**Lecture # 5**

**Middle East**

About The **Middle East**

countries located on more than one [continent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continent), known as **transcontinental states** or **intercontinental states**.

Thus defined it includes Cyprus, the Asian part of Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, the **countries** of the Arabian peninsula (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait), and Egypt and Libya.

Perhaps the most volatile (unstable) of all regions in the world, the Middle East remains a region in flux (change)

and in a state of upheaval(disturbance). Military actions being carried out in the region continue to make the

area one of the most dangerous in the history of the world. With this in mind, we look at how

most countries including Syria, Sudan, Jordan, and Egypt all remain primarily authoritarian

systems but outside influences continue to shake up the balance of information. Along with the

official state-controlled media, many Arab nations have Al Hayat, a regional Arabic newspaper

published in London, and the Al Jazeera satellite television news channel (has regular audiences

of up to 40 million viewers), which originates in Qatar.

Massive television networks are controlled by the Saudi Arabian government and the Arab

League ARABSAT, arab settelite communication organization a network of 21 Arab language channels. Networks such as these provide the

majority of citizens with their information and entertainment needs.

Adding to the complexity of the mass media industry in the region is the ongoing conflict

between Israel and Palestine. For example, although Israel is a democracy, most reporters

there are subjected to government control of stories the government deems sensitive military

issues. And so much has been written about the Arab Spring and all the changes taking places

in the region. Frankly, it is very difficult to keep up with those changes and to be current in a

textbook like this (what an ironic example of how print media is being slowly and steadily

replaced by electronic media).

AlJazera

Oppressive regimes

**Launch**

**Al Jazeera Satellite Channel**, now known as AJA, was launched on 1 November 1996 following the closure of the [BBC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BBC)'s [Arabic language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_language) television station, a joint venture with [Orbit Communications Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orbit_Communications_Company). The BBC channel had closed after a year and a half when the Saudi government attempted to suppress information, including a graphic report on executions and prominent dissident view

The [Emir of Qatar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_emirs_of_Qatar), [Sheikh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheikh) [Hamad bin Khalifa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamad_bin_Khalifa), provided a loan of [QAR](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qatari_riyal) 500 million ([US$](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US$)137 million) to sustain Al Jazeera through its first five years, as Hugh Miles detailed in his book *Al Jazeera: The Inside Story of the Arab News Channel That Is Challenging the West*. Shares were held by private investors as well as the [Qatar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qatar) government.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Al_jazeera_arabic.jpg)

Al Jazeera Arabic Building

Al Jazeera's first day on the air was 1 November 1996. It offered 6 hours of programming per day; increased to 12 hours by the end of 1997. It was broadcast to the immediate neighborhood as a terrestrial signal, and on cable, as well as through satellites (which was also free to users in the Arab world), although Qatar, and many other Arab countries, barred private individuals from having satellite dishes until 2001.

At the time of the Al Jazeera Media Network launch [Arabsat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabsat) was the only satellite broadcasting to the Middle East, and for the first year could only offer Al Jazeera a weak [C-band](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C_band_%28IEEE%29) transponder that needed a large satellite dish for reception. A more powerful [Ku-band](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku_band) transponder became available as a peace-offering after its user, [Canal France International](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Canal_France_International&action=edit&redlink=1), accidentally beamed 30 minutes of pornography into ultraconservative Saudi Arab

Al Jazeera was not the first such broadcaster in the Middle East; a number had appeared since the Arabsat satellite, a Saudi Arabia-based venture of 21 Arab governments, took orbit in 1985. The unfolding of [Operation Desert Storm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Desert_Storm) on [CNN International](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CNN_International) underscored the power of live television in current events. While other local broadcasters in the region would assiduously avoid material embarrassing to their home governments (Qatar had its own official TV station as well), Al Jazeera was pitched as an impartial news source and platform for discussing issues relating to the Arab world.

In presenting "The opinion and the other opinion" (the station's motto), it did not take long for Al Jazeera to shock local viewers by presenting Israelis speaking [Hebrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language) on Arab television for the first time. Lively and far-ranging talk shows, particularly a popular, confrontational one called *The Opposite Direction*, were a constant source of controversy regarding issues of morality and religion. This prompted a torrent of criticism from the conservative voices among the region's press. It also led to official complaints and censures from neighboring governments. Some jammed Al Jazeera's terrestrial broadcast or expelled its correspondents. In 1999, the Algerian government reportedly cut power to several major cities in order to censor one broadcast. There were also commercial repercussions: Saudi Arabia reportedly pressured advertisers to avoid the channel, to great effect.

Al Jazeera was the only international news network to have correspondents in Iraq during the [Operation Desert Fox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Desert_Fox) bombing campaign in 1998. In a precursor of a pattern to follow, its exclusive video clips were highly prized by [Western](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_culture) media.

**Around the clock**

1 January 1999 was Al Jazeera's first day of 24-hour broadcasting.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Jazeera#cite_note-23) Employment had more than tripled in one year to 500 employees, and the agency had bureaux at a dozen sites as far as EU and Russia. Its annual budget was estimated at about $25 million at the time.

However controversial, Al Jazeera was rapidly becoming one of the most influential news agencies in the whole region. Eager for news beyond the official versions of events, Arabs became dedicated viewers. A 2000 estimate pegged nightly viewership at 35 million, ranking Al Jazeera first in the Arab world, over the Saudi Arabia-sponsored [Middle East Broadcasting Centre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_East_Broadcasting_Centre) (MBC) and London's [Arab News Network](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_News_Network) (ANN). There were about 70 satellite or terrestrial channels being broadcast to the Middle East, most of them in Arabic. Al Jazeera launched a free Arabic-language web site in January 2001. In addition, the TV feed was soon available in the United Kingdom for the first time via [British Sky Broadcasting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Sky_Broadcasting).

Reach

The original Al Jazeera channel was launched 1 November 1996 by an emiri decree with a loan of 500 million [Qatari riyals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qatari_riyal) (US$137 million) from the [Emir of Qatar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_emirs_of_Qatar), Sheikh [Hamad bin Khalifa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamad_bin_Khalifa).[[58]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Jazeera#cite_note-autogenerated1-58)[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Jazeera#cite_note-59) By securing its funding through loans or grants rather than direct government subsidies, the channel seeks to maintain independent editorial policy. The channel began broadcasting in late 1996, with many staff joining from the [BBC World Service](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BBC_World_Service)'s Saudi-co-owned Arabic-language TV station, which had shut down on 1 April 1996 after two years of operation because of censorship demands by the Saudi Arabian government. The Al Jazeera [logo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logo) is a decorative representation of the network's name written using [Arabic calligraphy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_calligraphy). It was selected by the station's founder, Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa, as the winning entry in a design competition.

Many governments in the Middle East deploy state-run media or government censorship to impact local media coverage and public opinion, leading to international objections regarding press freedom and biased media coverage.[]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Jazeera#cite_note-boot-65) Some scholars and commentators use the notion of [contextual objectivity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contextual_objectivity),[[66]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Jazeera#cite_note-ref1-66) which highlights the tension between objectivity and audience appeal, to describe the station's controversial yet popular news approach.

Increasingly, Al Jazeera Media Network's exclusive interviews and other footage are being rebroadcast in American, British, and other [western media outlets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_media_outlets) such as CNN and the BBC. In January 2003, the BBC announced that it had signed an agreement with Al Jazeera for sharing facilities and information, including news footage.

Al Jazeera's availability (via satellite) throughout the Middle East changed the television landscape of the region. Prior to the arrival of Al Jazeera, many Middle Eastern citizens were unable to watch TV channels other than state-controlled national TV stations. Al Jazeera introduced a level of [freedom of speech](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_speech) on TV that was previously unheard of in many of these countries. Al Jazeera presented controversial views regarding the governments of many Arab states on the Persian Gulf, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar; it also presented controversial views about Syria's relationship with Lebanon, and the Egyptian judiciary. Critics accused Al Jazeera Media Network of sensationalism in order to increase its audience share. Al Jazeera's broadcasts have sometimes resulted in drastic action: for example, when, on 27 January 1999, critics of the Algerian government appeared on the channel's live program El-Itidjah el-Mouakass ("The Opposite Direction"), the Algerian government cut the electricity supply to large parts of the capital Algiers (and allegedly also to large parts of the country) to prevent the program from being seen. By and large, however, Al Jazeera's popularity can be more substantively attributed to its in-depth coverage of issues considered to be of great importance to the international Arab population, many of which received minimal attention from other outlets, such as: the Palestinian perspective on the second Intifada, the experiences of Iraqis living through the Iraq war, and the exclusive broadcast of tapes produced by Osama Bin-Laden.

At the time of the aforementioned incident in Algeria, Al Jazeera Media Network was not yet generally known in the Western world, but where it was known, opinion was often favorable

and Al Jazeera claimed to be the only [politically](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics) independent television station in the Middle East. However, it was not until late 2001 that Al Jazeera achieved worldwide recognition, when it broadcast video statements by [al-Qaeda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Qaeda) leaders.

Some observers have argued that Al Jazeera Media Network has formidable authority as an opinion-maker. Noah Bonsey and Jeb Koogler, for example, writing in the [Columbia Journalism Review](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbia_Journalism_Review), argue that the way in which the station covers any future Israeli-Palestinian peace deal could well determine whether or not that deal is actually accepted by the Palestinian public.

The channel's tremendous popularity has also, for better or worse, made it a shaper of public opinion. Its coverage often determines what becomes a story and what does not, as well as how Arab viewers think about issues. Whether in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, or Syria, the stories highlighted and the criticisms aired by guests on Al Jazeera's news programs have often significantly affected the course of events in the region.

In Palestine, the station's influence is particularly strong. Recent polling indicates that in the West Bank and Gaza, Al Jazeera is the primary news source for an astounding 53.4 percent of Palestinian viewers. The second and third most watched channels, Palestine TV and Al Arabiya, poll a distant 12.8 percent and 10 percent, respectively. The result of Al Jazeera's market dominance is that it has itself become a mover and shaker in Palestinian politics, helping to craft public perceptions and influence the debate. This has obvious implications for the peace process: how Al Jazeera covers the deliberations and the outcome of any negotiated agreement with Israel will fundamentally shape how it is viewed—and, more importantly, whether it is accepted—by the Palestinian public.

Al Jazeera's broad availability in the Arab world "operat[ing] with less constraint than almost any other Arab outlet, and remain[ing] the most popular channel in the region", has been perceived as playing a part in the [Arab Spring](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Spring), including the [Tunisian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunisian_revolution) and [Egyptian revolutions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Egyptian_revolution). The [New York Times](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Times) stated in January 2011: "The protests rocking the Arab world this week have one thread uniting them: Al Jazeera, ... whose aggressive coverage has helped propel insurgent emotions from one capital to the next." The newspaper quoted Marc Lynch, a professor of Middle East Studies at [George Washington University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington_University): "They did not cause these events, but it's almost impossible to imagine all this happening without Al Jazeera."

With Al Jazeera's growing global outreach and influence, some scholars including [Adel Iskandar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adel_Iskandar) have described the station as a transformation of the very definition of "[alternative media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative_media). Al Jazeera presents a new direction in the discourse of global news flow and shows voices underrepresented by traditional mainstream media regardless of global imbalances in the flow of information

**India**

Generally, the media of India consist of several different types of Indian communications

media: television, radio, cinema, newspapers, magazines, and Internet-based web sites. Many

of the media are controlled by large, for-profit corporations that reap revenue from advertising,

subscriptions, and sale of copyrighted material. India also has a strong music and film industry.

India has more than 70,000 newspapers and over 690 satellite channels (more than 80 are

news channels) and is the biggest newspaper market in the world—over 100 million copies sold

each day.

The traditional print media, and the television media, are largely family owned and often

partake in self-censorship, primarily due to political ties by the owner and the establishment.

However, the new media are generally more professional and corporate owned, though these,

too, have been acquired or affiliated with established figures. At the same time, the Indian

media, viewed as "feisty," have also not reported on issues of the media itself.