as their roles in current events.

As this thesis explains, these two phenomena do not only pertain to the networks CNN and Al Jazeera. Many news sources, whether they are brand-new

¹ Andrew Hurwitz, Jehane Noujaim, Abdallah Schleifer, and Rosadel Valera, *Control Room*, DVD (Santa Monica, CA: Lions Gate Entertainment and Magnolia Pictures, 2004).

² Philip Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect: How the New Global Media Are Reshaping World Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 3.

networks like France 24 or standards like *The New York Times*, contribute to the way real-time media shape events and public opinion. As Babak Bahador writes, “The media, after all, is not a monolith, but is made up of a number of public and private organizations that often originate from a dominant culture that influence the way events are understood.”³ And no matter what culture they come from, they can influence views around the globe. In this way, news sources can deepen the clash of civilizations, but they can offer the chance for cultural understanding as well. As one American military public affairs officer explains in the documentary *News War*, the viewing public should not be afraid of ideas they get from other news sources. Americans, for instance, can accept Al Jazeera on their cable packages and home computers and evaluate it on its own terms.⁴ This suggestion can apply to recent controversial news sources coming into the West, as well as outlets like CNN and the BBC that continue to bring the Western viewpoint into homes around the world.

Americans specifically should welcome and appreciate sources such as Al Jazeera English. Even in the multi-faceted, post-American world that Fareed Zakaria describes, the U.S. remains important to world security. This fact means that its citizens should continue to seek understanding of the world in which they hold clout. Dave Marash, one of AJE’s first anchors and an American, said, “The reality is that

³ Babak Bahador, *The CNN Effect in Action: How the News Media Pushed the West toward War in Kosovo* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 18.

⁴ David Fanning, Greg Barker, and Michael Sullivan, “Stories from a Small Planet,” Part IV, *News War*, DVD, produced by *Frontline* and WGBH (Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 2007).

America's position is undermined and nobody needs to understand that more than Americans."⁵ Polling shows that Al Jazeera's viewers in the Islamic world are well apprised of Western affairs, although they remain critical of them.⁶ But do not Americans expect their news sources to perform the same function? The network's English language arm represents one of many sources that provide an opportunity for American citizens and leaders to broaden their knowledge as globalization increases.

For its part, CNN continues to provide well-rounded newscasts on many domestic issues, and CNN International offers plenty of thoughtful reporting on international affairs. But in the U.S., CNN has been suffering in the ratings.⁷ As *New York Times* columnist Ross Douthat has described, "CNN is still the network Americans turn to when an earthquake strikes Haiti or a crucial health care vote takes place. But most days are slow news days, [and] opinionated journalism is more interesting than the elusive quest for perfect objectivity...."⁸ The network will most likely find a way to survive, but it may do so at the behest of executives and shareholders who require ratings and revenue, rather than thoughtful explanations of hard news. Still, CNN created the CNN Effect, and it has already left a legacy of using

⁵ Fanning, "Stories from a Small Planet."

⁶ Lydia Saad, "Al Jazeera Viewers Perceive West Differently," Gallup, April 23, 2002, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/5860/AlJazeera-Viewers-Perceive-West-Differently.aspx> (accessed April 1, 2010).

⁷ Bill Carter, "CNN Fails to Stop Fall in Ratings," *New York Times*, March 29, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/30/business/media/30cnn.html> (accessed April 5, 2010).

⁸ Ross Douthat, "Can CNN Be Saved?," *New York Times*, April 4, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/05/opinion/05douthat.html> (accessed April 5, 2010).

the 24-hour video news cycle to influence the government and public opinion. Al Jazeera, for its part, has established a precedent for the way new non-Western, multimedia outfits influence global discussions. Its challenges include the continuing battle against its reputation for bias. Both CNN and Al Jazeera will be adapting to new economic and social imperatives in the coming years.

Every nation is coming to terms with how media generate debates and decisions about policy, war, and society. Seib notes that “any appraisal of the many elements of international relations should include careful evaluation of media roles.”⁹ The scholar Joseph Nye puts these transformations that modern communications have wrought into perspective in his discussions of soft power. He writes, “Power is passing from the ‘capital-rich’ to the ‘information-rich.’”¹⁰ Nye contends that the U.S. can retain its dominance because it has led the information revolution.¹¹ However, much remains at stake in the international exchange of ideas through mass media. Nye describes the situation when misunderstandings abound:

American attitudes toward foreigners harden, and we begin to believe that the rest of the world really does hate us. Some Americans begin to hold grudges, to mistrust all Muslims, to boycott French wines and rename French fries, to spread and believe false rumors. In turn, foreigners see Americans as uninformed and insensitive to anyone’s interests but their own. They see our media wrapped in the American flag. Some Americans, in turn,

⁹ Seib, *The Al Jazeera Effect*, 3.

¹⁰ Joseph Nye, “Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy* 80, Twentieth Anniversary (Autumn 1990): 164.

¹¹ Joseph Nye, “Soft Power and American Foreign Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 263.

succumb to residual strands of isolationism, saying that if others choose to see us that way, “to hell with ‘em.” If foreigners are going to be like that, who cares whether we are popular or not. But to the extent that we allow ourselves to become isolated, we embolden enemies such as al Qaeda. Such reactions could undercut our soft power and are self-defeating in terms of the outcomes we want.¹²

Other nations can benefit from similar lessons. And to resolve such issues, according to Nye, Americans and others can listen to each other through cultural exchanges and public diplomacy.¹³ Global media networks can facilitate this process—apart from any government initiative—if they recognize their responsibility to inform and open minds. The CNN Effect and the Al Jazeera Effect will continue to grow in influence, and media networks will either take up this challenge or allow international perspectives to clash. They can contribute to making the world a better and safer place, or they can spur cultural conflicts. Humankind must better understand and deal with this dual impact of the media, positive and negative, so as to assure a promising future.

¹² Nye, “Soft Power and American Foreign Policy,” 258.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 266-267.

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