COMING TO AMERICA:
THE REPUTATION OF AL JAZEERA ENGLISH
IN THE UNITED STATES

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To my sons, Tiffen and Michael,
Thank you for your love, support, and understanding and for always being there.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH ..................................................................................................................................107
Al Jazeera English is the Qatar-founded international news network that launched in November 2006 as the first English-language global news channel not based in the West. It came into being ten years after its sister channel, the Arabic language Al Jazeera. The pan-regional Arab-language network has been mired in controversy since its inception because of the way it has covered the news in the Middle East and because of its airing of video from the militant terrorist group Al Qaeda. Much of the world has learned to live with Al Jazeera, both the Arabic-language network and AJE. But the debate over the journalistic tilt of Al Jazeera is still raging in the United States and may be preventing the fledging English-language network from getting on the air in the United States.

This thesis explores the reputation management challenges that have confronted Al Jazeera English since it came into being in November 2006, particular within the context of its aspirations as a news organization that presents the news from the perspective of the developing world.

The art and science of communications comprise a multifaceted study, even more so when journalism and public relations are simultaneously considered. Yet given the complexities of AJE, clearly, it is more than just another network trying to launch in the United States. It has
its roots in the Middle East, but is trying to go global. It has been labeled as “terrorist.”

Reputation management issues tied to public relations concerns are as much a part of its package as the usual journalistic concerns about presentation of the news.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Al Jazeera English

Al Jazeera English (AJE hereafter) is the Qatar-founded international news network that launched in November 2006 as the first English-language global news channel not based in the West. It came into being ten years after its sister channel, the Arabic language Al Jazeera. The pan-regional Arab-language network has been mired in controversy since its inception because of the way it has covered the news in the Middle East and because of its airing of video from the militant terrorist group Al Qaeda (Miles, 2005; Zayani, 2005). Much of the world has learned to live with Al Jazeera, both the Arabic-language network and AJE. But the debate over the journalistic tilt of Al Jazeera is still raging strong in the United States and may be preventing the fledging English-language network from getting on the air in the United States (Cohen, 2007; Fahri, 2006).

Purpose of Study

It is the issue of reputation – and the management of it that will be the focus of this exploratory study of AJE. It is exploratory because the network is young and still experiencing growing pains. Nor, to the knowledge of the author, had there been significant scholarly research published about AJE at the time of this writing. Certainly new avenues will be explored and changes made as the network seeks and establishes its place on the global communication stage. Similarly, it can be anticipated that further research will be done. But given that the network only came into being at the end of 2006, it is premature for any scholar to lay claim to making an exhaustive study of AJE or the reputation hurdles it faces and still seeks to overcome. Similarly, it is also beyond the scope of this investigation to examine AJE’s global successes
and/or failures or to analyze its impact in Asia, Europe, or Africa. While the rest of the world cannot be ignored, the focus of this research is on AJE in the United States.

A chief objective is an obvious one—how does AJE go about altering the perception that it is a “terrorist network” among potential viewers in the United States (Brown, Lloyd, & James, 2007). But just as importantly, how does AJE go about entering a market where it is being stonewalled by the gatekeepers because of perceptions about its image?

This study aims to document the approach AJE is taking to manage its reputation. Research will examine what strategies AJE is employing to establish a positive reputation for itself as a credible news organization in the United States. The research will also assess whether AJE is making strides toward achieving its reputation management goals by looking at how AJE is covered by a representative sampling of U.S. news media.

**Timing of Study**

The author became interested in conducting this study now because of the evolving global media landscape. It all began, of course, with CNN, which launched in June 1980 (Whittemore, 1990). CNN went on to become a household word and laid the groundwork for the concept that governs international television news today—continuous, ongoing news coverage (Robinson, 2002). The advent and improvement of satellite technology made it possible for a plethora of other new networks to follow suit.

In the United States, MSNBC, Fox, and others set up round-the-clock news channels. The BBC is seeking to expand its international reach as it loses audiences shares at home (“Viewers Turning Off,” 2008) with programs such as BBC America in the United States. Other more established networks trying to reach a global audience with English language offerings include CCTV of China, ABC Australia, and Bloomberg TV.
Al Jazeera English is not the only new 24-hour network to come onto the world stage in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. France launched an international news channel in French and in English about a month after AJE went on the air. But at the beginning of 2008, at the behest of France’s president, France 24 announced it was planning to drop its English-language service (“No English Please,” 2008). A mistake some would say and one that the Al Jazeera executive team has no intention of making (Brady\textsuperscript{1}, 2007; Cohen, 2007).

The world is changing and as the world changes, so does the practice of global journalism (Seib, 2004). English is the global language – “the language of a global economy, a global culture, [and] a global information society” (Stevenson, 1994). English-language news ventures would seem to make sense as the world becomes flatter (Friedman, 2005). AJE has a unique position as the only English-language network that is based in the Middle East at a time when technology and changing patterns of communication facilitate new approaches toward covering the news. There already seems to be a place for AJE on the world media scene (Cohen, 2007; Mattingly, 2007). This research will examine whether there is a place for AJE in the United States.

**Reputation and Credibility in the News Media**

When one considers the reputation of a media corporation, it is credibility, objectivity, and accuracy in reporting that come into play. A newspaper or television network that does not live up to those pillars of journalism has a reputation problem on its hands. Consider the blowup that followed former CBS anchor Dan Rather’s erroneous report on how President Bush avoided

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\textsuperscript{1} Personal interview with Clive Brady, AJE executive, conducted October, 2007.
serving in Vietnam in the 1960s or the impact of Jason Blair’s foray into fiction writing as a reporter for *The New York Times* (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006).

A news medium without credibility is news medium with a reputation problem on its hands. A medium’s reputation is based on public perception of its credibility (Abdulla, Garrison, Salwen, Driscoll, & Casey, 2001). AJE came onto the global media scene with a reputation that preceded it – for better and for worse (Cohen, 2007; Pearl, 2007). AJE is trying to sell itself to a U.S. public torn between the seeming liberal values of a CNN and the more conservative mores of a Fox (Block, 2007). AJE is betting there is a spot on the U.S. airwaves for an international television network that has its roots in the Middle East but offers an à la carte menu of in-depth reporting from around the world.

**Reputation of Al Jazeera**

The Arabic-language Al Jazeera achieved world renown – and for some global infamy – after it obtained exclusive interviews with Osama bin Laden after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. It was also the sole television network with correspondents in Afghanistan when U.S. troops invaded that country weeks later (Miles, 2005). If it were not for bin Laden and the U.S. attack on the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, it is likely that it would have taken many more years for the Al Jazeera television network to become the household word it has become in the United States and in the West and perhaps even for AJE to come into being.

For many Americans, the Al Jazeera name is inextricably linked to the man they construe as the epitome of evil, Osama bin Laden. Why? Perhaps because the images shown of bin Laden also displayed the Al Jazeera logo. As is customary in the world of television news, networks brand their video with their own logo. So the exclusive bin Laden video that was aired on U.S.

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2 Personal interview with Allan J. Block, owner of Block Communications, which owns Buckeye Cable Systems, conducted October, 2007.
television in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, also carried with it the Al Jazeera logo (Lovler, 2007).³

U.S. President George W. Bush has called Al Jazeera “the terrorist network” because of its access to bin Laden and other senior members of Al Qaeda. Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld accused the network of spreading "vicious lies" and U.S. officials have been upset by Al Jazeera's airing of footage of U.S. military deaths, as well as its unstinting coverage of the war’s effects on civilians (Fahri, 2006, Mattingly, 2007).

**Arabic-language Al Jazeera in Brief**

The Arabic language Al Jazeera owes its existence and its success to a combination of factors – including a bloodless coup in its home country of Qatar which brought a young and liberal emir to power; a failed effort by the BBC and Saudi Arabia to establish an earlier Arab-language television network; and the takeoff of satellite technology in the Middle East. The Doha-based satellite network was founded in 1996 with funds from the Qatari government, broadcasting six hours a day to the Middle East on the Arabsat satellite (Miles 2005).

The history of the Arabic-language Al Jazeera has already been well documented by Miles and others, including El-Nawawy and Islander (2002), Lynch (2005), Sakr (2004), and Zayani (2005). Al Jazeera started out as the little network that could. It took hold as audiences tuned in to watch its provocative programming. It challenged the region’s authoritarian governments with newscasts and talk shows that dealt head-on with controversial issues. Its maxim of “the opinion and then the other opinion” has given it access to bin Laden and other senior leaders of Al Qaeda. But it is also the only Arabic news channel to give Israeli government officials a voice on its airwaves (Miles, 2005).

³ Unpublished remarks delivered by author Ronnie Lovler during a lecture to journalism students at the University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL, April, 2007.
Always controversial, the Arabic-language Al Jazeera has been blasted by Western and Middle-Eastern leaders alike – not always for the same reason, but with equal disdain. Al Jazeera journalists – and sometimes even the network itself – have been kicked out of Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, and other Arab countries when government leaders found fault with Al Jazeera coverage (Lynch, 2006; Miles, 2005; Zayani, 2005).

**Al Jazeera English in Brief**

AJE is a different network than its Arabic-language brethren, delivering the news with language and a style that is perhaps more palatable to a Western audience with less coverage of Islam and fewer programs steeped in Middle Eastern and Arab cultural norms (Miles, 2008). In the United States, many of those who have viewed it give AJE good reviews, especially those who are looking for more serious coverage of the news than the latest celebrity scandal (Hodges, 2007; Levine, 2007; Marash, 2007).

AJE launched wrapped in the mantle of its sister Arabic language network for better and/or for worse – lambasted by some for advocating the equivalent of “jihad TV” (Pearl, 2007) and praised by others for delivering “consequential and compelling” programming (Barnhart, 2007). It launched on Nov. 15, 2006 with more than 400 employees representing 40 different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds working in almost three dozen bureaus around the world. The network airs from four main broadcast studios with programming that follows the sun in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Doha, Qatar; London, and Washington, D.C. (Jurkowitz, 2006).

Al Jazeera has gone out of its way to recruit journalists from well-established Western media news organizations like CNN, ABC, the Associated Press, the BBC, and the CBC

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4 Personal interview with Diane Hodges, AJE interview producer, conducted October 2007.
5 Personal interview with Joanne Levine, AJE executive producer, conducted April 2007.
6 Personal interview with Dave Marash, AJE news anchor, conducted October 2007.
(Tischler, 2006). The journalists, themselves, aware that something new and exciting was in the offing, were also eager to get on board (Hodges, 2007; Naidoo, 2007). Distribution in the United States, however, continues to be a problem. Network executives say political pressure is keeping cable and satellite companies from picking up the network; distributors say there is no market. At this writing, AJE’s only television distribution in the United States is through a cable company in Ohio; a municipal carrier in Vermont, and to a very limited audience in Washington D.C. (Block, 2007; Hemingway, 2007).

But in this age of online and interactive communications, AJE is refusing to be stymied. Rather than simply accepting defeat, the innovative AJE has found another way to get its programming out in the United States – on the Internet. In April 2007 Al Jazeera launched its own channel on the video sharing website, YouTube (Linder, 2007). Perhaps the Internet may prove to be the best tool for the AJE goal of giving a voice to the voiceless.

**What Lies Ahead**

The art and science of communications is a multifaceted study, even more so when journalism and public relations are simultaneously considered. Yet given the complexities of AJE, clearly, it is more than just another network trying to launch in the United States. It has its roots in the Middle East, but is trying to go global. It has been labeled as “terrorist.” Reputation management issues tied to public relations concerns are as much a part of its package as the usual journalistic concerns about presentation of the news.

The new kid on the media block says it presents news, not propaganda in its news programs, yet still needs to find a way to persuade a skeptical U.S. public that this is so (Khan,

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7 Personal interview with Anand Naidoo, AJE correspondent and anchor, conducted October 2007.
AJE journalists are journalists on a mission and their mission is to present a different world view by doing stories about people that the Western media generally ignore from places around the world that are similarly overlooked (Marash, 2007). The reputation management challenges that confront AJE are certainly more complex than those which other new media ventures might face. How it is attempting to confront that challenge and how its efforts are being perceived is the focus of this research.

Overview of Chapters

In the literature review that makes up the second chapter, the author will examine some of the research relevant to theories revolving around reputation management and communication. Other sections will look at the journalistic concerns of credibility and objectivity in the news media and their possible impact on the reputation management concerns of AJE. It will also introduce the reader to theories of agenda-setting and framing, both components of the research. Another point raised concerns the impact of satellite technology on the news media in general and the Arab news media in particular. Finally, the literature review will introduce the reader to the Arabic-language Al Jazeera as well as AJE and set the stage for the challenges the latter faces in the United States.

The methodology chapter will provide some detail about the descriptive or exploratory case study approach taken by the researcher and explain how the theoretical perspectives of reputation management, news objectivity, agenda-setting and framing come into play. The case study is based on a series of in-depth, qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted with key journalists and executives of AJE as well as the president of the sole commercial cable company

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8 Personal interview with Riz Khan, member of AJE board of directors and host of an interactive interview show, conducted October 2007.

9 Personal interview with Josh Rushing, AJE military affairs correspondent, conducted October 2007.
that was carrying AJE on its channel lineup at the time of this writing. It includes a content analysis of the interviews focusing on the main themes raised by the participants. Chapter 3 also explains how framing of AJE in the U.S. news media was explored through an inductive, text-driven content analysis.

The fourth chapter examines the researcher’s findings and provides detailed information resulting from the qualitative interviews conducted with AJE personnel and the president of Buckeye Cable Systems in Ohio, the only corporate cable company to carry AJE in the United States at the time of this writing. The content analysis of the interviews reviews the main themes raised by the participants. A second part of the research methodology is a framing study of AJE done as a text-driven content analysis of coverage about AJE through a sampling of major U.S. newspapers.

Finally, the research findings provide a basis for discussion and conclusions about the reputation management challenges faced by AJE in the United States. The discussion will consider whether the strategies employed by AJE to manage its reputation are adequate, particular in regard to their relationship with the journalistic concerns of objectivity, credibility, and accuracy. The results of this analysis and what it might say to indicate success or failure of the AJE strategies will also be discussed. The chapter and the thesis itself conclude with recommendations and suggestions for further study and research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

AJE faces unusual challenges as it tries to break into the U.S. market. Like any new television network, it needs to convince cable and satellite distributors in the United States that it is worth their while to give the network a spot on their lineup. Usually the drive is confined to convincing the distributor of potential viewer interest and thereby potential profits for the carrier. But in the case of AJE, there is another, perhaps even more important factor – corporate reputation (Tischler, 2006).

AJE has a reputation which proceeds it as “the terrorist network,” so labeled by high-ranking officials in the Bush Administration and others because its Arabic language sister network is seen as an outlet for radical Islamic propaganda (Williams, 2007). That label has stuck and has worked to keep AJE off U.S. airwaves and unable to develop a traditional viewership in the United States (Cohen, 2007).

To win a spot on the lineup of U.S. cable and satellite distributors, AJE needs to reverse its reputation and establish a standing as a credible news channel. It is making some inroads through its online programming both from its website and as a branded YouTube channel that can be seen on the Internet (Brady, 2007; Rushing, 2007). But with the Internet fast gaining stature as a source of news and information (Choi, Watt, & Lynch, 2006), the venture with YouTube may prove to be more expeditious than originally thought.

Reputation Management Theory

Morley (2002) defines reputation management as “the orchestration of discrete public relations initiatives designed to promote or protect the most important brand you own – your corporate reputation” (p. 10). Nakra (2000) sees it as a corporate communication function that
consists of “a method of building and sustaining of an organization's good name, generating positive feedback from stakeholders that will result in meeting strategic and financial objectives” (p. 35). Reputation scholar Charles Fombrun (1996) defines corporate reputation as “a perceptual representation of a company’s past actions and future prospects that describes the firm’s overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared with other leading rivals” (p. 72).

Wartick (2002) sees Fombrun’s early definition as classic. But still he finds a myriad of definitions out there trying to put a name on the elusive concept or construct of reputation in the corporate world. He lists “identity, image, prestige, goodwill, esteem, and standing” to name but a few (p. 373). But Wartick argues that image, identity, and reputation are not interchangeable and that discussions of reputation management need to go beyond the ephemeral idea of perceptions about reputation to more clearly defined theories incorporating models of reputation management.

Others argue that although reputation may be viewed as an intangible resource, it has an intrinsic value since reputation brings a standing or status with it that can make or break a corporation (Deephouse, 2000). The importance of reputation is evident by the growing body of literature around the topic and not incidentally, the emergence of at least two journals which focus on the issue as well as serious discussions about the topic within the whole world of corporate communications (Hutton, Goodman, Alexander, & Genest, 2001). The authors point to previous research when they note:

Concepts such as “reputation” and “image” are not generally something that can be managed directly, but are omnipresent and the global result of a firm’s or individual’s behavior. Attempting to manage one’s reputation might be likened to trying to manage one’s own popularity (a rather awkward, superficial and potentially self-defeating endeavor). On the other hand, some advocates see reputation management as a guiding new force or paradigm for the entire field, in keeping with Warren Buffet’s admonition that losing reputation is a far greater sin for an organization than losing money. (p. 249)
The Reputation Institute exists for the sole purpose of advancing the study of reputation. It defines its mission as one that aims to “advance knowledge about corporate reputations and help companies create economic value by implementing coherent reputeing strategies” (Reputation Institute, 2008). Since 1999, it has worked with Harris Interactive, Inc. to rank U.S. companies on their corporate reputation. The Reputation Quotient (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004) outlines six components of corporate reputation – emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, workplace environment, social responsibility, and financial performance.

In the inaugural issue of the institute’s Corporate Reputation Review in the summer of 1997, Fombrun and Van Riel outlined the challenges of corporate reputation as a “crossroads of converging discipline” (p. 5) that “constitute subjective, collective assessments of the trustworthiness and reliability of firms” (p.10). Even today, reputation scholars are trying to come to grips with the various components of reputation as outlined by the two – not simply in terms of the obvious economic factors, but also sociologically, organizationally, and strategically (Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997).

What is reputation and what is meant by reputation management? Can reputation be managed and/or measured (Doorley & Garcia, 2007)? Clearly, as the annual Reputation Quotient Index shows, reputation can be measured, but to what extent are assessments of reputation fair? One has only to remember high school days of yesteryear when a girl’s reputation was forever tarnished if she “went too far” with a boy, while the boy in question was unscathed by scandal to understand how complex issues of reputation can become.

In another article for the Corporate Reputation Review, Fombrun (2007) compiled a “list of lists” – 183 public lists that provide rankings of a company’s reputation in 38 countries, noting that making a good showing on a list can be more than just a one-time accomplishment. “The
publicity they garner, in turn, creates a halo around corporate brands and influences the 
subsequent evaluations of companies by consumers and specialists alike,” Fombrun states (p. 
144).

The researcher returns to Fombrun and Van Riel for further insights about the importance 
of being visible in the public eye as a corporation goes about building a positive reputation. In a 
collaboration that looks at strategies followed by winning companies, the two note the 
importance of staying in the limelight (2004):

An old French saying about leading the good life goes as follows: Pour vivre bien, il fault 
vivre cache—to live well live in hiding….That’s actually bad advice. In today’s 
globalized, mediatized, information-rich world, hiding is no longer an option. Stakeholders 
demand access, insist on known what you don’t want to tell, and reporters are hell-bent on 
discovering and revealing it. (p. 103)

Another perspective on reputation holds that what needs to be sought is not merely 
visibility, but vision (Surma, 2006). Noting that the word reputation itself derives from the Latin 
reputare, which means to think over, Surma argues:

For an organization to be defined by its reputation is for it to be defined according to an 
individual or group’s judgment of its trustworthiness and its integrity—that is, according to 
its judged capacity to act ethically and responsibly in all its interactions and practices. (p.1)

In other words, Surma argues in favor of a “visionary approach” such as the one she sees 
being taken by a company like Nike, Inc. the global producer of footwear, clothing, and other 
athletic gear and accessories. The corporation’s new mantra is “transparency” in the aftermath 
of a 1998 lawsuit against the company over its employment practices in Southeast Asia. Wal-
Mart is an example of another company that might be construed as visionary as in terms of the 
efforts it is making to revamp its reputation (Lovler, 2007)\textsuperscript{10}, with its plans to make more

\textsuperscript{10} Unpublished remarks delivered by author Ronnie Lovler during a lecture to journalism students at the University 
of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL, April, 2007
energy-saving products available along with ongoing image-enhancers such as low prices for generic prescription drugs (Kabel, 2008).

Vision or visibility or both? There are no easy answers, and while attempts to provide the same are beyond the scope of this thesis, it is evident that an organization or company with a bad reputation will feel the impact not just in terms of poor corporate image, but where it counts most in the business world – the bottom line. This is borne out by recent corporate scandals involving unethical behaviors such as the 2002 “creative accounting” employed by Enron and its accountants at Arthur Anderson; the 2006 Hewlett Packard spying scandal, and the 2007 sub prime mortgage lending meltdown in the United States. All demonstrate how quickly the reputation – not just of a particular corporation, but of an industry itself – can be sullied by foul or questionable business play (Doorley & Garcia, 2007).

Reputation is receiving increasing attention in strategic management circles because of the far-reaching impact of corporate misdeeds and/or missteps such as those just cited. Indeed reputation management may be the new public relations buzzword, at least as regards corporate communications. The factors that influence a corporation’s reputation or its good name are found within the media, the social and economic environment, and the corporation itself. What’s in a name? Everything (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990).

Crisis situations can also impact reputation. On the “what to do” side, public relations scholars often cite the Johnson & Johnson response to the Tylenol product tampering murders in Chicago in 1982 (Gregory & Weichman, 1999). On the what NOT to do side, is Exxon Corporation’s handling of the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska’s Prince William Sound in 1989, where it was Exxon’s lack of public relations finesse, rather than the spill itself which so damaged the oil company’s reputation (Doorley & Garcia, 2007; Holusha, 1989).
So we can see that reputation is an asset that must be managed like any other asset – in other words, while reputation itself is intangible, it has great tangible value. Why else would intrepid entrepreneur Warren Buffett put reputation before profits in his assessment of what really counts (Doorley & Garcia, 2007)? But to maintain and to enhance reputation and to manage it well, communication is critical. If public relations can be defined as the management of communication between an organization and its publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and reputation is the sum of the image various constituencies have of an organization (Fombrun, 1996) then reputation equals the sum of images plus communication (Doorley & Garcia, 2007).

Deephouse (2000) takes the argument a step further when he puts forward his own concept of media reputation. He describes media reputation as a strategic resource with development of a good reputation in the media as an essential component of reputation management. He adds:

The assumption that media coverage records and influences public knowledge and opinion is applicable to reputation because media coverage is a reasonable indicator of the public’s knowledge and opinions about firms within a few months of the publication date. Some members of the public may have direct knowledge and opinions of an event or issue that reporters gather for newspaper stories. These stories may then influence those members of the public without direct experience or strongly held opinions. For instance, knowledge and opinions about the Exxon Valdez oil spill spread from those who lived on Prince William Sound through the media to the rest of the world. (p. 1096)

What Deephouse has done is to establish the link between reputation management constructs and communication theory involving the media, particularly in regard to agenda setting and framing concepts to be discussed later in this chapter. He defines media reputation as “the overall presentation of a firm in the media” (p. 1106). In other words, the media provides information to stakeholders, but how the media determines what it chooses to present (agenda setting) and how it presents this information (framing) can impact reputation.
Communication Theory

In the now classic book, “Four Theories of the Press,” a perspective on the historical, philosophical, and social role of the global media was presented (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). It was relatively easy to divide up the media a half century ago and classify it into four categories – authoritarian, libertarian, communist, or socially responsible.

But that theory had to evolve and change in the 20th century. The four theories became “five concepts” – Western, development, revolutionary, authoritarian, and communist (Hatchen, 1999). Even with this division, most international news was gathered and disseminated by Western news media, albeit to a new and growing international audience in Asia, the Middle East, and the rest of the world.

But the world has changed even more in the first years of the 21st century. The global village that Marshall McLuhan predicted almost half a century ago is here (McLuhan, 1962). News programs can be transnational, international, and global bringing events across cultures as well as across nations (Volkmer, 1999). The information flow is east-west for some; north-south for others. In the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, much of the news is reflecting what some have labeled a clash of civilizations between the Islamic and non-Islamic worlds (Sieb, 2004). The Arabic-language Al Jazeera and AJE came into being in this changing media landscape. The two networks are part of the movement toward global media diversity which is ending the stranglehold Western media traditionally have had on the media (Sieb, 2004). For the media, issues of credibility and objectivity are where concerns about reputation management and how to communicate messages come face to face. They are of particular importance in understanding the special challenges facing AJE in the United States. These are the topics to be reviewed next.
Objectivity and Its Impact on Reputation Management in the News Media

For purposes of this study, when the issue of traditional journalistic objectivity is raised, the reference will be within the framework of American or U.S. journalism. With that in mind, we can look at the “objectivity norm” as something that compels the journalist to report the news in a manner that is free of bias, opinion, or any type of slant (Schudson, 2001). Objectively speaking – no pun intended – the question of whether there really is such a thing as journalistic objectivity is one that seems to engender all types of subjective ponderings.

Dennis and Merrill (2006) present a good case for both sides of the issue, with Merrill contending that it is an impossible dream, while Dennis argues that it is something that can be achieved. Regardless of where one falls on the objectivity spectrum, it is not an easy thing to define. Ryan’s (2001) comparison of journalistic objectivity with scientific objectivity fails to take into account this perspective. His argument for tried and true objectivity is subjective in and of itself. This researcher would call objectivity being fair and accurate. But then the subjective question can be raised – fair and accurate, according to whom?

Cunningham (2003) wrote that if one asks 10 journalists what objectivity means, the interlocutor would get 10 different answers. Journalism educator Michael Bugeja, who is quoted by Cunningham (2003) in that same article, defines objectivity as “seeing the world as it is, not as you would like it to be.” The New York Times columnist David Brooks equates objectivity with truth – but whose truth? (Brooks, 2006). And it seems that the conventional western view of objectivity is too much even for the venerable Society of Professional Journalists to tackle. SPJ removed objectivity from its code of ethics in 1996 (Society of Professional Journalists, 2008).

So where does AJE fall on the objectivity scale? The network has its own 10-point code of ethics, published on its website which calls for, among other things, adherence to “the
journalistic values of honesty, courage, fairness, balance, independence, credibility and diversity, giving no priority to commercial or political considerations over professional ones” (Al Jazeera English, 2008).

Contextual objectivity expands the idea of objectivity, allowing us to understand that objectivity has to be placed in a context (El Nawawy, 2003). El Nawawy and Iskander (2002) came up with the concept of contextual objectivity, defining it as an attempt "to reflect all sides of any story while retaining the values, beliefs and sentiments of the target audience" (p.27). This is particular relevant today when it comes to reporting on and about the clashing cultures of East and West in our changing world, particularly times of war –or in the parlance of AJE, North and South.

El Nawawy uses the concept of “contextual objectivity” to explain the incredible success of Al Jazeera in the Arab world even as it engenders anger and outrage in the West, particularly in terms of its coverage of the war in Iraq. El Nawawy explains:

The business of reporting and interpreting this war is governed by how the media approach it and how the audience perceives it. Both Arab and American television networks try to cover all aspects of the war - the good, the bad, and the ugly. But the good, the bad, and the ugly are all in the eye of the beholder - the audience seeking "truth." Contextual objectivity is the reason we are watching two different televised versions of the same war - and it is something that both worlds could better understand if they're ever to coexist. (2003)

In the extreme, contextual objectivity means one person’s “terrorist” is another’s “martyr” or can turn what is “a war of liberation” for some into “a war of occupation” for others. What does this discussion of contextual objectivity have to do with reputation management? Possibly, everything, since perceptions of objectivity and credibility enhance rather than distract from a news media’s reputation.

The multinational team of journalists who make up AJE’s staff would argue that seeing the world only through our own news prism does not really reflect the reality of the way that
others see the world (Hodges, 2007; Khan, 2007; Levine, 2007; Rushing, 2007). In the 21st century, journalists may need to consider combining the mores of old-school objectivity with those of “contextual objectivity,” in the news stories that they do. This concept of “contextual objectivity” can help to explain a difference in the way news is covered and why there appear to be so many discrepancies from network to network in terms of both worldviews and the word choices that are made in the writing and/or reporting process (El Nawawy, 2003).

**Credibility and Its Impact on Reputation and in the News Media**

A corporation whose main product is news faces a different set of criteria when it comes to managing reputation. Here credibility, ethics, and fair and honest presentation of the news are what can make or break the reputation of the medium in question. Television in particular has lost ground in terms of public perceptions about its credibility (Kiousis, 2001). Before launching his study, Kiousis expected that television would maintain its position as the fairest of them all, but instead his findings saw the print media edge ahead as the most credible source of news. Scholarly research on credibility has looked at credibility from the perspective of message, source, and medium (Kiousis, 2001).

In the United States, media credibility studies have been ongoing for more than 80 years when the first comparative look between radio and newspapers were taken in the 1930s. Newspapers and television have battled for the edge for more than 50 years (Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, & Mccann, 2003), but recent studies show it is the Internet that may be winning the credibility battle in the United States, at least as regards coverage of the war in Iraq (Choi, Watt, & Lynch, 2006).

A 2006 study by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found credibility ratings of major U.S. broadcast and cable television networks have declined in the first years of the 21st century. Of nearly 3,300 people surveyed, less than one in four believed what they saw
on network news and only slightly more than that found cable news reporting credible (Crupi, 2006). The Pew look at trends in 2005 found the public more and more dissatisfied with the way news is reported, and viewing habits becoming more politically polarized. The only news source that has continued to grow and gain stature is the Internet. The 2006 Pew study found that 50 million people went online to obtain news during the course of a day, on the average. Almost one out of four Americans uses the Internet as their main source of news (Pew Research Center for People and the Press, 2008). And when it comes to following developments about the war in Iraq, most Americans find the Internet to be the most credible medium (Choi, Watt, & Lynch, 2006; Pew, 2006).

Why is this relevant to AJE and its efforts to establish a following in the United States? Because in the United States, AJE is viewed primarily on the Internet. While this study looks at reputation management issues and their impact on AJE’s efforts to obtain satellite and cable distribution in the United States, the fact that AJE’s U.S. distribution is primarily managed through the Internet should not be ignored. If the research shows the Internet gaining credibility as a news medium, then future study might be warranted to determine whether its initial and still prevalent relegation to the Internet, may ultimately be a boon for AJE in the United States.

**Agenda-Setting**

The media do influence public opinion (Lippman, 1922). His assertion, made nearly a century ago, still holds true today – our point of view as journalist and as audience may be governed by preconceived perceptions, the pictures in our heads. Also commonly accepted today is the role of agenda-setting in public opinion, in other words recognition that the mass media does influence public knowledge and public opinion based on the news stories it covers (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).
Agenda setting is the coin termed by McCombs and Shaw in their study of the media’s coverage of the 1968 presidential race in Charlotte, North Carolina. Media coverage of issues and events increases the salience of these issues and events, with their findings that the issues the public considered most important were the issues most covered by the media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Their study shows a relationship between what the media covers and the issues that are of public concern (McQuail, 1994).

Salience transfer is the way the media influences individuals about what to think about the importance of an issue. In a 1982 study, Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder exposed different groups to different news broadcasts on one day and then again a few days later and compared the results. They found opinions of those surveyed, changed to match the emphasis given in the news stories viewed. In other words, the TV news coverage did influence their point of view. The findings of McCombs and Kiousis (2004) in their study of the 1996 presidential elections demonstrated the media’s influence on reasoning and judgment through the process of agenda setting. They argue:

It is important not to think of agenda setting as only a theory about issues. The core proposition of the theory is the transfer of salience from one agenda to another agenda. The salience of objects—issues, candidates, public figures, organizations, or whatever—is the first level of agenda setting, and the salience of attributes is the second level of agenda setting. Second-level research, in particular, has underscored the need for a more systematic perusal of the attitudinal outcomes of agenda setting. (p.38)

More than a theory, however, agenda setting serves a function by telling people what to think about – although not necessarily, how to think about it. Framing takes agenda-setting one step further in the communication process by the way it chooses to focus public attention on a given topic.

**Framing**

Framing is another aspect of agenda-setting that focuses on the way stories are presented by the media, influencing the way the public thinks about a particular issue or event. Goffman
(1974) sees a frame as a “schemata of interpretation” that lets the individual make sense of the information being presented and to use the information in a meaningful way. Goffman used the idea of frames to create the categories that allow individuals or groups "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" events and occurrences to give them meaning.

In terms of the news media, framing is a form of agenda-setting that influences audience perceptions about what is in the news based on language, perspective and supporting interviews in a news story (Ayeni, 2004; Kosicki, 1993). Framing focuses on the issues and places them within a field of meaning and tells people not just what to think about (agenda-setting), but suggests how to think about it (Maher, 2001).

A good example is that given by Zoch and Mloseda (2006) in their reference to the controversy over whether to fly the Confederate flag over the state house in Columbia, South Carolina. They note that some social groups might frame that flag as a symbol of an odious past; others frame it as part of the state’s cultural heritage. In other words, what one thinks about whether to fly the flag depends on one’s frame of reference.

Framing has to do with the way a story is packaged, the words and/or pictures that are used to present the information that guides the public to think about a news story or event in a certain way. Framing allows a news organization to define a political issue or public controversy (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997). Ayeni (2004) notes that organizational gatekeeping, ideological slant, power relations, self-censorship, and even bias are also concerns. Media professionals’ credibility is gauged by their objectivity and detachment, reflected in the level of transparency exhibited in subject selection, treatment, packaging, and dissemination of news.
Framing is as its name implies, sets borders and perspectives around an issue, providing a context or a backdrop for an issue or news event that can influence public perception and public opinion. Communication scholar Robert Entman (1993) puts it like this:

Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in the communicating text, in such a way as to promote, a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (p. 55)

Just as important when framing is studied, what is left out of a news story can be as significant and salient as what is put into it (Gitlin, 1980). Al Jazeera and AJE have been framed by the Bush Administration as being “terrorist” and reporting “vicious lies” in their coverage of Al Qaeda and other events in the Middle East. Not brought up, is the way Al Jazeera and AJE cover Israel or provide time on their air for interviews with Israeli government officials (Hodges, 2007).

How the media determines what is important is another aspect of agenda-setting. In the case of international news and events is it the ubiquitous Washington that makes the call or does the United States media make its own decision about global news? It is beyond the scope of this investigation to discuss that issue, but suffice to say, that had the Bush Administration not pointed its collective finger at Al Jazeera while labeling it “terrorist,” there might have been no reason for this analysis. While there is much to be said about framing and agenda-setting and their importance in analyzing news coverage, that is not the primary purpose of this research, other than to take an exploratory look at how these two concepts come to play in terms of AJE’s reputation management initiatives.

Al Jazeera Arabic: A Brief Background

Al Jazeera went on the air in 1996, a success almost from the start. Its provocative style challenged the region’s authoritarian governments with newscasts and talk shows that dealt head-
on with controversial issues. Its maxim of “the opinion and then the other opinion” has given it
access to bin Laden and other senior leaders of Al Qaeda. But it is also the only Arabic news
channel to give Israeli government officials a voice on its airwaves (El Nawaway & Iskander,
2002; Hodges, 2007).

The Arabic-language network has revamped the way news is delivered in the Middle
East. It is credited with almost single-handedly changing the scope and form of the Arab
electronic media from being pedantic, dull mouthpieces of officialdom to provocative and
thoughtful voices of change (Sakr, 2004).

Qatar’s new ruler – young and liberal and schooled in the West – was interested in new
technologies and new means of communication. He was also motivated by the idea that a
television network might extend tiny Qatar’s influence in the region and the world (Miles, 2005).
So for an investment of about $137 million, he funded Al Jazeera.

The network got an instant boost from the demise of a Saudi-BBC attempt to establish a
regional Arab-language network. That effort crumpled because of Saudi censorship demands,
making a pan-Arab pool of Western-trained journalists readily available to sign on with Al
Jazeera (El Nawawy & Iskander, 2002; Miles, 2005; Rushing 2007).

Several things set Al Jazeera apart from other Arabic language news channels of the time
– its freedom from government controls and censors; its packaging right from the start as a
satellite news network; its stated commitment to “balance” and “equal coverage;” and the
multinational makeup, commitment, and professionalism of its journalists (Sakr, 2004).

Technological advances, primarily satellite television and the Internet have created a new
Arab public sphere that Al Jazeera dominates (Lynch, 2003). Those who cannot afford to
downlink satellite TV in their homes, gather in public cafes to watch the news shows that are
now replacing government dictates as a frame of reference for public debate. Other Arabic-language satellite news networks have been formed, such as the U.S. government funded Al-Hurra and Al-Arabiya, based in Dubai, but Al Jazeera is still the leader (Worth, 2008).

This dominance is evident even outside the region. In Canada and in Europe – almost anywhere where the self-titled Arab Diaspora has established a toehold, Al Jazeera has become the network of choice among viewers in that community (Nawawy & Iskander, 2002). And in a recent study, Arab viewers in Britain said they found Al Jazeera more credible and more believable than CNN or the BBC (Miladi, 2006).

**Satellite Technology and the Arab News Media**

The Arabic-language Al Jazeera network has had an impact on the Arab media and its audience that has gone far beyond the expectations of those who were part of the venture when it was first launched (El Nawawy & Iskander, 2002; Miles, 2005; Rushing, 2007; Zayani, 2005). Political leaders and heads of states can no longer control the news through government-run broadcasting outlets, because their citizens were able to view another side of the story on Al Jazeera, and now, on dozens of other satellite networks (De Franceschi, 2007).

Satellite technology is hampering the ability of any government to absolutely control what is seen and heard by its citizens (Sakr, 2004). In the early 1990s, there really was no television journalism in the Arab world, unless one counted state-owned and controlled television news as journalism (Schliefer, 2005). Broadcasting is passé; it is satellite transmission or satcasting that is the norm. The Arabic-language Al Jazeera has changed the way media is received and delivered in the Middle East and beyond, in a way that is not unlike the effect CNN had on the foreign policy of many nations during the 1991 Persian Gulf War (“The CNN Effect, 2002).
“The CNN effect,” or the way live, continuous, ongoing news coverage impacts international events laid the ground for what Zayani has labeled the “Al Jazeera phenomenon” in his book by the same name (Zayani, 2005). In its own way, the Arabic-language Al Jazeera has had as much of an impact in the way news and information is delivered and acted upon in the Middle East and beyond. Al Jazeera has built upon the CNN effect to create its own phenomenon.

Al Jazeera did more than just change the way news was transmitted in the Middle East; it also influenced Arab public opinion and Arab politics. Its in-your-face style of journalism and interview programs captivated a pan-Arab audience and galvanized them. The Arabic language Al Jazeera has the dubious distinction of not just being demonized by the Bush Administration, but of being kicked out of every Arab nation at one time or another as well (Miles, 2005; Rushing, 2007; Zayani, 2005).

The Birth and Launch of AJE

AJE correspondent Josh Rushing has a very simple explanation for why AJE came into being. “We launched Al Jazeera English because the Emir of Qatar said to do it. He has never publicly said why he thought an English-language [network] was needed leaving us as well as the rest of the world to speculate on this thinking” (Rushing, 2007, p. 193). But what now has become a Qatari media conglomerate has given Doha much more clout on the world political stage than its mini-state status might merit despite its oil and natural gas reserves (Williams, 2007).

Until just a day before launch, the network was to be called Al Jazeera International, a reflection of its global aspirations. But in last-minute conversations, literally as the network was getting ready to go on the air, there was a sense that “international” was the wrong word to use since both Al Jazeera networks reach an international audience (Brady, 2007).
AJE is a bigger and more expensive gamble than the original Arabic language network. Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani has put $1 billion into the high definition, state-of-the-art network (Frontline, 2007). But much more is at stake. Al Jazeera is moving outside of the Middle East. With an English language network, Al Jazeera is developing a global face.

AJE is organized around four broadcast centers with programming that follows the sun from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Doha, Qatar; London, and Washington. At a time when Western news organizations are cutting back on international coverage and reducing staff, AJE promises to cover the world. It has hundreds of journalists representing about 40 different nationalities and ethnicities working in three dozen bureaus in places not often considered news centers (Al Jazeera, 2007).

The AJE team is made up of highly respected and well-known journalists who have already carved out a name for themselves in the profession while working for Western media organizations like CNN, ABC, the Associated Press, BBC, and CBC. On-air personalities include Sir David Frost, a long-time British talk show host; former ABC Nightline correspondent Dave Marash, a lead anchor in the Washington bureau; Riz Khan, Veronica Pedrosa and Anand Naidoo, all previously with CNN, and others from Sky News, CBC, Britain’s ITV, and CNBC. Josh Rushing, the ex-Marine public affairs officer, who was featured in “Control Room,” the 2004 documentary about the Arabic language Al Jazeera and its coverage of the war in Iraq, is on board. In 2007, Rushing traveled to Iraq, as a journalist, instead of as a Marine (11Smrikarov, 2007).

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11 Personal interview with Mark Smrikarov, an account executive with Brown, Lloyd James Strategic Communications, conducted April, 2007.
AJE in the United States

The AJE launch was easy from a perspective of garnering publicity. It had a brand name that was already known (Sauer, 2003) – and because of the unique nature of what it was and who is involved with it, it was able to get abundant media coverage internationally and within the United States (Levine, 2007; Mattingly, 2007). Globally, AJE has also had a high degree of success in picking up viewers, claiming to have passed the 100 million viewer mark just 10 months after launch (Al Jazeera English).

But it has had a tougher time overcoming the hurdle of viewership in the United States. The reputation of the Arabic language Al Jazeera as “the terrorist network” has preceded it. Network executives say political pressure is keeping AJE off the air in the United States; distributors say there is simply no market (Hemingway, 2007). A 2006 poll found that 53 percent of people in the United States opposed the launch of the channel. Two-thirds of those polled thought the U.S. government should not allow the channel to enter the U.S. market (Dajani, 2006).

The network has employed an external public relations firm to assist in the reputation management arena. The firm, Brown Lloyd James, has set out a number of objectives, including first and foremost altering the perception of AJE as “terrorist TV” by adopting “a controlled PR approach that would create a gradual shift in perception” about the network (Brown Lloyd James, 2008).

The hitch, however, remains distribution in the United States. So far, only two cable companies carry AJE in the United States, the Toledo, Ohio-based Buckeye Cable System and the municipal system in Burlington, Vermont. Philip Lawrie, a former international distribution executive for CNN has been brought on board as director of global distribution (Brady, 2007).
but as of this writing, AJE has not signed on any new cable or satellite carriers in the United States.

But in this day and age of online communication, AJE has found an alternative – the Internet. In April 2007, AJE signed a deal with YouTube to make some of its programming available on the popular video sharing website by establishing its own branded channel on the site (Al Jazeera, 2007; Ivry, 2007).

The arrangement with YouTube has put AJE before the eyes of tens of thousands of people who may not have seen the network otherwise. *Variety* magazine reported in October 2007 there are between 50,000 and 100,000 AJE downloads daily on YouTube, presumably with a majority coming from the United States. No other news network has gone this route in the United States, but then again, no other news network has been blocked in the United States the way AJE has been. Indeed, AJE may find itself doing double duty as a media pioneer – breaking ground not only in the type of news it offers its audiences, but in the way it delivers the news to them.

Innovative interactive approaches may help AJE gain ground in the United States. So might its willingness to publicly laugh at itself. A few days after AJE launched, its Washington, D.C. anchors took part in a five-minute segment on Comedy Central’s increasingly popular *Daily Show*. The segment was taped in AJE’s studios where *Daily Show* “correspondent” Samantha Bee gave AJE anchors “tips” on how to appeal more to a U.S. audience. Not only did the piece give AJE more visibility among younger viewers attracted to the *Daily Show*, it also showed that as a network, AJE had a sense of humor.

**The “Un-CNN”**

Think of AJE as the “un-CNN” (Pintak, 2006). It is like a certain kind of soda which calls itself the “uncola,” but which still has the fizz and the feel of that other kind of soft drink. AJE
has the look and feel of CNN or the BBC, but it is decidedly not either network. On launch day, it focused much of its coverage on parts of the world that the Western media have neglected but left out “the usual suspects” – stories that originated in the United States, Europe, or Japan.

AJE is challenging CNN and the BBC and the gatekeepers at other Western media outlets who make the decisions about what is news with its commitment to reversing the direction of the global news flow. While CNN International (CNNI) makes some effort to do this, it is less successful now than it had been in the past in taking this approach, because of the constant changes in leadership and program formatting at the network. At the old CNN, the news was the “star of the show;” now each program is a platform for its respective anchor – even at CNNI (Lovler, 2007)12.

But the biggest difference still lies in how the news is covered. AJE journalist and talk show host Riz Khan, who has worked with both the BBC and CNN, sums it up with his take on the difference between CNN style coverage and that of AJE. American news channels tend to "show the missiles taking off," Kahn says. "Al-Jazeera shows them landing" (Khan, 2007).

AJE intends to set the news agenda for others to follow (Levine, 2007) by altering the direction of the global news flow from the developing to the developed world and giving those traditionally at the bottom of the news pyramid a chance to be heard – or as AJE puts it, give a voice to the voiceless. As the first non-western English-language international news network, AJE comes to the table with a far different perspective than its predecessors of the West.

**Research Focus**

AJE believes it can overcome its reputation management problem because of the credibility of its journalists and what it perceives as the integrity of its mission, self-defined as

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12 Unpublished remarks delivered by author Ronnie Lovler during a lecture to journalism students at the University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL, March, 2007
balancing “the information flow from South to North, providing accurate, impartial and objective news for a global audience from a grass roots level [and] giving voice to different perspectives from under-reported regions around the world (Al Jazeera news release, 2008).

The researcher is interested in looking at what AJE is doing to alter the perception that it is a terrorist network and build a positive reputation for itself in the United States. The questions will be answered through a two-pronged approach – interviews with AJE journalists and executives employed at the Washington, D.C. News Center and by a qualitative framing analysis of coverage about AJE in the United States. The media sample is confined to relevant news stories and editorials published in major national and urban U.S. newspapers as culled by a LexisNexis search. By confining the study to newspapers, the researcher believes it will be easier to note changes in the way stories about AJE were written, if indeed differences in perception and coverage did occur.

**Research Questions**

The research attempts to answer four questions as posited below. Answers to the first two questions were obtained through the qualitative, open-ended interviews conducted at AJE’s Washington News Center., or when not possible by telephone. The qualitative framing analysis of the sample of U.S. newspapers selected for the study provides answers to the last two questions.

**Interviews at AJE Washington News Center**

**RQ1** – What strategies are being employed by AJE to establish a positive reputation in the United States?

**RQ2** – To what extent are these strategies working?
News Media Coverage

**RQ3** – How did the U.S. news media frame AJE immediately prior to and at the time of its launch in their reporting on the network?

**RQ4** – Has there been a shift in the type of media coverage AJE has been receiving since launch?
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Procedures and systems used in this study are fundamentally based on tenets of case study research methodology, utilizing two principle means of gathering evidence – semi-structured qualitative interviews and a textual qualitative analysis of news coverage in select media looking at framing. Case studies are frequently used in public relations studies and teachings (Morley, 2002), one reason this approach was taken by the researcher.

This is a snapshot case study of Al Jazeera English, (hereafter AJE), an international news network, and its efforts to break into the U.S. market. The network is unique because of its Middle Eastern origins and the perceptions of it by some in the United States that it supports terrorism. AJE is the first 24/7 global news network that is not headquartered in the United States or Western Europe (Khan, 2007; Rushing, 2007). It has penetrated markets in Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, and of course, the Middle East (Brady, 2007). But it has had an extraordinary lack of success in obtaining traditional cable and satellite carriage in the United States.

This examination of AJE is a case study of a mass medium which is distinctive in the way it came into being, in its approach to news coverage, and in the particular reputation management issues that confront it. Specifically, this investigation looks at the strategies AJE is employing to overcome its reputation management problems. The study also looks at framing in the U.S. news media in regard to the way news was reported about AJE at or about the time of its launch and again, at a period of time surrounding the network’s first anniversary.

Scope of Research

As a case study, the research consists of two primary components – qualitative, open-ended in-depth interviews with journalists and executives at AJE’s Washington, D.C. News
Centre and inductive, text-driven content analysis of a sampling of print media news stories about AJE both at the time of its launch in November 2006 and in the months preceding and immediate following the first anniversary of its airing in November 2007.

The study looked AJE’s corporate reputation initiatives in the United States with a particular focus on the way it presents and delivers the news and the way these initiatives were covered in a representative sampling of newspapers. The scope of the research was limited to the United States, because it is within the United States that the network is having its greatest difficulty breaking into the consumer market; because of funding and time constraints that limited travel to other AJE operation centers; and because inductive, text-driven content analysis of news coverage about AJE by U.S. media is a component of this research.

**Case Study Procedures**

Varying definitions of a case study have been offered. Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary defines a case study as “an intensive analysis of an individual unit as a person or community stressing developmental factors in relation to the environment” (Merriam-Webster, 2008). Yin (2003) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (p. 13). Kumar (2005) defines it as an approach to studying “a social phenomenon through a thorough analysis of an individual case” (p.113).

What makes a case study valuable is this intensive, in-depth look at a single topic. Case studies have become quite useful in studying a wide range of concerns. They have been used to look at reforms and issues in the field of education (Zigler & Muenchow, 2004) and in the business world as exemplified by *Harvard Business Review’s Case Studies*. One of the best-known case studies is the look at President John F. Kennedy’s handling of the Cuban Missile

**Types of Case Studies**

There are three kinds of case studies – descriptive, exploratory and explanatory (Yin, 2003; Tellis, 1997). Descriptive case studies depict events and/or processes; exploratory case studies survey situations where there is no pre-determined or defined outcome anticipated, and explanatory case studies clarify and elucidate situations (Fisher & Ziviani, 2003). Stake (1995) identified three more types of case studies; intrinsic instrumental and collective. Of particular interest was Stake’s categorization of the intrinsic case study

> It is not unusual for the choice of a case to be no choice at all. … The case is given. We are interested in it, not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problem, but because we need to learn about that particular case. We have an intrinsic interest in the case, and we may call our work intrinsic case study. (p.3)

In other words, the intrinsic case study is done precisely for the purpose of studying something that can stand by itself in a class of its own.

In general, however, the best time to use case study research is when it is something in the here and now that is being studied. “Case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context,” Yin writes (Yin, 2003).

A case study can offer insights into the widest range of social science concerns and to evaluate and/or bring about a greater understanding of an event or situation where there are no clearly defined or anticipated results (Yin, 2003). Flyvbjerg (2006) points out five misunderstandings about case study research, including the idea that theoretical knowledge has
more value than practical knowledge, which he then successfully refutes. Yin, however, also
notes that the findings of case study research are frequently challenged and that the insights
derived may be underappreciated (Yin, 2003). The author hopes this will not be the case here.

**Rationale for AJE Case Study**

The case study was selected as an appropriate methodology for this study for the following
reasons. Given that AJE only made its debut in November 2006; as such there is limited scholarly
research available. It is current and a phenomenon of “now,” with questions about “how” and
“why” needing answers (Yin 2003), even as external and internal developments impact the
network in ways which determine its present and define its future.

This is both an exploratory case study and an intrinsic case study of a singular news
organization – AJE with unique concerns and attributes. It is exploratory and intrinsic because of the
particular attributes of AJE – there is no other news network exactly like it – given its Middle Eastern
origins and its reputation challenges. It is exploratory because there is no predetermined or defined
outcome anticipated and because the researcher followed developments about Al Jazeera’s plans to
establish an English-language network in the U.S. and international news media for about a year
before beginning the study. It is intrinsic because of the researcher’s curiosity about AJE. The
researcher became intrigued after seeing the documentary about Al Jazeera, “Control Room,” and
began reading about Al Jazeera and the Arab media in general. The researcher’s “a priori” interest in
AJE, Al Jazeera and the Arab media further contribute to the exploratory and intrinsic nature of this
study.

A principal theoretical perspective for this investigation is the public relations concept of
reputation management. It has long been considered that a good reputation is based upon favorable
relationships with stakeholders (Deephouse, 2000). But it is only in the last 10 years that public
relations practitioners and those engaged in academic studies in the field have begun to pay attention
to this issue as it relates to a corporation’s public image (Hutton, Goodman, Alexander and Genest, 2001). The study also looks at journalistic concerns about objectivity and credibility with an exploratory look at framing of AJE in the news media as a part of this research. Credibility and objectivity are key reputation concerns for the news media (Blumenthal, 2007; Cunningham, 2003).

**Procedures**

The classic case study focuses on single entities, but can combine many different methods of data collecting, including interviews and observation (Eisenhardt, 1989). Interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information and while interviews may take different forms, in this investigation, the format used is that of the qualitative, open-ended, semi-structured interview, permitting respondents to share their insights (Tellis, 1997).

Tellis (1997) refers to Yin (1994) and Stake (1995) in outlining the sources of evidence in case studies, including documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. For this study of AJE, the primary sources of evidence are interviews and newspaper articles. Additional data was gained through field observation, by time spent observing procedures in AJE’s newsroom and control room. Secondary evidence was also gathered through the reading of additional newspaper and magazine articles as well as the viewing of broadcast news reports and visits to AJE’s YouTube channel.

These are the primary tools utilized in this investigation of AJE and the way the network has handled its issues of reputation management. The case study research method gives the investigator an opportunity for deeper understanding of what has taken place and what may transpire (Yin, 2003).

This study also utilized an inductive, text-driven content analysis, examining news coverage in a sampling of national U.S. newspapers between June 15, 2006 and January 15, 2008
– a period of time, covering the pre-launch, launch and post-launch period. For reasons of manageability, the study was limited to newspapers found through a LexisNexis Academic search.

The research analyzed how AJE was framed in the news reports about the network through the content analysis. A qualitative approach was adopted because of the exploratory nature of the study, allowing the researcher to make decisions about language, text and vocabulary utilized to establish the frame as well as the inclusion or exclusion of content. While there is much to be said about framing and its importance in analyzing news coverage, that is not the primary purpose of this research, other than to take an exploratory look at how this comes into play in terms of AJE’s reputation management initiatives.

Some acknowledgement of the theory or concept of triangulation also needs to be acknowledged since both in this case study, both interviews and a text-driven content analysis of newspaper articles were utilized to examine the reputation management issues confronted by AJE. Patton (2002) wrote that “triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods," a concept with which this researcher obviously agrees since more than one research methodology was utilized.

**Qualitative Interviews**

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) define the qualitative interview as a way to get information from socially situated speakers (p. 172). It is up to the researcher to bring purpose to the interview and find people who can make a contribution to the investigation. The qualitative, in-depth open-ended approach toward interviewing also allows for greater leeway in participant responses to questions (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002; Marshall and Rossman, 1999).

Adhering to the concept that an in-depth interview is a conversation with a purpose, these conversations can have multiple purposes (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) that can include:
Here and now constructions of persons, events, activities, organizations, feelings, motivations, claims, concerns and other entities; reconstruction of such entities as experienced in the past; [and] projections of such entities as they are expected to be experienced in the future.” (p. 268)

A series of qualitative interviews were conducted at the Al Jazeera News Centre in Washington, D.C. over a three-day period in October 2007. Decision-makers and key on-air presenters, producers, correspondents, and executives were interviewed. The investigation consists of 12 qualitative, in-depth open-ended interviews with AJE journalists, AJE executives and two other participants who have a professional relationship with AJE. Eight interviews were conducted face-to-face; four others were done via the telephone.

The interviews were conversations (Kvale, 1996), that followed the constructs of the accepted norms for in-depth, qualitative research interviews with an emphasis on open-ended questions in a semi-structured format to elicit the best responses (Gillham, 2000; Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). The conversations were structured with the interviews focused on the network, its reputation, and the challenges it faces breaking into the U.S. market. But each interview was unique as might be expected in these extended discussions that varied based on the interviewee’s available time, area of interest, and/or expertise and particular personality traits (Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

The interviews aimed to elicit difference perspectives on AJE’s reputation management challenges. All of the interviewees held high-level positions at U.S., Canadian, or British media outlets prior to joining AJE, one of the reasons the researcher sought to interview each of them. Lindlof (1995) explained, “Often a researcher will interview persons only if their experience is central to the research problem in some way. They may be recruited for their expert insight, because they represent a certain status or category or because of critical events in which they have participated” (p.167). This was certainly the case here. Each interview was audio taped with
the consent of the interviewees and later transcribed. This followed the research protocol approved by the University’s Institutional Review Board.

**Sampling Technique**

Interviewees were chosen by purposive sampling technique. The pool of potential interviewees was not a large one since by design it was confined to professional journalists or AJE executives working specifically for the network in Washington, D.C. The field was further narrowed by accessibility; some of those whom the researcher had hoped to interview were traveling or not otherwise available during the time research was conducted.

The investigator also made a conscious decision to seek out particular people based on the positions they occupied within the organization as well as their past experiences as journalists or executives with Western news organizations prior to joining AJE. Some rapport with the interviewees was anticipated and achieved because of the researcher’s previous professional experience as a journalist.

**Sample Description**

The researcher interviewed eight people in face-to-face sessions at the Al Jazeera English’s Washington offices; two other AJE respondents by telephone and two others with a professional relationship with AJE, also by telephone and by email. The nationalities of the AJE respondents are British, American, South African, Israeli and Canadian. Three are correspondents and/or news presenters; one is a show host and a member of the AJE board of directors; another is news executive, four are producers; and the last is a marketing and business executive. Also included in this count is the owner of the cable company that has AJE on its lineup and an account executive for the public relations firm representing AJE. All AJE personnel have decision-making responsibilities. All but one worked with major U.S., Canadian or British television networks prior to joining AJE. The sole exception in terms of previous,
professional experience was a respondent who was a public information officer for the U.S. military before taking an on-air position with AJE. Nearly all are at least 20-year veterans of the news business; only two of those interviewed had been in the profession for a shorter time. The respondents are primarily in their 30s and 40s, although one participant is in his 60s.

Interview Procedures

Similar, but not identical questions were asked of all participants who were regarded as conversational partners, more than as interviewees (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). There was a variance in the conversations because of time constraints (some respondents had more time than others for the interview), and differences in personal background, style or professional experiences encountered before joining AJE. Although it may be true that asking the exact same questions of all participants brings greater efficiency of information gathering (Lindlof, 1995), this research required a certain conversational flexibility. “Responsive interviewers recognize that each conversational partner has a distinct set of experiences, a different construction of the meaning of those experiences and different areas of expertise” (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 34). In addition, the in-depth interview method is based on the belief that because the respondents may have expertise in their field, they have the most to offer in terms of relevant observations and commentary (Austin & Pinkleton, 2006; Broom & Dozier, 1990). Throughout each interview, the researcher engaged in “active listening” using both the verbal and non verbal dimensions of listening (Gillham, 2000; Lindlof and Taylor, 2002).

The research interviews aimed to elicit insights about AJE successes based on five of the six components of the Reputation Quotient Index (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004). Through a collaboration with Harris Interactive, Fombrun’s Reputation Institute measures six components of corporate reputation – emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership,
workplace environment, social responsibility, and financial performance. The latter was not a factor in regard to AJE, for reasons which will be discussed later.

**Analysis of Interviews**

Content analysis is the study of recorded human communications (Babbie, 2001). Research methods and analysis can be applied to books, magazines, newspapers, letters, movies, television shows, and more. While content analysis can and often does take a quantitative approach, the researcher opted for a text-driven study.

A content analysis of the interviews was performed using the search functions of Microsoft Word. The researcher looked for particular words or phrases that might have been utilized in the responses to the interview questions. Words included in the search were: credibility, news coverage, objectivity, derivatives of terror (i.e. terrorist, terrorism); reputation and news agenda. Using an inductive, analytical approach, the researcher identified substantive statements made by each interviewee as they pertained to reputation management concerns and categorized them. (Gillham, 2000, p.59). For example, all felt that the hiring of journalists who had previous experience working for established, reputable, Western news organizations was a plus in terms of AJE’s corporate reputation. All the AJE staffers also addressed the differences in news perspective that AJE offers and the commitment to more in-depth news coverage. The researcher also made note of the enthusiasm manifested by the respondents when talking about their jobs and the network. Comments were categorized according to these themes, with new categories created as necessary to be included in the research findings.

**Inductive, Text-Driven Content Analysis**

The purpose of the inductive, text-driven content analysis was to see how coverage of AJE was framed by major U.S. newspapers. Through such an analysis, the researcher can judge how the presence or absence of information can create meaning (Perkins, 2005). It is a given that the
media does frame issues (Price, Tewksbury & Powers, 1997) but it is equally true that often the reader or audience is unaware of what is taking place (Gitlin, 1980). In this case, the framing study, approached as a text-driven content analysis, looks at messages as they are structured in newspaper articles (Reese, 2001) appearing in the research sample.

Inductive Research and Framing

Inductive research is based on a process of reasoning that starts with knowledge about specific facts and moves to form general suppositions. Data is collected that is relevant to the topic and is grouped accordingly; with explanations making themselves apparent based on the information collected (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). This qualitative framing analysis stemmed from the researcher’s desire to know more about the United States media perception of AJE. The research followed an approach described by Lofland and Lofland (1995) to “begin with an open-ended and open-minded desire to know a social situation or setting; the data and yourself as an agent of induction guide you in the task of emergently formulating one or more propositions” (p. 185). It was in this spirit that the researcher’s qualitative framing analysis was conducted.

Maher (2001) writes that framing is a difficult concept to measure. Konig (n.d.) concurs, providing a plethora of examples of qualitative framing studies that failed to divulge measurement criteria. Price, Tewksbury and Powers (1997) identify three basic themes or news frames that underlie most news stories in the U.S. media – conflict, human interest and consequence (p. 484-485). Iyengar takes the news framing discussion a step further by breaking down the way television frames news as either episodic, that is dealing with a specific incident or news event, or as thematic, looking at the bigger picture. What is said about television is equally applicable to the print media in the context of the AJE framing analysis undertaken here.

In the context of this research, human interest or consequence news frames might be applicable as would be thematic frames looking at the bigger picture (press freedom) in terms of
AJE in the United States. However, the researcher agrees with the perspective put forward by Wu (2006) that “news discourse, as a particular type of public discourse, is … subjective to individual interpretation” (p.254).

**Framing of AJE by the News Media**

A representative sampling of newspaper stories was conducted using text-driven content analysis. It starts as a kind of “fishing expedition,” since the researcher is simply looking to see what is out there (Krippendorff 1980, p.170). But text-driven content analysis is determined by the availability of texts with enough material to stimulate the researcher’s interest (Krippendorf, 2004). As a point of departure for content analysis of news stories dealing with reputation management issues confronting AJE, in the brief time that elapsed since its November 2006 inception, this method is quite suitable.

AJE has been framed in the news media by the very language that President Bush and others in his administration have used in their attacks against the Arabic language Al Jazeera. Examples of often-used master frames with a negative perspective include derivatives of the word terror, terror TV, mouthpiece for Osama bin Laden, anti-American propaganda and other catch-phrases and concepts that elicit derogatory views of the network. Master frames were identified based on key words and phrases such as “different perspective,” derivatives of the word, “terror,” as well as the appearance of words like objective, credible and fair that might have to do with the network’s reputation management concerns or speak to the AJE view of the news it delivers. Other master frames coming from the perspective of AJE itself might include “setting the news agenda,” “providing a voice for the voiceless,” “other perspectives,” or “view from the developing world” that speak to the AJE view of the news it delivers.
Sampling and Data Collection

Data for this analysis were retrieved from the online LexisNexis database using the search term or keywords Al Jazeera English. The study covered a time period from Nov. 15, 2006 to January 15, 2008. That time frame was selected to cover the period immediately prior to the network launch on Nov. 15, 2006, to see what coverage AJE might have obtained as it readied to go on air; the launch itself; and then through the remainder of 2006, all of 2007 and the first two weeks of January 2008 because of the intrinsic nature of the case study research approach.

LexisNexis listed 1,000 hits for Al Jazeera English in the sample. In the newspaper category, the area of interest for this analysis, 457 newspaper articles were found. A total of 79 newspaper articles were determined to be relevant based on a cursory look at the story headline which indicated the story was about Al Jazeera English. For example, a story headlined: “Al Jazeera English: What it is and isn’t,” that was published in *The New York Times* was included as relevant because the indication was the story was actually about the network. Another *Washington Post* story headlined “15 Police Recruits killed in Iraq, U.S. Death Toll for October hits 83” was not, on the expectation that the story was about something else, with a possible reference to AJE in the text as an informational source.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was each single article and/or editorial or opinion piece related to the coverage of AJE network in specific newspaper. Initially, the researcher had intended to limit study of coverage of AJE to five U.S. newspapers with a national audience – *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and *USA Today*. There was particular interest in *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, which are considered to be national newspapers of record. However, the study was expanded to include
coverage of AJE by newspapers in other major urban centers to broaden the sample after a preliminary search showed only a limited number of stories done about AJE by the previously mentioned newspapers. Those cities and newspapers include the Boston Globe, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, The Houston Chronicle, and the Los Angeles Times. The other five newspapers were chosen because they are located in major urban centers and are generally considered newspapers whose names are recognized throughout the United States. There was also a research interest in exploring coverage about AJE by media in different regions of the nation.

The study was limited to these U.S. media to keep the investigation manageable and because the focus of the research was to see how AJE was framed by major U.S. newspapers in their coverage of the network. The researcher opted to exclude coverage about AJE in international newspapers from Western European capitals and other periodicals of global importance because the analysis was focused specifically on coverage by key newspapers in the United States.

**Framing Analysis Procedures**

Each article was read by the researcher to determine if it was relevant to this framing analysis. An article was judged to be relevant if it was about AJE itself and did not merely cite AJE as a news source. In all, a total of 24 articles were found to be relevant; nine from The New York Times; three from the Washington Post; one from The Christian Science Monitor; four from USA Today; four from The Boston Globe; one from The Atlanta-Journal Constitution; two from The San Francisco Chronicle; and none from The Houston Chronicle or The Los Angeles Times. The LexisNexis entry for The Los Angeles Times only included entries from the last six months and no relevant articles were found. The Wall Street Journal only posts abstracts on LexisNexis; the abstracts of the two articles listed were not relevant to the research.
Relevant articles were read in order to identify meaningful news frames, both of a positive and negative nature. The researcher looked for key words, catch-phrases and concepts previously detailed. In addition, the researcher made subjective determinations as to whether the story appeared to be favorably or unfavorably disposed toward the network. These determinations were based on the text, interviews, headline and general slant of the story. As was the case with the analysis of the interviews, new categories were created as necessary. The results of this qualitative analysis will be explained in the findings section.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Strategies AJE Employs to Establish a Positive Reputation in the United States

An analysis of participant responses revealed a consistency of themes to describe the way the network is confronting its reputation management issues in the United States. Positive themes mentioned by all respondents included, but were not limited to reversing news flow from south to north; providing a voice to the voiceless; in-depth reporting from typically uncovered regions of the world; contextual objectivity, credibility and ethics, and demystifying the channel by the recruitment and retention of journalists who have already made a reputation for themselves in the West. All the respondents were quick to utilize the catch-phrases that are part of the network’s rationale; more than half provided some deeper insights about why they feel the way they do about working for AJE.

Words and phrases frequently used in the interviews included, but were not limited to, “in-depth content,” “context,” “determine own news agenda,” “setting the news agenda,” “reverse news flow,” “other parts of the world,” and “going slower,” and “giving a voice to the voiceless”. Other words and phrases that came up in the conversations were “staying away from parachute journalism,” “demystifying the channel,” “reputation for doing good stories,” “proud,” “ethical,” “fighting against stereotype,” “credibility,” and “veteran journalists.”

The consensus was that doing good journalism is the best way for AJE to establish itself as a serious, reputable news organization. The sentiment expressed by all was that the work of the AJE news team speaks for itself, and that the credible and in-depth journalistic reports the journalistic team delivers does more to enhance the network’s image than any public relations campaign could do. The respondents expressed an opinion that working for AJE is more than a job. In the words of one participant:
Why do we like to work here? If you are somebody who likes news, you will love working at this channel because we do news. For somebody who wants infotainment, this is probably not the channel to watch or where you want to be working.

**Reversing the News Flow from South to North/Providing a Voice to the Voiceless**

All respondents provided examples from their own on-the-ground experiences that they believe speak to the credibility and seriousness of Al Jazeera English as well as its commitment to a more diverse and equalitarian perspective on the news as it “reverses the flow from south to north” and provides “a voice for the voiceless.” The shared belief seems to be that through the kind of international, in-depth reporting AJE is building its reputation as a news source of record and as a place to go to get the news that will not be carried by other media organizations.

One respondent explained AJE intends to set the news agenda for others to follow by altering the direction of the global news flow from the developing to the developed world and giving those traditionally at the bottom of the news pyramid a chance to be heard. As the first non-western English-language international news network, AJE comes to the table with a far different perspective than its predecessors of the West, in the words of Riz Khan, a member of AJE’s board of directors and the host of an interactive, interview program that bears his name. He was succinct in his description of what he describes as the signature difference between AJE and other international news networks: “Other channels show the missiles being fired; we show them landing.” Later in the conversation, he went on to add:

One thing about the channel, it’s doing what international channels should be doing. If that’s pioneering, it’s kind of ironic or sad. We should be covering the world. What we’re doing is filling a gap doing what international channels should be doing. …and that is going out there and covering the stories from parts of the world where it isn’t being covered.

Military affairs and special reports correspondent Josh Rushing interpreted this as “being the voice of the underdog.” Rushing is the former United States Marine public affairs officer who was featured in “Control Room,” the 2004 documentary about the Arabic language Al
Jazeera, and its coverage of the war in Iraq. He described the news programming put out by AJE like this:

Our slogan is setting the news agenda. What does that mean? From the reporter perspective it is not setting anything, just telling the story, telling what happens. It is a way of telling the untold story. … We will look at a situation and say, here is the way all the Western media will cover it. We show what war looks like from the Iraqi perspective, the perspective of the Iraqi people. In that way, set a new agenda for that conflict.

Another respondent, interview producer Diane Hodges who books guests for AJE, said the network’s commitment is evident by the way it focuses more of its “resources on developing countries, in Africa, South America and Asia. We show less of what is going on in London and Washington, and more of what is going on in Jerusalem, Cairo and Dubai.”

Another respondent talked about offering that fresh perspective, once again utilizing the catch-phrase of setting the news agenda. The participant gave this example:

Darfur for example is a story heavily missed in the United States. For us to say we were going to go in there, that was a big help. We could set the news agenda by saying there are stories out there, that you should know about and these are as much a part of the news agenda as a speech from the White House.

Celebrity Journalism and the Dazzle Factor

All but one of the respondents made particular mention of the fact that AJE steers away from celebrity news. For example, when Anna Nicole Smith died in February 2007, there was never a mention of her death – or the ensuing debate over who fathered her child or where she should be buried – on AJE. In the words of executive producer Joanne Levine:

The day that Anna Nicole Smith died. I didn’t even know she was dead. Our top story was how Fatah and Hamas had come to agreement for a unity government and we didn’t even touch Anna Nicole Smith.

Like Levine, Hodges considers the lack of celebrity news another plus. “AJE also differs from some networks, like CNN, in showing NO entertainment/celebrity news – and doesn’t miss
having to line up stories about people like Angelina Jolie or Jim Carrey.” All respondents agreed with those opinions.

In addition to ignoring celebrity happenings, correspondent Anand Naidoo said AJE focuses on substance in its news reports instead of what he described as the “busyness” of other 24-hour news channels. He called it “the dazzle factor … the ability to be able to put up satellites very quickly, to get signals very quickly, to use very fancy graphics, to use very quick and sharp onscreen production tools, but they don’t necessarily add to the understanding of the story. It just looks great. It’s more Star Wars than news.”

**In-Depth Reporting and Contextual Objectivity**

When President Bush visited Latin America in March, 2007 the AJE correspondent who covered that trip did a wrap story, a story that “wraps up” coverage of an event. Then correspondent Viviana Hurtado chose to do her piece in Uruguay, by following around a trash collector. And who might be more voiceless than a man who picks up the garbage for a living? She recollected the trip in this way:

I think that one of the things that we do is probably take a step back and ask the question, why does this matter to the world? What are the stakes? Not just me reporting in Washington or the Americas, but why is this important to someone who is watching in Malaysia or Algeria or Russia? And when you take that step back, and ask that question, it makes you look for connections that just aren’t there right away.

Or in the word of another respondent, it is simply a matter of putting world events in their proper place – not just for a middle-class U.S. audience, but for a global one. For example, when the Virginia Tech massacres occurred in April 2007, AJE covered that story, but did not necessarily lead with it; in fact long after other reporters had wrapped up their stories, AJE’s man on the scene was still waiting to get to air. That was because on that day, for AJE, the Virginia Tech story came after bombings in Baghdad, the Nigerian presidential elections and fighting in Mogadishu. In the words of correspondent Rushing:
It’s a bias that says that what’s happening in Africa may be just as important, if not more important, than what’s happening in Hollywood. On a week where the news mentions hardly anything but Anna Nicole Smith, there are events happening around the world. I bet [people in war torn areas] wish they had a life where it could matter who Anna Nicole Smith’s baby’s daddy is. They don’t have the luxury of wondering who Anna Nicole Smith’s baby’s daddy is. They don’t have the luxury of caring about Paris Hilton.

All but one of the respondents mentioned context – or contextual objectivity, in some fashion. One respondent said: “The stories are told in a very compelling way. It’s not soundbite journalism…it’s much more than that.” The wider focus carries over into sports, where sports correspondent Brendan Connor said sports coverage is about more than the “big four” of football, basketball, hockey or basketball; but can include a look at a soccer club in Argentina or Sweden, a Chinese girl’s baseball team or a Brazilian beach volleyball star.

**Demystifying the Channel**

Many of AJE’s better-known journalists, among them some of the research participants, are public spokespeople for the network. To a person, all said they were attracted to the idea of working for a start-up network and several likened it to being a part of CNN when that network first started. All said they considered the fact that so many already established journalists had joined the network to be a reputation enhancer. Or as one participant put it: “That helps the reputation and to make people more comfortable with the organization and to make it more palatable and to make it better known.” Why did they make the move? One respondent said: “something like this is never going to happen again, at least in my lifetime. Another participant found the idea exciting and a chance to be part of journalism’s “cutting edge.”

Brown, Lloyd & James, (BLJ hereafter), the official agency of record for Al Jazeera English’s public relations efforts, builds much of its reputation management strategy around the type of news coverage offered by the network as well as its successes in recruiting and retaining top notch journalists with established reputations. One respondent likened what BLJ is doing as
working “to demystify the channel to show that we are not devils with horns and tails.” Rushing compared it to “buying a brand.”

There was a credibility issue in the beginning. By hiring me, they bought a brand, which is quintessentially American. How can we be anti-American if we are hiring Josh? They didn’t say that, but that’s what they bought when they got me. With David Frost, Sir David Frost, they got credibility; instant journalistic credibility. Riz Khan all the reporters. Those people brought their credibility with them. It’s an amazing brand.

Rushing makes for good TV. He is personable, pleasant-looking and knows how to talk “soundbites.” He comes across as sincere and straight-forward. He is a good spokesperson for the network – an excellent choice to carry out one of BLJ’s principal tactics for reputation management. On its bulleted web page case study of AJE, the agency says it “identified key spokespeople for the organization and undertook a series of interviews, profiles and features within their respective fields of expertise.” And who better than a journalist who is already used to being on camera – professionals who already knows how to walk to walk and talk the talk of a good media interview.

Another good tactical choice to sing the praises of the network to a U.S. audience is Washington anchor Dave Marash. Gruff, graying and garrulous, Marash is also a Jewish-American. He has garnered a good deal of the attention in the U.S. – not just because of who he is – but also because of who he was at “Nightline” – correspondent and Ted Koppel’s second-in-command.

Does it help that Marash is Jewish? Probably. Oy vey, how can it hurt? He said: “You’d have to ask the people who hired me. My guess is cosmetically, it was appealing. You know, what’s a nice Jewish boy like you doing working for Al Jazeera? … The logic of that makes sense, but frankly I doubt it, I think they were hiring the news guy not the Jewish news guy.”
To What Extent These Strategies Are Working

In terms of word of mouth or “buzz,” it would appear there is definitely something to be said for AJE’s reputation management efforts. If the adage that the “only bad publicity is no publicity” still holds, then AJE is definitely getting its name out there—perhaps not always as it would like, but still with more perspective on the network’s news content rather than on its image as “terrorist TV” as the findings from the framing analysis that follows would appear to indicate. In the words of one respondent: “I think as we’re out and about more, the reputation, the negative reputation is being challenged.”

The fact that high profile AJE journalists are also speaking out publicly on behalf of the network is another plus. It’s not so much that these journalists are buying the party line, but that they are the party, so to speak. In other words, they are known as credible journalists, continue to do credible journalism and so are helping to build AJE’s reputation as a credible news organization. That they are willing to act as public spokesmen for the network can only help. Frost, Khan, Marash, Rushing, and even AJE Bureau Chief Will Stebbins are not just available for media interviews, but also participants in panel discussions, guest lecturers at universities and even appear as guests on network talk shows.

But with cable and satellite distribution in the United States still elusive, altering perceptions about the network remains difficult. One respondent said:

We’re not seen here. I do a fair amount of public speaking. But until we can really be seen, until we can be seen on a real way going to be hard to change that perception. When we launched, we got rave reviews from The New York Times to the Detroit Free Press saying we should be watched. But if you can’t be seen, you can’t combat that.

AJE appears to have broadened its reach in its ability to attract newsmakers and commentators to appear as guests on AJE news shows and other programs. During a follow-up conversation, one respondent said AJE snagged Democratic and Republican legislators for
commentary following President Bush’s state of the Union Address on Jan. 28, 2008. The respondent also noted that a day later, the network lined up Republican consultant Roger Stone for three hours of political commentary on the Florida primary election.

**Cable and Satellite Distribution**

In terms of cable and satellite carriage in the United States, at the time of this writing, the reputation management strategies of AJE did not appear to be having an impact. Viewership in the United States was still limited to the Pentagon, the State Department and a smattering of other viewers in the Capitol; a small municipal carrier in Burlington, Vermont and the Toledo, Ohio-based Buckeye Cable System. Buckeye placed AJE on its lineup in the spring of 2007. The respondent, Allan Block, who is chairman of the board of the cable company said:

> We carry the channel because it deserves to be carried. We reviewed the quality of the channel before we decided to cover it. It has people from American and British broadcasting who are very well known.

Block noted that his company has carried the Chinese news channel, CCTV and that putting AJE on his lineup is no different. But at the time of this writing, no other large or medium-sized U.S. cable or satellite companies have joined Buckeye in giving AJE a spot.

All the AJE respondents expressed concern that the network is not being seen in the United States. About half of the respondents placed some of the blame on AJE management for not understanding the way the market works in the United States. One respondent noted: “You have to go and sell the channel in the United States; it’s not like everyone is going to ask for it, that’s just the way it is.” Another commented on what might be “cultural misunderstandings” about how the U.S. market really functions. A third respondent said:

> There are two levels of management. Sometimes I worry about the public relations strategies. First year, they said, we’re not in the 'States', who cares? But when you are in the ‘States’, the ‘States’ is the biggest deal in the world. Now, finally, there’s a push to get carriage in the United States.
One respondent said the launch of another competing network at the same time might have had an impact. “There was a National Geographic channel launch and that was very large. And then this one. And it was hey guys… National Geographic had $400 or $500 million dollars to [spend] to get distribution in the United States.” Another expressed hope that a management decision to hire former Turner Broadcasting System distribution executive Phil Lawrie to become AJE’s director of global distribution would help. Lawrie was brought on board in September 2007.

**AJE and YouTube**

Currently, the Internet is Al Jazeera English’s main U.S. distribution outlet. That’s where YouTube comes in. AJE is making headway on Youtube, where it has launched a branded channel on the popular video-sharing website. The researcher reviewed information posted on the AJE Youtube page, which showed the channel has made the top 100 of most-viewed Youtube channels in several different categories – just seven months after its launch there.

A majority of respondents said YouTube is a good vehicle for the network in the United States. One participant said: “Youtube is probably helping. People who are interested will go to see it.” One respondent said he sends YouTube links to AJE to friends and acquaintances.

The network is not airing all its programming on YouTube – but it is showcasing some of what it considers its best offerings including segments from shows like *Frost over the World* with host David Frost and Khan’s interactive interview show. One respondent said YouTube gives the network an alternative distribution scheme.

About half the respondents said interactivity via the internet is helping the channel establish a name for itself in the United States. One respondent cited the instant feedback that can be gleaned from AJE’s YouTube branded channel as something that is helping the network appeal to a broader audience. Another respondent said being internet savvy is enhancing the
network’s reputation by showcasing an ability to use the latest technology to communicate with an audience. Khan described it as a “disruptive brand character” that is popular with young people. “They look for something that is disruptive and new. These are all things that the younger generation knows aren’t established mechanisms.”

Thousands of comments have been posted on YouTube on the “Al Jazeera English – what do you think?” link to the channel. The researcher’s cursory review of comments posted on two days in January 2008 showed most seemed to be favorable.

“Liked the Clooney special with Frost David Sir,” wrote one person. “I’m on al Jazeera everyday. I come home and watch. I even watch “The Fabulous Picture show” every Saturday morning. Sometimes I skip school to watch,” wrote another. And from a third, “Al Jazeera is much better than BBC.” A fourth person wrote “This is how reporting should be done.” “How I wish that Al Jazeera one day will be available on cable service,” wrote another. And finally, in the words of one YouTube commentator, “Al Jazeera is Kick Ass.”

There were no negative comments about AJE posted on the two days monitored (Jan. 25 and Jan. 26, 2008) although there were some derogatory statements posted about ongoing political events that were covered by the network.

**Guest Perspectives**

One of the ways AJE seems to be getting past its reputation as a “terrorist network” is in the guest bookings arena. One respondent said that initially, conservative commentators were reluctant to accept invitations to appear on AJE – but that appears to be changing. Another participant referred to the participation of conservative commentators during AJE’s coverage of President Bush’s State of the Union address. Hodges, who works in guest bookings, said she sends prospective guests clippings about the network and makes certain they know AJE is viewed in Israel.
The first thing people think is supporting Bin Laden and the second is that all the Israelis must hate it. So I wanted to try and dispel those notions. For example, AJE is possibly most watched English language network in Israel.

Half of the respondents concurred that with the passage of time, public officials are saying yes more frequently to interview requests. One respondent noted comments made by aides to Democratic Sen. Barak Obama and Republican Sen. John McCain when they turned down requests for AJE interviews. The participant said the network was told by aides to both U.S. presidential candidates that the only thing that is keeping them off AJE now is not concerns about AJE’s reputation, but rather the fact that that the network still isn’t seen much in the United States – making it not worth their political while to take time out for an interview with AJE.

**Reputation Quotient Index**

Finally, to judge the success level of AJE reputation management strategies we will look to the categories established under the Fombrun-Harris Reputation Quotient Index to help draw some conclusions.

**Emotional Appeal**

All respondents agreed that AJE itself and the programs it airs do have an emotional appeal to those who seek it out in the United States. Respondents agreed that because most AJE viewers are educated and politically engaged, the appeal may be based on the fact that AJE covers regions and countries that are not usually covered by other international networks. Another noted the pull of the internet. A third commented: “If you are somebody who likes news, you will love this channel because we do nothing but news.” Another commented that travel abroad often “converts” U.S. citizens to the network. In the words of another participant: “anyone who actually goes and sees us when they are overseas, watching from their hotel room, loves the programming and our range of news. They love what they see.” One respondent, an
Israeli national said: “when my parents are in the U.S., they are afraid to watch it [AJE]; when they are in Israel, they see it all the time.” Another said there is also an emotional appeal to AJE simply because it’s new and is non-western in origin. Khan said:

People connect with something that’s been missing up to now. Plus young people want to be part of something that is different. Sometimes if they are told something is oddball or something they are not used to, they like it. The connection comes from the fact that it is something new. That appeals to a younger audience.

Senior anchor Marash said AJE’s global approach also has an emotional appeal because the majority of AJE’s viewers “are out there in the world and what they are seeing is news of them, by them and for them.

American news and even CNN or BBC tends to be all about us. What are Americans doing in ‘Existan’, or what is happening in ‘Oslavia’ that may impact on Americans. Whereas in Al Jazeera, we talk about what is happening to the people there. Their interest in the story and it’s often reported by people in the region, who are very good at portraying the region’s stake, rather than as cogs in a Western-run wheel.

Products and Services

All the respondents said they were proud of their work at the channel and felt that their type of news reporting is winning some respect. Its program, “Everywoman,” which focuses on women’s issues, was awarded the "Editors' Award" by the Association of International Broadcasting. It also got the prize for "Best Single News Report" for its story on Agent Orange at the 12th Asian Television Awards in Singapore (Al Jazeera English, 2007).

Prize-winning programs and stories certainly mean recognition by industry peers, and help boost AJE’s image, tearing down misperceptions with an excellent product. Marash said working at AJE is exactly what he anticipated, one reason he is so comfortable talking up the network during interviews or public speaking appearances. “I have to say, among the many pleasures of working here is that our product is exactly as promised, exactly what was described to me when I was hired and exactly what I was selling to prospective viewers and cable system
carriers before launch.” Another respondent, a show producer said: “On American news stations, the people who are on TV are called ‘talent’. It’s not how journalistic they are, but how talented they are at delivering the product. Our guy [in Pakistan] is not ‘talent.’ He is who he is because of his contacts. He doesn’t have the $10,000 teeth and cosmetic makeover and that’s fine. That’s what makes this channel different.

All participants agreed the selection and treatment of stories and the choices being made editorially are all part of building a product and building the reputation. One participant commented: “The places we are reporting from and the stories we are telling. I sit at my desk with AJE on all day and I stop and go, wow! I am proud of the product and I am proud of my colleagues.”

**Workplace Environment**

Included in this look at workplace environment are comments about professional risks that accepting a job with AJE might entail as well as a perceived desire among many working journalists in the United States to take part in the AJE experience. About half categorized the work environment as a positive one. One respondent said he gets about two dozen resumes a month from former colleagues wanting to work at AJE. Another mentioned that during one week in October 2007, he received three resumes from former colleagues at a network where he had worked. The researcher believes the fact that there are so many journalists out there who apparently would like an opportunity to work with AJE is an indication of a good reputation.

However, that does not mean there are not certain professional or personal risks involved in accepting a job with AJE. About half the respondents detailed some concerns about coming to work for the network. Levine said some news sources won’t be interviewed by her AJE journalists. She wrote an impassioned op-ed in the *Washington Post* in June 2006 about the trials and tribulations of working for AJE. Her piece talked about the experiences of two staffers,
one of whom was dropped by an adoption agency previously used and another who had two rental applications rejected when the name of their new employer was mentioned.

One respondent said he thought carefully before accepting a position at AJE. “I had the obvious concerns, the connotation that goes with the name. I had to learn more about the mission of this new English channel. One respondent said she has not told many of her relatives or neighbors exactly where she works because “they would say it’s a terrorist network”. Another said he was apprehensive at first because his wife works at the Voice of America, although he said his spouse suffered no repercussions when she advised her employer of her husband’s new position and said no concern was expressed by management officials there.

Is AJE gaining a reputation as a good place to work? Perhaps. Again, half of the respondents said former colleagues were constantly asking them about job possibilities at AJE and two said they often received resumes from their peers. Although some respondents praised the “fantastic work environment” and the “appreciation” toward staff shown by management, others expressed an opinion that there are still some challenges on the job in terms of blending cultures, work styles and even television terminology.

**Vision and Leadership**

Half of the respondents mentioned the fact that the network has a code of ethics posted on its website (Al Jazeera English) as a demonstration of vision and leadership by making public a standard of measurement. Another refers to the code as proof of “the transparency of the network.” To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, AJE is the only television news network to display an ethical code on its website and for two-thirds of respondents said this served as a kind of morale leadership. Respondent references to journalistic values and AJE catch-phrases referred to earlier in this chapter were cited as the way the network was using its vision and leadership as a reputation management tool. One respondent summed it up like this:” The
leadership is a good one because the slogan is setting the news agenda. What does that mean? From the reporter perspective, it means we are not setting anything, just telling what happens. It is a way of expressing it, is sowing leadership in the news world by getting untold stories out there.

Social Responsibility

None of the respondents viewed the promotion of corporate acts of social responsibility as a function of AJE – although there was a general sense among a majority of participants that the network does act responsibly based on the information it disseminates. As one respondent put it:

We are not there for that. It’s not the network’s responsibility. It certainly does disseminate information. And if the background for that, means people see it (AJE) as socially responsible, that’s great. But that is not the main purpose of the channel. The main purpose of the channel is to disseminate information in a very objective way and as widely as possible. It’s public service broadcasting.

Financial Performance

Funding for AJE is provided by the Emir of Qatar. Because of that fact, none of the respondents thought financial performance was a factor in building AJE’s reputation. Khan said at this point in time, AJE is not profit-driven. Brady said at least for now, AJE is not looking to advertisers as a source of money. So as a measure, the RQI is not relevant in terms of judging AJE’s corporate reputation based on financial performance.

Where questions could arise is whether news coverage is dictated by the one who pays the bills. All respondents said that from their perspectives, the Emir does not interfere with the way AJE covers the news. Half of the respondents described the financial arrangements as having some similarities to the relationship by which National Public Radio (NPR) or the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) is funded. One respondent commented:
Having a kind of state mandate, a kind of public broadcasting mandate, means we’re not so desperate … we aren’t worried about commercial success. Ultimately, we do have to develop some kind of commercial structure and grow it, but for now we can focus on what most of us got into the business for, concentrating on the story and the editorial content.

Summary

The general assessment of AJE respondents and those outside the network who were also interviewed is that the network is establishing a reputation for credible and in-depth journalism. Respondents ignore the “terror TV” label as they go about their day-to-day work. The YouTube relationship is getting AJE noticed within the United States; where it appears to be getting a positive reception from those who see AJE online. However, it must be taken into account that generally people who seek their news from the Internet are better educated and may have a broader world view. It is probable that most of those people who are watching AJE online made a particular effort to seek it out and may not be typical of the broader U.S. audience that might be exposed to AJE if it was available on cable or satellite TV.

How the U.S. News Media Framed AJE

When the network launched, USA Today editorialized “the new English version of Al-Jazeera could have a positive impact, by exposing Americans to different points of view and perhaps by tempering the Arabic version” (Nov. 15, 2006). That article provoked a question in the mind of the researcher as to how other media in the United States might view AJE and prompted a text-driven content analysis to identify frames.

Initially, master frames were categorized based on key words and phrases such as “different perspective” derivatives of the word, “terror,” as well as the appearance of words like objective, credible and fair that might have to do with the network’s reputation management concerns. Other key words that the network often uses to describe itself such as “fearless,” “cover the untold story” and “cover the developing world.” were taken into account. These
frames can be more broadly defined as “AJE news coverage” and “AJE journalist pool” and indeed they were categorized in that way. Another frame was the “familiarity” frame, or reference to how AJE’s format for its news shows resembles that used by CNN and the BBC. The search for this language led to a decision to use broader, thematic frames based around U.S. standards of free speech and press freedom to make further assessments about framing of AJE in the U.S. news media. The researcher also made subjective evaluations based on the overall tone of the article about the network. New categories were created when necessary.

To answer this first research question, the researcher looked only at those articles published between Nov. 1, 2006 and Jan. 31, 2007 to cover the period leading up to the network launch; the launch itself and a two-month period after the network was on air, or in the case of the United States, on the internet. Findings of any shifts in perception will be analyzed in the response to Research Question 4, which follows. An analysis of the findings relevant to each of four newspapers included in this sample will be offered individually.

The researcher read each article to determine its relevancy to this framing analysis. An article was judged to be relevant if it was about AJE itself and did not merely cite AJE as a news source. In all, a total of 24 articles were found to be relevant; nine from The New York Times; three from the Washington Post; one from The Christian Science Monitor; four from USA Today; four from The Boston Globe; one from The Atlanta-Journal Constitution; two from The San Francisco Chronicle; and none from The Houston Chronicle or The Los Angeles Times. The LexisNexis entry for The Los Angeles Times only included entries from the last six months. The Wall Street Journal only posts abstracts on LexisNexis; the abstracts of the two articles listed were not relevant to the research.
In all, nine relevant stories were published in *The New York Times*; but for this first look, three articles, one column and three letters reacting to the column were examined. The three actual stories about the network were published at and around the time of launch; a critical op-ed piece was published two months later, which provoked three published letters in response.

The first story was a brief a week before the network launched that simply said the channel was “ready to go.” Two full-length articles were run the day before the launch and then another, the day after, both of which fit into the “freedom of speech” and “free press” frames. One was a business story that talked of AJE’s “global focus;” the other was a post-launch analysis for the newspaper’s front section by a media writer for the newspaper.

Even though some negative “terror” language was used to explain why the network was so controversial, the framing generally stayed within the positive, “freedom of the press” frame. The business story headline, “A New Al Jazeera with a Global Focus” drew a perspective of a channel that is changing its image and looking ahead. The story began with a rundown of some of the problems the Arabic-language network had confronted, including an early reference to “accusations that it is sympathetic to Al Qaeda.” Overall, the article portrayed AJE positively, presenting the network as it hopes to be seen within the AJE news coverage and AJE journalist pool frames. For example, the fourth paragraph into the story talked about how the network’s journalists “are working to transform the network into a conglomerate with a global reach.”

*Not Coming Soon to a Channel near You* looked at the first day AJE was on the air and contrasted AJE’s coverage of events in Iran and Darfur with the focus by U.S. networks on hearings by the Senate Armed Services Committee. That article also implied a sense of regret that AJE would not be available in the United States except on the Internet. The thematic frame
that was dominant here was the free press concern; with the article expressing the reporter’s point of view that “it’s a shame” that Americans couldn’t see AJE.

An op-ed piece that ran in January was headlined “Another Perspective or Jihad TV?” As its headline suggests, it was dominated by the “Terror TV” frame. It was written by Judea Pearl, father of Daniel Pearl, the Wall Street Journal reporter who was killed by Islamic extremists in Pakistan. Pearl was critical of both the Arabic-language network and AJE, and its “Jihad TV” frame. It is an opinion piece and clearly expressed the view that AJE is a vehicle for “extremist propagandizing.” The Times published three responses to Pearl’s article; one from AJE Washington bureau anchor Dave Marash and two others from readers in North Carolina and California. It might be expected that Marash’s response would come to the defense of the network, but other letters also expressed the point of view that AJE should be seen in the United States.

The Washington Post

There was only one truly relevant article about AJE found through the LexisNexis search covering the entire period in question; from Nov. 1, 2006 to Jan. 31, 2007. Although there were five hits, only one was a full-length article about AJE; two of the hits were announcements of a book signing and speech by AJE correspondent Josh Rushing; the others were “letters to the editor” responding to the article about AJE’s launch. Another article looked at issues of the Arab media in general, and mentioned Al Jazeera but was determined not to be relevant to this query. Several other articles talked about diplomatic snafus committed by a U.S. State Department official who was interviewed on the Arabic-language network, but did not talk about AJE.

The Post story was a Style-section piece about AJE and Washington bureau anchor Dave Marash on the day the network launched. The article framed Marash as a champion of free speech and a free press, bringing up Marash’s journalistic credentials such as his long career with
“Nightline,” and his Jewish faith. In other words, the article was faithful to the news coverage and journalist pool frames.

The description of Marash was friendly and respectful and also allotted ample time and space for Marash to come to the defense of the network and explain the AJE news perspective as being “able to give the best-reported, most transparent report of all the English-language news channels.” The story provided the background on the accusations against Al Jazeera and its reputation concerns within the “terror TV” frame.

By establishing Marash right from the start as “a former ABC newsman”, the article set the journalist pool frame of reference. It also referenced Marash’s Jewish roots, and conveyed a sense that if “a good Jewish boy” like Marash can go to work for AJE, then the network can’t be all bad. The terrorist frame was a mention; but the dominant frames were that of “free press” concerns in the United States and AJE credibility and international focus.

**The Christian Science Monitor**

As was the case for the *Washington Post*, there was only one article of substance about AJE that appeared in *The Christian Science Monitor* – and that was an op-ed piece that appeared in late November 2006. The article was written for the newspaper by one of their regular media columnists and was framed in a more negative fashion than previous mentioned articles in *The New York Times* or *Washington Post*.

The “terror frame” was used in that references were made to Al Jazeera’s reputation for airing “video messages from Osama bin Laden,” while noting that the station launched in the United States without a single U.S. cable company or satellite provider signed up to carry it. That fact, however, was framed in such a way so that one might not realize from reading this article, that AJE launched globally – and not just in the United States. At the same time, the
author of that article wondered whether the channel would be “a mouthpiece for anti U.S. propaganda,” a negative take on the free press frame.

**USA Today**

Of all the newspapers examined in this framing analysis, *USA Today* was most consistent in the positive way it framed of AJE – as well as in a continuity of coverage. *USA Today* published three stories about AJE at the time the network launched. All were relevant to this analysis; all were framed positively, with friendly, tongue-in-cheek headlines like “Goood Morning America!” (cq) or “Al-Jazeera aims for no 'accent' in English.” Those two were feature stories; a third was a more of a straight news story headlined “English Al-jazeera expects ‘scrutiny.’” Affirmative words and phrases like “welcomed” and “positive impact” or “studded with respected names” were used in one editorial piece; another story started out by saying how similar AJE operations appeared to those at CNN, NBC, ABC and CBS – another bit of positive framing, in that AJE is portrayed as just another global network with a different perspective. The very day that AJE launched, *USA Today* editorialized “the new English version of Al-Jazeera could have a positive impact, by exposing Americans to different points of view and perhaps by tempering the Arabic version” (Nov. 15, 2006). All three *USA Today* stories included references to the Bush Administration attacks on Al Jazeera, but the “terror frame” was not dominant – and in fact the references were placed in such a way as to cast doubt on the U.S. government allegations – with phrasing such as “says is a tool of Al Qaeda” or “denounced as the voice of the enemy.”

**The Boston Globe**

*The Boston Globe’s* coverage of the AJE launch was a single column published few days after the network went live. This was a thought-provoking piece about changing media landscapes; and again was framed along the themes of free speech and free press. This article
went a step further, however, by framing the argument in terms of how much is to be gained by improved international relations when one learns to understand different perspectives. Every frame comes into play here. In his article, Lawrence Pintak wrote:

The reality of the new digital world means that Americans may not like what they see. These channels will show the often yawning gap between words and deeds. "We are not there to be diplomatically correct," al-Jazeera chief Wadah Khanfar recently told me. "We are there to practice journalism."

Yes, some of the coverage - whether on al-Jazeera or other channels - will be biased, distorted, and sensational. Deal with it. American officials must engage, not demonize. They must find a way to communicate, not preach. But most of all, they must be aware that their every word and deed is being viewed real-time, often in a split screen showing the reality for folks at the receiving end of US policy.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

The LexisNexis search turned up only one story in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution during the 15-month period being studied. That was an article that ran a day after AJE launched that was headlined “Al-Jazeera now in English; Arab network to challenge the West". The “terror frame” and the “news coverage frame” were juxtaposed against each other throughout the article. For example, the first sentence in the article read: --- “It has been called the "CNN of the Middle East," the "most popular political party in the Arab world" and --- most notoriously --- "Terror TV." In other words positive and negative frames competed for the reader’s attention. But the terror frame appeared to dominant in an explanation as to why AJE did not get carriage in the United States.

The reason for Al-Jazeera's difficulty in finding space in already crowded U.S. cable and satellite line-ups is simple, media analysts say.” Al-Jazeera has been pilloried in the press for the past five years and it's seen by an overwhelming majority of Americans as the 'terrorist wire service.' It's a radioactive brand," said Matthew Felling, media director of the Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington.
The San Francisco Chronicle

The LexisNexis search turned up only two articles in *The San Francisco Chronicle* about AJE, both at the time of launch. One story headlined “Al Jazeera speaks English” was cast in the objective news/free press frame. The “familiarity” frame was dominant, with emphasis on how much AJE resembled CNN. It also played on the “news coverage” frame, talking about the wide net AJE cast in the news it covered its first day on the air. The “free press” frame was also present; the article was critical of the fact that AJE was not able to air on U.S. cable or satellite TV. Another article, a curtain raiser the day the network launched, was a feature piece that focused on the need to give AJE a chance, in other words, underscored the “freedom of the press” frame.

**Shift in the Type of Media Coverage of AJE since Launch**

Based on the preliminary analysis offered here, it is hard to assess how much of a shift there has been in media coverage that would indicate a more favorable perception of AJE. The LexisNexis search did not turn up much coverage about AJE in the newspaper sample during 2007 and the first two weeks of 2008. Two-thirds of the articles published at or around time of launch were favorable within the context of “freedom of the press,” “familiarity,” “news coverage,” and “journalist pool” frames. However, they stopped short of outright suggestions that U.S. cable and satellite distributors include AJE on their lineups. The later articles examined in the framing analysis more strongly suggested that AJE should be carried.

Of the ten newspapers selected for this framing analysis, it is important to underscore, that two had no relevant coverage of AJE at all during the time period selected for scrutiny. Only *The New York Times, USA Today* and *The Boston Globe* published articles about AJE after January 2007. All the articles were editorials urging that AJE be made available in the United States. *The New York Times* article was published in November, 2007; the *USA Today* piece ran
in December, 2007. The latter opinion, from Souheila Al-Jaddaa, a member of *USA Today*'s board of contributors asked: “Does Al-Jazeera belong in the USA?” The answer, framed in arguments about a free press, and “looking beyond our borders” was a resounding yes. Roger Cohen’s piece in the New York Times was framed in the same way, when he talked about AJE as the network of choice for U.S. soldiers working out at the NATO gym in Kabul, Afghanistan. Cohen called AJE “a useful primer,” again in the interests of “free press” and in giving U.S. audiences more exposure to other perspectives, Cohen wrote: “Comparative courses in how Al Jazeera, CNN, the BBC and U.S. networks portray the Iraq war and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be taught in all U.S. high schools and colleges. Al Jazeera English should be widely available.”

*The Boston Globe* ran a review of Josh Rushing’s book about Al Jazeera and an editorial, where the “news coverage” and “free press” frames were evident in the headline – “News without the nonsense.” Once again, the focus was on the professionalism of AJE and its seasoned journalists. Arguing against the anti-American frame, the article stated that until people in the United States can see AJE, they will never know whether the network has such a bias.

**Summary**

The opinion expressed by *USA Today* when AJE first became a presence on the global media stage may be indicative of a general media view toward the network. While no absolute conclusions can be drawn yet, it does suggest that there may be a proclivity amongst U.S. journalists not to view AJE as “terrorist TV” but simply as another voice.

Although the researcher’s original expectation was that it would be possible to make judgments about framing based on the repetition of certain words and phrases, this proved not to be the case. Master frames were concepts. Each writer seemed to approach the story in a unique way – some talked about challenges; some talked about Osama bin Laden in lieu of the catch-
phrases like “terror TV” or “Jihad TV.” A headline like “Five Hours with Al Jazeera English” is decidedly neutral; yet the article’s inclusion of phrases like “subtle and not-so-subtle jabs at the U.S. administration” or raising the questions of whether AJE would be “a mouthpiece for anti-American propaganda” frames AJE in a negative fashion.

Stories written about AJE at the time of the launch seemed cautiously optimistic about what the channel might offer. In its articles, The New York Times writers used positive words and phrases like “champion of forgotten causes” or “prominent journalists” to describe the AJE news team, while quoting AJE executives who talked about the network’s “fearless” coverage. Not being able to see AJE was described “as a shame” in another story in The New York Times written at the time of launch. That story was a detailed accounting of the “different perspectives” offered by AJE.

A year later, more positive framing, in the two articles culled from this sample, was evident. Language in favor of AJE was stronger. A column written by Roger Cohen was headlined with the phrase “Bring the Real World Home.” Cohen used phrases like “balanced reporting” and “distinct perspective” to describe AJE. In her piece in USA Today, Souheila Al-Jadda framed her arguments with words like “competitive news network” and “help bridge the divide between East and West.”

Two conclusions can be drawn here regarding the generally favorable coverage given AJE in the U.S. news media. First, it would appear that for the most part, the U.S. media has not accepted the "terror" frame that had been utilized by the Bush Administration to discredit the network. In some cases, this might be attributed to an opportunity to see the programming; it might also be a result of the high regard with which many AJE journalists are held. Secondly, the fact is that AJE journalists are serving dual roles as public relations representatives for their
employer, who are available to talk up the network and talk it up well. AJE's launch was treated as news and the willingness of key AJE journalists with previous experience in Western news organizations to participate in interviews or be the focus of profiles and/or feature stories was an effective part of a strategy to surmount some reputation hurdles.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

AJE’s Future in the United States

AJE is a television network with charisma – like it or not, it is hard to ignore. Yet it still has a reputation to overcome. Is it doing so? Apparently, yes. From the journalistic perspective, it’s getting more praise than pans these days. It may well be on its way toward achieving its stated journalistic goal of setting the news agenda by way of its content as well as the credibility of its journalists.

The fact that many of its journalists are also officially public relations spokespeople for the network is another plus. Who is better able to carry a media message to other journalists than someone who is a journalist? In fact, one of the best strategies implemented by AJE to establish a positive reputation in the United States may be the recruitment and participation of AJE journalists to speak out on behalf of the network and serve as AJE spokespeople.

“Brand name” spokesmen such as Riz Khan, Dave Marash and Josh Rushing are willingly and wittingly part of the public relations plan. But other, less well-known AJE staffers are just as eager to speak up for the network. A female reporter who works in Colombia said there is rarely a time she goes out on a story when she doesn’t feel that she is part of the effort to put the network’s best face forward, although she said the people she encounters are generally favorably inclined toward the network. Interview producer Diane Hodges is often called upon to explain the network to potential guests and she frequently draws upon the favorable coverage about the network in U.S. newspapers and magazines, including those articles that profile AJE staffers to send clippings to the people she is trying to persuade to go on air.
In the AJE case study published on its webpage, Brown Lloyd James talked of how it "identified key spokespeople for the organization and undertook a series of profiles and features" as well as taking advantage of "speaker opportunities to showcase the quality of talent and skilled journalists within Al Jazeera English." A prime example of this strategy at work is the lengthy profile piece on Marash that was the lead article in *The Washington Post* feature section the day AJE launched. Another excellent example is the piece that ran in *Fast Company* in April 2006 that profiled Josh Rushing and then Al Jazeera International. It was that piece, which sparked the research interest that led to this thesis.

Incidental to this strategy, but just as important is the professionalism of AJE journalists. Indeed, in many ways it is the journalists of AJE themselves when they are out and about doing their job as journalists who ultimately may be the ones who do the most to establish a good name for AJE in the United States. A reporter for a newspaper in Columbia, South Carolina was pleasantly surprised by his encounter with a team of AJE journalists sent to cover the Democratic primary election in that state in January 2008 (Morehead, 2008).

When we first learned these guys were from Al-Jazeera we were confused. They certainly didn’t appear to be Arab extremists bent on filling our airwaves with anti-American propaganda. These were American journalists from Washington, D.C. And they were no slouches.

The barriers placed in AJE’s way because of its perceived reputation may also end up boosting the network in the end and help it break ground in another way that was not conceived when it first began. Just like CNN made a name for itself as the first 24-hour news network, so may AJE make a name for itself as the "internet network." Instead of being stymied by image and reputation issues, AJE is sidestepping traditional distribution systems to opt for broadband
and the worldwide web. That strategy could prove to be more beneficial than contemplated at the outset.

The comments obtained during interviews that formed the basis of this research were quite insightful and provided valuable perspective on how the journalists and executives of AJE see themselves and their role as representatives of an international news organization, particularly for purposes of this research, in terms of the United States.

It was also of interest to the researcher to find that despite the Bush Administration painting of AJE as “terror TV,” the framing study suggests that in general, the U.S. media favors making the network more readily available in the United States. This hypothesis is supported by a cursory review of articles of that appeared in newspapers published in small and medium-sized U.S. cities that were not included in this framing analysis. The general sense seemed to be that the U.S. television audience should be given the opportunity to view AJE.

Geographic bias is nothing new in terms of how the news is covered, and it is closely linked to agenda-setting issues determined by Washington (Dominick, 1977). In terms of international news coverage, “world news” can become what’s on Washington’s plate – and ever since the end of the Cold War in 1990, Washington’s gaze has been cast on Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and the never-ending Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Western media have focused on developments there as has Al Jazeera – but there the similarities end. AJE’s commitment to “providing a voice to the voiceless” is moving beyond geographic boundaries and the international news coverage generally mandated by Washington and Western Europe.

In writing about AJE, *Kansas City Star* TV critic Aaron Barnhart said he is “convinced it is the most important English-language cable channel to come along since Fox News. (Barnhart,
Even just being out on the story with other journalists is boosting AJE’s image – at least with the media (Morehead, 2008).

Of course, not everyone is convinced. Leading the assault on AJE in the United States is Accuracy in Media, the conservative media watchdog group. Cliff, editor of the AIM report, has consistently attacked AJE and its sister network in his writings. In April 2007, while blasting the Toledo Ohio-based Buckeye Cable System, Inc. for carrying the network, Kincaid wrote that “It is worse than an American network airing Tokyo Rose during World War II because Block is actually paying for the right to air enemy propaganda (Kincaid, 2007). Buckeye Cable’s response has been to ignore Kincaid and keep AJE on the air (Block, 2007).

Those at AJE also ignore Kincaid and his charges about “terror TV.” As Marash put it, there is a context for Al Jazeera and AJE’s access to information from Al Qaeda and that context is news.

It’s true that Al Jazeera became the release point of choice for Osama bin Laden and leadership of Al Qaeda. But if you understand the dynamics of the reality of the reason they went to Al Jazeera with their video and news releases you will see it’s the same reason the Unibomber sent his letter to The New York Times. If you are an Arabic speaker or you are in the Islamic world, Al Jazeera in Arabic is the best known, best distributed and best trusted source of news, in other words it’s analogous to The New York Times in American journalism. The crucial thing is what happened to their materials after they were sent to Al Jazeera and the answer is they were treated as news. (Marash, 2007)

Objectivity and Contextual Objectivity

The idea and ideals of objectivity have long served as a moral fiber of U.S. and Western style journalism. (Gans,1980). As noted earlier, however, objectivity is hard to define and in the 21st century, even in the United States, journalistic views toward objectivity are changing. Michael Kinsley (2006) calls objectivity a muddled concept that is in its twilight time.

Abandoning the pretense of objectivity does not mean abandoning the journalist's most important obligation, which is factual accuracy. In fact, the practice of opinion journalism
brings additional ethical obligations. These can be summarized in two words: intellectual honesty. (Slate, 2006)

In another commentary posted on the Society of Professional Journalists web page, Chris Hedges of The Philadelphia Inquirer described objectivity as a commitment to truth.

Balance and objectivity, without a strong commitment to the truth, can turn journalism into farce. It was impossible to witness the army massacres in El Salvador or the murder of children by Bosnian Serb snipers in Sarajevo without being revolted. … And I wanted, through my reporting, to get the world to wake up and put an end to the wholesale murder of innocents. This commitment, however, was effective only when we were rigorous about telling the truth.

The shifting views toward objectivity in U.S. journalistic circles may be a signal that AJE’s time has come. In its corporate profile posted on its web page, AJE describes itself as "balancing the current typical information flow by reporting from the developing world back to the West and from the southern to the northern hemisphere. The channel gives voice to untold stories, promotes debate, and challenges established perceptions."

Is this contextual objectivity? The researcher would argue that AJE’s commitment to providing many perspectives is just that—an attempt to reflect all sides of a story within the context of the audience that is being served (El Nawawy, 2003). Never easy, in the researcher’s view, contextual objectivity becomes an even more difficult task when serving a global audience. Contextual objectivity may set the journalistic bar for the 21st century. It would be easy to argue the case that this should be so. Certainly at a time when technological tools can provide the means to make more information available in record time, a news organization, particularly a global or international news organization should provide more perspective and more context in the stories it reports.
Intercultural Competence

It would also seem to be a prerequisite for employment at Al Jazeera that the individual possess a high level of intercultural competence – in other words the ability to communicate with and appreciate people of other cultures. Many also speak a second or even third language outside of their mother tongue (Smrikarov, 2007). In general, AJE has gone out of its way to recruit a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural staff. Journalists come from more than 40 different countries, including Israel, Canada, South Africa, the United States, France, Germany and of course, a number of Arab nations. In the words of anchor-presenter Riz Khan:

We have cultures coming together. Eastern cultures Western cultures. And that’s been a great cross-fertilization of ideas. Of course you face different approaches and attitudes. Like Ramadan comes by are we very much celebrating. Then Christmas comes around the corner, and the Westerners celebrate that. So it’s kind of nice. Everyone is becoming more aware of each other and each other’s customs.

The multicultural, multinational makeup of AJE would seem to help it serve its multicultural, multinational audience. Can a world that celebrates Ramadan, Christmas and Hannukah learn to live and work together? It seems that challenge is being surmounted in the AJE newsroom, if not in the world at large.

U.S. Perspective of the Arab World

Before moving on, it is important to place AJE’s reputation difficulties in the United States in context. First, it is necessary to keep in mind a prevailing perspective about Arabs and Islam in the United States and to remember that Al Jazeera has its roots in the Middle East. The Western mindset, particularly that in the United States, often sees the Arab world as something strange, exotic and even evil (Said, 1981). Although Said was writing about western media coverage of the Iranian revolution in the late 1970s, his insights about cultural misunderstandings and misinterpretations are still all too relevant today.
There is a consensus on ‘Islam’ as a kind of scapegoat for everything we do not happen to like about the world’s new political, social and economic patterns. For the right, Islam represents barbarism; for the left, medieval theocracy’ for the center, a kind of distasteful exoticism. In all camps, however, there is agreement that even though little enough is known about the Islamic world there is not much to be approved of there.” (1981)

Against that backdrop, comes Al Qaeda with its predilection for terrorism and “jihad” or “holy war.” In the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Al Qaeda sought out Al Jazeera to deliver its messages, providing the network with the equivalent of video exclusives from Osama bin Laden and other Al Qaeda operatives. Because Al Jazeera had access to Al Qaeda, its detractors labeled it “Jihad TV” (Pearl, 2007). However, others argue there is a news context for airing such video (Marash, 2007), a journalistic rationale exercised not just by Al Jazeera or AJE, but also by U.S. broadcast or cable networks which were given access to the footage.

**AJE and You Tube**

It would appear that Al Jazeera is on the cutting edge of change and may become a global news leader. Since it’s been just a little more than a year since the network launched, it is too early to judge its success potential, particularly in the United States where television access is limited because of distribution issues. Yet, the April 2007 agreement to establish an internet channel on YouTube may alter the media landscape for AJE in a way that cannot be measured at this writing. But it certainly will have implications for 21st century journalism and the stated aims of AJE to alter the direction of the news flow from south to north.

This researcher believes that signing the distribution deal with YouTube was a stroke of genius on the part of the AJE executive team. Not only does it make AJE appear to be hip, progressive and extremely in tune with our online times, it also allows millions of young Americans to decide for themselves about AJE (Khan, 2007). Rather than mounting an expensive public relations campaign to counter critics and get their message out, AJE is going
right into the homes of their potential audience members – by way of their computers – for a very low cost (Brady, 2007).

It also is worth mentioning that research shows that the Internet news audience is younger and better educated than the U.S. public as a whole. (Pew Research Center, 2008). Additionally, the You Tube launch is clean, clutter-free, and highly credible in that "what you see is what you get." There can be no allegations that a frilly, fluffy public relations campaign is trying to cover up the dark spots.

**Limitations**

The information interview is a primary source of research data (Williams, 1964). It has often been said that every interviewer comes to the table of the qualitative research interview with his or her own subjective views already in place (Kvale, 1995). Certainly, as a former journalist, and one who worked in the world of television as an international correspondent for a global network, the researcher does have a perspective on news and journalism which some might consider a bias (Goldberg, 2003). But as a social science researcher, the author’s goal was to avoid interview bias in the phrasing of the initial questions and follow-up as well as in the way she listened (Richardson, Dohrenwend, & Klein, 1965; Gillham, 2000).

Another possible limitation is that the researcher did have a previous professional relationship with several of the people interviewed at AJE, having worked with them at CNN International. This fact is noted in the interests of transparency, but prior acquaintance did not seem to impact the interview process one way or the other. The researcher did have a collegial, professional exchange with those she interviewed. As someone who was intimately familiar with the constraints, pressures and even language of international news and issues of credibility as they might impact upon reputation, conversational ease was a consistent component of the interview process.
As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the fact that AJE is so new to the world media stage is another limitation. Time is needed to determine whether the network will achieve what it has set out for itself and at the same time gain not only an audience in the United States, but journalistic stature as well.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

**AJE Journalists**

It would seem that more interviews with more AJE journalists would be useful to expand upon the research initiated here. Because of time constraints, the researcher was not able to talk with as many people at AJE’s Washington bureau as might have been desirable. It might have been particularly helpful to speak with an AJE photographer or producer who spent more time out in the field to gain some insights about their experiences. It must also be noted that all but one of the AJE staffers who participated in the interviews held more prominent positions at the network. It would be useful to speak with younger members of the AJE team who hold either entry-level or mid-level positions to gain their perspectives about working at the network.

Another approach worth exploring would be to accompany AJE journalists into the field to see how they go about “giving a voice to the voiceless.” In terms of other reputation management issues, it might provide some useful insights to observe interaction between AJE journalists and their sources when they are out covering a story – particular when the AJE team is covering a Washington-based event involved high-ranking U.S. government officials. Do AJE journalists get to ask questions? How are the questions answered? What kind of language is employed both by the journalists and/or the source?

**AJE Public Opinion Research**

It would also be interesting to conduct some public opinion research and audience analysis in the three areas where AJE was available to cable viewers at the
time of this writing, particularly because the audiences are found in different parts of the country where perspectives might vary as well. AJE is available through a municipal carrier in Burlington, Vermont; through a cable company based in Toledo, Ohio and to a very limited audience in Washington, D.C. It might also be worthwhile to compare the findings of such a study with a poll of those in similar communities who are not able to view AJE through a cable or satellite service and assess their interest or the lack of same in accessing the channel.

**AJE and YouTube**

Further time and research is of course needed to determine how successful AJE’s YouTube venture will be and the impact it will have. One needs to remember that AJE itself only launched in November 2006, while the You Tube deal was reached in April 2007. Will U.S. viewing habits move to the internet and mobile devices or will there continue to be a place for easy-chair television with a remote readily at hand? The former would bode well for AJE, while the latter will not.

Research is just emerging on the credibility of the internet as a news source and early returns show the Internet is highly regarded at least in terms of news about the war in Iraq (Choi, Watt & Lynch, 2006). Given that at the time of this writing, the Internet is the primary way most people in the United States can view AJE, it would be useful to further explore the AJE-YouTube connection.

**AJE Cable and Satellite Distribution**

Similarly, it is just as important to see whether more cable companies and satellite distributors will join those few brave souls who have dared to place AJE on their lineups. At the time of this writing, AJE’s new global head of distribution, Phil Lawrie, had not secured more
carriage for the network in the United States. AJE is seen in more than 100 million households worldwide in Europe, parts of Asia, Africa and Australia (Insead Knowledge, 2008). In January 2008, AJE announced a new agreement with a cable television carrier in Hong Kong further expanding its reach (Lew, 2008). Both AJE and the Arabic-language channel are available in Israel (Burstein, 2007). AJE has announced plans to conduct “a hard global relaunch” in the second quarter of 2008, a clear indication of ongoing concerns about reputation (Insead Knowledge, 2008).

Another question needs to be asked in terms of coverage in the United States. Is it true as executives for cable companies and satellite distributors allege that there is just no interest in international news among U.S. viewers (Stroehlein, 2007)? Or is it simply that other interests or channels like National Geographic have beaten AJE to the punch? (Brady, 2007) Or is it AJE’s “reputation” which is getting in the way? Further researcher might bring us closer to knowing the real answer

**Shifting Political Winds**

There will be a new United States president in 2009 and a change in administration could change the way AJE is perceived in the United State (Brady, 2007). It is not the researcher’s intent to speculate on the world view of the media the next administration will take, but there is a real possibility that the “terror TV” frame will be put to rest. To this end, it might prove useful to embark on another framing analysis of AJE a year or so after a new president is in office. Additionally, it might be helpful to include as a part of that analysis a look at coverage of AJE in newspapers in small and medium-sized cities.

In the same vein, an exploration of coverage about AJE on the internet might provide some other avenues of study. Finally, it is also important to expand the research to include
conversations with other media experts and scholars, particularly those with a focus on the Arab media.

**Conclusions**

While it is trite to say so, it is also true – only time will tell if AJE will tear down its reputation as “the terrorist network” and build up the reputation it seeks to establish for itself – as the network that sets the news agenda; that is a voice for the voiceless and that reverses the information flow from south to north.

What’s in a name? Apparently, quite a lot. Perhaps that could explain why the network changed its name from Al Jazeera International to Al Jazeera English just days before it launched – to keep it from being confused with the other Arabic-language Al Jazeera, which since it airs in many countries, makes it international as well.

AJE’s publication of its Code of Ethics on its website is also important. Highlights include a stated adherence to the journalistic values of honesty, courage, fairness, balance, independence, credibility and diversity; a commitment to endeavor to get to the truth and to present diverse points of view and opinions without bias or partiality (Al Jazeera English, 2008).

As far as this researcher is aware, no other international news organization does this. Is it a gesture to appease critics who consider AJE a “terrorist network” because of the Arabic-language network’s access to Al Qaeda? Or is it simply because it’s the way AJE wants to work and let its audience to know that’s what it can expect from them.

AJE is challenging CNN and the BBC and the gatekeepers at other Western media outlets who make the decisions about what is news with its commitment to reversing the direction of the global news flow. CNN International (CNNI) makes some effort to do this, but not to the extent that it has in the past.
CNNI once offered its viewers the promise of information with a global perspective; something that despite good intentions was hard to live up to because CNNI is headquartered in Atlanta and its executives were and are for the most part British or U.S. American. AJE is the first international news network that is non-Western in terms of staff and location. In Africa, for example, AJE is providing coverage that doesn’t just look at floods and famines, but is attempting to go beneath the surface to help people understand the why of Africa’s problems. (Nestory, 2007).

Al Jazeera is the first non-Western, English-language international news network. It has already set its goals of reversing the information flow and giving a voice to the voiceless through the journalists it has recruited to carry out its mission. Future research would determine how far AJE is coming in meeting that goal.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ronnie Lovler became assistant director of the Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism at San Francisco State University in February 2008. Previously, she was a broadcast journalism instructor at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, Florida. Ronnie’s journalism career spans several decades. She served as bureau chief and correspondent for CNN in Latin America for almost 10 years. During her time at CNN, Ronnie reported from every country in Latin America. Ronnie has also worked for CBS News, The Weather Channel and The Associated Press, as well as The San Juan Star in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Ronnie has also served on the executive board of the Society of Professional Journalists’ Mid-Florida Pro Chapter and as a member of the International Committee of the SPJ.

She was part of a team of observers headed by President Jimmy Carter monitoring electoral processes in Nicaragua (2001) and Venezuela (2004). During the 2005 U.S. hurricane season, Ronnie worked with the American Red Cross as a volunteer crisis communicator and public information officer. Ronnie is a graduate of Ohio State University.

She is proud to be a member of the “boomer generation” and even prouder to have demonstrated you can go back to school after age 50 and succeed. She is equally proud of her two sons, Tiffen and Michael, who are engaged in their own pursuits and studies.